

**A case study of learning during induction at a  
Local Authority's Children and Young People's service**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis reports on a case study undertaken within a Local Authority's Children and Young People's Service. It focuses on the learning of front-line staff learning during induction. Whilst practice-based learning, particularly during induction, is embedded into roles such as Teaching or Social Work, there has been little research into other similar professionals engaged in caring for children and vulnerable families in the public sector. The thesis seeks to fill that gap. It explicitly seeks to understand induction from the perspective of inductees, something that mainstream management research on induction does not focus on. In addition, the thesis is set within the context of financial austerity and cut backs in the public sector in the UK, and offers an insight into how this affects learning within the organisation.

The case study involved inductees and first-line managers. Data was collected through a daily 'learning journal' that inductees completed, and semi-structured interviews with both inductees and managers. This data was examined with the help of literature on work based learning, new managerialism and austerity. It drew upon Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, doxa and illusio as a framework to help understand the context and the data.

The thesis reports on how the perceptions and practices around induction emerge as rooted in hierarchical relations between inductees and managers, with the assumption that managers would - and should - lead on what is learnt and how, during induction. One effect of this is that prior experience and knowledge, particularly around softer skills and unaccredited informal learning, appears devalued. Coupled with the new managerialist ethos and the pressures that accrue during a period of recruitment and resource freezes that typify 'austerity', the effects on both the learning environment as well as understandings/assumptions about induction learning are of concern. The thesis examines these factors in some detail and ends with some brief thoughts on how induction learning could be improved in the short and longer terms.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

This thesis is based on case study research on work-based learning during new recruits' induction with in a Local Authority's Children and Young People's service, set within a context of financial austerity. As a long-term and part-time research project, the study saw several changes and evolved constantly over the study period. This first chapter presents some of these changes to the research over this time, along with the rapid changes to the research context during the study period. It also sets out the research questions/issues that this thesis addresses for theory and practice within these changing contexts.

Previous academic activity for my Masters degree led me to undertake a small-scale research project involving front-line family support staff, looking at which aspects of induction they found most and least useful. At the time I was managing a team of approximately 12 front-line inductees and I became acutely aware that although each had similar professional heritages and experiences, and each was manoeuvred through a very similar induction programme, the majority thrived and developed in their role but there was a small minority who - for no immediately apparent reason – did not. From my academic reading, along with my own first-hand experiences, I recognised staff induction as being one of the first learning experiences that a new employee faced, and I was keen to make this as effective as possible given that it formed the foundation of the inductees' understanding of their new role. My suspicion at the time, from my discussions and interactions with others within my organisation, was that induction was viewed by many as a mechanical process for new recruits to pass or manoeuvre through rather than as an important learning opportunity, that I now considered it had the capacity to be.

This thesis therefore deals with notions of both informal and work-based learning. As Garrick (2006) highlights, these are both notions which have captured an increasing level of interest over the years from slightly different perspectives – from Dewey (1938) and Kolb's (1984) work on learning from experience, to Zuboff (1988), Lave & Wenger's (1991) work on learning within a context, to literature on enhancing incidental and informal learning by Brookfield (1986) and Marsick & Watkins (1990). For the purposes of this thesis, I consider that in contrast to 'formal' learning, informal learning is predominantly experiential, often self-directed, and achieved through participation and involvement with others within a workplace environment. Work-based learning and informal learning are also terms which are often used interchangeably, and with varying meanings, and so I make two principle assumptions when referring to work-based learning in particular:

- That the work place is a context which is rich in learning opportunities, and
- That learning occurs through the everyday practices that take place in that context.

This thesis therefore defines informal work-based learning as relating to learning that occurs in the course of, or as a result of, engagement with the real-life everyday practical work activities that constitute a job role (adapted from Woodall, 1991).

I held an interest in the induction period in particular as, from reading I understood the induction period to be the principle vehicle for inductees to develop:

- Knowledge about expectations and requirements of their new role
- Knowledge about the roles of other professionals linked to their role
- An understanding of the wider organisational context

(Cunningham, Dawes & Bennett, 2004)

It was during this period that I began to also learn about the notion of 'Communities of Practice' as offered by John Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991). Whilst I had encountered their work before, in this context I found myself considering the nature of the linkages between staff induction and on-going work-based learning, and if or how induction can be or is used to instil the beginnings of, or aspects of, what could be considered a 'community of practice' with the environment in which I was working. I extended this reading to consider the notion of collaborative working and was particularly struck by the writing of Engestrom who refers to collaborative working as "knot-working", characterising collaborative working as a

*"pulsating movement of tying, untying and re-tying together otherwise separate threads of activity.....An activity that is not reducible to any single individual"*

(Engestrom, 1994 p.153)

I related this notion of knot-working to the informal work-based learning, alongside the reading I had undertaken by Lave and Wenger around the notions of Communities of Practice, and became intrigued by the links between informal learning - particularly within the workplace context - and these notions of collaborative working and Communities of Practice. I held a professional interest in the effect of induction on inductees' performance and so the question I found myself asking, at the start of my doctoral research was;

*“What could employees (managers and managed) reveal about learning during induction, and what could this insight tell us, or suggest, about the potential for, or lack of, collaborative learning in the workplace?”*

It was conceived as an open, exploratory enquiry into the situation. During my initial readings, there was very little specific research on staff induction that was undertaken from the employee's perspective that was not located in the fields of Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) (Wong, 2004) or Social Workers (CWDC, 2001) or some health professions (Midwifery, Health Visiting, Mental Health). Within the field of management and business studies, reference is often made to the mechanics of induction; the legalities, format etc. Yet, this is almost exclusively written with an assumption of the employing organisation as the key benefactor. Induction of NQTs is rather more extensive, however it appears to be driven by a high – and increasing – rate of NQTs who leave the teaching profession in the first year post-qualifying. This is also the case for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs). Whilst these professions make up a notable proportion of the workforce today, I was curious as to why the induction experience of other public sector groups appeared not to be given equal consideration. Local Authorities (LAs), whilst employing Social Workers and NQTs, have a greater number of employees that are not employed in these roles. In many counties in the UK the LA is the biggest employer (e.g. Staffordshire, Lancashire, Cornwall, Cumbria), and have a greater number of employees who were not Social Workers or NQTs and so I was keen to highlight the perspectives of these other employees.

My interest in this subject was therefore both of a professional and personal nature. As a manager of services to children and families I held a professional interest in developing and fostering learning in others. A background in early years care leads me to adopt a stance of developing a 'desire to learn' over the actual learning output. It is with this in mind that I was led towards considering staff induction as gaps in literature had already begun to illuminate an apparent lack of recognition of the employee's perspective of this important episode in their new role. I was also not aware of any point where employees' had been specifically consulted on their expectations or anticipations of induction and I considered that this was a gap worthy of further exploration.

In the early days of the research many aspects had held my interest. I was certain I wanted to understand the induction period - it provided a boundary and framework for my study. I knew, because I had knowledge of the existing induction format, that I would be largely considering aspects of tacit and informal learning; learning 'in situ' and of a social nature, and within the context of a work setting. As I progressed through the study therefore, my initial questions crystallised into the following areas of enquiry:

**1a. What perceptions and assumptions about learning do inductees and their managers hold?**

**1b. What are the formal and informal processes of induction affecting learning?**

By designing a case study of the induction period at a LA Children's Service, with these key areas of enquiry, I hoped to be able to understand influences on learning during induction with a view to understanding how to maximise the learning during that period. With further changes to the research context and my own understanding of wider social and political changes that affected the working environment and structures of the LA and the Children's service, the thesis also began to address the following theoretically informed concerns:

**2. How is the 'doxa' inherent in an organisation's practices, and how managers and inductees see their 'fit' with the organisation and its values ('illusio'), affected by wider social and organisational changes (austerity & new managerialism) and how does this impact on how learning (or not learning) is shaped during induction?**

In the rest of this chapter I will briefly outline the nature of these changes with specific reference to LAs and the Children's Services department, where my study was set.

### **Changes to the research context and my role during the period of research**

At the start of the EdD (2010) I was an Area Manager within a Local Authority (LA) in the East of England. As a recent appointee to that post from a manager of front-line Children's Centre services I was keen to be able to use my new role to influence a wider area of the service.

At the earliest stages of the study (2010/11) the then Labour Government's Sure Start initiative was at the peak of its activity. Funding was high, new buildings were built and resourced with the very best equipment that could be sourced, staff morale could be argued as being extremely high, and there was much positivity surrounding the programme. Children's Centres sat under the umbrella of Children's Social Care Services in this LA – a long established and statutory Local Authority service, which had a good reputation. There was much competition for all Children's Centre roles, so recruiting managers were able to make selections from candidates who exceeded the 'essential' recruiting criteria.

By the end of the first year of the study (2011) changes in government (leading to a coalition of Liberal Democrat and Conservative parties) and the 'aftermath' of the financial crisis led to reductions in LA budgets and funding. At this stage, I had also left my full-time employment with the LA to take up a new post elsewhere in the region. I retained a small contract in my exiting role (which had changed from my initial role due to the restructuring but was still within the CYP directorate). Whilst still connected to the

LA due to the small contract held, I was far less 'visible' to staff, and so the insider-researcher role I had originally assumed altered to that of an 'informed outsider' researcher. I was still kept abreast of changes and activities of the various teams although was neither directly nor practically involved in service delivery, and I held no accountability for any 'day-to-day' undertakings of the teams. In many ways, this shift allowed me to 'see' the broader canvas of the study better, connecting my immediate concerns with 'learning during induction' to wider social and political changes. This led to the greater use of critical social theory, particularly the work of Bourdieu, within the thesis - to make sense of how managers and inductees experienced induction and learning during it within this very specific context of financial austerity and the organisational restructuring that went along with it.

By 2011, the Local Authority was initiating a period of 'consultation and restructuring'. This process continued for over 12 months, during which staff – although forewarned about forthcoming events – faced huge uncertainty as to the shape and look of the LA of the future, and their own roles within it. Front-line staff were reassured of their employment as the actual restructuring and redundancy proposals were directed at those employed at Grade 7 and above (front-line staff were typically at Grade 3, 4 or 5). However, there was a question around which directorate, or section of the LA, Children's Centres would sit with in the future. Front-line staff were aware that their managers and senior managers were more directly involved and affected by the proposed staff cuts. This was understandably a period of significant unrest for all staff as it was coupled with the removal of key processes, principal meetings being placed 'on hold' and a sizeable cut to most Children's Centre budgets. There was also a sense of disbelief at evolving developments amongst front-line staff. Although published correspondence from the Chief Executive to all staff specifically stated that only those at grades 7 and above would be affected, there were also well-publicised messages stating that the LA was aiming to reduce its number of total employees by 30%, and so unrest and anxiety was generally high, and continuing to rise.

It is important to note also that this was not a process restricted to Children's Services only, but the entire Local Authority, and indeed LAs across the country. This initial unrest was quickly followed by a strict 'recruitment freeze' whereby there was a total embargo on managers appointing to vacant posts. This led to 'relocations' of those at risk of redundancy and several managers spoke of unsuitably qualified staff being moved into positions that neither they, nor the recruiting manager, felt positively about. As the months progressed staff saw notable and senior members of the staff team leave or relocate, and this often happened suddenly. They also faced increasing workloads due to the recruitment freeze (re-deployment was not often successful) and they experienced continued financial cuts which affected the service they delivered. Concurrently, referral thresholds for cases warranting

statutory Social Care involvement rose, which resulted in staff within Children's Centres not only working in an environment charged with unrest but also saw a marked change in the type of work they were being asked to undertake. There was a distinct rise in the complexity of case loads, and the level of needs faced by those they were working closely with (families and young children). A change in the direction of Children's Centres was announced by the Government, ushering the advent of focused targeting of services as opposed to the previously largely universal service provision. At the same time, statutory Ofsted Inspections for Children's Centres were also announced.

Towards the end of fieldwork (2013), the restructuring was concluded and the recruitment freeze partially lifted. Children's Centres found their new place situated under 'Integrated Services' and although geographical working boundaries were changed, there remained some continuity in that the vast majority of Children's Centre Managers remained in their posts, and those who left did so of their own volition (rather than being forcibly made redundant). A new structure brought about a new 'way of working' in terms of new and revised meeting formats and a revised Performance and Development Review (PDR) process linked to the new operating model's key priorities.

During the study there was a marked and keenly felt shift in the sharp decline of financial resources for LAs. The financial pinch was felt across almost every directorate, and most notably, there was a rapid reduction in core funding to LAs. To illustrate the severity of this, as reported in the local newspaper – The East Anglian Daily Times, the LA in which my study took place faced financial reductions of £156m over 4 years (02/08/2011). 'Austerity' became a lived experience and raised questions over spending, and 'value for money' in almost all areas. Provision of training was not excluded from this. Previously, the LA had spent a sizeable amount of revenue – sometimes as much as 50% of the total training budget - on external sourcing of training. There was an emerging dependency on external and formal 'training' sessions, as a 'fix all', even as a mandatory process. However, as financial cuts became more pronounced, LAs could no longer afford to pay for such external training and were required to be 'self-sufficient'.

These changes were far reaching and introduced an element of social complexity that I had not bargained for at the start of the study. However, these changes, with my greater distance to the immediate context of the organisation meant that I was better able to utilise elements of critical social theory, particularly the work of Bourdieu to situate the immediate concern of the study – learning during induction and how it was experienced by managers and inductees – within these wider social and political currents. The next chapter will set out in greater detail, the literature and theoretical concepts that are therefore central to this study.

In Chapter 3, I discuss my research methodology, methods used and ethical protocols followed, along with a brief consideration of the participants and their recruitment for this study. Chapter 4 reports on the data gathered in a thematic fashion, leading to three phenomena that seemed to characterise the work place and had a huge influence on how learning during induction was understood and practiced. This is followed by chapter 5, which offers a discussion of the main research findings in relation to the research questions mentioned earlier and chapter 6 draws the thesis to a close by reflecting on its contribution, its limitations and areas for further study.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter sets out some of the key literature and theoretical concepts that have been central to this study. I explore them and indicate their influence on this study. The topic of study – workplace learning during induction – can span a range of fields (management, education, psychology), and in this review, I attempt to convey some of the key debates on workplace learning across these fields. In the first part of the chapter, literature relating to work-based learning - and more specifically - literature relating to learning during induction, tacit learning, situated learning and 'social capital' in the workplace, are considered.

The second part of this chapter moves on to consider literature on 'new managerialism' including notions of 'professionalism' and 'performativity' in contemporary public service workplaces, and is followed by a consideration of research relating to workplace learning in times of 'austerity' and 'cut backs' (such as the one in which this study was set). In addition, some literature on time and speed of learning, which seem to gain a higher status and value in times of austerity, is briefly discussed. The final part of this chapter is devoted to the theoretical concepts of Bourdieu, particularly notions of 'Doxa', 'Habitus', and 'interest' (or *Illusio*) and key studies that have used these concepts to consider the workplace.

The research journey, as briefly outlined in the introductory chapter, shaped the composition of this chapter. Whilst some of the literature and ideas presented here were identified prior to fieldwork (such as work based learning), ideas changed and developed as the study progressed (such as the new managerialism and its influence in the workplace, particularly under conditions of 'austerity'), with literature and data analysis influencing one-another rather than following each other in a chronological fashion. Thus, this chapter is a retrospective assembly of the key literature and concepts that have aided the collection and interpretation of the data and findings of this thesis.

## Part I: Work-based learning

Literature relating to the field of work-based learning seems to be predominantly rooted within three key fields: the field of business and management studies, the field of psychological studies and behavioural theory, and the field of adult education - most notably the 'adult social learning' sub-field. Each of these have their own implicit and explicit perspectives on how work-based learning is viewed, each shaped by varied understandings of 'benefits' and 'drivers' of work-based learning. It is therefore pertinent to look at how each field 'positions' the individual/learner/employee and some key debates. The literature under the umbrella of work-based learning is presented under the following themes:

Induction and learning; Tacit knowledge; Situated learning and Social learning in the workplace

### Induction & learning

As my study is focused on learning during induction, my search for literature on this area led me to business management and human resource management areas. The following quote, though dated from 1982 is not untypical of the view still prevalent in this area:

*"...the process of helping a new employee settle quickly into their job so that they soon become an efficient and productive employee... An induction programme must be designed to meet your objectives and you should decide what information the person is required to know, over what timescale, the length and timescale of training methods to be used and the role of the manager."*

(Edwards & Scullion, 1982, pp.237)

Here, the viewpoint leans heavily towards 'speed' as being a determinant of effectiveness and heightened productivity, and company objectives are presented as the predominant drivers. The company sets the curriculum, the method and the timescale – it appears to pay little, if any, regard to the employee's past experience/knowledge, preferences or the perception of their needs. This appears to be the case in the bulk of this literature, even while it is recognised that:

*"new employees will need to get to know the people they will be working with, become familiar with their surroundings, learn about their job and the surroundings they will be working in"*

(Edwards & Scullion, 1982, pp.273)

This is also echoed in Hunt's (1992) 'Managing People at Work'. Whilst this publication, like so many others, devotes whole chapters to 'groups' or sub-communities in the work place and the

'organisational cultures' of even the smallest work places, the staff induction process is still presented wholly as an opportunity for employers to 'set right' a new recruit:

*“behavioural changes should be tackled on day one of employment, preferably in the first hour. This is when the new recruit is most anxious and willing, for reasons of conformity and compliance. A major mistake is to wait... by then the new recruit has linked to the informal structure and the 'other' view... and it will be harder to [make the] new recruit unlearn so as to pick up the 'official' story...”*

(Hunt, 1992, pp. 207)

Hunt goes on to explain the 'optimal' induction programme, which consists of 'telling' the new recruit what is expected of them as well as when and how they are to undertake these expectations. The second phase is for the employer to win the commitment of the new recruit to the firm, with the assumption that an employee who is loyal to the new firm will release greater productive energy and therefore be more profitable. He then goes on to state however that in order to win this loyalty and commitment, employees need to be told:

- what they will have to do, precisely
- how long they have to do it
- how they will relate to others
- how they will be evaluated and rewarded for their performance

(Hunt, 1992, pp.217)

Hunt does this with the stated assumption that 'humans are goal-directed' and that therefore the organisation has to take care to prescribe and set goals (Hunt, 1992). Hunt's perspective is perhaps not unusual - an independent national body (ACAS) set up to support business with advice on 'effective relationships and good practice in the workplace' provides a template induction record which focuses on 'ticking off' the mechanical aspects of a new employee's role and makes almost no mention at all of any possibility of on-going learning and development ([www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)).

Within key management texts there is some recognition of the fact that new employees need to be given opportunity to 'connect' with their physical and social surroundings, but the methods employed to achieve this tend to promote a mechanistic manner of learning rather than one which promotes social or learner-centred approaches. An example from a publication for aspiring Human Resource managers states:

*“A formal induction is useful, however several new starters can be given the information at the same time. A checklist covering what topics will be covered, and when (meeting colleagues, tour of main areas) may be useful and can be signed by the employee and stored in their employee record”.*

(Edwards & Scullion, 1982, pp.273)

In 1974, Turner described induction as a transition, a period of time where individuals are stripped of their current status and re-entered a new social structure as a ‘clean slate’ (Turner, 1974, pp.233). Whilst this view is over 40 years old, it is surprisingly, not too dissimilar to ideas that underpin many staff inductions today. Indeed, a professional Human Resources publication (2006) for managers recommends that managers offer new employees some form of “basic induction early on, and cites reasons of increased efficacy and the reduced likeness of employees “causing disruption” later down the line. The recommendation of the practice of induction goes on to suggest ‘short, sharp’ activities which focus on the ‘mechanics’ of the role, i.e. ensuring the employee knows where the toilets are, understands lunch break practices, and is clear as to their job description requirements.

More recently, Mulders and Berends (2010) considered two small organisations in their case study which looked at induction practices. They concluded that both organisations, to some extent, developed ‘dynamic capability’ within their employees and practices, but that this was achieved as a result of ad hoc problem solving rather than considered and purposeful work-based learning. Antonacopoulou (2010), whilst recognising the importance of ‘socialising’ new recruits to their environment and context within induction, did so with the perspective that this is important because it is this socialisation that underpins an organisation’s core practices and shapes how work is carried out. So, although there is some broadening of perspective within organizational and business literature as to how staff inductions are planned and conducted, there remains an unstated principle that adaptations and changes in staff induction are (mainly) for the benefit of the employing organisation. While there is vast variety in the literature within management circles, there may be a dominant perception that organisations tend to view their own survival, economic viability, efficiency, productivity, etc. as more crucial than the needs of individual employees. Indeed, one perspective from this field ([www.cipd.co.uk](http://www.cipd.co.uk)) is that in uncertain times, the organisation should be given precedence over employee needs in order for it to survive and play its role in those employees’ lives.

This led me to explore literature in other, more public sector oriented fields like education and the area of teacher induction in particular, to analyse their approaches to the idea of induction and learning during induction. Wong (2004) has written extensively on teacher induction, but he too appears to relate

learning during induction to the impact of teaching quality on student outcomes rather than to the trainee teachers' own learning or development. In this field too, even where work-based learning is framed as part of structured professional development, its importance as a means of reducing the turnover of newly qualified teachers is often emphasised. Even whilst there are synergies with my own perspective, in that there is also a view that induction is complex, a 'comprehensive, multi layered process' (Wong 2004, pp.48), the overarching principle within such programmes seems to be to 'train' staff in academic standards and the requirements of the 'profession', as defined by the latest policy imperatives.

There is also a major emphasis on the use of professional mentors – more experienced teachers who are allocated to newly qualified teachers (NQTs) with a view to developing their professional teaching practice. This tends to take a structured and formal approach, with set standards and criteria to meet within the mentoring role. Although there is some degree of differentiation which allows for the development of peer-to-peer collaborations, the structure tends to lean towards more explicit aspects - administration; portfolio building, tours of physical building etc. (Wong, 2004). Developing a sense of connectivity with the rest of the team – whilst implied – is usually accepted as a 'by product' of engaging with the structured programme. Wong (2004) goes so far as to suggest that the route to achieving a sense of belonging is through the employee knowing the systems and processes – the framework – within which they work. Furthermore, by the allocation of a mentor as a 'more experienced other' the suggestion is of a developmental approach – that knowledge can be a resource that can be transferred from one to another. A mentor that is allocated as a co-constructor of knowledge however, may indeed enable the collaborative construction of learning for both parties, but this is dependent upon skills of the mentor and details of the role they are to fulfil – which is more frequently handed down by the employing organisation (Wong, 2004).

There seems to be an emerging recognition in both management literature on induction as well as teacher induction literature, that the learner is central to the process, but the dominant perspective through which induction is viewed is still that of the organisation/school. My critical reading of this literature is that it is less concerned about the learner being a beneficiary of the learning but instead the focus is on another body, usually, the employing organisation or the student population. Such a reading has thus led me to consider the importance of induction from the employee's perspective within my research. I felt such a perspective would help bring the importance and benefits to the employee to the forefront, so they are considered as primary, or at least as co-beneficiaries, with the organisation, rather than as secondary. My reading of literature in other fields (adult education, which follows this section), and also my experience of seeing numerous examples of induction in practice, led me to

frame induction as an important work-based learning episode that new recruits engage with, and one that could set the foundation for future work-based learning in that role, or indeed future roles.

In the following sections I review the literature around tacit knowledge, and then situated learning, which have better informed my own study and approach to learning and induction.

### **Tacit knowledge**

Eraut's work (2000) had highlighted that capturing tacit knowledge is tricky in its own right, not least because it often centres around what individuals 'know but cannot tell' or knowledge that they may access and use without being aware that they are doing so. Eraut explains the characteristics of tacit knowledge as being 'codified knowledge'; tacit learning therefore is the creation of shared meanings and understandings between people which are acquired informally through participation in social activities. He explains that much of this relates to what is 'taken for granted' and even goes to suggest that it is knowledge that people are unaware of having, let alone aware of how it influences their behaviours. (Eraut, 2007 pp.405)

According to Eraut (2009), tacit knowledge and competences are created in the workplace through undertaking and practicing roles. Therefore, in order to be able to undertake work satisfactorily, individuals need to be able to undertake three activities, which are:

- to understand both the general context and the specific situation you are expected to deal with,
- to decide what needs to be done by yourself and possibly also by others, and
- to implement what you have decided, individually or as a group, through performing a series of actions.

All three of these processes contribute to the perceived competence of the learner. Even if other people are making the decisions, the learner in question may still have to interpret their meaning in order to know precisely what is required (Eraut, 2009). Employees are seen as attaining differing levels of competences, starting as a novice, when they have smaller amounts of tacit knowledge, to eventually becoming an expert when they have honed their ideas or experiences in the workplace (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986). Throughout this progression, individuals appear to move from deliberating what action needs to be undertaken to developing different forms of tacit cognition (Eraut, 2000 pp.114). Therefore, they become cognitively competent at undertaking their work and are able to do so with less consideration or deliberation of what needs to be done.

Tacit knowledge is therefore seen as being strengthened over time by the contextual experiences that individuals have. Eraut (2009) has argued that tacit knowledge may take three forms:

- Situational understanding - developed through all five stages of skill development (summarised by Eraut as: Novice, Advanced beginner, Competent, Proficient and Expert), based largely on experience and remaining mainly tacit during its use.
- Intuitive decision-making involving pattern recognition and rapid responses to developing situations, based on the tacit application of tacit rules.
- Routine procedures, developed through to the competence stage for coping with the demands of work without suffering from information overload.

As each of these forms of tacit knowledge is gleaned over time, an individual's competencies, proficiencies, experiences, and practices, all are believed to improve and grow. In turn, they become an expert within their role (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986 pp.20-25). However, this model has been criticized for its simplicity, its focus upon individualism and for its conservativeness (Baron, Wilson & Riddell, 2000), even if it attempts to explain how tacit knowledge may evolve over time.

Nevertheless, it provided a useful literature base to inform this study as the much of the learning taking place during induction was to be through informal interactions amongst the inductees and others within the workplace. Inductees' roles also required them to be able to develop intuition and make rapid decisions to 'problems' or developing situations in the workplace. It also provided a useful 'corrective' to the literature on induction (explored in the previous section) as it took a broader, longer-term view of learning and the benefits for the learning in particular.

### **Situated learning**

While the fields of business and management did not yield much critical literature on the topic of induction, it proved to be a richer field to consider notions of 'situated learning'. Sylvia Downs, an experienced workplace trainer published a book entitled 'Learning at Work' (Downs, 1995). In it she highlighted the changing context of the industrial world and encouraged managers away from the belief that employees needed to be taught 'tasks' and towards the fact that employees needed to learn the skills of adapting to changes. Although still purveying a sense that the employer leads the learning, Downs also considered the underlying principles associated with adult learning and compared it to what learners may previously have experienced (in this example, within schools) and more 'formal' education situations (college, formal training etc.).

She notes how, within formal education even in more contemporary times, 'learning' in school or university is conceptualised and operationalised as largely an individual process. Although teachers deliver a core curriculum to a whole class of pupils, it is individual pupils who are assessed and have their learning measured against 'national norms'. It is also the 'norm' that the teacher leads this learning process. As a child in primary school, to receive help with school work could, in some circumstances, be judged as 'cheating'. Therefore, learning, by default, becomes not only an individual activity but one that is competitive and quantitatively measured (Downs, 1995). Even in secondary education - although some learning collaboration is encouraged - students are graded on their work output and accomplishments on a largely individual basis. Downs believes that this causes a dissonance amongst adults who subsequently enter the work place and are then required to collaborate with others and to support not only their own learning but also that of others.

Downs' explicit assumption is that learning is largely a social activity, and that four principles should form the foundation of work-based learning opportunities, which are echoed across a range of management texts today:

- learning is a social process
- everyone has a role to play in helping others to learn
- everyone has something to contribute and something to take away from the experience
- sometimes we are all unwittingly guilty of preventing another person from learning

(Downs, 1995)

The premise that 'everyone had a role to play in helping others to learn' challenged the previously prevalent idea of experts 'leading' the teaching. The principle that at times 'we are all unwittingly guilty of preventing another person from learning' could tie in with Eraut's ideas about the different obstacles that individuals might face in the workplace. Eraut notes that tacit knowledge, by definition, hard to articulate/see in its operation, might unwittingly lead one person to prevent another's learning (2005). This is because of unspoken or unexamined pre-conceptions that tacit knowledge can foster (2005) and the difficulty it can present in accessing (either by one's self, or another) the description and understanding of such knowledge (2007). Both of these aspects are linked to potentially preventing the learning of others because these tacit preconceptions may be unknowingly influenced by a process of 'tacit generalisation' – i.e. generalising their response to a certain type of situation because of a previous experience. Due to a tacit generalisation developed, a person may - unintentionally - respond negatively or adversely in response to another's 'new' or unexpected behaviours or learning experience, or may hinder their learning in some way by their actions (or lack of them) because their

own behaviours are affected by these unexamined previous experiences. This also suggests that other individuals – indeed, ‘experts’ possibly - in that contextual community might in fact be a preventative factor, hampering learning within a community.

In contrast to the concept that learning is ‘individual’ to each person, with a definite start and a finish point (Kolb, 1999), Lave & Wenger took the stance that learning is multi-dimensional and a socially collaborative process - and that this is based on four key premises:

- That learning is fundamentally a social process; the interactions between people are therefore a central aspect to human learning.
- As social beings, ‘knowing’ occurs through participation and engagement within the world around them
- Knowledge is therefore a matter of ‘competency’ within that world – or context.
- Learning therefore is about an individual producing ‘meaning’ in their world, or context that they are in.

(Wenger, 2008)

Lave & Wenger discuss within their work, the strength of a ‘community of practice’ in building ‘communal memory capacity’ which serves a higher purpose than individual cognitive capacity; the strength of the ‘community of practice’ outweighs the strength of the total of the individuals’ knowledge within it. ‘Communities of Practice’ are based on the ethos that they are strong learning environments which support the individuals to learn from one another – that no one person has higher status within the community than another. Lave & Wenger’s community of practice paradigm adds further definition and a more definite framework for social learning to be co-constructed between interconnected professionals, and it also recognises the sum total of the collaborative learning as being greater than the sum of the individual parties’ knowledge.

Lave & Wenger’s community of practice theory suggests learning is socially collaborative, but also recognises that learning has an individual aspect (John, 2000). Whilst accepting that learning is a social process that happens through co-construction with other human beings, this idea also acknowledges that there is a very individual nature to the creation of knowledge, and looks at the individual’s need to feel capable, connected and challenged in order to engage in learning opportunities. John terms these the ‘Crucial C’s (John, 2000).

