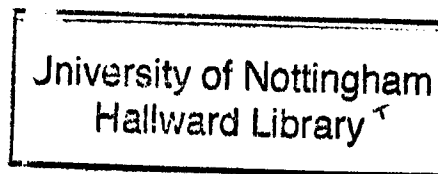


# **VOICES BEYOND THE MOMENT**

**Occupational Therapy Students' Attitudes to and Experiences of  
Personal Profiling in the Context of Early Professional Development**

**RUTH HEAMES, MA, DipCOT, TDipCOT, DipEd, Cert Ed.**



**Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**JULY 2010**

**THESIS CONTAINS  
CD/DVD**

# Table of Contents

<b>List of Figures and Tables .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Chapter One: Introduction to the Study.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Context of Professional Practice .....	3
1.3 Continuing Professional Development .....	4
1.4 Occupational Therapy Education: innovation and change .....	5
1.5 Rationale for the Study .....	7
1.6 The Concept of Profiling .....	10
1.7 Personal Profiling: an overview of the case study system.....	13
1.8 Summary .....	19
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review (I).....</b>	<b>20</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	20
2.2 In Search of a Definition .....	20
2.3 Profiles and Portfolios: are they synonymous? .....	29
2.4 Personal Profile and Profiling: emergence of definitions .....	36
2.5 Profiling in Higher Education .....	37
2.6 Reflective Writing in Profiling .....	49
2.7 Summary .....	54
<b>Chapter Three: Literature Review (II).....</b>	<b>56</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	56
3.2 Experiential Learning .....	57
3.3 Reflective Practice .....	74
3.4 Summary .....	92
<b>Chapter Four: Methodology: The Design of the Study.....</b>	<b>94</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	94
4.2 Research Methodology, Ontology and Epistemology.....	95
4.3 The Research Framework .....	99
4.4 Methods of Inquiry .....	103
4.5 Research Interventions .....	108
4.6 Student Participants' Demographic Data .....	110
4.7 Investigating Students' Attitudes to Personal Profiling .....	111
4.8 Ethical Considerations in the Study Design .....	119
4.9 Summary .....	132
<b>Chapter Five: Methods of Fieldwork Inquiry (I) The Pilot Study.....</b>	<b>133</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	133
5.2 Pilot Study .....	133
5.3 Design of the Attitude Questionnaire .....	138
5.4 Participants' Background Experience .....	143
5.5 Qualitative Interviews: cross-sectional approach .....	146
5.6 Summary .....	151

<b>Chapter Six: Methods of Fieldwork Inquiry (II).....</b>	<b>152</b>
6.1 Introduction .....	152
6.2 University Tutors' and Practice Educators' Perspective .....	153
6.3 Developing the Qualitative Questionnaire .....	154
6.4 Practice Questionnaire: practical considerations .....	156
6.5 Summary .....	157
<b>Chapter Seven: Research Findings (I)</b>	
<b>Analysis of Data: Students' Attitudes to and Experiences of Personal Profiling.....</b>	<b>160</b>
7.1 Introduction .....	160
7.2 Student Participants: background .....	160
7.3 Launch of the Research Study .....	162
7.4 First Year Student Participants: knowledge of profiling .....	163
7.5 Attitude Questionnaire Data: students' perspectives on profiling .....	168
7.6 Qualitative Opinion Questionnaire: personal profiling .....	170
7.7 Interview Data .....	180
7.8 Interviews: third year students .....	184
7.9 Interviews: second year students .....	196
7.10 Interviews: first year students .....	203
7.11 Summary .....	218
<b>Chapter Eight: Research Findings (II) Analysis of University Tutors and Practice Educators Perspectives on Profiling .....</b>	<b>220</b>
8.1 Introduction .....	220
8.2 University Tutors' Perspective: Personal Profiling .....	223
8.3 Practice Perspective: Personal Profiling System .....	240
8.4 Summary .....	259
<b>Chapter Nine: Discussion of the Findings.....</b>	<b>261</b>
9.1 Introduction .....	261
9.2 A Changing Context .....	261
9.3 Students' Attitudes Towards the Concept of Profiling .....	263
9.4 The Living Context: the process of profiling .....	265
9.5 Students' Commitment to Personal Profiling .....	269
9.6 Students' Level of Engagement in Profiling.....	275
9.7 The Practice of Profiling – good practice and issues .....	285
9.8 Personal Profiling as an Agent for Personal Change .....	306
9.9 Summary .....	311
<b>Chapter Ten: Personal Reflections, Recommendations and Further Research from the Findings.....</b>	<b>313</b>
10.1 Introduction .....	313
10.2 Personal Reflections .....	313
10.3 Implications and Recommendations of the Study .....	326
10.4 Recommendations Emerging from the Study.....	333
10.5 Dissemination of the Research Outcomes .....	334
10.6 Future Research .....	335
10.7 Contribution to Knowledge and Pedagogic Community .....	338
10.8 Conclusions from the Findings .....	338
<b>Bibliographic References.....</b>	<b>341</b>

## Appendices



## **List of Figures and Tables**

### **Figures**

2.1	Defining the Term Portfolio .....	34
2.2	Defining the Terms Profile and Profiling .....	35
3.1	Kolb's Learning Cycle .....	62
3.2	Double-loop Learning .....	89
3.3	A Model of Experiential Learning in the Context of the Study.....	92
4.1	Research Question and Sub-themes .....	103
4.2	Methods of Inquiry and Participant Involvement .....	107
4.3	Enquiry Design: Tools, Timing and Milestones .....	109
5.1	Focus Group Emergent Themes .....	138
5.2	Dimensions from Themes .....	139
5.3	Initial Qualitative Questionnaire .....	144
6.1	The Research Process .....	158
6.2	The Research Study Implementation Timelines .....	159
7.1	Previous Experience of Profiling .....	164
7.2	Experiential Writing .....	164
7.3	Reflection and Being Reflective .....	166
7.4	Personal and Professional Development .....	167
7.5	Use and Application of the Profile .....	173
7.6	Outcomes of Personal Profiling .....	176
7.7	The Value of Personal Profiling .....	178
7.8	Emergent Themes by Year Group .....	218
8.1	University Tutors' Perspective on Profiling .....	225
8.2	Enabling Students to Achieve Personal Goals .....	247
8.3	Supervision - How Students are Facilitated .....	248
8.4	The Professional Profile .....	254
8.5	Facilitating Students – A Model .....	255
9.1	Research Question and Sub-themes .....	263
9.2	Transition .....	274
9.3	A Model of Levels of Engagement .....	279
10.1	Model of Facilitator Effectiveness .....	329

**Tables**

7.1 Cohort Age and Gender ..... 161

7.2 Entry Route ..... 161

8.1 Students’ Reflective Practice ..... 250

## **Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations**

<b>AHPs</b>	<b>Allied health profession(al)s. Collective term for occupational therapists, physiotherapists and similar professions.</b>
<b>HE(I)</b>	<b>Higher Education (Institution).</b>
<b>PD Tutor</b>	<b>Professional Development Tutor.</b>
<b>PPD</b>	<b>Personal and professional development.</b>
<b>Practice Co-ordinator</b>	<b>Practitioner responsible for organising and managing practice-based learning.</b>
<b>Practice Educator</b>	<b>Designated practitioner for student(s) in practice setting.</b>
<b>COT</b>	<b>College of Occupational Therapists.</b>
<b>Professional practice</b>	<b>'Hands on' experience (hospital, community settings).</b>
<b>SPSS</b>	<b>Software Package for Social Sciences.</b>
<b>HPC</b>	<b>Health Professions Council.</b>
<b>WFOT</b>	<b>World Federation of Occupational Therapists.</b>

## **Abstract**

Personal profiling is a dynamic learning process designed to enable individuals to identify their strengths, needs and aspirations in order to set strategic and behavioural goals. This single-site case study seeks to explore undergraduate occupational therapy students' attitudes and experiences of the process of personal profiling in the context of early professional development. The profiling system aims to support students through the process of integrating their University-based and practice-based learning experiences for personal and professional development.

The investigation was carried out in two phases, a pilot study and main study, using an inclusive approach for inquiry. From the initial research question several sub-themes emerged during the pilot study which informed the overarching design of the main study. Students' attitudes towards the existing system were examined using a cohort study approach which employed a survey design of quantitative and qualitative data-gathering questionnaires. Attitudes and experiences of students were further explored through semi-structured interviews. A cross-sectional approach which included a sample of students from each year was adopted. In addition questionnaire data was collected from tutors and practice educators who play a significant role in students' professional education.

Findings indicate students generally appear to have a positive attitude to personal profiling. The value is experienced at varying psychological levels, depending on students' willingness, motivation to engage with the process and psychological preparedness. A model of levels of engagement in profiling is proposed. Students' report the process of profiling was a challenging, psychologically messy and uncertain process yet worthwhile in the overall pursuit of professional development. Tutors perceived it as an enabling process in the students' learning.

The conclusion drawn is that students have the intellectual capability and potential to benefit from personal profiling. Students appear to self-consciously recognise, articulate and acknowledge the value of personal profiling in facilitating early professional development.

## **Acknowledgements**

Throughout this study the guidance and support of Professor Carol Hall and Dr Eric Hall has been invaluable. I wish to extend my thanks to them and everyone involved in the research process. My exploration of personal profiling has been enriched by the willingness of participants to share their perspective.

'Each day is a journey. Each day is a process.' (Schaefer 1990:9).

# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction to the Study**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Since the inception of the National Health Service (NHS) in 1948, health care practice has changed at a pace that the visionary Minister of Health, Aneurin Bevan could not have foreseen. Dynamic changes in political and professional thinking have created further NHS reforms particularly over the last ten years bringing new policies in health and social care, strategies of care and ways of working. Practitioners are now required to be proactive and strategic in planning and service delivery, with their practice firmly evidence-based. Thereby continuing to provide the 'best care' that Bevan strived to achieve for the people of Britain in establishing comprehensive healthcare services (Campbell, 2006).

In such an aspirational climate, it is imperative that educationalists and practitioners work in partnership to ensure that the pre-registration curriculum in occupational therapy addresses current and future needs of health and social care services. Students need to be intellectually and emotionally prepared to work flexibly and ready to face the challenges and opportunities of change positively as they enter the client-based world. Profiling is used in higher education (HE) for developing such abilities and promoting personal and professional development (PPD). As qualified therapists they will be responsible for their continuing professional development (CPD) to maintain professional competence and best practice; this is now the central ethos of client-based services.

This study explores and captures occupational therapy undergraduate students' attitudes toward and experiences of personal profiling, which forms an integral part of their professional development. The profiling system is designed to

prepare students for the process of lifelong learning (LLL) and meeting the challenges of change, which are required in the world of health and social care.

The study has focused on a single research site due to the individualised approach each higher education institution (HEI) takes in developing the curriculum for healthcare programmes. The focus of the case study is a pre-registration undergraduate course in occupational therapy, managed and delivered by a Department of Occupational Therapy in an English University. It is one of 31 courses in the UK (COT, 2006).

This introduction provides the context in which the study has been undertaken and identifies three themes which have sharpened the focus of the research.

Themes pertain to;

- i. the context of practice;
- ii. continuing professional development (CPD);
- iii. occupational therapy education: innovation and change.

Having set the study in context subsequent chapters will present the Personal Profiling System being explored, a review of the literature pertaining to personal profiling and the underpinning theoretical concepts. This is followed by a discussion focusing on the methodological considerations which informed the research design and implementation of the study. The development of the study is fully detailed, from the pilot study undertaken as a test bed to the implementation of the main study. The findings with commentary, a full analysis of the data and discussion of the findings are presented with recommendations thereafter. In the final chapter personal reflections on the study and the process of research are offered with emergent issues worthy of further exploration being identified. The key themes, outcomes and relevance of the study to the wider academic community are summarised in the conclusion of the thesis.

## **1.2 Context of Professional Practice**

The preparation of occupational therapy students for the unpredictable and unexpected in their working lives has become paramount. In recognising the demands being placed on pre-registration students to perform in this constantly changing arena of health and social care, my interest in the role of 'self' and professional development emerged. Allied health professionals (AHPs) such as occupational therapists cannot afford to be complacent in their view of services they deliver if discipline specific professions are to survive. New ways of working have been embraced within the Government's Modernisation Agenda (DH, 2000a) with pilot funding being available to pump prime initiatives for inter-professional education and the development of generic workers. Fenech (1999:14) advises occupational therapists that; '...employers are now looking for professionals who are self-directed.' Fenech's interpretation of 'self-directed' is that professionals are able to identify their own personal and practice needs through problem-solving, developing practical strategies and finding the resources to meet identified needs. Within this process of problem-solving, individuals must draw upon their skills of critical analysis and evaluation. The evaluation of outcomes becomes an integral part of their approach to CPD, which has been learnt from their pre-registration education.

If health and social care employers are seeking self-directed practitioners to fulfil the changing demands of health initiatives and targets, it is insufficient to make small adjustments in practice and focused developments which are specific and locally based. Employers are looking for leadership and management abilities to implement strategic plans and deliver on the Government's initiatives.

Throughout the rapid changes that have taken place in health and social care over the last decade there have been resistant practitioners who have made the minimal professional adjustment in an attempt to find a way of coping with the



pressures of externally imposed changes. Student occupational therapists likewise are coping with the multiple pressures of studying in an academic environment at the same time as working within the changing health and social care environments during the practice-based components of the course. The role of the University is to prepare students to respond appropriately and professionally to the changing agenda.

