

'It's just what you do': How can Educational Psychologists and Early Years practitioners work together to reflect on pedagogy?

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July 2019





## Overarching Abstract

Social Constructivist Theory (SCT) represents an evidence-based pedagogical approach, underpinning some of the world's most successful education systems. The approach emphasises the importance of developing a pedagogy beginning from children's interests and scaffolded by educators. SCT also provides a lens to view the learning of others and ourselves, providing a useful basis for reflective professional development.

Educational psychologists (EPs) offer expertise in research and theory, therefore are well placed to support practitioner professional development utilising theoretical frameworks. Such approaches provide an alternative to the common reactive practice of EPs, and pressures of a performativity culture felt by educators; offering both parties the opportunity to explore new directions for practice, within a Community of Learners.

Chapter one details how a combined synthesis was utilised to review SCT and dispositions literature. This led to a nuanced consideration of how SCT can support educators to create environments which exemplify and encourage positive learning dispositions.

Chapter two bridges the literature review and empirical research, explaining how the researcher's ontological and epistemological pragmatic stance influenced the research. Discussions of methodological decisions and ethical practice are also included here.

The final chapter details the empirical study which aimed to explore how the elements highlighted in the literature review could be used to support EYs practitioners to reflect on their practice. The study aimed to identify how EPs and EYs practitioners could work together using video to reflect on pedagogy. The study involved six members of staff from nursery and reception. Five weeks of videoing and reflective sessions were completed. Following the project, staff and the researcher were involved in a collaborative evaluative dialogue, analysed using data driven thematic analysis. Emerging themes suggest collaborative reflection with colleagues and an EP led to changes in perspectives and practice.

The study provides an example of proactive and universal approach to EP practice in EYs.

## Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents whose love, encouragement and passion, instilled in me a lifelong love of learning. Their passion for the world gave me mine.

My mum was my first editor, and proof reader, reading everything from my poems about animals when I was little, through to this thesis. She has been interested in everything, and for that I am grateful. She also tells me when to stop, and congratulates me for staying out late when I need it. She grounds me in ways only a mum can.

My dad always believes in me and never thinks anything is past my reach. He always makes me laugh, and always pays for my drinks.

Without them I would not be the person I am today.

## Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank the practitioners, parents and children whose participation and enthusiasm for this project made it into a reality. The learning I have done alongside you has shaped my practice significantly, I am a better EP as a result, and for that I will always be grateful.

Dave Lumsdon has been the ideal supervisor. His genuine interest, helpful and humorous comments, and patient encouragement hugely helped me both in this thesis and the course. I would also like to thank Pam Woolner, whose knowledgeable outsider view provided the challenge needed to shape the direction of the research.

I want to acknowledge the huge amount of support and patience my amazing friends (you know who you are!) and family have provided me over the past few years, without your endless messages of kindness, and multiple offerings of wine and chocolate, I would not have reached the end. In particular, my amazing colleague and friend, Jenny Shannon, has been my lifeline at many times during this course. She has listened, understood, and helped me find some space to think where there was none. There is no other way of putting it, she has just made things better.

My fiancé Leigh's love, patience and kindness has kept me going through some difficult times. He has responded to my anxieties with understanding and care, and for this I thank him. Times with him, and our adventures together make me happy and bring into perspective what is important.

Finally, I have to thank my amazingly creative, innovative and dynamic doctoral colleagues of all years. The multiple conversations, rants, and debates have made me think in different ways and have influenced my work tremendously. In particular, I want to express thanks to my incredible nine fellow TEPS who I have had the privilege of sharing this journey (sorry Rachel) with. I could not have picked a funnier, more talented or more inspiring bunch of people to work with, and I know I will be in awe of the tremendous work that you will all do as EPs. Thank you for sharing your humour, kindness, and knowledge with me over these three years, and I know we will share many more together as colleagues, and friends.

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## **Chapter 1 – Literature Review**

### **How can Social Constructivist Theory and Dispositions literature help Early Years' Practitioners to support learning for life?**

#### **Abstract**

This literature review consisted of a combined synthesis of the qualitative literature surrounding social constructivist theory (SCT) and dispositions and how this connects to children's engagement with lifelong learning. This led to a nuanced consideration of how SCT can support educators to create environments which exemplify and encourage positive learning dispositions.

#### **1. Introduction**

##### ***1.1 Educational Psychology Practice in the Early Years***

Over the past decade Early Years (EYs) education has received increased attention (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2017), resulting in significant expansion, and policy change. The diverse range of EYs settings are entitled to access, in both traded and statutory roles, Local Authority (LA) support services including Educational Psychology (EP) services.

In 2000 the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) established 'Early Years' work as a core function of EP services (Department for Education and Employment, 2000). Over the past 30 years major theoretical and practice changes have moved the EP role from traditional statutory and 'gatekeeping' roles, towards more proactive and systemic practices (Wagner, 2017). However, evidence suggests many EPs continue to work reactively, primarily within-child assessment and intervention, often limited to the remit of special educational needs (Department for Education and Employment, 2000; Shannon & Posada, 2007; Stobie, Gemmell, Moran, & Randall, 2002).

Dennis (2003) suggests the restricted role results from limited experience of wider EP practice, supported by literature highlighting lack of understanding regarding the EP role (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). Shannon and Posada (2007) found a sense of dissatisfaction for such reactive work in EYs, with EPs hoping for less narrow practices.

There is limited literature surrounding the role external professionals play in supporting EYs settings (Douglas-Osborn, 2017; Shannon & Posada, 2007). Therefore, despite scope for

developing the EP role, we lack reference to research exploring alternative practices utilising proactive psychology (Douglas-Osborn, 2017).

My experience of the reactive nature of EP practice in EYs has been the driving force for this research. My aim is to collate research evidence, from which a guiding framework can be produced to support EPs to facilitate the application of psychological theory within EYs learning environments.

### *1.2 Effective Early Years Provision*

Research, both nationally and internationally, suggests attendance at high-quality pre-school programmes provides long-lasting benefits for children's attainment and social outcomes (Camilli, Vargas, Ryan, & Barnett, 2010; Cascio & Schanzenbach, 2013; Nores & Barnett, 2010; Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2017; Sammons et al., 2003; Sammons et al., 2002; Siraj-Blatchford, Muttock, Sylva, Gilden, & Bell, 2002; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2004). Although some question whether 'effective' education can be measured (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012), we are more informed about supportive provision for children (Moyle, Adams, & Musgrove, 2002a; Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002). There are significant differences between EYs settings and their impact (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004). Therefore, there is a continued need for evaluating how EYs settings effectively scaffold children's learning and how external support services, including EPs, may facilitate this.

A difficulty appears to be the inhibition of many EYs professionals to engage in pedagogical discussions (Stephen, 2010, 2012), with few opportunities to do so, alongside an inability to articulate their use of practices (Moran, 2001; Moyle, Adams, & Musgrove, 2002b; Turner-Bisset, 1999), and the often tacit nature of pedagogical practice (Schon, 1987; Shulman, 1986, 1987). This may impede professional development (PD), by limiting opportunities for reflective practice (Moyle et al., 2002b; Stephen, 2010). Teaching demands an extensive set of competencies, underpinned by personal judgements, beliefs and values. There is a need for consideration of approaches which support practitioners to use meta-cognitive skills, and reflect on underpinning principles, to critically evaluate their practice (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Peleman et al., 2018).

### *1.3 Social Constructivism and the EYFS*

Internationally, there are stark contrasts in approaches towards EYs (Bertram & Pascal, 2016; Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2006). While there is great diversity across settings, approaches can be considered on a continuum from centralised, academic curriculum approaches, towards social pedagogy, promoting child-centred, holistic provision (Kyriacou, Ellingsen, Stephens, & Sundaram, 2009). Academic approaches are commonly criticised for serving the objectives of public education, focusing on readiness for school or 'schoolification' (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2006, p. 144). However, countries adopting a social pedagogy see pre-school as a specific institute, incorporating children's broader developmental needs (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012). While such research has limitations, studies comparing international achievements suggest countries adopting more holistic and child-centred approaches, frequently score highly (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2015).

SCT spans a range of spheres of theoretical thought considered to share resemblance. By its own tenets, SCT is constantly changing and open to a variety of interpretations (Beck & Kosnik, 2012). I present here my own understanding, stemming from the work of Vygotsky (1978b), Dewey (1966), and others (Bruner, 1966; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Piaget, 1951, 1952; Rogoff, 1990).

This conceptualisation of Social Constructivism (SC) continues to receive increasing empirical support as a significant account for human development and learning (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012; Oldfather, West, White, & Wilmarth, 1999). SCT forms the bedrock of arguably, some of the world's most successful educational approaches. These stem from a common desire to establish early experiences encouraging lifelong values, and develop critical thinking abilities, alongside a commitment to individual rights (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012).

Vygotsky's central idea is that learning is the product of social interaction, interpretation and understanding (Vygotsky, 1978b). Van Harmelen (2008) summarises this as; 'knowledge is created by learners in the context of, and as a result of social interaction' (p.36). Learning is neither individual, nor is it passive (Pritchard & Woollard, 2013); the child is an active agent. Transactional relationships within the social environment bring about children's learning (Dewey, 1966; A. Moore, 2012), therefore development is defined by the community in

which it occurs (Fleer, Anning, & Cullen, 2009; Rogoff, 1994). Meaning is made rather than distributed or given (Adams, 2006).

SCT is perhaps so influential due to its inclusion of both child-led, and scaffolded learning by more experienced others, which is highlighted as a key element of effective provision (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002; Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004; Sylva et al., 2004). This inclusion guards against practices allowing entirely child-led exploration, risking a laissez-faire approach potentially removing adults from the learning process (Stephen, 2010). SCT provides a framework for considering levels of theoretical mediation, occurring in the decisions and practices of EYs professionals. It highlights the foundational importance of building on children's motivations and developmental stage; supporting the inclusion of all, a common challenge facing educators today (Beck & Kosnik, 2012).

SCT has underpinned the UK Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum for many years (Brogaard Clausen, 2015). Many elements successfully permeate thinking and are observable in UK pedagogy (Stephen, 2010). However, they are perhaps not always realised as such in practice (Lewis, 2018).

Despite EYFS claims to SC underpinnings, the political perception of the purpose of early childhood provision as a preparatory time for school means contradictory emphases are evident (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012; Fleer et al., 2009). Many argue attempts to link strict content with pedagogical methods favour the adoption of teacher-centred academic approaches poorly suited to the 'psychology and natural learning strategies of young children' (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2006, p. 13). This risks stifling young children's desire to learn and willingness to do so (Aasen & Waters, 2006; Claxton, 2000; Katz, 1995, 2015), undermining the 'life readiness' approach that true SC promotes (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012).

There are significant differences across countries in the way in which SC approaches are interpreted and embedded, perhaps due to difficulties in embracing and enacting an approach which sits at odds with societal pressures (Beck & Kosnik, 2012). Importantly, it is not simply what learning opportunities are offered within a curriculum, but *how* they are offered, perhaps highlighting the difference between a curriculum, and a pedagogy of practice (Durdin, Escalante, & Blitch, 2015). If interpreted and understood appropriately, SCT has significant potential power in supporting educators to re-contextualise learning

(Stephen, 2012). A move away from the mechanistic, prescribed 'state theory of learning' (Alexander, 2010), primarily involving 'teaching to the test' (Grant & Hill, 2006; Wurdinger, 2012) which directly conflicts holistic pedagogies aiming to support lifelong learning. I believe, with appropriate support, educators can begin to embrace SCT and reflect on pedagogical practices which benefit all learners.

#### *1.4 The Development of Positive Learning Dispositions*

Alongside increasing supportive literature for SCT, there has been a shift in educational thought from prioritising transmission of knowledge, to the 'development of the capacity and the confidence to engage in lifelong learning' (Carr & Claxton, 2002, p. 9). This has led to increased emphasis on promoting positive learning dispositions (Action for Children, 2012; Carr & Claxton, 2002; Early Education, 2018; Katz, 1995).

Positive dispositions can be considered as 'learning strategies that have become habits of the mind, tendencies to respond to, edit and select from situations in certain ways' (Jordan, 2009, p. 40). Similarly Katz's defines dispositions as 'a pattern of behaviour exhibited frequently and in the absence of coercion, and constituting a habit of mind under some conscious and voluntary control, and that is intentional and orientated to broad goals' (1993b, p. 16). Dispositions are connected to intrinsic motivation, they do not represent skill or knowledge acquisition, but require deeper involvement strongly connecting to lifelong learning (Pascal & Bertram, 1999).

Research suggests EYs are an important phase for establishing learning attitudes (Bertram & Pascal, 2002), arguing the stronger such dispositions are embedded, the greater their resilience to 'inevitable, climatic periods of poor stimulation' (pg. 95).

Unfortunately, dispositions literature appears to have become somewhat stagnant, perhaps due to the indeterminate relationship between motivation, engagement and dispositions; creating an unclear conceptual picture (Stephen, Cope, Oberski, & Shand, 2008). However, increasing numbers of children are becoming disengaged with education (Dole, Bloom, & Kowalske, 2016; Stephen et al., 2008). Dispositions literature may aid this by emphasising the importance of nurturing children's approaches to learning, rather than undermining them, as perhaps many current educational pressures do. Katz (2015) argues dispositions,



once damaged, are difficult to replace in later life, leading to long term negative consequences.

Researchers generally agree developing positive learning dispositions stems from process-related pedagogy starting from the interests, experiences and choices of children. With a focus on supporting dispositions useful for children across their life, not just to pass short-term tests (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012; Katz, 2015). Teachers' use of effective mediation and scaffolding during play is thought to support the development of such dispositions (Perselli, 2016). Carr and Claxton (2002) describe the dynamic and reciprocal interplay between the learning culture and the child's cognitive and social development. However, while there is agreement dispositions are highly influential in learning, exact definitions and details of the development of dispositions are inconclusive (Daniels, 2013; Katz, 2002).

There is useful scope in research aiming to distil the essence of what SCT informs us about supporting children to develop positive learning dispositions. This type of consideration involves a nuanced understanding of SCT (Stephen, 2010), connecting this to an understanding of how children become lifelong learners. Such an approach emphasises the importance of schools becoming ready for children, as opposed to making children ready for school (Dunlop, 2006; Dunlop & Fabian, 2002), and perhaps helps to bring learning dispositions back to the fore of educational discussion.

### *1.5 Current Educational Climate*

There are numerous examples of effective pedagogies from which guidance can be drawn. However, there is a need to consider the current UK political climate as wider systems can limit teachers' abilities to implement alternative pedagogies (Dole et al., 2016).

The impact of austerity on education is clear, with schools' resources suffering significantly. Pressures of a performativity culture are rife (Ball, 2003; Glazzard, 2014; Priestley, Edwards, Priestley, & Miller, 2012), with persistent focus on accountability, evidence and a prescribed curriculum (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012). There is a need for pedagogical approaches which authentically respect the notion of an individual learner, but which also acknowledge these pressures, aiming for effective teaching and learning despite these. The influence of policy expectations alongside local and national practices is not always considered when pedagogy is discussed (Goouch, 2008). This type of consideration also aims to avoid placing

practitioners in a deficit position (Stephen, 2010), facilitating the opening of pedagogical dialogue.

I believe there is a significant role for EPs in supporting EYs practitioners, utilising tools and frameworks aiming to increase self-efficacy in delivering an effective curriculum within the constraints of the current educational climate (Gibbs & Miller, 2014). Without well-developed understandings of children's learning theories, practitioners are ill-equipped to take on the competing demands they encounter (Stephen, 2010).

Stephen argues the search for a set of universal principles to shape expectations of practice is likely to be 'ill-fated and flawed' (2012, p. 236). However, I argue, articulating a *local* theory of EYs education, unique to each setting, underpinned by psychological theory and responsive practitioners, has much to offer. In my view the development of a local theory or pedagogy requires a guiding ethos or values framework on which practices are built, alongside a recognition of the dynamic, situated nature of the learning culture and context. This must be built from both the top-down from the guiding ethos, and bottom-up from the interpersonal relationships between those at the fore-front of teaching and learning. Their experiences, values, beliefs and goals will guide the selection and interpretation of practices offered by the guiding ethos. As a result educators must be equipped with a knowledge of appropriate pedagogical approaches and able to critically reflect on the usefulness of these given their overarching approach to teaching and learning. SCT has the potential to offer a powerful overarching ethos. I argue developing such local theories provides a shift from doing 'what is said to be right' to asking, 'in what ways can we create effective learning environments?' (Yelland & Kilderry, 2005).

In summary, the EYFS espouses a SC underpinning; however, there exists a potential gap between rhetoric and reality, as educational pressures provide opposition. Current theoretical emphasis lies in supporting children to develop the skills for lifelong learning; therefore, there is merit in exploring how SCT theory can support us to develop these skills with children, and to utilise this knowledge to engage professionals in reflective discussions around pedagogy. The aim of which would be to achieve a local pedagogy within settings which embraces teaching practices known to support children's lifelong learning dispositions, within current educational constraints.

## 2. Methodology

A meta-ethnography approach was chosen as the primary means of addressing the qualitative review question and synthesising relevant literature. Meta-ethnography was chosen due to its potential to provide a coherent and structured account of the research evidence, and due to the complementary nature to the theory being explored, lending itself to interpretivist synthesis (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006).

Noblit & Hare's (1988) seven step iterative process, which remains the most prominent method to structure a meta-ethnography (Lee, Hart, Watson, & Rapley, 2015), was adopted for initial synthesis:

1. Getting started
2. Deciding what is relevant to the initial interest
3. Reading the studies
4. Determining how the studies are related
5. Translating the studies into one another
6. Synthesising translations
7. Expressing the synthesis

### *Stage 1. Getting started: Research aims*

The review aimed to explore literature concerned with the key principles of SCT and how these could support lifelong learning. This exploration aimed to add depth and clarity to the psychology underpinning SCT, allowing these to be utilised by EYs professionals. The initial review question was:

*'What are the psychological principles of SC that enable EYs provisions to effectively support learning for life?'*

My understanding of, and reflection on, the research question changed throughout the review as a result of my experience with the literature. The final decision on the question was an iterative process not made until near the end of the review (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006).

## Stage 2. Deciding what is relevant to the initial interest

### Locating relevant literature

A more exhaustive search, with an increased number of papers than initially proposed by Noblit and Hare (1988) was adopted, attempting to create a 360 degree search reflective of current literature (Lee et al., 2015).

An electronic database thesaurus (EBSCO), alongside scoping research, was used to gather synonyms for key terms, and provide an efficient way of reviewing the literature (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006). However, this led to a long search string which many databases could not support. Therefore, only the most frequent synonyms were chosen for final search terms.

<i>'What are the <b>psychological principles</b> of <b>Social Constructivism</b> that enable <b>Early Years</b> provisions to effectively support <b>learning for life</b>?'</i>	
<b>Psychological principles</b>	It was decided that to add this term as an addition to the string would potentially exclude many useful educational papers which simply may not mention psychology. Therefore, the psychological principles were something it was decided could be drawn out by hand searching and/or during interpretation.
<b>Social Constructivism</b>	("soci* constructivis*" OR "social pedagogy" OR "sociocultural theory" OR "socio-cultural theory" OR "child centred*" OR "child-centred*" OR "child led")
<b>Early years</b>	("early years" OR kindergarten OR kindergarden OR prekindergarten OR pre-kindergarten OR "early childhood education" OR nursery OR preschool OR pre-school OR "early learning" OR pre-k OR "foundation stage")
<b>Learning for life</b>	Learn* (from initial trial searches if 'learning for life' and synonyms of this were used, the retrieved papers were severely limited, therefore this wider search term was utilised) OR "motivat*" OR "engage*"

Table 1. Key search terms stemming from the research question.

Boolean search term 'AND' linked the three sections above to design more specific searches. Truncation was used to ensure alternative word endings were included. Words which may have included hyphens were searched for both hyphenated and non-hyphenated, ensuring databases only employing key word searching searched both varieties.

The following electronic databases were searched between August 2017 and November 2017: Ovid, Psycinfo, ERIC EBSCO & British Educational Index, Web of Science, and Scopus.

Proquest and Google Scholar were searched due to inclusion of grey literature, which helped limit the otherwise potential bias towards published literature.

Hand searches were conducted of references of included articles and journals considered particularly relevant, due to their frequent citation in the chosen papers. These included:

- Early Child Development and Care
- Language Culture and Curriculum
- Contemporary Issues in Childhood
- European Early Childhood Education Research Journal
- Early Years: An International Research Journal

Making decisions on inclusion/exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria are a set of agreed conditions studies must meet to be included in the review, concurrent with the research question. The following were applied to screen the retrieved papers:

	<b>Inclusion</b>	<b>Exclusion</b>
<b>Type of research</b>	Case study, empirical research	Policy papers, thesis papers (which could not be gained via available databases), descriptive papers (e.g. outlining current curriculum)
<b>Place</b>	UK, Scandinavia, Australia, New Zealand, (this was decided based on the types of education systems in differing countries)	All other countries
<b>Date</b>	All years (due to low numbers of research papers initially retrieved)	N/A
<b>Language</b>	English	All other languages
<b>Participants</b>	Early years provisions (or equivalent, generally aged 3-6), mainstream settings,	Age 6+, specialist provisions, purely constructivist approaches, English as an additional language (if purely the focus of the research)
<b>Area of focus</b>	Pedagogical practices of social constructivism, or related components e.g. free-play	Focus on specific subjects (e.g. maths, science, literacy), readiness (if discussed as a concrete concept), focus on specific areas (e.g. transition, later start to school, assessment), documentation of progress, discussion of the concept of 'play'
<b>Accessibility</b>	Available to access the full content at no cost	Not available or including a charge for access

Table 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria organised according to category.