Lave and Wenger’s influential notion of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ was used and extended by Bereiter & Scardamalia (1993) (their earlier work had been centred around what defined an ‘expert’).

who endorsed the practice of 'legitimate peripheral participation' based on their recognition of the importance of teamwork compared to individual learning. Their introductory chapter outlines 'Community of Practice' and the legitimate peripheral participation of new members of that community, with an assumption that peripheral participants seek access to the role of 'expert' in the centre of that community. Bereiter & Scardamalia extend this to describe experts as being akin to those who can tackle problems that are beyond themselves. Rather than fragmenting 'problems' into components that are then addressed in isolation and handled with familiar routine (usually taught in a didactic fashion by another 'more able' person), experts construct new concepts and methods for dealing with unfamiliar and unexpected situations that present themselves.

Where Eraut (2000; 2004) and Downs (1995) speak of physical, psychological and social '*obstacles*' faced, the work of Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) indicate how these obstacles can become barriers to gaining '*expertise*'. Initially, in my study, exactly what these obstacles might be was unclear, nonetheless the recognition that they were in existence (as voiced by participants) created doubts about the use of the 'communities of practice' lens within my work. As data was further analysed, a recognition of the effect austerity measures were having on learning in the workplace (as obstacles to learning) became apparent. Increased frustration that the community of practice framework did not offer enough of a framework for the kind of data that was emerging, resulted in the beginning of a shift away from this framework as the main explanatory lens through which to view my data. Neither inductees nor managers had seemed to offer responses that sat neatly with a community of practice approach. Little evidence as gathered which showed the 'community' aspect of a community of practice orientation was evident within induction in this study. Instead, there appeared a rather superficial 'on the job' approach to induction, where a wider team or a single mentor may have been available for inductees to learn from. For the most part, the data indicated that the inductees were on their own to negotiate and access learning. This indicated that the social dimension to the nature of learning and developing was largely ignored. Communities of practice therefore in turn failed to offer enough of a critical angle on the context of financial restraint and austerity that seemed to weigh much heavier on inductees and managers.

### **Social learning**

Another way in which situated learning in the workplace was discussed was through the notion of 'Social learning' in management literature, which seemed to gain greater pace in the late 1990's and early 2000's, signalling a greater recognition of the intangible assets to organisations (Mayo, 2000). Burgoyne (1996), Pedlar (1996) and Boydell (1989), had recognised a view of work-based learning or

'on the job learning' as a route to building 'human capital' (Boydell, 1989) and highlighted it as a means of acquiring competitive leverage against others – specifically competitors – within a professional sector (Burgoyne & Pedlar 1996). The term 'human capital' came to refer to actual skills and knowledge within an organisation, and was seen as crucial to an organisation's 'ability to respond' to economic, technological or social change. With technological advancements ushering in new changes, organisations needed to be able to respond and adapt quickly if they were to retain their market position. The workforce was seen as pivotal to this, and, as such, their learning needs moved towards a focus on 'learning to learn' rather than mechanistic skills development (Spender, 1996). In this context, work-based learning opportunities were most often developed with the specific needs of the company, within the acute context of its trading activity. Later, companies, sectors and organisations which anticipate future needs, and consider employee development needs in their own right received more prominence (Evans, 2002; Coffield, 1999). Spender writes,

*“Human Capital is ‘the self-reflective’ ability to identify and find resources for the knowledge and skills they do not possess”*

(Spender, 1996, pp. 47)

From this, human capital was a term that signified a shift in assumptions about individuals/employees as people who possessed (or ought to possess) a level of creativity, initiative and entrepreneurialism to generate their own learning (Spender, 1994). Therefore, we begin to see a shift from businesses preferring specific human capital, i.e. the development of specific skills that relate solely to a person's current employment, to one that prefers general human capital, i.e. the development of skills that enable employees to be flexible, adaptable and self-teaching (Johns, 1993). Whilst this literature was primarily talking about private industry, there were stark similarities to the context being considered for this study – particularly, the rapid changes in context and financial constraints that seemed to demand employees who were quick to learn, flexible and self-teaching (discussed in more detail in the findings section).

Technological advances, and the resulting explosion of interest in the field of work-based learning saw Cohen & Prusack (2011) discuss an enhanced notion of 'social capital' whereby employees demonstrate trust, shared values, establish social norms and gain mutual understanding. Although this tended to focus more on individual skills rather than the inter-relationships between individuals and peers, these social relationships in the workplace were recognised as aiding the '*greasing of the wheels*' that assisted work-based learning – something which was then seen as key to developing and maintaining 'social capital'. These professional relationships were seen as 'being powerful in terms of

an organisation's professional ability to respond to change, and even more powerful than individual intellectual knowledge and skills alone (Cohen & Prusak, 2011). In short, this social capital, i.e. an organisation's ability to mobilise its staff and workforce's development so that they are ever-developing and 'nimble' in their response to changing demands of the customer, was recognised as a valuable asset, acquiring a status closer to 'harder' capital such as machinery, assets and busy order-books, from the previous era.

Poell and Van der Krogt (2000) had already alluded to this earlier through the concept of 'Learning Network Theory' which they used to explore group dynamics and the impact they have on work-based learning. They concluded that organisation size was not a contributory factor, and in turn recognised that at any one point in time, an individual may be a part of any number of Learning Networks. This provided a challenge to more simplistic earlier theories, and a deeper understanding and appreciation of 'how' employees were learning, as opposed to solely 'what' they were learning, was gaining strength.

Because this study is interested in inductees and managers, and their perceptions of learning, it seems pertinent to briefly mention ideas presented by Fenwick (2012) whose work was influential in my developing knowledge about the nature and dynamics of learning in the workplace. She writes about the set of related ideas that gained ground under the umbrella of 'Activity Theories' (Cultural Historical Activity Theory, Actor Network Theory and Complexity Theory). Cultural Historical Activity Theory, as pioneered by Vygotsky and Leont'ev in the field of Psychology offered a foundation in the 1920s and 30s for the idea that humans conceptualise their sense of 'self' within social cultural interactions. Learning, including that taking place within social spheres, was seen primarily as an individually constructed experience, and contained within the sense of self. Complexity Theory however, began to develop within fields of strategic management and organisational studies, and whilst similarly considering learning as being situated within the sense of self, it recognised social influences of collective events in determining an individual's behavior and did so in relation again to the sense of 'self'. Here, there is a widening of the lens through which work-based learning is viewed, albeit still a rather constrained one – centering on learning being individually based and housed. Finally, Actor Network Theory took more of a constructivist approach, seeing non-human objects as part of a social network too, and considered how artefacts (both human and non-human) influenced the behaviors of and within a social network as well as what develops as a result of the interactions within that social network. This led to a consideration of the synergy between Fenwick's (2012) re-thinking of the overarching notion of social learning and the context in which research was being undertaken. Fenwick (ibid) highlighted the importance of three ideas:

- the consideration of 'whole' systems, i.e. recognition of human and non-human interactions, and their interdependence;
- the idea that interactions are non-linear, i.e. they don't cascade neatly from one situation to another, but rather,
- that several simultaneous dynamics can occur at any one time within a social network, adding complexity to previously held notions of learning at work.

Her questioning of the creation of 'knowledge' – what it is and how is it identified – challenged my early ideas and led to a reconsideration of the notion of 'knowledge' in relation to this study: Fenwick suggested that knowledge is less 'created' but rather 'enacted' in certain situations. For me, this reinforced the ideas of performing learning through roles that may be tacitly or consciously absorbed and practiced. Fenwick (2012) had also suggested that instead of a created knowledge set, learning was more akin to a 'virtual cloud' - constantly moving, shrinking, stretching and malleable in nature. This nature of knowledge changing and adapting to different contexts, pressures and agendas, further influenced how I began to see induction learning, set within organisational but also wider social and economic contexts.

Budworth et al. (1997) had considered matters of group efficacy when training individuals. Their findings supported the perspective on 'enacted knowledge' offered by Fenwick (ibid). Links with these works and that of Raelin (1997) (who furthered Engestrom's work (1987)) to suggest that all knowledge is tentative, and only real within the context in which it is learnt) became evident. These notions challenged theories about how knowledge is created and constructed and led me to reconsider my understanding of 'knowledge' - what influenced how new knowledge was created, and in the workplace context, what did individuals learn to value as being important knowledge or understanding for their job role? For this study therefore it raised interest in the question of whether participants were in fact 'learning about the nature of' rather than acquiring knowledge. This also raised related questions about their prior knowledge and its transference between contexts, and how - or if - individuals used previous learning to support them in their new role.

This became important also in the work of Jack and Donnellan (2010), who looked at factors affecting the rapid decline of Newly Qualified Social Workers, and at how the employing organisations' failure to recognise the 'person within' the social worker was deemed to have a detrimental effect on the individuals' well-being. Jack and Donnellan (2010) considered the relevant induction programme for their employees, and concluded that a lack of recognition of an individual's existing skills set and attributes further fuelled this decline in self-belief, motivation and contentment in their role. Therefore

this issue of recognition of prior experience and skills also shaped the research design and some instruments of data collection (i.e. journal guidelines and interview questions).

I will now focus on discussions about the notion of 'community' and 'ownership' of knowledge. The significant differences in the debates briefly outlined above, can also be highlighted by their perspectives on where ownership of the knowledge rests. Wenger (2008) would suggest the knowledge 'belongs' collectively to the 'community of practice' within which it is generated – each individual having a stake in its ownership. Alternatively, Raelin (1997) considers the individual as 'temporary owner' of the knowledge, only maintaining ownership in the specific context from which it is generated, and the need to feedback that knowledge into the community within which it was learnt. As Fenwick suggests, 'knowledge' might sit in a virtual cloud – thus the knowledge is malleable; growing, shrinking or altering dependent upon others' influences on it, in which case, no one person or set group of people ever 'own' the knowledge, instead it is constructed and re-constructed organically.

As recognised by Mitchel & Sackney (2000), there may be a 'plethora of different meanings given to the idea of a community' (pp.142). A community can take several forms:

- an **ecological** form - purely determined by the fact that people live or work together
- a **political** form - an occupational group, religion etc., whereby members are each interested in acquiring the resources for their co-members
- an **ideological** form - which for example, tries to maximise participation within a democratic culture of inclusiveness and sharing

(Eraut, 2004)

Here, the initial version of a community of practice sat more neatly with the definition offered by Tosey (1999) in that, within the context of my study, the community of practice might be considered a 'peer learning community' - the group's characteristics set by a common interest - i.e. their job role. However expectations were two-fold - for individual personal development as well as the development of collective or 'group' knowledge by community interaction. As my data presented very little evidence of this group or 'collective', I therefore once again questioned the appropriateness of the community of practice model for understanding my data. In addition, more 'obstacles' were presenting themselves within the proposed 'community' which were having greater influence the notion of a group or collective.

Within the context of the mentoring of newly qualified teachers, Wong (2004) had posited learners as having ownership over their own knowledge creation. By taking a structured and directive approach in shaping how it is generated, when it is generated, and to some extent controlling what is generated,

this controls the extent to which the knowledge is truly constructed. It may be that where companies or industries endeavour to take this approach that they do so in order to try and maintain control over the 'knowledge'. The study also sought to engage with inductees – and managers – to identify each party's priorities for the induction, the implications of this, and to consider whether front-line inductees actually want to be able to influence learning during induction at all?

This felt an appropriate line of enquiry within this study because there was an assumption that all participants would be coming to their new role with some degree of prior academic or experiential learning and that their new roles would require them to translate this learning into the practices of their role. Being mindful early on that it would be difficult to extrapolate what participants had 'learned' from academic study compared to past experiences, it might also be too complex (or just a too tacit notion) for participants to articulate how their practice had been influenced by formal prior learning. It was therefore decided that this would be considered from an alternative angle – that is, consider previous learning within the immediate context of induction and then to ask participants about what they had learnt through practice (in the specific context of induction) rather than how they had applied learning to practice – a form of bounded recall, albeit in an adapted format (Sudman & Bradburn, 1978).

Raelin's (1997) view that what is learned is only ever 'real' in that particular context, also remains a subject that has been debated in management literature. Raelin's viewpoint has been further considered by Alfred (2002), who, through observation of learning in a range of contexts, highlighted that both the social and cultural context that a learner learns within, determines not only what, but how they learn and ultimately what is considered as 'knowledge'. In Alfred's healthcare context the employees' 'day job' was the presentation of an on-going series of 'problems' – problems which they then 'overcame' through the development of new skills or new knowledge, the gaining of which almost always required some level of social interaction. In this study there was social interaction between professionals (in a range of roles), parents and children. Issues or problems presenting as very similar within the research context would always retain a certain uniqueness that was derived from the uniqueness of each and every family situation. Even with similar or identical family make-ups, the variables offered by each unique family set up mean that no two 'problems' will ever be the same.

The study therefore remained open to whatever experiences participants revealed, including that which was transferred from previous contexts. This was in contrast to Engestrom's (1987) position that learning is contextually rooted, that all knowledge is tentative and therefore is only ever truly known within the context that it was learnt in. Raelin (1997) had already strongly disputed this, instead describing work-based learning as opportunity for individuals to 'make sense' of theoretical learning by

providing experiences that embed the theory into visible practice. This led to an implicit assumption that theoretical understanding was required to be in place before contextual learning can take place. Falling somewhat between these two perspectives led to a study which not only enquired about previous learning but also that which was considered as occurring 'in-context' with a view to how and where knowledge was constructed but also whether it was static – i.e. remaining at place of construction, transferable or only ever 'held' within the context from which it originated.

The literature reviewed so far had a similar 'focus' - however each held somewhat different views of the learner, the principal driver, and the success measure. The salient features (of relevance to my study) that have emerged from the literature review thus far are:

A distinct lack of movement over the years within management literature and the place and role of staff inductions. That even where studies were being undertaken and theories developed including the perspective of the 'learner', often they were not at the heart of these enquiries - instead an alternative agenda was usually driving learning during induction. This study therefore aimed to undertake research that considered inductees' perceptions of their induction experience for its own sake. There was also a distinct lack of recognition around the importance of staff induction as a work-based learning episode that potentially influences future learning of both the inductee as well as the organisation. This study aimed to conduct research that considers the importance of induction to see if inductees' perceptions of this period of time can help conceive 'better' work place learning in the future, as well as give an account of managers' perceptions and the reasons behind these.

My study therefore had three key areas of enquiry: Firstly, because of this move away from predominantly formal, perhaps instrumental learning, to a recognition of learning as a social process, it aimed initially, to understand to what extent inductees felt learning was a 'social' process within the induction period. Later, it felt important to capture what assumptions were held about work-based learning particularly during induction. It also aimed to explore the formal and informal organisational processes that surrounded induction, to explore how they influenced inductees' perspectives on learning. Although learning was to take place largely through an informal learning style, there were nonetheless formal procedures that encased it and framed it, and I was keen to understand more about whether these formal processes influenced the informal learning. Given that the learning was informal by nature, predominantly socially constructed, I considered the induction period to be a suitable period to study as it would be the first occasion within that particular new role that employees would be engaging in learning within that acute context. It was hoped that by gaining greater insight into these

areas, suggestions could be made about how to use this new knowledge to say something about the nature of learning (or its impossibility) during induction in public service organisations.

## **Part II: New Managerialism, austerity and speed**

As the research progressed, especially fieldwork and post-fieldwork, the emergent findings indicated that a closer understanding of the context and culture of management within services such as the one I was studying was warranted. This section therefore reviews briefly, some of the literature on 'new managerialism' in the public services. Alongside this is presented some literature on the effects of austerity on public services as well as the emotional challenges faced by workers. Finally, this section ends with a consideration of notions of 'time' and 'speed' that are increasingly highly valued, as signs of 'efficiency', as this emerged as a key theme in the interviews during fieldwork.

New managerialism derives from a broader philosophy of neoliberalism. According to Lynch, Grummel and Devine (2012 pp.51) many private – and more latterly public - organisations or those that seek to make a profit (or in this case, address significant financial constraints not previously experienced) have been using scientific management techniques for years. *“...What makes new managerialism 'new' is the much firmer deployment of managerialist principles in public sector bodies...”* (Lynch, Grummel, and Devine, 2012 pp.12). The notions associated with this idea are seen to focus organisations upon targets, targets which are then utilised to measure, monitor, or review their progress towards attaining financial or goals derived from other sources (Arnaboldi, Lapsley and Steccolini, 2015). I shall therefore explore literature which suggests that the success of meeting set objectives/targets has now become these organisations' priorities – most often because they are measured via the use of public audits to ensure that they have delivered a quality service, which is 'efficient' (Arnaboldi and Lapsley, 2008). Coen and Roberts (2015) highlight that these changes have been implemented across a variety of contexts and their effects can be seen in both economic and cultural terms, across a diverse number of workplaces (pp.5-8). The context within which this study was undertaken experienced these exact same changes and measures.

For example, the focus in public sector organisations in recent years has been on creating efficiencies and ensuring that employees are productive. This in turn, causes these organisations to focus on their spending, as they are now being held accountable for this by other public bodies (Kalimullah, Alam, Ashraf and Ashaduzzaman, 2012). This is relevant in this context for two reasons. Firstly, financial constraints imposed on the Local Authority saw a significant reduction in budgets for almost all

services, and the Children and Young Peoples service within which the research was conducted was not immune to such austerity measures. Secondly, Children's Services nationally were in an era of increased scrutiny, monitoring and evaluation of the 'impact' of services provided, both through inspection regimes and more locally implemented strategies. To compound this, the services which they in turn monitored (e.g. the quality of early years provision for example) were therefore now also being measured in such a way by the Local Authority themselves. In effect, the constraints experienced by themselves were being passed on to services which were under their jurisdiction.

Avis (2014) has taken the stance of warning against such moves based on their impact on performativity. Avis positions himself to purport that 'One Nation Labour'<sup>1</sup> directives are flawed and that far from celebrating an added 'responsibility' instead suggests that doing so places the 'blame' for perceived failings of services over to those delivering the services; the professional community. He goes on to state that this approach is "*attempting to refashion social democracy and the state to fit austere times*" (pp. 254) and refers to such an approach as a 'vener'. The fear here is that instead of empowering and/or motivating employees to increase their performativity it may actually serve to achieve the opposite. Considering this in relation to the research field here, there had been a locally publicised rise in thresholds within the statutory Children and Young Peoples' Services (Children's Social Care primarily), and this resulted in an increase to the complexity of the nature of the work undertaken by peripheral Children's Services (such as those roles that participants in this study were part of). Avis was posing the consideration that the current political climate could be stifling the development and performativity of these staff because rather than promoting independency and celebrating the added role that those at the focus of such plans, that they actually serve to make them even more at the mercy of the political and economic directives that they serve.

Bezes & Evett et al. (2012) further highlight the decline that such an approach is having on professionals and the sense of 'professionalism' being undermined in fields such as those studied here. Recognising the transformation that new managerialist directives appear to have had, and continue to have, on the Children's Service workforce, Bezes and Evett et al. warn that a decline of professional groups is coupled with a decline in the level of autonomy previously held by such professionals. Thus, when the effects of new managerialism are considered, and specifically within this context, it is possible to assert that these have changed the ethos/culture of Local Authorities and particularly Children's Services in a number of ways that may impact upon employees (Ahlbäck Öberg and Bringselius, 2014

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<sup>1</sup> 'One Nation Labour' was the 2012 branding of the Labour Party. Under the leadership of Ed Milliband is sought to reduce economic inequality in society and to unify the country. This approach emphasised technical education as a means of ensuring long term economic stability. Low and middle income earners were a focus, as they were seen as key to ensuring economic stability of the country.

pp.2-4). Firstly, Lynch proposes that the notion that all objectives are associated with targets and that these take priority over most other considerations serves to alter the way in which employees are seen and the things that they must consider. For example, an additional emphasis placed upon customer service, the satisfaction of service users and customers over and above a notion of solidarity of employees, their welfare, or how they are treated as citizens (Lynch, 2014 pp.3). Therefore, instead of a focus on employee benefits and individual rights which might have been afforded in the past, there begins a shift towards placing greater emphasis on the organisational goals and targets and accepted behaviours that are more likely to ensure service users or customers are 'satisfied', or to ensuring that the financial imperatives (like savings through cost cutting) are met.

Secondly, within such an approach, Arnaboldi, Lapsley and Steccolini (2015) claim that organisations become more focused on the required or expected outputs, outcomes and impact which are measured through the monitoring of employee performance. The focus on employee benefits and rights, again, risk being overtaken by such approaches. Financial incentives and performance are cited as key influences on staff inductions depending upon the role of the new employees that are associated with organisational targets that they need to attain (ibid, pp.2-3). As a result, individuals become de-professionalised as pre-determined targets and outcome measures reduces the need and/or opportunity to exercise professional judgment. As a consequence autonomy is also eroded. This literature suggests that organisational objectives are often discussed by referring to their vision, mission, and goals and made explicitly visible within the workplace through a range of means such as automated email signatures, document footers, etc. The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) (2011: online) explain the purpose of such an approach as a way of encouraging employees to become invested in the organisation's performance because it serves to place the organisations' aims as the primary focus of their role. In the research context here, there was process whereby employees had to be considered to be 'performing' in their role at annual appraisal to be put forward for a salary increment. Therefore, the investment in organisational performance here was directly linked to their pay or benefits. Thirdly, the recently updated CIMA website (2015: online) suggests that within a new managerialism approach, employees are encouraged to monitor their own performance via the use of a 'league table' type approach, setting their individual targets or objectives and benchmarking this within and between services (CIMA, 2015: online). Whilst this was less evident in this particular context, there was a drive for self-evaluation and self-reflection, which implied an encouragement towards considering the 'goal in mind' and individual contribution towards the achievement of such goals. Therefore, personal authority appears to become decentralised and the central focus moves away from the employee. Gray et al. (2015) suggest that in association with these

notions, line managers hold increased responsibility for these functions on both a budgetary and managerial level (Gray, Dean, Agllias, Howard, and Schubert, 2015 pp.368-370). This literature therefore appears to strongly suggest that whilst this new managerialism approach might reduce the overall costs associated with functionality, it appears to also increase the control, authority, and power that these organisations hold over employees whilst decreasing autonomy and a sense of professional authority / judgment by employees.

In relation to this, Anderson, Cohen and Seraus (2015 pp.350-353) warn that what feel like '*ideological*' practices of '*scientific*' management may be implemented alongside organisational ones that are aligned to currently favour market systems. For example, a prescribed list of training that a new employee is to take, regardless of previous experience or role, or, an assumption that a universal induction programme which all new recruits will move through, will be appropriate. This becomes a politically ideological means through which whole organisations become managed and run by (Ball, 2009; Blackmore, 2010). Pollitt (2003 pp.10) therefore asserts that new managerialism can be seen as a form of "*reform*", which has taken place in public services management, driven by and derived from political means.

Berg (2015: online) seeks to look beyond this and consider the variable contexts of new managerialism. Berg considers the embedded and interrelated complex web of social, political, or economic, organisational variations that are closely tied to enacting neoliberal principles via institutionalising the authority functions within organisations. Here, neoliberal principles and assumptions are related to the fact 'that the market is the primary producer of cultural logic and value and that solutions to societal ills and the management of social change can be best understood through the deployment of market logic and market mechanisms' (<https://repository.mruni.eu/handle/007/13666>). However, Lynch notes that such an idea suggests that economic, educational, and social problems are thus construed as management 'issues' that new and more efficient managerial regimes can resolve. If this is the case then the ethical, political, and social dimensions of such problems are liable to be treated as 'secondary considerations' (Lynch, 2014 pp.4).

Therefore, from the literature reviewed here, new managerialism could be considered as a form of governance that utilises market based models of control to regulate workplaces (Lynch, Grummel, and Devine, 2012) where the priority is the attainment of organisational efficiencies or effectiveness above "*more broadly-based moral and social values related to care, autonomy, tolerance, respect, trust and equality*" (pp.10-12). If this is to be the case then it potentially serves to have the ultimate impact of defining human relationships in work organisations in transactional terms, as the means to an end – the

end being that of high performance and productivity (Lynch, 2014 pp.4-6). Here, new managerialism may be critiqued as weakening the moral or social foundations of organisations – those “*unspoken norms*.” The principles upon which these moral or social foundations are based therefore become eroded through the practices described above which seek to measure, monitor, or review organisational progress towards attaining effectiveness and efficiencies (Arnaboldi, Lapsley and Steccolini, 2015 pp.1-2). This seems to raise questions as to whether this approach does in fact consider the needs or wants of the workforce – and if it does not, then what is the longer term implication?

This critical literature also suggests that the instruments of control, power, and authority are also tied to the measurement of satisfaction of service users. Tight (2014) suggests that the employment of such an approach results in individuals’ notion of solidarity with co-workers, or concern for their welfare or rights within these organisations, being eroded. Furthermore, Tight goes on to warn that that this in turn results in the relationships within organisations, which may have fostered greater trust, equality, respect, or sharing, being lost to the ethos of new managerialism. Tight goes further, to suggest that this ‘interference’ in the mutual relationships between employers and their employees can mean that positive perceptions of organisations are lost and the feelings of loyalty or goodwill are diminished. Instead, ‘accountability’ becomes the new buzzword that is bounced between manager and employee, so notions of loyalty, fairness and fair assessment or equability begin to erode as personal identities are altered due to the practices adopted via the implementation of the new managerialism principles adopted in the workplace (Tight, 2014).

Banks (2011) writing about the field of Social Work suggested that the ‘New Public Management’ approach was adversely affecting the ethical practices of the profession. She used conduct, behaviour, character and relationships as the four cornerstones of what constitutes ‘ethical practice’. She raised specific concern that a focus on procedures, targets and evidencing outputs through the new ‘modernisation of public services’, alongside budget cuts, was detrimental to the creativity and efficiency of those who work within those professions, and therefore affecting the quality of service being provided. This is illustrated by a specific example in her earlier work (2009) whereby a Youth Offending Team staff member who was working in a preventative way with an individual for 12 weeks felt the need to spend slightly longer in order to be effective. However, organisational procedure denoted that workers should only engage for a maximum of 12 weeks, and so he had to make a decision to disregard the ‘rules’ for what he felt was best. He was reportedly left feeling compromised due to experiencing conflict between personal and professional beliefs about what was ‘right’ in a particular situation. Indeed, the opposite of this was discussed in the Munroe Report, which specifically

stated that “For some, following rules and being compliant can appear less risky than carrying the personal responsibility for exercising judgement” (DfE, 2011 pp.5). And so a new managerialism approach can exacerbate a situation where what is considered to be the ‘appropriate’ way to act, might be in contrast to personal values and beliefs, bringing about severe dissonance.

The introductory chapter outlined the political, economic, social and therefore organisational changes affecting the field, and whilst there is much speculation about how this affects the immediate and longer term service provision for vulnerable children, there is little – if any – reference, to be found as to how these measures affect employees’ learning. And yet, given such austere times, it is more important than ever that staff teams are adequately prepared to be able to continue to meet the needs of vulnerable children and families, now and in the future.

In times of austerity the ethos of a new managerialism approach appears to be exacerbated because of financial constraints and cut backs to day-to-day professional practice. The apparent lack of investigation into the impact of such measures, particularly on workplace learning illuminated a stark gap in the field. This thesis sets about to instigate a recognition of this in the context of induction and to provide a foundation for further, wider, studies. Ball et al. (2014) seek to offer some possible ideas to address these situations of new managerialist ethos. They recognise that in recent years whilst there has been an explosion of ‘learning communities’ and learning community approaches to enabling continued professional development for professionals, learning has remained largely a private and personal event. Their research showed that most professionals worked and learned in isolation, thus knowledge they generated remained private and personal to them. They also go on to discuss how even though in the field of education there is a perceived acceptance of shared and community learning, there were in reality, very few opportunities afforded to employees to develop shared knowledge. This study therefore focused on the induction period as an initial platform from which to explore the types of learnings and assumptions surrounding them, particularly in the context of ‘new managerialism’ and ‘austerity’.

### **Austerity and some challenges it presents in the workplace**

Recent literature considering the effects of austerity measures on learning - particularly in the public sector will be considered in this section. This is included here to set the wider and current context for this study but also, this emerged as a growing consideration during the study. Very few publications had considered the effect of the state’s austerity measures on the functioning of public services beyond

immediate financial effects, as they were a relatively recent phenomenon brought about by the UK coalition Government in 2011.

Banks (2013) writes about *creative tension* being caused amongst caring professions as a result of austerity. Within this work she considers motivations for staff engaged in such professions, and although not top of the list, a desire to have a job and to earn a living is cited. In times of austerity it is only natural that many may feel this job security is compromised. Furthermore, she goes on to write about how social work professionals often hold a desire to do more than simply 'follow a set of rules or guidelines' – that they felt the effects of austerity sometimes reduced them to – instead, holding a desire to be creative and 'do whatever it takes' to achieve a positive outcome for those they are engaged with. She further explores the 'accountability' that these professionals feel for their work by the transference of responsibility effected by such measures (delegated responsibility, for example, in times of staff shortages or management cut-backs, and a move by central Government to de-centralise responsibility and move it out into the professional fields themselves) – feeling responsible personally for the service users' outcomes. This suggests that effects of austerity not only affects 'the professional' but also the individual that is at the heart of that professional.