### **1.3 Continuing Professional Development**

The curriculum for pre-registration occupational therapy students has a significant role and responsibility in preparing them for eligibility to register with the professional and regulatory bodies. This includes preparation for CPD and LLL. With registration potentially being for the entire career of an individual, the issue of LLL and CPD is critical to ensure continuing fitness to practice. Fenech (1999) rightly points out that practitioner's knowledge is only relevant at the time of professional qualification.

The Health Professions Council's (HPC) requirement is that all AHPs' competence be monitored on a periodic basis. Retention on the professional register depends on the outcome of CPD (HPC, 2007). Therefore, LLL is no longer an option, but a professional duty and responsibility. The College of Occupational Therapists makes a clear statement on this matter:

Occupational therapists shall be personally responsible for actively maintaining and developing their personal professional competence, and shall base service delivery on accurate and current information in the interests of high quality care. (COT, 2005:5.4)

The HPC has a key role in the protection of the public, principally through its responsibilities in monitoring standards of education, training and practice and the conduct of its registrants. Accountability to the public and the health service and CPD is clearly identified in the Modernisation Agenda (DH, 2001a) and by the HPC (HPC, 2007). Currently, it is the practitioners' responsibility to up-date

their technical and professional skills, specialist expertise and deliver best practice. They have to be prepared for and ready to respond to change whilst proactive in remaining competent to practice and able to meet service demands.

#### **1.4 Occupational Therapy Education: innovation and change**

Whilst changes have been occurring in health and social care at a practice-based level, educationalists have also experienced an increasing demand for occupational therapy developments in the curriculum. This has happened as a consequence of changes in practice and the growth of purchaser-provider culture in higher education (HE).

A significant stage in the profession's development came in the 1980s with the approval by Privy Council of a new curriculum framework which gave schools of occupational therapy the responsibility of designing the curriculum within a broad framework (Cracknell, 1983). In the late 1980s further changes were brought about by the approval of degree status (Blom-Cooper, 1989) and schools moved from clinical locations into higher education institutions (HEIs), which produced a sense of maturity and also a feeling of liberation because it enabled course teams to have greater ownership over the curriculum, content and methods of delivery.

Nationally, pre-registration courses have now become individualised because of this major change of award, status and location. The responsibility for curriculum delivery and development rests with the respective institutions and course teams. Overall course approval is undertaken under the auspices of the HEI with representation from the professional and regulatory bodies working with the HEI. So, whilst there is a common core in programmes through the requirement to follow the Professional Body's curriculum framework and standards (COT, 2008), which embrace the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT)

education standards (Hocking and Ness, 2002), localisation and individuality characterises course design.

It was as a result of this freedom to develop the occupational therapy curriculum that I became increasingly interested in issues of personal development and its relationship to professional development. Through my involvement in the process of curriculum development of an undergraduate degree in occupational therapy in 1990, I was able to explore ways in which occupational therapy educators could facilitate students in their development and transition into practice. The outcome of that work was the approval and implementation of what was called an Interactive Processes module and profiling system, a mechanism by which students' personal learning could be facilitated during the three year undergraduate course. Further development of the work came with my involvement in the then Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA), Department of Employment funded project on profiling in work-based learning (see Chapter Two).

The idea for the study emerged, as discussed earlier, as a professional response to ensuring occupational therapy education remains responsive to the changing demands within health and social care. It takes the initial curriculum development work undertaken on profiling a stage further; it seeks to investigate occupational therapy students' experiences of and attitudes to personal profiling in the context of professional development. In retrospect, the initial work was ahead of its time. However, although internal evaluations of the profiling system from the University tutors' perspective has been undertaken, through the project work detailed earlier, students' attitudes to the process were not closely examined. Institutionally this is now paramount with the notions of personal and professional development (PPD) being fore-grounded and LLL essential for professional practice. The study is a timely exploration of some key underpinning

factors particularly as CPD is no longer an individual responsibility but a cornerstone of the Modernisation Agenda (DH, 2000a) and a regulatory requirement for healthcare practitioners (HPC, 2007).

Educating practitioners of tomorrow is about educating for change. Students must be receptive and prepared to embrace new initiatives, accommodate the uncertain, rise to the challenge of the unpredictable, be safe and clinically effective and proactive in the advancement of the profession. Commitment to ongoing PPD is critical in such a climate and not only about self, it is about contributing to the development of the profession through research. The pursuit of evidence-based practice with a view to the advancement of the profession is clearly needed (Ilott and White, 2001).

From an educator's perspective, without motivation, commitment and an active engagement in LLL and continuing PPD, the currency of the occupational therapy professional status may be threatened. More importantly, the currency of our professional practice and knowledge base, whether in education or practice, comes into question. Ultimately, in becoming a registered occupational therapist, we are charged with a responsibility to others, the public, as well as the professional conduct of ourselves as therapists (HPC, 2007). It is therefore imperative to maintain our standards of professional practice and service delivery.

### **1.5 Rationale for the Study**

Pre-registration education forms the foundations from which future health and social care practitioners become academically qualified and socialised into their professional discipline. It is here that the notion of CPD and LLL must be introduced. The American Association of Occupational Therapists mirrors this

belief in its philosophy of education and quoted by the College of Occupational Therapists (COT, 1998:4):

Learning is valued as a life-long process promoting competence and scholarship through entry-level, post-professional and continuing education. (AOTA, 1997:876)

With such strong emphasis being placed on CPD, it is crucial that pre-registration courses prepare future practitioners at the very beginning of their professional socialisation, to ensure that it is an intrinsic aspect of their own professional philosophy. For CPD is a process, not a product thus we talk of the 40 year degree and not three year degree (Alsop, 2000). Fundamental to this notion are the basic assumptions of occupational therapy itself. Occupational therapy is a discipline concerned with clients' abilities, strengths and their potential to grow through therapeutic techniques and intervention strategies. Occupational therapists therefore work towards enabling individuals physically, emotionally and socially in their pursuit of a personally acceptable lifestyle within their social milieu. Therapists strive to improve a client's level of independence, quality of life and sense of well-being.

Given this philosophical basis to practice, occupational therapists, by the very nature of their work, need to be self-aware and effective problem-solvers, facilitators and teachers, in order to work competently and efficiently with their clients. Twinned with these skills must be the ability to be effective and proactive in their management of client services. Teaching and facilitating such relationship skills is essential for student occupational therapists to enable them to develop personally and continue to develop professionally. A positive attitude to PPD is as much a part of the process of education, as the curriculum of practical and technical skills. Personal profiling is a mechanism which is used to facilitate such development and this study explores occupational therapy student experiences of and attitudes towards PPD, in the context of profiling.

In this case study site a personal profiling system has been created and adopted as an integral feature of the course and been in use since the implementation of the first undergraduate programme (see Section 1.7 and Appendix 1 for a fuller description). The Personal Profile was designed to bring together, in a meaningful and purposeful way, aspects of professional knowledge, technical and personal skills, which are substantive features of a pre-registration undergraduate course. How to close the theory-practice gap is discussed widely across nursing and AHPs because students find it difficult, in the early days of training, to relate theory to practice and apply theoretical concepts in differing and sometimes unfamiliar practice settings (Rolfe, 1998; Stewart, 1998).

Student occupational therapists during their pre-registration studies must practice in a variety of settings as set out in the WFOT Standards of Education (Hocking and Ness, 2002). In the British health and social care system, community practice is wide-ranging and may include primary care trusts, social services, funded community-based project work, for example with the homeless. Therapists have to be flexible in their approach in working with clients with complex sets of needs. They need to be able to draw on a range of theoretical models and concepts (in relation to models of practice and professional practices), policies and procedures as the situation or circumstances necessitate. The profile was therefore designed to assist students in their conceptual thinking, enabling them to develop their own strategies in preparation for their learning in practice. Placements are undertaken accordingly:

- Year 1: 7 weeks (end of year);
- Year 2: 10 weeks (mid-year);
- Year 3: 12 weeks (beginning of year).

Evaluation is a key component of the ongoing cycle of curriculum development within the University quality assurance mechanisms. As such, work has been undertaken to explore the value of the personal profile system. However, to date it has examined only the practicalities of the process. The tutors' views of the

system and the contribution it makes to the overall progress of students has only been undertaken informally. There is a dimension beyond the informal and anecdotal evaluative work undertaken to date which is essential to explore, that of students' attitudes to and experiences of engaging in the process of profiling throughout their course of study as part of professional preparation.

The academic progress of a first year cohort of students who consented to participate in all aspects of the research has been monitored for one full academic year. A cross-sectional approach to the study was adopted and consent to participate was also sought from students in years two and three. My role within the study is that of both course tutor and researcher. The importance of this relationship to the study will be described and explored in later chapters.

With the recent policy emphasis on CPD it is timely to evaluate the process of PPD from the perspective of the student. Students' attitudes and their experiences *do* matter. Without active commitment to the process students, as they make the transition to practitioners, would be unlikely to sustain the engagement in personal reflection or the ongoing PPD encouraged throughout the course. Likewise they may not discover the intrinsic 'worthwhileness' that Hirst (1974) describes as an integral feature of education.

## **1.6 The Concept of Profiling: an overview**

This section clarifies the concept of profiling and defines the terms as used in this study. In addition, the profiling system under investigation will be described to set the study within an institutional context. The concept and nature of profiling will be explored in depth, with associated literature reviewed, to examine the underpinning theory in the section to follow.

The concept of profiling emerged in the early 1990s (Vaughan, 1992; Godfrey, 1993; Gifford, 1994; Hutchinson, 1994). At this time academics' thoughts were turning to new means of teaching and assessing students, as the implications of the 1991 White Paper, 'Higher Education: A New Framework', were being realised. The White Paper stated that graduates needed to be equipped with skills to meet the rapidly changing demands of the working environment. It was advocated that so-called 'core skills' should be transferable across a range of contexts.

This change in education practice was emerging at a time when health service reforms were taking shape and the Community Care Act (1990) came into being. Educationalists in occupational therapy agreed that practitioners of the future were, like graduates from traditional subjects, needing transferable skills to be able to function in changing circumstances, settings (community-based services, non-statutory provision) and arenas (the purchaser and provider system of service delivery). In parallel were initiatives such as the Department of Employment's 'Enterprise in Higher Education', which began to view communication, interpersonal skills and skills of analysis and evaluation, as necessary for working life. This has become pertinent given that change is now a 'built in' feature of this century particularly in health care (DH, 2000a; 2000b; 2001a; 2001b).

Concepts of profiling, Records of Achievement (RoAs) and portfolios emerged as frameworks in which more diverse skills and learning, through a variety of techniques could be acknowledged and/or assessed. The schools sector in the main implemented RoAs, with their enthusiasm stemming from the opportunity to provide an alternative means of documenting and recognising the diversity of children's achievements (Calderhead and James, 1992). Her Majesty's



Inspectorate (HMI, 1988) in the 'New Teacher in School.' recommended profiling to bridge 'the gap' between training and employment.

It clearly has relevance in other sectors, as a bridge beyond schools into vocational and other undergraduate courses. This applies equally for graduates, making the transition between the environment of learning in HE to employment; indeed, to occupational therapy students, as they make the transition from student to qualified practitioner status.

The project, 'Profiling Work Based Learning in Academic Courses', through the CNNA focused on 24 case studies, which drew on schemes already in existence and highlighted good practice (Fenwick, Assister and Nixon, 1992). In the review of the literature it became apparent that there were a variety of systems and approaches adopted to facilitate core transferable skills for working life and acknowledge students' achievements. Case studies were drawn from a range of disciplines, including AHP and teacher education. The published outcome took the form of guidelines for the development and use of profiling schemes. Given the variation of systems in operation the research team defined a 'profile' as:

...a document which records a student's development and/or achievements, gained either in the academic setting, the work place or elsewhere. It may serve as an interim document which provides the framework for teaching, learning and assessment processes, by making explicit student objectives and activities to be undertaken. (Fenwick, Assister and Nixon, 1992:3)

They refer to the profile's potential as a summative document, thereby recording students' achievements. It is clearly stated that the profile can provide a framework for assessments, although the profile is not an assessment per se. Key features appear to be its formative, ongoing nature, with diagnostic potential and flexibility to be used as a tool for appraisal and re-appraisal. It is the element of flexibility to capture experiences and achievements and further develop personal and professional skills through the process of profiling which

the case study institution focuses upon. Hitchcock (1990) agrees with the view that a profile is more than an assessment. She highlights that a profile is much more flexible than any one single assessment mode, in that it is a means of documenting a range of abilities, attitudes, personal achievements, personal qualities and subject attainments; not a method of assessment in its own right.

### **1.7 Personal Profiling: an overview of the case study system**

Nationally, pre-registration occupational therapy programmes have developed a range of strategies to facilitate ongoing professional development and LLL. Whilst there remains a common core in programmes as a requirement of the professional and regulatory bodies (COT, 2008; HPC, 2004), individuality has emerged in course design as previously discussed. A case study approach was therefore chosen as the optimal methodology for investigating the research question and its sub-themes.

The Personal Profile was originally created through the development of a new degree course in 1990. A small team led by myself, established the profiling framework as a formative, diagnostic and dynamic tool for students' PPD. The profile was designed to promote personal reflection skills and encourage the development of personal skills and strategies for life as an occupational therapist. Although CPD and LLL were not in vogue at that time, as an educator, I felt that students needed some form of personal, psychological survival kit to be able to draw upon in their practice. A flexible tool kit, from which to build personal resilience and preparedness for the demands of care-giving, client-based practice and the wider contextual challenges of service delivery. As detailed in the introduction the system is woven throughout the three year pre-registration modular degree course and enables students to integrate university-based theoretical studies and practice (work-based learning).