Following initial scoping the majority of papers appropriate for further selection were qualitative in nature, therefore it seemed appropriate to focus the remainder of the search towards qualitative research to represent the research most authentically (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006).

Titles, abstracts and keywords of identified research were scanned to exclude studies not matching criteria (Atkins et al., 2008), from which papers were filtered further by reading abstracts (Barroso et al., 2003). Figure 1 demonstrates how the screening process progressed and the gradual refining of papers emerged.

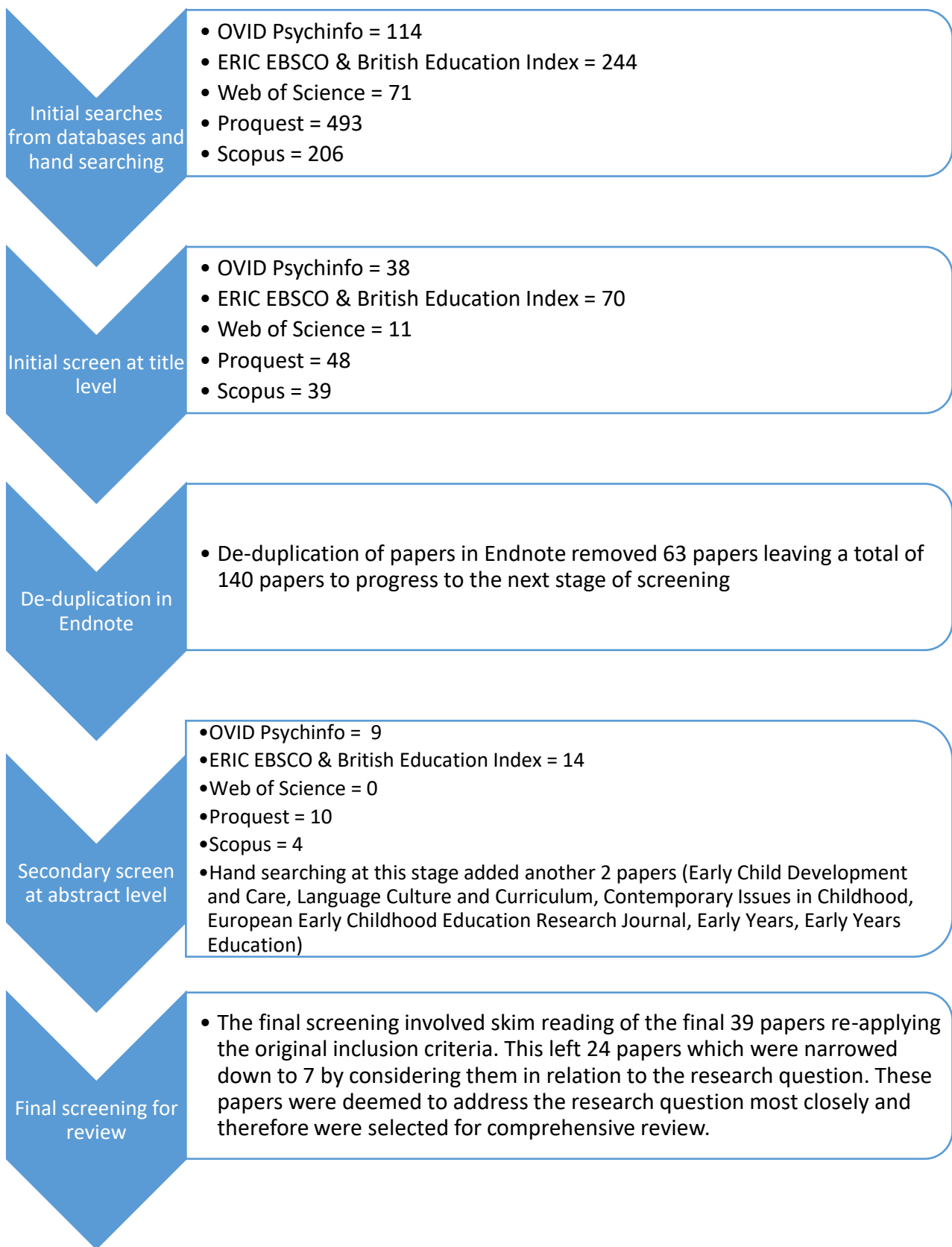


Figure 1. Process of refining papers

Due to time and resource constraints, I decided books, book chapters, government documents and theses would not be included in the review. However, these sources,

alongside relevant papers not meeting inclusion criteria, were used for supportive background research.

Seven studies were selected for stage 3 (Table 3). I decided not to conduct an analysis of quality using a qualitative weight of evidence scale due to the varied content, and diversity of study designs. I believe this made it unfitting to compare the papers against a set of a priori characteristics to assess quality (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006).

Study label (number)	Title, Author and Date
1	Subject Knowledge in Early Childhood Curriculum and Pedagogy: beliefs and practices. Hedges & Cullen (2005).
2	You Can Learn Something Every Day! Children Talk About Learning in Kindergarten – Traces of Learning Cultures. Alvestad (2011).
3	A framework for teaching learning: the dynamics of disposition. Claxton & Carr (2004).
4	Teacher-researchers promoting cultural learning in an intercultural kindergarden in Aotearoa New Zealand. Cullen, Haworth, Simmons, Schimanski, McGarva & Kennedy (2009).
5	Free choice and free play in early childhood education: troubling the discourse. Wood (2014).
6	Young children’s ‘working theories’: Building and connecting understandings. Hedges (2014).
7	Early Childhood Creativity: Challenging Educators in Their Role to Intentionally Develop Creative Thinking in Children. Leggett (2017).

Table 3. Final studies chosen for analysis.

### Stage 3. Reading the studies

It is widely agreed synthesis requires ‘considerable immersion in the individual studies’ (Campbell et al., 2012, p. 4). Therefore, during this stage I ‘actively’ read and re-read the papers, often with different intentions (Lee et al., 2015). I used various techniques e.g. annotating, coding and listing, to gather metaphors, concepts (explanatory ideas) and themes (patterns across papers) which emerged (Atkins et al., 2008).

While some authors have suggested difficulties in shifting focus from working within, to working across accounts (Lee et al., 2015), I made the decision to embrace, rather than bracket, my knowledge from other accounts. I acknowledged and valued each time I revisited the accounts it was with a different lens as a result of my developing perspective and understanding.



Reading the papers was not contained to one phase, repeated reading occurred throughout the synthesis (Lee et al., 2015).

#### *Stage 4. Determining how the studies are related*

The metaphors, concepts and themes were themed utilising Thematic Analysis (TA) (Clarke & Braun, 2013). To accurately reflect the metaphors and themes they were named using language similar to that used in the papers, or by using overarching concepts considered to represent the singular concepts explored in the papers (Atkins et al., 2008). This method enabled me to clarify whether the studies were considering similar aspects of SCT as important, and as such determining how I would synthesise them (see Table 4).

Hermeneutics highlights the interpretation of texts are inextricably linked to the interpreter's search for understanding, and is contextually situated (Gadamer, 2004). My own thoughts went into highlighting the texts meaning and therefore to identifying the key themes. My views about the interpretation of the papers was influenced by my experience and involvement with previous writings. Therefore, there was a degree of dialectical play as the text merged with my own reflections (Kinsella, 2006).

#### *Stage 5. Translating the studies into one another*

This stage was realised as an extension of stage 4, whereby the results of the TA allowed for systematic comparison of the meanings of the concepts and themes within the papers. This information was synthesised and compiled into Table 4, demonstrating frequency of themes:

<b>Subordinate Theme</b>	<b>Study 1</b> <i>Subject Knowledge in Early Childhood Curriculum and Pedagogy: beliefs and practices. Hedges &amp; Cullen (2005)</i>	<b>Study 2</b> <i>You Can Learn Something Every Day! Children Talk About Learning in Kindergarten – Traces of Learning Cultures. Alvestad (2011)</i>	<b>Study 3</b> <i>A framework for teaching learning: the dynamics of disposition. Claxton &amp; Carr (2004)</i>	<b>Study 4</b> <i>Teacher-researchers promoting cultural learning in an intercultural kindergarten in Aotearoa New Zealand. Cullen et al. (2009)</i>	<b>Study 5</b> <i>Free choice and free play in early childhood education: troubling the discourse. Wood (2014)</i>	<b>Study 6</b> <i>Young children's 'working theories': Building and connecting understandings. Hedges (2014)</i>	<b>Study 7</b> <i>Early Childhood Creativity: Challenging Educators in Their Role to Intentionally Develop Creative Thinking in Children. Leggett (2017)</i>
Affective elements of learning		X		X	X	X	X
Building on previous learning	X		X	X		X	X
Learning is a process not a product	X	X	X	X		X	X
Making learning meaningful	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Holistic view of learning	X	X		X	X	X	
Learning starts from the child	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Physical learning environment			X			X	X
Reciprocal and responsive relationships	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Community of learners	X	X	X	X	X		

<b>Subordinate Theme</b>	<b>Study 1</b> <i>Subject Knowledge in Early Childhood Curriculum and Pedagogy: beliefs and practices. Hedges &amp; Cullen (2005)</i>	<b>Study 2</b> <i>You Can Learn Something Every Day! Children Talk About Learning in Kindergarten – Traces of Learning Cultures. Alvestad (2011)</i>	<b>Study 3</b> <i>A framework for teaching learning: the dynamics of disposition. Claxton &amp; Carr (2004)</i>	<b>Study 4</b> <i>Teacher-researchers promoting cultural learning in an intercultural kindergarten in Aotearoa New Zealand. Cullen et al. (2009)</i>	<b>Study 5</b> <i>Free choice and free play in early childhood education: troubling the discourse. Wood (2014)</i>	<b>Study 6</b> <i>Young children's 'working theories': Building and connecting understandings. Hedges (2014)</i>	<b>Study 7</b> <i>Early Childhood Creativity: Challenging Educators in Their Role to Intentionally Develop Creative Thinking in Children. Leggett (2017)</i>
Wider involvement in learning including parents and community	X	X	X	X		X	
Importance of dialogue	X	X		X		X	X
Curiosity						X	X
Collaborative learning leading to co-construction of knowledge	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Children as active participants in their own learning	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Children learn about learning		X	X		X	X	X
Valuing children's expertise and knowledge they bring	X	X	X	X	X	X	

<b>Subordinate Theme</b>	<b>Study 1</b> <i>Subject Knowledge in Early Childhood Curriculum and Pedagogy: beliefs and practices. Hedges &amp; Cullen (2005)</i>	<b>Study 2</b> <i>You Can Learn Something Every Day! Children Talk About Learning in Kindergarten – Traces of Learning Cultures. Alvestad (2011)</i>	<b>Study 3</b> <i>A framework for teaching learning: the dynamics of disposition. Claxton &amp; Carr (2004)</i>	<b>Study 4</b> <i>Teacher-researchers promoting cultural learning in an intercultural kindergarten in Aotearoa New Zealand. Cullen et al. (2009)</i>	<b>Study 5</b> <i>Free choice and free play in early childhood education: troubling the discourse. Wood (2014)</i>	<b>Study 6</b> <i>Young children's 'working theories': Building and connecting understandings. Hedges (2014)</i>	<b>Study 7</b> <i>Early Childhood Creativity: Challenging Educators in Their Role to Intentionally Develop Creative Thinking in Children. Leggett (2017)</i>
Children's perceptions of themselves as learners		X	X				X
Importance of content/subject knowledge	X					X	
Role of teachers	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Beliefs-practice congruence	X						X
Creativity		X			X		X
Demonstrating learning						X	X
School preparation	X	X					
Concerns around testing/outcomes-based curriculum		X			X		X

Table 4. Comparison of each study's concepts and themes.

The subjective role of the person carrying out the meta-ethnography has been discussed frequently (Arruda, 2003; Noblit & Hare, 1988). The purpose of a meta-ethnography is not to find an absolute answer to the research question but to offer an interpretation of it, given the individual researcher's understanding of its context (Noblit & Hare, 1988). Therefore, the articles and themes were revisited adding to the interpretation process.

#### *Stage 6. Synthesising translations*

This stage involved reconsidering the subordinate themes in light of the research question. Themes were further translated and combined to develop new interpretations beyond those in the single papers.

Initially the subordinate themes were categorised as I progressed through the translations. These categories were revised and merged through reflection on their connections, and by reference to the original texts (Atkins et al., 2008). The initial emerging subordinate themes were based on the metaphors and concepts the papers explicitly discussed. However, the developed and interpreted categories (superordinate themes) attempted to capture the overarching themes behind the paper's collaborative discussions (see Table 5 for an explanation of themes and examples of the text guiding the interpretation).

Superordinate Themes	Initial subordinate themes incorporated	Description of the theme	Examples of in-paper text
<b>Learning starts from the child</b>	Making learning meaningful	Learning should be contextualised and meaningful for children. Teaching needs to be guided by children’s interests and embedded in experiences that are meaningful to children, such as play. Teaching should acknowledge and value children’s individual differences, identities and the unique knowledge they bring (Funds of Knowledge). The role and input of the teacher should be guided by the child. Valuing children as capable learners is also a key part of this theme, recognising their abilities and supporting them to reflect on their own experiences of learning, and developing their identity as a capable and competent learner.	<p><i>‘Through self-initiated activities, ....(children) showed more agency and motivation in (their) choices’ (study 5)</i></p> <p><i>‘children can move from recipient to active participant in the process of discussing and making choices about their learning’ (study 3)</i></p> <p><i>Children developed working theories and knowledge in creative ways, related to their interests and inquiries in areas of personal significance’ (study 6)</i></p> <p><i>‘children’s play interests may be intrinsically bound with their self-interests, including status and identity maintenance’ (study 5)</i></p> <p><i>‘learning is expressed (by children) in terms of gaining new knowledge and being active in experiencing and doing things’, ‘children talk about themselves as learning persons’ (study 2)</i></p> <p><i>‘children are not simply influenced by their environments but act in ways that change them’ (study 5)</i></p>
	Children as active participants in their own learning		
	Children’s perceptions of themselves as learners		
	Valuing children’s expertise and the knowledge they bring		
<b>Community of learners</b>	Reciprocal and responsive relationships	Children learn within a learning community, a place where people act and interact, and where learning takes place as a result of the interactions and communications between participants. The community is wide and involves not only those within the school environment but parents, and into the wider community. There is a respect for all	<p><i>‘defines learning as strategic, self-motivated and purposeful, and occurring within an environment where individual differences are legitimated, and reciprocal learning and teaching occurs among children, teachers, parents and others in the community’ (study 4)</i></p> <p><i>‘a potentiating learning environment shares the power amongst the teacher and the learner’ (study 3)</i></p>

Superordinate Themes	Initial subordinate themes incorporated	Description of the theme	Examples of in-paper text
	Wider involvement in learning including parents and community	participants as sources of knowledge and pedagogical relationships exist between all participants, a shared ownership of knowing. This is acknowledged by children and they are aware of how others can be involved in their learning. Relationships within the community are reciprocal and responsive, power in teaching and learning is shared between children and adults. Therefore, learning is collaborative, where knowledge is co-constructed between participants. There is a sense of belonging for participants, that they belong to a community of learners who learn together. However, there is also a strong sense of individual and collective agency. Participants learn alone but also alongside others, but this learning is affected by the interactions and communications of the learning culture. There are multiple learning cultures as learning is distributed across contexts and people. Children are supported to learn how to access and manage this network.	<p><i>'collaborative engagement in meaning-making occurred through intersubjective pedagogical relationships dependants upon intersubjectivity' (study 1)</i></p> <p><i>'there are multiple systems of meaning operating between children (study 5)</i></p> <p><i>'children also engage in scaffolding and co-construction strategies...taking a tutoring role' (study 4)</i></p> <p><i>'knowledge is shaped and co-constructed through creative processes involving multidimensional meaning making that occurs within social learning environments' (study 7)</i></p> <p><i>'through exploratory talk ...teachers and learners actively collaborate to build ideas' (study 4)</i></p> <p><i>'children talk about learning as something they do alone as well as together with and from others, both children and adults' (study 2)</i></p> <p><i>'she was discovering that learning is distributed across...peers, teachers, family and material resources, and that...she had to learn how to 'manage' this extended network of support' (study 3)</i></p> <p><i>'it is the participation in a classroom ...with others who orient their actions to common values that contributes to a sense of belonging to a community of learners and to strengthening identity as a learner' (study 3)</i></p>
	Collaborative learning leading to co-construction of knowledge		

Superordinate Themes	Initial subordinate themes incorporated	Description of the theme	Examples of in-paper text
<b>Learning as a process not a product</b>	Building on previous learning	Learning is seen as an ongoing and incremental process. It happens across areas and across contexts and cultures. Learning is considered in the widest sense as a series of interrelated processes rather than decontextualized competencies. There is a strong emphasis on children's participation in the process of learning rather than the acquisition of skills and dialogue is considered a key mediator of this. Children's learning is supported by opportunities to revisit and build on previous learning. There is also an emotive element to learning, children want to learn and take enjoyment in it.	<i>'learning (is) much more than domain knowledge' (study 6)</i> <i>'(children) see learning as something that happens across a broad range of knowledge areas' (study 2)</i> <i>'revisiting their learning experiences...provided the foundation for deeper and extended learning experiences' (study 4)</i> <i>'participation in meaningful dialogue promotes learning and understanding on a range of levels for all participants' (study 1)</i> <i>'teachers' interactions reflected an emphasis on promoting skills such as thinking, reasoning and problem-solving rather than knowledge construction' (study 1)</i> <i>learning is not just 'head work' but 'heart work' (study 7)</i>
	Holistic view of learning		
	Importance of dialogue		
	Demonstrating learning		
	Affective elements of learning		
<b>Skills to support learning</b>	Curiosity	Curiosity, creativity and learning about learning (meta-cognition) are highlighted in the papers as mediating children's learning. They acknowledge the importance of identifying, valuing and fostering these skills as part of the process of learning. There is also crucial value in reifying learning experiences and in highlighting and making learning concrete for children, so they are able reflect on their learning and recognise the value of it. This can be achieved	<i>'knowledge formation requires the transformative power of creative thinking' (study 7)</i> <i>'children's curiosity is an expression of their eagerness to learn' (study 6)</i> <i>'accepting and allowing children to explore their intuitive, creative...ideas may be just as important in fostering thinking and intellectual curiosity as confronting children's understandings or introducing more scientific explanations'. (study 6)</i>
	Creativity		



Superordinate Themes	Initial subordinate themes incorporated	Description of the theme	Examples of in-paper text
	Learning about learning	through children’s participation in all elements of their learning e.g. assessment, naming learning for children in context, and via revisiting learning. These approaches develop a self-efficacy for sense making and support children’s identity as competent learners.	<p><i>‘make public the identity of the child as a successful learner’ (study 3)</i></p> <p><i>‘children were aware of the significance of portfolios as a record of their learning’ (study 1)</i></p> <p><i>‘the teacher made the children aware of their learning in the conversation...this became an enjoyable moment of shared experiences’ (study 2)</i></p>
<b>Role of educators</b>	Importance of content/subject knowledge*	The role of teachers is crucial in supporting children’s learning. They have a role in establishing a facilitating learning environment, explaining the purpose of learning and making it meaningful to children, drawing attention to the construction of learning, and modelling the responses of an effective teacher and learner within their learning community. They empower children to become competent learners by using appropriate pedagogical strategies to support children through challenge, and to identify and utilise opportunities for learning. Difficulties may arise when wider systemic pressures striving for outcomes and preparation for school seem incompatible with a more holistic view of teaching and learning that teachers wish to embrace. This may create incongruence between educator beliefs and practice. It is	<i>‘highlights the significance the preschool teachers have as educators in making them aware of the children’s own learning, their gaining of new knowledge and in empowering them in their learning processes’ (study 2)</i>
	Beliefs/practice congruence*		<i>‘children are likely to show creativity during free-play and we can nurture it as a co-learner’ (study 7)</i>
	Physical learning environment		<i>‘a ‘learning curriculum’ will always be locally constructed’(study 3)</i>
	School preparation*		<i>‘acknowledge the role that educators have in creating environments where children can express interests and inquiries and test out ideas’ (study 6)</i>
	Concerns around testing/outcomes-based curriculum*		<p><i>‘teachers being knowledgeable about pedagogical strategies that foster working theories and enable theories to become connected is also important’ (study 6)</i></p> <p><i>‘consideration of links between beliefs and practices in relation to philosophy and pedagogy revealed congruence in planned teaching interactions, but not in relation to spontaneous teaching interactions’ (study 1)</i></p>

Superordinate Themes	Initial subordinate themes incorporated	Description of the theme	Examples of in-paper text
		perhaps also important to consider how teachers can embrace social-constructivism as an overarching guiding ethos rather than a set of pedagogical strategies to implement.	<i>'orientation towards learning outcomes and the extended testing is not the way forward' (study 2)</i>

\*These themes arose from the papers; however, I do not necessarily believe they are connected to the elements of learning for life. However, that does not undermine the significance of their presence within the papers.