Although a relatively new area of interest, there is furthermore an emerging interest and recognition of the potential combined effects of new managerialism and austerity on the learning within organisations. Two more recent research projects however have reported very different findings. Smith and O'Leary (2013) consider the effect of new managerialism within a Further Education context at a time of cutbacks, from the perceptions of employees. Respondents within that study concluded that education was no longer about the matter of educating people, or even learning per se, but rather about "*generating revenue and hitting targets*" (pp.260). This alteration to their previously held values-based foundation to their role, they felt, meant they were now at the opposite end of a professionalism continuum to where they entered the profession. Not only did a new managerialism approach feel at the polar end to their originally values-based approach, but it caused conflict with their professional identity at a personal level, too, which had the effect of causing them to question their commitment to their role. Participants cited that the "*teach to the test*" (pp.263) approach inferred through the drive to measure performativity not only risked fabrication of data but also ignored the complexity of the context in which learning is undertaken and the benefits often achieved that cannot be so easily captured in this way. The study illuminates the way that a new managerialism approach in the current financially strained context, not only produces particular ways of being, but also ways of '*knowing*'. The warning is, that new managerialism "*focusses the managers' gaze away from local concern and instead prioritises a link between them (the learning provider) and the centre (Government)*" (pp.262) and as a

result the particular way of being becomes also the way in which learning is understood – the reductive ideological perspective that rejects idiosyncrasies means that learning is reduced to numerical data – and even that this modus operandi becomes subconsciously embedded as ‘the way it has always been’ and thus is less likely to be questioned. The study concludes that the new managerialism approach exacerbated by austerity measures, “mobilises knowledge for political ends” rather than effecting a “meaningful and sustained contribution to improving experiences and opportunities for staff and students in the FE sector” (pp.263). In contrast, Warhurst’s (2012) research findings found, that in times of austerity, where a new managerialist approach is taken, some managers – as within their study – recognised the vital role of informal learning in the workplace for organisational survival. Although in a different context, and focusing on Manager participants (MBA graduates) rather than employee perceptions, this study showed that managers held two key aims of workplace learning: to enable the generative outcomes imposed by a new managerialism approach but also as a means to developing individuals and team performance (pp.46). Managers here saw facilitating and enabling learning as an integral part of their role as a manager. Whilst they recognised tensions between the pressures of “day-to-day responsibility for delivering the results” (pp.47), they also recognised their role in “getting the most out of the team through developing them for long term success” (pp.47). As such, informal workplace learning was prioritised as a key vehicle for ensuring this as a means of the service to “make the continuous improvements that are needed” (pp.47). So, in contrast to Thornton Moore (2004) and Colley (2012) who warn that changes such as those brought about by new managerialism or austerity measures might not be conducive to workplace learning, the managers in Warhurst’s study – whilst still recognising the challenges it brought about – also recognised it as vital if the service was to meet these new demands. A notable consideration here appears to be that managers themselves 1) saw themselves as learners, and 2) saw facilitation of learning as integral to their management role. Finer nuances about how managers perceived the achievements of their staff as a measure of their own managerial effectiveness places an interesting ‘spin’ on the use of a new managerialist approach in terms of how efficacy is measured. Caution can be assigned here however, as there is limited evidence of whether this was the reality ‘in practice’ or simply the ‘corporate narrative’ that managers were reporting.

And so, the combined effects of new managerialism and austerity can have an impact on learning within organisations. Except in Warhurst’s study, the research seems to suggest that this makes for a very tough learning environment, with an emphasis on meeting externally imposed targets and outcome measures as a means of efficacy, often resulting in a greater sense of dissonance between personal/professional values and organisationally approved ways of being.

The next section reviews literature on 'time' and 'speed' as this was an oft-repeated concern expressed by managers, in relation to learning during induction, and one that was clearly exacerbated by both practices of new managerialism and the context of budget cuts to the service.

### **Time and speed of learning**

One of the factors that emerged as a key consideration during induction was that of the time as well as the speed of learning. This was a particularly visible theme during the data analysis phase. Hence a brief discussion of literature on time and speed is offered here.

Whether discussing events more generally or when considering learning more specifically, a concept of 'time' is often implicitly used as a measure of effectiveness, i.e. how 'much' knowledge is acquired in what 'length' of time. Therefore, the speed at which something is learnt might be argued as being pre-determinant to a judgement of how efficiently it has been learnt. A different notion of time is considered by Castells (2004), who remarks that an inclination towards 'speed' results in a gradual reduction in the importance placed upon other concepts of 'distance and duration' (pp.56). Here, a preference for swiftness of pace overtakes or perhaps replaces the value of quality of learning/action. Eriksen (1998) warns that a preference for speed is not only contagious, but also addictive, i.e. the 'quicker' one becomes, the quicker one wishes to become. This striving for speed can also often be a cause of a decline in quality and its relevance. Although rooted within work relating to technology, Eriksen refers to a broader sense of a 'hurried existence of our society' (pp. 53) as a whole.

Synthesizing Kaldor's writing about the need for 'self-reprogrammable labour' (1998, pp899), (i.e. individuals who have the ability to adapt their skills in a range of situations), Castells (2004) notes how 'self-programmable' requires highly educated people who manage and control information with high creativity:

*"The more our information systems are complex, and interactively connected to data bases and information sources, the more what is required from labour is to be able of this searching and recombining capacity. This demands the appropriate training, not in terms of skills, but in terms of creative capacity, and ability to evolve with organisations and with the addition of knowledge in society" (pp.40).*

Within the context of this research this 'creative capacity' to evolve with the times and shifting contexts becomes even more important, as is the ability to adapt knowledge from one situation to another. It is also the ability to understand the complex web of social relations and the socially constructed nature of knowledge. Such abilities however cannot be developed in short periods, to order. This exposes a

tension with the imperatives of a new managerialist ethos within a time of austerity. Eriksen notes that “*Acceleration affects... the production of knowledge*” (2001, pp.121), which brings into question the understanding of time within learning, especially the demands placed during induction learning. Eriksen (2004) has raised the question of whether we should seek to protect our ‘slow time’ in order to resist an urge to learn ‘quickly’. Is this also a time to seek to embed learning, thus learning how to creatively apply such learning in different situations and contexts?

In contrast to Castells, Leibniz offered a relatively simple definition of time - patterns in the sequence of ‘things’, as space refers to the coexistence and inter-relationships between ‘things’ (McDonough, 2014). In this definition therefore, without ‘things’, time does not exist. Time is linear with a start and end point, and has points that can be measured in-between. In its simplest form here, an employee’s start date provides an initial basis for time to be measured from, and the end of induction (or even a particular recorded milestone) provides an end measure to that particular period of time. However, Castells offers an alternative concept of time with the paradoxical term ‘timeless time’. He writes about how the modern world, technology and social interactions make it possible for individuals to participate in more than one activity in one place at any one time. For example, the participants in this study might be responding to an email whilst engaging in a telephone call with another professional. They might be delivering an early learning opportunity to a pre-school age child whilst also signposting the parent to advice on housing and/or domestic abuse support (and may also be making a mental note of what to record on the family’s case file if appropriate, or making a judgement over whether this is cause for concern of the child’s well-being). This timeless time therefore appears here, where consecutive activities that are usually characterised by linear time are ‘interrupted’ and muddled by cross-connections and inter-connections between activities that come with our social interactions. Castells does not suggest that this means that linear time disappears entirely, only that it becomes arbitrary (ibid). He goes on to say that it is the collective construction and delivery of a group of activities that becomes much more important than the staging of which order they are delivered in. This suggests that the ambiguity initially identified as potentially problematic may actually be far less so –in fact quite the reverse.

Colley, Henrikson, Miemeyer and Seddon (2012) relate notions of time to a similar context to this research context. Suggesting that time is constructed and generated by human action, they studied different configurations of time within education spheres across three countries; Finland, England and Germany, drawing from previous conceptualisations in the fields of education, health and social care. Even with similar contexts researched in each country, three rather dissimilar notions of time became apparent. To understand this further, the placement of ‘professional work’ was considered alongside

other roles that individuals, particularly females, had in their lives. Each country showed a different configuration of time because of the human action – and what value was placed upon it – and how these different human actions sat alongside one-another. Two ‘types’ of time were concluded; abstract time and concrete time. The former related primarily to what we might consider ‘clock time’ – that which measures labour. Conversely, concrete time related to the process time, measured **by** labour rather than a measure **of** labour. In the context of my study, time seems to be assumed in the abstract – the political setting of targets and performance measures means that outputs achieved is what is used to measure labour, which in turn is seen to indicate effectiveness. I return to these notions of time and the implications of this within the findings chapter of this thesis as it appears visible in the vocabulary of managers’ interviews.

The literature on New Managerialism, and critical responses within it, provided an interesting conceptual backdrop against which data could be interpreted. Much of this literature played a greater role during the analysis stages of the project, as it provided insight and possibilities as to the influences at play. The possible effect of austerity was recognised earlier on, but at those initial stages served more as a contributor of methods employed (ensuring methods that could ‘travel’ with the employee should they move, for example) and the practicalities of undertaking the fieldwork stage (interviewing managers earlier on in the study, for example, as they were considered more likely to move roles sooner than front-line staff). Later on, this particular set of literature enabled links to be drawn between broader concepts, such as those of ‘time’ discussed here, and management approaches alongside national political directives. The interplay and inter-relational understanding of such notions allowed an increased degree of insight, analysis and understanding of the data to be achieved by enabling greater awareness of the ‘whole’ meso-system rather than focussing solely on the acute context within which the research was conducted. This was because this increased understanding of the macro influences at play within the micro-context enabled a deeper understanding of how their impact translated within the researched context.

### **Part III: Bourdieu’s concepts of Habitus, Doxa and Illusio**

Initial thoughts with regard to the study began with Engestrom’s ‘7 theses of work-based learning’ which focused my thoughts around Lave and Wengers’ (1991) influential work on ‘legitimate peripheral participation’. Based broadly on an apprenticeship model of learning, ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ acknowledges the importance of the learning context as well as the value for learners in being able to develop their own knowledge gradually. Lave and Wenger (2002) contend that ‘legitimate peripheral

participation' provides a means through which the relationships between new personnel and 'old hands' can be discussed with regard to their activities and the communities of knowledge and practice (Daniels, 2001). This concept provided an initial means of organising the study, but as it progressed it became evident that this was less relevant than anticipated and the predominance of the broader work conditions (for example, budget cuts and redundancies) in the lives of the participants led to a greater reliance on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, doxa and *illusio* in making sense of the information, in view of the fact that his theories attempt to understand practice within the social world and provide a bridge between the objective and subjective social worlds (Jenkins, 2002).

### **Habitus (and Field)**

Bourdieu's concepts of Habitus, Field and Capital are intertwined and difficult to explain singularly, without drawing upon the each other. In this section, I will mainly focus on Bourdieu's notion of Habitus and to a limited extent, therefore explain the idea of Field as well. In this particular thesis, I am not drawing upon Capital which is the third of this triumvirate of concepts, mainly because this study did not collect enough personal data to be able to make much use of this concept.

Bourdieu (1998) contends that habitus is an internalised, subconscious battery of dispositions that orientate a person's action to, and indeed within, any given situation. He describes habitus as

*"... a socialised body, a structured body which has incorporated the imminent structures of the world or a particular sector of that world – a 'field' – and which structures the perception of that world as well is the actions of that world"*

(pp. 81).

In this way, Bourdieu refers to the intertwining of a person's dispositions, predispositions, beliefs and values system in relation to the context, as habitus. For him, the context does not merely centre on the physical or emotional; it considers the intricacies and relational nature of the context and the interactions that take place within it, and how at any one time individuals may be a part of a number of different habitus. Furthermore, he believes that not only are individuals influenced by their social structures and surroundings: they are also represented through individuals themselves, in that they are a fundamental part of habitus (Flach et al, 2010; Costa and Murphy, 2015).

The term habitus therefore refers to familiar constructs (both mental and physical), that are implied within social communication, identity, cultural experience and meaning which are displayed within personal attitudes (Flach et al., 2010). Habitus is something which is subjectively experienced and it is something which characterises our actions, and to a certain extent is integral to our character, our

feelings and our motivations for action. It is also something that is collectively shared within the various communities with which each individual is involved (Flach et al., 2010).

It is in this sense that Bourdieu's notion of 'field' is linked to habitus. Bourdieu's 'field' is an attempt to explain the relationship between people and groups of people. Bourdieu understands that "to exist is to exist socially in relation to others" (Cuijpers, 2012, pp. 28). Reality is relational and everyone sees themselves by observing differences between the things that they observe and experience. The modern world has developed as a result of a process of separation into semi-independent, unique areas of action which he designates as 'fields.' Bourdieu contests that the relationships between and within these areas structure the way in which humans behave, and therefore in order to comprehend why individuals behave in a certain way, it is important to understand the fields in which they operate.

He explains the influence of field as

*"... a field of forces within which the agents occupy positions that statistically determine the position they will take with respect to the field, these position-takings being aimed either at conserving or transforming the structure of relations of forces that is constitutive of the field"*

(Bourdieu, 2005, pp. 30).

In relation to the literature that has been explored in this chapter, for instance, we can take the example of Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004), who found that the data from their study confirmed that the identities and attitudes of individuals within a specific teaching department contributed to the overall nature of the social relations within a department, as well as the development, construction and reconstruction of working cultures. Thus Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) utilised Bourdieu's notion of field in order to understand their findings with regard to communities of practice. They state that the argument becomes one of needing to belong to something in order to learn, and that whatever an individual belongs to can be called a community of practice (which, in essence is similar to Bourdieu's concept of field). When looked at from this perspective, they believe that communities of practice can be extremely diverse and that the researcher's task then becomes not one of justifying their existence as much as to identify their features in relation to learning. The fact that individuals are not working together in close proximity or interacting with each other on a daily basis does not mean that they cannot be a member of a community of practice - it means that they are part of a different type of community of practice. They further justify their stance by falling back on the ideas of Bourdieu in respect of his belief that all individuals relate to the fields in which they are engaged and that it would be impossible to think of anyone not existing in a field, as they would have no position in the social

world and no interaction with it. How the notion of 'field' has been understood by researchers who have utilised this concept follows in the discussion of habitus and doxa.

Costa and Murphy (2015) comment that habitus is a complex social process in and through which individuals construct and reconstruct their ideas through practice, which in turn develops and justifies the perspectives, actions, values and social positions of those individuals. It provides a focus through which practice and knowledge can be understood via the social context in which they are generated by both individuals and collectives, and allows an investigation of social actions in a constantly evolving situation which sees individuals develop as a result of reflecting upon the way in which they act, think and perceive the world (Costa and Murphy, 2015). "*Simply put, habitus focuses on our ways of acting, feeling, thinking and being*" (Maton, 2014, pp. 51) and places human actions within a vibrant structure of social reality which expresses knowledge within those actions (Grenfell and Jones, 1998). In many ways, habitus is an internal library of an individual's experiences that have accumulated as a result of their social journey (Costa and Murphy, 2015), which are reflected by the way in which they live and approach their lives (Bourdieu, 2000). It is for this reason (of constant accumulation) that habitus can be seen as an evolving structure which has limitless scope for new ideas that have their foundation in existing political, economic, cultural, social and historical and technical contexts (Costa and Murphy, 2015).

A number of researchers have found Bourdieu's work useful in understanding or casting light on events in the context of research. Reay (2004) recognises that Bourdieu's aim to uncover the deeply buried mechanisms of social worlds in order to transform or reproduce them is not the overriding aim of most educational research. Having said that, she draws upon his ideas that habitus should be seen as a means of thinking about and analysing the social world in order to highlight social differences in the conduct of her study. Her research (1995) looked at habitus in the primary classroom, taking seriously Bourdieu's injunction that

*"... one cannot grasp the most profound logic of the social world unless one becomes immersed in the specificity of an empirical reality"*

(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1993, pp.271).

She states that the appeal of habitus as a concept lies in its ability to focus upon agency and structure whilst uncovering social inequality. Reay looked at 15 months of data collected through participant observation of two primary classrooms (from the perspective of habitus), exploring how differences in race, class and gender are constructed by children, drawing the conclusion that habitus as a method has the potential to pinpoint accepted inequalities that are entrenched in everyday social practices. She

(Reay, 2015) also points out that although there have been criticisms of Bourdieu's work for not exploring the affective domain properly (Sayer, 2005; Sweetman, 2003), there is scope within habitus to develop an appreciation of affective experiences of inequalities within society. In her study, Reay (2015, pp. 21) comments upon the amount of psychological and psychoanalytical terms that appear in Bourdieu's work which lend themselves to a psychosocial understanding of habitus, drawing the conclusion that this concept "... enables a focus on the hidden, embodied and psychosocial injuries of social class that come with living in a deeply unequal society." Reay (2015) states that whereas Bourdieu employs habitus to expose how the concept of class is embodied and played out in individual lives, she would argue that it is helpful in recognising how feelings about social class (inferiority/superiority, recognition and abjection) are internalised and reinforced through practices. As such, it becomes a practical tool that can be used to appreciate "... the affective dimensions of both privilege and disadvantage" (Reay, 2015, pp. 21) that are an example of how external notions become internalised to the psyche.

Colley et al. (2003) use Bourdieu's concepts of habitus as a platform from which they developed the notion of a vocational habitus. Their study explored the nature of vocational learning, looking at not only what was learnt but how it was learnt. Their focus was the relationship between learning and identity and how looking at this might provide them with an insight as to how the transformation process (or becoming) took place. Having explained the dominant concepts of learning within Vocational Education and Training, Colley et al. (2003) explored the concept of learning as identity transformation, first from the viewpoint of direct entry into the workplace where individuals were absorbed into specific cultures and practices in particular environments (Coffey and Atkinson, 1994; Killeen, 1996), and then from the economic standpoint of negotiated processes between employees and employers (Herriot and Pemberton, 1996). They identified a gap in this research in that no consideration had been given to the relationship between identity and vocational learning and their relevance in workplace situations. They highlight the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) in advancing the notion of learning being participation and the work of Frykholm and Nitzler (1993) who see learning as an active process of becoming within formalised courses. It was their view that there was a vocational notion which combines structured and subjective aspects of individuals' actions that order the environment in which they find themselves. They stated that practitioners adjust their teaching to the habitus, with this habitus being informed by the vocational notions which provide guidance for the pedagogic approaches. They formed the opinion that this notion was an important influence on both individual and collective identity, as put forward within the classroom. Colley et al. (2003) found this study helpful with regard to the analysis of the

learning processes within Further Education (FE) although it was limited in usefulness in that many of the courses analysed were more academic in nature.

Colley et al. (2003) went on to cite the works of Bates (1994), Riseborough (1994) and Hodkinson et al. (1996) as those who have used the idea of vocational notion, although these were focusing upon career pathways as opposed to processes of learning. Their study utilised Bourdieu's concepts of habitus as it conveyed the subjective personal dispositions as well as the collective structural predispositions that are shaped by gender, race and class within each individual. They looked at different fields which interacted with each other in the development of learning, membership and identity in respect of how the different fields structure the habitus, how the habitus enables meaning to be provided for each field, and the habitus as a whole.

Their decision to concentrate their analysis in this way held the specific purpose of making habitus a more explicit "*structuring... and structured structure*" (Bourdieu, 1986, pp.170). Their conclusions led them to believe that learning does involve a process of becoming, with students adjusting themselves to a vocational habitus, which they describe as "*... a set of dispositions derived from both idealised and realised identities, and informed by the notions and guiding ideologies of the vocational culture*" (Colley et al., 2003, pp.492). They believe that an individual's sense of place is developed as a result of this vocational habitus and their interaction with it, as well as the development of and through it.

### **Doxa and Illusio**

Bourdieu (2005, pp.37) defines doxa as "the universe of tacit presuppositions that organise action within the field." Doxa refers to assumptions that are taken for granted or beliefs that are shared within a field (Albert and Paradis, 2014) and constitute "*a set of fundamental beliefs which does not even need to be asserted in the form of an explicit, self-conscious dogma*" (Bourdieu, 2000, pp.16) or even an acceptance of the status quo (Golsorkhi et al. 2009). These presuppositions or predispositions are defined from birth, with individuals not being born as blank canvases, which is the reason why situations, and the learning that occurs as a result of them, can be perceived very differently by two seemingly similar individuals. Clearly, these presuppositions will form the baseline and will act upon individuals and groups along with social capital to provide individuals and groups with a means to 'play the game' within the field that they are occupying at any given time.

An individual's social capital will be determined by factors such as the strength of their relationship with others, their connectivity to their peers and/or the community, their status (actual and perceived) and their influential abilities. Illusio can be regarded as the interest that a person has in the game (or field) or life in general (Desjarlais, 2011) and is used by Bourdieu to describe how we are involved in the

game, our commitment to it and its worth to us (Colley 2012). Colley (2012, pp.324) argues that it is this concept that is critical to understanding how Bourdieu views the interaction between “... *the socialised subjectivity of habitus and the objective determinations of the field*”, thus making it a more active, explicit and conscious notion than any underlying doxa. It is this concept that is critical in looking at theories of workplace learning which emphasise the notion of identity and being a member of a community of practice, as well as the idea of caring about what happens at work (emotion), which, it could be argued, a professional habitus should entail (Colley, 2012).

Colley (2012) highlights the work of Widin (2010) who emphasises the fact that *illusio* is complex, in that there needs to be an understanding that different groups within a field will bring a multitude of different interests to it, some of which will inevitably dominate others. For example, within education the greater interest of government policy may be a driving force behind the *illusio* of practitioners. Widin (2010) also states that it is important to undertake a deeper investigation in order to identify the genuine targets that individuals are chasing, and that there needs to be a recognition of the ways in which dominant groups hide their true interests through ‘disavowal of interest’, which it is claimed is regularly the case within bureaucratic public organisations. Colley (2012) also makes the point that the ethical values and beliefs of any individual game can only be learnt through participation, with our level of participation being governed by whether we share the same *illusio*. If we do not, we will not engage in the game (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) as a result of there being no ‘fit’ between our habitus and the field, which in turn disrupts our *illusio*, leading to emotional suffering as a result of the negative effect that the undermining of long-term commitment and investment within a profession would cause (Colley, 2012; Colley and Guery, 2014). This was the case in Colley’s (2012) investigation of the changes of roles, identities and practices within the youth service; she found that as a result of governmental austerity measures, the practitioners were continually overworked, under pressure and not learning. The reason for this was the fact that their *illusio* was constantly under attack as they tried to juggle the need to meet targets and their commitment to helping young people, whilst seemingly fighting against bureaucracy in order to maintain their *illusio*. In a constantly changing field (Grenfell and James, 2004) where accountability has overtaken professional service and care, professionals’ confidence has been undermined and prevented their learning (Fineman, 2010), causing a shift from caring to instrumental control (Lynch, 2010), thus illustrating how the more powerful groups within a field (policymakers) are able to impose their ideas on others who are in a less privileged position (Colley, 2012; Colley and Guery, 2015). The game of youth support that they were playing has irrevocably changed and now makes little sense to them, making it impossible to learn how to practice (Colley, 2012). Similar

shattering of practitioners' illusion occurred in Colley and Guery's study (2015) as a result of a complete revision of their work targets and their being overpowered by bigger agents within the field.

The topic of work-based or situated learning has grown, developed and morphed into quite a different being to what it was, for example, 20 years ago. While there is still a dominant perspective within some contexts that 'work-based learning' or 'learning on the job' is fundamentally to improve corporate performance, there is a growing trend towards seeing this from an alternate perspective - from the inductees' viewpoint and at the benefits it can bring more generally to have a workforce that feels capable and yet constructively challenged in their working role (John, 2000). This alternative perspective is one that I also hold not only from the reading I have undertaken in this field but also from my own experience of a manager and seeing how inductees 'flourish' more so where appropriate 'on the job' learning is facilitated for them and designed collaboratively with them. Of course, for many, still lying beneath this is the recognition that in turn this aids employee retention, productivity and ultimately performance, so we have not quite moved as far from the original paradigm as it may seem on the surface. Government policy and political influences have – this thesis would argue - shaped and fueled this notion. The publication by Ofsted 'Good practice in involving employers in work-related education and training' (2010) signals a move towards greater value on work-based learning and raises some important benefits for employers, for example. However, it still describes a proposed learning culture which is employer-led and one that positions the employer as primary benefactor. Much of this is of course due to the proposed audience of the publication, nonetheless it is a message that is consistently replayed in key publications.

It is with these factors in mind, and with these assumptions and beliefs outlined above that this research was based. The study considered the induction phase, as have many texts and studies in the field of business management, however it was designed to do so from a life-long learning perspective and from the perspective of the employee - which became evident as a gap in the literature from quite early on. It is anticipated that by considering learning or skills development within this discrete stage that it may be able to gain insight into skills development in the subsequent stages also. There are implied assumptions that underpin this viewpoint - that the learning is context specific, and that the learning taking place is individual-specific rather than collective. This is a debate that may not be fully addressed within my study, as it will be considering a discrete stage of work-based learning only.

In summary, this chapter has considered literature from three areas that come together for this thesis – induction & work based learning, new managerialism and speed/time, and using Bourdieu's concepts of

habitus, doxa and illusio it seeks to provide a new insight, learning and understanding for those in similar contexts.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

This chapter explains in detail the methodology, methods and design of the study. Firstly, it outlines the social constructivist stance underpinning the research and how this influenced research design, including the rationale for the adoption of a qualitative case study methodology. This is followed by an outline of the research design process, methods employed, and rationale for them, linked to the research questions. The chapter concludes with an overview of participant selection and profile, ethical considerations and procedures culminating in a brief reflection of the data gathering and recording processes.

#### **A social constructivist approach: influence on research design**

The critique of Humanist philosophy, particularly as drivers of research is now well established. The unquestioning allegiance to notions of progress and development; the belief that identities are partially, or wholly, fixed, or that 'reality' may be unequivocally discernable or definable; the associated assumptions about language as a transparent medium that can communicate meaning unproblematically, have all been thoroughly critiqued by post-humanist scholars (cf. the works of Foucault, Derrida, Butler, Spivak, Deleuze and Guattari, for instance). This research follows in this wake, retaining assumptions that humans invent and re-invent their identities continually, dependent upon their situation and experiences (McLean, 2010); that reality may be socially constructed and that language and communication maybe essentially messy processes. That is to say, that humans are not necessarily always (or even largely) logical and objective; psychological, social, cultural, historical, political, economic factors all have great influence over current and future behaviours, and so the immediate context – as well as previous historical contexts – shape behaviours and perspectives of both current and future experiences. This combination of beliefs, assumptions, and values underpins the approach to this study.

As Gergen (1994) notes, such a position also has implications for the researcher who may also occupy an 'insider' identity as in the case of this research, as at the start of the study I was employed by the Local Authority as an Area Manager within the Children's Social Care team, responsible for development and delivery of Children's Centre services within a specific geographical locality of the Local Authority. Whilst I was not directly involved in the line management of any participants within this study I could still be considered as being an insider-researcher and later, an informed outsider, as I was so closely and inextricably linked to the research environment:

Firstly, the terms we use to determine both ourselves and the world around us are not depicted by the physical objects or our names for them; the terms through which we understand both the world and our place within that world are produced through exchanges between people and the culture within which we are immersed. In addition, this is the position of the researcher and the knowledge s/he creates. Secondly, this account of the world is not sustained through validation of our understanding, but instead by on-going social processes. As such, a researcher with prior intimate knowledge of the researched world can be a crucial cog in effecting change. Finally, language derives significance through these human affairs via the way it is used and functions within social relationships. The language of research may find greater resonance coming from an insider's position (Gergen, 1994).

This study was an empirical one, drawing on experience and perceptions based data, and undertaken from a social constructivist approach. This is a perspective which 'emphasises the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding' (Derry, 1999, pp. 67).

Social constructivism is based on specific assumptions about reality, knowledge, and learning:

**Reality:** Social constructivists believe that reality is constructed through human activity. Social actors together invent the properties of the world (Kukla, 2000). For the social constructivist, reality cannot be 'discovered': it does not exist prior to its social invention.

**Knowledge:** To social constructivists, knowledge is also a human product; socially and culturally constructed (Ernest, 1999; Gredler, 1997; Prawat & Floden, 1994). Individuals create meaning through their interactions with each other and with the environment they live in.

**Learning:** Social constructivists view learning as a social process. It does not take place only within an individual, nor is it a passive development of behaviors that are shaped by external forces (McMahon, 1997). Meaningful learning occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities.

Thus, 'reality', i.e. the understanding of induction, knowledge and learning about and during this induction period is being constructed, co-constructed and re-constructed on a continual basis. The study recognises the subjective position of the researcher. Studying within a context that the researcher holds prior knowledge of, both as a manager and a 'managed' person provides insight that might otherwise not be afforded. Knowing of, for example, corporate 'drivers' - that still may yet be unknown to some participants - means that an insider-researcher position is potentially influencing the context within which the research participants are experiencing and practising within. Far from hindering the research design, this added an additional dimension. Eraut's (2007) three-year

longitudinal study, looking at the workplace learning of engineers, accountants and nurses - the research topic of which resonates with the research questions here in this study - highlighted that due to the difficult nature of capturing non-formal learning, the ability to access a 'description' of learning is greatly beneficial - if not vital - if participants are to be able to explain rather than justify learning activity. Furthermore, it is this insider position which may also hold potential to consider the 'espoused' nature of practitioners' descriptions (Argyris & Schon, 1974). An approach which afforded a heightened degree of one-to-one interaction with the participants was therefore preferred, especially in light of lessons learned from Eraut and his reporting of similar studies – as well as lessons learned from my own previous research. I had found particularly that this approach increased the likeliness of sustained engagement by participants by reducing drop-out rates. With a relatively small study such as this, this was of primary importance.

### **Research focus and design**

The study commenced with a particular area of focus and interest in mind, one which was born out of previous academic study, professional experience in the field, and questions that had begun to emerge from published literature on the topic. These were coupled with a developing frustration about apparent gaps in published literature on the subject. Therefore, at the start of this research, a study that allowed greater insight into the inductees' perspective of their induction, how this related to managers' perspectives, that would help consider the potential, or lack of it, for collaborative learning in the workplace was desired. Based on these initial impulses, and assisted by literature on work-based learning, a research study was designed which aimed to consider learners' experiences during their induction period, alongside managers' perceptions of this period. It was recognised early on that this was not without challenge as the 'capturing' of non-formal learning, 'that which we know but cannot tell' (Eraut, 2000) would be a tough task. However, the field of work-based learning contains exemplars of research by key scholars (cf. Eraut, 2000 and Eraut et al. 2005) from which methodological understanding and design choices could be drawn for similar research.

Once the research area and context were identified, and a potential and relevant group of subjects who held insight – and therefore suggestions – to some of the lines of enquiry identified were decided, access to the 'whole' research site was sought and given. By far the most influential constraint was time; both the time to complete the study but also the time afforded to access participants both physically and corporately. It was largely due to this factor that observation of participants was not possible. Although recognised as being an important method within Eraut's study (2004), the time

constraints made this virtually impossible to achieve to any degree of value. However, the key advantages of observation were considered, and alternative methods employed that could potentially achieve similar outcomes.

Eraut's case for the advantages of observation is as follows:

- *Educates the observer/interviewer about the working context, thus enriching subsequent data gathering*

I had this already through the employed role held within the same context as was being researched.