### **1.7.1. The Process of Profiling in the Case Study System**

The Personal Profile as used in this study (detailed in Appendix 1) remains under the ownership of the student. Using the profile as a data source, students can be facilitated with tutors' support, to establish PPD goals and at the same time recognise and acknowledge their strengths and distinct learning opportunities arising from work-based learning. The system adopted is not positioned within modules of study per se. The profiling process aims to assist students bridge and integrate the theoretical and practice components of the course by embracing academic, university-based blocks of study and practice placements. Students are expected to draw upon the profile in setting their practice objectives and formulating the learning agreement for the placement with their practice educator.

As an integral feature of the course, the system and process of profiling is introduced to students from the outset. Each student is assigned a Professional Development (PD) Tutor who offers individual support for professional development. The tutors adopt the position of 'critical friend' using specific one-to-one meetings to engage in a reflective dialogue with each student on their personal profile. The implicit expectation is that all students will engage in the process. Tutors are encouraged to consider a flexible approach towards students, particularly those who find this a challenge and to be responsive to their needs. Respect for students' concerns and decisions they make is a critical ingredient in the tutor-student relationship. However, just as students may seek to change their designated tutor, so they may choose to opt out of attending their professional development tutorial sessions.

### **1.7.2 Conceptual Framework: the development of Personal Profiling**

Experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), humanistic psychology and andragogy were identified by the team as being the most appropriate approaches for enabling

students to develop and enhance their personal and professional skills and be able to cope with the unexpected, unpredictable and changing pattern of interactions in professional practice. The team also considered the concept of critical reflection in practice (Brookfield 1998) and the cyclical learning model offered by Gibbs (1988) using exemplars from their experiences of work-based learning. Under my leadership the team explored how the work of Kolb could map against the type of experiences students would encounter through their practice placements. The process of reflection was acknowledged as fundamental to the process of profiling and experiential learning as an invaluable tool in the pursuit of personal and professional change. In accessing a deeper level of engagement in reflection Della Fish (1988) facilitated an exploration of her model through a staff development workshop.

The 'self' is fundamental to the therapeutic relationship and health and social care context. Weil and McGill (1989:246) clearly set out this notion of inter-relatedness;

Experiential learning enables us to engage with the interrelatedness of self and the social context, inner experience and other experience, content and process and different ways of knowing.

Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning in which the inter-relationships of work, education and personal development are acknowledged, is appropriate to occupational therapy. As the profiling system developed using experiential learning as a basis, a three dimensional spiral model, emerged assuming that with each iteration the quality of the learning experience would be enhanced (Cox and Heames, 1999). This was achieved through strategic periods of reflection, followed by writing down the outcome of the process (using a pro-forma as a guide to areas for inclusion) and engagement in a reflective dialogue with a PD tutor as 'critical friend'. Reflective dialogue is encouraged not merely for students to report on their reflections but for active involvement and articulation of the process of reflection on experience. The time that each student

and tutor have together is intended for gaining fresh insights and perspectives on these experiences.

Structured dialogue rather than conversation brings different qualities to the communication process. In particular, it allows for shared meaning to emerge through reflection and inquiry. This also enables the student, with the tutor, to explore assumptions, attitudes, and values and put into words the intrapersonal dialogic process. Johns (2000:61) clearly states the need for open dialogue so that there is a freedom to share 'without feeling intimidated'. He argues that it is essential for a collaborative relationship to be effective. There are many defining characteristics of dialogue which in combination Ellinor and Gerard (1998:26) argue give dialogue its '...unique feel and quality...' and are:

- suspension of judgement;
- release of the need for specific outcomes;
- inquiry into and an examination of underlying assumptions;
- authenticity;
- a slower pace with silence between speakers;
- listening deeply to self, others, and for a collective meaning.

Although Ellinor and Gerard identify that dialogue '...releases the need for specific outcomes' it was however envisaged that the use of learning goals/outcomes would enable students to be more focused in their work. It would better prepare them for their role as a qualified therapist with its demands and expectations of performance reviews and CPD.

### **1.7.3 The Process of Profiling**

Given that the profiling system is about personal development as well as professional development, consideration and much debate within the team ensued at the design stage in terms of student responsibilities and rights. It was felt that for students to engage fully there had to be a climate of openness, honesty and trust. The profiling system had to be explicitly student-centred.

Assessment can certainly focus attention and for some students this can be motivational whilst for others, a block to their creativity. In the case of a profiling system built upon a humanistic philosophy, assessment seemed an incongruous or paradoxical notion. Boud (1990) clearly articulates the tensions of assessment on the process of journaling. Assessment is a more open and public form of capturing reflections in writing. Establishing the role of a PD tutor as a facilitator and not a tutor-assessor was essential. It was felt that this would overcome the potential for constrained dialogue and facilitate the open dialogue that Johns (2000) argues is essential. A PD tutor made explicit the importance of CPD and this title for the tutor reinforces this notion. It also helps separate out other functions tutors may have. The responsibilities for engagement with profiling lie with students themselves. The whole process was designed to be enabling and supportive and begin to empower students to take control over their learning. This trust is bestowed from day one, when students are introduced to the concept of andragogy and how this translates to the profiling system. Students are assured that they will not fail if they withdraw from the process. Compulsion may disenchant individuals from considering the potential of reflective practice for the future and this is not in the best interests of the profession. Conversely of course it can give resistant students a 'way out' without failing the course.

#### **1.7.4 Engagement, Outcomes and Monitoring Profiling**

Providing educational opportunities for all students to engage in programmes of learning on a fair and transparent basis is an important principle in all sectors of education. Profiling is no exception. The Course Team in the case study site recognised that within a cohort of students some would come with previous educational experiences founded on the principles of andragogy. Some students may have engaged in experiential learning and reflection others would possibly be totally unfamiliar, reticent or critical of self-reflection as a process of learning.

Given that the age demographic of any student intake can range from 18 to 48, the team acknowledged that some students may be able to engage more confidently because of psychological and physical factors, such as maturity, whilst others may have recent experience of RoAs through the school system. Profiles in contrast to RoAs are tailored to the individual's perceived personal and professional needs, which are developed into personally-orientated goals. Students may perceive profiling as more challenging if it is outside their previous experience of learning. Fears of exposure can emerge and this is where a climate of trust is crucial and ground rules must be set and upheld by all involved (Douglas, 2000).

It might appear from the discussion that the notion of formal assessment is incongruent with the philosophy underpinning the system. However, student feedback, support and progress monitoring have become a clear focus in academic standards (QAA, 2001) and professional and regulatory bodies continued approval of an award (COT, 2008; HPC, 2004). The dialogue between PD tutor and the personal reflective documentation serves as a process for monitoring progress, a formative system.

In terms of student satisfaction and whether the system achieves its aims, the profiling system has been reviewed generally via end of course evaluation. However this study aims to drill down far deeper than any paper-based student evaluation proforma either can or intends to do. This study for the first time seeks to explore students' attitudes in depth to personal profiling and their experience thus giving them a voice.

Five conceptual strands, closely intertwined, have emerged in the discussion of personal profiling thus far; experiential learning, reflection and reflective practice together with humanistic psychology and andragogy. A clear understanding of

these strands is critical to achieving clarity around the focus and expectations of students, engaging in profiling. These will be discussed further in subsequent chapters.

### **1.8 Summary**

This chapter has contextualised the research study which seeks to explore students' attitudes to and experiences of profiling by providing a broad policy and institutional framework. The definition of the key terms used at this stage, are those currently used by the case study site and reflect the thinking which underpinned the development of the profiling system, under discussion. The nature of profiling will be discussed further in Chapter Two and students' demographic background will unfold throughout the thesis. The main research question to be pursued in this thesis is as follows:

What are occupational therapy students' attitudes to and experiences of personal profiling?

This question is set in the context of their lived experiences in PPD. Whilst it is a case study of one undergraduate course, I anticipate the outcome will be of value to practitioners and others interested in occupational therapy education and wider vocational education communities in HEIs. It will also be integral to my own CPD. The following two chapters provide a literature review. The term 'profile' and profiling will be explored in Chapter Two. Profiling as a theoretical concept will be introduced linking it to experiential learning and reflective practice in Chapter Three.



## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review (I)**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The literature review in this thesis is presented in two chapters. Firstly this chapter will focus on providing a definition of profiles and profiling to provide a broader perspective from which to investigate and review the system being researched. Similar profiling systems in operation will be considered and their relevance to the study discussed. Finally, the key concepts and theoretical issues relevant to this research will be identified and implications for profiling and individual engagement in profiling will be presented. Chapter Two reviews and analyses the literature associated with the conceptual and theoretical bases of profiles and profiling. Chapter Three moves on to explore the theoretical relationship between profiling and experiential learning and reflective practice.

The methodological approach adopted for the literature search followed the normal conventions of utilising library catalogues, electronic databases for published sources and conference proceedings using the keywords, 'profile' and 'profiling' (Hart, 1998). From the initial search a second phase of hand searching was undertaken due to the paucity of research studies (Stewart, 2003). Originally, studies in HE were sought and in light of few studies being located the search was expanded to include all sectors of education, including CPD for healthcare professionals and teachers.

#### **2.2 In Search of a Definition**

A paucity of literature in relation to profiling systems in the context of PPD has been acknowledged in Chapter One. This seemed somewhat surprising given the

drive in HE to explore alternative teaching and learning strategies, including forms of assessment and the promotion of 'key skills'. The Dearing Report (1997:19) makes explicit the changing work environment and the need for individuals to keep pace with such changes and '...develop new capabilities and to manage their own development and learning throughout life.'

An essential component of 'graduateness' is lifelong learning (LLL). In health and social care LLL is essential for delivering the Government's modernisation agenda (DH, 2000a) as specified in 'Working Together – Learning Together: A Framework for Lifelong Learning in the NHS' (DH, 2001a). For occupational therapy specifically, this has been embraced in the College of Occupational Therapists' Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (COT, 2005), strategic vision and position statements to ensure services to clients are, '...based upon effectiveness and best value...' (COT, 2002:198). In 2001, the College set out minimum standards for CPD (COT, 2001:276) and this was reaffirmed through the Position Statement on Lifelong Learning (COT, 2004). The College states categorically that it expects line managers to be monitoring CPD and identifies examples of appropriate mechanism including '...personal development plans and the scrutiny of reflective outcomes of continuing professional development...' (COT, 2002:198).

### **2.2.1 What is a Student Profile?**

'At its simplest, profiling helps you become a lifelong learner' (Hull et al, 2005:18). The facilitation and enabling of LLL appears to be the underpinning philosophy. A working definition of a profile and the process of profiling is however needed. These key terms as they stand, can be examined from a number of different educational contexts; from the schools sector and HE to continuing professional education, each appears to have its own perspective. An

introductory and practical exploration of profiles and profiling in the schools sector is presented by Hitchcock and she offers the following description:

A profile is not in itself, a method of assessment. It is a means of recording assessments of students across the whole range of abilities and covers skills, attitudes, personal achievements, personal qualities and subject attainments. It includes the continuous formative learning process, as well as the summative or summary, document of record. (Hitchcock, 1990:2)

From Hitchcock's perspective profiling is both process and product driven and the summative aspects of the profile are possibly synonymous with the concept of Records of Achievement (RoA). Broadfoot (1986) refers to both profiles and RoAs. Broadfoot provides a useful glossary and defines both the term profile and the concept of profiling. The definition of a profile is consistent with that of Hitchcock. However, in the final sentence Hitchcock alludes to a quite different notion, that of the process or experience. Although Hitchcock (1990:2) includes 'the continuous formative learning process...' within the definition it suggests that it is connected with the interim monitoring of learning and progress reporting rather than documenting the experiences of engaging in learning opportunities. Broadfoot argues that it is a 'catch-all' term for both documentary evidence of achievement and experiences. However, the inclusion of records and reports veers more to the concept of RoAs; a collection of evidence. This possibly indicates the increasing demands made in the schools sector for target setting and monitoring pupil progress and attainment.

The notion of recording experiences (Broadfoot, 1986) begins to find an echo in this study. The term experience suggests an appreciation of different perspectives; that is, what is occurring, what is known and what feelings are being evoked through the experience. As the search for a definition of profiling unfolds, so the dimensions of behaviour, cognition and affect emerge. These dimensions give rise to the potential for individual change and ongoing development. Embracing experience in a definition as Broadfoot (1986) does has

a greater affinity with the type of profiling system under discussion. Both complexity and diversity in the development of profiles and RoAs was acknowledged by Broadfoot (1986). This has given rise to little conceptual clarity, a sense of messiness and a dearth of theoretical frameworks.

In HE, profiles are cited in the context of other forms of documentation. The development of a profile and RoAs in HE was reported in a study by Godfrey (1993:4). The broad aim of Godfrey's pilot study was to; 'influence how students learn and increase their effectiveness as learners'. Her work was designed '...to promote an integrated view of learning...'; bringing together academic based learning and learning outside of the course of study.

Unlike Hitchcock (1989) and Broadfoot (1986) Godfrey explores the process itself and the individual's role in learning. Godfrey (1993:5) acknowledges the role of ownership and distinguishes between providing a learning experience and learning as a reflective activity '...in which students make a sense of and gives meaning to the experience.' She argues that it is active involvement which enables students (from their learning experiences) to 'construct and transform personal meanings' (1993:5). This is where learning becomes more powerful and significant. Ownership and taking responsibility are seen to be critical elements in this process. Whilst Godfrey acknowledges *psychological* ownership, the profiles and RoAs were public documents for use with students' tutors thus indicating that the *physical* ownership was not an entitlement.