*Table 5. Subordinate and Superordinate Themes from Papers*

The process of meta-ethnography represents the hermeneutic circle; highlighting that the meaning of the whole, and coming to understand the constituent parts are interdependent activities (Gadamer, 2004). Construing the meaning of the whole, in this case the papers as a collective, means making sense of the parts (each paper), and understanding the meaning of the parts depends on having some sense of the whole (Schwandt, 2007). This is particularly significant given that my role as the interpreter in this process was to reveal the psychology underpinning the explicit educational themes raised, but in turn respecting that educational practices themselves, bring the psychology to life.

With extensive reflection on the process and the initial research question I believed it was necessary to divert from the original format of the seven stages. It is important the review question drives the synthesis method (Atkins et al., 2008). I believed, in order to authentically address the research question posed at the beginning of the review, I needed to access literature beyond the seven papers synthesised (see Chapter Two p.34 for further discussion). The following diagram (Figure 2.) provides a visual representation of how the meta-ethnography and wider literature synthesis combined to develop a more comprehensive response to the research question.

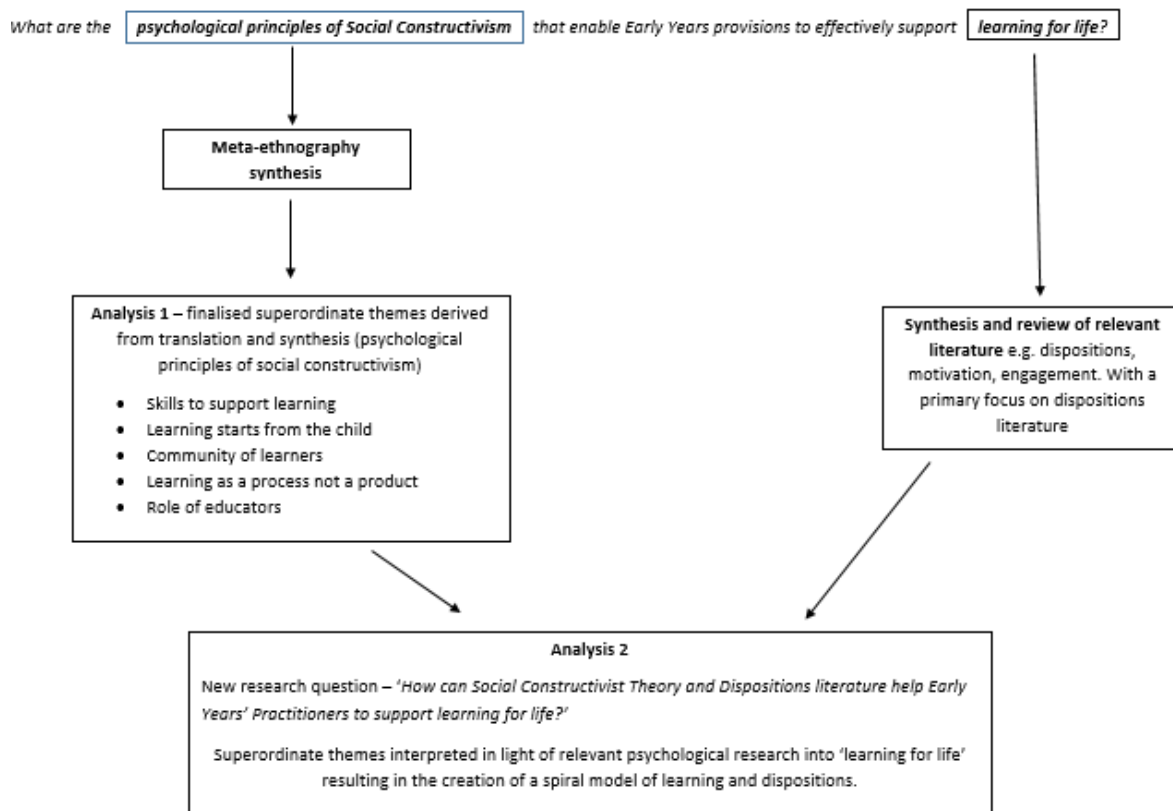


Figure 2. Model of the synthesis

### Stage 7. Expressing the synthesis

Following the decision to divert from the original stages, it became apparent the research question no longer accurately reflected the process of the combined synthesis. Eakin and Mykhalovskiy (2003) argue the research question should be treated as a compass rather than an anchor and is often not finally settled until the end of the review. Therefore, the research question was altered to accurately represent the outcome of the synthesis. The themes derived from the meta-ethnography were critically considered in light of salient dispositions literature (with reference to additional motivation and engagement literature as the relationships between these concepts remain unclear (Stephen et al., 2008)) to move towards a different interpretation addressing the modified research question.

#### Learning starts from the child

Within the meta-ethnography this theme was identified in all seven papers suggesting it is an essential part of SCT. This is mirrored within dispositions literature. Sadler (2002) emphasises the need for learning to be made meaningful through the achievement of goals which ‘make up the primary mechanism by which dispositions are accorded meaning’ (p.46);

a concept shared by motivation researchers (Jones, 2009). Children develop positive dispositions to learning by seeing themselves as successful learners as they work through challenges and succeed (Bandura, 1997; Sadler, 2002). This is connected to a wealth of motivation literature around children's beliefs that success stems from effort (Bandura, 1997; Deci & Ryan, 1980; Elliot & Dweck, 2013; Jones, 2009; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Importantly the meta-ethnography and wider SCT literature highlights that, while events and activities are organised according to goals, 'mental processes cannot be dissected apart from the goals to be accomplished and the practical and interpersonal actions used' (Rogoff, 1990, p. 29). The dynamic processes occurring in the mind of the learner cannot be disentangled from the social domain in which they are nested (Oldfather & Dahl, 1994).

Katz (2015) discusses the importance of learning being meaningful and useful to the learner across a variety of contexts, not simply expected to be useful in the future. She claims the younger the learner, the more important it is to strengthen their dispositions to look closely at phenomena in their environment that are worth learning about. If decontextualized activities are utilised to achieve arbitrary outcomes, children's engagement with learning, and the dispositions needed to use their skills, are both likely to diminish (Hatch, 2002; Stephen et al., 2008), a concept Katz (1995) refers to as the damaged dispositions hypothesis.

SCT research helps us understand beginning from the child means acknowledging all children are capable and vibrant learners who approach learning differently, therefore settings must identify, promote and nurture, skills and dispositions which individual children hold useful to them as learners (Daniels, 2013).

Finally, this theme includes and promotes the value of children having an active role in their own learning. This is highly valued by children themselves (Alvestad, 2011) and consistently highlighted within engagement and motivation literature (Deci & Ryan, 1980; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Hickey, 1997; Jones, 2009; Oldfather, 1992; Rinaldi, 2006; Stephen et al., 2008). Interpretation of the dispositions literature suggests through this involvement children are more likely to express, develop or strengthen dispositions useful for the development of their own unique learning trajectory (Claxton & Carr, 2004), as they are moving towards the achievement of meaningful goals (Hickey, 1997; Sadler, 2002).

The positioning of children at the centre of their learning experiences is crucial. It is not only at odds with the current performativity narrative in schools (Ball, 2003; Glazzard, 2014), but also with many teachers' expectations and understanding of child engagement, which is frequently teacher-centred (Stephen et al., 2008). This is directly opposed to children's understanding of what it is to be motivated and engaged in learning, which stems from contextualised activities from which they derive meaning e.g. play (Alvestad, 2011; Stephen et al., 2008). It is important teachers recognize the importance of such activities as primary learning opportunities, and do not simply perceive them as 'hooks' or forms of coercion to draw children into adult led agendas (Katz, 2015; Stephen et al., 2008). This distinction is subjective and nuanced and, I believe, requires a degree of critical reflection on, and engagement with, theory and practice to comprehend the crucial differences between these agendas (Dole et al., 2016).

### Community of Learners

Dispositions literature frequently complements the importance of children's participation in groups where members learn and grow together. Claxton and Carr (2004) highlight the value of potentiating environments which support children to express their dispositions and actively foster them through frequent participation in shared activities (Rogoff, 1994), where there is a communal ownership of teaching, learning and knowing (Daniels, 2013; Oldfather, 1992).

Dispositions, motivation and engagement literature all highlight the importance of the emotional warmth children experience within their learning relationships. With learning to learn being shown to flourish in the context of 'reciprocal and responsive relationships' (Carr, 1998, p. 2). This is frequently identified as a key element of effective EYs provisions (Moyle et al., 2002a; Sammons et al., 2003; Sammons et al., 2002; Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002; Sylva et al., 2004), and provides the basis for social pedagogy approaches (Stephens, 2009). The most valuable learning resources are other people (Carr & Claxton, 2002), epitomised in the context of a community of learners, where processes of discovering and generating meaning occur, and are shared (Rogoff, 1990). This sense of community engenders mutual caring amongst members and sustains feelings of relatedness, belongingness, and a commitment to a common goal. When children feel others are invested in, and care about their learning, they are more motivated in the classroom (Jones,

2009), and therefore more likely to strengthen positive learning dispositions. In turn, learning is enhanced (Skidmore, 2006).

Also within this theme is a consideration of wider involvement, such as parents, extended family and other community members. While the meta-ethnography emphasises the importance of valuing 'funds of knowledge' that exist within families, households and communities (Alvestad, 2011; Cullen et al., 2009; Hedges, 2014; Hedges & Cullen, 2005), Stephen et al. (2008) consider the system of dispositions that children may acquire and develop within the home or peer culture. This encourages further reflection on Katz's (2002) critique of the usefulness of dispositions, and begs the question whether some dispositions are more useful than others in particular situations? Therefore, how might educators manage potential conflicts between cultures and accompanying dispositions?

#### Learning as a process not a product

Dispositions literature can further our understanding of this theme by considering dispositions 'not as a noun, as a 'thing' to be acquired, but as a verb with qualifying adverbs.' (Claxton & Carr, 2004, p. 88). Through this lens, focus shifts to considering how children can become more or less disposed to respond in certain ways. Therefore, learning is considered as a change 'in the likelihood that they will respond differently in certain ways.' (Claxton & Carr, 2004, p. 88). They suggest dispositions can strengthen in three ways, which they describe as 'adverbs': robustness, breadth and richness. Robustness is the tendency to respond to an event in a positive way despite occurring in a non-conducive environment. Breadth is conceptualised as the development of perception, understanding that positive dispositions can be generalised to other situations. Finally, richness is considered to be the elaboration of dispositions; for example, persisting may initially have meant not giving up when facing difficulty, it may become more elaborate to include increasing strategies for emotional regulation and gathering support.

This acknowledgement of children's approach to learning, alongside their specific achievements, supports children's self-esteem and their identity as a learner (Daniels, 2013), thus supporting their engagement in continued learning (Harlen & Deakin Crick, 2003). This supports the consideration of a holistic view of learning including academic and social and emotional development. Children make cognitive connections in tandem with developing relationships between themselves and others (Daniels, 2013). This reflects research

highlighting that effective EYs settings prioritise development across all these areas and see development as complementary (Sammons et al., 2003; Sammons et al., 2002).

Tickell (2011) draws our attention to dispositions as ‘enduring characteristics, pertaining to lifelong learning’, she expresses that while these need to be continuously observed and fostered they cannot be described in a developmental sequence. As such, these characteristics represent learning processes rather than outcomes, echoing the SC conceptualisation of learning reflected in the papers.

Language and dialogue are at the heart of children’s learning and motivation. They, alongside additional cultural tools, mediate the socially situated cognitive activity (Hickey, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978b, 1986).

Finally, learning as ‘heart work’ as well as ‘head work’ (Alvestad, 2011), representing the affective elements of learning, was highlighted among many papers (Alvestad, 2011; Cullen et al., 2009; Hedges, 2014; Leggett, 2017; E. A. Wood, 2014). This is important, given that concern with emotion in theories of motivation or disposition is often noted (Stephen et al., 2008). While some authors argue that enjoyment is not the goal of education, but a side-effect of effective teaching (Katz, 2015), children’s emotions both positive and negative are inextricably connected to their dispositions to learn. For example emotions such as pride, shame, success, failure and perceived competence are part of the experiences of social interactions within learning environments (Stephen et al., 2008; Trevarthen, 2001), and connected to engagement in learning (Stephen et al., 2008).

#### Skills to support learning

Interestingly, the ‘skills’ emerging from the meta-ethnography can be found in similar descriptive forms amongst dispositions literature. Creativity and curiosity are combined by Bertram and Pascal (2002) under the label of ‘creativity’ as a key disposition of effective learners. Described as being characterised by children ‘who show curiosity and interest in their world.....the creative child is imaginative, spontaneous and innovative’ (Bertram & Pascal, 2002, p. 248). This reflects the characteristics of creativity described by Leggett (2017). Curiosity is also cited by Katz (1988) as an example of a disposition.

It is interesting to consider whether, although these have been labelled under the theme ‘skills to support learning’, they perhaps reflect a brief selection of three elements which



could be interpreted as capabilities or dispositions. Carr and Claxton (2002) describe capabilities as;

*The skills, strategies and abilities which learning requires: what you might think of as the 'toolkit' of learning. To be a good learner you have to be able. But such capabilities are necessary, they are not themselves sufficient. One has to be disposed to learn, ready and willing to take learning opportunities, as well as able (p.10).*

Curiosity and creativity may be considered approaches to learning, demonstrating a willingness to embrace learning opportunities. However, learning to learn (reflecting on and making sense of your own learning and that of others (Adams, 2006)), which may incorporate some elements of meta-cognition, may be considered a capability underpinning learning (Whitebread & Pasternak, 2010). On reflection, this distinction is nuanced and subjective suggesting that perhaps the division between capabilities and dispositions is not as definitive as Carr and Claxton (2002) initially posited.

Consideration of this theme in relation to the additional literature also begs the question as to the usefulness of creating a list of positive dispositions to be reflected on, particularly as there is no clear agreement over 'key' learning dispositions (Carr & Claxton, 2002). Many previous attempts to produce such lists have developed over time (Coffield, 2002), perhaps reflecting changes in educational trends and priorities.

However, it is possible these dispositions; creativity and curiosity, alongside those which can be interpreted from other themes e.g. reciprocity, may be considered particularly important within SCT? Although some may agree, by its very nature SC learning cannot be 'disembedded' (Carr & Claxton, 2002), it cannot be disentangled as the 'surround in a real sense holds part of the learning' (Perkins, 1992, p. 135). Therefore, the usefulness of attempting to detach and label dispositions from the learning opportunities to which they are attached is called into question.

Additionally, in relation to this theme, much dispositions literature focusses on the development of positive learning dispositions. However, children can also learn dispositions which may not always be viewed as positive, as Katz (2002) states this may reflect 'positive learning of negative behaviours' (p. 54).

### Role of educators

All the papers within the meta-ethnography highlighted the powerful role of educators in supporting children's learning, and although this is discussed briefly in the other themes, it seems pertinent to explore this further given the focus of the research question. This important role is strongly echoed within dispositions literature where educators are fundamental in strengthening desirable dispositions in children (Da Ros-Voseles & Fowler-Haughey, 2007).

Desirable dispositions are not likely to be learned from instruction, but from interactions with significant others who exhibit, exemplify and model them (Katz, 2015). Teachers' personal learning dispositions and how well they model lifelong learning, is key to developing educational programmes which promote learning dispositions (Da Ros-Voseles & Fowler-Haughey, 2007; Sadler, 2002). For dispositions to then be strengthened, they must be manifested and appreciated, rather than extrinsically rewarded. This is particularly important considering the current educational climate where a behaviourist and mechanistic model of children's learning continues to be promoted (Alexander, 2010).

It is vital an effective balance be reached in terms of support from educators, as excessive and unnecessary dependence on adults in learning situations may undermine the development of useful learning dispositions (Katz, 2015). This is an important and difficult balance for EYs practitioners to reach, and one which must be based on a well-evidenced and individualised view of children's unique learning trajectories.

In essence the role of educators is to design and nurture a curriculum guided by the interests and motivation of children, which is framed by the expertise of educators (Fraley Gardner & Jones, 2016). This creates a respect for the role of all those involved in the community of learners and creates an environment where children can express their own dispositions, which can be nurtured, and scaffolded by those with expertise in learning.

### *Expression of the combined synthesis – Theoretical model*

As I considered the uptake of the results into my empirical research context (Atkins et al., 2008), the final synthesis has been diagrammatised in a model, thought to be applicable and accessible to educators (Figure 3).

Dispositions are expressed as being environmentally sensitive; they are acquired, supported or weakened by interactive experiences in an environment with significant adults and peers (Bertram & Pascal, 2002). The model aims to highlight how, by embracing the key themes of SCT, EYs settings can support the development of potentiating learning environments, 'which not only invite the expression of certain dispositions, but actively 'stretch' them, and thus develop them' (Claxton & Carr, 2004).

The model (Figure 3.) diagrammatises key themes arising from the meta-ethnography, alongside synthesised considerations of developing positive learning dispositions. Akin to the idea of 'spirals of learning' (Wells, 2002), learning is considered as being continually extended and refined through situated knowledge building, which is social and interactive in nature. In this way, learning cannot be disentangled from the social environment in which it is situated.

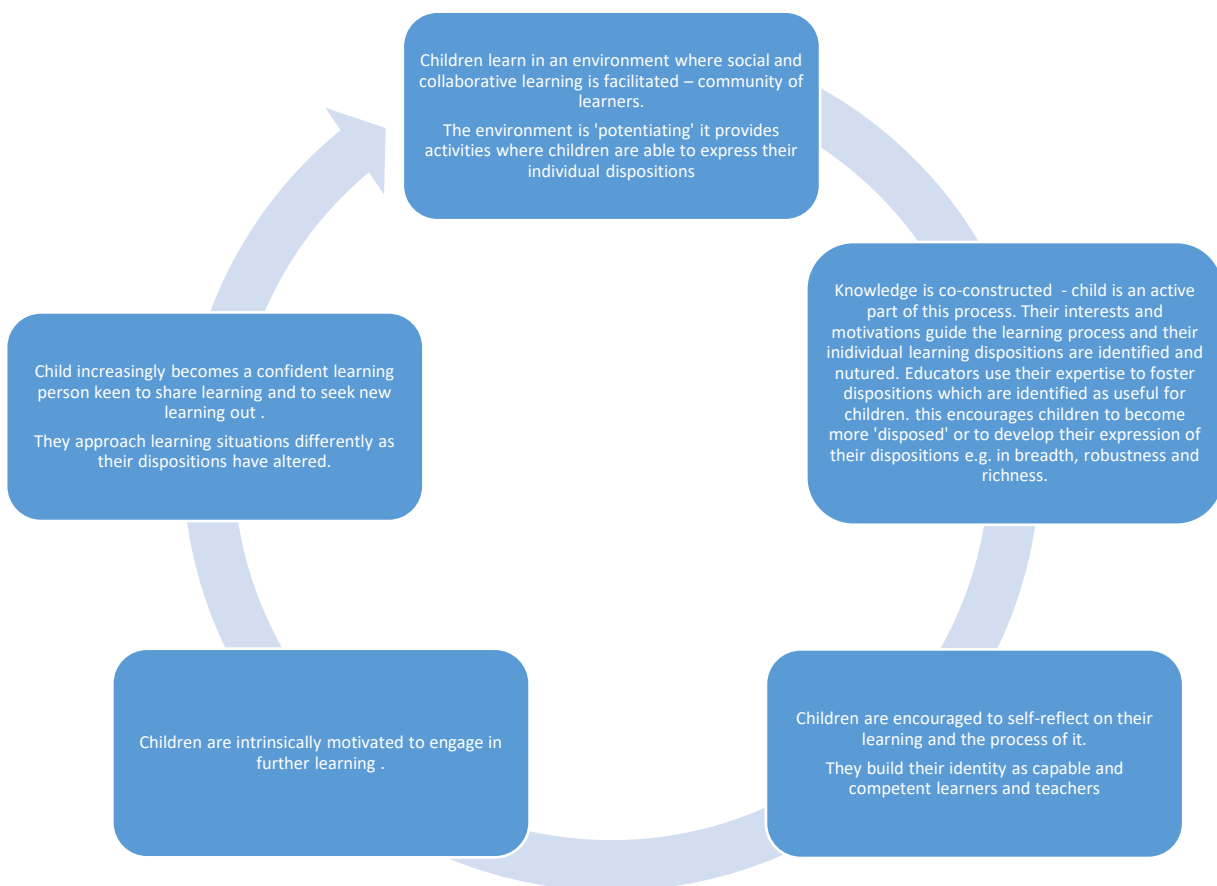


Figure 3. Spiral model of learning and dispositions

### 3. Conclusion

This combined synthesis collates information from the meta-ethnography around key SCT principles supporting children's engagement in 'learning for life', alongside a synthesis of dispositions literature. This has provided a reflection on the research question:

*'How can Social Constructivist Theory and Dispositions literature help Early Years Practitioners to support learning for life?'*

Much dispositions literature is situated within the theoretical framework of SCT, demonstrating the complementary nature of the research bases. However, the combination of the two has perhaps led to a more nuanced and comprehensive consideration of how the application and adoption of a SCT approach to teaching and learning can support the development of positive learning dispositions. The above discussions demonstrate that key elements of SCT can provide the building blocks of learning, and that it is within the capacity of educators to provide environments that exemplify and encourage their development (Carr & Claxton, 2002; Claxton & Carr, 2004; Katz, 2015). Children are active agents in their own learning, they are not only recipients of their environment but also act in ways which change them. SCT helps us consider how the dynamic interactions between children and their social environments are inextricably intertwined. We must reflect how, as educators, we can develop a greater understanding and respect for these interactions, which we can utilise to create learning environments supporting each child's unique learning journey. This is crucial as Katz states; 'the ultimate goal of all education at every level is to strengthen the learner's disposition to go on learning' (2015, p. 118).