- *Enables workplace documents and activities to be accessed and used as starting points for conversations*

This was achievable through my 'insider' position

- *Providing 'clues' to the use of knowledge that must have been previously learnt*

This was achieved by asking participants about their previous learning, both formal and informal within a journal document provided. I also had professional insight into broad career histories from which some judgement on this could be drawn.

- *Allowing the complexity to be appreciated even if not fully explained*

Again, my insider position meant that a good understanding of the complexities of the roles participants were engaged in was fully appreciated

- *Discouraging the painting of 'ideal pictures' by [participants] when they know the reality had been observed*

Participants were aware of my professional role, and therefore it was not considered that this would be a significant hindrance. There was a good understanding of the roles participants held and the nature of their work through shared prior experiences.

- *Seeking opportunities to introduce further triangulation by interviewing significant others in the workplace of the main participants*

Within the study, first-line managers were also consulted via semi-structured interviewing

(Eraut, 2007, pp.404)

The context for the research therefore afforded the ability to not only engage with appropriately 'relevant' participants – both newly employed staff members and front-line managers, but also to have

insight into organisational practices, processes, procedures and documentation – because these were being engaged with by myself on a regular basis already.

Personal and professional principles led to a consideration that whilst what was actually ‘learned’ was likely to be different for each party, it was considered important that the advancement, development and creation of knowledge in the widest sense could lead to some betterment for all concerned. Questions constructed therefore invited participants to think about ‘why’ they felt a particular response to a question (e.g. ‘why’ did they feel that shadowing others was useful to them so that they could begin to be curious about their own perspectives) (Yin, 2013 pp. 90-91).

The case study was framed within the induction period, firstly because it would be the first experience of work-based learning that the participants engaged with, in this specific context, but also to provide a ‘boundary’ to the research and protection against it becoming simply too broad or losing depth. A range of influences would be affecting the research site: political agendas which governed the actual work to be undertaken, coupled with participants’ own internal influences such as responses to previous experiences of learning at work, for example, would undoubtedly act as ‘interference’ in the research data. In addition, participants’ potentially changing perspectives and expectations both prior to their role and during the research study, brought about as they begin to learn and understand more about their role and what it entails, would potentially intensify this even further. Methods employed therefore considered these factors in a variety of ways, which will be explored later on. Whilst none were felt able to mitigate against such factors completely, these possibilities were held in mind both within the design stage and throughout the study.

In dealing with ‘human participants’ and their interactions, complexity and messiness within data garnered was recognised as highly likely from the onset. For this reason, ‘an insight into’ perspective rather than ‘an abstract truth’ was sought from the study and it was accepted early on that the research would only ever allow access to the level of detail the participants felt able and willing to share - and only in a manner that they felt comfortable with. With no ‘single truth’ to be proved or disproved, it was accepted that findings would, and should, be based on what this particular group of participants afforded in this particular context and at this particular period of time (Yin, 2013 pp.29).

An initial review of the literature suggested a gap in the material reported within the field of work-based learning that was generated from the employees’ perspectives. Benefits of, and rationale for, induction and work-based learning almost exclusively therefore centred on organisational efficacies, and the effect this might have on the inductees themselves as individuals and learners seemed much less important. The study considered this in its application of the chosen methods, and as a result both key

methods employed sought to capture inductees' narratives - adding originality to the research focus. This study takes the mirrored perspective, adding an additional dimension to the 'pool' of findings.

Davison (2004) highlights that qualitative research consistently endorses the advantage of a close relationship between the researcher and the participants – and it is indeed these close relationships that enhance rapport. The research design and undertaking allowed care to be taken in supporting and nurturing this rapport and relationship formation – both to ensure ethical practice but also to gain a better quality of information about their perspectives and experiences. To this end, from the onset there was openness and honesty about the purpose and aim of the research, thus significantly reducing, if not eliminating, the 'mask of democratic relations' (Kvale, 1996).

In planning the methods to be employed therefore, the following factors were concluded as being pertinent to the study. That -

- the research was of a qualitative nature
- there were multiple 'interferences' at play (e.g intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, previous experiences, influences and drivers)
- these '*interferences*' were of great interest to the study as they might provide a level of contextual richness to the findings that would otherwise be omitted or lost
- the number of participants would need to be relatively small. A group of 12 seemed an appropriate number - enough to give some opportunity for thematic analysis, but small enough to value the uniqueness of each individual
- the research area was 'thick' i.e. a rich yet compacted phenomenon of a naturalistic form
- multiple sources of evidence would likely be available
- in order to gain the widest and greatest insight the study warranted a multi-method approach, as this would also allow opportunity to generate multiple sources of data for a broader consideration of the responses provided
- the study needed to be framed within a specific and contained event/period, in this case the staff members' induction period, in order to secure its richness of data

A small-scale study of 12 inductees and 4 managers was therefore designed, with inductees completing a daily 'learning journal' to record their learning activities in and then semi-structured interviews to allow greater depth of probing around emergent and interesting themes that transpired from that. For triangulation, a contrast to the perspective offered by inductees, and learning from

Eraut's similar (albeit longitudinal study), it was also felt appropriate to engage with managers also, and so semi-structured interviews were also planned for a small number (No.=4) of first-line managers. In conjunction with this, it is necessary to also consider that the researcher's own tacit knowledge may be utilised to further support the research as their professional judgement, experiences, and immersion in the field could enhance and be valuable to the research (Eraut, 2007 pp. 405-408). Eraut claims:

*"... proficient workers see situations holistically rather than in terms of aspects and see what is most important in a situation. They perceive deviations from the normal pattern and use maxims for guidance, whose meaning varies according to the situation. Related learning often entails a combination of the unconscious aggregation in memory of experiences with cases and episodes of activity, incidental learning from other people about the salient aspects of situations and reflection on one's more memorable experiences."* (2004 pp. 213-214)

Therefore, it is probable that the researcher's experience and knowledge will contribute to the richness of the research by helping to interpret the data within their occupational context (Unluer, 2012). Furthermore, the depth of analysis that they apply to the collated data may help to inform their research findings. Without this researcher's tacit knowledge, some factors may be overlooked, may not be appropriately interpreted within the context of the workplace, where the research is being commenced or the only parts of the issue may be understood, instead of the whole situation that is being investigated. Each of these factors enriches the research during both the data collection and interpretation phases, as participants may open up more or they may be placed at ease, because of their prior workplace encounters with the researcher. In turn, this would enhance the detail of the data, which is collated and its interpretation, as the researcher will be able to apply their tacit knowledge to the information that has been gathered by commencing their case study. The fact that the data is supported by the researcher's own professional judgement and experience in the field or that they are immersed in the field, further contributes to the validity and accuracy of the study. Additionally, it increases the depth and breadth of analysis, which may be undertaken and therefore the research is valuable and relevant to the field.

The role of the 'insider' researcher here is difficult to extract from the research because they consistently interact with their colleagues, they share information with their acquaintances, may glean insights into situations by having conversations with others or they may use their knowledge of a situation and apply this in the research, without even being aware of the fact that they have done so (Eraut, 2000). This may also impact upon the research as they could have preconceptions about the situations under investigation, or they may draw premature conclusions based on their tacit knowledge

(Eraut, 2005). Eraut (2009) has stated that interpretations may also be unknowingly influenced by a process of tacit generalisation, during which interpretations of unfamiliar people, situations and contexts are affected by your prior knowledge of more familiar, but not necessarily similar, people, situations and contexts.’ Therefore, there is a glut of influences at play within this research, not least the notion that the researcher’s tacit knowledge is difficult to extract from the process being undertaken. Far from being to the detriment of the research, it can be viewed here as an added richness, as data is derived from a qualitative research paradigm, one which is focused upon utilising in-depth knowledge gathered from individuals in a specific context to gain a deep and enriched understanding of the field of study (Gerring, 2007).

In conjunction with this, the methods that have been employed in this research have relied upon the tacit knowledge of the researcher. In this case, I, as the researcher have been involved and embedded in the research context to a great extent, as it was undertaken within my workplace. Therefore, I have been able to draw upon my situational understanding, intuitive decision-making, and familiarity with routine procedures whilst the research has been undertaken within my occupational setting. Thus, my own tacit knowledge of the workplace is integral to this research. It is extremely difficult to separate how my tacit knowledge may have affected the research or changed its context due to my involvement. These factors cannot be measured or gauged. Therefore, both my presence and tacit knowledge and research findings have shaped the study’s analysis and findings, because it was undertaken in my practice site.

With all of this in mind, the methodology and methods that were used to undertake this case study shall now be discussed in the next section of this thesis.

### **Methodology: adopting a ‘Case Study’ approach**

*“Sometimes, an in-depth knowledge of an individual example is more helpful than fleeting knowledge about a large number of examples. We gain better understanding of the whole by focusing on a key part”*

(Gerring, 2007 pp. 1)

This study uses a ‘case study’ approach therefore to study, engage with, and research a group of participants, 12 inductees, and 4 managers. This methodological approach was based on the original research question:

**What could employees (managers and managed) reveal about learning during induction, and what could this insight tell us, or suggest, about the potential for or lack of collaborative learning in the workplace?’**

Case study, as a methodological approach, has occupied a central position in a wide range of research fields – and continues to grow (Yin, 2013). Fields such as anthropology, social work, sociology, education, and psychology see case study research thriving (as an example see: Farquhar, 2012 pp.1-21; Yin, 2011n pp.89-116; 2013 pp.90-91). Even more traditional fields such as medicine now see a growth in qualitative case study research. Perhaps this is due partly to the likes of Kelly et al. (1995) who signalled a move from ‘cross-case method’ i.e. the study of lots of houses to ascertain how best to build future houses, to ‘case study’; i.e. to study the construction of one house in depth to ascertain how best to build a house.

This study understands case study as;

**Case:** an unlimited phenomenon which becomes partially limited by the design of the case study research project, which is observed at some point or over a period of some time.

**Study:** the ‘study’ imposes the boundaries – apparent and/or temporal. As a minimum, this includes both a start and end (adapted from Gerring et al., 2007)

Alexander et al. (1987) reveal the rationale behind case study methodology:

*“the case study of an individual group, organisation or event rests implicitly on the existence of a micro-macro link in social behaviour. It is a form of cross-level inference. Sometimes in-depth knowledge of an individual example is more helpful than a fleeting knowledge about a large number of examples. We gain better understanding of the whole by focusing on a key part”*

(Alexander, et al. 1987, pp.2)

Within this study the ‘case’ was not the ‘organisation’ but instead the group of sixteen participants (12 front-line inductees and 4 first-line managers<sup>2</sup>) who provided data for the study either through the completion of a journal, semi-structured interviews responses or both (front-line inductees only). The twelve front-line staff were all employed within Children’s Services and recruited within the immediate period leading up to my research, and the 4 first-line managers - also working within Children’s Services, but having been employed in those roles for varying times. The ‘case’ comprised a

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<sup>2</sup> First-line managers are those who manage front-line staff. They are the first line of management within a hierarchical organisation.

consideration of their activities and reactions to and perceptions of the induction period. The boundaries created by this study were the induction period framework and the field of inquiry that the research was limited to. This provided both a start and end to the research but also a surrounding boundary. The study was developed from this definition.

### **Recruitment of Participants and Ethical Considerations / Procedures**

Participants were drawn from across the Children & Young Peoples Services directorate, however all were employed to undertake family support type roles within vulnerable children's services, either within Sure Start Children's Centres or Children's Social Care Teams. On reflection I would have preferred to have been further disconnected with the research site given my role. However, at the time of designing and commencing the study no one was to know of the impending political, economic or organisational changes. Concerns early on, whilst developing the project, centred on my insider-researcher position. I was aware that as a well-known and reasonably influential figure within the directorate there was a distinct and very real risk of a form of 'question-threat' – especially as the study was being undertaken solely by me and not a third party. In many ways I could not completely negate this, therefore I took various measures to reduce this - one of which was to always speak about the study from my personal perspective and by being clear it was something very separate from my day job and role; I was undertaking the research as 'Emma Slaughter, an Ed.D.' student, not as 'Emma Slaughter, the Area Manager'.

Concerns heightened significantly at the start of the restructuring of the service. Concerns centred around the possibility that morale would fall lower than it did, and that a high proportion of staff (including the study's participants) would leave the study, or be required to leave due to the upheavals previously outlined. None did though, and neither did managers who were involved. However, managers were interviewed early on in the study to limit the impact of such changes should they occur. Although a small number were relocated to alternative teams they remained in the immediate locale and same directorate.

In retrospect, my move away from the LA to another job greatly aided my ability to retain just enough distance from the workplace to allow a degree of abstraction and connection to wider social and political changes, while my minimal connections and attachments from the recent past allowed enough insider knowledge and a degree of empathy with the managers and inductees who agreed to be part of the study.

Participants were chosen if they were due to start a new post within the Local Authority's Children & Young People's directorate in the four weeks from my research start date. This was for reasons of

providing a time boundary to the research project itself and for the purpose of easier and more appropriate focus group engagement, if utilised. The topic of my research project meant I needed ideally to be researching participants who had first hand and very recent experience of work-based learning via an induction process, and it is for this reason alone that I elected to only choose participants who met this set criteria (Rainbird, Munro and Holly, 2004 pp.38-40).

These 12 non-managerial participants were in a variety of roles; Family Support Practitioners (4), Family Intervention (5), Families Information Officer (2), and a trainee Social Worker (1). Although each had quite different job roles they all shared a commonality in that they were part of multi-agency children's services teams, all of which provided non-statutory support and information services to families where children were under eleven years of age. Whilst the Social Worker was trained to work within the statutory arena of Children's Social Care Services, her role was one of a preventative and early intervention remit which saw her working with families below the threshold of statutory social care support.

Once participants had committed to being part of the project, they were sent an information pack consisting of:

- A letter explaining my aims, what I was researching, how, and why
- A consent form – explaining how data would be gathered and stored, and reminding them of their ability to opt out at any stage, and how to 'opt out'.
- An overview of project timescales
- My contact details in case of queries or questions during the project
- A brief description of my background.

I recognised from the outset the importance of participant consent and mutual engagement (Longhurst, 2009 pp582-583). Participant selection was through the form of self-selection; participants elected to be part of the research through an opt-in process rather than an opt-out situation. Therefore participants chose to be a part of the study having been informed by way of a flier circulated to all staff, rather than me approaching individuals for a specific reason (Allmark et al., 2009, pp.8-50). I did not actually ask the participants about their rationale for being involved in the study so I cannot be certain of the reasons at play and how this affects the data I subsequently gathered. If I were to conduct the same type of research, again I believe this would be an area I would be keen to explore at the beginning, so that any influencing or background factors could be identified and considered. Potential participants were not under any obligation to respond (Barriball and Wile, 19943 pp.29-33). If they failed to respond, they were not re-contacted.

Within the research field I was given permission from the Senior Leadership Team and by the Chief Executive of my organisation to recruit participants and to conduct the activities for the purpose of my research. I did not recruit any participants who were direct reportees to myself, as I felt the researcher/manager conflict of interest both for myself and the participant would be too great and not an acceptable ethical position to be in (Allmark et al., 2009 pp.48-50). Furthermore, it was unnecessary, as I had a wealth of other potential participants from which to draw from. Participants attended interviews in their work hours, which had the advantage in assisting recruitment of participants.

Data gathered was in electronic and hard copy format. Electronic data (interview recordings etc.) was held securely and password protected on an encrypted laptop for the duration of the project only. Hard copy data, i.e. interview notes and journals, were held securely in a locked cabinet. Participants were advised by letter of how their information would be stored, for how long, and where. They remained the 'owner' of their own information and could request to see it or withdraw it at any time. No participant requested this.

During the study I was in regular contact with participants, so whilst there was no formal method of updating them periodically, there were some informal discussions that took place about generic themes and findings that were emerging at key points of the project. To meet data protection guidelines I provided participants with a date by which they could retrieve (or I would securely post back to them) their hard copy data (interview transcript, induction diary etc.), before it was shredded and disposed of confidentially. Electronically held data was deleted and removed from electronic storage devices.

### **Participant backgrounds and routes into Children's Services**

All participants were women of British origin. Two had moved into Higher Education directly from Further Education. The remaining ten participants had moved into extended further and/or higher education in their 20s and 30s, although half of them had made the distinct choice to undertake learning in the field of early years upon leaving school. From discussions with those who did not consciously make a career choice of early years or education upon leaving school I was interested to understand what path had ultimately led them to this field. Four had become what I now term 'accidental practitioners'; i.e. those that undertook work within an early years setting primarily because the working hours and context fitted in with their personal lives. Within this study all such participants had done so when their own children were younger, on a voluntary basis before taking up employed positions in their original setting. This suggests that the learners might have an additional insight into

the practical settings for their learning which those who take a pathway offering 'learning first, application second' are not immediately afforded.

Whilst the majority of my participants held further education qualifications, only two were full graduates (i.e. held an honours degree or higher), although two further participants had engaged in some form of Higher Education and held some HE qualification credits. Discussions revealed that generally they had felt that there had been 'opportunity' to extend their formal academic learning but that they had chosen not to do so. I did not however probe further into their reasons for choosing not to do so. I feel it would raise questions around individuals' perspectives about their own 'academic ceiling' – i.e. whether those who had undertaken further studies felt their academic ceiling to be determined by external structural factors (i.e. requirements of Government Policy, Ofsted requirements, LA direction of travel etc.), economic factors (i.e. cost of undertaking learning in actual terms, or cost versus reward) or personal factors (sense of learning confidence, self-belief / esteem, personal circumstances, or environmental factors arising from the work place or home environment) or, of course a blend of any, or all, of these.

### **Undertaking fieldwork**

Barnett (2003) writes about the super complexity of learning and work, even within the most stable of workplace environments. He talks about how learning and work are different, and yet inextricably entwined - 'separate activities but rapidly converging' (Barnett, 2003 pp.29). This double-story, of learning being embedded in work and vice versa becomes even more forceful during induction, with learning at work becoming all the more vital, yet the pressures of 'the work' create unsettlement, challenge and can be fraught with frustration. Learning therefore becomes work itself.

I therefore sought to adopt methods within this study, which allowed for the separateness yet interconnectivity of these two concepts to be explored. Considering Eraut's work on tacit and process knowledge (1994; 2009) I recognised that inductees themselves may not differentiate between the two activities, or, may do so beyond what is actually the case and yet it was this 'experience for learning' that interested me (Boud, Cohen & Walker, 1993).

I returned to the premise that I wanted to centre my research on inductees' perspectives, and reminded myself that it was their 'story' that I wanted to hear. It was not feasible however for me to follow each participant for the duration of the study. Therefore, I developed the daily journal that I would ask participants to complete at the end of each day – thus, capturing their 'story' as they moved along their induction period. Drawing from some of the principles suggested by Cohen et al. (2008) of writing open-ended questionnaires to frame the participants' stories, I provided open-ended questions and then a free-text space for responses to be added to. I felt this to be important in order to ensure that I

received data that broadly sat within the scope of my research. I also considered that it would be more likely that participants would complete the daily journal if they felt reasonably confident as to what 'type' of response I was asking for. This provided the 'safety' to the participants that might be afforded by a questionnaire, whilst allowing me to capture the subjective narrative from the participants about their 'story'.

Unsure of the responses that the daily journals would afford me, and mindful that there was a risk that the journal responses might raise more questions than they provided answers to, I scheduled semi-structured interviews to follow up on these (Barriball and While, 1993 pp.329). I did so because I wanted the opportunity to engage with participants to probe deeper on areas of interest, or to inquire deeper the reasons underlying their responses. Kvale (1996) writes about the interview and it was the use of a semi-structured interview that afforded me opportunity to engage with the participants and for them to provide their narrative to support me to work towards a new understanding – a new view – of learning in the workplace. Opting for a blend between an interview-guide approach and a standardised open-ended interview, this allowed a framework to the interviews based on an initial thematic appraisal from the journal responses, whilst allowing flexibility to the interviewer to explore areas of particular interest arisen from the daily journal responses (Patton, 1980). Semi-structured interview questions were designed, using the thematic analysis of the journal data so far, in order to encourage description; a recital of their experience and opportunity for the researcher to gain understanding of the inductees' knowledge of workplace learning (Spradley, 1979, Patton 1980). Adopting principles suggested by Arksey and Knight (1999):

- Displaying interest
- Promoting openness within the interview process
- Remaining neutral in the researcher's responses
- Being sensitive to the body language signals displayed by the participant
- Affording appropriate time and language to encourage a fuller response

mitigated against many of the anticipated challenges associated with conducting small-scale interviews (Field and Morse, 1989). This interview data was then thematically analysed in the same way as the daily journal data using an approach based on Miles and Huberman's (1994) '12 tactics' and the 'constant comparison' akin to Glaser's (1978) approach, paying particular attention to seeing the data set as a 'whole' – reminding oneself of the case study approach being taken, and resisting the urge to consider each 'set' of data in isolation from one another.

Having discussed the overarching methodological approach I shall now consider the individual methods employed:

- Front-line inductee-participant completed journals (n=12)
- One-to-one interviews with the above (n=12)
- One-to-one interviews with managers (n=4)

Front-line participants were asked to complete and maintain an induction 'journal' from the first day of their induction and throughout their induction phase (See Appendix for sample). The journal had pre-determined headings with specific areas of questions for the participant. Each journal included a single-page coversheet asking generic questions such as age, previous work-based learning experience, expectations of induction, previous work experience etc. It then went on to ask the participant to 'describe their education/training/qualifications to date' and to 'give an overview of their employment experience to date (up to a maximum of 5 years)'. Finally, this section concluded by asking;

- **What expectations do you have of your induction?**
- **What do you expect to be doing during induction?**
- **How long do you expect your induction to last?**
- **What do you want to achieve from the induction period?**

Participants were asked to complete Section One before their start date (for most this was 1-5 days prior to their start date). Then, there was 'a day-per-page' format where for each day worked, where participants were asked to provide an overview of the activity undertaken; an indication of what they found most and least helpful. Completed on a daily basis each 'weekly' section then asked participants to comment on the week as a whole, being asked 'What has been the most helpful part of this week?', 'What have you valued the most?' and 'What have you learnt?' There was then a separate space for candidates to include any additional comments, feedback, or thoughts they felt appropriate that were not covered in the pre-set headings.

In order to allow a depth of engagement with the responses provided in the daily journal, semi-structured interviews were planned to be held with each participant at around 4-6 weeks of their start date. The purpose of this was two-fold - initially it was with a view to re-establishing contact with each participant to maintain the relationship and momentum – with only a total of sixteen participants, and only twelve of which being 'inductee participants' (the primary focus) it was important to limit the

likeliness of dis-engagement as much as possible. However, perhaps even more importantly, this also provided opportunity to probe deeper into any answers or responses that had been given but were unclear, were of specific interest, or where the study would benefit from even further insight into the reasons behind (or underlying) an initial response given (Barriball and White, 1994 p329). From conducting the interviews, a third, unplanned benefit arose. It was noted within the journals that some candidates had begun to write very limited responses under each day's/week's headings. When asked why this was, it became apparent that some felt 'settled' into their new role and therefore felt that their 'induction' was nearing a close, even though their official period of 'induction' was 6 months. This not only provided data around the specific questions asked, but also enabled the study to garner further data from participants through dialogue which focussed on enabling participants to recognise work-based learning that was taking place and therefore prolonged the completion of the journals for an extra few weeks (Barriball and White, 1994 pp. 329).

Before interviews commenced, a number of factors were considered. Firstly, the setting of where these should be undertaken was deliberated to avoid the difficulties that may arise for example, power relations between the interviewee and interviewer (Longhurst, 2009). I carefully considered the location and venue where the interviews should take place, how this may be significant to the participant and how various environmental factors may have impacted upon the process such as, noise, the layout of the seating or how close the interview room was to the participants' work setting (Baxter and Eyles, 1997 pp. 508). Subsequently, the interviews were held in an Area Office, in one of the small break out meeting rooms. This was situated within a three-story building, so I deliberately booked rooms that were on a different floor to which the participant worked, so that they had some 'distance' between their interview and their day job or their colleagues. The rooms were quite small - suitable for four to six people, so there was plenty of space to ensure that the participants were comfortable and did not feel overcrowded or 'small' in the space provided. The seating was standard office furniture but comfortable, so that the interviewees would feel at ease when they sat to talk to the interviewer. In the interview, the interviewee and interviewer (myself), sat at right angles to one another so it did not feel like a formal process (pertinent as many of them had been interviewed for their current jobs within these rooms). These meeting rooms were also situated at the end of the building and in the corner, to enable for a little more privacy and to ensure that they were in a quiet area of the workplace to avoid distractions from noise whilst the interviews were undertaken. This was also important as a Dictaphone was used to record the interviews, so minimising background noise was favourable.

In order to be able to collect meaningful data through these semi-structured interviews, a “normal” conversation must be held between these two parties. As Diefenbach (2009) has summarised how

*“the collection of data by interviewing people is social interaction and draws attention to the fact that there is no such thing like a neutral, non-intervening and non-existent interviewer. The interviewer is an active part of the social interaction and he or she has to intervene in that sense that the interviewee makes statements he or she would not make otherwise...It is the very nature of data stemming from ‘normal’ interview situations means that they mirror what people regard and reveal as their conscious thoughts in a social setting—nothing more or less.”*

(pp. 880)

To ensure that this was possible, I took time to make the interviewee feel comfortable, by introducing myself and talking freely to them about a variety of subjects (Galletta, 2013). Before the interviews, I took each participant to get a drink and chatted generally in a relaxed way to try to put them at ease. This is important as Diefenbach (2009) has stated that it

*“... is not only the interviewer but also the interviewee(s) who ‘spoil’ the data. One way this can happen is unconsciously, i.e. that the interviewee (and perhaps the interviewer, too) is not aware of the influences of the interview situation and his or her internal, unconscious reactions to being asked ‘officially’ about certain issues.”*

(pp.880)

During the interview process, it was important that I paid attention to the interviewee’s story asking open questions so that the interviewee was gently encouraged to divulge as much information as possible. Probing questions were used to try to get more details or to ascertain their thought, ideas and how they really felt about their workplace training as appropriate (Merrihall and While, 1994). Each participant was interviewed within their work time and each lasted for around 30 minutes, although there was no real pressure or emphasis placed on the time that they took as up to one hour had been allowed for each interview. This ensured that the interviews were not rushed and so the interviewees could talk without the influence of undue time constraints (Galletta, 2013).

Further to this, recognising the potential for ‘question threat’ (Wilson & Nisbett, 1978) - particularly during the semi-structured interviews - the methods employed gave participants ‘control’ to divulge or offer as much or as little as, they felt comfortable with. Questions within the interviews were open-ended and prior to the interviews participants were advised of the broad areas and themes that would be explored during the interview. It was also made clear that if they felt unable or unwilling to answer

any question within the interview that they were not obliged to do so (Secor, 2010). The responses gathered suggest that the physical and emotional environment was appropriate and satisfactory to participants. The reflective journal had also provided opportunity for participants to record their thoughts and views without the added pressure of an interviewer awaiting their immediate response. This allowed them to only those responses that they felt comfortable with.

Here, the semi-structured interview approach allowed questions to evolve as a result to pre-designated broader and planned questions (Merton et al. 1990). The semi-structured interview was therefore an extension of everyday conversation – providing a familiar base for participants to interact from; offering the same social rules as everyday conversation (turn taking, responses influencing next discussion point, etc.) whilst enabling the researcher to probe into areas of interest and explore more deeply the underlying rationale, or clarify data provided, within the daily journal (Barriball and While, 1994). ‘Conversation’ might be perceived as a form of linguistic ‘dance’ between two or more individuals. As with most dances, there needs to be a lead – and the semi-structured interview approach enabled the researcher to take this role, whilst also allowing the dance to develop as each party jointly contributes to it.

Semi-structured interviews with four managers within the organisation provided triangulation to the data garnered from inductees. It had become obvious in the design stage that whilst the study would be capturing data around participants’ perspectives and expectations it might also prove interesting to consider the perspectives of another stakeholder – especially given that the vast wealth of literature currently within the field tended to centre heavily on the perceptions of this other stakeholder group. Not wishing to move away from the case study design (and more towards a comparative study), it was felt that to consider the views of managers as well would in fact add certain richness to the case study proposed. What had begun as a context-building factor of the design turned into a rich and interesting source of an entirely unanticipated set of results (as will be discussed in the latter chapters).

### **Data Analysis**

Analysis of the content of data gathered was largely through thematic analysis, using a framework offered by Kuby (2013) as the basis for this. Using initial ideas offered by Micciche (2007), Kuby offered a framework for considering data simultaneously; it seemed pertinent to do so with my data rather than considering each single piece of data in isolation because I wanted to gain insight holistically – and the questions asked of participants interconnected with another. I took a somewhat more general approach to conducting the thematic analysis - focusing on dominant themes emerging

from the data. Kuby's idea therefore provided a framework here therefore rather than a blueprint for analysing the data .

All responses were considered through transcribing and re-reading of participant data provided. This enabled a consideration not only of individual responses but also enabled the identification of initial common themes and trends through identification of repetition of key words, phrases, or inferences. These were documented as emergent themes and data was then analysed again, this time undertaking a content analysis, which led me to classify the information into the key themes I had identified and under which this chapter is reported. Finally, I conducted a final round of reading the responses, this time paying particular attention to responses to look for data, which contradicted any of the key themes, and considered the relevance of such contradictions.

To assist with the above, I used a self-devised spreadsheet to record the themes identified as well as recording contradictions and inferences. An overview of the primary themes identified is presented below. These will be discussed in more detail in the data chapters.

'Time' or 'speed' seem to be influential for both – slightly more so for managers	Participants are 'empty vessels' that the manager 'fills' with knowledge through the induction period
Inductees see their manager as a 'more able other'	Inductees have little effect on designing or directing the induction process
Managers do not consciously consider prior informal learning / skills	Inductees value learning through first hand experiences
Inductees sense a dissonance between the supportive nature of induction and the accountability of probation	Inductees give little recognition, if any, to prior learning that has not awarded them a 'certificate' or accreditation
Inductees expect their manager to lead and direct the induction process, and that this process will equip them for their day to day role in the future	Managers see the induction as a time to support but also to make judgements about inductees' suitability

Analysis of the written journals was again mainly through the same thematic analysis, but these did not fit so easily into a spread sheet and so an 'in-text' highlighting method was employed. Through detailed readings I identified key themes where particular responses were given. For example, where

participants had been asked about their prior training, education and qualifications, and I noted that overwhelmingly the responses centred on formal academic qualification and made no explicit reference to skills gained in previous roles. Furthermore, I noted where participants indicated what they had valued most – responses frequently related to shadowing and working alongside those who had been in similar or identical roles for a longer period of time. I was able to then consider these against existing theoretical perspectives and knowledge in order to reach my own conclusions.

