Designing accredited CPD for the Children's Workforce: Challenges and opportunities facing Higher Education in England

Abstract

There is no doubt that education services and welfare policy are now seen as key drivers within the high priority social policy arena of Children's Services that has become the dominant reform of Local Authorities throughout England. This article considers questions surrounding the issue of how an effective continuing professional development framework can be developed for the Children's Workforce linked to higher education accreditation. This is explored within the current context of an emergent Integrated Qualifications Framework for the UK Children's Workforce that is also aligned to the same levels within the European Qualifications Framework.

Introduction and Rationale

In Britain, as elsewhere in the Europe, the latter decades of the 20th century were dominated by the rise of neo-liberalism and the free market economy in which the traditional notion of the welfare state was challenged and in many areas reformed by central government. When New Labour came to power in 1997 after eighteen years of Conservative Government, social welfare reform was a priority. To this end the policy initiative *Every Child Matters* (ECM) (DfES, 2003) and the Laming (2003) Inquiry which informed it, served to question the effectiveness of existing welfare service provision, especially in relation to the most vulnerable. Public enquiries into headline cases of child abuse and neglect suggested that the old protectionist models of public funded support agencies operating within their own communication silos as a form of professional demarcation, that was put in place in the UK since 1945, were no longer considered socially acceptable and needed to be replaced (Simon, 2008). The overarching social policy to emerge from this process was *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003). The driver for this policy change was the restructuring of the welfare state *via* New Public Management in order to break down professional power and control (provider capture) by further opening up the public sector to market forces and encouraging public participation. Rather than promoting a strong centralised state which had been a feature of Neo Liberal politics of the 1980s, the role of the

state under New Labour became that of the 'enabling state', whereby citizens at a local community level become 'stakeholders' and take an active part in and responsibility for the running of their own lives.

Thus, implicit within New Labour policy documentation is an understanding of the complex and inter-related needs of children, young people and families in modern day society, including the most vulnerable. The underlying emergent ontological assumption is that inter-related problems such as health, social housing, finance and education can be dealt with best by adopting inter-related or multi- agency approaches to service delivery. The new policy expectation is that all agencies to do with child welfare; private, public and voluntary, will work together in order to achieve the five outcomes embedded within *Every Child Matters*: to stay safe, healthy, enjoy and achieve, promote economic wellbeing and to make a positive contribution. This approach has resonance with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory and as such attempts to understand the complex world around the child and how various environmental layers may help or hinder development (Adams and Tucker, 2007). Rustin's (2004) evaluation of the Laming Report into the murder of the child émigré Victoria Climbié at the hands of her aunt and aunt's boyfriend who were living in England, was that it presented a series of recommendations that focused on the institutional and personal failings of the key English agencies and personnel involved in the Climbié case at that time. This would serve merely to replicate the deficiencies of the dominant style of public service management; one which focused on objectives and targets. However, the resultant policy initiative *Every Child Matters* goes far beyond the initial 108 recommendations of the Laming Report, applying its findings to *all* children, not just those deemed to be 'at risk'. Numerous agencies across the private, public and voluntary sectors were now to form the Children's Workforce responsible for the delivery of Children's Services. Thus, *Every Child Matters* (2004) and the subsequent *Children's Plan* (2007) concentrated on such issues as 'early intervention', 'information sharing', 'multi-agency working', 'joined-up support', 'co-operative working practices' and the 'co-

location of services' in order to respond to local need and prevent occurrences of vulnerable children and families 'falling through the net'. Such restructuring of welfare provision met New Labour's aim of reducing the perceived inadequacies of old state bureaucracies by limiting the power of professionals (provider capture) and drawing on much needed private finance and expertise via partnerships and networks. What emerged was a social policy which is predicated on a belief that the whole workforce based around children, young people and families should be operating together to provide joined-up, multi-agency responses to the complex issues of safeguarding children. To this end, English Local Authorities (LAs) have been restructured to combine Social Services and Education Departments into a common Directorate of Children's Services, thus replacing the former strategic separation of these services.

No specific models of multi-agency working are recommended by the UK Government although the *Every Child Matters* website lists three models under the category of integrated working:

- Multi-agency panels where professionals are employed by their home agency but meet together on a regular basis for the purpose of assessment and information sharing. This model is closest to pre-existing child protection panels that link schools, parents, social services and legal stakeholders to decide on child protection issues.
- Multi-agency teams – where professionals' are seconded or recruited into a team and generally share a base.
- Integrated services – the Sure Start Centres set up in England would be the exemplar here where diverse agency professionals e.g. from health, social services and education, work out of an early years or school setting to provide 'wrap around care'.