EPs hold a strategic position in schools offering a unique vantage point (Loxley, 1978) as both an insider and outsider, with the potential to support critical reflection on practice. They provide knowledge of key theory in relation to reflective practice, SCT and dispositions literature. Therefore, further research into the possible role EPs may play in facilitating EYs practitioners to engage in pedagogical discussions would offer an insight into how potentiating learning environments could be facilitated within the constraints of the current educational climate.

## Chapter 2

### Bridging document

#### 1. Literature Review Process

##### *1.1 Reflection on literature review methodology*

This section outlines some of my reflections on the 'Systematic Literature Review' process.

Whilst at 'Stage 6 – Synthesising the translation' phase of meta-ethnography, I realised I was struggling to decide how to progress with my synthesis. I believed the process had not led to an authentic consideration of my question. I revisited my question, and reflected perhaps there were two parts; one looking at the 'psychological principles of social constructivism' and the other looking at connecting these to 'learning for life'.

Whilst the meta-ethnography had gone some way to providing me with a consistent picture of the principles of social constructivism (SC), it seemed I was trying to make the meta-ethnography 'work' (Lee et al., 2015). I wanted to avoid the potential risk of simply aggregating the research rather than engaging in an interpretive process. I believed it was perhaps arrogant to presume seven papers, only one having a strong focus on learning dispositions, could offer insight into the second part of my question. I believed it was imperative to revisit the research base which discussed children's engagement in learning, and connect this to findings from the meta-ethnography, in an attempt to bring together a more comprehensive consideration of my research question.

This reflection and subsequent change in direction, highlighted to me the iterative and interpretive nature of my literature review (Atkins et al., 2008; Dixon-Woods et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2015). The adaptations I then made to the subsequent phases of the meta-ethnography, which did not align with those originally proposed by Noblit and Hare (1988), I believed created a methodology which emerged as an organic product of my interactions and reflections on the data (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006). I decided to term the type of synthesis I had developed 'combined synthesis' to avoid methodological confusion.

During this amended synthesis, as a result of comprehensive reflection, I also decided to change my research question as I believed the original did not accurately reflect the developing findings. This change made me instantly more comfortable. I believed it further addressed my concerns by moving away from a proceduralist approach by instead treating

the research question as compass, rather than an anchor (Eakin & Mykhalovskiy, 2003). I believe this change led the question to more authentically reflect the findings, without undermining the dynamic process of review occurring before.

Additionally, while attempts were made to collect the research papers most appropriate for the research question, I acknowledge my choices may have resulted in some papers being overlooked. However, I justify my decisions on the ground of manageability. I have not attempted a systematic literature review, instead I have used subjective search criteria to gather papers which I deem to be most relevant to the research question.

### *1.2 Formulating the empirical research question in light of the literature review*

This section highlights how themes and reflections from the combined synthesis influenced the empirical question.

The synthesis highlighted the environmentally sensitive nature of dispositions, and suggested how, by embracing Social Constructivist Theory (SCT), Early Years (EYs) settings could potentially support the development of environments which promote children's individual learning dispositions. This was visually demonstrated in the Spiral Model of Learning and Dispositions. Several potential areas for further investigation arose from the model.

I thought it was important to keep the focus of the research broad, as this more authentically allowed for practitioners to guide the inquiry, and to develop their own interpretations of our collaborative work (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). I believed it was imperative practitioners reflect on the importance of their role in supporting the development of children's learning dispositions. Therefore, the research focussed on how one EYs setting worked together to explore, interpret and utilise the information from the combined synthesis to develop their pedagogical practice.

## 2. Empirical Research

### *2.1 Refining the Methodology*

Methodology can be considered as an 'intricate set of ontological and epistemological assumptions that a researcher brings to his or her work' (Prasad, 1997, p. 2), and includes the tools or techniques used in the inquiry process.

#### *2.1.1 Ontology and Epistemology*

This section explores the concept of 'methodological fit' in relation to my research (Klakegg, 2016). The relationship between my ontological/epistemological position and methodological choices.

'Ontology' refers to claims regarding the nature and structure of being. Theories of what exists (Runes, 2001). 'Epistemology' refers to knowledge, about what can be known and how (Willig, 2013, p. 20).

Modern epistemology continues to be based on the distinction between mind and body (Biesta, 2014). This dualism is rejected as a dichotomy in Pragmatism (Dewey, 2005), as knowledge only takes meaning through lived, sensory experience (Plowright, 2016).

Therefore, it is in direct opposition to adopt Pragmatism as an 'epistemological' position (Garrison, 1995). Instead, I have embraced Pragmatism as an alternative paradigmatic lens through which to reflect on knowledge and guide my research.

Akin to other approaches, there are many interpretations of Pragmatism (Biesta & Burbules, 2004). My understanding and interpretation stems primarily from the work of (Dewey, 1916, 1938, 1966, 1974, 1980, 1997) given his focus on education, however, such ideas have been built on by more recent Pragmatists such as Rorty (Reason, 2003; Rorty, 1982).

The concept of inquiry (Dewey, 1938) is central to the application of Pragmatism to research. Inquiry is required to generate solutions to problems in which our everyday habits of action do not offer a satisfactory solution (Rosiek, 2013). It is an investigation into some part of reality with the purpose of creating knowledge for change related to this part of reality (Goldkuhl, 2012b). Therefore inquiry must provide suggestions for future outcomes, rather than create a picture of a static world (Hassanli & Metcalfe, 2014).

The intricate and dynamic relationship between knowledge and action as described in Pragmatism is considered especially relevant for those who approach questions of

knowledge primarily from a practical angle (Biesta & Burbules, 2004), as knowledge can only be evaluated in terms of its real-life practical benefit to an individual situation (Dewey, 2005). This focus on the development of constructive knowledge, that which is valuable in action (Goldkuhl, 2012b), has been a driving force for my research.

Pragmatist thought was also considered as an appropriate position to adopt given its ability to embrace and interconnect with SCT. Garrison (1998) discusses the value of Pragmatic SC which emphasises the transactional nature of teaching and learning, where meaning belongs in the relations with others.

### *2.1.2 Pragmatic Action Case Research*

Ontologically, I see myself as part of others' lives and they of mine. Knowledge is created in the company of others as we act together and co-create. This can be considered a 'participatory perspective' (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Therefore, I made the choice to adopt an insider, participative approach.

Action research (AR) is described as an orientation to inquiry rather than a specific methodology (Reason, 2003). It seeks to:

*'bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities'* (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 4).

AR calls for an engagement with people in collaborative relationships, opening communicative spaces, allowing for dialogue and development (Ivankova, 2014). The approach sits comfortably within the lens of Pragmatist thought (Baskerville & Myers, 2004; Hammond, 2013), creating consistency within the research. It was thought through this approach I would bring knowledge of the AR process and of pedagogical theories, while participants as co-researchers, would bring situated practical knowledge and experience (Baskerville & Myers, 2004).

Collaboration within AR is key. It is considered to help the researcher remain grounded and avoid being cast in the role of hero innovator (Lacey, 1996), instead researchers are placed in a helping role alongside practitioners (Baskerville & Myers, 2004), engaged in the process of



inquiry towards change. Collaboration also offers a crucial means of validating new knowledge, leading to warranted assertions (Elliot, 2006).

As Pragmatism is non-dogmatic and adaptive, it does not seek to establish a rigid framework in which AR inquiry should take place. Therefore, this left ongoing methodological choices open for discussion with participants, such as how reflective video sessions would operate, with an understanding of what was contextually appropriate for our inquiries (Hammond, 2013). This allowed respect for participant agency, with an awareness of constraints on action. I believed Pragmatic AR was an appropriate and useful choice in order to initiate organisational change whilst simultaneously studying the process of this (Barburolu & I., 1992).

The consequences of Pragmatic AR are argued to be increased self-esteem among participants due to the democratic and empowering role in the process, and increased situational capacity building. A recent literature review also highlighted the value of AR in supporting practitioner reflection on theory-practice connections, with the potential to drive transformational change (Peleman et al., 2018). The approach aims to address practical problems without minimising those problems to a short term fix (Hammond, 2013). Therefore, I believed the approach represented a useful and respectful way to approach the research.

An action case research method was adopted due to its mix of interpretation and intervention with a sufficiently rich context: a focussed research question; a framework of ideas to be tested; less than full participation by members of the organisation (as appropriate to the setting); and a small scale intervention that is achievable given the researcher's experience and resources (Vidgen & Braa, 1997). The approach allowed difficulties found in more traditional case studies and action research to be overcome.

In order to outline my methodological choices more clearly I have formatted them into a table below:

<b>Paradigm</b>	Pragmatism
<b>Ontology</b>	Participatory perspective
<b>Type of knowledge</b>	Constructive knowledge
<b>Role of knowledge</b>	Useful for action
<b>Type of investigation</b>	Inquiry in the form of Pragmatic Action Research Action Case
<b>Role of researcher</b>	Engaged in change
<b>Type of inquiry</b>	Pragmatic action case research

### 3. Ethics and Research Quality

#### *3.1 Ethical considerations*

Prior to beginning the empirical research full ethical approval was obtained from Newcastle University. During the research process I worked diligently to ensure the research was completed to high ethical standards, meeting the requirements of Newcastle University, BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (British Psychological Society, 2009) and Health and Care Professionals Council. The following discussion focuses on the ethical considerations that I made to ensure this.

My primary consideration in this study was to make decisions and act in ways which promoted and protected the rights of children. My consideration of ‘procedural ethics’ (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004) was included in detail as part of the research process (see Appendix A). Therefore the following discussion engages more with the need to be ethically reflexive, with continual consideration of the micro ethics (Barrow, Barrow, & Glocking, 2014) which occur throughout the research process as a result of the dynamic nature of human interactions. This is echoed by Willig (2013, p. 26) who discusses the importance of qualitative researchers remaining ‘ethically attuned’ to their research, acknowledging and acting upon ethical dilemmas as they arise. One such dilemma within my research was the concept of power.

In true AR the ownership of the research process and findings should belong to the participants (Reason & Bradbury, 2001), in this case the practitioners. However, due to their own work constraints and the constraints of the research process this was unable to be the case. Pain and Francis (2003) suggest that further or full engagement of participants is a common and understated issue in participatory research. My role in analysing the footage perhaps led to a more traditional approach to research, going against the notion of

participants as controllers and actors. Instead I became the 'holder of knowledge' (Borda, 1998). However, I argue there is also the need to consider the concept of informed consent. Participants were aware of the process of the research and judged the analysis of information to be suitable, even when given the option of analysing the film themselves. They reported that further engagement in analysis on their part would be unachievable alongside their current workload. Therefore, my role in analysis was part of what made the project manageable from their perspective. Perhaps what is important to reflect on is how the principles of participation are protected through openness and collaboration with participants. I continually reflected on the balance between participation and possibility. I consider it essential that participation should not be enforced, and should be at the level which is deemed manageable and suitable for those involved. There needs to be a degree of humility and respect for the legitimacy of the participants' own perspectives and expertise related to how knowledge can and should be generated (Rahman, 1991).

The issue of power is also connected to the concept of collaboration and collaborative practice. I framed my research as 'collaborative' in order to represent an ethos of working together towards new understandings. However, Grover (2004) argues that while this terminology may reduce the power imbalance, it does not hide that '...one party is investigating the other. One party (the academic), for instance, normally has the power to disseminate information broadly about the other' (p.256). This may be particularly problematic given our powerful and independent positions as EPs. However, I hope that positioning the concept of 'process consent' (Heath, Charles, Crow, & Wiles, 2007), negotiated on an ongoing basis, in the research, allowed authentic discussion around levels of engagement and collaboration. I wondered whether these potential issues with collaboration became less salient across the course of the research as our group partnership grew, perhaps allowing a more authentic representation of collaborative practice to emerge.

### *3.2 Generalisation of findings*

The use of a case study design may lead some to conclude that no further generalisations can be made from this research. Such criticisms often stem from a simplified view of generalisation operating on the assumption that 'generalisation' has a clear singular meaning (Larsson, 2009). Much educational research describes and interprets processes which emerge in situations and human actions, but only as a potential. While we cannot

claim they will always emerge in these situations, we can consider different forms of generalisation, such as context similarity (Schofield, 1993), and recognition of new patterns or interpretations which could be recognised or considered elsewhere (Larsson, 2009). We can investigate and consider the conditions and factors that give rise to certain phenomena. In this case it may be the use of learning theory, the time for supported reflection, the use of video feedback, and the involvement of an educational psychologist to facilitate. However, we are investigating social situations and human minds, these are not static, but dynamic therefore, as M. M. Kennedy (1979) argues 'the evaluator should produce and share the information, but the receivers of the information must determine whether it applied to their own situation' (p.672).

#### 4. Reflexivity

This section focuses on the role of 'personal reflexivity' in my research (Willig, 2013, p. 10). 'Reflexivity' is commonly viewed as the process of continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of the researcher's positionality, as well as an explicit recognition of how this may affect the research process (Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Pillow, 2003).

Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) state the researcher can never assume a value-neutral stance. I acknowledge that my values and previous experience may have influenced the way in which I have engaged with the research process. For example, in my previous career as a Speech and Language Therapist I had a significant role in providing support to EYs settings and was surprised to see this was not a common feature of many EPs' work. Therefore, my previous experience, taken with my commitment to advocating for the EP role in EYs, impacted my position within the process.

Additionally, my role as a trainee educational psychologist in the school may have pre-shaped the nature of our relationships, which in turn may have affected the information practitioners were willing to explore (Berger, 2015). Finally, my world view and background affects the way in which I construct my language, pose questions and provides a lens for filtering information gathered from participants, thus shaping the findings and conclusions of the research (Kacem & Chaitin, 2006).

However, whilst remaining alert to the potential impact of my role in the research, I also embrace this, as I accept my role in the co-construction and development of knowledge in this process (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). It stands as a representation of what EPs can offer in supporting schools to adopt evidence-based approaches to support children's learning and development.

## 5. Conclusions

The bridging document seeks to add a degree of clarity to connection between the Literature Review process and the Empirical Research. The Combined Synthesis culminated in the production of a Spiral Model of Learning and Dispositions outlining some key areas of SCT which, with reference to key dispositions and motivation literature, supported learning for life in the EYs. I decided to use video reflective practice (VRP) as a tool to support EYs practitioners to consider their role in supporting learning for life. I hoped VRP would offer an empowering way of reflecting on their use of evidence-based theory to support children's learning and development. My role in facilitating this reflective discussion was twofold; to demonstrate alternative ways EPs' can work within EYs settings in a proactive and universal way, and to utilise SCT principles in a meta-system whereby I was promoting the use of SC principles with my learning with practitioners; whilst they reflected on their use of these principles with children.

## Chapter 3 – Empirical Research

### **‘How can Educational Psychologists and Early Years Practitioners work together to apply Social Constructivist Theory and Dispositions literature to support reflection on pedagogy: An Action Case Study using a Video Reflective Practice Approach’**

#### Abstract

This empirical study aimed to identify how Educational Psychologists (EPs) and Early Years (EYs) practitioners could work together using video reflective practice (VRP) to explore pedagogy. Social Constructivist Theory (SCT) and dispositions literature were used as a lens for reflection. The study involved six members of staff from nursery and reception over a five week period. Thematic analysis of evaluative dialogues suggest collaborative reflection with colleagues and an EP led to changes in perspectives and practice.

#### 1. Introduction

##### *1.1 Educational Psychology in the Early Years*

Despite a wealth of literature in EYs with strong psychological underpinnings (Sammons et al., 2003; Sammons et al., 2002; Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002; Sylva et al., 2004), there remains limited research demonstrating proactive practice by EPs within EYs settings (Douglas-Osborn, 2017; Shannon & Posada, 2007). Therefore, despite EYs being identified as a key role for EPs (Department for Education and Employment, 2000), we lack literature from EPs perspectives. Such research has the potential to provide examples of proactive and universal practice, helping us move away from traditional and reactive ‘within-child’ approaches of assessment and intervention.

One example of such proactive approaches is capacity building in schools (Natasi & Vargas, 2013). There is ample literature exploring how children learn and how to develop effective corresponding teaching practices. However, these are rarely accessed by teachers, who, under local and governmental pressures, lack time and resources to access such information (Behrstock-Sherratt, Drill, & Miller, 2011). While professional development (PD) programmes usually exist in schools, the frequently partial, flawed and erratic nature of these means they are often less effective than they should be (Opfer & Pedder, 2010). EPs are well placed to provide support for teacher development. Their skills in synthesising and critically appraising

literature, alongside knowledge of reflective practice, and well-developed understanding of children's learning, offers a valuable addition to schools.

### *1.2 Effective Early Years Provision*

EYs is a crucial period of learning and development for children, with access to high-quality learning provisions providing long lasting benefits for children's attainment and social outcomes (Camilli et al., 2010; Cascio & Schanzenbach, 2013; Nores & Barnett, 2010; Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2017; Sammons et al., 2003; Sammons et al., 2002; Sylva et al., 2004). Within recent years governmental changes have led to increased variability across settings. Therefore, it is crucial EYs settings continue to explore their effectiveness. EPs may play a useful role in this exploration.

A common criticism of the UK EYs approach is that the 'readiness for school' focus, serves the objectives of public education, leading to children's broader developmental needs being overlooked (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012). In contrast, there are effective settings both nationally and internationally utilising child-led, social pedagogies. The driving theory for this tends to be SCT, which continues to receive vast empirical evidence as a significant account for learning and development (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012; Oldfather et al., 1999). A recent literature review (Chapter One), synthesised relevant research to explore the key components of SCT and discussed these with reference to salient dispositions literature, to demonstrate how EYs settings can create supportive environments, engaging children in lifelong learning.

UK EYs provisions generally follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum (Department for Education, 2017). While this espouses a Social Constructivist (SC) ethos, the realisation of this in practice, is varied, with a focus on outcomes and 'readiness'. This risks undermining the 'life readiness' approach SCT promotes (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012), and children's engagement in lifelong learning (Aasen & Waters, 2006; Claxton, 2000; Katz, 1995, 2015).

To effectively reflect on pedagogy, research suggests teachers must; have an appropriate level of pedagogical knowledge (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012); be given the time to engage in metacognitive processes and reflect on practice (Garet et al., 2001; Moyles et al., 2002b; Stephen, 2010); and feel empowered to practice in contextually and culturally appropriate ways (Koutselini, 2017).

Researchers propose being able to articulate and reflect on the beliefs and theories underpinning teaching practices is challenging for many EYs practitioners (Moyles et al., 2002b; Stephen, 2010; E. Wood & Bennett, 2000); suggesting there may be merit in offering frameworks to facilitate critical reflection on practice; supporting the PD of EYs practitioners.

### *1.3 Teacher Development and Change*

High quality PD is a powerful precursor in teaching practice, shown to support student's learning, and teacher's self-confidence and independence (Borko, 2004; Eun, 2008; Guskey, 2002; Koutselini, 2017). Research suggests teachers hope to gain specific, concrete and practical ideas directly relating to their day-to-day practices (Fullan & Miles, 1992).

Therefore, is it essential PD is directly connected to classroom activities (Eun, 2011; Peleman et al., 2018). However, improving teaching is not simply learning about better approaches, it is about a fundamental change in attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions (Baird, 2004). Guskey (2002) argues only when teachers implement new approaches which have an effect on children's learning, will changes in beliefs and attitudes occur. Therefore, it is not the approaches learnt during PD per se, but the experience of successfully implementing these, which shape attitudes and beliefs.

Teachers can be anxious and reluctant to adopt new practices, unless sure they can make them work (Lortie, 1975). One method to overcome these anxieties may be to identify successful practices already being implemented, and empowering practitioners to build on these (Kelly & Bluestone-Miller, 2009; Stark, McGhee, & Jimerson, 2017). One way this can be achieved is by encouraging reflection on the theory behind effective practice (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Moyles et al., 2002b), allowing tacit knowledge and understanding to be explored. This may allow practitioners to embrace a deeper understanding of their practices. By grounding practice in theory it becomes possible to derive predications for enhancing the effectiveness of wider pedagogical practices, broadening the impact of effective practice (Peleman et al., 2018).