### **Reflection on Data Gathering and Recording**

The methods selected did indeed enable the gathering of a wide range of data - written, verbal, and implied. The semi-structured interviews in particular were effective at being able to probe further into participants' responses, underlying influences, and reasoning for responses (Galletta, 2013 pp. 51-52). Their semi-structured nature gave a framework but equally allowed a reflexive and responsive response to answers provided. The absence of a second interview once data had been analysed meant that some areas remained less explored than might have been useful, so the next time similar research is conducted this might be a point for consideration. Although a telephone or email follow up might have been possible it was felt that this 'remote' contact did not fit with the original ethos of the study. Whilst a second or follow up interview would have been preferable, by this time the organisational re-structure within the field had already seen a number of staff moved to different work places, so it felt ethically inappropriate to do so. Instead, it was more appropriate to withdraw from the research site and allow the participants space and time to begin to fulfil the new expectations of their new roles. This also presented a very practical barrier in terms of access to participants - many had moved to different sites across the county and geographical locations of the original participants was now disparate.

The reflective journals were less effective for gathering data than had been hoped for. Although a reasonable quantity of data was generated, which felt 'rich' in its nature, initially participants completed their diary entries with a good level of detail, and some comprehensive responses were provided. This tailed off significantly however after the first 10 days and there was a definite decline in the volume and quality of responses provided from day 14 onwards. No participant considered themselves to be in induction after week 12 (despite the 'formal' period being 26 weeks) and no journals were fully completed for the entire period of research.

The issue of memory recall was considered. Interviewing participants retrospectively may have meant that their recollection of such events was skewed (possibly by the external influences described earlier on) (Longhurst, 2009). This was in part a rationale for the combination of methods chosen; the daily

journal provided a stimulated recall (Wilson & Nisbett, 1978) for the semi-structured interviews to be based around. Bounded recall is the term often used where researchers 'frame' the period of time that they are asking respondents to provide data for, and along with only a short time lapse between experience and interview, supported participants to provide responses that were as 'fresh' or 'untainted' account as possible through the use of bounded recall (Sudman & Bradburn, 1973). Therefore, combining stimulated recall with bounded recall enhanced the validity of the data gathered overall.

Upon analysis, I concluded that the interviews with the managers initially provided predominantly 'organisational' or 'corporate' responses rather than what I believe to be their more deeply held personal responses. Once settled into the interview process however they did start talking more openly to me – possibly because they recognised me as being 'one of them' (Longhurst, 2009 pp.583-584). However, there were occasions where I felt they provided answers that they felt they 'should' offer based on their professional role. Whilst the managers interviewed were open and amenable to the process, each electing of their own free will to be a part of the project, there was an air of 'detachment' from the responses they provided. Further chapters explore possible reasons and rationales for this (Diefenbach, 2009).

I considered validity from two primary angles - internal validity, that is – how the research is viewed by the participants, and the external validity, i.e. how my study would be situated from the wider perspective of the field of work-based learning (Baxter and Eyles, 1997 pp.508). Internally I optimised my study's validity through the provision of information and insight into what I was researching, how and why – as well as what I hoped to gain from the study as well as its limitations. I was careful not to claim that my study would achieve more than it was likely to. I was realistic as to what the study might or might not provide. I did not anticipate that it would provide me, or others, with full and total answers to the areas I had set out to explore (Secor, 2010). However, my aim was that it would provide me with further knowledge and insight into factors and influences at play, which may or may not be able to be generalised outside of the specific context from which they derive (Barriball and While, 1994). I hoped it might also provide a platform from which other research may develop.

Furthermore, in qualitative research, my accountability as a researcher is one of the most significant assets, which supports the validity of my findings (Unluer, 2012). By careful and meticulous consideration and planning, and by being able to provide a rationale for each step or stage of my project, I support the validity of the study overall (Diefenbach, 2009). The feedback I received from

participants and the actions of the organisation in adopting many of the recommendations I made, led me to believe that I achieved this.

The data gathered from the employee-completed induction journals and subsequent follow-up interviews was amalgamated and analysed as one set of data because the data-sets inter-related, and in fact, offered an increased richness by doing so. This was the intention behind the design. There were several occasions where one data set could not be disconnected from another, or where to do so would remove the contextual information provided by the other. Once the data analysis was completed, I looked across the themes, in both the data from the managers and from inductees to identify the best way to narrate the emerging story across the whole data set. In the next chapter, I present the main findings through the seven themes that allowed me to do this.

Throughout this chapter I have attempted to describe my orientation to the subject of study, the main methodological territory (case study) that it occupies, the methods used and ethical matters considered. I will return to reflect on the whole study and its limitations in the final chapter of this thesis.

## Chapter 4

### Data reporting and analysis

To consider the 'case' as a whole, data gathered from the employee-completed induction journals and one-to-one interviews was analysed as one complete data-set. This approach was further reinforced by the inter-relatedness of the data sources, e.g. interview questions were influenced by journal responses and therefore the two datasets were inextricably linked. To draw comparisons and contradictions, reference will be made to the source of data.

The initial analysis of data reported identified two broad phenomena:

Firstly, there was 'a sense of dissonance' that managers faced with respect to learning during induction. Exacerbated by financial directives, reorganisation and cut-backs to staff and costs, the need to 'progress' employees through their induction quickly was both implied and explicitly verbalised. Managers' dissonance arose, for instance, when they felt they needed to 'move' the employee to a position whereby they were suitably able to fulfil their employed role in as short amount of time as possible, in contrast to their professional belief that this was either not possible or not effective for the service in the longer run. At other times, they felt hemmed-in by procedures that did not give them room to adapt the induction programme to the everyday needs of the service, or of inductees.

A second phenomenon centred around entrenched/orthodox understandings about the roles of the managers and inductees during the induction phase, particularly in terms of their expectations about who drove or led the induction, and who had primary responsibility for the learning that occurred during induction. This was exacerbated by the way induction did not seem to allow room to consider inductees' prior experience, particularly in relation to the softer skills that were so important in the delivery of this particular service.

Three key themes were identified as being both the cause and propagators of these phenomena. Thus, these three themes will first be presented in this chapter and an in-depth exploration of these alongside literature and theoretical concepts will be presented in the next chapter (Chapter 5):

**1. Perceptions and practices around induction:** A. Expectations of induction; B. Terminology use and contradictions; C. Paperwork and the format of recording

**2. Understandings about learning during induction:** A. Who holds responsibility for learning during induction? B. Being part of a 'whole'; C. Misrecognition of prior learning

**3. Learning during a context of austerity:** A. Time/speed perceptions; B. Emotional challenges faced

There are many co-relations and interconnections here. For example, the misrecognition of learning (both that had taken place prior to and during the induction period) will highlight links to the sense of urgency and need for swiftness and the effect on terminology used - all of them fuelled by the effects of the most recent austerity measures imposed. Moreover, these aspects contribute to a situation where the recognition of learning becomes narrow, where anything other than a drive towards the cited end goal is perceived as superfluous, extraneous, even frivolous during a time of austerity, and should therefore remain hidden. The next chapter (chapter 5) will explore these implications further, situating them within the literature and concepts that have shaped this thesis.

## **Theme 1: Perceptions and practices around induction**

### **A. Respondents' expectations of induction**

With both inductees and managers, an area of questioning within the interviews centred around participants' expectations of the induction process. From managers there was a wide range of responses and these will be briefly considered below, before considering what this data set offered as a whole. When asked what they felt inductees wanted from the induction process, the following responses were offered:

*"I think they want to know how everything works – to be shown and told who does what or how things are done. I guess they want us to show them as their manager what we expect from them" (Steve)*

Here, the manager appears to consider new inductees' needs and expectations, albeit from his own preconceptions and perceptions. He does not comment on whether he might be able to 'deliver' on these perceived expectations, but his body language, tone and intonation during this part of the interview did not suggest that this was considered an area of difficulty for him. Here, the manager has placed himself in the role of 'more expert other', accepting of his perception that inductees require some hierarchy to the organisation, where the expert manager who is higher up the hierarchy is expected to impart direction to the employee. It is not entirely clear if the employee is in turn recognised as a passive receptive vessel for this new direction but the implication is that they would prefer to be 'shown' and to be 'told' how to be within the organisation. The discourse around induction here is framed in an instrumental and conventional way.

The second response took a slightly different view:

*"I don't think employees really know what they want to be honest – until they start they don't actually know what the job entails – not really – so we have to show and tell them" (Andrew)*

With this manager, the employee is considered uninformed or unconscious of their learning needs, because of the newness of their role within the organisation. The response draws on a discourse where the manager is more knowledgeable about what the employee needs and therefore wants. The inductee is characterised as someone who may be an 'empty vessel' – in the context of someone who is new to the job - who is to be led by a 'more able other'. What this perspective fails to consider are issues around relevant prior knowledge/experience/expertise that the employee could be bringing from another context. This new organisational context is viewed as predominantly defining what needs 'to be shown and told' during induction.

A third response showed less clarity about what this manager felt to be the expectation of inductees:

*“Oh, er, well I guess they want us to tell them what’s what – to learn about the ways of the LA and what they do – yes, it’s about showing how what they do links in to the bigger picture I think” (Phil)*

Here, there was much more hesitation and uncertainty, but with the wider organisational context again taking precedence. The manner of the response suggests that this was not something that had previously been considered by the respondent, and words like *“I guess its...”* and *“I think...”* suggest this. The *“yes, it’s about...”* mid-way through further reinforces the notion that he was perhaps thinking aloud as he was firming up his answer. Although the uncertainty is prevalent, there is still a suggestion that what most inductees would like to know is how they 'fit' within the wider organisation. Learning 'what's what, clarified as 'the ways of the LA', foregrounds this perception, followed by 'what they do' set within this context. Here too, the manager emerges as the expert in setting this out, made possible by establishing the LA and its agenda/objectives as of perceived primary importance during induction.

The fourth response was somewhat more ambivalent, and the manner in which it was delivered suggested a passivity to the process on the manager's part:

*“Well, I tend to find that they want some extra support, someone to show them the ropes, it’s about it being a time when they gradually do more and more until they do the whole job” (Andrew)*

Here, although the manager's verbal response suggests they see themselves in something of a 'scaffolding' role - offering opportunities for inductees to develop their own learning and understanding - the response was provided dismissively and in a hurried manner. This response was sometimes accompanied by a wave of the hand as if dismissing someone from a room. Seeing and hearing this response, it seemed that for this respondent, this was not an area he wished to embark on any further

discussion about, so he was not probed further (for risk of depleting goodwill in the researcher-participant relationship that had been established). The response though suggests that the perception of what inductees wanted was 'the showing of the establishment ropes', echoing the perception of previous managers.

A fifth response provided a somewhat more considered response, suggesting that there might have been some previous consideration about what inductees' expectations could be. The swiftness of the response suggested that this had been previously considered and accompanying body language further confirmed that this was an area which held the participant's interest.

*"I think employees think it's your (the managers') time to help them get to the point where they can gradually build up and build up their abilities so that eventually they can 'do' the job"*  
(Glynn)

The opening phrase of "employees **think** it's your time to help get them to the point", with emphasised intonation on the "think" suggested that this was perhaps not a perspective held by the participant. When questioned about this further therefore and asked if they felt that this was what it was, the response was "I suppose so, yes, it is really isn't it...?". The deflated manner with which this was provided was surprising – especially given the positive manner in which the earlier part of the response had been delivered. A space of time was allowed at this point to encourage the participant to elaborate further, and although at one point it was intimated that an additional response was to be provided, the participant held back and instead chose not to elaborate on his response. This aspect of the exchange will be explored later in this section where conflicts or discrepancies between one's personal and professional sense of self is considered.

In regards to gaining the required foundation of knowledge and skills, managers spoke frequently about the induction period being a time where they enabled the employee to 'know' what they would be doing and be able to do whatever that was to good effect. Responses were typified by the following statement:

*"...I need them to know what they need to do .... If they don't know what they're supposed to be doing I can't complain if they're not doing it, can I?! It's about setting a foundation – saying, look, this is the job this is what I need you to do." (Glynn)*

And

*"I need them to develop the skills they will need to have to be a good Family Support worker. I need them to be adaptable and to be able to get alongside families and move them out of the*

*situation they are in currently. In short I need them to stop families they are working with from escalating to needing social care intervention – that is costly and not good for either the child or the family. We've got too many children being looked after – and placed out of county – and we have to all do our bit to reduce that trend...they've got a key role to play in helping with doing that, so I need them to be doing so as quickly as possible” (Steve)*

This response indicates the pressures that managers were under – to stop the trend of placing children in care within other counties - as well as their disposition towards what they saw as their primary role – to be of service to vulnerable families, and to prevent the escalation of the situations that made them more vulnerable. In this, the role of inductees is to develop the necessary skills and settle in “*as quickly as possible*”.

After each respondent had given their replies they were asked what they based their responses on - had they ever asked or surveyed new recruits, for example? None had, nor were they aware of any such work being undertaken. Furthermore, they did not engage in any purposeful dialogue around this with inductees prior to commencement of induction. All reported that their beliefs were based on their own experiences; what they thought or believed to be the case or what they surmised from informal conversations with new recruits in the past.

Responses so far had tended to demonstrate a common tendency among managers, to believe that inductees expected the induction process to be led by the manager, particularly around the managers' role in enabling the employee to 'see' how their role fitted in with their co-workers and colleagues. It was less clear about whether this 'fitting in' was centred on the mechanics of 'doing' the role or more accurately related to organisational vision or values.

As for inductees, they all verbalised an acceptance that induction was an expected part of any new role. When asked about what they perceived as the purpose of the induction the following responses were received:

*“It's when your employer helps you to settle into your new role... I gradually find out what it is all about and what I have to do on a day-to-day basis” (Kate)*

*“I think in induction I expect to gradually build up to doing more and more of the job each day until I do it by myself – or with just occasional help” (Chloe)*

Both responses stress the gradual nature of learning on the job. When specifically asked about what they might expect to learn:

*“...as for what I will learn – it will be the time when I find out about policies and ‘what to do when’ and also when I get to see others doing the job already so that I can pick up on what is needed and at what level I am expected to support a family; to what degree do you help. But it’s a bit more than that too I think, I think it is also about learning what everyone else does...”*  
(Carol)

Almost all mentioned it being a time where an employee comes to understand the mechanics of an organisation, typified by Claire’s response below;

*“It is in induction where you cover things like set policies and procedures, and what to do if this happens or that happens, who to go to, who is who, where specific things are and how to use the IT systems etc.; all the bits you need to know about in order to do your job really”* (Claire)

Notably there was also a complete absence of the employee speaking about what learning they brought to the induction process. Whilst there was occasional yet infrequent reference to existing skills (notably only from graduate inductees) at no point was there an acceptance that the employee may have skills, knowledge or ways of working that they may be able to offer to the wider team. When probed about what they felt the purpose of their induction to be, none spoke of it as being a learning process with value to anything more than their immediate role. Similarly, none spoke about it being an opportunity for staff to amalgamate as collective learners. The ‘ideological community’ idea simply was not present. The term ‘I’ was consistently used when speaking about what would be learnt, and by whom – but never in relation to holding responsibility for leading/driving that process, nor for being collaborators in the journey.

Overwhelmingly, the majority of participants reported their expectation of the induction process as being an opportunity where they received information (determined by their manager) that would enable them to perform to a satisfactory level within their role. Additionally, learning was continually and specifically related to the employee’s current job role. Responses such as “*show me where things are kept or stored*”...*‘introduce me to people I need to be introduced to’* and “*show me what I need to know to do the job well*”, overshadowed any mention of developing skills that may also be useful to roles in the future, or indeed to other areas of their lives.

Considering the above responses as a whole, inductees seem to express their desire to be ‘shown and told’ what to do during induction. This reported ‘*show and tell*’ model echoes what managers also seemed to believe characterised induction, and perhaps provides an insight into how learning within this organisation is perceived more generally - that it is perhaps quite habit-bound. There is an influx of each new wave of recruits expecting to be ‘shown and told’ the ‘*right thing to do*’. Organisational norms

remain unshaken or unchallenged therefore. Neither inductees nor managers expect to see new ideas emerging in this induction phase – because innovation and creativity is not given the ‘space’ or the time to surface, neither is there an expectation of such new options. The repetition of practise further stifles potential creativity of practice and the ‘status quo’ becomes the norm.

Hunt spoke about participants being most ‘*anxious and willing*’ early on – ideally within the first hour (pp. 207). Anxiety was not evident within the responses, neither however was the internal motivation spoken about by Eccles and Winnie (1995). Instead, rather than ‘motivation’ the data suggested more of an ‘acceptance’ to be party to the process. Associated meanings of motivation includes terms such as enthusiasm, inspiration, impulse and drive. Body language did not generally offer an implication of enthusiasm, and neither verbal nor non-verbal communication implied drive or inspiration. Instead, both sets of participants’ responses demonstrated passivity to the process, with inductees tending to expect induction to be led by managers and managers tending to accept this, but without purposeful or conscious thought of what or why this was the case, let alone whether this was in fact the most effective model of induction or best practice.

Just as with managers, here too there was a sense that there was a standard package to what needed to be learned in order to fulfil the role adequately. Examples included:

*“I just want to get through the induction bit – to know what I need to know to get on and do the job” (Kate)*

And

*“Yeah, there’s like certain stuff that you have to know to be able to do a reasonable job – I don’t think it’s actually written anywhere but there must be – if you wanted to write it I suppose perhaps you could – like a list of ‘in order to be a reasonable family support worker you must at least have to know about...’ type of thing...” (Chloe)*

Both sides seemed to think that induction was the time to acquire a templated ‘suite’ of skills rather than exploit the new experience and knowledge, or potential creativity that new recruits might bring to the service.

Considering the above responses therefore against the literature on adult learning we see that inductees demonstrated a type of ‘readiness to learn’ (Knowles, 1984) and implied willingness to do so – although this was implied as being linked to enabling them to ‘do the job well’ rather than an openness to learning per se. Thus, the willingness was inextricably linked to holding relevance to their day job – inductees needed to be able to see the link between what they were learning and how it

would enhance their everyday practice. A difficulty this presents is that of course early on in the induction process, the employee is not so easily able to link their learning to their day-job as they have a limited experience of doing that job and in that specific context. The daily induction journals further reinforced this idea as many in the earliest entries (the first 1-2 weeks) would record activity undertaken but the 'learning' taken place as a result was often scant or not completed. Where it was completed the entries tended to attribute to superficial aspects of the role, for example;

**Clare:**

Activity undertaken – Attended joint HV (Health Visitor) allocation meeting

Learning – Met link HV

**Chloe:**

Activity undertaken – Attended CAF meeting

Learning – met new Social Worker from 'X' team.

**Carol:**

Activity undertaken – Staff team meeting

Learning – Got given new 'step down' protocol for CIN to TAC

The responses here are indicative as to the level of detail within almost all journal responses.

Superficial in nature – short, concise and limited in depth of detail, the organisation's narrowness of the 'show and tell' model is seen here replicated by the employee in their reporting of what took place. It is entirely possible that inductees, in the course of a busy and perhaps stressful induction period, simply felt they could not spare the time to record more detailed comments. However, this did not seem to be the reason when follow up interviews were conducted, leading me to take the brevity of these recordings at face value.

In the next section of this theme, I wish to focus on the different ways in which managers referred to and understood the 'induction period'. This is relevant as the perceptions and practices of induction can change substantially depending on whether the 6-month trial run at a job leans more towards 'induction' or 'probation'.

**B. Induction vs. probation**

The corporate policy, within the context was that induction lasted for a period of six months from the first day of starting. This was standard across all directorates without variation. Paperwork ("The

Induction Record Form”) for managers to complete covered the full six-month period, with specific entries for days 1-5 and then weeks 1-4, followed by a three and then six month formal review requirement. There was a requirement for managers, at the end of this six-month period, to make a professional decision as to whether to confirm that employee into their post, to extend their induction period for up to a further three months (documented grounds must be given to support this decision), or to cease the employee’s contract at that time as a result of an unsatisfactory performance review at the end of the induction period. At the three month review period, the manager was to give an indication based on performance to date, whether they felt the employee was likely to be confirmed into post at six months completion, or not. If the ‘not likely’ option was indicated then a rationale for such was required, with an action plan outlining what corrective action needed to take place in order for the employee to succeed. The three and six month milestones therefore were each key. However, when participants (managers and inductees) were asked about how they perceived the induction period, it was commonly viewed as being the ‘first few weeks’ of a new job role. No inductee spoke of being actively engaged in induction activity for the full six months, and although managers made frequent reference to the period as the inductees’ ‘probationary period’, there was less emphasis on the actual scaffolding, learning and developing of the employee beyond the initial 3-4 weeks.

The interchangeable use of these terms creates a dissonance in minds of inductees, if not managers. Inductees spoke readily about their expectations of induction and what they expected it to consist of.

Analysing the data further showed that the term induction was used by both sets of respondents when talking about supportive measures or activities that they undertook in the initial weeks. *“Those first few weeks when you get to find out who everybody is and what they do”* was spoken about by Clare. Glynn (manager) spoke about *“planning specific meetings [for the inductees] to attend so they get to find out who’s who and what’s what”*. ‘Induction’ was a time of *“showing them the ropes”* and *“making sure they know what do to”* (Glynn) and inductees spoke about being *“shown what they needed to do”* (Chloe) and *“when you get to find out about all the things you need to do to do the job well”* (Kate).

‘Probation’ had more serious consequences, associated with inductees having to ‘prove’ themselves worthy to managers. Conversely, probation tended to have a more consequential meaning, being used where either group were talking about a judgement of performance being made. This can be exemplified by Phil’s response (a manager) who said *“...its also a time to make sure they’re up to the job”* and later saying:

*“we have ‘essential criteria’ – one of which is about qualification levels, but I also have to be sure they can do it in practice, it’s all very well having a certificate or a degree but I want to know how*

*they react when faced with a real life situation where a child might be at risk if they do the wrong thing”.*

In parallel an employee spoke of

*“showing her manager that she’s a ‘safe bet’ and that I have the ability to do ‘on the ground’ what I spoke about at interview” (Tanya).*

Also evident within the data was the inter-changeability of these rather different terms. Sometime after the initial data analysis this was revisited again, in both sets of responses, particularly to consider the language surrounding each occasion of these terms being used. While all of those interviewed did indeed refer to the period of time considered as the ‘induction period,’ they seemed to use a different mental framework to describe it, i.e. that of probation. That is, whilst the explicit language was around ‘induction’, inductees were also aware of and perceived themselves as ‘under probation’ simultaneously. The inter-twinning of two quite different aspects of a new recruit’s is exemplified by the response offered by one manager:

*“...it’s when you provide them [inductees] with opportunities to find out about what they will be doing, what they will be doing, soon, so its important that I give them as broad a picture as possible early on so they start to see how everything works together. I also need to make sure they’re up to the job – that they will be able to fit in to that broader picture – and enhance the picture, not just add to it but enhance it. I suppose it’s when I test what they’ve said in interview and on their application if you put it bluntly. Yes, put bluntly I am giving them opportunity to grow and develop into that role but I also need to know if they’re up to it, or not – this is my chance to do that – the later you leave it the harder it is if you don’t realise early on that they’re not up to it, gosh – and don’t I know that?!” (Phil)*

Given that there were threats of job losses and financial pressures, this overlap between probation and induction was possibly a contributing factor in deterring, or reducing the extent to which inductees admitted to a need for more support. The safer option was to try and convince others, and themselves, that they were fully and quickly competent in their roles so were more likely to be considered a ‘good’ employee, and therefore more likely to be confirmed into post and retained. This became evident when asked about what they considered managers’ expectations to be. Then they described situations associated with probation, with responses relating to “*making sure.....*” and “*checking that.....*” outweighing responses which presented more of a scaffolding nature to the process. Similarly, whilst managers recognised that inductees wanted ‘opportunities’ and ‘to be shown’ what to do in these early weeks, they too referred to it being an opportunity to assess tacit and demonstrable skills of an

employee so as to make a judgement of their suitability for the role at the end of the six month period. For example, Andrew stated

*“It’s all very well sitting in an interview and asking them to say how they would respond to situation A or B, but I need to be able to see them in action – I need to know, at the end of six months or whatever, can I let them out on their own and be confident that they are doing a good job, not just an OK job, but a really good one – one that is going to make a difference to children here in...”.*

He extended this to also add

*“...and it’s not just about ‘what’ they’re doing, but I want to know ‘how’ they go about it – that’s really important. We’ve got a good team here, they get along and they perform well, and that’s because they know not only ‘what’ but ‘how’ to approach a family – that’s important, it’s the oil that greases the wheels – that’s the real clincher for me”.*

Analysing vocabulary used immediately prior to the term being used showed that the term probation was used when participants were being probed and pushed for a definite response, or, right at the end of an answer. What this suggests is that whilst the socially accepted term is ‘induction’ there is an underlying appreciation of a somewhat implied, although a high-stakes agenda, that these early weeks are also where a manager is making a judgement of suitability and competence. Furthermore, there was a sense that this was being done covertly, or at least not explicitly. The implication for managers is that whilst they generally wish to appear supportive, friendly and build a professional rapport with new recruits, they have an underlying appreciation that it is also a time for scrutiny and judgement. New recruits for their part were not oblivious to this, but seemed to sense this rather than having been made aware of this formally.

This also came to attention when analysing inductees’ completed induction journals. As the proposed induction period was deemed as lasting 6 months, participants had been provided with an induction journal that allowed daily entries for each working day of the six-month period. What was curious was that none of the inductees completed the paperwork even for just the first month, and some ceased recording after just 2 weeks. I wondered if they simply got fed up with recording, or if there was less activity to record, or if they were simply too busy to give me all the details? The follow-up interviews therefore started with this precise line of enquiry. All participants reported that although ‘officially’ their induction period was six months they felt that the actual ‘learning’ elements were undertaken within the initial 2-3 weeks. One participant described this as;

*“Well when you first start you’re... say...100% supervised and told or shown what to do. Then as you show that you are OK doing, certain bits you are only supervised say 80% of the time, and left to do your own thing for the other 20%. Then towards the end it’s the other way round – you’ll be doing your own thing 80% of the time and having a bit of support – although less than in the first few days and week – for the other 20%. By the end of your induction you might not be 100% on your own but you’re pretty close to it” (Carol)*

This participant could be describing a gradual decline in the level of support given but she talks about it in terms of her gaining autonomy. As did three others:

*“...and then after a little while you get to do more and more by yourself – I was quite surprised how quickly I was able to get on with most things by myself, the everyday stuff...” (Claire)*

*“I think much of it is about having the confidence to do what you feel is the right thing. At the start you perhaps don’t have that because you don’t really know what you are supposed to be doing and everything is brand new, but as each day goes on, you do more and more and more and need less and less help” (Chloe)*

*“...well, like on day 1 I was having to ask about practically every single thing, I was always asking someone about something, and yet as the days and weeks go on, you have to ask about less and less because you know it...Everyone was really helpful and – I didn’t feel like I was a pain, they were all just really helpful and supportive” (Sammy)*

These four spoke about their induction as being an initially manager led activity in the first few days – and then gradually moving towards one that they describe as having some control over. Support was “there if they needed it”, and was close at hand, but they had some degree of control over whether they accessed it, when and from whom.

This was quite different from a significant proportion (3) who took a more passive response - instead speaking about managers having the primary control over what was ‘administered’ to the employee and used terminology which situated the employee in a much more passive role. One of them though was quite critical of the passivity generated by the induction:

*“The first few days or even weeks are a bit yucky in any new job I think, you turn up – and your day is directed for you: you’ll learn this today, or you’ll see that today, or you’ll meet this person this afternoon. It’s nice when you finally get to spread your wings a little bit or and know what you’re going to be doing as well – initially you feel a bit like a sheep being herded through a process” (Tanya)*

The remaining participants (5) offered a blended insight. However, there emerged a strong belief that the first few weeks of the induction period was for the manager to provide adequate support, training, guidance and opportunities to enable the employee to fulfil most of their duties, with a gradually increasing expectation as the days and weeks moved on. Then, it appeared that at somewhere around the three to five-week marker, it was more about the inductee demonstrating to the manager that they were able and competent in their role and did not in fact need or require a heightened level of support – in effect they were fully functioning as a ‘regular’ member of the team.

It was interesting that most of the inductees seemed to think that their induction was coming to a ‘natural’ end when they did not need to ask another member of the team questions regarding technical or procedural matters of their everyday job:

*“Well to start with you’re like ‘I don’t know what I’m doing’, then as the days go on you can gradually do a bit more and a bit more, which is nice – no one ever seemed to mind the fact that I kept having to ask them stuff but you do worry that you are stopping them from doing what they need to do, or that you just look a bit stupid for asking a silly question. It’s nice when you at last have a day where you think – actually I’ve had to ask for hardly any help today – that’s a nice feeling – when you aren’t so reliant on everyone else” (Sophie)*

So, although the first 6 months were supposed to be a time for asking questions and getting ready for the job, inductees themselves believed they needed less time as ‘inductees’ and perhaps saw themselves as ‘probationers’ after the first few weeks.

### **C. Format of recording (paperwork)**

The lengthy ‘Induction Record Form’ completed for each new employee provided further insight. Although titled “Induction Record Form”, it went on to have time-bound headings such as ‘Week 1 of probationary period’ and ‘Comments on progress made within month 1 of probationary period’. These seemed mandatory for all new recruits to the LA. It seemed to be ‘the norm’ though that they were not completed for internal movers and this may be due to the fact that internal movers are not subject to a probationary period and instead are confirmed into post straight away (assuming they have completed their initial 6-month probationary period satisfactorily). Managers reported there being no training in how to complete the Induction Record Document, and the document itself was a series of tick boxes initially, with output statements such as ‘Has attended H&S training’, followed by a ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ box. With the example given above – attendance at H&S training would result in a tick of ‘Yes’ – and appropriately so. Ticking a ‘Yes’ here would simply signal that the individual attended the venue, sat on the seat and stayed for some amount of time. It did not confirm competency or even understanding. All

were aware that the form had to be completed and submitted to the Human Resources department, however almost all also made reference to the fact that they felt the completed documents were not 'checked' nor was any feedback given – and so there was lack of clarity as to whether they had been completing them correctly, a sense of disappointment that no feedback was ever received about the quality of the recording or activity undertaken. As a result managers were largely relying on their own (historical) personal experience of induction to influence how they planned employee inductions at the current time.