Furthermore, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OfSTED) and the Office for Health and Adult Social Care (Ofcare) have built multi-agency working into their assessment criteria underlining this fundamental change to professional/occupational working practices.

Calls for joined–up thinking and inter-agency working are far from new and can be traced back in the UK as far as Plowden (1967). Recommendations' for greater collaboration between schools and social services provide a blueprint for the current *Every Child Matters* multi-agency agenda:

'We think the following arguments carry great weight: (a) workers in a variety of services are increasingly finding they are concerned with similar families having similar needs; (b) the atomisation of social services leads to contradictory policies and to situations in which 'everybody's business becomes nobody's business'; (c) continuity of care is difficult under present arrangements; (d) a more unified structure would provide better opportunities for appraising needs and planning how to meet them; (e) it would also accord with the present tendency of social work to treat people as members of families and local groups rather than to deal with specific individuals or separate needs isolated from their social context; (f) it would make it possible to create viable teams to operate in areas of special need. Although such teams should cover carefully selected areas they could be physically located in many different places, for instance in clinics, in the local offices of welfare and children's departments, or medical group practices. Since all children spend several hours a day in school for most of the year, and since it is relatively easy for parents to visit schools, there is much to be said for choosing the schools as a base for social work units responsible for helping families facing many kinds of difficulties' (Plowden, 1967 para. 240).

However, it is evident that there are issues with the philosophy and practice of multi-agency working that need to be addressed, as well as understanding the new training needs necessary for professional practitioners in the field. Such discussion is pertinent not only within the United Kingdom but also across the European Union where the concept of 'transnational welfare' is emerging (Sindberg Martinsen, 2004) suggesting both internal and external pressures to reconfigure (children's) welfare services and the training requirements of professionals and practitioners. This is driven in part by national responses to neo-liberal economics which led to massive welfare cuts. Pastore and Piperno (2006) identify two interrelated factors that have contributed to what they term the European welfare crisis**:**

- a financial aspect; the dearth of public resources that may be allocated for social purposes; and,

- what may be called a social aspect, which springs from the lack of available human resources …. to carry out welfare tasks.

This has resulted in many immigrant workers fulfilling the roles of care workers within national welfare systems. Most commonly affected are welfare services related to health care, the elderly and children. There are evident implications for both sending and receiving countries in terms of welfare needs, provision and training as well as regulation and cross-border accountability. No longer, it seems, can nation states construct welfare policy in isolation. Furthermore, social policy that includes welfare and education strategies are more often linked to an agenda promoted by transnational organizations such as the World Bank, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Union (EU).

The EU has recently sought convergence in Education and Training standards and transnational transferability and recognition of qualifications by implementing the Bologna Declaration on 19 June 1999. The Bologna protocol (EU, 1999) aims to implement and quality assure a pan-European Higher Education Area by 2010. Within this is an EU Lifelong Learning policy that envisages a European Qualifications Framework (EQF) (EU, 2008) that creates eight common levels of educational achievement linked to vocational and academic awards with undergraduate degrees (or equivalent) occupying levels 4 to 6 and masters degrees at level 7; with doctorates taking the pinnacle of achievement at level 8. The EQF encourages countries to relate their qualifications systems or frameworks to the EQF by 2010 and to ensure that all new qualifications issued from 2012 carry a reference to the appropriate EQF level. Indeed, this EU qualifications framework is rapidly becoming a *de facto* international qualifications framework with other countries such as Singapore and South Africa aligning their own education and training systems to that of the EU system. This is important as the harmonization of qualifications across Europe as part of a globalization strategy takes place at a time that seeks a similar harmonization of qualifications for the Children's Workforce in England [the National Qualifications

Framework (NQF)]; both with an agenda to increase professional workforce mobility with potential access to greater skills and resources through such joined-up synergy.

The aim of this article is to examine the challenges faced by individuals, professional bodies and Higher Education Institutions in developing the new training and continuing professional development (CPD) solutions that befit the demands of such joined-up ways of practice. Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003), the restructure of English Local Authorities around Children's Services and the subsequent Children's Plan (DCSF, 2007) clearly establish the aims, objectives and intended outcomes for multi-agency working, but without providing models (or indeed any new core funding) for this type of working or the training that should underpin it. This and the fact that there is no clear knowledge base for new practices has led to a climate of uncertainty for both practitioners and strategic planners alike. The proposed UK-wide Integrated Qualifications Framework (IQF) (CWDC, 2006) indicates that there are core skills endemic within multi -agency working. Furthermore, evidence from health and allied health fields suggests substantial benefits for joint training. This article explores the challenges presented to CPD providers by the imperative of multi-agency/multi-professional collaboration in the workplace, reflecting on our own experiences of developing CPD opportunities for Integrated Children's Services in South West England. We feel this raises important issues for teacher educators in preparing themselves and their students for a multi-agency approach to working that is still very much in its infancy. We draw on the development of the Professional Masters Programme (PMP) that is located within Bath Spa University's School of Education CPD department with the introduction of a 'Children's Services: Vulnerable Learners' and Inclusion' career pathway. This has been mirrored at undergraduate level with the introduction of some cross-school modules (Social Sciences and Education) to develop collaboration across the disciplines and facilitate 'inter-professional' teaching and learning.