### *1.4 Reflective Practice*

Literature supports reflection as positive for educators. Dewey (1974) emphasised the importance of reflective thinking, not only as a tool, but as the aim of education. It 'enables us to know what we are about when we act. It converts action that is merely appetitive, blind and impulsive into intelligent action' (p.212). However, engaging in individual reflection



or making tacit practices explicit, is insufficient in itself to support PD (Loughran, 2002; Zeichner, 1994). Research highlights the value of collaborative reflection in providing opportunities to de-privatise and critique practices within a community of learners (Koutselini, 2017; M. W. McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006).

The concept of collaborative learning in PD and reflective practice sits closely with the SCT of learning. Both nurture the idea of school as a learning community, and practitioners, alongside children, as learning persons (Eun, 2008). SCT also emphasises the social underpinnings of higher cognitive functions (Vygotsky, 1978a), therefore, development gained from collaborative reflection can be argued to stem from social interactions with others. SCT provides a useful and empowering theoretical framework to consider PD practices (Eun, 2008, 2011; Shabani, 2016; Sullivan Palincsar, 2005; Warford, 2011).

Collaborative reflection can be done in many ways, one way receiving increasing empirical support is Video Reflective Practice (VRP).

### *1.5 Video Reflective Practice*

Research suggests video is a powerful form of PD, providing a tool for enabling shared understandings, supporting reflective dialogue, and collaborative discussions of pedagogical practices (Borko, Koellner, Jacobs, & Seago, 2011; Cherrington & Loveridge, 2014; Fukkink, Trienekens, & Kramer, 2011; Moyles et al., 2002b; Zhang, Lundeberg, Koehler, & Eberhardt, 2011).

Borko et al. (2011) suggest video creates a shared experience, a focal point for collaborative exploration of pedagogy. Viewing oneself in practice is a unique characteristic of video feedback, offering practitioners opportunities to step-back from the immediacy of classrooms to analyse practice (Dowrick, 1999; Van Manen, 1995). This, alongside professional dialogue, can have powerful effects in highlighting the congruity between espoused and actual practices (Grey, 2011; E. Wood & Bennett, 2000). Tacit knowledge influencing personal practice may also come to the fore (Kugelmass & Ross-Bernstein, 2000), allowing for a greater self-awareness.

### *1.6 Study Aims*

The need for further applied EP research into proactive practice with EYs settings has been highlighted (Douglas-Osborn, 2017; Shannon & Posada, 2007), alongside the need for

research into how video may be used in the EYs to support professional learning (Cherrington & Loveridge, 2014). Finally, despite the significant attention PD receives, there have been few attempts to connect this to a theoretical framework (Eun, 2008). This research aims to further explore these interesting areas using the following research question:

*How can EPs and EYs practitioners work together to apply SCT and dispositions literature to support reflection on pedagogy? An action case study using a VRP approach.*

The participatory nature of the research also allowed practitioners exploration of their own research question:

*How can EYs practitioners support children's learning within unstructured times?*

## 2. Method

### *2.1 Context*

The research was carried out in a primary school in North East England. Two teachers and four support staff from Nursery and Reception years were involved in the project, their experience in schools ranged from 8-20 years. Video recordings of child-staff interactions were taken by the researcher on a weekly basis for five consecutive weeks. Weekly reflective sessions for staff were not compulsory and were attended by between 4-6 members of staff.

### *2.2 Design*

The research took the form of a pragmatic, action case research project, which seeks to actively involve practitioners in a process of enquiry, with a focus on the agency of practitioners (Hammond, 2013). I adopted a 'helping role with practitioners' (Baskerville & Myers, 2004, p. 330) by working with them to explore how SCT and dispositions literature could be applied in their setting to support lifelong learning.

The collaborative nature of the research was reflected in the autonomy of staff to guide their own research question, and their active role in the process. They adopted roles as co-researchers and co-learners (Cremin, Burnard, & Craft, 2006), complimenting the learning principles of SCT. They wished to explore how practitioner-child interactions could support learning within unstructured times (e.g. free play). Through investigating their question we explored how EPs and EYs practitioners could work together to support reflection on pedagogy.

Further information can be found in Chapter Two (from p.37).

### *2.3 Ethical Considerations*

Full details of ethical considerations can be found in Chapter Two (p.39) and Appendices (A-G).

Before beginning all participants were given written information sheets (Appendix B-D) and offered introductory sessions. Written informed consent was obtained from parents and practitioners (Appendix E-F). Children's consent was gained verbally from the outset and we remained vigilant to children's responses throughout; utilising the concept of assent to judge ongoing consent (Cocks, 2006).

Due to the collaborative and iterative nature of the research, the discussions and focus changed over time; therefore ongoing verbal consent was gained throughout. All were provided with debrief forms (Appendix G) and given the opportunity to discuss the research.

Principles of confidentiality were adhered to (see Appendix A).

#### *2.4 Research Process and Data Collection*

Figure 4 shows a diagrammatic description of the research process.

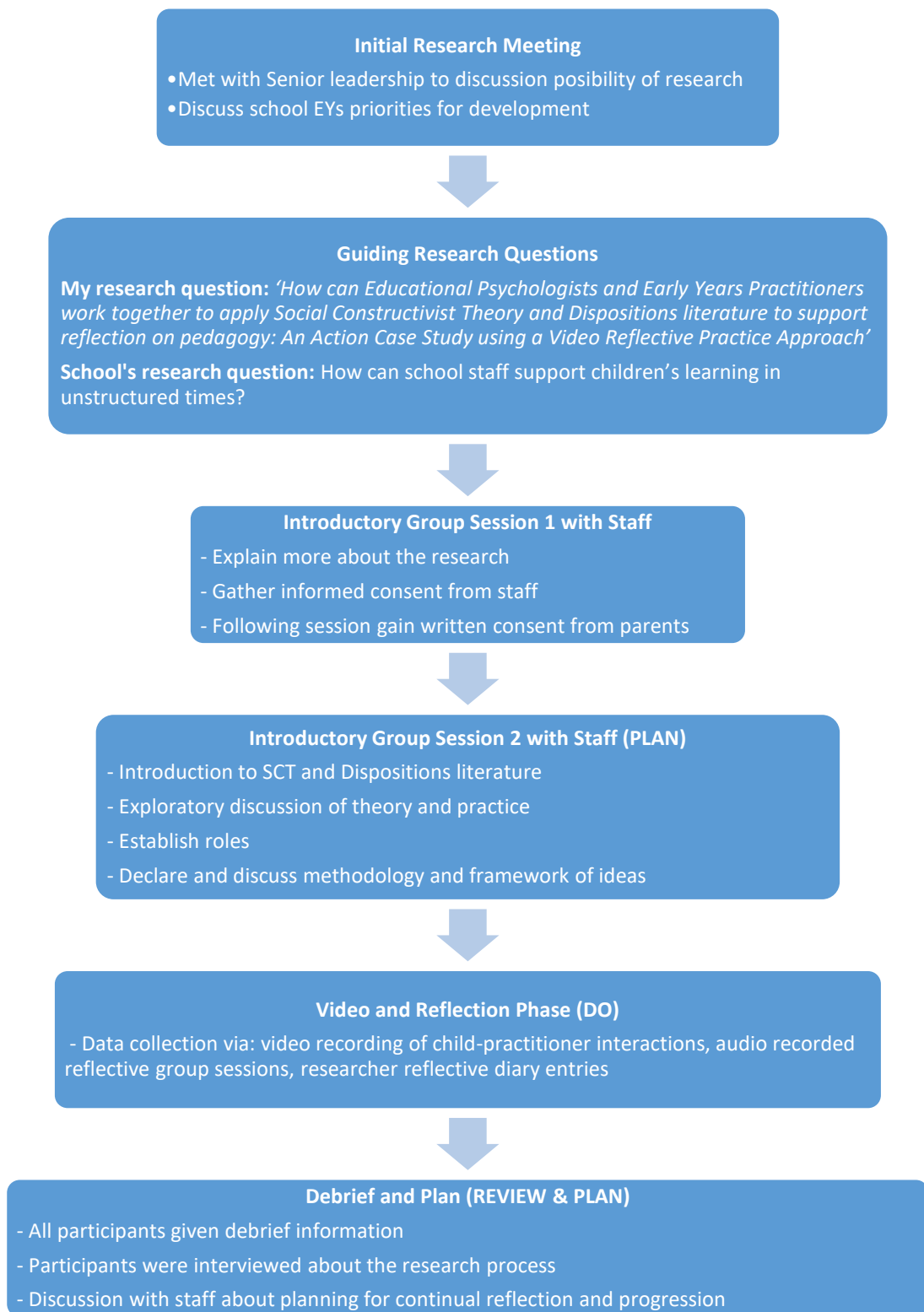


Figure 4. Diagrammatic description of the research process.

Following initial interest from school senior leadership, I met with interested practitioners. We discussed the areas of practice they were aiming to develop, leading to the development of their research question. Following this, a collaborative introductory session explored further details including methodological and logistical decisions.

Four months later, at the beginning of the following school year, a second collaborative session was held with staff to explore key elements of SCT and dispositions literature resulting from the literature review, using visual supports (Appendix H). Staff were given the opportunity to discuss their initial thoughts on the theory and how it corresponded with their current practice. The logistics of the process, roles of group members, and the guiding framework for the research were collectively explored and clarified.

Following this the video and reflection phase of the research began.

#### 2.4.1 Video and Reflection Phase

Figure 5 provides a visual outline of the cyclic nature of the phase which ran continuously for five weeks during September/October 2018.

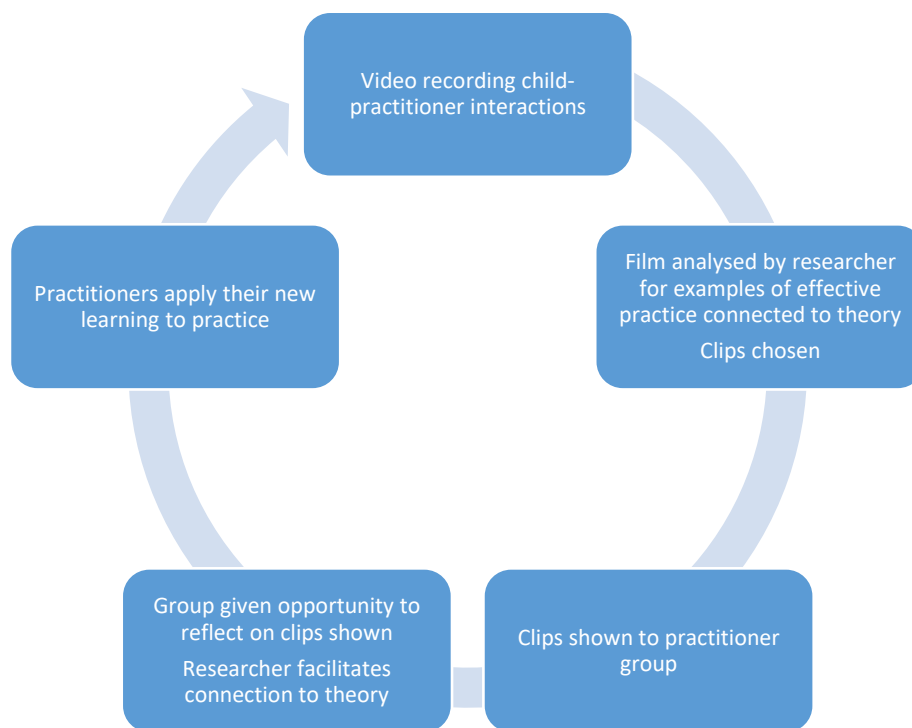


Figure 5. Outline of Video and Reflection Phase

A video camera was used to film student-practitioner interactions across nursery and reception during free play (approximately one hour per week).

I chose to adopt a VRP approach to support the practitioner's reflection on pedagogy. The research adopted an inquiry-orientated approach to reflection on practitioner-child pedagogical interactions using video. While the approach embraces similar principles to Video Interaction Guidance (VIG) (H. Kennedy, 2011) and Video Enhanced Reflective Practice

(VERP) (Todd, Landor, & Kennedy, 2015) in terms of identifying strengths in practice, the approach for selection and analysis of clips differs. While VIG and VERP both adopt the principles of attunement (derived from research around intersubjectivity) as a focus for exploration, VRP is flexible in its approach to this. Therefore, as I was utilising the SCT as a lens for exploration and reflection, with a more specific focus on pedagogical practices VRP was considered a more appropriate approach. However, it is important to note that the principles of attunement and pedagogical practices are not mutually exclusive. As such many elements of the attunement principles were considered during the reflections, but included in components of SCT such as in consideration of responsive and respectful relationships with children.

Based on Bandura's (1997) social learning theory, and following principles of Video Interaction Guidance (H. Kennedy, 2011), I worked on the premise that reinforcement of positive behaviour increases learner self-efficacy. Using positive self-modelling (Hitchcock, Dowrick, & Prater, 2003) and the principles of SCT, I analysed the film for examples of effective practice, chosen due to their reflection and modelling of SCT. Each week I chose three clips that demonstrated a variety of practice and staff. This allowed all practitioners the opportunity to see the value of their own practice. These clips were reviewed in weekly, group reflective sessions. Sessions were informal, led by practitioners and the ideas they wished to explore, allowing practitioners to individually interpret the theory, and reflect on implementation.

Mirroring previous research (Cherrington & Loveridge, 2014), sessions utilised Stimulated Recall Methods; playing video clips to stimulate recall of thinking. The video was repeatedly paused to allow for recognition and acknowledgement of key interactions.

Within sessions my role was facilitatory, such as questioning, or encouraging reflection on their research question. Key SCT themes derived from the review provided a framework to support theory-practice connections. Practitioners were positioned as having situated expertise and practical knowledge, which, alongside my knowledge of the research process and psychological theory, created an equitable collaboration (Baskerville & Myers, 2004).

I maintained a research journal recording my reflections and decisions regarding the developing process (Richards, 2014).

## 2.5 Data Analysis

There were two reasons for gathering data; to answer my question and to answer the school's. The data corpus included; audio recordings, video recordings and my reflective notes. Data was systematically gathered to demonstrate learning, progress and change as it emerged through the research (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006).

The research question determined my decisions regarding the approach to interpretation within the analysis. As the question explored collaborative working, I decided to use the evaluation sessions as my data set for analysis. This included two separate interviews, one with five participants and one with the remaining participant. The evaluation questions evolved from exploration of similar research projects (Digby, 2017), and reflection on the research question (see Appendix I).

I transcribed the evaluation sessions verbatim and analysed them using inductive thematic analysis (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). TA was considered most suited to my research question, aims, and research position. TA allows identification of themes reflecting textual data (Howitt & Cramer, 2014), in a data-driven, 'bottom-up' approach. To respect this inductive approach I attempted to maintain a level of reflexivity, allowing recognition of instances where I may have been trying to fit data to pre-existing ideas and assumptions. However, I recognise I cannot free myself from my theoretical and epistemological commitments, therefore my approach to analysis is not value free (Braun & Clarke, 2006). TA is compatible with my pragmatic epistemological stance, as I aimed to explore the practical value of knowledge built within the project (Goldkuhl, 2012b).

The six phases of TA suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) were adopted (see Table 6).

NVivo software was utilised to facilitate the coding process.

<b>(1) Familiarisation of data</b>	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading, noting down initial ideas – <i>active</i> reading of the data
<b>(2) Generating codes</b>	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the data set
<b>(3) Searching for themes</b>	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
<b>(4) Reviewing themes</b>	Checking themes against coded extracts and the whole data set – generating a thematic map of the analysis
<b>(5) Defining and naming themes</b>	Ongoing analysis to refine specifics of each theme. Generating definitions and names for each theme
<b>(6) Producing the report</b>	Production of an accessible and finalised thematic map and description of themes to clarify overarching findings

Table 6. Phases of Thematic Analysis



### 3. Findings and Discussion

Table 7 outlines the research findings. The corresponding thematic map provides a diagrammatic representation of themes (Figure 6). To demonstrate bottom-up analysis superordinate and sub-ordinate themes are exemplified with participant quotes.

I suggest learning in this transactional project occurred for all adults involved; practitioners and the researcher. Our dual experiences of learning created a dynamic and living project, developing alongside our experiences. Discussion of the findings explores themes, using participant quotes with previous research to support interpretations.

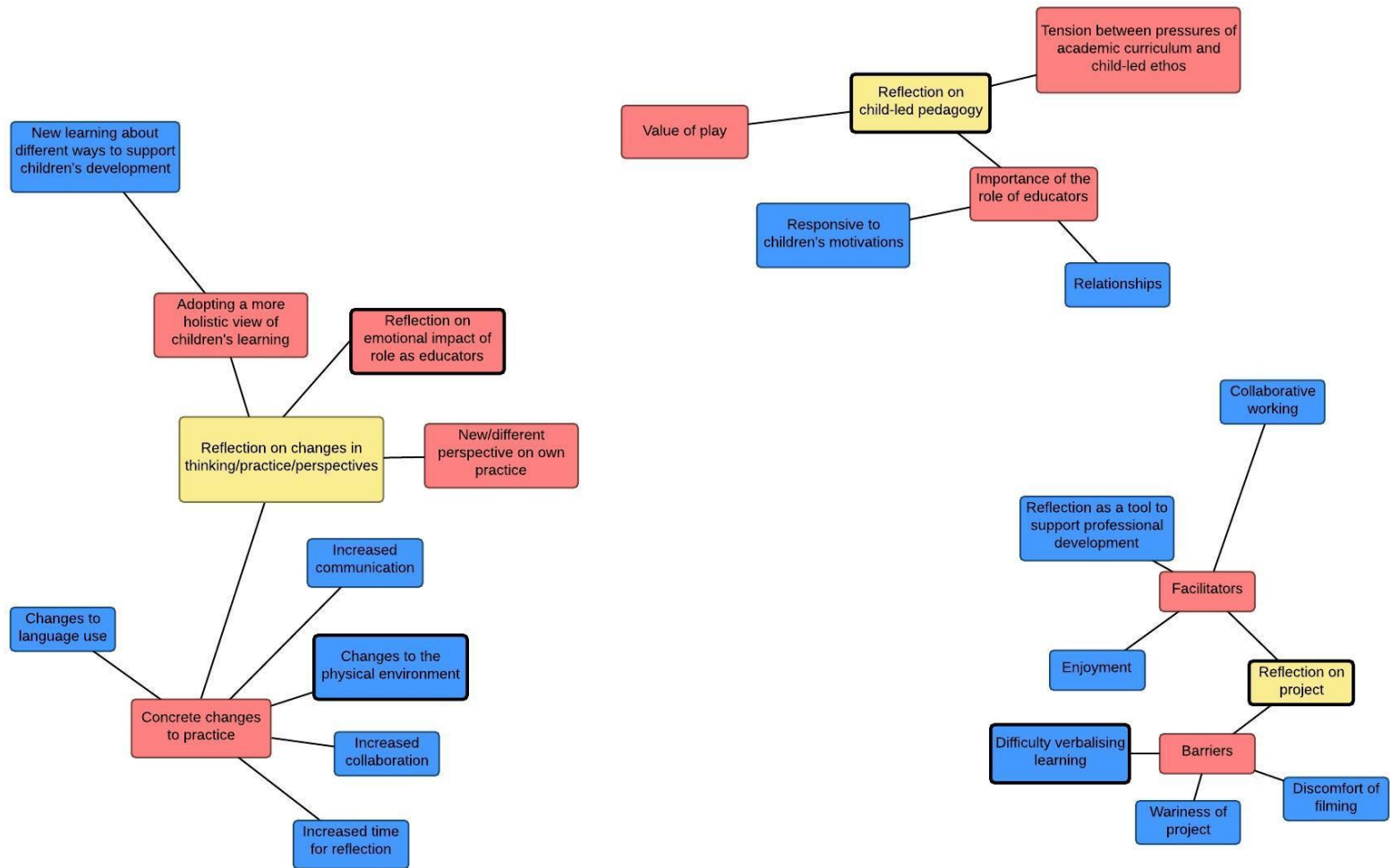


Figure 6. Thematic map

Superordinate themes including description of theme	Sub-ordinate themes		Examples from participant discussions
<p><b>Reflection on project</b>  This theme explores the practitioners' reflections on their participation in the project. It includes discussion of the facilitators including; utilising reflection as a professional tool, working in collaboration with the educational psychologist researcher and colleagues, and the emotional reaction to their involvement. It also includes discussion of barriers including; initial wariness of the project and what it entailed, negative emotional impact of filming, and the difficulties some participants faced in verbalising their reflections and learning.</p>	<i>Facilitators</i>	<i>Reflection as a tool to support professional learning and development</i>	<p><i>'it's been really useful in giving the opportunities to reflect on things and see each other in ways that you don't normally get to'</i></p> <p><i>'You've got to keep it fresh as well haven't you. You've got to keep those little angles and looking at your practice'</i></p> <p><i>'Reflecting on my practice, like how I do thinking...just like getting from feedback from you (EP researcher)...and off the team and stuff to see what they think...because it's not always what you pick up is what you were doing.'</i></p> <p><i>'you know it in your head a lot of it'</i></p>
		<i>Collaborative working with EP and colleagues</i>	<p><i>'it's quite nice to see other people's practice as well, which is something you don't often see'</i></p> <p><i>'as an outsider you (EP researcher) have thought of things differently than what we would do'</i></p> <p><i>'I think as well when you (EP researcher) have questioned things when we have looked at the video it's kinda brought up more, well, make us think a bit more about what we are doing'</i></p>
		<i>Enjoyment</i>	<p><i>'I've just enjoyed it, it's just been an insight into what you don't see or you don't see other people doing'</i></p> <p><i>'very beneficial and something we will definitely continue with'</i></p> <p><i>'I think it worked really well and I did really enjoy it'</i></p>