To try and focus in on what the key priorities of staff induction (from manager's perspective) were they were asked to list their top four or five aims for any staff induction. The table below shows the responses given by each respondent (each respondent did not give the full 4-5 priorities)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
To cover the LAs policies and procedures – so all working to same framework	*	*		*	*	
To cover the basic employer responsibilities; i.e. H&S, Safeguarding etc.	*			*		*
Get them working towards the wider CYP strategy so that everything they do contributes to the wider goal		*			*	
To equip them with what they need to know in order to do their job well	*		*			
To make sure they have the skills and knowledge they need to be able to perform in that role			*			
For 'us' to get to know them – what their strengths and weaknesses are					*	
To make sure that they are right / compatible for the role	*					
To identify any training needs						*
To give graduated additional support until such time that they can operate independently						*
Show them how things happen – ways of working etc.				*		

To give them a period of lee-way so that there are no excuses down the line if they do not perform well		*				
Get them working towards the wider CYP strategy so that everything they do contributes to the wider goal		*			*	

All except one respondent gave a response that included a corporate-led induction programme, either by seeing the main priority as being to cover corporate policies and procedures, by ensuring the employee contributes to a wider CYP strategy, or by covering mandatory training such as Health & Safety, Safeguarding etc. There was a distinct ‘corporate’ nature to the responses given and there was a strong sense that managers felt the construction of the induction sat with themselves.

At times responses suggested that individuals were in a position of leading and supporting a process in which they do not feel wholly supported or competent themselves. Managers were not trained in delivering induction programmes, nor was there any guidance afforded to managers on how to deliver work-based learning and vocational learning for inductees. Furthermore, it was not a requirement for managers to have any knowledge or understanding of how to deliver learning to adults, and yet a significant part of their role involved supporting, overseeing, monitoring and developing the professional development of those who they line managed. There was supporting documentation in the form of written policies and guidelines, and there were internally offered formal ‘training’ courses that inductees could be booked onto – thus alleviating some of the burden of responsibility of the manager. However, many respondents (both inductees and managers) returned at this point to reporting a dissonance between the paperwork completion they were required to undertake and the practical application of the job in hand. An example of a manager response is given below;

*“Yes, we have paperwork and that lays out very clearly what to do and when. People don’t operate in tick boxes though of course, do they?” (Steve)*

And

*“The paperwork is fine. So long as you have one employee, who work five days a week, is office based, next to you, and doesn’t have to go out to meetings or actually ‘do’ the job you need them to of course...or of course that you have to do an actual job!” (Glynn)*

Having sight of the document and paperwork in reference also raised questions about the effect on the manager that they are to report and confirm specific outcomes without apparently being provided any

guidance on 'how' to achieve specific outcomes. They are provided with the 'what' but not the 'how'. It raised questions about how this affected the way they viewed learning in the workplace, and how this might be transmitted to the inductee. Whilst no inductee made specific reference to this, looking at the data as a whole, this consideration provided some explanation of why learning recorded might have been so superficial in places – the paperwork framing the situation therefore setting the principles of the situation - also supported this superficial approach.

In essence, there appears to be a narrow vision of what induction might do for both inductee and the organisation. Both managers and inductees reported their expectations of a 'show and tell' model of induction, with inductees needing to learn about a 'suite of skills' and generally playing a more passive role and learning to fit into the hierarchy and doxic ways of the organisation itself (this last point will be explored in more detail in the following section). The interchangeable use of 'induction' and 'probation', with their different associations fuels the passivity of inductees who may opt for low risk behaviour that does not draw on their own experience and knowledge to bring newness and creativity to the organisation. Managers also seem inclined to operate on a tick-box approach to induction even as they appear dissatisfied with it. Their own lack of training for how to best use this period in a new recruit's course through the organisation does not help. The paperwork's simplicity, in combination with the above factors also serves to diminish (simplify) a period and processes that deserve more complex treatment.

## **Theme 2: Learning during Induction**

### **A. Responsibility over learning**

Overwhelmingly, the majority of participants reported their expectation of the induction process as being an opportunity where they received information (directed by their manager) that will enable them to perform to a satisfactory level within their role. None cited an expectation of an opportunity for them to direct learning, or to identify areas that they felt to be beneficial to their own development. Within the face to face questioning, the change of body language was noted as well as verbal language, as typified by a response provided by Alice:

*“Well, it's when your boss kind of shows you what to do – I want them to tell me what I have to do, show me where things are kept or stored, introduce me to people I need to be introduced to I guess... I think it's like – they look at what you've done, they will know what you need to know to do the job well – and then they fill in the gaps” (Alice)*

Here, Alice is suggesting a passivity to her learning, there is the expectation that her boss will 'show and tell' her what to do, and then be responsible for filling in gaps in her knowledge or understanding to enable her to eventually have a 'full suite' of competencies. Alice does not appear to take responsibility for identifying gaps – the implied assumption is that her boss will know what these gaps are, although there appeared to be no mechanism at all for capturing or analysing what knowledge was already held or could be transferred from previous experiences. It was also not so much the language used but the body language that accompanied the response. Arm and hand gestures appeared 'dismissive' of the employee holding responsibility. Hand gestures were used to depict what appeared to be a compartmentalised or segmented approach to the learning, and the pointing of fingers towards a 'virtual' manager suggested strongly that the employee held a strong belief that it was most definitely the role of the manager to lead the induction process. Her own body positioning appeared to change to one which was guarded and deflecting of the question, suggesting that she felt it was not a responsibility that she felt she should hold. Whereas this type of response was common, it was at one end of the spectrum, the wholly 'passive' end. The response offered by Inductee 3 (Clare) echoes Alice's, as she described the induction as;

*"...where you get to know everyone, to see how you fit into the 'bigger picture' so to speak – where they [your manager] get to find out if you are really right for the job or not, and vice versa. It's where they provide you with the opportunities to gradually be able to do more and more of the job, and you to show them that you are capable and able"* (Clare)

This is an echo of the response provided by Alice. Clare is also demonstrating a passivity to the learning to be undertaken and also places an emphasis on her boss both identifying and then directing the programme of learning to be undertaken. The suggestion that they "*provide you with the opportunities to gradually be able to do more and more of the job*" suggests the 'filling in of the gaps' that Alice described. Yet again we hear of no mechanism for analysing what was 'needed' or what gaps were evident prior to undertaking this programme of learning, nor a means of evaluating progress within the programme of study.

Within the next chapter of this thesis some reasoning and explanation for why this might have been evident in this context will be posited as analysis of data had begun to suggest that there was a relationship between significant organisational changes – in this case brought about by political austerity measures – and a greater reliance on this 'show and tell' model described above. This was particularly intriguing because at such times there can be an increased need for inductees to be flexible and able to transfer skills (often swiftly), and yet practices described here by both sets of participants

appeared to discourage this. Austerity therefore began to emerge as an inhibiting factor to the informal workplace learning that had already been identified as important in such contexts as this, or at very least as a 'risk' to such practices.

The remaining responses tended to gravitate around the two points exemplified above. And so we see a continuum of expectations - on one hand some inductees view the induction period as wholly manager driven, and the expectation is that the effectiveness of the process sits with the manager. At the other end of the continuum there is an acceptance of a degree of employee engagement and agency. However, none reported an expectation that the employee could be responsible for identifying their own learning needs within this process, nor was there a sense that it should or could be a collaborative process. It was largely expected that the manager should, and would, know every aspect of the job in question and would plan an appropriate programme of induction that covered all relevant aspects within the induction phase.

Data analysis so far had already identified that there appeared no mechanism, formal or informal, to evaluate or share information about inductees' learning needs or expectations. Follow-up interviews sought to explore this further. On the whole, inductees recognised this as a failing, however they posed no solution, nor accepted that this could sit within their responsibility. When asked specifically about what they felt they brought to the process, responses included:

*"I think I bring a 'will' to do a good job, and I am keen and open to having a go. I think that is a good thing, because you've got to be willing to do what is set out for you because if not how are you going to learn how to do the job? So, in terms of what I bring I think it is about that enthusiasm and will. I can't teach them how to do their job because they've all be doing it much longer than me so I don't think I have anything to offer there – unless it's like to say why do we do it that way, I suppose...but no, I think it's more about just being willing to muck in and help as much as I can" (Carol)*

The idea of inductees needing to be 'willing to do what is set out for them' is a fair expectation or comment, and so too is the idea that the manager's role is to help inductees to understand 'why things are done in a certain way'. The idea that inductees bring no learning, or ability to generate learning due to the limited period of time they have been in the role is more disputable. Inductees appeared to be voicing a predominantly passive perspective. Whilst they spoke about personal characteristics such as willingness, being enthusiastic, etc., they expected to be led in their technical learning and considered themselves to have minimal worker's capital (experience, knowledge etc.)

Other similar responses included:

*“...I am starting from scratch, so I have to rely on my manager arranging an induction programme that makes sure I get to cover all the important bits...”* (Sue)

Or

*“...this is all very new for me, so until I get in there and am doing it I won't know what I don't know..”* (Carol)

And finally

*“Well I think it's important for me to be open to the induction process because that is where I will develop the skills I need to do this job well...”* (Sam)

The above responses show that inductees place themselves in the position of 'recipient' of the learning. The insecurities that are an inevitable part of any induction certainly seem to play a part in highlighting inductees' 'newness' within the organisation and in their new roles. This also seems to lead managers to be seen as the 'provider' or leader of the induction process, with the expectation that managers knew what they needed to learn. An even more definite example was offered by Sammy who, when asked a similar question, responded:

*“Well they (the manager) should know what each of their staff have to do that they line manage so it is up to them to make sure they teach you that; that's why they are managers and we are not! I do what I am asked to do – I can't be responsible for not knowing something they haven't told me about, can I..?”* (Sammy)

Within a neo-liberal context whereby individuals are being encouraged to take greater responsibility for their own learning and development, these responses were not congruent with this expectation. Within the professional field within which the research was undertaken there was an implied assumption that self-reflection and a personal sense of responsibility for one's own professional development was the normative behaviour of those employed. This did not come through within the data here. Instead, these typical responses around inductees 'not knowing what they did not know' laid the responsibility (predominantly) with managers to ensure that key areas of learning were covered.

However, when Tanya was asked about what she felt managers used as a basis to plan induction activity and learning, she expressed doubts about this dominant belief that managers would and could know everything:

*“Well I guess they are the managers so in theory they know the ins and outs of what the job entails. I don’t think they always do, but that is the idea anyway.”*

By expressing such doubts, Tanya opens up a space for a greater ‘presence’ of inductees as agents within the induction process. However, she also added:

*I think I had quite a good idea of what my ‘gaps’ were after a few days, or even I guess just before I started, but it isn’t really for me to go to them and say I need X, Y and Z – they know more than me about what I need to know so it’s just sort of up to them I guess”*

(Tanya)

This alludes to the unspoken pressures to conform to the orthodoxies of a workplace, the belief that even while one could gauge one’s needs well, it is seen as somehow unacceptable to voice these views, particularly when one’s position is perceived to be at the bottom of the hierarchy, as an inductee.

By and large therefore, inductees were reliant on the guidance of someone whom they saw as ‘more expert’ than them. It is possible that what was recorded in their journals can be explained as ‘enacted’, as learning to a script rather than a will to ‘create’ learning. What is meant by this is that the journals contain a ‘passing on’ of what the inductees feel to be the normative story of what they have learned rather than what they may consider they have ‘actually’ learned in practice. Instead of a depth of recognition or reporting, a quick, ‘off the cuff’ response was usually provided – for instance, by solely reporting the ‘headline’ story, without thinking any deeper about it. Early on in the induction process, a foundation of the importance of self-reflection, self-direction and self-motivation in workplace learning had not been set and perhaps the result is that learning was seen as immediate and effective – resulting in inductees only recording moments/events of learning that were directly related to their professional role.

Of the inductees, only Andrea said:

*“Erm, well I think it is about listening and being confident to ask questions if you don’t understand something really. Sometimes a fresh pair of eyes looks at something differently. That’s not to say that what they are doing already is wrong but I’m always open to someone asking me why I do something a certain way because it makes me think.”* (Andrea)

Here, she sees her ‘newbie’ status as being able to offer new perspectives, to make those more experienced colleagues around her to also learn to see their practice anew, as a result of her questions about why something is done in a particular way. However, Andrea is also astute in pointing out that this kind of questioning, particularly as a new colleague, requires a degree of confidence. As a graduate

employee, Andrea perhaps could be expected to have a degree of assurance or confidence to ask these kinds of questions, but her quick change of subject from 'they' ('not to say that what they are doing already is wrong') to 'I' (but I'm always open to someone asking me why I do something a certain way') opens up room to question whether she really managed to ask these sorts of questions. This also underscores the strong sense of needing to comply with organisational hierarchies and doxas during the induction period.

The bulk of the responses above detail, a degree of passivity with which inductees approached induction. Raelin (1997) talks about how learning comes about through a process of '*reflection in action*' – of learning being a self-motivated process which relies on intrinsic motivation on the part of the employee. The passivity here is not congruent with this kind of learning. Rather than the responsibility for one's own learning, inductees clearly positioned their manager as knowing more and therefore needing to drive the process.

## **B. Being part of the whole**

In both the interviews and journals, inductees inferred that they had a tacit expectation that their induction period would enable them to somehow 'see' how their roles 'fitted in' both within their immediate and wider professional context. This was a common reference that was made notably within the employee interviews but also touched upon within the manager's responses. Fuller writes extensively about the sense of becoming and belonging in the workplace as being a pre requisite of learning (2007). This links to the participant responses about them wishing to 'fit in' – data suggests they were wanting to 'belong'. Analysis of responses highlighted that inductees rated their induction by how effectively it enabled them to gain a sense of how, within their role, they played some small part in the wider professional context of their organisation – particularly their immediate working environment and that of the wider professional context in their immediate locality.

There were different contextual boundaries described, which did not appear to be role specific or influenced by the specific job role. For example, three different Family Support Workers each spoke of being able to 'see' how their role fits into the 'bigger picture', but within different professional boundaries:

Melanie described this notion of knowing one's boundaries;

*"Well it's good to be able to see how what you do fits in with what the Social Worker is doing, so that you don't cross over or duplicate what she is doing. So to know what bits we as a*

*Children's Centre do, and where that starts and stops and where Social Care then takes over – that's helpful so we just know what each other are doing really"* (Melanie)

Denise described her perception of the importance of identify her role in the 'bigger picture';

*"Well, I guess it's so that you can see how your small part plays a part in that overarching CYP plan I suppose. It's about saying – well OK – here is what we are trying to achieve overall and this is what I am doing to help you get towards that – no matter how small – that we all make sure we are going in the same direction I guess"* (Denise)

Kate touched on both of these aspects;

*"I found going to the Health Visitors team meeting the most helpful - it was nice to be able to put a face to a name, and to be able to start building those professional relationships really, because they do their thing over there and we do our thing over here but really we're all aiming for the same thing over all – and so we need to know what we are all doing; not in every detail although sometimes that too, but generally, mainly so you don't step on anyone's toes and do the wrong thing or do someone else's thing!"* (Kate)

And so, here, responses tended to suggest that an expectation of induction is that it would enable the employee to be able to visually and mentally identify how their role fitted in within the professional community within which they practiced. The follow-up interviews helped to illuminate this, which was helpful – especially given that journal responses had been largely superficial. The journal responses had really only offered the suggestion that inductees saw themselves as operating in an 'ecological' community whereas for the first time here we see that what they describe is more like that of a political community - an occupational group with shared professional interests. This is exemplified by Denise who talks openly about the "*overarching CYP plan*" and it is about what "*we*" are "*trying to achieve overall*". And also Kate, who states "*we are really all aiming for the same thing overall*".

Another way in which inductees learnt from being part of a whole was in a mundane yet striking way, by shadowing or being part of more experienced teams. Inductees' responses, both within their journals and the interviews, talked frequently about 'shadowing' and working alongside others. In Kaldor's (1998) writing about the field of Information Technology, he aligns these kinds of complex social interactions as being similar to the way information is presented on the World Wide Web. Eriksen explains how information in a book is linear and structured, whereas web based knowledge, or, as in this study, socially based knowledge is disorganised, random and non-structured (2004). So while the outer framework of the induction appears structured in a linear way; i.e. with a start and end point, the

'space' in-between was far less so, and much more messy and complex. Leibniz characterises this kind of 'space' as the pivotal point where knowledge and learning occurs (2007) while Fenwick (2006) notes that enabling individuals the opportunity to do so within this 'space' is the difference between them creating and embedding their own knowledge or simply enacting what they have learnt.

This was exemplified in the following two responses, both of which show how observations of other staff influenced the thinking of two new inductees:

*"Being at the baby weighing clinic was good – it was nice to work alongside 'X' – she has a really nice way with the families, especially new mums and young mums. I could see how me working with her can really help families that need it to make that transition into the children's centre; she's got a really nice friendly way about her – and hopefully by me and her working really well together and being consistent in our approach with families we will be able to encourage them into other activities too"* (Kate)

Here, the employee has clearly observed the professional practice and behaviour of her new colleague and can already recognise that she wishes to adopt a similar approach within her practice, for a joint professional endeavour of engaging harder to reach families. As a contrast, a follow-up interview with an employee who had noted 'Attended TAC meeting' in her daily journal and 'How not to speak with parents!' under the section asking what had been learnt, yielded the following comment:

*"Oh, yes.... Well I put that because yes, I did learn something, but it wasn't particularly positive. 'X' was talking to the mum – there were lots of needs and mum clearly had several issues but I just felt that 'X' was so, I don't know...uncaring perhaps...that, well I just think mum wanted to say more than she had the opportunity to. Afterwards I just thought, well, next time I'm in a similar position I don't want to be like that – I want to let parents have the time to say what is a concern for them – you never know – it might be the only time they have the chance to...you might be the first or last person that actually asks them what is a priority for them...and of course their child. I wouldn't want to come across like she did, that's all I guess"* (Tanya)

This second respondent appeared to have a very genuine sense of disappointment at how this parent had been treated. There is a sense that the parent was rushed and not given an opportunity to present their concerns within a caring environment, perhaps because of time pressures or fatigue or apathy. Both inductees, even with vastly different experiences with team members were exhibiting signs of a certain professional habitus that would be expected from those in caring fields. Banks suggests (2011) that within caring professions inductees feel a sense of '*sine qua non*' – an inherent sense of accountability towards their work and its subjects and that one of the effects of a new managerialism

approach is that creativity is suppressed and the emotional challenge of the job under such constraints is felt even more intensely. In the second example, whilst the employee had been through the mechanical aspects of the process, the inductee felt that she was not displaying the care required of her role, possibly curtailed by the directive to consider a minimum number of 'cases' within the TAC panels each week.

Overall therefore, the inductees' data is intriguing. It showed that they held a desire to become 'experts' i.e. 'be able to tackle problems beyond themselves' (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 1993) and they saw the importance of team learning to achieving this. Their team, however, consisted of their new colleagues and allied professionals – no mention of previous colleagues or a professional team beyond that of their immediate workplace or employing organisation was made.

Whilst the social nature of learning was recognised by inductees they made no reference to the learning that they had achieved through this medium in prior roles. However, they did recognise formal learning achievements that had occurred previously (qualifications etc.) which suggests that a recognition of prior learning is not missing completely - only when it relates to learning which is less formal in nature. This is concerning, as Jack and Donnelan (2010) explain that a lack of recognition of one's skill-set and professional attributes fuels a decline in their motivation, self-belief and contentment in their role.

### **C. Misrecognition of Prior Learning**

New inductees may very well have knowledge and skills that can be utilised in their roles from the outset. However, this research found that the passive role of 'recipient' adopted by inductees caused this prior learning to be largely ignored, assuming it was discovered at all by managers.

#### ***Managers***

There is already a breadth of writing around different notions of accreditation and recognition of prior learning (Berglund, 2010). This rarely refers to recognising or acknowledging the 'softer' skills that an individual has learned within a previous role or activity and tends to focus on more formal learning. There is no singular definition offered for the recognition of prior learning (RPL), although there are variations on a similar theme offered by the likes of Challis (1993), Evans (2003), Anderson and Harris (2006) and Anderson and Fejes (2010) which, in general terms, suggests that RPL refers to the knowledge and skills acquired previously - often being documented and evaluated via a less structured process. Within Children's Services, where every scenario and situation that a worker faces with a family is unique, staff members need to be able to transfer previous learning, skills and experiences to

new situations on a daily basis. Therefore, there is no one single academic qualification or formal training course that can equip a member of staff for every eventuality that they may meet. Thus softer skills, informal learning and workplace learning increase in their importance. Furthermore, an ability to build rapport, develop good inter-personal skills and communication skills are also required in order to engage with customers (adults and children) and to work with them to best effect. Whilst formal learning programmes can teach the theory of how to do this, a depth of learning comes from the application of 'doing'.

Therefore, in this context, informal learning takes precedence over more formal learning in terms of developing these skill-sets. As such, because these softer skills in particular are skills rather than technical abilities, they are developed through life experiences in all areas – and are not just limited to those developed within the workplace either previously or currently. Skills around empathy and communicating to those in distress may have come about through supporting a close friend or relative at a difficult time, and yet these skills will be transferable into the workplace when dealing with parents on the verge of statutory safeguarding processes with their child, for example.

This study operated from a position that prior learning held value not only in relation to the immediate needs of a role but also in relation to future learning possibilities. However, there appeared to be no method for capturing such learning, nor meaningful recognition made of its occurrence. Responses garnered from the manager interviews, which centred on factors they took into account when planning staff induction, gave insight into their understanding of the learning aspect to the induction process.

Comments such as:

*“Well I think about what they have done in the past – are they a completely blank slate or do they have some experience to draw on?” (Glynn)*

and:

*“I think about what the most pressing needs are, and try and address them first” (Steve)*

were common, with 4 out of 6 respondents considering past employment experiences. 2 of the 6 made specific reference to the immediate business needs, and all 6 respondents made reference to meeting the needs of the business in some form, although the remaining 4 placed less emphasis on immediate needs and appeared to refer to overarching job role requirements and skills set needed.

One response provided a rare opportunity to explore inside the managers' corporate exterior. An extract is given below, which illuminates the dichotomy between the organisation and the sense of self:

*"I think about what skills I think they've got already – from what they've done in the past - and what skills I need them to have in the future – like quite soon – and then I think 'well what is most urgent'. The problem is 'they' (employing organisation) say that X Y and Z have to be done first but I'm like – hmmm – but I need them to be able to do A B and C so you have to juggle and balance a little bit and meet somewhere in the middle. I think it's also about getting those support networks up and in place soon too- so that the employee knows who they can go to for help and support – I'm not based where they are based so I meet them for a few hours the first day, and can set stuff up, but then they have to be able to look after themselves – and I do want them to feel they have someone to go to – I want them to be happy, of course."*

(Steve)

This response is another one which allows us to glimpse at the contradictions between being an experienced professional with a strong sense of what was needed from new recruits and the more corporate demands which did not fit these experiences. Here the manager gives a sense of how he arrives at a 'compromise' that fits the situation best.

Another kind of compromise, indicative of a more 'typical' response, was:

*"Well I look at where I need to get them to from where they are now. It's not a quick fix kind of approach – I chat with them and we talk about what they feel is going to be important; of course they don't always know at that stage because they haven't done the job yet, but mostly – especially if they've done a similar job – they know what is expected of them and they might know already that they have some gaps.... so we kind of decide together; I have my priorities they have their priorities and we meet somewhere in the middle. That's the idea anyway – but it usually works"* (Phil)

Here we see an appreciation that there is some form of skill-set held by inductees upon joining the organisation, and the managers consider themselves as needing to identify what that skill set is or might be. However, the overarching aim is "*where I need to get them to from where they are now*", suggesting again that there is an intermediate point of measure to the learning. Whereas the inductees implied in their responses that they did not always share their prior learning, and therefore appeared as 'blank canvases' in the context of a new organisation, here the manager's data showed that this was not the case. Responses suggesting this included:

*"It's useful to some degree to know what they've done beforehand....most have got 'some' experience of doing something – not necessarily the same job, but similar. Its my job to know*

*that sort of information, as I need to get them up to speed – and as quickly as possible, too!”*  
(Andrew)

And

*“...it gives an idea of what the most pressing areas to concentrate on – you know, addressing what is most urgent – or what might be at least, and so on”* (Glynn)

Interestingly the preoccupation of ‘time’ presents itself as crucial once more. With managers using phrases such as ‘as quickly as possible’ and ‘addressing what is most urgent’ within their responses, the increased drive to achieve quick success is very evident. This seems to be in line with Banks’ (2011) warning of how pressures to demonstrate measurable outputs, fuelled by the effects of austerity, influences how managers perceive learning (narrowly) at work.

An adequate recognition of prior learning is one means of enabling learners/inductees to link learning or skills undertaken/acquired within alternative contexts to the current workplace, thus recognising the possibility of transference of knowledge/skills from one context to another. This also has implications for RPL as a route to recognising prior ‘social’ learning as it shows participants are utilising softer social skills gained from one situation to assist in another. For example, a childcare worker who has previously worked in a day care setting and moves to a family support role may feel they have no previous ‘family support’ experience to start from. However, when one sits and talks with them about what their role entailed, they speak about communicating with parents about children where there was a concern about the child’s development, for example, and they realise the skills set they drew from to have that conversation is very similar to the skill set they will draw from when having other types of ‘difficult conversations’ with parents in a family support context. An appreciation of their ability to empathise, speak respectfully and to listen to the messages the parent is conveying are important whether it is a conversation about a child’s behaviour, development or, safety. It is these types of skills that can be transferred amongst a range of different contexts, yet it is also these softer skills which often go un-noticed as they develop. Managers did not suggest that they sought to systematically capture either this type of prior learning or the skill sets already developed. One ponders therefore how they knew what ‘gaps’ required filling when planning the learning within induction.

There was also no reference to how any new learning might be carried forward to a future or new role. A key difficulty in eliciting this was the tacit nature of much of the knowledge that practitioners in this type of field hold. There was a definite sense that they had in fact all generated, developed and/or benefitted from previous work based experienced or social learning experiences. In some this could be observed or ascertained from the way they talked informally about their roles and what they were doing.

However, they appeared less able to recognise it in themselves, or put into words what it was or how they developed such learning and skills. A pattern of learning 'starting then stopping, then starting over again' quickly emerged, rather than a sense that learning was on-going and transferred across to different contexts.

As previously noted, managers frequently referred to the induction period as a time when they informed the employee about what they would be doing, and enabled them to perform their tasks to good effect. This was also a notion echoed by a majority of inductees. There was a sense that there was a minimum package to what needed to be learned in order to fulfil the role adequately. There was an implied belief that there was a 'ceiling' as to what was to be learned during induction. This seemed to exist in both sets of participants - that there was a pre-determined 'suite' of skills to acquire and that induction was the time set aside to learn them. There appeared to be a lack of appreciation that there may be additional skills or understanding required and acquired during induction, that are not held within this pre-determined collection.

In regards to this, a clear observation when speaking with managers was the concise nature of their responses. Responses (both written and within the semi-structured interviews) by the participant inductees had generally been offered in a 'conversational' nature – inductees had appeared willing to 'offer' more than a basic response, voluntarily extending their answers – often without any prompting. In contrast, managers appeared far more 'considered' - even 'guarded' in the answers they provided - answers which were, on occasion, only a handful of words in length – and clearly considered in their construction so as to provide a concise answer without adding additional information. This suggests that prior learning either is not a large part of the induction process or that the managers lacked the "how" of leveraging it.

### ***Inductees***

So far, this section has focussed on how managers appeared to fail to recognise prior learning. Analysis will now re-focus towards employee's perceptions and what their data suggested on this subject. Within the journals, two areas particularly stood out: inductees recorded only formal academic or accredited training they had undertaken or completed and none of them recorded vocational work-based learning of new skills or understanding that they had accomplished within previous roles. Billett (2002) provides suggestions as to why this recognition of prior learning is somewhat taboo in the employed world, relating to luxury and excess, and we will return to ideas of why this might be as we move through this chapter and into the next.

Whilst the questionnaires did not directly ask what participants felt they had learnt through ‘on the job’ training, under the section which asked about education and qualifications not one response was made that referred to any informal learning or skills a participant had achieved. Participants used this section to record only formal and academic qualifications awarded, even though all had engaged in some form of paid or voluntary employment beforehand and therefore it could be reasonably assumed would have learned or developed new skills during that time. 75% of participants had recorded some of the mandatory training required within their relevant field (i.e. Safeguarding, Food Hygiene) but upon further questioning it transpired that almost all had engaged in ‘workshop’ style sessions or one-off continued professional development learning, that they had not recorded. When questioned about these aspects the usual response was that they felt that less formal learning was less relevant or recognised as the formal learning recorded. One respondent stated:

*“Oh I thought you only wanted the important stuff – qualifications and that sort of thing, that’s what people usually mean, isn’t it... I think that’s what people are more interested in nowadays, aren’t they – if it doesn’t give you a piece of paper then they’re not so interested”* (Chloe)

Another said

*“Yeah – they’re my qualifications, what I’ve got certificates for and stuff. ...Oh yeah, I’ve done some other bits and pieces too, but then you only get like a ‘Certificate of Attendance’ and that’s not really worth very much nowadays, is it”* (Sue)

And another

*“Oh I thought you only wanted the proper stuff... I’ve done quite a few of those one day things [one day CPD workshops usually offered by the LA] but no one really cares about those do they? If it doesn’t hold actual credits or a qualification nowadays people just don’t want to know do they... not really, do they? For most of those things you don’t even get a certificate for it nowadays. I used to go to loads – like every month, but I don’t tend to bother so much now... I’m putting my energies into my foundation degree because that’s recognised”.* (Karen)

This quote is emblematic not only of the participant’s own perspective but it illuminates the culture at play here and how the effects of austerity are perhaps accelerating these impulses. Not only is Karen not attending less formal learning opportunities, but she also appears to de-value those which she has already attended. And yet at the time, one can reasonably assume that she felt they held value, else she would not have attended them. Austerity measures that the public services and local authorities are subjected to are therefore having a negative effect in terms of valuing certain types of formal

qualifications and devaluing those that are not certified. Learning at work is, by default, usually a social process, one which does not lead to a certificate or accreditation. It appeared that this might be why inductees were not recognising it as 'proper' learning. This suggests a narrowing of the scope of learning and what might be considered as worthwhile knowledge/skills. It is worth considering here what other factors might be contributing to this perspective.