The terminology demands some explanation. Multi-agency; multi-disciplinary; inter-agency and inter-disciplinary appear interchangeable in the literature; however, inter-professional is the term preferred by heath, social services and allied health agencies that have some history in the development of collaborative professional working in the fields of health, allied health and social care.

The UK response: Towards an Integrated Qualifications Framework

New Labour's proposals for more integrated working, first mapped out in *Every Child Matters* were encapsulated in the notion of an integrated Children's Workforce to be managed at a strategic level in each English Local Authority by the formation of Children's Trusts. Publications such as *Building a world-class workforce for children and young people and their families* (DfES, 2006a) and *Building an Integrated Qualifications Framework* (DfES, 2006b) highlighted the key issues that were to be addressed. These included:

- 'The need to produce a more competent and more flexible workforce.'
- 'To create a qualifications framework relevant to practitioners working across the range of services engaging with children, young people and their families and covering the majority of occupational roles in the children's workforce.'
- To develop 'a framework founded on a thorough review of occupational standards in each sector; that recognizes and enables the accreditation of prior skills and knowledge; and that actively encourages and promotes movement within and between sectors.'

(DfES, 2006b:1; DfES, 2006b:2)

The current rationale for common training is an acknowledgement that the climate within which the Children's Workforce is operating is in a state of flux and change, partly because of the stepped *Every Child Matters* reform agenda and the consequent blurring of sector boundaries, but also because of financial imperatives and the changing nature of the workforce as outlined above. The UK

Government seemed committed to the belief that a 'flexible, skilled and motivated workforce is a major factor in the provision of better services' (DfES, 2006b).

'Settings which have staff with higher qualifications, especially with a good proportion of trained teachers on the staff, show higher quality and their children make more progress.'

(http://www.ioe.ac.uk/cdl/eppe/pdfs/eppe_brief2503.pdf)

Current qualifications can be grouped as follows from entry level to level 8. These make up the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in England as depicted and mapped against the EQF in Table 1 in the Appendix.

Children's Workforce employees can be working with qualifications at any one of these levels where the overlap of NQF and FHEQ at higher education levels 4 to 8 also equate to the same levels of the EQF under the Bologna protocol with the aim of educational convergence and professional recognition and mobility of skilled workforces across the EU by 2010. Training within each agency and the professional discipline represented has to comply with the respective national occupational standards (NOS) and professional standards e.g. in the UK the professional standards for teachers and higher level teaching assistants form part of the wider framework of standards for the whole school workforce including the national occupational standards for teaching/classroom assistants (TDA,2007:2). Reducing the complexity of qualifications and assessment across the Children's Workforce would allow for 'greater flexibility and movement between work in different kinds of settings and service'(DfES, 2006b:3).

'As well as specialist units on supporting pupils' learning, the NOS now include units imported from play work, health and social care, youth work and children's care, learning and development;   covering, for example:
- children's development and safety
- supporting pupils and families
- support during therapy
- Support for a range of special needs
- young people's welfare
- mentoring young people

- supporting play

This will increase the common elements in qualifications for the Children's Workforce and make it easier for staff to develop transferable skills' (CWDC, 2008:13).

The notion of an Integrated Qualifications Framework (IQF) for the Children's Workforce in the UK is underpinned by a belief that there is a 'common core of skills and knowledge' that can be drawn on across the wide range of agencies involved in supporting children's welfare as well as providing a means for career transfer and progression across the allied professions making up the Children's Workforce. Indeed, the earlier and profound recommendation in the Plowden Report was for 'a greater measure of training common to all the services'. (Plowden, 1967 para: 231). Thus, we have an early political vision in search of a policy framework not to happen for another half century.

These assumed ideas of a common core vocational curriculum for Children's Services practice were set out in the 2005 document of that name and include:

- effective communication and engagement
- child and young person development
- safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child
- supporting transitions
- multi-agency working
- sharing information (DfES, 2005).