The personal development profiles in Godfrey's (1993) research focused on the development of academic and personal goals. Personal goals were related to generic transferable skills rather than capabilities and qualities. Godfrey argues that it is these skills (written and verbal communication, problem-solving, working with others and developing professionalism), which remain valuable

after the experience of HE has concluded. These skills enable learning to continue and individuals to remain lifelong learners. In examining the goals more closely the emphasis was more towards academic goals (11 cited) than personal goals (5).

The work undertaken by Fenwick, Assister and Nixon (1992:3) identified the use of profiles with RoAs accordingly:

A profile is a document which records a student's development and/or achievements gained either in the academic setting, the workplace or elsewhere. It may serve as an interim document, which provides the framework for teaching, learning and assessment processes by making explicit student objectives and activities to be undertaken. Such a document, **formative** or *diagnostic* profile, may also include an account of what constitutes the attainment of a particular target, and record of progress towards objectives. Additionally, the profile may act as an end point or *summative* document - or *Record of Achievement* - recording a student's achievements.

It appears that the integration, the 'bridge' that Godfrey (1993) alludes to, may be critical in this exploration. This definition considers both process and product models in gathering evidence of student learning. Learning in a workplace is made explicit, which suggests a more rounded approach to personal development bringing together education, work and personal occupations (for example; leisure, service to the community). The combination of the profile with a RoA may provide the bridge between skills acquisition and development or enhancement of personal qualities.

Documenting learning outcomes has been a feature of all work discussed thus far. Assessment is clearly featured in this definition, which raises again the issue of profiles and RoAs being public or private documents and the consequence of this in terms of disclosure of information. Ethical principles and the management of issues are also a real concern, not only in respect of confidentiality and anonymity (documenting significant others) but of personal exposure. Hull et al (2005) use words of guidance for reflective writing such as, *be frank, be honest,*

*express yourself freely*. This encouragement of self-disclosure warrants the development of clear guidelines for portfolio building, as advocated by Timmins (2008).

Clifford (1999) in discussing issues in autonomous learning and journal writing argues that there is a tension between writing for personal reflection and producing a document for public viewing or assessment. Wilson et al (1995) substantiate this point and also state that it changes the dynamics of the relationship between student and tutor. It also draws attention to the articulation of experience, how disclosure of personal reflections is managed and how the power relationship between student and tutor affects this process. These will be discussed in later sections.

Self and textual editing are critical issues and the conscious selection of material to meet assessment requirements has the potential to lose what has been captured as significant for the learner. The role of grading in the context of self-directed learning has been contentious (Clifford 1999). Students can become hesitant in expressing their thoughts and ways of thinking because of the awareness of a judgement or grade. Wilson et al (1995:172) take this further and state that students in their journal writing are 'reluctant to reveal their feelings and thoughts', signifying a greater level of personal exposure. Reading rather than assessing journals can minimise the self-editing process (Boud, 1990). Boud argues that the learners' satisfaction with their achievements is the relevant form of assessment in self-directed learning (1989). In the context of portfolios for student teachers Jarvinen and Kohonen (1995) observe that self-assessment is critical for increased reflectiveness and professional development. Jarvinen and Kohonen (1995:27) argue the importance of getting 'in touch with their emerging professional selves', which should enable LLL. Whilst these themes are around journaling, portfolio building and self-directed learning, the

premise is equally of value to profiling. Profiling is owned and self-directed albeit with varying degrees of support by tutors and/or peers.

Jinks (1999:228) in the exploration of nurse teachers' perceptions of student-centred andragogical teaching and learning found that power relations were central to the concept of andragogy. She reported that it was 'not just about age differences but equitable student-teacher relationships.' Having acknowledged equity she continues to indicate that there was still an issue of balance in the power held or perceived to be held:

...although students have a great deal of power in respect of meeting their learning needs, ultimately it was thought that nurse teachers have the most power. (1999:228)

This must be a prime consideration in the process of profiling if significant others are involved in some way. The power relations may overtly or covertly govern what becomes shared and public from the process of profiling.

In nursing practice, there is a clear commitment to a process driven model of profiling, grounded in learning through experience, rather than a product model. The profile is a structure or tool, a means of recording professional development. However, through the dynamic process of profiling, there is an expectation of insightful commentaries to accompany statements on skills and knowledge acquisition. As Teasdale (1996) contends, it is more than a statutory requirement. It is part of LLL for every professional. Profiling is, therefore, by nature very personal and Melville (1995) states that professional profiling is about an attitude towards personal development and is not just about writing a set of documents. Beneath the surface of this statement lies the very real issue of individual motivation and commitment. If neither an awareness of purpose or personal benefits are perceived by the profiler then the act of profiling may not have the potential power that Kaur and Hamer (1995) clearly see. If, as COT (2002) identify it is undertaken in the context of CPD with significant others then

the relationship, student-tutor or employee-manager, may have an influence on the nature of the process and what counts as evidence of CPD.

Kaur and Hamer (1995) and Mitchell (1994) demonstrate that there is evidence to support the statement made in the introduction that personal development is an influential and essential component of professional development. Profiling has been identified as an individual process. However, the role that others have within this context should not be underestimated nor ignored. Benner (1984) in relation to nursing refers to caring power, which is used to empower patients. If we draw on this work and that of Stein-Parbury (2000) who also identifies the potential power nurses have to empower, then significant others (line managers in the work relationship) can also have an influential effect on personal and or professional development. Stein-Parbury (2000:49) identifies six key factors:

- transform patients' views of their situation;
- reintegrate patients with their social world;
- remove obstacles or stand alongside and support and enable patients;
- solicit patient resources;
- bring hope, confidence and trust;
- affirm the human capacity to cope.

If the word 'patient' is omitted and 'student' is inserted, then an important role can be seen to emerge for tutors. Whilst profiling remains an individual process, it is not carried out in isolation. It is a process supported and encouraged by others in the case study institution.

Likewise, the role of tutors in using negotiation techniques within the profiling process when considering profiles for the promotion of personal development appears crucial. Through negotiation, the learner can be encouraged to take more responsibility for making choices in development strategies and greater independence in learning. This is particularly pertinent in the early stages of engaging in the process of profiling.



In developing an awareness of 'self' through the process of profiling, fresh insights can be empowering. Such insights can enhance the individuals' ability to perceive their professional development needs in relation to further developing their professional skills and role in advancing practice, rather than being advised of their development needs by others.

The relationship between profiles and portfolios needs to be examined. Brown (1995) identifies portfolios and profiles together as a means of CPD and in recent nursing literature Brown's definitions are the most widely accepted (Jasper, 2003; Hull et al, 2005; Timmins, 2008). Whilst Godfrey (1993) identifies the integration of learning in the academic and non-academic arenas, Brown considers personal and professional dimensions of learning and development. Personal profiles are defined separately by Brown as;

A collection of evidence which is selected from the personal portfolio for a particular purpose and for the attention of a particular audience. (1995:4)

From this definition there emerges a specific remit for the individual. Indeed, profiles can be developed to meet 'different and distinctive needs' (Timmins, 2008). It brings to the fore an explicit indication that the portfolio is collective evidence in a public document. Ownership by the individual adds a different dimension to the concept. Yet no consideration is given to the inclusion of the notion of 'audience', and like Broadfoot (1986), there is no discussion in Brown's (1995) definition of the implications this has on the disclosure of personal details or issues of choice which may ensue. Brown discusses her definition in relation to nursing and use of personal profiles as evidence for CPD for continuing professional registration for employment. What can be extracted from her work is that personal profiles are:

- evidential;
- purposive;
- audience-directed;
- constructed; personally owned, shaped and edited.

Brown (1995) like Broadfoot (1986), appears to hold a similar view and utilises the term, 'all-embracing'.

The statutory body for nursing in the 1990s refers to a personal professional profile in policy documents and McGrother (1995) explores the intentions of using the term. She concludes that the intention of a professional profile is about a **biographical sketch** emphasising that it is about an individual developing as a professional. The nature of the information, which is expected to be recorded through profiling, is clearly identified by McGrother particularly in relation to client care (see bold):

...record what path your professional development has taken, what led you to the choices you made, how you prepared yourself for the different roles within your profession and what you have learnt about your job, your skills and needs about yourself. More than anything, you should demonstrate how your professional updating has **improved the care of your client group**. (1995:3)

In this rubric there is a clear sense of a professional duty of care by the inclusion of the words, 'improved the care of your client group'. This links with the professional code of ethics and CPD requirements for continuing competence to practice.

Whilst not defining profiling in their work, Kaur and Hamer (1995) claim it is, in the development of nursing practice, a most powerful tool. This claim is based on the assumption that it draws on both life and work experience and offers a framework in which to learn and develop. Teasdale (1996) supports this further by arguing that it can help to gain insight into daily working practice.

### **2.3 Profiles and Portfolios: are they synonymous?**

The terms portfolios and profiles, are frequently used interchangeably in both professional and educational contexts. This does not help in gaining clarity about the concept or process of profiling. What does become clear is that the portfolio

comprises a range of personal details some of which are constructed by the writer and is for personal use. It is from a portfolio that edited extracts such as profiles can be tailored and made public for a specific audience. The extent to which personal editing is undertaken is dependent on the nature of the relationship with the recipient and the purpose for which it is to be used.

A commonly understood use of the term portfolio is a collection of papers and examples of work, which demonstrate an individual's skills and abilities. Glen and Hight (1992:416) refer to Knapp's (1975) definition accordingly:

...a file or folder of information which has been accumulated about a student's past experiences and accomplishments ... can be the vehicle for organising and distilling raw prior experiences into a manageable form for assessment ... a process by which prior experiences can be translated into educational outcomes or competencies, documents and assessed for academic credit or recognition.

From this definition there is an indication that a portfolio comprises a wide range of documentation and therefore more akin to RoAs. However, reference is made to 'distilling raw prior experiences', which suggests that the process not only brings about a description of prior experiences but some form of heightened awareness about the experience in the use of the word 'distilling' to capture the experience. Hall (1992) made the distinction between these two forms of documentary evidence, with the emphasis being placed on the process of reflection during the compilation of portfolios. What is meant by the term reflection clearly needs to be determined. From a student's perspective Andrews (2000:396) states:

...reflection is about learning and developing from experience, resulting in a changed perspective.

In essence, reflection is as Andrews portrays it. However, to achieve a changed perspective requires the individual to engage in a set of complex activities. On this issue of complexity, Francis (1995:229) says: 'I believe that reflection is more intellectually challenging than is generally recognised'. From her work with pre-service teachers she continues;

...too little assistance is provided to teachers to help them observe, think through, reconstruct, and deeply understand the process of personal theory building.

The notion of personal theory building as a central component of the process of profiling needs to be recognised and explored further.

Brockbank and McGill (1998:103) discuss the concept of personal learning portfolios, which are intended for assessment. They emphasise that it is a 'reflective document detailing your learning process' (learning logs, journals and diaries extracts may be included). Reflection in the context of practice, Johns (2000:34) argues, is more than the learning process itself:

Reflection is a window through which the practitioner can view and focus self within the context of her own lived experience in ways that enable her to confront, understand and work towards resolving the contradictions within her practice between what is desirable and actual practice. Through the conflict and contradiction, the commitment to realise desirable work and understanding why things are as they are, the practitioner is empowered to take more appropriate action in future situations.

He emphasises the learning journey that is learning about self, becoming empowered, as well as extending personal and professional knowledge.

Similarly, Brown (1995:1) in considering a personal portfolio clearly identifies the importance of the reflective process. In her writing, she emphasises particular words in bold and italics:

*A **private** collection of evidence which demonstrates the continuing acquisition of skills, knowledge, attitudes, understanding and achievement. It is both **retrospective** and **prospective**, as well as reflecting the **current stage of development and activity of the individual**.*

If, as Hall (1992) claims, portfolios involve the individual in some form of reflective process during the compilation of the documentary evidence, the role reflection plays in the use of profiles and profiling must be explored as a key concept (see Chapter Three).

The notion that a personal portfolio can be all-embracing is certainly evident in Brown's (1995) work. Although Brown is writing for nurses, the nature of the portfolio appears to be used in other disciplines in a similar way. From the listing of possible content (for example, in-service training, critical incidents, voluntary work) it is evident that a portfolio differs substantially from a personal profile. More recently with the advent of progress files in HE, Cotterill (2003:191) identifies a portfolio as a personal record with different sections which hold documents demonstrating achievement, development and information relevant to future job applications. The final section of the portfolio is for personal papers 'sources of inspiration, school reports, articles'.

Returning to the more recent nursing literature, there is evidence of portfolios being used in a more public sense as a form of evaluation tool (Karlłowicz, 2000). Karlłowicz argues that portfolios can provide documentation against which curricular outcomes not measured by other techniques can be assessed. The inclusions are specific and under the headings 'required' and 'optional'. The rationale proposed is that the portfolio can demonstrate 'complex sets of skills', effective communication, clinical performance, the ability to think critically can be evidenced (Karlłowicz, 2000:82). In this model students' work with tutors in a collaborative process on the development of their portfolio.

In her work on evaluating this type of portfolio, Karlłowicz (2000) gathered tutors' and students' views. Students reported that portfolio compilation was a positive experience and that it brought about a sense of pride in their achievements. However Karlłowicz (2000:85) highlights two significant issues relevant to this study as it bears on student attitude and the impact of tutors on the process:

...a general reluctance by students to engage in self-reflection and self-evaluation. Students may not entirely understand the

significance of engaging in continual reflection, or may not ever have been required to do this as part of their learning.

...not all faculty members are effective facilitators of self-reflection, indicating the need for further orientation on the importance of self-reflection and self-evaluation to the portfolio development process.