All in all, there was a distinct absence of recognition of prior learning other than within formal contexts, and yet my awareness of the field and professional roles being researched recognises that it is often the case that the soft skills that are part of informal learning are valued by managers as a useful aid to their role. The implied assumption was that the vast majority of this learning would arise from the work-based learning undertaken in this new role rather than transferred from or built upon previous roles or experiences. There appeared to be a lack of appreciation that the same or even greater degree of learning is entailed in the period beyond induction, or at least that there may be further skills or understanding required that are not held within this collection/suite.

Going by what Berglund (2010) suggests, this apparent resistance or failure to recognising prior learning may be due to its place of origin. Within some societies unemployment still holds a level of stigma today, and therefore this may be an underlying reason for individuals - and in fact organisations - making less reference to learning that has been acquired in non-paid roles. One cannot ignore also that in the care industries many front-line staff are female – in this case 100% were female. There is also a socially held belief that for women in particular 'childcare' and care more generally is often an 'inherent ability'. As such, this type of social assumption leads to a general lack of recognition of prior knowledge, which may have been generated in the course of their home life (raising their own children, caring for elderly relatives etc.). This does not achieve such profound recognition as formal qualifications held therefore, for example.

### **Theme 3: Learning during a time of austerity**

#### **A: The effect of cut-backs on learning programmes**

Although this study does not look specifically at the policy changes and developments in recent years, it could not ignore the changes in the political landscape that early years – and indeed almost all areas of education – have experienced in recent times. All of the participants in this study have experienced a shift in professional context of late.

Undertaking this research afforded opportunity to have sight of a 'Children's Workforce CPD' brochure from 2006 within the Local Authority where the research was conducted. Some 78 pages in length, in glossy full colour, the content centred primarily on a suite of one-off practice based workshops for practitioners to attend. All were free of charge, and a great majority offered resource incentives to encourage practitioners to apply and attend (e.g. a free digital camera and printer for those who attended a half-day session on using digital media to enhance children's observations, or a £25 voucher to spend on puppets for attendees of a half day puppet workshop to enhance social and emotional development through the use of puppets). Workshops were offered at a range of venues, and setting leaders were advised that where sufficient practitioners from one setting were interested, then the programme could be delivered 'in-setting', free of charge, too. Furthermore, settings were reimbursed 'supply cover costs' in order to release staff from their day job to attend a workshop. In short, there were a wealth of incentives and financial support options available to encourage staff to attend these CPD workshops.

Formal qualificatory courses were mentioned briefly on the last two pages of the programme. In notably duller colour schemes to the rest of the brochure, limited information was given other than the fact that 'Level 4 and higher qualificatory courses are available, and funding may be available based on circumstances – call 'X' for further details". Notably less inviting, with only a mentioned that funding 'may' be available, and no details of venues or even towns where they were delivered, these appeared an altogether less favourable option.

By 2013, the CPD brochure looked very different. Three distinct sections were cited within the brochure (now only available on-line in a basic text format):

**Qualificatory courses:** those leading to a full and relevant qualification. These forms make up the significant part of the on-line brochure. Funding is available but at varying levels and dependent upon qualifications already held by the individual already and the qualification level of others within the setting. A framework by which funding is allocated is also offered. The introduction of this section highlights specific text extracted from key Government publications which support 'full and relevant' qualifications, the drive for a more qualified workforce and a definite steer towards a graduate-led workforce.

**Mandatory courses:** those which professional bodies (i.e. Ofsted) state that all staff must undertake and complete in order to fulfil legal practising requirements e.g. Safeguarding Children, Basic Food Hygiene, Paediatric First Aid etc.

**Optional and further CPD opportunities:** where acute areas of childcare and/or education are explored in some more depth. Here, information is vague, and wording such as ‘where an identified need is evidenced’ accompany a narrative descriptor relating to the session possibilities. There are also numerous links to ‘other’ agencies that provide such training for early years staff – and no mention of supported access (e.g. funding) is made.

This is relevant because it demonstrates the significant influence that wider government policy has on individuals’ perspectives about less formal learning more generally – about what is considered ‘worthwhile’, or less so. No participant spoke of learning they had accessed, or chosen not to access, in terms of being guided by Government policy or National Strategy. However, as we see from Karen’s response, particularly in respect of less formal learning; “...I’ve done quite a few of those one- day things [one day CPD workshops], usually offered by the LA] but no one really cares about those do they?”. She clearly felt that one day workshops (most usually aimed at practical skills development) were ‘not cared for’ – even to the point that she did not even record them when asked about the education and training she had attended. It now begins to become less surprising therefore that learning that is relatively ‘shorter’ in length or for which one does not even receive a certificate of attendance,- in this case work-based learning, achieves even less recognition.

There appears, as a result, a discernible social shift that favours formal or academic qualifications over vocational and socially achieved ‘skills development’ and the apparent social norm that ‘if it does not hold academic credits, then it is of less value’ is a worrying one for work-based learning. This concern is two-fold. Wong (2004) has referred to the role of learning at work (similar to this context within staff induction) as being a key process which not only provides a foundation to a sustained professional development process but also that of lifelong learning. Without having recognition of such learning through informal methods this is unlikely to be the case.

Finally, there was an (admittedly understated) reluctance to recognise prior learning because inductees may not have seen it as ‘theirs’ to ‘claim’ – instead believing it to ‘belong’ to their previous employer. Forrest and Peterson (2006) speak about the need for inductees to be ‘ready to learn’ and that was apparent within the responses received – both verbally and attitudinal. However, one questions how long this can continue for if inductees move jobs frequently; if they are not recognising prior learning as valuable and useful then each time they start a new role they will be ‘starting again’ and so we can quickly see how Jack and Donnelan’s idea of de-motivation and reduced commitment could easily begin to hamper an employee’s sense of self-belief - and ultimately their performance - in their role.

It seems that key to mitigating this factor is for managers to recognise the prior learning and the knowledge and abilities that inductees have that are not necessarily depicted within an academic qualification or certificated course.

### **B. Time and 'speed' during induction**

At times where pressures of time and measuring of 'value for money' are so prevalent, striving to retain the status quo can also be seen as a much safer, or at least less risky, position to be in. The context within which this research was undertaken was affected by the effects of austerity and this placed a heightened pressure to maintain expected levels of output, despite reduced staffing, for example. Data provided by managers suggests that this is in fact the case, as they spoke openly about pressures of time and a need to get up to speed 'quickly' or in as short an amount of time as possible, due to pressures of the work at hand.

An early observation was that most of the managers' responses had tended to be concise and guarded. However, this was the one question where 'fuller' responses were offered. All respondents spoke of time being an influential factor, and early on in the discussions, too. Managers were seeking to deliver their staff induction programme in the shortest amount of time possible. 'Speed' was mentioned by all except one interviewee.

Responses sat within a continuum of;

*"Well, its about making sure that they [the inductee] know what they are doing – can do it well – and get up to speed with the day to day 'doing' of their job" (Glynn)*

to

*"As a line manager I need them to be functioning in that role pretty much from day one – we've had huge staff shortages and stuff is slipping so we need that to be picked up; I need to make sure they are able to do that – and fast!" (Steve)*

These are only two examples, though others were of a very similar nature. Two managers spoke specifically about the effects of financial cut backs, resulting in staff shortages and the challenges this had presented for induction:

*"...well we've had quite a time of it really – the sort of informal restructuring that we did unsettled some, I think almost each team lost at least one or two people so that of course, leaves a gap. Then there was talk of a recruitment freeze so again, more gaps in filling vacancies which means that the same amount of work has to be done – the referrals still keep coming in, they don't stop just because someone has left, do they? So, once we get someone*

*new we are so keen to get them to a place quickly where they can pick up some of that backlog...” (Chris)*

And

*“Crumbs, yes, we were up against it for really quite a while... one of my teams were only working at around 60 or 70% capacity, so when at last we were able to recruit I really needed people who could be up to speed and fully operational quickly... really quickly! There were cases that needed reviewing and we kept on top of it, to some degree, we were safe, just! But it couldn't stay like that or it wouldn't have been. Plus, there were too many things being 'left' – there had been gaps in visits, gaps in some of the less important meeting attendance and so on... and you can only create so many gaps before the whole thing just starts to crumble, can't you...?” (Andrew)*

Many had spoken about needing staff to be 'up and running' or 'fully functional' in the shortest period of time. Such mechanical metaphors were frequently evident and references to their team being 'fully operational' pepper the interviews. It might be argued here that managers were being more 'efficient' in their delivery of the induction programme if speed were to be used as the main efficiency measure (Raelin, 1997). However, Lave and Wenger's (1991) suggestion that effective learning is more about how efficiently it is embedded as opposed to being superficially learnt poses the question of just how one might usefully measure effective learning – for example, whether 'efficiencies' should be measured in orthodox terms, i.e. by how quickly one achieves the required level, or by quality or depth, i.e. by the degree to which learning has been embedded into someone's capability and practice.

The interviews were undertaken at a time when the Local Authority (LA) had been facing 'recruitment freezes' across almost all departments. As a result, all managers interviewed were carrying high percentages of unfilled staff vacancies at the time of interview. Managers' desire for new recruits to be able to 'pick up the backlog of work' and stop the 'crumbling' edifice of their organisation means that narrow understandings of 'efficiency' erode the value of slower workplace learning, and particularly a process like induction, to an instrumental process. This instrumental approach results in a mechanised, 'tick-box' process, where moving inductees through a series of learning opportunities/events in the swiftest time possible is desired. In short, a formula to depict the 'efficiency' of learning might look as simple as this:

**Quantity of knowledge gained, divided by, length of time taken**

Castells warns that this desire for increased speed reduces the emphasis given to other factors such as quality (2004). In the context of induction speed can take precedence over taking the time to evaluate starting points, distance travelled, and quality of learning for different recruits. An appreciation for the process of slower or more embedded learning therefore begins to dissipate in preference for speed of learning and an evidenceable 'product' of learning. There was no mention or consideration of if, or how, inductees' starting points in their learning might determine the length of time taken to learn new skills. Therefore, the pressure of time can – and in this case, appears to have – reduced consideration of distance travelled (Castells, 2004) with the result that new recruits tend to be assumed to be homogenous, with all collectively starting from the same point. When such intimate recognition of each inductee is ignored, 'speed' becomes the dominant efficiency measure within the workplace.

Although the employing organisation seems to be playing out its role within the 'hurried society' of Castells (2004), it is not without a degree of recognition by managers. Four out of the six interviewees went on to speak about how, although speed was of the essence, there was an appreciation that investment (in terms of time) in the earlier stages was seen as a preventative measure for what they termed 'problems' (i.e. staff performance issues) later down the line. Here, time is being referred to as a resource of limited supply and managers appeared to be considering their most effective use of that valuable resource – basing such judgement on a 'length of time versus outcome achieved' basis. Managers talked at some length about how they had a desire to balance speed with quality. Even from those who did not specifically use this exact vocabulary there was a sense that quality was important, with one respondent stating;

*"We need to get through it – and quickly – but well; do it quickly, do it effectively..."* (Andrew)

Whereas another replied:

*"Its true, we do need to get them up and running in their role, and of course we I want them to be fully functioning and doing the job of a family support worker, but I need them to do that job well because if they do it well, then the families get the better service – and so too do the children, which is what we are here for. No good doing just a half job"* (Steve)

Here is evidence of the recognition of the need for some degree of 'quality' of induction, although as is shown by the sequence of the narrative, it can quickly become a secondary aspect. There was one notable exception to the trend of seeking 'speed' however, with one respondent replying:

*"Well I look at where I need to get them to from where they are now. It's not a quick fix kind of approach"* (Chris)

Overall though, the responses of managers raises the prospect of their desire for a higher quality of learning during induction being over-ridden by time and workload pressures faced by managers. This creates a source of dissonance and emotional imbalance for managers.

Eriksen's ideas (2000) about the need for creativity, particularly in how learning is applied to a range of contexts and scenarios (2004) also seems relevant here. Within the roles that these inductees will undertake – which can be complex in nature – there is no pre-set 'blueprint' that will offer them an answer or solution to every situation they have to face. In the same way that every 'case' is very different, every family they must work with presents a uniqueness, too. Therefore, even with very similar presenting issues, the solution to those issues may be different from one family to the next. To creatively adapt and apply knowledge, Eriksen (2000; 2004) believes 'time' is necessary. In short, speed can reduce quality and therefore the capacity to use that new knowledge to best effect.

Considering these points, it appears that some managers were therefore working against their endeavours. They had spoken about the need for swiftness of action, but had also made reference to the need for a degree of quality that "prevented problems later down the line". Spender (1996), Mayo (2000) and Eriksen's (2004) work suggests that they were increasing their likeliness of 'problems down the line' because the focus on speediness of learning during induction was likely to result in superficial rather than embedded learning and skills.

The journals and interviews showed that 'time/speed' influences recruitment selection quite broadly. When asked about what key influences managers felt were at play when recruiting a new member of staff, the majority of responses provided were of a corporate nature, i.e. centring on fulfilling Job & Person Profiles, recruitment performance etc. However, there were also other kinds of comments made about recruitment decisions relating to applicants' readiness for the job. When specifically asked "*So, if you had two very similar candidates on paper, one would be 'good enough' and could start straight away, and one that would be excellent but had a lengthy notice period or some longer training need – who would you chose?*", all except one opted for the first option. The exception response did not necessarily choose quality over speed, but provided a more ambiguous response which failed to commit either way – stating a need to consider needs within the team and seek further manager opinion etc. The question was posed to try and ascertain just how much of an effect 'speed' had on managerial decisions pertaining to new recruit learning.

I further pursued this line of enquiry by directly asking "*If you had only two days allocated to inducting an employee into a new role, what would you do?*", to try and gauge what aspects of new recruits' learning, the managers placed greatest value on, and to explore their reasons for this. 100% of

managerial respondents reported they would use this time to introduce the inductees to as many colleagues and co-workers as possible, arranging 1-1 and multi-agency meetings as a priority for day one, followed by attendance at key meetings (a CAF panel meeting, a health visitor meeting and a Child Protection conference were each cited). It was felt by those asked that this would not only allow the individual to meet key colleagues but also show first hand an important aspect of their role. This was different to earlier responses which appeared to rank mandatory training and knowledge of key policies and procedures as the most important priority of induction learning. The fact this order of priority was changed under the hypothetical situation of reduced induction time suggests that managers overrode the traditional priorities to focus on the importance of key colleagues and the interrelationships between different agencies and bodies. This is intriguing because it suggests that in times of relative harmony, an individual enacts – perhaps sub consciously – what they believe to be the behaviours appropriate to their role and organisation. However, in times of stress, induced by limiting the time available or adding another similar external pressure (in this case the staff shortages, or reduced time to carry out an activity), managers reveal a different inclination. Such a level of dissonance that required compromise between what ‘they say’ and what managers themselves felt was right was a revealing insight into managers’ daily practices and the pressures they faced.

The interviews also provided opportunity to explore a hypothetical situation of an ‘ideal’ or ‘unconfined’ scenario. Therefore, all manager participants were asked during their interview *“If time were of no constraint to you – how, or would, this affect how you planned and carried out a staff induction?”* A significant proportion of the initial responses took the theme of:

*“Yes, there are occasions, often, where time limitations affect what is delivered, but I still believe that the induction that we offer is still of good quality, and effective, and so there are very minimal changes that would be affected by longer time being allowed.”* (Glynn)

Upon further probing and the offering of an increased level of reassurance, a different story emerged. Respondents began to speak about how, whilst the current induction process – they felt – was broadly fit for purpose and that any changes made would only be of an ordering nature; i.e. some elements would be undertaken at an earlier stage than currently actioned, they also began to refer to significant changes they would make. When given this space and added reassurance to speak freely – albeit in a hypothetical frame – about their ‘ideal’, all cited changes, including affording new inductees a longer period to watch, to observe, and to work alongside their colleagues and peers. Of these manager respondents, two specifically referred to the notion that ‘learning by doing’ or ‘on the job learning’ was felt to be the optimum method for enabling staff to understand their job role and to learn of the

multifaceted aspects of their job role, but followed this up with comments which suggested that time was considered a 'luxury' that was no longer readily afforded.

Thus far, I have presented managers' responses to focus on the theme of time/speed and the expectation of the induction process. However, the inductees' data was re analysed with this theme in mind, and the following observations can be made. In its most basic form, time can be defined as a measure between two points - 'time' being the distance between those two points or patterns in the sequences between these points (Leibniz, 2007). In the context of this study, this could suggest that the 'time' of induction is a measure between the inductees' first day and the last day or their induction period (c. 6 months from start date), and indeed, many managers voiced this notion of induction. And yet other data from managers, inductees and the daily induction journal showed that events in-between those points were not straightforward or consistent. Individuals engaging in cross-connected and different learning activities may cross, inter-twine and inter-relate with one another. The nature of learning during the induction period therefore seems closer to Castells' notion of 'timeless time' than Leibniz's idea of time being measured between two 'points'. Castells' (2004) 'timeless time', refers to situations where individuals are engaging in multiple and complex activities at any one time, when time (and learning or growth) in the linear sense becomes far less relevant. Whilst the notion of linear time does not disappear, it becomes more arbitrary – as it is almost impossible to measure or quantify the difference between two set points anymore. The nature of learning is complex, nimble and fluid. It can be argued that the non-linear nature of learning during induction may be being 'boxed' and its effectiveness gauged through a more simplistic linear measure. It is unclear whether this is because managers held only a linear concept of time themselves, or whether under the pressure of time they resorted to subscribing to the orthodox notion of time.

Analysis also showed that on-line training tended to centre on 'Safeguarding', 'Health and Safety' and 'Basic Food Hygiene' certification. Whilst participants reported an understanding of the necessity of undertaking such training, and none showed any particular resistance to undertaking their learning in this way, when questioned about its relevance to their day-to-day work there were less positive responses. Four out of twelve felt it had little or no relevance, a further four felt it had some theoretical relevance but it did not alter their actual practice with children or families. One respondent however felt it held value in reaffirming her existing knowledge and the remaining four saw relevance to the training although did not always feel they 'learnt anything new'. Those specifically who undertook Basic Food Hygiene reported no changes to their working practice as a result. For example, responses included:

*"I understand you have to do it, and I certainly wouldn't have said 'No, I won't do it' but it's a lot of common sense really, I mean – I have 2 children...and a husband...and I haven't poisoned them yet. A whole day to go over what I pretty much knew already anyway. It just seems, I don't know, perhaps I could have done more in that time I guess"* (Chloe)

and

*"It was alright. It seemed overkill – I only chop a banana or put some grapes in a bowl when it's snack time. Can you even catch anything from a banana?!"* (Carol)

Attending professional meetings, either to shadow other colleagues, or in one's own right was generally reported as very useful:

*"...and then after a little while you get to do more and more by yourself – I was quite surprised how quickly I was able to get on with most things by myself, the everyday stuff..."* (Sue)

and

*"Went to X Children's Centre to observe [family support worker] at an Infant Massage session...[helpful because] that will be me next month, so nice not to just be dropped in at the deep end, get to do a bit more each week until finally I'm fully up and running on my own, and others will be watching me!"* (Karen)

These responses suggested that inductees were using the 'what is learned' and less 'time taken' formula in reverse. That is, they were using time taken as the pre-measure and the learning in relation to that amount of time. In contrast, managers spoke first about what had needed to be achieved and then measured efficiency by the amount of time it took to achieve this.

Eriksen writes about the way knowledge is 'presented' within complex social interactions (2000). As referred to above, work-based learning engages the individual in social situations where there are multiple, almost endless, outcomes and possibilities of learning. Because of this, and because of the ease of access to knowledge (through the World Wide Web, for example) Eriksen suggests that this is leading to a loss of appetite for knowledge that is extraneous to a situation (2004). This helps us to understand the reasoning behind inductees' responses here - in the case of Food Hygiene, participants felt they already had the knowledge required in order for them to practice safely. For them therefore, this training seemed extraneous – it offered nothing new in the immediate sense, and therefore they consider the amount of 'time' spent as wasteful, or at very least, could have been spent 'better'. They mostly appeared to be making this judgement based on the technical knowledge acquisition rather than

any professional networking, reaffirmation of existing learning, or other such developments they may have garnered from attending the session.

Reflecting on the data alongside the literature illuminates the effect that this apparent sense of speed may be having on learning in this workplace. Castells' reminder that a drive for speed may reduce an appetite for quality was reflected in some managers' responses to certain questions. The concern is the contagious nature of speed. Eriksen's suggestion of the hurried society raises the possibility that no matter how swiftly an employer manages to bring an employee 'up to speed' in the role, it may increasingly not be 'quick enough'. Furthermore, as the drive for increased and further speed grows, the appetite for quality of learning may decrease or appear to have less value. In essence, this could result in a situation where speed becomes 'the gold standard', 'the' measure of efficiency. This presents a risk that the learning undertaken becomes superficial and lacking in time to get embedded, which both Lave and Wenger (1991) and Eriksen (2000; 2004) warn against, as reducing the individual's ability to use such knowledge creatively.

It appears therefore that contemporary austerity measures, in their effect on compressing the time of induction, are having significant negative impact on workplace inductions. Whilst inductees did not verbalise the notion of learning becoming 'taboo', the data suggests that inductees make an efficiency judgement based on time taken compared to 'quantity' of new knowledge they achieved. It is highly likely therefore that in times where financial constraints, employee redundancies and impending service reductions are blatantly publicised, this is having an influence on the necessity of each activity.

Furthermore, whilst the current austerity measures do not specifically reinforce or challenge the notion of learning, with the dominant focus being on targets, short term intervention, and outputs as opposed to outcomes, any activity that detracts from the achievement of documentable outputs (i.e. number of cases 'closed' within a month) may be seen as detracting from the core purpose, and as such a 'taboo'. What this also suggests is that with this drive for speed, the space for creativity, innovation, or simply 'trying a different way' is lost, and is instead likely to be considered as a distraction from the task in hand. It 'risks' valuable time being 'wasted' if it is not perceived as 'successful'. Inductees may also be hesitant to alert managers to the fact that they require additional, or even 'different' learning opportunities to those suggested- particularly where this would necessitate additional time - as to do so may suggest a weakness or lack of ability. With managers being so explicit about their drive for speed and a speedy acceleration of inductees to - what they term - 'full capacity', it is likely that this is what has led inductees to the assumption that in order to be 'effective', or to be viewed in a positive light

by their line manager, they needed to demonstrate their ability to be independent and 'fully operational' in the shortest amount of time possible.

### **C. Emotional Challenges**

Employee expectations about job compatibility and security can be quite different from the reality. Often only managers know the full picture of job availability and expectations, as well as impending staff, job focus and policy changes. Managers therefore try to maintain, in as much as is possible, pleasant, or at least tolerable, working conditions, both in the physical environment as well as mentally and emotionally. However, where the full scale of problems is concealed in this effort, it can create an illusion regarding job prospects and can be devastating to the inductee.

The managers in this study were in a position to be aware of proposed or impending alterations ahead of front line staff. This placed them in awkward positions whereby some may have been presenting one narrative to inductees whilst they were uncomfortably fully aware that an alternative narrative was in process for potential use in the near future. The manager's knowledge about these wider conditions and financial/policy imperatives coupled with their need to maintain a silence about it 'until the right time' can pose a strong emotional challenge. This conflict is illustrated by the vignette below, drawn from personal experience within the context and it exemplifies the point in question. Even though it was not directly from the site of the fieldwork it is not unique to the site from which it was drawn, quite the contrast – it exemplifies the emotional conflict faced by managers in the field on a daily basis.

*X was a manager, inducting a new employee into her first full time role since leaving university. X had interviewed the individual himself and felt she was a perfect fit for the role – holding almost all of the attributes necessary as well as the professional qualifications required. Being aware that it was her first full-time job, X was careful to place Y into a supportive and nurturing team where Y's skills could be further developed over time in a supportive environment. X was aware that Y was also soon to be married and was in the process of buying a new house with her soon-to-be husband. Because of his management role however he was involved in the restructuring of the teams that Y would be working in, and three weeks into Y's new role, X was in a meeting that saw the 'signing off' of a revised delivery model which would in effect see Y reduced to part time hours and be moved to a different team altogether doing similar– but work that would not be making best use of her skills and knowledge, not to mention financial challenges. X continued to have fortnightly supervisions with Y, and as the plans were not to be made public for another two to three months, X was not in a position to divulge forthcoming changes to Y. At each supervision X would see Y's enthusiasm for her role, whilst at the same time being painfully aware that it would be short lived and that she would soon be receiving strategic communication that would be devastating to her. Furthermore, he knew that she would at that point know he had been aware of this impending news and had not alerted her to it, and this knowledge caused him some level of anxiety and possibly guilt.*

The above example typifies the context which was at play when the study was undertaken. Managers were planning inductions for staff while not being aware of their longer term roles or even if they would remain in the organisation in the medium term, or longer. Given these factors it is understandable why managers appeared to be more focussed on the 'here and now' as opposed to more nebulous longer term. If managers were guarded in their responses, it is likely that it was because they more acutely felt the pressure of working under very tough conditions. Some front-line staff were now at risk of redundancy or restructuring and all staff were affected, including themselves. Whilst many of the redundancy decisions were to be deemed necessary because of structural and strategic changes, there was still an unspoken assumption that staff who demonstrated greater effectiveness would likely be safer when decisions were made about who to keep and who to make redundant. The emotional challenge that this presented, although notable, was small in comparison to the other themes that presented.

Managers' unease was apparent in a number of other occasions which have already been discussed. For instance, the apparent dissonance between what they might do under 'normal' conditions as opposed to a situation of financial cut-backs, were evident in a range of issues from recruitment of potential inductees, the length of induction and the type/quality of induction.

Upon conclusion of the analysis of the data it became even more starkly apparent that the two earlier identified phenomena: Perceptions of Induction and Learning during Induction were clearly interconnected to the third: The effect of austerity measures and the pressure of time that this brought into play. These three phenomena, and more importantly - their inter-relationships, will now be explored in the following Discussion Chapter (Chapter 5) drawing upon literature and Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, doxa, field and illusio.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion and Analysis

This chapter brings together key findings and considers them in view of relevant literature and the key Bourdieusian concepts of habitus, field, doxa and illusio. Echoing the format of the preceding chapter this is presented in three themes; the first theme analysing perceptions and expectations of induction, a second which discusses issues around learning during induction, and finally a third which examines the effects of austerity, particularly on notions of *time*.

#### **Theme 1:** Perceptions and expectations of induction

Overall, managers' expectations and perceptions regarding induction appeared to echo the approaches promoted within more traditional management literature, which typically endorse certain orthodox assumptions. These include a belief in a 'show and tell' model of induction, practices and procedures that saw notions of induction and probation as interchangeable, even as the differences between these concepts were acknowledged, and a monitoring of progress during induction based largely on established corporate forms and processes. This orthodoxy in approaching induction seems to be part and parcel of the wider 'doxa' of the field. The field of caring services within the public sector in contemporary UK may all be seen as sharing these characteristics, judging by the literature on inducting newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and social workers. The particular organisation of county council Children's Services also thus emerges from this study as rather hierarchical and habit-bound in its organisational features and practices.

According to Bourdieu, habitus can be the result of a 'constant accumulation' of experiences which, although shaped by social class, gender, race etc. is also constructed by the subjective experiences of an individual. But habitus can also be something that is shared across the range of fields (Flach et al. 2010) that an individual belongs to, being constantly constructed and re-constructed through the subjective experiences encountered. From a Bourdieusian perspective, the field is comprised of a particular terrain that sustains the rules by which behaviour is organised, valued and recognised. It is helpful here to consider the parallels offered by the work of Colley et al. (2003) and their notion of "*vocational habitus*" (which arises in the context of vocational education courses). They note that "a central aspect of students' learning appears to be a process of orientation to a particular identity, a sense of what makes 'the right person for the job'. Vocational habitus proposes that the learner aspires to a certain combination of dispositions demanded by the vocational culture. It operates in disciplinary ways to dictate how one should properly feel, look and act, as well as the values, attitudes

and beliefs that one should espouse. As such, it is affective and embodied, and calls upon the innermost aspects of learners' own habitus" (Colley et al. 2003, pp.488) Such habitus is shaped by both idealised and realised identities which are guided by the ideologies of the vocational culture. Extending this notion to the workplace under consideration, (embedded within the Children's Services sector), it is possible that a professional habitus is engendered by the field of Children's Services. The 'doxa', for their part, are beliefs and assumptions which are not questioned and often perceived as a taken-for-granted truth (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, Bourdieu, 2010 (1984)).

Managers in the study could be said to be embedded within the field of a public sector caring service, exhibiting a professional disposition, or habitus that clearly valued the care of vulnerable families and children. In the previous chapter, several responses underscore this discourse either explicitly or implicitly. However, the doxa within this field seemed to support a belief that the organisational purpose was best served by managers leading a hierarchical structure. This rather paternalistic premise that managers lead and inductees will be led is visible throughout their responses. For instance, managers were unanimous in reporting that their priorities arose from organisational objectives and pressures, and that this shaped the value or ideology that the organisation was to be the principle beneficiary of the learning. And, managers appear to believe that induction should settle new recruits into their role so that they "*soon become an efficient and productive employee... [who] meets [the manager's/management] objectives*" (Edwards & Scullion, 1982, pp.142).

Whilst there were some notable differences amongst inductees, most held views similar to that of the managers regarding the purpose of induction – that of settling into their organisational role as speedily as possible. Most did not see themselves as holding primary responsibility for the learning occurring during induction and there was no discernable difference in expectations between respondents from different qualificatory backgrounds. However, whilst inductees tended to anticipate similar learning opportunities to what was provided to them in previous employment, they did so from a somewhat more employee-centred approach. That is, inductees spoke more about the benefit for **themselves** as individuals through the learning experiences of induction, whereas managers placed a heavier focus on delivering learning opportunities that were driven by the **organisational priorities**. So, although expectations were broadly congruent between participants, the rationale for these beliefs differed. Managers appeared to be more driven by organisational requirements whereas inductees focussed more on the 'here and now' and an immediate sense of seeing how their role fitted into the bigger picture. This suggests that '*the field*', which extends beyond the specific organisation to the wider community involving various stakeholders in Children's Services, including the feeder routes into this

field (such as being part of early years education) shares this doxa about learning and inductee-manager relations.