Rollout of the IQF is anticipated for 2010 (the same deadline for the EQF) and will focus attention for Higher Education Institutions (HEI) on work-based learning accredited CPD requirements, particularly at level 4 and above. Whereas the majority of the core skills relate to working directly with children, young people and families in order to 'facilitate entry to and progression within and across the children's workforce' (DfES, 2005) the section on multi-agency working and to a lesser extent that on information sharing, acknowledges the changing climate of professional practice and the potential for the development of new skills which could be reflected in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).

What is worthy of note is the tension between a qualifications framework that promotes transference across sector/professional boundaries and the unique contribution of professional disciplines. Training for transferability, a key aim of the Integrated Qualifications Framework is different from training for collaboration where professional difference is recognized and celebrated as a means of bringing together a range of professional expertise in answer to a specific case. Thus, we have a case of *vertical* specialisms moving up the FHEQ levels trying to be balanced with a need for a transferable curriculum of IQF common skills operating *horizontally* across the levels of each professional sector – a new kind of qualifications matrix that attempts to bridge the extant vocational-academic divide. The challenge for HEIs is to formulate and support the development of coherent and coordinated learning within this complex qualifications matrix from the practitioner/pre-professional (undergraduate) stage (Level 4), into professional training and beyond. This can be achieved *via* implementation of continuing post-professional development as a form of accredited work-based professional learning linked to practitioner and clinical field practice (Gardner & Coombs (Eds.), 2009).

Lessons from health and social services: inter-professional working, education and learning.

According to the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) (Sharland Taylor, Jones, Orr and Whiting, 2007) the history of Inter-professional Learning (IPL) in the UK can be traced back to the 1960s and has since developed in response to a range of differing agendas. Links between Higher Education and Inter-Professional Education (IPE) in social work began in the 1990s and has since received endorsement by the National Health Service (NHS) and Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, culminating in the Universities UK (2003) paper *Partners in Care.* This has been followed by support from the Higher Education Academy (HEA). What is significant, however, is the lack of policy attention paid to IPE in areas other than health, which the SCIE identifies as a striking 'gap in

relation to preparing professionals in children's services' (Sharland *et al,* 207:4). Whereas health professionals such as nurses, hospital social workers and pediatricians, for example, may expect to experience joint training by equally diverse training professionals this is not the normal experience of teacher trainees either during their initial teacher training or in subsequent years of practice. The benefits for effective multi- agency practice of teachers learning alongside social workers, educational psychologists and speech therapists, for example, cannot be ignored by CPD providers at Local Authority level or Higher Education Institutions.

Although definitions of IPE are by no means without contention the Centre for the Advancement of Inter-professional Education (CAIPE, 2002) define IPE as 'occasions when two or more professionals learn with, from and about each other to improve collaboration and the quality of care.' It is the interactive nature of inter-professional learning that is considered vital here; allowing 'students from different professions to learn with each other with the potential for new knowledge and understanding to be generated through that interaction' (Sharland *et al,* 2007:6).

According to Hammick , Freeth, Koppel , Reeves and Barr (2007:50):

> 'The uniqueness of IPE demands authenticity from the learning experience, a characteristic that arises when the development and delivery process are customized to the particular learning group and their professional practice. Increasingly this is being recognized a part of good practice….Similarly, the customization of IPE so that it reflects the reality of practice for the specific groups of inter-professional learners acts as a mechanism for positive outcomes'.

Thus, what the learner brings to any inter-professional training is as important to the success of the learning experience as the capabilities of the teacher/trainer in facilitating inter-professional learning. How this inter-professional learning can be both embedded and utilized in a systematic programme of CPD and the role of HEIs in facilitating this across all professional disciplines represented in the

Children's Workforce is of pressing concern and demands new radical thinking and solutions (Coombs & Calvert, 2007 and 2008).

The emergent role of Higher Education and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in devising programmes within a shifting multi-agency environment.

Thus, the changing geography of the pre-professional/ professional landscape has significant implications for institutions of Higher Education (HEIs) in the delivery of 'fit for purpose' training combined with accredited CPD programmes. Across UK Higher Education, bodies such as the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre (ESCalate), the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE) and the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) have all sought to address the challenges posed by *Every Child Matters* to the education and professional training sector (UCET, 2007). Similar organizations across health, social work, youth and community etc have likewise responded to the call for greater training and professional learning to support the development of integrated service delivery which is challenging traditional learning boundaries. Taylor and Burgess (2007) have identified ways in which Higher Education is beginning to respond to the *Every Child Matters* agenda across sectors such as health, social work, education and psychology. The Integrated Children's Services in Higher Education (ICS-HE) project (Taylor and Burgess, 2007) aims to bring together subject disciplines and sector bodies in order to:

- Provide an evidence-based approach to identify effective ways of developing inter-professional curricula and pedagogy for professional practice in Children's Services.
- Scope existing initiatives and support the developments of informed educational practice for professionals who will be working in reconfigured children's services.
- Facilitate a coordinated response across Higher Education to the Integrated Qualifications Framework (Taylor and Burgess 2007:12).