The importance of utilising experiences for personal theory building and PPD cannot be underestimated. Karlowicz's work has resonance with this study. Self-reflection and reflective dialogue are central to the process of profiling. Students in Karlowicz's study were generally reluctant to engage in these processes. Self-reflection may be an unknown process, one which generates discomfort or is at odds with the individual's personal learning style. The supporting role of others therefore appears to be a significant factor for successful engagement in the process.

It must be noted all of the authors (Brown, 1995; Stewart, 1998; Alsop, 2000; Cottrell, 2003) deemed the portfolio to be of significant value in bringing together a collection of personal experiences and (professional) achievements. The key purpose being presenting an *organised* collection of evidence which may be used for a public audience, whether this is for sharing as evidence, for example at an interview, or some form of scrutiny such as an assessment. Alsop (2000:11) clearly articulates that the portfolio may be used in a variety of ways to demonstrate CPD and provide evidence of a state of readiness to move forward for new opportunities for example, 'learning as a course participant, critical evaluation of practice, skills and abilities to be marketed'. Some aspects of the rationale for personal and or professional portfolios are not dissimilar to the rationale for profiles and profiling. What is not evident is the potential time, effort and commitment needed to engage fully in building a comprehensive portfolio. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 summarise the key features of portfolios and profiles for comparison between authors.

**Figure 2.1 : Defining the Term Portfolio**

<b>Knapp in Glen &amp; Hight (1992)</b>	<b>Brown (1995)</b>	<b>Alsop (2000)</b>	<b>Brockbank &amp; McGill (1998:103)</b>
File or folder of accumulated information	<b>Private</b> collection of evidence		
Documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Past experiences</li><li>• Accomplishment</li><li>• Retrospective</li></ul>	Prospective and retrospective		
'Vehicle' for; <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• organising and distilling raw prior experiences</li><li>• translating prior experience into education outcomes</li></ul>	Demonstrates continuing acquisition of: knowledge & understanding, skills, attitudes	Demonstrates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• professional development</li><li>• state of readiness to move forward for new opportunities</li></ul>	
Document for assessment: academic credit or recognition			
	'Reflecting the current stage of development and activity.'	Reflective document	'Reflective document detailing your learning process'

With reference to a personal profile as part of the documentation of a portfolio, Mitchell (1994) argues that the personal profile is part of the goal-orientated material and demonstrates an individual's ability to reflect on experience. Therefore, a profile is process-orientated. It is a facilitative tool for individuals to capture experiences and learn from and work with these experiences.

A profile is not just a record of personal or professional achievement, it draws on cognitive and affective dimensions of an individual, it enables the individual to explore 'the self' and the relationship one has with others, the environment, occupations and activities in life. In discussing the role of portfolios in the context of CPD, Stewart (1998) highlights that it can provide evidence of the acquisition of knowledge, skills and achievements. This firmly relates a portfolio to professional and technical skills.

Figure 2.2: Defining the Terms Profile and Profiling							
Characteristics	Hitchcock (1989) Schools	Broadfoot (1986) Schools	Fenwick et al (1992) HE	Godfrey (1993:5) HE	McGrother (1995) Nursing	Brown (1995:4) Nursing	Cotterill (2003) HE
Formative learning process documented as achievement.	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Summative recording: assessments, skills, attitudes, achievements, qualities, attainments	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Documenting evidence of experiences.			✓	✓	✓		
Records student's development.			✓	✓	✓		
Transferable skills to enable LLL.			✓	✓	✓		
To promote an integrated view of learning; academic-based and learning outside of a formal course of study.				✓	✓		
Learning reflective activity - construct and transform personal meaning.				✓	✓	✓	
Psychological ownership and responsibility for the profile.				✓	✓	✓	✓
Developing professionalism.						✓	✓
Documented as a process.					✓		
Collection of evidence from personal portfolio for particular purpose particular audience.						✓	
Progress files in HE defined in a similar way to portfolios.							✓



From the review of literature it appears that profiles can be used as a complementary form of documentation, which can be included in a portfolio. A profile does have a clear frame of reference and Law (1984) supports this as does Fenwick, Assister and Nixon (1992).

## **2.4 Personal Profile and Profiling: emergence of definitions**

Synthesising the literature and using my experiences of working with profiles in the HE case study site, I propose the following working definition for use in this study:

A **personal profile** is a document compiled and *owned*, by an individual for a professional or academic purpose, which provides a framework from which to engage in retrospective and prospective reflection on experience, alone or with another person. The process of reflection acknowledges the integrated nature of cognition, affect and behaviour.

Working with a personal profile and engaging in activities within its framework is termed **profiling**. In relation to this study the process of profiling is undertaken within a professional or academic context. The word *owned* is emphasised and used to convey that it is under the ownership of the individual, personal and therefore private. Sharing, making the document and its contents public or not, is at the individual's discretion. This gives the freedom to work with the profile in a way that feels appropriate to an individual style and way of working. Experiences and issues or difficulties, which emerge through the process of reflection, are explored through reflective dialogue with a PD tutor. The document is not assessed but may be shared with the tutor if the individual feels it appropriate. Profiling then can be defined for the purposes of this study accordingly:

**Profiling** is a dynamic process which enables the individual, alone or with another person, to identify their abilities, strengths, needs and aspirations, whether personal or professional, and set their own personal goals and development strategies. The process of profiling is ongoing with strategic in-built points where the individual formalises the outcome of their reflections by written entries within the given framework of the profile/profiling system.

The term **Personal Profiling System** is used to convey that there is a structured and co-ordinated approach to supporting individuals in working with a personal profile. In the context of this study it is for the purposes of ongoing professional development. A significant other may facilitate the process and engage with the individual through reflective dialogue. In discussing the professional socialisation of physiotherapists and reflective practice, Clouder (2000:517) makes explicit the need for; 'strategies that facilitate dialogic reflection rather than focusing solely on written reflection'. Dialogic reflection is equally vital for occupational therapists. These working definitions will be used throughout the study.

## **2.5 Profiling in Higher Education**

As detailed in Chapter One the concept of profiling emerged in the schools sector in the late 1980s but there appears to be little published documentation for, or research conducted, in HE around that time. It was just this difficulty that appears to have prompted the Department of Employment to fund the project 'Profiling in Higher Education' undertaken by the CNAA (1990-1992). The outcome of that work (Fenwick, Assister and Nixon, 1992) made a significant contribution to the use of profiling in HE when there was a perceived lack of guidelines for setting up a profiling system.

It is difficult to judge how widespread profiling is or has been in HE since the CNNA project, as little appears to have been documented with the exception of profiling in nursing and portfolio work. However, what has been implemented are Progress Files (QAA, 2001). Progress Files appear to be more aligned with RoAs than the process of profiling. The Progress File comprises two elements to chart students' progress and achievement, a transcript and some form of personal development planning.

### **2.5.1 The nature of profiling**

Fenwick, Assiter and Nixon (1992) identify and describe three types of profiles which emerged through the project detailed previously. They state that profiling systems may incorporate more than one type. These types are identified by outcomes as follows:

- i. prescribed learning outcome profile;
- ii. negotiated outcomes profile;
- iii. personal development profile.

As detailed previously, the notion of combining the differing forms of profile was undertaken by the University of Sheffield as part of the Enterprise in HE Programme. Both personal development profiles and RoAs were used as a means of supporting students to be more effective learners and 'influencing how students learn' (Godfrey, 1993:3).

The intention behind the work at Sheffield was that it would be used by students across university departments and not be constrained by the boundaries of a programme of study. To this end, both intra-curricula and extra-curricula activities could be used by students as sources of learning. Therefore, generic skills of undergraduate education were identified in the design, which overarch individual subject disciplines.

The process of reflection and planning formed a significant component of the system. This led to 'the view of learning as belonging to and being the responsibility of the student' (Godfrey, 1993:5). Godfrey concluded from her study that engaging in a subject is more than developing intellectually; it is also about personal development and thus affective as well as cognitive processes. In fact, I would suggest that this is a different dimension of personal development. Personal development is commonly interpreted in curriculum guidance documents as communication skills and teamwork skills. Personal

development planning as articulated by Cottrell (2003) is focused on personal skills for learning; developing the skills of self-management, understanding how to learn, developing thinking skills to improve and strengthen academic performance. This also develops the ability to self-evaluate and feel more confident and independent as a learner, similar to Godfrey's (1993) view on personal development.

A limitation of Godfrey's (1993) study was that no formal evaluation of staff views on the Personal Academic Development Programme had been undertaken. Godfrey provided no indication either that student views had been collated for the purposes of evaluating the system from their perspective. This is essential to gain the users' perspective so that a system can meet the potential needs of all stakeholders. This study aims to redress the balance by allowing the student experience and voice to be at the forefront of the research and also explore tutors' views in order to see how they might impinge upon student attitudes.

In the literature on initial teacher education, the use of competence-based profiles appears to be the most prevalent type of profiling to emerge. The issue around competence and competency-based profiles is linked to the DfE circular in the 'New Teacher in School' (HMI, 1988), in relation to the professional development of teachers and their specialist knowledge base. Therefore profiles have been largely developed as an assessment or monitoring tool which appears to be the initial intention in schools.

A competence-based profile has been presented by Vaughan (1992) as an assessment mechanism in the professional development of students in initial teacher training in respect of information technology skills. The profile is a working document to assist students in identifying their strengths and weaknesses and to address these. The document is designed to be an

interactive document, students being an integral part of the process of profiling and RoAs, thereby motivating and enhancing their self-awareness and making them more aware of their own PPD.

In contrast, a system devised at Bath College of Education and reported by Ward and Ritchie (1994) sought to facilitate students in the process of gaining greater autonomy in learning, whilst acknowledging that their learning involves developing scientific skills and understanding as well as professional competence to teach the subject discipline (science). The competence-based profile incorporates student self-assessment, similar to Vaughan's (1997) work and extends the feedback to peer and tutor review. In this way it is argued a comprehensive view of progression is developed.

Criticism has been levelled at the behavioural model used to underpin these types of profiles. Calderhead and James (1992) have been critical of institutions' use of check lists and grids for the assessment of student teacher competence. They argue that this approach fails to take into account the complexity of teaching. A set of discrete skills does not constitute the teaching experience therefore this approach is likely to be unsuccessful (James and Denley, 1992).

Teaching has some similarities to work within health and social care. Teaching, like occupational therapy, is about facilitating and motivating individuals working in a context where attitudes, values and beliefs impact on human interaction. Calderhead and James (1992) identify the role of students in their own professional development and suggest that it is being neglected through the narrow focus of competency-based approaches. It is this dimension of education which is integral to *becoming* a professional and behaving as a professional in both the student and practitioner role.

It is the work-based aspect of being a student that could be said to differentiate vocational students from others. A student entering an occupational therapy course becomes a student occupational therapist, a student member of the professional body, the College of Occupational Therapists and bound by the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (COT, 2005) the moment they enrol. Likewise, a student on a teacher training course, whilst in supervised work-based learning, is a student teacher; a model for pupils with a code of conduct to observe.

In this respect the use of competence-based profiles, based on a behavioural model could be challenged. Gifford (1994) in presenting the Surrey New Teacher Competency Profile explains the 'menu' approach to competencies adopted in the system. The menu enables the user to match the context of their teaching more accurately to the profile. The profile is clearly about facilitating professional development and no performance indicators or levels for measuring achievement are set. This was based on the rationale that competencies are '...not achieved in a once-and-for-all sense...' (Gifford, 1994:319). In this system, ownership remains with the newly qualified teacher and written documentation is by negotiation with a mentor. Although the system is to some extent behaviourally orientated, there is an acknowledged need for reflection and an enhancement of existing skills as well as the performance development of those skills deemed to be lacking. The fact that the mentor-teacher relationship is one of partnership and that levels of satisfaction in teaching are taken into account, seems to suggest that the system was designed on a more humanistic than behavioural premise. However, as previously discussed, partnerships may need to be defined as Jinks (1999) found power relations still remain, even when the principles of andragogy inform the context of practice.

In discussing competence-based training, Hutchinson (1994) highlights Hyland's suggestion of an alternative model for teaching based on the concept of 'expertise'. The concept extends to higher level patterns of behaviour. The central feature of these patterns is reflection compatible with the model advocated by Schön (1983), the reflective practitioner. Schön's work has been increasingly influential not only in teacher education but also in the health and social care professions, including occupational therapy and is discussed in Chapter Three.

In that same paper Hutchinson (1994) critiques the competence-based profiles of Roehampton College. He focuses on the fact that the profiles do not explicitly identify reflection, although the profiles require the individual to analyse children's work and learning but do not require the teacher to analyse or reflect upon their own work. Hutchinson does note that reflection and self-evaluation is identified in the 'Personal and Professional Qualities' performance criteria.

The organisation of criteria seems to be crucial. If performance criteria do not explicitly address the centrality of reflection, then reflection from the individual's perspective cannot be guaranteed. Reflection may be about the event and not the individual's total experience and interface with it. The theory-practice relationship from a personal perspective is crucial and brings personal meaning to learning (Rogers, 1981). James and Denley (1992) identify the experience - evaluation - action cycle, emphasising the need to be explicit and acknowledge the integral nature of reflection. Likewise, Conway (1994) identifies a similar staged process; description, consequence, evaluation and action plan. This begins to follow the cyclical model of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Gibbs, 1988) and discussed in Chapter Three.

The importance given to the act of profiling is an issue in its own right. The profiling system, which is not given the status of being integral or central to a course, can be perceived as separate or as a 'bolt-on' feature which may be interpreted as optional and therefore, as James and Denley (1992) experienced, an extra activity for students. Conway (1994) argues that to achieve maximum benefit from profiling explicit guidance is required which translates into a considerable investment in time from tutorial staff. It therefore has implications for the skills development of tutors as well as the attitudes that students form and experiences in relation to the profiling activity.