	<i>Barriers</i>	<i>Difficulty verbalising learning</i>	<i>'but sometimes you just sit and think, well I don't know what I was doing I was just doing it'</i>
		<i>Wariness of process</i>	<i>'I think initially I thought oh how is this going to go, because obviously you have no concept have you especially when things are first starting'</i>
		<i>Discomfort of filming</i>	<i>'it's horrible looking at yourself' 'the thought of being filmed and looking back at yourself, for me, I hate things like that'</i>
<p><b>Reflection on child-led pedagogy</b> This theme includes practitioner's discussions of and reflections on the nature of child-led pedagogy and the reality of adopting such practices within the current educational climate. It also encompasses the importance of the educators' role including the importance of responsive relationships and the skill involved in scaffolding children's learning around their interests and needs.</p>	<p><i>Tension between pressures of academic curriculum and child-led ethos</i></p>	<p><i>'in that I would be thinking oh well I didn't say anything about the numbers, I didn't do anything about literacy...but there has to be a balance' 'it just feels like when you do whole class teaching with nursery I felt like it was a ticky box' 'it's just being a bit more aware of the playing as well, I'm just so obsessed with targets I think' 'it has made us think more about the value of having the time when we can to do more interactions just for interacting with the children rather than like we need to get an observation done'</i></p>	
	<p><i>Value of play</i></p>	<p><i>'we are all more relaxed and we are getting more from it and they are getting more from it because of that' 'there are valuable interactions going on in every area and outside, it's not just a certain place that you have to be having positive interactions with them' 'you do learn such a lot from it'</i></p>	

			<i>'We always said we needed...a set time where we don't have assessments and literally just play with the children, and I think it just again, reinforces that.'</i>
	<i>Importance of the role of educators</i>	<i>Responsive to children's motivations</i>	<i>'it has given the opportunity to really zone in on children's interests and how, what we can then do in the environment to ensure that they are all playing or engage them' 'You've gotta make it fun!' 'Children will play and children will learn through their play but it is the different little tweaks you do within that.'</i>
		<i>Relationships</i>	<i>'relationships play such a key part don't they' 'I think again it just brings you down to their level when you are playing with them and you are not in that moment as an authority figure you are playing with them' 'they treat you like a friend' 'we know their strengths and weaknesses of each child and we all do' 'using adults is a key tool isn't it'</i>
<b>Reflection on changes in thinking/practice/perspectives</b> This theme explores practitioners' explicit reflections on the learning and changes which have occurred	<i>Adopting a more holistic view of children's learning</i>	<i>New learning about different ways to support children's development</i>	<i>'We have seen learning in a different context, and that you easily forget.' 'I think it just makes us more aware of all the different aspects that are coming in when the children are playing and what we can maybe get out of them a little bit more within that'</i>

<p>for them as a result of their involvement in the project. Practitioners' discussions reflect a wider view of children's learning leading to viewing new ways to support learning. Practitioners' language also suggests a new perspective on their habits of practice, alongside the development and integration of new practices.</p>			<p><i>'I didn't recognise that there is other stuff that you can pull in during child initiated, so it is pushing boundaries as well'</i></p> <p><i>"the skill to like know when to intervene and when not to...It's quite a hard skill to do...whether you should be stepping back...it's just that way of being in that zone and thinking about all of the time what you are actually doing'</i></p>
	<i>Concrete changes to practice</i>	<i>Increased time for reflection</i>	<p><i>'we have planned in one staff meeting per half term purely for the early years staff to do more reflective work'</i></p> <p><i>'we are definitely more reflective I think, we feedback to each other about things a lot more I think'</i></p>
		<i>Changes to language use</i>	<p><i>'it's changed my questioning'</i></p> <p><i>'just adding the right questioning to extend where they are going'</i></p>
		<i>Changes to the environment</i>	<p><i>'we have reflected on the environment...we have started having to think about each area, what the children have enjoyed or not enjoyed...we have thought about each area and we do anyway, but I think we don't usually necessarily stop in the middle of the topic and think about it and this time we have'</i></p>
		<i>Increased communication</i>	<p><i>'I think I am reflective with myself anyway, but I don't think I would always feedback as much stuff whereas we seem to communicate a lot more, I think from doing this.'</i></p>

		<i>Increased collaboration</i>	<i>'I do think we are more likely to share as well, like you know if I'm doing something and you see us, you'll make a comment or I'll make a comment'</i>
		<i>New/different perspectives on own practice</i>	<i>'I didn't realise how much, I know I speak to the kids a lot, but I didn't realise how much I actually got back from them'</i> <i>'I think I've come away thinking I have...I do put a lot of real-life experiences and they do react to that a lot better'</i>
		<i>Reflection on the emotional impact of role as educators</i>	<i>'I love being with the children'</i> <i>'if you look at the enjoyment levels on all of our faces on the photographs and you think...we are obviously all getting something back from what we are doing because we are all smiling...but you just don't think that that when you are doing it do you?'</i>

*Table 7. Superordinate and subordinate themes from analysis of participant discussions*

Importantly, the tables present themes as discrete components for analytical purposes. Themes represent learning resulting from the project. They are interrelated and cannot be considered as isolated parts. None would have developed without the effect of the others. They perhaps can be better conceived as a web of components (see Figure 7).





### 3.1 Reflection on participation in the project

#### 3.1.1 Facilitators

Practitioners' overwhelming view was feeling participation '*worked really well*'. All expressed they '*enjoyed it*' and it was '*really beneficial*'. Discussions reflected that the success of the project was facilitated by opportunities for collaborative working, both with the educational psychologist researcher (EPR) and colleagues.

Working collaboratively with the EPR seemed to bring a different, valuable perspective; perhaps contrasting to outcomes-based observations typical in EYs classrooms;

*'If I had been analysing that, I would have been analysing that aspect because that is our targets...I would go right, I should have said that...when in actual fact, every single clip that we have said it wasn't focussed on that'*

*'Even if we had done the same thing as that round the table we might not have looked at things in the same way, because you don't know the children like we do so some of the things you've said has made us go, oh, actually, so you have made us, the discussion and the things that you have got back from us is different than we would have had ourselves'*

*'As an outsider you have thought of things differently'*

This connects to the concept of an EP as a critical friend, a familiar outsider able to challenge in a supportive and encouraging manner (Squires & Farrell, 2007). Despite being an 'outsider', I attempted to bridge a dual role, combining an outsider's perspective with insider understanding (M. Moore, 2010). I engaged as a group member and non-expert, supporting facilitation of reflection alongside others:

**Researcher** –...*what I am hearing from what you are saying there is that you just...it's something that you just do naturally and you didn't quite realise maybe?*

**Speaker 1** – *I'm a good waffler!*

**Researcher** – *it's more than waffle!*

*Laughs*

**Speaker 1** – *it's not that's what I mean, I thought I just waffled...*

**Speaker 2** – *valuable waffle*

**Speaker 1** – *no because they were listening and then they were doing what I said and yeah*

**Speaker 3** – *responding*

**Researcher** – *so realised what you're bringing to that*

**Speaker 1** – *yeah, the way I speak to them is, I don't know, better, than I thought*

However, I believe at times offering guidance via reflective questioning, scaffolded group learning (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Wagner (2008) discusses the EP as both an 'expert' in their application of psychology, yet 'non-expert' in their approach to dialogical co-construction. I wonder if this dual role supported the project's success. This example demonstrates how group members facilitated each other, to build on thinking, or clarify, or echo, what they heard. Such tools contribute to dialogic relationality; the importance of respect, appreciation and affection, alongside active listening and trust (Burbules, 1993). This ethos validates and affirms contributions, allowing speakers to clarify their perspective by hearing it reflected by others (Bodie, Vickery, Cannava, & Jones, 2015).

Our approach to facilitation supported a democratic, collaborative process where members felt empowered to share their views (Alvestad & Rothle, 2007; Lasky, 2005; Moyles et al., 2002b; Priestley et al., 2012).

Practitioners collectively agreed the space and time allowed for detailed reflection on practice was a key element underpinning the research's success.

*'It's been really useful in giving the opportunities to reflect on things and see each other in ways that you don't normally get to'*

Reflection is generally agreed as a catalyst for transforming daily experiences into individual, team and organisational learning (Knipfer, Kump, Wessel, & Cress, 2013). It offers the potential for increased self-awareness of practice, and can guide future behaviour (Järvinen & Poikela, 2001).

Practitioners highlighted the positive, solution-focussed element of reflections, suggesting this offered an alternative to self-critical perspectives commonly adopted when self-evaluating practice (Powell, 2016);

*'I think we would have been more critical of ourselves rather than taken the positives that you've seen straight away, like you've seen something different sometimes straight away in a clip, when a first things one of us would go ah, I should have done that'*

The value and appreciation of opportunities afforded for collaborative working was collectively expressed. Collaborative reflection is suggested as offering greater and different possibilities (Kugelmass & Ross-Bernstein, 2000) through collective scaffolding (Donato,

1994), and the development of multiple Zones of Proximal Development, where various forms of expertise are shared and internalised (Eun, 2011).

There was enjoyment and pleasure in the way the group reflected on working and learning together, suggesting a sense of belonging. Strengths of others were explicitly expressed, demonstrating respect and value for each other. There were also suggestions of practitioners becoming more aware of colleagues as a source of learning for themselves (Eraut, 2000), reflecting key principles of a community of learners (Rogoff, 1994);

*'I was just watching her, and she was doing something with the bairn (child) and I was just watching her'*

It seemed practitioners were viewing elements of their relationships with each other differently, perhaps moving to a new understanding of the roles they could play for each other, in learning and as supportive colleagues. This sense of change and appreciation of collegiality is also reflected by wider research (Bleach, 2013; C. McLaughlin, 2003; E. Wood & Bennett, 2000), with examples of practitioners feeling connected to colleagues in new ways. Interpersonal relationships are crucial to providing continuing support, and consequently sustaining effectiveness of PD endeavours (Eun, 2008; Peleman et al., 2018).

### **3.1.2 Barriers**

Practitioners mentioned, but did not dwell on potential barriers to their engagement in the project, primarily relating to initial stages. These included initial wariness, related to concerns about time pressures, and fears of unknown processes. No-one indicated these in the early stages, perhaps demonstrating a certain level of rapport is necessary for these to be expressed. This possibly reflects shifting power dynamics (Van der Riet, 2008), and the changing balance, as relationships and roles evolved.

Practitioners also expressed a reluctance to view themselves on film, a common barrier in VRP research (Santagata & Guarino, 2011; Sherin & Han, 2004; Zhang et al., 2011).

Finally, some practitioners found it challenging to verbalise their learning and reflections; *'I don't know how to explain'*, a difficulty expressed more widely (Moyles et al., 2002a; Turner-Bisset, 1999). This perhaps presented a barrier to a more holistic and collaborative exploration of these ideas. Polanyi (1966) introduced the concept of 'tacit knowledge' helping explain the discrepancy between implicit understanding; *'it's just what you do'*, and

explicit knowledge, highlighting the ways 'we can know more than we can tell' (p.4). This is perhaps due to socialisation processes within organisations, from which we learn but have no awareness of (Eraut, 2000); for example, implicit knowledge of expected roles (Tomlinson, 1999). Actions become routinized; they no longer need to be thought about as they have been done so many times before (Eraut, 2000).

Leitch and Day (2000) argue reflective practice goes some way to making conscious the implicit. The dynamic interplay between thinking and action may facilitate individuals towards greater self-knowledge and self-challenge, through analysis of the values and theories that underlie pedagogy. Some practitioners found it more challenging than others to articulate and reflect on their practice mirroring the impact of practitioners' career experiences (C. Day, 1993), and previous opportunities for self-reflection and pedagogical discussions (Eraut, 2000). However, reflection was supported by colleagues who, through their community of learners, facilitated further articulation and de-privatisation of thoughts and feelings (M. W. McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006);

***Speaker 1** - ...I don't know how to explain*

***Speaker 2** – like how much you get out of them naturally by what you are saying...*

***Speaker 1** – yeah, coz when you are doing it it's just, what you do*

***Speaker 2** – like how valuable your interactions are*

***Speaker 1** – but then when I was sitting I was like, they are all actually paying attention to us but they are doing different things, coz then they were coming and I was like ee, I had quite a few engaged but I didn't notice that I had*

In line with previous research such comments suggest collaborative reflection may encourage deeper reflection, knowledge construction (Attard, 2012) and meta-cognitive skills (Cherrington & Loveridge, 2014). Here, the group supported evolution of reflections from description through to theorising (Manouchehri, 2002), facilitating the process of making implicit practices, instilled from experiences of practice, to explicit knowledge, able to be described (Knipfer et al., 2013). Organisational research suggests tacit knowledge can never become truly explicit as translation of our embodied intuitions, emotion and values can never be accurately expressed. However, new knowledge may be gained from the translation of one type of knowledge to another, as part of a knowledge conversion. This occurs as a social process between individuals, expanding both the quality and quantity of both types of knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Importantly, group and individual reflection are inextricably linked in a transactional relationship (see Figure 8). Collaborative reflection is an emergent phenomenon evolving from sharing of individual understanding and experiences (Stahl, 2006), acting as a catalyst for individual reflection and collective co-construction of new meanings (Knipfer et al., 2013).

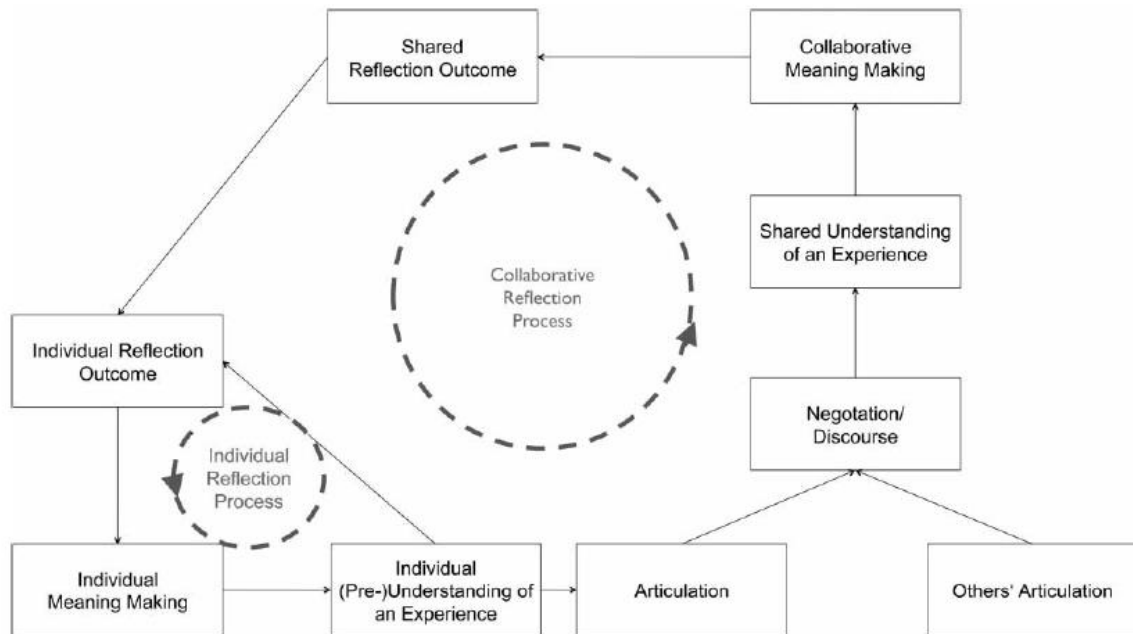


Figure 8. The interrelationship of individual and collaborative reflection (Knipfer et al., 2013).

Therefore despite difficulties in articulating knowledge and ideas, I argue, the supportive community around each practitioner facilitated new learning through re-construction and re-framing (Barge, 2004). This relational process supported individual and group knowledge conversion (Knipfer et al., 2013; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka & Von Krogh, 2009).

### 3.2 Reflection on child-led pedagogy

Group discussions suggested a more nuanced reflection on the value of play, representing a renewed awareness of the widely evidenced value of informal child-led interactions for learning (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012). However, these were interspersed with comments regarding outcomes and targets, highlighting tension between knowledge of effective pedagogies and an outcomes-based curriculum.

*'it has made us think more about the value of having the time when we can do more interactions for just interacting with the children rather than like we need to get an observation done.'*

This seemed to engender a sense of disappointment and responsibility:

*'You do get cornered up by targets, teaching time'*

*'When you are flitting around doing a million things, or observing one child, or doing some groups and things like that, you miss key facts'*

There seemed to be an overarching reflection of the huge task that educators face in managing workload alongside utilising effective pedagogies. This is found more widely (Kugelmass & Ross-Bernstein, 2000; Moyles et al., 2002a), perhaps reflecting the tension in EYs curriculum policy (Lewis, 2018). Engagement in play seemed to offer an alternative *felt* experience to this, providing opportunities to reflect on learning processes, rather than outcomes;

*'We are all more relaxed and we are getting more from it and they are getting more from it because of that'*

Group conversations reflected the need to establish a 'balance'; finding a way of meeting the needs of an outcomes based curriculum within a child-led pedagogy, by trying to *'bring what I need to do into what they are doing'* and *'do it in the play'*. This tangible discomfort and tension perhaps results from dominant discourses that school readiness and academic outcomes act as truth, and as such shape what it means to be an 'effective' EYs practitioner (MacNaughton, 2005). This has the potential to limit both practitioners and children's experiences of teaching and learning.

Reflecting on these difficulties appeared to be a challenging, uncomfortable process for some; perhaps as a result of a perceived challenge to their professional and intellectual security (C. McLaughlin, 2003), causing them to re-think their practice. Freedman and Ball (2004) argue being involved in a monologic education system makes it challenging for practitioners to question their own thinking, particularly if this appears to provide an alternative narrative to the entrenched performativity culture. The need to 'play the game' seems strongly felt (Lewis, 2018). It is important practitioners recognise the importance of play as a primary learning opportunity, not simply as 'hooks' to draw children into adult led agendas (Katz, 2015; Stephen et al., 2008). The willingness and opportunity to engage in such discussions has powerful potential in supporting practitioners to develop a more

values-based pedagogy (Biesta, 2010), where EYs is regarded as an important life stage, rather than as preparation for later life, or an outcome 'hoop' through which to jump.

Finally, practitioners reflected on their relationships with children, both as educators and co-learners, and the importance of their role. This represented a shift as the group initially found it challenging to reflect on their role within interactions, instead focussing on children's actions, perhaps resulting from directed attention to this during observations and assessment. I wonder if outcomes-based methods in schools place emphasis on the child as an isolated unit, rather than learning as a transactional and social phenomenon, discouraging more holistic methods of assessment which capture wider elements of teaching and learning.

Adult-child relationships are fundamental to quality child-care (Burchinal, 2018; Hopkins, West, & Beresford, 1998; Kugelmass & Ross-Bernstein, 2000; McNally & Slutsky, 2018; Moyles et al., 2002a; Sammons et al., 2003; Sammons et al., 2002; Sylva et al., 2004). Katz (1993a) argues interactions reflect adults' values, beliefs and assumptions. Therefore, increasing consideration of these connections with children perhaps reveal practitioners developing reflections on their own belief systems.

Practitioners reflected on the affective elements of these relationships; *'I love being with the children'*. DiPardo and Potter (2003) highlight the importance of attending to emotional and affective aspects of teaching, as they are inseparable from cognitive and intellectual aspects of professional lives. I argue this is a parallel process and that attending to the affective elements of teaching is strongly connected to the children's emotional experience of learning, and resultantly their motivation to learn (Carr, 1998; Katz, 2015). This highlights teaching and learning as being 'heart' as well as 'head work' (Alvestad, 2011).

The project seemed to offer an alternative perspective highlighting the value of practitioner's interactions. Consequently, they were able to explicitly discuss techniques they had employed, which facilitated learning, such as following children's motivations, and the impact those had on children; *'you got the dinosaur books out for me!'*. Such approaches are widely supported by SCT literature (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012; Moyles et al., 2002a; Oldfather & Dahl, 1994; Sylva et al., 2004), and emphasise the importance of the educator role in offering a range of quality resources and choices, alongside appropriate scaffolding (Shefatya, 1990). Such involvement determines the ways children's choices are exercised



and built upon within interactions, guiding and encouraging children's learning (Stephen, 2010), and supporting the development of positive learning dispositions (Da Ros-Voseles & Fowler-Haughey, 2007).