The challenge for CPD departments in Higher Education institutions is to fully understand the sheer diversity and scope of the different professional groups working across the children's workforce as well as the types of new knowledge emerging from new forms of collaborative practice. This and the need to understand the professional structures, standards and systems of engagement represented, are considered here to be fundamental to successful collaborative learning.

Clearly, the convergence of new modes of practice, the imperative of continuing professional development and the formalisation of national occupational and professional standards into a single Integrated Qualifications Framework for Children's Services create a new space for HEIs to develop multi-disciplinary CPD; and put new curriculum flesh into the complex qualifications matrix that represents the systematic meshing of the FHEQ and IQF.

A second challenge, and at a more basic level, is encouraging those diverse professional groups to recognise the strategic need and priority for collaborative training, particularly if this is the context in which new knowledge can be gained and explored (Coombs and Calvert, 2007). Understanding what other professionals do is more than a mere intellectual exercise. Learning together can enable participants to be aware not only of the contributions of others, but to be secure in their own expertise and limits. Embedding opportunities for joint education and training experiences early on e.g. at Foundation Degree/Honours degree level is a collaborative way forward to embed early professional expectations and ethics to mirror 'real life' working situations. What is at stake is not the preservation of professional identities and traditions, but a workforce that is able to effectively learn together in order to work and communicate together so as to make a difference to the trajectories of the most vulnerable children and young people in their care. What is emerging from the literature is evidence that current barriers of professional culture, 'sectorisation' and funding arrangements are limiting opportunities for more responsive (and therefore more effective) CPD arrangements across the workforce and in forging links with HEIs. Providing the

means and infrastructure for the future children's workforce to comfortably cross the professional boundaries of the extant institutionalized sectors is a major societal challenge. The embedding of the IQF into HEIs across all these professional sectors' training requirements would be a useful start. Thus, we would seek to identify where CPD solutions overlap with the needs of the IQF curriculum and multi-agency working across Children's Services – see figure 1.
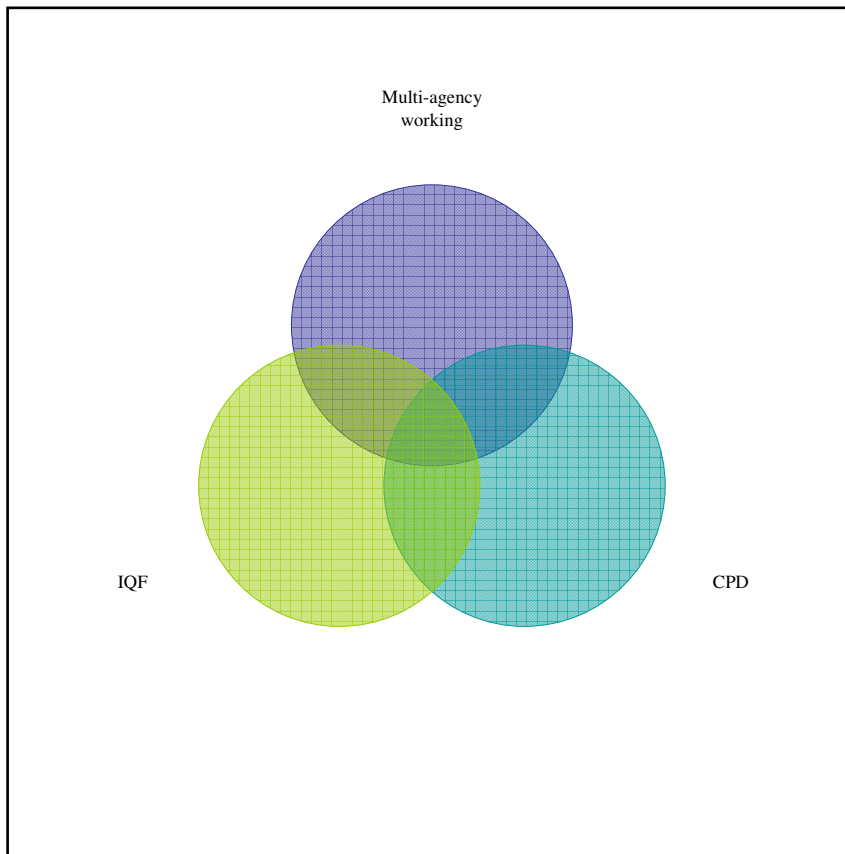

Figure 1: Finding the inter-relationship between the IQF, multi-agency working and CPD solutions for the Children's Workforce

Coombs and Calvert (2008) recommend the following approach and policies for UK HEIs to take-up for developing the IQF at postgraduate levels:

1. That the government, in the form of the DCSF, makes available and co-ordinates similar funding sources across all professional agencies (i.e.