In reviewing the initial records of students' experience James and Denley (1992) further emphasised the importance of making explicit to students that action follows reflection. The cycle referred to above was revised to take account of this emphasis and became the '...description-learning-significance-action...' model. While being clear was necessary, so is monitoring with caution. Reflection overload was experienced by some students who reported that they were requested to be reflective in a range of curriculum activities. Yet, Simco (1995:261) states 'the key to professional development is in enabling the process of rigorous critical reflection'.

I suggest that to become a reflective practitioner, the individual must accept and believe in the reflective process itself, develop the habit of engaging in the process and have the volition and motivation to learn from the process. In discussing continuing competence, Alsop (2002:201) argues that there are a number of influencing factors including occupational therapists';

...ability to reflect on practice in a critical way, their commitment to learning and their desire for personal and professional growth.

In relation to using portfolios, Jarvinen and Kohonen (1995) identify the phrase 'habit of mind' to the development of a thoughtful, inquiring basic attitude,



which assists in the coming to understand the complicated phenomena of students' own process of learning. Reflection is a necessary part of a professional's life and this had yet to be fully realised by students in James and Denley's (1992) study. Reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schön, 1987) is fundamental in the fast changing health and social care milieu.

To engage in reflection is to engage in a strategy for self-appraisal (Munton, 1995). Reflection in Simco's (1995) writing is about self-review and self-development and creating a necessary dialogue. This is concerned with dynamic movement, not standing still. However, the fact that the feeling of overload had been experienced and reported by students in relation to profiling, draws attention to the way that it is presented and to the critical issue of motivation and attitude. This must be an influential factor in the process and level of engagement and the focus of this study. Davies (1993) states, in reference to teachers, that unless there is encouragement to develop reflective and practical skills throughout their careers, then the profession will remain at less than full potential. The same statement is pertinent in the health and social care setting. The essential attitudes of open-mindedness, wholeheartedness and responsibility are attitudes proposed by Dewey (1933) to underpin reflection and were found to be of relevance in this study (Chapter Three).

The role of critical friend was identified by Davies (1993) in highlighting the need for a range of individuals to be involved in profiling. This has a potential to aid motivation for engagement within the process if student ownership is assured. Full ownership (Simco 1995) is advocated, that is the profiling is under the directorship of the student not the tutor. As previously discussed, dialogue is a crucial component of the process of profiling and considerations of the mechanisms cannot be discounted. In the early days of profiling, Broadfoot (1986) suggested that profiling within the school context seeks to establish a more egalitarian teacher-pupil relationship and highlighted the importance of

self in the context of self-direction and self-assessment in learning. Thus far the discussions on profiling in HE have centred on the use of competency-based profiles for the purposes of developing professional skills and professional development more generally. Few papers have made reference to a personal perspective to professional development (Vaughan, 1992), self-awareness or self-review. From the work of Fenwick, Assister and Nixon (1992) a profiling system appears to be particularly valuable for providing students with a structure for enabling them to take responsibility for their own learning within a university setting, across modules and work-based learning. Taking this forward into the work-based context the Department of Health in 'A First Class Service' (DoH, 1998) ascribes to the concept of LLL to benefit, contribute to the development and currency of service delivery, stating LLL is:

...a process of continuing development for all individuals and teams, which meets the needs of patients and delivers the healthcare outcomes and healthcare priorities of the NHS and which enables professionals to expand and fulfil their potential.  
(DoH, 1998)

Although not identical to appraisal systems or personal development plans as identified by the professional body in its LLL position statement (COT, 2002), it is believed that profiles which focus on PPD have the potential to contribute to ongoing CPD. This proposal interacts with the employers' perspectives and is in line with the Department of Health's view for a 'First Class Service' (DoH, 1998) and modernisation (DH, 2000a).

Profiling can be an ideal tool for enabling the student to bring together their achievements and experiences and reflect on them for the integrated nature of their studies to emerge. Fenwick, Assistor and Nixon (1992) emphasise that the focus is on the individual learner. Many universities have implemented a degree of openness in programmes to provide some student choice in relation to option modules which diversify the student experience (for example, learning a modern language). In occupational therapy this has provided the opportunity for a taste

of specialist areas (for example, housing policy), which is beyond the core mandatory modules. Profiling has the potential to enable students to reflect on opportunities within the curriculum and inform choice.

A more specific benefit of a profiling system is that students can focus on setting clear objectives, short and long term and clarify the learning outcomes. Clarity in this respect can provide a sense of purpose and transparency of intended learning outcomes, which in turn may aid motivation and lead to a positive attitude to the process itself. The framework explicitly encourages students to engage in the process of self-assessment, reflection, and reflective writing by setting guidelines and prompts to trigger further engagement. If these activities are coupled with a mechanism of support and feedback such as critical friendship, then the skills underpinning the activities can be enhanced as the learning is taking place. Davies (1993) supports the notion of skills development in the discussion of students' skills of self-assessment which he claims can be enhanced through dialogic exchange between tutors and students.

Although referring to the schools sector, Broadfoot (1988) identifies this element of self in profiling by stating that there is a commitment in the process to self-direction and self-assessment. This emphasis draws attention to it being a process with the notion of progression. The principle of self-direction and self-assessment should underpin the rationale of an undergraduate course with its intention to educate the individual, as a *whole* person. One who is autonomous, academically and socially capable and ready for employment. Within the education of occupational therapists and other AHPs this relates to fitness for academic award, fitness for purpose and fitness for employment (HPC, 2004; COT, 2008).

Being individually tailored to student experience and clearly stating the responsibilities of ownership, profiling has the potential to enrich the learning

experience and improve the quality of learning. Profiling has, in addition, the potential to enrich beyond the formal curriculum. It can be used to actively encourage students to take responsibility for themselves, and for their individual development. It can be a complementary and empowering feature of students' formal programme, which engenders an ethos of LLL. Likewise, Halsall, Hustler, Carter and Green (1995) refer to the importance of empowerment in discussing the role of RoAs in the shaping how, what and where students learn.

To be successful in the professional role it is imperative that the process of education attends to the intellectual and technical skills required to be fit for award and also the interpersonal skills, communication skills and professional skills to meet professional and regulatory requirements as detailed earlier. In considering the value of intellectual and personal skills, Godfrey (1993) argues that they remain valuable because subject content will inevitably go out of date. This same issue has been openly discussed within the health and social care context in relation to continuing competency to practice (Burley, 2000). Eraut (1994) claims competency decays and frequently five years is identified as the turning point for the currency of knowledge. Therefore regardless of whether a student is studying a professionally orientated course or not, both intellectual and personal skills should be an explicit part of the curriculum, if the curriculum is designed to foster LLL.

The transition between university life and the world of work can be a difficult one for graduates. Fenwick, Assister and Nixon (1992) claim that profiling can support the developmental transition between life stages, and refer to three periods of transition:

- school/adult life and HE;
- university-based academic and work-based learning and HE;
- employment.

They believe that profiling has the potential to underpin learning that promotes LLL. More importantly in the context of employment it has the potential to be an invaluable mechanism for professional development during and following students' programme of study. Halsall, Hustler, Carter and Green (1995:35) importantly identify HE as a 'stage in a learning career, not a final learning experience' as I have argued earlier.

Profiling, Radcliffe (1997) acknowledges, needs an exploration of attitudes, values and belief systems, interactions with others and also self-awareness. As discussed by Gartside (1990) it is an ongoing process and therefore constantly produces new outcomes from which a new personal contract is established. Individuals establish goals to be achieved. The benefits Gartside argues are; being more capable, reliable, realistic, self-reliant and as a consequence more mature.

Having stated the benefits of profiling as portrayed in the literature, a number of emerging issues must necessarily be explored. In particular, level(s) of engagement (personal investment of self), reflection, personal demands (motivation, commitment) need consideration in light of the focus of this study. These issues have not been explicit in the literature, yet they have the potential to impact if not disconnect individuals' engagement in the process of profiling.

From my involvement to date in leading a team of HE tutors undertaking profiling with students, I would argue that the key to a positive and meaningful experience is an enabling framework, explicit guidelines for students and facilitative and enabling tutors. 'Caring power' as defined by Stein-Parbury (2000) has been mentioned previously as a means to earn respect from students, enable them to feel capable and instil confidence in their independence

in learning. Whether this proves to be seen as an empowering process for students early in professional education will to be explored in this study.

Reflection and reflective writing lie at the interface between theory and practice and the acquisition or advancement of knowledge fundamental to professional education. It may be seen as a 'melting pot' or 'cognitive housekeeping' to imply its nature as a sorting out, clarifying process' (Moon, 2004:189). This relationship will now be considered in the context of profiling.

## **2.6 Reflective Writing in Profiling**

Within forms or genres of writing, the closest, for the purposes of capturing personal reflections, as discussed previously, is journaling. Journaling is akin to profiling in relation to charting progress while enabling the journalist to document thoughts, feelings and at a deeper more reflexive level, attitudes and values. Holly (1989:71) claims from her research with teachers that journaling can develop an archive and '...serves as an evolving database for gaining understanding and insights which inform and enrich professional judgement.' Similarly, the profile becomes an evolving personal archive. Reflective writing in the process of profiling aims to capture the essence of experience and inform the distillation process of reflection and reflective dialogue with others. Writing taps into tacit knowledge and the writer may use different styles according to the nature of the thinking and the circumstances about which they are writing (Holly, 1989). This suggests reflective writing is a learned skill rather than a naturally acquired aptitude thus needing development. In relation to developing the reflective attitude, Pierce (2005) recognises the need to explore learning styles as reflection does not always sit comfortably with an individual's preferred learning style, for example concrete experiences.

However, there are differences in interpretation of terms and use of learning journals as argued by Cowan (1992) and Moon (2006). Through conversations with colleagues Cowan (1992) discovered five different activities under the term journal. All of the activities had a significant element of reflection and ranged from being private (old style diary) to more public activities (learning journal on work-based experience). Of interest here is the journal, which is private '...dialogue on the side', facilitated discussion, in which, 'descriptions, queries, feelings, reactions and worries' (Cowan, 1992:139).

From Cowan's exploration of the core purpose, journaling can be seen as a flexible means of recording reflections and a dynamic means of building upon the reflective process. The process is iterative and not static. Once the document is complete, further development and reflection can occur. Moon (2006) proposes eighteen purposes which form the experience of journaling for example it, encourages active involvement, and ownership, of learning; enhances reflective practice; encourages meta-cognition.

In exploring journaling in pre-service teacher education, Latham (1996) found that the majority of students were able to use journaling positively, despite written reflection being experienced as difficult. It helped them to 'listen to their thoughts and better understand them' (1996:45). Journaling had been used to enable pre-service teachers to be 'reflective, inquiring researchers in their own classrooms' (Latham, 1996:46). This has similarities with reflective dialogue in profiling and becoming a reflective practitioner.

The engagement in this type of journaling can promote self-awareness and self-evaluation (Riley-Doucet and Wilson, 1997). It enables individuals to theorise and be explicit about the implicit through critical analysis. This enables a clarity about the sense of self (Heinze, 1987), increases knowledge of self, the

profession and the relationship between the two. Journaling can be a means by which;

...novice professionals find meaning in life and thereby facilitate the epistemological development of the profession itself. (Kobert, 1995:142).

This is truly PPD. The act of writing about experiences and events according to Cooper (1991) imposes form on what are often considered to be chaotic experiences. Practice can certainly be perceived as being chaotic with unexpected and unpredictable circumstances emerging such as a client's psychological distress. Kobert (1995) considers the journal a helpful means for students to identify and express their own voice.

The processing of experience, particularly practice experiences, has the potential for students to develop insight into their personal perspective, development and most importantly ways of caring for themselves in practice. Journals are not therefore uni-dimensional. Wilson et al (1995) identify three forms of using journals in their study; student-teacher interaction journals, dialogue journals and critical groups or community inquiry. These forms of journal are more open documents than the journals in Holly's work. Student-teacher journals are designed for open reading and written feedback by student and tutor and levels of reflection are assessed.

Dialogue journals provide the opportunity for the writer to engage with an audience, whether a tutor or a peer. It is normally in a written form and there is a building of the writer's perspective as the dialogue explores through clarification and questioning of the writer's assumptions, narratives and arguments. The dialogic aspect of journal building over time enables the conversation itself to move learning forward. This type of collaborative work has implications for issues already raised in relation to power relations, trust and confidence (Section 2.2.1). The notion of dialogue in Wilson et al's work is to a degree similar to the process of engagement being explored in this study



between students and PD tutors. This is in relation to an interchange between student and tutor which is in part written and part verbal dialogue, founded on the process of reflection.

The final form of journaling is a process of journaling through open group discussion defined by Wilson et al (1995) as 'critical groups' or 'community inquiry'. Journals are public with feedback given to the writer and this intention is explicit from the outset. With such a public document, writers may be more guarded in the content of their writing although the purpose is to expose reflective thinking. With an audience in mind, a sifting or editing process is likely to ensure that the material stays within a comfort zone of self-disclosure. Journals can play a role as psychological dumping grounds. This cathartic action can be a release from frustration and possibly anger over behaviours, feelings or issues. So the sifting editorial process then becomes of greater significance. November (1996:117) seeks to explore ways for students to adopt a deep approach to learning and sees this aspect of journaling to be 'possibly undervalued'.

Context and audience have an impact on the potential attributes of such a dialogic journal (Roe and Stallman, 1994) and this may be bound up with the issue of documentation both public and private and relationships. Roe and Stallman (1994:586) talk in terms of 'students' inhibitions in expressing their ideas'. This is understandable as writing openly exposes the self to those who read the journal and questioning or challenge may initially be a new and possibly difficult even shaming experience.