### *3.3 Reflection on changes in thinking/perspective/practice*

This theme reflected realised changes occurring for practitioners, involving changes to perspectives, thinking, and observable practice.

Group discussions suggest adoption of a wider view of children's learning:

*'We have seen learning in a different context and that, you easily forget'*

*'It shows a lot about their personality, their home life, their, you know, I think it has made us think more about all of that'*

Discussion around holistic factors affecting learning seemed to reflect a previously undervalued or unseen element of children's lives realised through the project. Particularly considering the cultural resources children bring from homes and communities, or 'Funds of Knowledge' (Alvestad, 2011; Cullen et al., 2009; Eun, 2011; Hedges, Cullen, & Jordan, 2011).

This suggests a shift towards child-referencing interactions as opposed to child-centred interactions, guided by specific information about children, rather than theories (Kugelmass & Ross-Bernstein, 2000). Although, I would argue this was facilitated by reflection on SCT. Research suggests practitioners who engage in more PD and hold more child-referencing beliefs offer higher quality teaching programs (Pianta et al., 2005).

Adopting a more holistic view of children's learning was shown in parallel developments in the practitioner's scaffolding skills. This highlights the interconnection between changes in beliefs and practice (Baird, 2004; Guskey, 2002); the dynamic interplay between thinking and action, arising from reflection (Kumaravadivelu, 2001; Leitch & Day, 2000);

*'I don't recognise that there is other stuff that you can bring in during child initiated, so it is pushing the boundaries as well'*

*'I think it's just made us like think about which way to take it...it's given us a different way of just looking at them and looking at what you do with them...when to intervene and which way to take it.'*

Analysis echoes previous video research, highlighting a shift towards practitioners more positive perspectives of their practice (Powell, 2016). This resulted in emotive experiences; *'the way I speak to them is, I don't know, better than I thought'*. Further emotional reactions were described and observed when practitioners reflected on the impact of their role, both on themselves and children. This was particularly evident in response to still images;

**Speaker 1** – *'everyone's happy and it's not forced'*

**Speaker 2** – *'natural isn't it, but I think just the children's faces, there is not one child that is not engaged or focussed'*

**Researcher** – *'what does that make you feel about your own practice?'*

**Group** – *'that we are doing a good job'* (said together)

**Speaker 1** – *'that the kids value what we are doing as well'*

**Speaker 3** – *'that we are doing something right'*

Perhaps this reflects Day's (2004) statement observing passionate educators at work; 'there is no disconnection between the head and heart, the cognitive and emotional' (p.13).

Discussions included language suggesting a shift: *'it's made us think', 'I think it's quite important that I have never thought of that', 'it's a lightbulb moment', 'I didn't realise', 'I've come away thinking...'*. Interesting, given language is considered as a main vehicle of thought within SCT (Vygotsky, 1978a), signifying changes in thinking patterns. Wider VRP research shows similar dialogical changes (Powell, 2016).

The group explicitly discussed practice changes resulting from the project. These included; auditing the physical environment, adapted communicative styles with children and colleagues, increased collaborative working, and increased time for reflective practices. Again highlighting the transactional relationship between thinking and action (Leitch & Day, 2000).

### ***3.4 The use of Social Constructivist Theory***

It is important to revisit the interconnected nature of the themes and components found, which I consider to be a reflection of the connectivity between elements of SCT. Throughout, it was my experience, that without artificiality, we worked within a parallel process whereby we reflected on and utilised SCT, but also embraced SCT in our approach to research and collaborative learning. It seems appropriate to suggest practitioners' changes in practice and

thinking resulted from positive experiences while utilising and experiencing a SCT approach. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2011) agree, stating to 'understand deeply, teachers must learn about, see, and experience successful learning-centred and learner-centred teaching practices' (p.83).

While practitioners did not explicitly discuss elements of SCT or dispositions, their language, discussions, and subsequent changes to practice suggested SCT had been influential. During introductory sessions practitioners agreed these theories reflected the ethos and practices of their setting, and yet the changes and discussions perhaps suggested a discrepancy between espoused theories and previous practice. Perhaps the project offered opportunities and space to step back from espoused theories, and search for genuine outcomes of their actions, exemplifying double-loop learning rather than self-confirmatory single-loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1974)

Suggested changes in perspectives and assumptions, highlight the importance of practitioners utilising processes allowing them to generate their own knowledge of practice, rather than adopting a passive role in implementing existing theory in practice (Peters, 1985). SCT allowed practitioners to consider and experience an alternative, flexible approach, open to personal interpretation and implementation, to understand the learning of others and themselves (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). The concept of learning communities encouraged reflection on interactions with both adults and children, a crucial consideration within schools (Kugelmass & Ross-Bernstein, 2000).

Polanyi and Prosch (1975) explain 'theory is like a pair of spectacles; you examine things by it and your knowledge lies in the very use of it' (p.37). SCT provided a lens through which familiar practices took on educational meanings, facilitating informed decisions, and predictions about further practice (Bleach, 2013; Eun, 2008; Kugelmass & Ross-Bernstein, 2000).

Through the research, the use of SCT moved from being an explicit and conscious attendance to tenets, to a more implicit, adoption of an approach or ethos. I wonder if this reflects a form of knowledge conversion (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka & Von Krogh, 2009).

### *3.5. The use of Video Reflective Practice*

While practitioners did not explicitly discuss the use of video as a facilitator to the project's success, they noted the value of 'seeing' practices. It is highly likely this supported the shift in perspective and practice they describe (C. McLaughlin, 2003; Potter & Hodgson, 2007; Tripp & Rich, 2012). During reflective sessions, video acted as stimulus for reflection (Powell, 2016), facilitating skills in 'noticing' (Van Es & Sherin, 2002). It offered a medium for transition between 'having' experiences, and learning from them (Munby & Russell, 1994), by being able to connect classroom interactions to broader pedagogical approaches (Van Es & Sherin, 2002).

This research suggests that video may provide a useful shared point of reflection, or catalyst to discussions. I suggest that the combination of observing practice differently, removed from the busyness and complexities of classroom environments, alongside the opportunities for supported collaborative reflection with both the EPR and colleagues led to the changes in perspective and practice seen. This combination allowed the practitioners to 'see' things differently, and make active changes to practice towards the achievement of meaningful goals.

### *3.6 Summary*

In line with similar research (Moyles et al., 2002b; Peleman et al., 2018), the project offered practitioners opportunities to see and reflect on their own and each other's practice; leading to:

- Developments in thinking around pedagogical approaches
- Enhanced awareness of their own and other's practice
- Enhanced awareness of colleagues as learning partners
- Greater awareness of the impact of adult-child interactions
- Wider consideration of children's learning and its impact on adult-child learning interactions

#### 4. Implications for Educational Psychology Practice

Leitch and Day (2000) paint a challenging, yet strikingly familiar picture of current educational practices;

*'Paradoxically, as policy makers in all countries exhort teachers to become lifelong learners in the ever more demanding and complex worlds of classrooms and schools, so the strictures which they place upon the use of time and the accompanying mechanisms for bureaucratic accountability increase. These often result in diminishing, rather than increasing opportunities for structured reflection through action research. They thus decrease teachers' capacities to raise standards of teaching, learning and achievement in circumstances where many children and young people are becoming disillusioned with schooling alongside raised expectations of teachers by parents and employers.'* (p. 189)

It is vital EPs appreciate current challenges, and develop respectful, proactive and positive ways to support PD which empowers our colleagues in schools to grow and learn despite difficult times. The research demonstrates EPs have valuable skills including knowledge of pedagogical practices and research approaches, and expertise in facilitation and reflective practice which can be of benefit to educators. Their alternative perspective, when combined with the situated expertise of educators can create a powerful combination with the potential to change practice to the benefit of all. I argue that it is important that we as educational psychologists are involved in the facilitation of supportive learning environments for staff, because as this research suggests, this is then mirrored in the learning environments we then develop for children.

I believe this research provides an example of a successful collaborative project within EYs, which has the potential to create a causal sequence whereby both children and adults discover together, to approach learning, and teaching, in a different way. It presents an EP perspective of supporting EYs which offers an alternative approach to working which counters the statutory, within-child assessment work which is frequently adopted. It is imperative EPs demonstrate the significance of a proactive and preventative role in EYs settings and continue to build evidence supporting this (Douglas-Osborn, 2017; Shannon & Posada, 2007).

I believe that SCT offers a valuable approach to teaching and learning which is of value to EPs. It provides a powerful lens through which to view the learning of children, ourselves and those we work alongside. It informs us that learning begins from the individual, from their

interests, values and motivations and can be scaffolded by those who are sensitive and responsive to this. It helps us understand what is needed to create communities of learners who respect and value the input of others. For example, what was highlighted within this research was the importance of empowering practitioners to take ownership of the research by focussing the inquiry around a situated problem, and by providing a structured but not constraining framework (in this case SCT and dispositions). Such approaches can enable educators to actively engage in inquiry and extract their own personal interpretations and meaning to shape their practice, as opposed to being the passive recipient of theory (Peters, 1985). While many 'how to' guides exist, they typically lack the theoretical framing which supports practitioners to assign meaning to daily activities or predictions about future practice (Hannafin & Land, 1997). This research demonstrates how the use of theoretically situated frameworks which allow for personal interpretation can lead to shifts in perspective and concrete changes to practice. I argue that EPs should take the time to actively engage with SCT and reflect on what it may offer to their practice. If taken as an overarching ethos to practice it has much to offer to shape the wide range of activities, we as EPs, become involved in.

## 5. Limitations of research

It was clear that as the research progressed the relationships between the practitioners and myself developed. Through this came respect, trust and curiosity which allowed the opening and development of a dialogical space (Anderson & Burney, 1999). I believe committing more to the development of these relationships earlier in the research process would have perhaps overcome some of the initial wariness practitioners mentioned in the evaluation. This could have been achieved by spending more informal time within the setting prior to beginning the research project, this would have allowed the practitioners and myself to get to know each other and for me to familiarise myself further with the learning environment (Thomson & Hall, 2016).

While I had anticipated that the development of the Spiral Model of Learning and Dispositions and the table of key SCT themes would have been useful visual supports for staff during the project, they did not seem to utilise these explicitly. I reflected that perhaps they needed to be further amended in order to make them more tangible and connected to

classroom practice. I wonder whether the group could have used case examples from the video clips to directly map on the Spiral Model and/or key themes table, which may have made the theory-practice connections more explicit.

Finally, as the aim of the research was to empower practitioners to be active participants in their own learning and development, I feel the use and discussion of the AR approach could have been made more explicit. With the immense pressures of the current educational climate it is imperative educators have an awareness of emerging pedagogical evidence and acquire adequate research-based knowledge for the development of their practice (Guerriero, 2017). AR encourages practitioners to critically reflect on and develop their own practice through research (Heissenberger & Matischek-Jauk, 2019). The successful use of an AR cyclical approach where reflections led to subsequent practice changes, gave practitioners lived experience of AR as an approach. However, it would have perhaps been useful to incorporate more explicit discussions around the methods of AR. Such discussions would have provided an additional element of professional development and may have made it more likely the practitioners could have embraced AR as an approach to continuously evaluating practice.

## 6. Conclusions

This chapter highlights how EYs practitioners and EPs might work together to reflect on pedagogical approaches to support the lifelong learning of young children. Returning to the research question: *'How can EPs and EYs practitioners work together to apply SCT and dispositions literature to support reflection on pedagogy?'* analysis of the data highlights key factors useful in supporting collaborative working and reflection. The focus and purpose of research was not reflection as an object of activity, but instead the ways in which EPs and EYs practitioners can work collaboratively to employ reflection in communicative action, as a tool in co-construction (Ottesen, 2007).

Practitioners noted value in reflective practice and working collaboratively in developing new understandings of their practice. Expressing tacit knowledge of practice was sometimes challenging; *'It's just what you do'*. However, working collaboratively as part of a community of learners facilitated knowledge conversion; the development of description to theorisation (Manouchehri, 2002). It is important to consider how schools can facilitate and encourage

collaborative working and reflection and how EPs, adopting a valuable, critical friend perspective, can support this.

Practitioners' discussions and reflections highlighted a newly energised perspective on the value of play for children's learning. However, in line with previous literature, a tangible tension between a child-referencing ethos and the pressure of academic outcomes emerged (Kugelmass & Ross-Bernstein, 2000; Moyles et al., 2002b), leaving practitioners feeling uncomfortable and searching for 'balance'.

The group explained concrete changes made to their practice following the project, mirroring project components they deemed valuable. This emphasised their learning as being contextually and culturally situated.

Throughout the research SCT was embraced and experienced as a parallel process to reflect on the principles leading to improved student learning, and the PD of practitioners (Eun, 2008). SCT theory offers a holistic and balanced pedagogical approach, as opposed to a framework of curriculum content. It advocates beginning from the interests, experience and choices of young children within their social contexts, and emphasises the importance of adults in scaffolding learning and developing dispositions useful for children's lifelong learning (Stephen, 2010). The approach allowed practitioners the opportunity to reflect on the process, rather than outcomes of learning (Moyles et al., 2002b).

The research offered a method of PD, with a strong theoretical basis, increasing the likelihood of tangible impacts on classroom practice (Eun, 2011), due to the bi-directional relationship between theory and practice (Eun, 2010). Consequentially, it is reasonable to suggest practitioners who have positive experiences of learning through SCT are more likely to embrace SCT principles to guide their own practice.

EYs pedagogy is complex and difficult to define. It involves more than practice alone, incorporating practitioners' thoughts, values, morals, and theories (Moyles et al, 2002). It is about enthusiasm, passion and a love of *'being with the children'* in ways which support, celebrate and nurture their development.

SCT provides an empowering, holistic, and evidence-based theory on which PD can be framed. Its comprehensive understanding of learning can be powerful in reflecting on our own and others learning, leading to possibilities of more effective proactive practice in our



EYs settings. EPs offer valuable knowledge and skills in both research and theory, while those on the front line of education offer contextualised expertise. Together we can create powerful learning communities, with the potential to change practice, and support children's lifelong motivation to learn, in challenging educational times.

### Afterword

This research provides an example of how EPs can support practitioners to begin reflecting on and developing, a local theory, reflecting the contextually situated teaching and learning that occurs within their provision and community of learners.

The concept of a local theory has been explored by others (Elden, 1983; Israel, Schurman, & Hugentobler, 1992), however I present here my conceptualisation of this term, built from my learning experiences within this research project.

Within this collaborative project, SCT was utilised as a guiding framework. Although often conceptualised as a psychological learning theory, I believe within our work it was realised as a meta-theory; an ethos, or set of interconnected values, to guide selection of appropriate pedagogical methods. The methods chosen by practitioners were influenced by their experiences, values, beliefs and goals. Therefore there perhaps exists two forces which, when taken together, result in the formation of a local theory specific to the setting (see Figure 9).

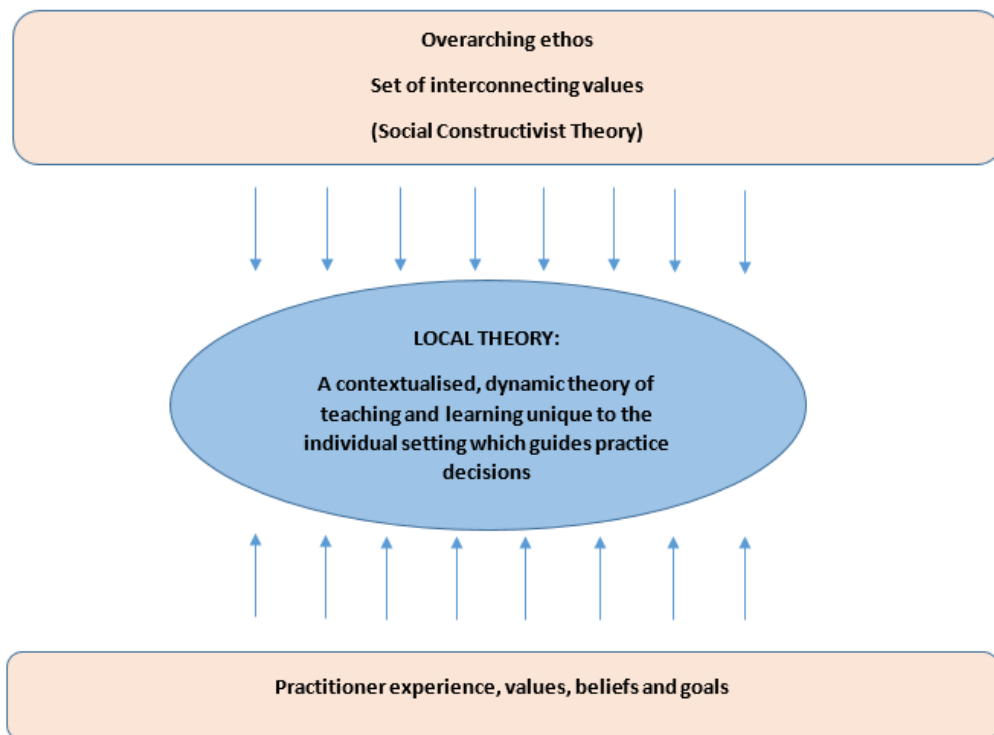


Figure 9. Top-down and bottom pressures leading to the development of a local theory

The local theory perhaps arises from the top-down influence of the guiding ethos, and the bottom-up influence of those in significant pedagogical relationships at the fore front of teaching and learning. Their experiences, values, beliefs and goals will guide the selection and interpretation of practices offered by the guiding ethos.

As a result the local theory becomes a dynamic and ever-changing description of the pedagogical practices adopted by the setting, as they strive for effective teaching and learning. It is realised as a lived experience of participating in the community of learners within the setting, as it is culturally and contextually situated. As Goldkuhl (2012a) states 'A practice is shaped by humans as an organised, artificial and continually evolving arrangement, enabled and restricted by human knowledge and financial, semiotic and material conditions' (p.66).

Through our research we were able to move between reflections on holistic levels of practice (in this case SCT), and micro elements of practice (examples of practice captured on film). This dual consideration produced knowledge of practical value, following the ideas of pragmatic inquiry, aiming for knowledge that is useful in practice (Dewey. 1938). This

resulted in the development of what Goldkuhl (2011) coins 'Local Practice Contributions', including design proposals, and implementation and evaluation of changes.

Akin to Elden's (1983) discussion of local theory, I believe the transactional nature of the learning in this project allowed practitioners to reflect on and shape a local theory for their provision. This developed with a greater understanding and acknowledgement of their community and the psychology underpinning their practices.

In terms of EP practice it may be useful for psychologists to establish what exists as part of the settings local theory, as this may help guide the selection of approaches which may be useful for supporting the professional development of staff. For example beginning by support them to utilise approaches which are closely connected to their overarching ethos, taking into account their experience and goals.