CWDC, TDA, General Social Care Council (GSCC), and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) etc) affected by delivering the IQF such that a common training platform leads to professional convergence of CPD services offered across all the diverse sectors.

2. This should first start at the postgraduate level of the IQF, as this influences the operational and strategic decisions of middle and senior professionals that lead children's services. It will also influence the development of professional pathways.

3. There is a serious need to develop capacity-building funds across HEIs and the other professional bodies and groups that need to design and deliver new provision for the IQF, including the regional and national agreements required for Accreditation for Prior Learning/ Accreditation for Prior and Experiential Learning (APL/APEL). One way to achieve such IQF curriculum development is to offer ring-fenced IQF development grants via influential stakeholders such as Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), which can also offer both the quality assurance and take-up of the sector as a whole.

The Emergent Research and Development Objective

Multi-agency working therefore implies a need to develop multi-disciplinary CPD solutions. Thus, the key focus for the enquiry was in what ways Higher Education can support collaborative professional training through the development of joint multi-agency CPD partnerships.

Methodology

The broad aim of the research project is to generate knowledge for action. Thus, the substantive aim of the enquiry is to establish what a responsive CPD programme might look like. The focus is upon one University's case study experience in developing CPD programmes in response to, and support of, a Local Authority's Children's Services' CPD needs.

The methodological aim takes a qualitative approach in research design and is situated within a critical realist paradigm. The research draws on the theoretical frameworks offered by Cultural-historical activity theory, which has been developed from the work of Vygotsky (1978) and Leont'ev (1978 &1981). The experimental 'improvement' paradigm (Gardner & Coombs (Eds.), 2009) of such CPD community development draws upon the concept of a *social manifesto* agenda as a means of directing and articulating social change through professional learning research activity. Gardner and Coombs (2009) maintain that action learning and research are linked to organizational change and that levering impact in the workplace can be achieved through accrediting such practitioner research:

'..the linkage of work-related research to higher education can provide a means of deepening the critical engagement of such reflective practitioners who also operate as change agents for their profession' (p.134).

We believe that the change of disposition and values required for professionals to act and work together across traditional boundaries is a difficult goal to achieve. One way of achieving such new practice is for them to become change agents empowered through HE accredited work-based learning CPD projects.

Data Collection Methods

This study involved a systematic enquiry into the nature of learning that takes place in and for multi-agency working and how this can be used to inform the development of CPD courses in partnership between UK Higher Education Institutions and Local Authorities or Primary Care Trusts. The proposed Integrated Qualifications Framework poses a number of questions and tensions for course design and purpose in terms of professional boundaries, pedagogy and progression at all levels, but perhaps most significantly at the post professional (postgraduate) stages. If multi-agency working is the way forward for latter day Children's Services then the responsive design of CPD courses will

contribute a great deal to the effectiveness of the professional workforce as new working practices evolve.

Thus, specifically, the research objectives are to establish:
- The nature of professional learning that takes place among peers in situations of multi-agency working.
- What professionals need to know in order to work together effectively (i.e. having a positive impact on the lives and trajectories of vulnerable children and young people) in multi-agency contexts.
- How this knowledge can be used to inform the future design of CPD programmes to support multi-agency working.

These objectives inevitably influence the choice of methodology. In terms of the wider project the methodological design will allow for the exploration of the complex and stratified areas of professional structures, previous professional training and expertise, and personal attitudes towards and responses to, new working practices.

Studies such as the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Multi-agency Teamwork for Children's Services (MATCh) project (Anning, Cottrell, Frost, Green and Robinson, 2006) and the current ESRC Teaching and Learning Programme: Learning in and for Multi-agency working (LIW) (Daniels, Leadbeater and Warmington, 2007) will inform the enquiry. Anning *et al.* (2006) seek to 'analyse the knowledge bases and practices that professionals brought to the teams from their previous work' also 'how professionals shared knowledge…designed together new ways of delivering services and how they developed through their creative activities new forms of professional knowledge both as individuals and as teams' (p.10). The LIW study (Daniels *et al,* 2007) similarly investigated 'the learning of professionals in the creation of new forms of practice which require joined-up action in response to complex and diverse client needs' (Daniels et al., 2007:522). The research was influenced by three concerns:' the identification of new professional learning practices emerging within multi-agency settings; the creation of new knowledge rooted in reflective,

systematic analysis which can be utilized to facilitate more effective multi-agency working; and the location of emergent multi-agency practice within an understanding of the historically changing character of service provision and user engagement' (ibid).