A discussion on journaling would not be complete without the consideration of Progoff's (1975:86) work on intensive journaling. This form of journaling seeks to enable individuals to come to a greater understanding of self. A daily log, used on a continuing basis like a diary, captures the essence of the breadth of

subjective experiences 'that move through a person's mind and emotions'. It is the journal that brings together extracts of the log of 'unstructured, chronological recording of events of a person's life' in the way that the individual sees them and provides the forum for achieving a perspective and moving forward in the understanding of self (Progoff, 1975:67). Progoff (1975:87) makes a clear distinction about the purpose of the daily log in relation to what is commonly accepted as diary-keeping and emphasises further in his work that;

...the mere fact of continuously writing entries, as done in the keeping of a dairy, is not sufficient in itself to bring about deep changes in a person's life.

...entries should include only an essential minimum of descriptive material dealing with the external events of life. Whatever is necessary to record in this respect may be included, but it should be brief, so that we will be free to focus primarily on the interior aspects of our experiences.

Progoff (1975:88) further argues that the individual reflections should be 'succinct reflections of the mental, emotional, and imagery occurrences taking place within us'. He uses the log as a complementary process to the intensive journaling 'to record the unpremeditated flow of events of our inner experience'. This serves to capture and be a repository for a stream of personal thoughts and provide the means through which anything can be entered in a dialogue with self.

Learning logs have been identified as a way of recording particular events and used as a reflective self-reporting mechanism (Brockbank and McGill, 1998). Thornbury (1991) describes the piloting of teaching practice logs with trainees to encourage reflection on classroom practice. In this work, Thornbury (1991:140) states that logs are 'instrumental in the development of personal theories of learning and teaching.' In contrast to the personal diary, logs are normally records of events and therefore documented factual information. The

development of personal theories from Thornbury's work is the critical constituent for this discussion.

From reviewing the literature it is evident that reflective diaries, learning logs and reflective or learning journals have all been used to facilitate the process of reflection in both nursing and teacher education. Richardson and Maltby (1995), with reference to reflective practice in nursing argue that diary writing promotes the qualities for reflection;

...open-mindedness and motivation, and also the skills, i.e. self-awareness, description and observation, critical analysis and problem-solving, synthesis and evaluation. (Richardson and Maltby, 1995:235)

In the same way, writing within profiling can enhance reflective practice. In this case study site, journals have been used as an adjunct to profiling to capture a multiplicity of experience; thus enabling students to focus on the specifics of day-to-day events and critical incidents in preparation for profiling. Reflective writing becomes a conduit for personal developments and performs an important cognitive and affective purpose.

## **2.7 Summary**

In this chapter, a working definition has been presented alongside an examination of the concept of profiling. The term portfolio has been investigated and recognised as a discrete concept although in some literature it is used synonymously with profiling.

Much of the literature on profiling describes systems and processes by which profiling is implemented and enacted. Although James and Denley's (1992) work included an evaluation, there has been little published on the user's voice. From the review it appears that there are elements of the process of profiling yet to be researched in relation to engagement, reflection and personal demands in

profiling. This study aims to contribute to bridging that gap and exploring the student perspective and attitudes towards profiling.

Although not analogous, reflective journals in teacher education have been discussed in relation to developing 'pedagogical habits, skills and perceptions necessary for self-directed growth' (Wilson et al, 1995:167). The process of writing itself has been examined in this section for there appears to be similarities in diary-keeping and journaling for personal (and professional) development, supported by Holly's research (1988;1989). These discussions will be elaborated in relation to profiling in occupational therapy in subsequent chapters.

Emerging from this review of the literature there are a number of notions which have a critical role in underpinning the process of profiling and providing a conceptual framework. Profiling in this study focuses on occupational therapy students' experiential learning, engagement in the process of reflection and dialogue, and an active belief in empowering individuals through the profiling process. The locus of control (Munton, 1995) in the process thereby must lie with the student. The process of reflection on experience is central and underpins the exploration of knowledge, attitudes, values and the self. Thus the conceptual framework is developed with the discussion of key concepts of experiential learning and reflective practice.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Literature Review (II)**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, an in-depth exploration of the process of profiling and a working definition of profiles and profiling was provided while setting profiling within educational and institutional contexts. Writers use the terms interchangeably and it was necessary to provide greater conceptual clarification in order to set parameters for the study. The literature review demonstrated that writers such as Godfrey, 1993 and Brown, 1995, while describing professional experience, do not provide models or a theoretical or conceptual framework for profiling. The theoretical exposition begins with a discussion of experiential learning and its relationship to personal profiling.

This chapter argues that experiential learning and related concepts such as reflection provide the conceptual framework for personal profiling and the research itself. The process of reflection as an integral component of experiential learning is examined in order to gain a fuller understanding of students' experiences and attitudes to personal profiling.

The methodological approach to reviewing literature mirrored the approach described in Chapter Two. The initial search focused on experiential learning in health and social care. The key term 'experiential learning' was matched with 'professional development' for an enhanced search of literature, using electronic databases. Very little literature was retrieved. A second phase of hand searching (Steward, 2003) likewise revealed little. Daley (2001) identifies that there is very little research on experiential learning in relation to the how and what learning occurs from clinical experiences in nursing. A similar lack of research is

evident across AHPs, specifically in relation to whether or not practitioners utilise reflection to integrate learning into their practice (Lowe et al, 2007).

Experiential learning is cited as an underpinning theoretical framework in a range of work; Cayne (1995) portfolio development, Blacker (2001) informal education and Reynolds (2005) service-learning, for example. However, they refer to it uncritically, acknowledging the influence of Kolb (1984) yet failing to explore the theoretical principles. Whilst reflection, one of several dimensions of Kolb's model is focused upon to some extent greater emphasis is placed on the impact of Schön's influential work (1983; 1989) in relation to reflective practice. Reynolds (1999) claims that characteristics of experiential learning presented in the literature have often been simplistic reductions of Kolb's work. The unquestioning acceptance of the work as seen may be attributed to practitioners' struggle to find simplicity and evidence to support their practice in the increasing complexities of service delivery. Schön's work may also feel accessible to practitioners in their pursuit of reflective practice.

### **3.2 Experiential Learning**

Perceptions of experience are unique to the individual and influenced by exposure to similar events in the past, attitudes, values, gender and cultural background. The multiplicity of influences have a fundamental effect on the way new experiences are received, perceived and accommodated. The term *experiential learning* is loosely described as learning through doing experience(s). Yet Moon (2004:2) considers it, like reflection, separate from 'generic' learning and as a form of more sophisticated learning. More recently, Beard and Wilson (2006:16) argue that it is 'an underpinning philosophy that acts as a thread joining many learning theories together.' However, it is the element of reflection within the cycle of experiential learning which has captured

the attention of researchers and this relationship will be discussed later in the chapter.

To learn from experience seems to be a common sense notion which applies to 'everyday' learning, informal learning and formal learning. However, defining experience is not straight forward as Boud et al (1993:7) argue. An experience is multi-faceted, multi-layered and inextricably linked with past experiences. This complexity they claim,

...almost defies analysis as the act of analysis inevitably alters the experience and learning that flows from it. The experience is perceived as personal and unique.

Further complexity lies in the process of informal learning itself as Turner (2006:317) identifies in relation to beginning teachers, arguing that it is highly contextualised and individualistic, being based on cognitive, affective and behavioural development.

Informal learning as proposed by Turner is implicit, reactive and deliberative. It recognises purposeful learning from the experience itself, others and the spaces surrounding the experience. Eraut (2004:247) emphasises that the work-based environment is 'rarely structured with learning in mind.' Informal learning implies the possibility of individual agency in relation to what is being learned, how it is learned and what happens as a 'result' of the learning.

For learning to take place beyond the perception of experience and acquisition of 'know how to do' there must be some form of active engagement (cognitive and affective) in the experience and learners must own and value their experience (Kolb and Kolb, 2005). Cuffaro (1995) emphasises that action and thought inform each other thus arguing the two must not be separated as one informs the other. Thereby the experience becomes meaningful. Positive or negative previous experience(s) can impact on the level of engagement an individual

wishes to invest in new learning. Exploring new opportunities may be perceived as risk-taking, moving away from a firm familiar knowledge base and safety of knowing, to unfamiliar territory where opportunities and challenges are faced, new knowledge found or constructed. Previous negative experiences can potentially inhibit deeper levels of learning and exploration beyond the habitual comfort zones or levels of risk-taking.

Dewey (1933) appears to be the earliest educational learning theorist to explore learning in the context of experience. To learn from experience Dewey (1938) argues that there must be interaction between the individual and the environment. This interaction of the inner and external worlds of the individual enables a more holistic *sense-making* process of learning. This active engagement is a basic tenet of experiential learning, not the tools and techniques from which learning experiences are created for learners (Kolb and Kolb, 2005). The emphasis is on learning which is relatively independent of tutor intervention (Moon, 2004).

A distinction between learning from experience and experiential learning is pivotal to the study given the contexts (University and practice settings) in which students learn. Usher and Solomon (1999) define learning from experience as learning in 'life-world' contexts and everyday experience. Experiential learning thereby being learning from experiences which have been structured (Gibbs, 1988), constructed or created to facilitate the derivation of knowledge (Beard and Wilson, 2002) as in the occupational therapy programme. This emphasises how experiences are unique to the learners. Life worlds are dynamic and cannot be replicated in exactly the same form. Practice experience can be a combination of both Usher and Solomon's definition through exposure to the milieu of informal interactions and Gibbs' in relation to explicitly structured practice-based



learning by practice educators. The profiling system therefore seeks to bring together experience(s) and develops further existing or new experiences.

### **3.2.1 Kolb's experiential learning theory**

Kolb (1984) argues that experiential learning theory offers an approach to learning well-founded on the key disciplines of philosophy and social and cognitive psychology. It provides a framework in which there can be an exploration and strengthening of the interface between personal development, education and work. Certainly, for adult learning programmes focusing on the promotion of personal growth, the development of self-awareness, the sense of a critical perspective on experiences and fostering an increase in responsibility and autonomy is fundamental (Rogers, 2002). Furthermore, Kolb argued that learning would be; '...a central lifelong task essential for personal development and career success...' (1984:3).

The relevance of these notions for personal profiling lies in Kolb's (1984) components of the experiential learning cycle which constitute the driving force behind PPD accordingly in this study:

- *Education* relates to University-based elements;
- *work* relates to the work-based learning experience (placements);
- *personal development* relates to personal (and professional) development in University-based and practice-based elements.

Kolb in his work acknowledges Dewey (1933), Lewin (1951) and Piaget (1970) and refers to them as 'the foremost intellectual ancestors of experiential learning theory' (1984:15). Kolb makes particular reference to the importance of 'experience' as an event and the analysis and theoretical orientation of post-experience conceptualisation, emerging from Lewin's leadership development work. Kolb recognises that in pursuing an inquiry into experiential learning the therapeutic psychologies contribute also, in relation to the integration of cognitive and affective dimensions of experience.

Immediately apparent is that Kolb bases his theory on cognitivist assumptions although essentially an eclectic approach is adopted. By drawing selectively on the work of a number of significant theorists Kolb (1984:38) presents a working definition of experiential learning which at first sight appears accessible:

...the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.

Conversely, what lies behind 'transformation' alone is a complex set of processes and Quay (2003:106) argues that this 'provides a perceptively simple yet conceptually complex definition'. The complexities inherent in each stage, as stepping stones to the transformation of learning, remain relatively unexplained.

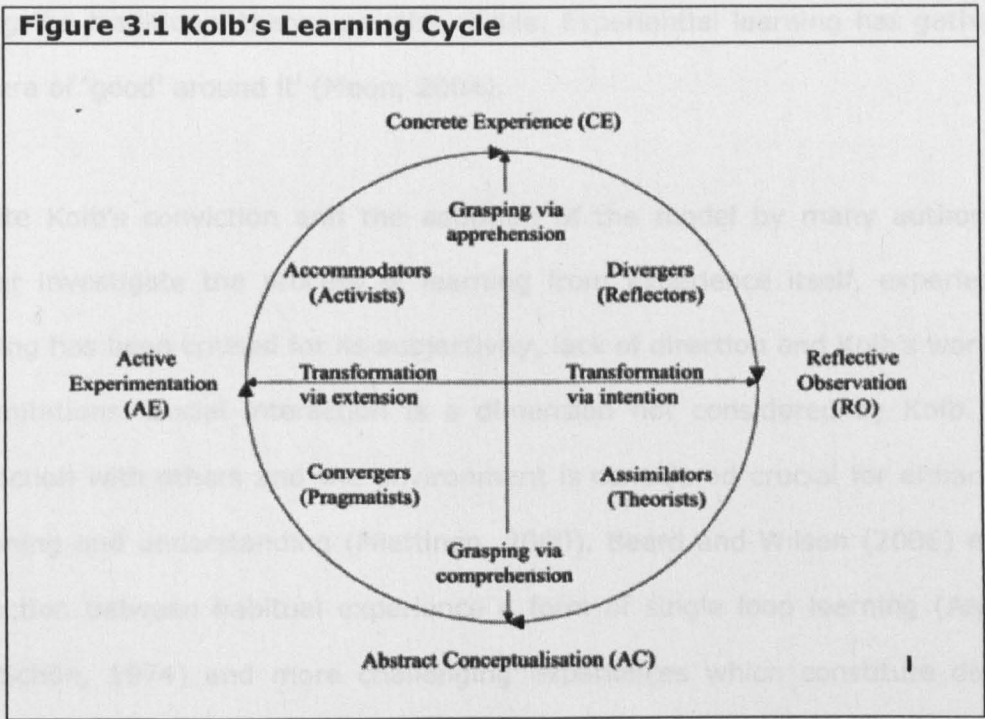
Kolb offers six propositions that characterise experiential learning which can be summarised as follows:

- Learning is best conceived as a process;
- Learning is a continuous process grounded in experience;
- The process of learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world;
- Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world;
- Learning involves transactions between the person and the environment;
- Learning is the process of creating knowledge.

and a four-staged cyclical model of learning (Figure 3.1) where 'Knowledge is continuously derived from and tested out in the experiences of the learner.' (Kolb, 1984:27).