I believe, that although in the early stages of development, this conceptualisation of a local theory may be a helpful contribution to the fields of education and psychology.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A – Procedural Ethics

The following table outlines my consideration of ‘procedural ethics’ (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004):

Ethical Principle	How was this adhered to in the empirical research process?
<p><b>Informed consent</b></p>	<p><b>Parents</b> – The research process was explained and opened for discussion throughout. Parents were given an opportunity to attend a drop-in session at the beginning of the research which explained the process. This provided potential participants the opportunity to ask any questions they had. Parents also received this information in an information pack including; an outline of the research, consent form, the ethics of the study and my contact details. All parents of the children involved were asked for written consent. Written consent comprised of consent for involvement in the study produced by myself and additional video consent in line with the local authority (LA) policy on consent for video.</p> <p><b>Children</b> – The research process was explained at the outset of the project in a way suitable for the language abilities of the children, role play and props such as the camera was used to ensure they understood the process. The researcher and practitioners were also alert to any signs from children that they wished to opt out of filming using the concept of assent.</p> <p><b>EYs practitioners</b> - The research process was explained and opened for discussion with all involved. Potential participants received an information pack providing an outline of the research, the ethics of the study and my contact details. This differed from the parental information pack as it outlined the practitioners’ key role in the research. I also arranged a session in school to discuss the research providing the opportunity for people to ask any questions they had; this was arranged at a time suitable for staff. All practitioners were asked to complete a written consent form, comprising of consent for involvement in the study produced by myself and additional video consent in line with the LA policy on consent for video.</p> <p>Informed consent was revisited throughout, a recognition of the complexity and dynamic nature of consent.</p>
<p><b>Right to Withdraw</b></p>	<p>All participants were frequently reminded of the right to withdraw (in ways suitable to their abilities) during the process without judgement.</p> <p>The issues of judgement were particularly important to consider as I built relationships with the participants, who knew the purpose of the research (as part of my doctoral training), and therefore may have felt an alliance to me and my work. Therefore, it was important to reassure them that any changes to participation would not adversely affect the research. This attempted to</p>

	<p>confirm to them that the primary concern was their wish to participate.</p> <p>EYs practitioners' attendance at sessions was encouraged but was by no means compulsory.</p>
<b>Privacy and Confidentiality</b>	<p>The names of the settings and participants was be included in the write up of the study so they would not be easily identified.</p> <p>Gender neutral pseudonyms were used.</p> <p>All quotations used were anonymized.</p> <p>All data collected by video was deleted on the original camera, copies remain on my LA secure computer on the secure server, in a password protected file. The videos will be stored here for 10 years, in line with the university guidance on storage of video material. Only my supervisors and I have access to the original raw video files.</p> <p>If any requests are made for data to be destroyed prior to this I will comply with the request and remove all data from the study, I will contact them directly to reassure them this has been done.</p> <p>Although children were identifiable on the video film images the children were already known to the staff and myself who were the main viewers of the film.</p>
<b>Debrief</b>	<p><b>Children</b> – practitioners were available to discuss with children any concerns or views they had about the filming during and following the research. This gave children the opportunity to discuss any feelings they had about the filming.</p> <p><b>Parents and practitioners</b> - were provided with comprehensive debrief information to take away with them this reminded them of their on-going rights as participants in the research, and again provided contact details. It also provided details of what will happen to the research information they have contributed to. I acknowledged that by taking part in the study, participants may have reflected on issues that they were previously unaware of and this may be uncomfortable for them. I ensured that participants were aware that they have an on-going opportunity to contact me and had all their questions answered.</p> <p>Participants and I had preparatory discussions about the end of the research early in the process, to provide transparency around the length of input, but also to encourage reflection on how to take any changes forward. This approach provided a holistic consideration of the purpose of the research and potential changes the research may have had on participants.</p> <p>We discussed the debrief information together, giving participants the opportunity to talk about any concerns they had, or comments they wanted to make, about the research process (this openness was also encouraged throughout the process).</p>
<b>Potential Harm?</b>	<p>Participants experienced no physical harm throughout the research process.</p> <p>There was time during each reflective session to discuss how everyone felt throughout the process and efforts were made to ensure all participants felt comfortable throughout.</p>



	<p>Practitioners were also made aware that the video collected would not be used for/against them in any potentially judgmental way e.g. as a judgement on practice, career progression. Similarly the film would not be used to make any judgements upon children's learning or progress either.</p> <p>I am fully DBS checked and ensured this was communicated to school staff and parents.</p>
<b>Trustworthiness and Transparency Deception</b>	<p>The research process was discussed in detail at the beginning of the process and then at each further stage, this aimed to avoid any potential deception.</p> <p>I was open to suggestions around changes to the process and flexible in my adoption of this e.g. changes to session outlines and times.</p> <p>The purpose of the research was made clear to participants from the outset.</p> <p>I did not mislead participants as to the purpose of this research, explaining clearly that the aim was to film teachers practice and not to 'test' children's abilities.</p>
<b>Integrity and Quality</b>	<p>To ensure the integrity and quality of the research, the process and components of the study were based on a strong evidence base. Details of evidence can be found in the body of the thesis.</p>
<b>Social Responsibility</b>	<p>The research was made available to the schools involved, LA in question and the Educational Psychology Service.</p> <p>I intended to develop my research in such a way so it was suitable for publication in an appropriate journal, therefore I informed participants that this was my intention.</p>

## Appendix B – Parental information sheet

### Who am I and what am I doing?

My name is Kate Hodgson and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist, on the Doctoral programme at Newcastle University. This research is being undertaken as part of this training. I will be carrying it out with pupils and school staff, who choose to participate, from schools within the North East area.

It will take place during Spring/Summer term 2018.

### Research Aims

The aim of this research is to:

- Explore a different way Educational Psychologists can work with Early Years Settings.
- Explore the ways in which Early Years staff support children to develop learning dispositions which support learning for life
- Use video as a tool to support staff to reflect on the strengths of their practice
- For Educational Psychologists and Early Years staff to work together to develop a reflective framework based on evidence based theory

### Why research this?

There has previously been limited research around the ways in which Educational Psychologists can work with early year's settings in more proactive and universal ways.

The aim of this research is to develop and utilise a framework which supports early years practitioners to reflect on their practice and connect it to an evidence based psychological theory, to promote interactions with young children which support them to develop positive learning dispositions.

The findings will help to provide an insight into understanding how Educational Psychologists can work more proactively into early years' settings, demonstrating effective use of traded psychology time and supporting early intervention.

## The Study

### Qualitative Research Design

Children who wish to be involved in the research (and whose parents agree to this) will be videoed during their typical interactions in their Early Years settings. This video will be used as a reflective tool during discussions with Early Years staff.

The aim is that we will consider the strengths and elements of good practice which are being used within the setting and will draw attention to the psychological principles underpinning them using the framework, to support staff to become more aware of their successful practices.

We will discuss the ways in which staff help children to develop skills which encourage children to engage in learning throughout their lives.

Importantly, the focus of the research is not the children, and the video will not be used in the assessment or judgement of children's skills or abilities. The focus of the research is the opportunity for staff to reflect on the positive elements of their practice which support children to become engaged in learning.

The information gathered will be used to inform a research report and submitted as part of my thesis.

Following their involvement, all pupils, school staff and parents will be offered the opportunity to discuss their experience of this research process.

#### Important information

- This research will be conducted in line with the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics and has passed through the University's Ethics process.
- All appropriate permissions will be sought prior to any work being carried out with children.
- I hold an Enhanced DBS certificate (i.e. police check).
- All pupils will be asked to give informed written consent.
- All video recordings will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1988). The recordings will be saved securely according to Newcastle University's Data Management policies.
- Full confidentiality will be adhered to – names of pupils, schools, other people and identifying information will be changed in the research report.
- The video will only be seen by practitioners, myself and my supervisor, unless it is necessary to share them more widely in line with safeguarding procedures.

Pupils, parents and practitioners will be free to withdraw from the research **at any time**, until completion of the final report. This can be done by letting me or my supervisor know your wishes.

#### Further information

Thank you for taking the time to read this information leaflet. I hope it has answered any questions you may have had about this research project.

Should you require any further information or if you are unhappy with any aspect of this project, please feel free to contact me or my research supervisor on the details below.

Many thanks

#### Contact details

Of myself and supervisor

## Appendix C – Child information sheet

This information was read to children (by the researcher), in a way which made the information understandable.

'My name is Kate and I am here in school to work with you and Mrs/Miss/Mr/Ms X. We are going to be doing some videoing using this camera (use video camera as demonstration). If it is alright with you, we are going to be videoing some of the work that you do here in nursery/reception.

You don't have to be on the video if you don't want to be and you can tell me or Mrs/Miss/Mr X if you don't want to.

We are going to use the videos that we get from this to talk about all the good work that your teachers do with you.'

## Appendix D – Practitioner information sheet

### Who am I and what am I doing?

My name is Kate Hodgson and I am a trainee Educational Psychologist, on the Doctoral programme at Newcastle University. This research is being undertaken as part of this training. I will be carrying it out with pupils and school staff, who choose to participate, from schools within the North East area.

It will take place during Spring/Summer term 2018.

### Research Aims

The aim of this research is to:

- Explore a different way Educational Psychologists can work with Early Years Settings.
- Explore the ways in which Early Years staff support children to develop learning dispositions which support learning for life
- Use video as a tool to support staff to reflect on the strengths of their practice
- For Educational Psychologists and Early Years staff to work together to develop a reflective framework based on evidence-based theory

### Why research this?

There has previously been limited research around the ways in which Educational Psychologists can work with early year's settings in more proactive and universal ways.

The aim of this research is to develop and utilise a framework which supports early years practitioners to reflect on their practice and connect it to an evidence based psychological theory, in order to promote interactions with young children which support them to become engaged in learning from an early age.

The findings will help to provide an insight into understanding how Educational Psychologists can work more proactively into early years settings, demonstrating effective use of traded psychology time and supporting early intervention.

## The Study

### Qualitative Research Design

Staff who wish to be involved in the research will be videoed during their typical interactions with children in Early Years settings. This video will then be used as the focus for reflective group discussions with the staff.

A model based on psychological theory will form a reflective framework to use within discussions.

The aim is that we will consider the strengths and elements of good practice which are being used within the setting and will draw attention to the psychological principles underpinning them using the framework, to support staff to become more aware of their successful practices.

Following these discussions, myself and staff can work together to adapt the model to make it more useful as a reflective framework.

The information gathered will be used to inform a research report and submitted as part of my thesis.

Following their involvement, all pupils, school staff and parents will be offered the opportunity to discuss their experience of this research process.

### Important information

- This research will be conducted in line with the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics and has passed through the University's Ethics process.
- All appropriate permissions will be sought prior to any work being carried out with children.
- I hold an Enhanced DBS certificate (i.e. police check).
- All pupils will be asked to give informed written consent.
- All video recordings will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1988). The recordings will be saved securely according to Newcastle University's Data Management policies.
- Full confidentiality will be adhered to – names of pupils, schools, other people and identifying information will be changed in the research report.
- The video will only be seen by practitioners, myself and my supervisor, unless it is necessary to share them more widely in line with safeguarding procedures.
- Pupils, parents and practitioners will be free to withdraw from the research **at any time**, until completion of the final report. This can be done by letting me or my supervisor know your wishes.

### Further information

Thank you for taking the time to read this information leaflet. I hope it has answered any questions you may have had about this research project.

Should you require any further information or if you are unhappy with any aspect of this project, please feel free to contact me or my research supervisor on the details below.

Many thanks

### Contact details

Of myself and supervisor

## Appendix E – Parental Informed consent

This form is to say that you agree for your child to take part in the research project about how Educational Psychologists can work with Early Years staff to support children to engage in learning throughout their lives. Please could you read the following statements and tick if you are happy for your child to be included in the project.

Please remember **the focus of the research is not the children, and the video will not be used in the assessment or judgement of children’s skills or abilities. The focus of the research is the opportunity for staff to reflect on the positive elements of their practice which support children to become engaged in learning.**

1. My child will be videoed in their nursery/reception setting, during their typical daily activities. My child will not be asked to engage in any other activity beyond providing consent for filming.

Please tick the box if you understand and agree

2. The recording will be used as the focus of a group discussion including the researcher (Kate Hodgson) and the nursery/reception staff

Please tick the box if you understand and agree

3. The film will be stored on a secure computer, in a password protected file. The film will only be seen by staff, the researcher and the university supervisor. The videos will be deleted ten years after the project is finished.

Please tick the box if you understand and agree

4. The researcher will be writing a report about the research, this may be published. My child’s name will not be used in the report.

Please tick the box if you understand and agree

5. My child or I can remove ourselves from the research at any point. I will contact the researcher should I wish to do this.

Please tick the box if you understand and agree

6. I am happy to take part in this project.

Please tick the box if you understand and agree

Name: .....

Child’s name: .....

Date: .....

## Appendix F – Practitioners informed consent

This form is to say that you agree to take part in the research project about how Educational Psychologists can work with Early Years staff to support children to engage in learning throughout their lives. Please could you read the following statements and tick if you are to be included in the project.

**Please remember the video will not be used in the assessment or judgement of staff's or student's skills or abilities. The focus of the research is the opportunity for staff to reflect on the positive elements of their practice which support children to become engaged in learning.**

1. My work will be videoed within the nursery/reception setting, during my typical daily activities.

Please tick the box if you understand and agree

2. The recording will be used as the focus of a group discussion including the researcher (Kate Hodgson) and the nursery/reception staff

Please tick the box if you understand and agree

3. I will be asked to attend reflective discussion groups and to engage in discussions. These groups will be organised at times suitable for me.

Please tick the box if you understand and agree

4. Notes may be taken by the researcher during the discussions, these will be anonymised, so they will not be traced to me.

Please tick the box if you understand and agree

5. The film will be stored on a secure computer, in a password protected file. The film will only be seen by my fellow class staff, the researcher and the university supervisor. The videos will be deleted ten years after the project is finished.

Please tick the box if you understand and agree

6. The researcher will be writing a report about the research, this may be published. My name will not be used in the report.

Please tick the box if you understand and agree

7. I can remove myself from the research at any point. I will contact the researcher should I wish to do this.

Please tick the box if you understand and agree

8. I am happy to take part in this project.

Please tick the box if you understand and agree

Name: .....

Date: .....



## Appendix G – Debrief

### **What was the research about?**

Thank you for participating in my research which involved exploring the ways Educational Psychologists and Early Years' staff can work together to support children to engage in learning. We did this by videoing staff interacting with children in Early Years settings, this video was then used to support conversation about how we help create learning environments which support children to want to learn.

### **Can I see the findings of the research?**

If you would like a copy of the completed research this can be arranged by contacting either myself or my research supervisor via the contact details on the bottom of this page.

Should schools or parents wish, I can arrange to come to school and present the findings of the research, please contact me if you would like to arrange this.

### **What can I do if the research has raised potential issues that I would like to discuss?**

My supervisor and I would be very happy to discuss any potential issues that may have arisen as a result of the research. Should there be any difficulties in discussing these issues with myself or my supervisor details can be given to you for appropriate further support.

### **What if I have any questions about the study, or would like to withdraw my data from the study?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the research, please feel free to contact myself or my research supervisor at any time:

Contact details of both myself and supervisor were provided.

## Appendix H – Visual supports for practitioners

### Social Constructivist Theory

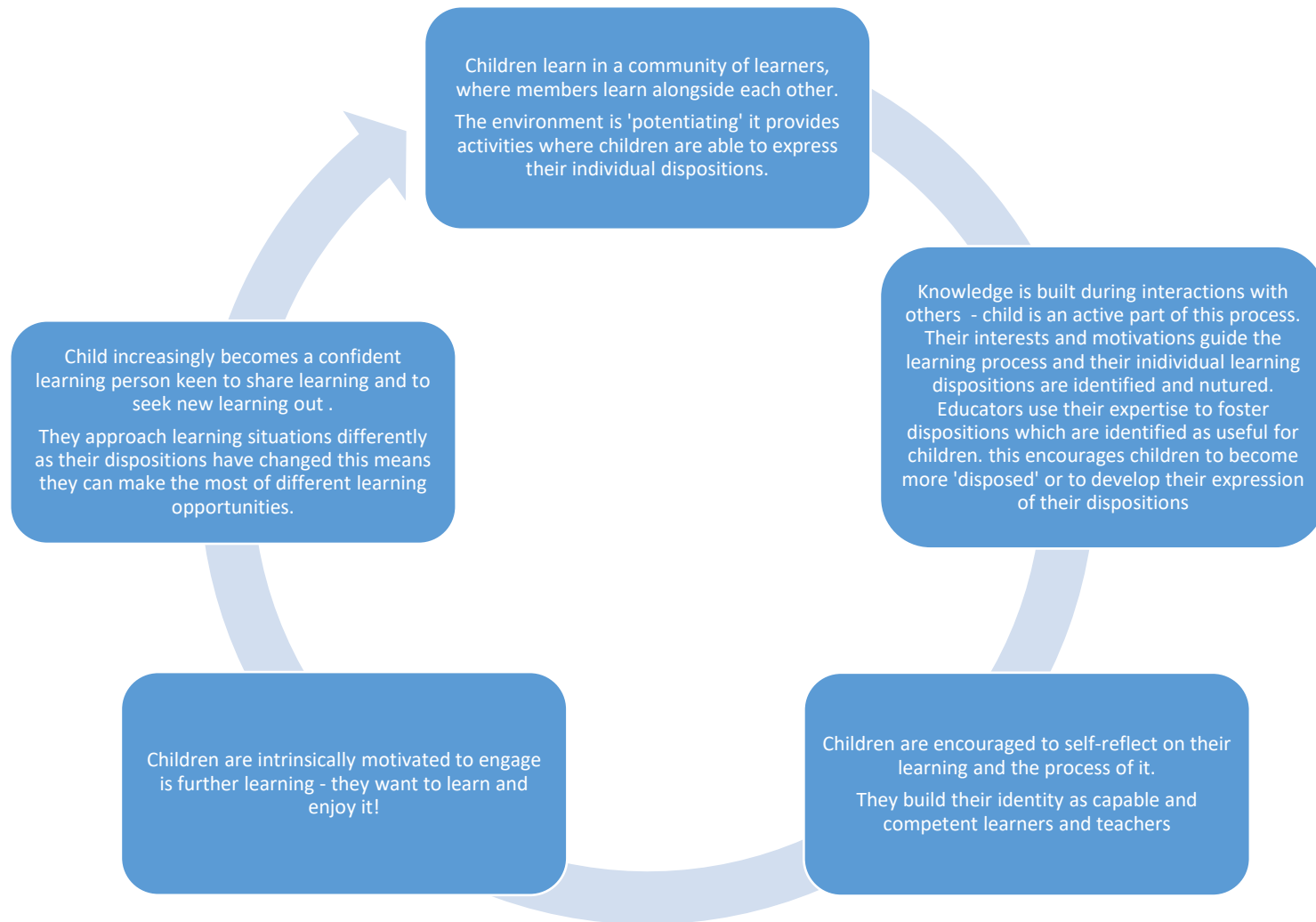
- One of the most prominent theories of learning
- Helps us understand how children learn best
- Stems from work of Vygotsky, Bruner, Dewey and others
- Some of the world’s most effective Early Years settings are underpinned by this theory
- This theory underpins our EYFS
- You are likely to already be using lots of this theory in your thinking about teaching and learning

Key themes	Key points	
<b>Learning starts from the child</b>	Making learning meaningful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning should be contextualised and meaningful for children.</li> <li>• Teaching needs to be guided by children’s interests and embedded in experiences that are meaningful to children, such as play.</li> <li>• Teaching should acknowledge and value children’s individual differences, identities and the unique knowledge they bring.</li> <li>• The role and input of the teacher should be guided by the child.</li> <li>• Valuing children as capable learners is also a key part of this theme, recognising their abilities and supporting them to reflect on their own experiences of learning, and developing their identity as a capable and competent learner.</li> </ul>
	Children as active participants in their own learning	
	Children’s perceptions of themselves as learners	
	Valuing children’s expertise and the knowledge they bring	
<b>Community of learners</b>	Reciprocal and responsive relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children learn within a learning community, a place where people act and interact, and where learning takes place as a result of the interactions and communications between</li> </ul>

Key themes	Key points	
	Wider involvement in learning including parents and community	<p>participants. The community is wide and involves not only those within the school environment but parents, and into the wider community. There is a respect for all as sources of knowledge – everyone can be both a teacher and a learner. This is acknowledged by children and they are aware of how others can be involved in their learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships within the community are reciprocal and responsive, power in teaching and learning is shared between children and adults.</li> <li>• Learning is collaborative, where knowledge is built between participants. There is a sense of belonging for participants that they belong to a community of learner who learn together.</li> <li>• Participants learn alone but also alongside others.</li> </ul>
	Collaborative learning leading to co-construction of knowledge	
<b>Learning as a process not a product</b>	Building on previous learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning is seen as an ongoing and incremental process. It happens across areas and also across contexts. Learning is considered in the widest sense as a set of connected processes rather than decontextualized skills.</li> <li>• There is a strong emphasis on children’s participation in the process of learning rather than the acquisition of skills and dialogue (spoken interaction) is considered as important for this.</li> <li>• Children’s learning is supported by opportunities to revisit and built on previous learning.</li> <li>• There is also an emotional element to learning, children want to learn and take enjoyment in it.</li> </ul>
	Holistic view of learning	
	Importance of dialogue	
	Demonstrating learning	
	Affective elements of learning	
<b>Skills to support learning</b>	Curiosity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curiosity, creativity and learning about learning (meta-cognition) are important for learning.</li> <li>• It is also important that children’s learning is highlighted and made concrete for them so they are able reflect on their learning and recognise the value of it. This can be achieved through children’s involvement in all elements of their learning e.g. assessment, naming</li> </ul>
	Creativity	
	Learning about learning	

Key themes	Key points	
		learning for children in context, and via revisiting learning. These make children feel successful in learning making them develop an identity as a learner.
<b>Role of educators</b>	Importance of content/subject knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of teachers is crucial in supporting children’s learning.</li> <li>• They have a role in establishing a supportive learning environment, explaining the purpose of learning and making it meaningful to children, drawing attention to the construction of learning, and modelling how to be an effective teacher and learner within the learning community.</li> <li>• They empower children to become competent learners by using appropriate teaching strategies to support children through challenge, and to identify and utilise opportunities for learning.</li> </ul>
	Physical learning environment	

## Spiral Model of Learning and Dispositions



## Appendix I – Prompt questions for evaluation session

- Has your participation in the project changed you as a practitioner? If so how?
- What has been the most significant learning for you in the project?
- How has the project helped you reflect on your question of how to support learning in unstructured times?
- Can you tell me a little bit about what you felt about my role in the project?
  - How do you think it would have been different if I hadn't of been involved?
- Is there anything you would have changed about the project?
- How would you like to take the learning from this project forward?
  - What would you like to do next?
  - How will you know you have achieved that?

### Prompt questions:

- Do you think the project has effected your relationships with each other or the students?
- Do you think using the theory has supported your learning in this project?
- Ask them to expand on previous comments
- What was it about the sessions that was useful?
- Can you give an example?

How long have you all been working in schools?