Data collection methods for the first phase of our study consisted of an evaluation of the implementation of the programme using the Stake's (1967) Countenance Model (Stufflebeam and Shinkfield, 2007).

	intentions	observations
antecedents		
transactions		
outcomes		

This included:
- Interviews with the Local Authority (LA) located in southwest England.
- Discussions with LA Parenting Support Service and Psychology Service regarding potential course design, marketing and delivery.
- A CPD needs analysis – addressing how HE should respond to the vocational/academic divide. Those enrolled on the first UK 60 credit level 7 module for the University's new Professional Masters Programme in Children's Services and Vulnerable Learners module were required to complete a CPD needs analysis based on their current perceptions of their working practices and professional learning needs.
- Participants were requested to complete a course impact evaluation on completion of the programme, reflecting on how the course, including its multi-disciplinary nature, has impacted upon professional working practice.

Ethics were addressed by adhering to the University's Code of Ethics for Researchers, which generally seeks to protect human participants through anonymity of personal identity obtained from any authentic social research

findings placed in the public domain. This also adheres to the professional policy on ethics as laid down by the British Educational Research Asociation (BERA) set of guidelines for educational researchers. Interview data was recorded via written notes and written up immediately thereafter. Interviewees were made aware of the research project aims and their contributions anonymised. Similarly all written data from participants *via* the CPD needs analysis and Impact Evaluation was anonymised and codified according to emergent themes.

Interim findings

The research is based upon a change management social improvement agenda seeking to move from professionals operating in close-nit teams from within their traditional silos, to a new situated learning environment that sees professionals gain the means and confidence to naturally cross boundaries and traditional demarcations of working practice. This inter-professional and inter-disciplinary team approach towards professional working in and across the Children's Workforce at all levels is the core ontological assumption underpinning the child wellbeing goals of the ECM agenda. Hence, the research design was to contrive such CPD opportunities by providing common training and funding platforms across diverse professional groupings operating within Local Authority (LA) Children's Services. This was the shared vision and goal-directed objective of the university and LA collaborative partnership. If we could develop a CPD model that achieves this objective for one course, then it was hoped that this process could be transferred to many other CPD training arenas for the LA, PCT, police and charities for example.

Initial discussions with the LA proved favourable in terms of identifying the potential of multi-professional CPD, however, no formal agreement was reached about developing multi-disciplinary training.

Independent of these discussions, approaches were made to the University by two course providers about developing existing training courses for a wider

audience and with university accreditation. The Psychology Service was able to agree a 60 credit module on Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing that fitted the requirements of the newly validated Professional Masters Programme pathway award for Children's Services: Inclusion and Vulnerable Learners. Marketing began in the Autumn of 2008 and was directed at schools and support services. The course ran between February and May 2009. Marketing was directed within one LA with the intention of building a local support network between attendees.

Intended outcomes for the course were to increase the professional knowledge and understanding around issues of mental health and emotional wellbeing, in order to meet the requirements of the ECM outcomes agenda. We also wished to evaluate student perceptions of mutli-disciplinary learning.

Expressions of interest in the course came from Head teachers, qualified teachers in both school and non-school settings, Local Authority Advisors, Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) and Learning Support Assistants (LSAs). In all 21 participants registered for the course with 20 completing in May. Participants' represented a wide range of professional disciplines including: Home Teacher with the Hospital Educational and Reintegration Service, Centre Managers, Inclusion Officers and Educational Psychologists. With the exception of one HLTA, all participants had Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Subsidised rates were available from the English Training and Development Agency (TDA) for schools only for those with QTS. Alternative funding from the LA to support Teaching Assistants and Learning Support Assistants whose salaries are generally lower than teachers' was not forthcoming.

Analysis of the initial Professional Needs Analysis forms presented to participants indicated six key emergent areas for professional development needs:

1. Improving skills, knowledge and understanding

2. Opportunities to share best practice
3. Developing links with 'outside' agencies
4. Understanding what other agencies can offer
5. Potential opportunities for career change
6. Masters Qualification

Analysis of the 20 completed impact evaluations suggested that these intended outcomes were largely met. Meeting with a range of professional colleagues across the authority was considered a major strength, especially where they discovered areas of shared knowledge. Students consequently reported greater confidence and ability to work more effectively with other professionals. They were also more aware of the limits of their own professional expertise, when to call on others, and more importantly, who to call on.