A source of uncertainty during the induction period was the interchangeable use of crucial terms like 'induction' and 'probation'; the former of which suggests a period of learning and growth and the other which has associations of assessment and judgement with potentially severe consequences for the inductee. This uncertainty means that their sense of position and identity within this field becomes uncertain and unstable, too. Distrust, scepticism, doubt or uncertainties are also risked by the organisation appearing to be 'saying one thing, but doing another'. However, what was interesting was that both inductees and managers seemed to share the idea that induction did not really extend to the full six-month period, but that it only lasted a few weeks. Although this is not made explicit, the fact that the paperwork (Induction Record Form) actually conflated induction and probation, meant that this was a popular, largely tacit understanding of the 'rules of the game'. This reduces the chance that inductees would raise challenging questions about current practices or dare to bring in their own prior experience into their everyday jobs for fear of increasing their vulnerability.

Such procedures serve to strengthen the doxa but also create uncertainty in terms of what could be considered the 'illusio' of inductees. Illusio, or 'interest' in Bourdieusian terms, denotes how players in the field get 'caught up in the game', commit to it, and get invested in it. The implications of illusio, its role and its workings are explored by Colley. Thus,

*"Illusio is ... more explicit, conscious, and agentic than the underlying doxa; it resonates with theories of workplace learning which emphasise identity and belonging in professional communities of practice, as well as with an 'occupational' model of professionalism that foregrounds a client-centred ethos... it provides a sense of the emotional investment – caring about what happens at work – that a professional habitus may entail. ...the stakes of the game include ethical values and beliefs, and must be learned through participation in the field. ...Equally, this suggests that any fundamental change in the field (see Grenfell and James, 2004) which transforms the established stakes in the game is likely to disrupt the illusio of some subordinate players within it – for example, practitioners – and create emotional suffering, since it disturbs deep-seated and long-term commitment and investment of oneself, especially in caring public service work."*

(Colley 2012, pp.324-325).

Thus, during the period of induction, their sense of illusio can be shaken when the inductees become sceptical of the rules at play, particularly if their understanding of the Children's Services field is characterised by its caring ethos that it is seen to value; an idealised notion perhaps of the public

institution they work for, as a caring institution, that would also care for and care about its inductees. When this idealised notion of the workplace as a 'community' of professionals feels 'at odds' with the reality of it, then the prospects for a shattering of the illusion increase. Thus, these everyday mundane experiences during induction can shape the inductees' perception of the context (or field) as a whole and their disposition to act (their habitus) in the long run

## **Theme 2:** Learning during induction

The factors mentioned above all impact on assumptions about learning during induction, including who drives it, how prior experience/learning is valued (or not) and how one's role fits into the bigger organisation.

The orthodoxies listed previously can be extended to how learning is increasingly viewed. For example, 'swiftness' of learning was seen as 'good' learning, and it was expected that the organisation/manager would take the lead in 'setting the curriculum'. This employer-led and employer-benefitting approach that was noticeably prominent through the 1980s and 90s literature (Edwards and Scullion, 1982; Hunt, 1992) was still evident in this context. There was more of an emphasis in 'setting right' a new employee to fit in speedily with the organisation's top priorities, in a manner that ignores and neglects their previous learning/knowledge/experience/status (Turner, 1974).

In this conceptualisation of induction, the learning during induction takes on an abstract quality, becoming de-personalised from inductees' specific needs and prior expertise. While the organisation may not have been explicit in requiring inductees to enter their structures as a 'clean slate' (Turner, 1974), they did not seem to create the space, time or processes to encourage the transfer of any prior learning or experience into this new context. As a result, there were no systematic procedures to understand what their previous experiences entailed and how/why they came to hold the assumptions they might hold as they started work in the new context. Although managers claimed to know about the background of inductees through the recruitment and interview process, this was not systematically followed up or explored once they were an inductee. The current climate of austerity fuelling time pressures, and the entrenched practices of induction meant that an opportunity to share knowledge and to re-align expectations – of both the organisation as well as the inductee – or to assess the needs of both parties was lost.

Inductees appeared not to recognise previous learning that they had developed or constructed other than within the more 'formal' accredited routes. Not only did they not refer to it in the same way as they did their formal learning, but even when probed further they confirmed that they felt it did not hold equal status nor was it considered as important. This strongly suggested that it was a lack of external

appreciation that influenced their internal perspective of its value or currency. As Turner (1974) suggests, where organisational practices and culture are effective in 'stripping' the employee of their previous identity, the employee can lose a sense of value in prior knowledge/experience. In this case inductees' had learned that qualitatively measured informal skills-based learning sat uncomfortably with the quantitatively rooted approaches to measuring efficacy, efficiency and output evidencing. Banks (2011) reminds us of the importance of tacit skill sets and their role in setting the foundation of caring professions. Whilst the data here showed that tacit learning was central to the employee developing the necessary skills and abilities to perform their role to good effect, it is also noted that the way induction programmes operated, served to shake the foundations of such professional underpinnings.

As noted previously, there was a general assumption that the manager was responsible for driving the process of induction, the content of the learning and the means by which learning took place. Avis's (2014) point that inductees might interpret 'responsibility' as 'opportunity to blame', could explain inductees' resistance to accepting responsibility for their learning at this early stage of their employment. However, this seems too simple an explanation on its own, and one that does not perhaps take into account the differential power relations within an organisation or the weight of tradition which suggests that the larger organisation and its goals/objectives matter more, or are valued less than individuals' personal development goals/objectives. In Bourdieusian terms, this exemplifies the operation of the doxa of the field. For instance, it seemed as if it would be taboo for the inductee to take the lead in determining their learning needs or even examining them in relation to the organisational objectives. Speed came to be seen as the primary determinant of measuring efficacy (and will be discussed further as part of the final theme). The creativity that underpins the foundation of many caring professions (Banks, 2011; 2013) appeared to be limited by the approach taken to induction and its potential for learning for both organisation and inductee. Terms such as reducing '*disruption*' and a promotion of the induction period to focus on the '*mechanics*' of the roles appeared to be driving managers' priorities, and a fear/suspicion of 'creativity' being seen as 'disruption' can lead to a culture of conformity, dictated and 'quick win' learning .

Applying the Bourdieusian metaphor of a game and its rules/laws within a 'field' to the organisation, the parallels with how various players (managers – managed; inductor – inductee) and their roles are tacitly understood and followed are clearer. The knowledge and expectations of the field allows traditional roles and practices – in this case, of managers taking responsibility for leading/directing learning, particularly during the vulnerable period of induction – to go unchallenged, thus also reinforcing the game and its rules. According to Bourdieu, to play the game 'successfully', individuals have to be endowed with the habitus that provides one with *the feel for the game* (Bourdieu, 1993 pp.72). When

the previous experience of inductees drives their understanding of appropriate behaviour, role and status within an organisation, this can be read as part of their professional habitus, their predisposition, in this case, to allow/expect managers to take the lead and responsibility for learning during induction.

However, a Bourdieusian understanding of fields suggests that they are also arenas of struggle, social spaces where individuals try to maximise their role, status and power. The lack of any contestations during induction could be attributed to the fact that this a period where the inductee is vulnerable, more prone to seeking approval, thus leading them to take a more subordinate/passive role in terms of learning during induction as way of securing their longer term employment, post-probation. Such experiences in turn shape the work-place habitus of inductees and will characterise their actions in that role, at least in the short-term. The idea explored here, that these characteristics could be communally shared beyond the organisation, suggests these could be dominant values within the wider field of the Childcare sector.

The dominant ideology about learning was that formal learning was superior to informal (prior) learning, and was further exacerbated by events in the field, (brought about by austerity measures and resulting financial cuts). In more simplistic terms, the implied and inferred belief that formal learning is superior to informal learning served to de-value the latter to the extent that it is entirely ignored and not referred to, or there is a stigma attached to it so that no one would speak openly about it. So, here the process seems to encourage the 'clean slate' approach whereby new learning overrides the previous accumulation of skills and/or knowledge and silences it within the individuals' habitus. This ideology which shapes habitus becomes part of the constant accumulation of one's doxa - and this then becomes the viewpoint that they hold, and transfer to, other contexts, or 'fields'.

The reduction in funding had created a context that was unstable. This uncertainty was being internalised by new recruits and serving to form 'unspoken new norms' (such as speed of induction being valued, and of demonstrable outputs being of utmost importance, over and above processes or what one might consider to be professionally 'right', for example). Within this case, managers spoke about how, if time were not constrained, then they may afford a greater amount of time for the inductee to familiarise themselves with the social context.

Managers (and inductees, albeit to a lesser degree) seemed to assume that inductees could gain the sense of 'where they fitted' by attending meetings where key networks/contacts were established. Analysis of the daily journals showed that there was occasional opportunity for ad hoc problem solving during the induction period, however, the social learning opportunities afforded to inductees tended to stop (for the managers) at the idea of socialising the recruits into their new roles in a somewhat

mechanical sense, for example “*getting to know other key staff members*” or “*meeting those they will be working with frequently*”. Little mention was made by either party of it being an opportunity for the new recruit to socialise into the field, nor as an opportunity for them to absorb the organisation’s core practices and ‘ways of being’ or ways of doing. Indeed, when considering the macro factors at play within the context at the time of the study, for managers at least, the crucialness of efficiency, productivity and their own survival had clearly become the dominant foci, and the longer term benefit to the employee subsided into the background.

Whereas differences in expectations about how induction would be delivered showed some quite remarkable differences, this was less apparent with expectations of ‘what’ would be delivered. Whilst both parties spoke about the aim for a supportive, inductive approach, managers seemed to still hold - or at least be strongly guided by - their ‘corporate sense’ and this became increasingly evident in their responses. It became increasingly apparent that corporate perceptions portrayed by the manager were strong enough to overrule their professional perception.

Bourdieu writes about individuals either seeking to transform or conserve the structure of the relationships within the field (Bourdieu, 2005). Bourdieu (2005; Cujipers, 2012) uses the term ‘field’ to refer to a context that the individual is part of – similar to Lave and Wenger’s ‘communities’ within their Community of Practice paradigm (1991). However, Bourdieu’s idea of field provides a more detailed and complex representation of that domain, and recognises the intricate and multi-faceted nature of that field. This understanding was important here because of interferences that the data – and understanding of the field more broadly - showed to be at play. Bourdieu’s ‘field’ is recognised as being relational, between people and other groups of people, with reality only ever being relational to social interlinking within that field, and across other fields. Data showed a range of forces (Bourdieu, 2005 p30) to the field researched, both at a macro and micro level, which have been discussed in this chapter. A sharp change in political direction was resulting in changes in day-to-day practice for these recruits and, perhaps more importantly, those around them. Because of this, the field was constantly changing around the inductees. And so, inductees experienced challenge at a personal level to their habitus as the realised habitus emerged as somewhat misaligned with their expected/ideal professional habitus. Their relationship to the field therefore was ever-changing, too. Data here suggested that inductees were seeking to conserve the structures through a desire to see how their role fitted in to the social network within that field.

To extend this further, Bourdieu’s notion of *illusio* (Widin, 2010) can also be drawn upon to understand how the managers’ perceptions of the stakes at play influenced their demonstrable practice in the field

and the stakes of inductees and managers. For the managers, it could be argued that, the personal stakes were high; they were closer to the messages about the need for or implications of financial cuts and, that this may place their own job at risk. They are now required to 'buy into' the dominant rules of the game – those rules being those of achieving demonstrable outputs, meeting targets and being able to measure efficacy of practice. These austerity-enhanced interests/stakes appeared to override a personal inclination towards longer-term quality. Thus, a level of dissonance arose between aspects of the managers' habitus and the requirements for 'professional' conduct within the field. Their habitus - that which is integral to their character (Flach et. al 2010) - recognises a different 'recipe' for quality or effective workplace learning opportunities than that required by their professional context and the changing rules of the game. This was one of the clearest examples of the shattering of 'illusio' within the research data.

Returning to the inductees' desire to 'see how their role fitted in' we can further draw on illusio as it leads us to understand how one's own doxa can shape perceptions of the social capital held within the game at play (Desjarlais, 2011) because we see that an individual's 'stake' in the game is affected by their sense of connectivity, relationship to and their perceived status within the field. Therefore, it becomes far less surprising that individuals sought to identify their role's position in the field – because it allowed them to determine their own stake or position in the game. When considering why this is important I return to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) who explain that participation in a field is determined by whether an individual considers themselves to share the same illusio as is held in the field. If they consider they do not, or if the field's habitus does not match with their personal habitus they may chose not to participate in the field at all – or to engage lesser degree. The managers' stake therefore is one of self-preservation (of their professional role if not their jobs) and conforming to the habitus of the field, whilst the inductees' stake becomes one of seeking to see how their 'position' in the fields fares compared to their counterparts and from this, determine their engagement in the field itself.

### **Theme 3: Time**

The dominant construction of learning also viewed 'speed of learning' as high value and desirable. Thus, formalised learning which tends to be measurable and/or demonstrable through quantitative 'outputs' was favoured over 'softer' or more informal learning because it can be more readily measured, reported and evaluated through standardised and linear time measures. In this context, this in turn served to subtly shape the behaviours, actions and habitus of the individual because the impulse to measure efficacy through a linear measure of time served to meet the demands of the field.

Leibniz's explanation of time suggests it is a measure of the space between one 'thing' to another (Leibniz, 2007; McDonough, 2014). But, linking back to Eraut's writing about the tacit nature of what is learnt (2000; 2004; 2007) this type of learning neither constructs nor develops in linear form, and instead appeared to occur in a much more complex format. The inductees' daily journals exemplified this, whereby one activity would be described (e.g. attendance at Health Visitors allocation meeting) and yet two or three aspects reported as being 'learned' from that experience. This recognition was extended by the interviews where this became even further apparent, which brings about the suggestion that to measure induction by these orthodox time measures is arbitrary in such social learning situations.

Downs (1995) acknowledged that learning is largely a social process, and the data in this study further reinforced this. Apart from the mandatory training undertaken to comply with legislation, much learning was undertaken with colleagues and other professionals in social situations. However, this approach took extended periods of time, and in times of austerity it was time that appeared to be in short supply for the purpose of learning, at least. The preferred 'show and tell model' suggested a correlation between a reduction in financial resources and an inextricable resulting impact on the amount of time that was felt to be available for learning. Moreover, it fuelled a passivity in terms of responsibility for learning, for both parties to some extent. Munroe made the suggestion that where risk to an employee is intensified then "*following rules and being compliant can appear less risky than exercising judgement*" (DfE, 2011 pp.5). In times of turbulence the fall back on 'compliance' and working to the rules appeared to afford a degree of safety for individuals. Munroe (2011) and Banks (2011) each noted how times of austerity inhibit individuals from displaying professional judgement, and that simply 'abiding' and 'playing it safe' was considered a less risky approach. Yet, creativity, specifically in social learning, requires individuals (inductees and managers of staff) to take risks. Particularly in relation to the tacit skills, understanding and knowledge that individuals in the field of children's services require, these attributes are most often developed through multiple and often un-guided experiences through experiential creative learning. However, in this context, for both parties, financial cutbacks placed questions over the future of their employment, and altered what was considered to be the principal efficacy measure of work undertaken, and therefore both parties displayed risk aversion.

This link between a reduction in finances to an organisation and a perceived reduction of time available to be creative within learning opportunities supports the suggestions of Anderson, Cohen and Seraus (2015). Austerity is narrowing opportunities for learning because of the aversion to risk that it creates in both managers and inductees; a fear that they will not be able to demonstrate the necessary outputs or outcomes imposed on the context or the reality of fear for their own job and financial security. A drive

for efficiency appeared to be inhibiting the achievement of these efficiencies however, and furthermore, these efficiencies were erroneously being seen as measurable by 'time' and outputs rather than outcomes and impact. Kalimullah et al. refer to this as 'productivity taking over efficiency' (2012, pp. 60), and this appears to be the case here; an inaccurate measure of efficiency is being employed which serves to provide a skewed picture for the longer term, but also, the manner in which this picture is being created serves to inhibit the desired result. The warning by Lynch (2012) is further reinforced here - that target-setting serves to preside over practice efficiency considerations; an example of how overarching political directives in one area (in this case, financial) directly impacts on other areas within the field – learning of those employed to undertake the roles that deliver the targets set.

In essence this in itself is not new; Jack & Donnellan (2010) had already looked at these concerns in relation to the decline of Newly Qualified Social Workers as had Wong (2004) in relation to Newly Qualified Teachers. However, this study extends this understanding across the Children's Services sector. These individuals typically have an increasingly more diverse and complex role to undertake than before - they have multiple responsibilities and areas of work, and yet, are more often less 'formally' qualified than professionally accredited roles such as Teachers or Social Workers. Therefore, the softer skills required to undertake their role effectively are not only vitally important - but fundamental - if they are to undertake such complex roles in the way they are required. The primary risk here is that the addictive nature of this erroneous efficacy measure (Eriksen, 2001), could eventually mean that time for learning will be eradicated altogether.

## **Conclusion**

Notwithstanding the critique it has been subjected to, 'New Managerialism' has had a deep and long lasting impact on most work places, engendering a pervasive ethos that seems to have gathered strength in the recent drive for austerity. Whilst the financial savings of such an approach might be able to be relatively easily quantifiable, the impact of such measures on the culture and ethos (Ahlback, Oberg and Bringselius, 2014) of organisations cannot be so easily measured, nor can the impact on individual inductees (Lynch, 2014). And yet, the effect of austerity measures seemed to be having a definite impact on the day-to-day practices of the staff working in such contexts, and the practices appear to be at odds with the overarching endeavour of caring for vulnerable children and families. A consequence of not allowing the time to develop professionally, nor of affording the mechanisms to recognise / acknowledge these skills, is likely to lead to a situation whereby 'efficiency' is falsely measured. Furthermore, where this is the case, an organisation risks grinding to a halt as a result of a reduced capacity to learn and also because of the ways the individuals in the field 'play the game'.

Lynch, Grummel and Devine (2012) warned against this, and it is further evident in this context through analysis of the data, that a new managerialism approach is placing organisational outputs above development of more broadly based moral and social values associated with the professional field. And so, the analysis of the data reinforced my belief that my original idea of using a 'communities of practice' framework to provide clarity to the research findings was in fact far too superficial for the complexity of a contemporary children's services context operating under austerity. Government austerity measures have perhaps created a context and climate that is much more complex than 'communities of practice' accommodates. There are apparently far more obstacles than the somewhat simplistic 'novice-to-expert' route that new recruits take, Obstacles identified included; a difficulty in verbalising the type of learning that was taking place, difficulties presented by the paperwork and the terminologies used within the process, obstacles created as a result of differences in expectations both of who leads, benefits from and what the purpose of induction is, and obstacles brought about by a perception in the time allowed (or rather, not allowed).

This raises concerns about just how organisations like the one explored here will develop the 'dynamic capability' that Mulders and Berends (2010) remind us as being vital in professions such as this and in such times. Changing roles and responsibilities within Children's Services means that inductees are not in a static role that will stay the same year in- year out. Instead, day-to-day practice and professional priorities are fluid and subject to change – at least with the advent of each new Government election or policy change, either within their own acute context or by changes in professional contexts around them. A particular example of that here was with the recent rise in Children's Social Care thresholds. A rise in thresholds does not by result in a decline in the levels of need of children. Where statutory children's social care thresholds rose, this meant that the nature of the work to be undertaken by the participants changed; they had previously worked only with tier one 'universal' families and children with relatively low levels of vulnerability. This changed rapidly during the time of the study, and by the end of the fieldwork stage they are routinely working with children who were likely to, for example 2 years ago, have been within the care of a statutory safeguarding service. The role they found themselves in required a different skill-set from that when they started their role – perhaps even from when they applied for the job to when they were appointed. Therefore, it is highly likely that the skill-set that these new recruits joined with may need to flex and adjust in response to similar changes during their role, too. Regardless of tier of need being worked with, the practicalities of the role required staff to problem solve and work through often complex situations with the family based on their unique situation.

It is prudent therefore to consider the possible consequences of such an approach to the learning of inductees. I discussed in the earliest chapters the need within Children's Services for inductees to be well-placed to adapt to each child and families' unique situations. With no nationally-set formal qualification criteria for those entering the profession, family support roles enjoy a wealth and breadth of experience and diversity of backgrounds within their workforce. However, with this comes the reality of risk that individuals undertaking those roles may not have been sufficiently equipped within their previous formal learning for the day-to-day reality of their role. Similarly, I also posed the idea early on in this thesis that it could be argued that formal learning can never fully equip someone for such a role due to the tacit nature of much of what they undertake. However, as discussed above, the changing nature of the role and complexity of the day-job leads us to understand that no 'one size fits all' approach is likely to be effective, and therefore the ability to continually re-construct and develop new or alternative ways to approach a situation appear all the more important – it becomes less about what is learned and more about '*learning to learn*' – the 'dynamic capability'.

Chapter 1 spoke about the changing landscape of the field researched, and therefore, even for those who had undergone specific formal training and learning then the need for those working in such fields to develop this dynamic capability seem even more important, if not vital, to the continued ability of the field to serve its customers. If such an approach is taken that serves to deplete the potential of the employee to learn through first-hand experiences and reflections, through problem-solving and practice-based experiences, then this surely serves to inhibit their ability to continually learn, adapt and flex to the needs of the context. Induction practices which see creativity and disruption as a 'problem', or that prefer a mechanical approach to the delivery of inductions sets to at best to limit, and at worst, to erode, this from happening. Thus, the aim of creating social capital (Spender, 1996) and human capital (Mayo, 2000; Burgoyne, 1996; Pedlar, 1996; Boydell, 1989) that is seen as essential to the survival of organisations (Burgoyne and Pedlar, 1996) is actually depleted by the approach that the organisation has taken. Not only does it appear to impede this in the longer term but it has potential to restrict the quality of delivery of the service delivered in the immediate sense. It is generally accepted that quality of the learning of the adults in a professional role has a direct impact on the quality of experiences on child(ren's) outcomes (Wong, 2014). Therefore, in times of austerity whereby performance measures and a need to evidence outcomes and impact reign supreme, it is problematic if the approach taken to achieve this actually serves to achieving the opposite. Downs (1995) highlighted the changing context of the industrial world and how this impacts on what inductees need to learn; a need to adapt to change, to transfer skills across contexts etc. Burgoyne and Pedlar (1996) highlighted the need for inductees to be able to respond to economic, technological or social change. This context experienced

economic and social change due to the imposed austerity measures. Managers had clearly internalised these changes. In response, they had accommodated this within their approach; the required change or alteration in 'output' was identified, yet the process for achieving such outputs did not appear to be as fully considered – if at all. Therefore, the process was defeating the intended goal; instead of developing nimble and adaptable inductees who took responsibility for their learning they risked creating passive inductees who looked to their manager for 'answers', thus encouraging higher levels of employee dependency instead of independency for one's own learning.

The final chapter concludes with a return to the research question and aims, and reflects on the study, its limitations and future directions for research.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

This thesis has been an attempt to answer the following questions:

- 1a. What perceptions and assumptions about learning do inductees and their managers hold?
- 1b. What are the formal and informal processes of induction affecting learning?
2. How is the 'doxa' inherent in an organisation's practices, and how managers and inductees see their 'fit' with the organisation and its values ('illusio'), affected by wider social and organisational changes (austerity & new managerialism) and how does this impact on how learning (or not learning) is shaped during induction?

This chapter will attempt to outline the implications for induction in the Children's Services, that arise from the findings of the study. As mentioned previously, the three themes under which data was analysed and presented – Perceptions and Practices around Induction; Understandings about Learning During Induction, and Learning within the Context of Austerity – yielded insights into two main phenomena. These were the doxa inherent in entrenched practices around induction that were paternalistic and hierarchical in nature (manager leading and inductee being led) that shaped so much about how induction was understood and experienced. At the same time, there was an underlying sense of dissonance in managers' illusio in operating under a new managerialist ethos, exacerbated by the context of austerity.

The implications of these two features are striking when considering the period and processes of induction, particularly learning during induction. The thesis has already outlined the narrowness of much of the induction experience - from the way it is conceived, delivered and therefore experienced. Induction saw two main approaches to learning - the traditional formal training consisting of delivered face-to-face and on-line taught sessions, and informal social learning. The former tended to be reserved for the mandatory aspects of an inductees' role, e.g. first aid, manual handling, basic food hygiene etc. Each of these areas are obligated to employing organisations through policy or legislation – most commonly, Health & Safety Acts. However, learning about the day-to-day practical aspects of the job role tended to be learned almost exclusively through social, situated, learning in the workplace.

The study found that orthodox linear measures of time sat more neatly with more formal training and the new managerialist approach adopted. In comparison, informal and social or situated learning sat less neatly. So, even though the 'amount' learnt seemed greater in the latter, the former was preferred

– even to the extent that a preference for formal learning appeared to de-value the more informal type of learning. With informal and situated learning being seen as vital to the adaptability, growth and continued success of this type of field this raises concern of the sectors ability to continually meet its professional endeavours. As the new managerialist ethos seems set to hold sway, particularly during times of austerity, it seems hard to see quite how this could be considered and changed. What is perhaps more hopeful are the moments of dissonance that show that there is a prevailing unease about how induction is being managed and delivered.

In more pragmatic terms, one of the insights from the study that allows for a quick fix, is the erroneous interchangeability of terms such as induction and probation. It is clear that conflating these two is not providing the right atmosphere for learning during induction. It could make for a stronger learning and questioning culture if induction and probation were clearly defined as two separate periods – for instance, 0-6 months as induction and 6-12 or 18 months as a probationary period.

Moreover, there can be room for greater consideration of inductees' background and prior knowledge and skills, particularly softer skills that can be valued more clearly. If this were made a more systematic process in the early days of induction, there is a sense in which inductees' learning journey may be a smoother and more holistic one. In practical terms, this might be a conversation the manager and inductee have on day one (or at least very early on in the new recruits' role), or, managers may prefer this to be completed in document form prior to the new recruit starting. Given that inductees tended not to recognise their prior learning, some more specific prompts may be required in either case in order to draw out relevant information here.

Similarly, a deeper consideration to the format of induction for each recruit could enable individual 'programmes of study' to be developed for each new recruit. Rather than conversations and actions centering on 'what' is to be learned, explicit consideration could be afforded to 'how' it might be best learnt. Whilst these might so far appear relatively minor changes, when combined, they could begin to redress the apparent trend of formal learning reigning supreme over informal learning, and develop a culture of learning which recognises both forms of learning as equally valuable.

As managers themselves indicated, there is at present, little or no attention paid to their own educational needs in terms of inducting new recruits. While this does not seem to be something that would be immediately addressed in the current climate, there is a clear need for more induction studies that will help organisations and managers undertake a more progressive approach to induction. As part of this broader approach to induction (and indeed learning within organisations as a whole), issues raised within this thesis relating to dissonance between personal and corporate values and time/speed

of learning could be addressed. At present the Local Authority deliver 'Safer Recruitment' training which focusses on the legislative and safeguarding aspects of recruiting new staff. It might be feasible that this programme extends to incorporate an element of 'Effective Recruitment' – including content about effective learning within the induction period for those who are recruited. At very least this would serve to alert managers to the importance of the induction phase, and its potential for learning at work in the longer term as well as the immediate sense.

What may be of longer lasting benefit would be for the insights afforded by Bourdieu's concepts to form a core part of organisational learning. For instance, discussing *illusio*, or the stakes that people invest in particular fields and organisations could create a better 'soundtrack' to austerity-hit professionals and organisations, allowing for common ground amidst the diversity of peoples' values and views, perhaps even signalling the possibility of 'communities of learning' to be forged. Admittedly, this sounds utopian within the current context, which is plagued by staff shortages and unbearable time and resource pressures. However, the implications of not attempting a re-think of induction (and the wider learning of the organisation) seem far more unbearable to those like the author of this thesis who have spent considerable number of professional years in the service.

### **Limitations of the study**

One of the main limitations of the study is that it is not fine-grained enough to capture a more intimate portrait of individuals. This means that it does not really engage with how the personal habitus and capitals of individuals work within this field. There were several reasons why the study did not gain such fine detail – firstly, as a novice researcher, I simply did not have the skills or expertise needed to engage with participants in an in-depth manner. Secondly, I was also not able to conceive that such detailed portraiture of respondents could be legitimate research practice. Although familiar with qualitative research and qualitative research literature, this seemed, certainly at the start of the Ed.D. a step too far for myself and my understanding of what could be a social science project. Thirdly, my own subsequent departure from the organisation and those of several respondents meant that it was impossible to return to the site and gain more detailed information of this kind. Fourthly, the upheavals and uncertainties of the context made for an uneasy time of fieldwork. I felt ambivalent about asking for much more, particularly about sensitive issues, at a time when the 'pain' of the organisation and its many members was evident. At times within the field-work stage it appeared that the flux within the field was impeding data that was being gathered, particularly from managers. An example of this was when one manager asked to have certain aspects of his interview data withdrawn from the study. I assumed that there was a worry that he may have said something that would not look good if it came to light too

soon. This was also one of the reasons why the emotional challenges faced by managers and inductees did not become a more substantial theme within the thesis.

All of this is not to suggest that if I were to conduct the study with my greater experience and hindsight, that it would be able to address all of the above issues. I still contend that this was a difficult topic to research during a difficult time, but one which still has provided some insights for the practice of induction.

### **Further research**

In terms of suggestions for further study, it seems that while this particular study focused on the induction period as a time-bound frame for the case study, it would be of great interest to the topic of induction research – which merits far greater attention than it has received – to undertake a study that followed inductees across the first 12 months of their journey. This would allow for more robust assertions to be made about how habitus, doxa and illusio work in their professional lives as a new recruit. It would be worthwhile to consider for instance, how the inductees' illusio shapes their practice within the field – or indeed whether it is the case that where there are conflicts with the personal habitus, this has impact on the inductee's commitment to the field, or, as Bourdieu suggests does it push them to leave the field altogether?

It would also be worthwhile to examine whether there are changes to how the field perceives itself, whether professionals in the caring professions do indeed share a common habitus and ethos that survives the brutal effects of austerity, or if new entrants to the profession bring with them a different habitus and expectations that changes the field over the longer run.

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