The experience of being taught by and learning alongside other professionals also helped participants to feel more confident and assertive in multi-agency meetings. Comments were generally to do with greater confidence in working with others. This was represented as the ability to run in-house training or greater confidence in advising or offering suggestions in team meetings. Examples also included working together with colleagues to produce new resources, greater clarity in early identification and information exchange in team meetings. Again, this was underpinned by a better sense of understanding of the role of other professionals, knowing when to seek advice and from whom. This was especially true of other disciplines such as medical/heath and community professionals such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) team. Participants reported greater confidence in working with other professionals and being more proactive in setting up joint meetings and working in joint projects. Overall, there was a sense that participants felt more confident in forging links with other professionals and were far more proactive in doing this. Participants also reported improved team working techniques and relationships.

Analysis and discussion of findings

It has become clear through this initial phase of the project that there were recognized benefits from studying in multi disciplinary contexts for 'frontline' workers such as teachers and learning support assistants. Participants were looking to develop links with 'outside agencies' through engagement with the course and the professional benefits gained through this were widely reported in the impact evaluations. These findings have resonance with the Anning *et al.* (2006) and Daniels *et al.* (2007) studies. In this respect multi-professional teamwork was shown to offer 'opportunities for professional knowledge and expertise of individuals to be distributed across the team' (Anning *et al.*, 2006:85) New relationships and understandings across professional barriers influenced professional thinking whilst maintaining respect for distinctive specialist knowledge and practice. Learning together allowed for 'knowing how to know who', i.e. the expertise distributed across the local system (Daniels *et al.* (2007) and facilitated the ability to be confident in and make explicit one's own professional expertise and values.

The major obstacle to the development of the Professional Masters Children's Services pathway has undoubtedly been funding. This was because we do not have a common funding platform to support the accredited CPD of diverse groups of professional workers operating across the Children's Workforce. The TDA accredited CPD fund for qualified teachers was not available for other professional groups, e.g. social workers. This disparity affects common access and entry into a programme that ironically intends to break down such barriers.

There were also issues with accreditation of prior learning that needed to be addressed at University level. This generally affected the 'paraprofessionals' within Children's Services such as Teaching Assistants or Learning Support Assistants. However, it is such frontline workers who are engaging in multi-agency practices. How far the proposed Integrated Qualifications Framework will serve to address such issues remains to be seen.

We do recommend, however, that with so many professional agencies and vested interests operating across the vast arena of the Children's Workforce that the HEQF needs to be clearly mapped and linked to the IQF for levels 4 to 7 at the same time as being linked to the EU's EQF similar initiative. In order for all these diverse professionals to gain greater access to work-based accredited CPD for IQF areas across levels 4 to 7, we would further recommend the ring-fencing of common funding provided to all HEIs in England by the HEFCE in line with Coombs and Calvert's (2008) rationale for capacity building and QA.

Authors' Biographies   Dr Steven J Coombs is Head of Department for Continuing Professional Development, Bath Spa University, Bath, UK

Email: s.coombs@bathspa.ac/uk
Tel: +44-(0)1225 876149

Catherine A Simon is Senior Lecturer in Education and Childhood Studies, Bath Spa University, Bath, UK

Email: c.simon@bathspa.ac.uk
Tel: +44-(0)-1225 875553

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Appendix

Table 1

NQF level	Examples of qualifications
Entry	- Entry level certificates - Skills for Life at entry level
1	- GCSEs grades D-G - BTEC Introductory Diplomas and Certificates - OCR Nationals - Key Skills level 1 - NVQs - Skills for Life
2	- GCSEs grades A*-C - BTEC First Diplomas and Certificates - OCR Nationals - Key Skills level 2 - NVQs - Skills for Life
3	- A levels - Advanced Extension Awards - GCE in applied subjects - International Baccalaureate - Key Skills level 3 - NVQs - BTEC Diplomas, Certificates and Awards - BTEC Nationals - OCR Nationals
4	- Key Skills level 4 - NVQs - BTEC Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards
5	- HNCs and HNDs - NVQs - BTEC Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards
6	- National Diploma in Professional Production Skills - BTEC Advanced Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards
7	- Diploma in Translation - BTEC Advanced Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards
8	- specialist awards

The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) equates with level 4 and above and the EQF.

FHEQ level (EQF)	Examples of qualifications
Certificate (4)	- certificates of higher education
Intermediate (5)	- foundation degrees - ordinary (bachelors) degrees - diplomas of higher education and further education - higher national diplomas - other higher diplomas
Honours (6)	- bachelors degrees with honours - graduate certificates and graduate diplomas
Masters (7)	- masters degrees - postgraduate certificates - postgraduate diplomas
Doctoral (8)	- doctorates

Table 1: Mapping the UK National Qualification Framework (NQF) with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)