Kolb's model begins with concrete experience from which observation and reflection takes place. This is followed by a description of the experience bringing together and connecting known theories to that experience (abstract conceptualisation) to enable the individual to move forward and construct new approaches to future experience (active experimentation). The transformation of knowledge is characterised by the dialectical tension of knowledge intention (reflective observation) and knowledge extension (active experimentation) (Kaye, 2002). The learner thus draws on their personal resources (reflective observation) to interact with the environment (active experimentation), external

resources. 'The learner must continually choose which set of learning abilities he or she will use in a specific learning situation' (Kolb et al, 2000:3).



Kolb argues for learners to be effective they need to possess each competence within the process and to observe and reflect on experience from multiple perspectives. In the process of learning the learner engages in the resolution of learning tensions and/or conflicts. In knowledge acquisition, the resolution between concrete experience (apprehension) and abstract conceptualisation (comprehension) must necessarily take place to contextualise and make meaningful the experience.

The unequivocal acceptance of Kolb's model for well over 20 years by educators and practitioners indicates that it is a durable model and meaningful. It bridges the theory/practice divide and gives academic credibility to formal learning in practice in terms of the transference of skills into the working environment and the development of new knowledge from the experience of practice. The

attraction may also be that it embraces deductive and inductive approaches to theory, as Vince (1998:306) suggests it provides 'a bridge over the divide between objectivity and subjectivity, positivism and phenomenology'. Thus ending the traditional theory practice divide. Experiential learning has gathered an 'aura of 'good' around it' (Moon, 2004).

Despite Kolb's conviction and the adoption of the model by many authors to further investigate the process of learning from experience itself, experiential learning has been criticised for its subjectivity, lack of direction and Kolb's work for its limitations. Social interaction is a dimension not considered by Kolb. The interaction with others and the environment is considered crucial for enhancing reasoning and understanding (Miettinen, 2000). Beard and Wilson (2006) make distinction between habitual experience a form of single loop learning (Argyris and Schön, 1974) and more challenging experiences which constitute double loop learning. The former they argue may cause false conclusions to be drawn and not promote understanding or explain change and new experiences. The nature of experience itself must also be considered consciously at a level of self-awareness if new knowledge and development is to be achieved.

Beneath the apparent simplicity of the model lie a number of questions. These are in relation to the nature of the experience (informal doing or formal, planned exposure for learning), the impact of external influences on the individual learner (including relationships and context specific influences), the depth of learning and nature of personal theory-building taking place and issues of 'connectiveness' of the learning for future experiences. For educationalists, how to maximise the potential harnessed within an experience and developing the individual's level of self-awareness, is crucial.

Kolb's model is founded on 'here and now' experiences and 'there and then' post-conceptualising of experience to inform future behaviour. Experiential learning is also, I would argue, about self-awareness and self-preparedness. Thus, exploring the 'there and hence', periodic post-conceptualisation is critical. Re-interpreting experiences in the light of new knowledge enables individuals to gain greater depth of understanding, insight and resilience. The work of Beard and Wilson (2006:35) has resonance. It is possible to learn from:

- An event at the time;
- A past event when reflecting on it later;
- Learning more from a past event when thinking about it further (in the future);
- Re-interpreting the past event differently in the light of further experience (and new knowledge);
- Analysing future scenarios (what may be).

In Kolb's seminal work reflection on experience has generally been an accepted concept. However, Holman et al (1997) consider Kolb's emphasis on reflection to be over-simplified and almost separate from the cyclical process. The *there and hence* that concerns the process of prospective reflection on experience (preparedness), that is, the preparedness for similar events remains unacknowledged. Further prospective analysis and reflection on future scenarios enables the unpredictable occurrences which add complexity to the overall experience to be considered. Thus greater depth of meaning and making sense can occur; Kolb fails to discuss this and the 'sleeping effect', the 'delayed reaction to experiential learning' identified as significant for adult learners (Hall et al, 1996:397). Furthermore the social or professional context and individual's relationships with others are not primary concerns for Kolb in his generic analysis, but crucial components of this study.

I would argue in the health and social care context that the basis of learning is sense-making out of a complex and often unpredictable environment. The social context of experience is an integral part of a healthcare practitioner's working life. This social context of experience(s) is crucial to enhance reasoning and the

quality and depth of understanding (Miettinen, 2000). This is achieved through both internal dialogue with self and external processes (others) (Holman et al, 1997). The concept of reflection requires exploration in the sense of being 'the "engine" that shifts surface to deep learning' (Moon, 2004:50) and role of significant others in enhancing the quality of learning through support techniques such as coaching, mentoring or personal tutoring.

Holman et al (1997) in critiquing Kolb's theory are explicit in concluding that learning does not need to be cyclical in nature to be effective; thus disagreeing with Kolb's theory of sequential progression through a learning cycle. They value dialogic interaction (internal and external) as a critical aspect in the process of learning. Indeed interaction is considered vital in transformative learning (Cranton, 1996). This aspect is particularly relevant to the study. Profiling sets out to facilitate students' learning from extant personal knowledge. The starting point may not therefore, be as Kolb argues, begin at the point of concrete experience.

Vince (1998), whilst acknowledging the importance of the theory-practice link in Kolb's model, expresses some important reservations. In his critique, Vince identifies five issues and areas for theoretical development:

1. Experience needs to be seen as constructed, shaped, and contained by social power relations.
2. Complex and unequal relations around knowledge are constructed between people as an integral part of the learning process.
3. There is a need to focus on the here and now experience and the mirroring process between the people within the education environment and the organizations they represent.
4. Finding ways of working with underlying and unconscious processes, particularly defence mechanisms, is necessary.
5. Second-order or meta-processes relating to each aspect of the cycle are included. (Vince, 1998:309)

Issues two and four are particularly pertinent to this discussion and resonate here with the issues raised earlier in this chapter in relation to the simplicity

of the Kolbian model, particularly in terms of psychological process, meta-processes and contextual influences. Supporting this view Quay (2003:106) argues that there is 'an imperative to adapt, to evolve, and to learn via our experience'. This relates to experiential learning from the perspective of students exploring their own construction of reality, experience and milieu.

Kolb explicitly states that the model is an experiential learning cycle. He later discusses experiential learning theory of development which acknowledges maturation and developmental achievements. It attends to the;

...transaction between internal characteristics and external circumstances, between personal knowledge and social knowledge. (Kolb, 1984: 133)

The learning cycle appears to be a generic interpretation of complex activities (Beard and Wilson, 2006). The concept of experiential learning development is in part more closely associated with the issues Vince raises (1998). Personal and social knowledge however, is not explored in any depth by Kolb and as Kaye (2002) argues he leaves himself open to criticism. Paradoxically, many authors accept Kolb's model without challenge and the experiential learning theory of development which Kolb expands upon in the latter part of his work appears to go unrecognised.

### **3.2.2 Beyond Kolb**

Since the publication of Kolb's work adaptations of the learning cycle have been proposed (Gibbs, 1988; Jarvis, 1999) which encourage deep rather than surface learning (Entwistle, 1988). Indeed, a spectrum of meanings has been attributed to the concept 'experiential learning', its practices and ideologies (Weil and McGill, 1989).

It is important in any definition that the transactional relationship between the person and the environment is seen as both subjective in the sense of the

personal experience (internal state) and the objective experience, whatever constitutes an environment at the time; 'a situation' whether this is an interaction with another person, an event or a topic.

...is whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had...  
(Dewey, 1938:43).

The holistic nature, the integration of thinking, feeling and action in the process of learning makes experiential learning distinct. Learners drive their self-development through the process of managing the learning experience and reflecting on experience (Vince, 1998). This relates directly to the nature of student engagement in and attitudes to personal profiling.

In attempting to 'make sense of' experiential learning Weil and McGill (1989:3) are more explicit than Kolb. Three domains of human learning; cognition, affect and psycho-motor skills are considered, with the intention of exploring *being* in the world. New knowledge is recognised as having the potential to bring about personal change, if the conditions encourage it and the individual is willing to accept and connect with the change process. They identify four foci or villages of experiential learning, each having 'interrelated ideas and concerns about experiential learning' (1989:3). Associated with the villages are individuals who share common aims and values. Of relevance in this research is Village Four focusing on personal growth and development; personal and interpersonal experience, increasing self-awareness and group effectiveness. This embraces the essence of profiling which sets out to enable students to consciously explore cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions of PPD. Thus capturing socio-emotional dimensions recognised by Quay (2003) as key features of experience including risk-taking, creative problem-solving and feedback which Kolb fails to foreground.



Boud, et al (2000), also explore the pivotal nature of experience in learning and the individuals' role within the process. They make five propositions in which socio-emotional and socio-cultural dimensions of learning through experience are explicit and are central to the developmental dimensions of experiential learning:

1. Experience is the foundation of, and the stimulus for learning;
2. Learners actively construct their experience;
3. Learning is a holistic process;
4. Learning is socially and culturally constructed;
5. Learning is influenced by the socio-emotional context in which it occurs.

These propositions extend Kolb's (1984) definition. Proposition 2 articulates *active* construction of learning and *depth* of learning is implicit within the detail of the schema. Surface approaches to learning focus on the accumulation of knowledge; facts matter. Deep learning, in contrast, is about a world where active interplay between knowledge, professional application and personal mastery exists. This proposition is complex; together with Proposition 3, 'Learning is a holistic process' and the influence of the socio-emotional context (5), are far from simple processes. It could be argued that learners must be in a state of preparedness to engage in experiential learning to make the most of experience(s).

Bringing about change is emphasised in Eraut's definition (1994). He defines the 'experiential' as taking on board the experience as it happens and then for the experience to be reviewed through the process of reflective thinking before cognitive assimilation takes place. That is, the assimilation into existing mental schema so that it can potentially bring about change. The post-situation phase is therefore a crucial component for bringing about change. Reflective thinking is emphasised as a central feature.

From this definition thinking begins within experience thus individuals draw upon more sophisticated psychological processes. It can be said to be 'a forked road situation that is ambiguous, that presents a dilemma, that proposes alternatives'

(Dewey, 1933:122), therefore 'risky'; yet it may also occur in a 'taken-for-granted situation' (Blacker, 2001:90).

Experiential learning by its very nature is flexible, student-centred to varying degrees and is designed to facilitate change in behaviour. Behaviour in this context is to mean not only behaviour categorised in the cognitive domain but also in psycho-motor and affective domains, in some shape or form. Reynolds (2005:42) states that experiences 'serve to motivate students, engage and stimulate them towards higher-order thinking' and acknowledges the work of Kahne and Westheimer (1996) in relation to the need for critical inquiry and reflective action. For instrumental learners, who like a clear set of parameters in formal learning solution-focused activities, experiential learning may lead them out of their comfort zone. Experiential learning has been identified as open-ended and messy, which may in turn lead to it feeling, to some learners and tutors, a risky activity (Dennison and Kirk, 1990). A framework in which experiential learning can be harnessed may provide instrumental learners some form of security whilst exploring and building new personal and professional knowledge.

Blacker (2001:90) emphasises the potential for learning in any situation; 'By exploring them we can often uncover useful insights into ourselves and our work'. New meanings can also be found 'hidden in old experiences' if structure and opportunity are available to re-explore past experiences (Beard and Wilson, 2006:37). This encapsulates the working definition of profiling formulated in the previous chapter. Within the context of the study, the system is designed to enable learners to contextualise and integrate theory and practice and explore the socio-emotional and cultural aspects of professional practice as beginning therapists. Whilst theory is applied in practice (work-based experience), theory can also emerge from the practice experience itself (Fish, 1988). Re-visiting

experiences in the light of new knowledge is encouraged through profiling to extend and expand the students' understanding and perspective on the inter-relationship of theory and practice in everyday client-based situations and complex case issues.

The concept of a learning space is an emerging theme in the literature and one discussed by Kolb and Kolb (2005) most recently in relation to enhancing experiential learning. Making *my space* for learning is emphasised by Johns (2007) in relation to supervision and is equally pertinent here. This links with the earlier point made about dialogic relationships. Conversational learning provides opportunities for reflection and making sense and meaning of experiences thus potentially improving the effectiveness of learning (Keeton et al, 2002). This conversational learning is a core feature of the profiling system in the case study site.

### **3.2.3 Experiential Learning: transformation of experience**

Having discussed experiential learning from the perspective of Kolb (1984) and others (Beard and Wilson, 2002; Vince, 1998, Holman et al, 1997) it is necessary to unpack the concept of reflection in greater detail as this is the key aspect of experiential learning for the purposes of this review. Most importantly this assists in exploring the notion of reflection in relation to Schön's work (1987) and others on the transformation of experience in practice and becoming a reflective practitioner in the journey of profiling.

'Reflection' has become part of the everyday professional vocabulary yet difficulties still remain in defining the concept (Moon, 2004). Kolb, although frequently cited in the literature, devotes little attention to defining or discussing the nature of reflection. The cognitive process is, in this context, more than a moment's pause for thought about an experience or a recall of events (Andrews

et al, 1998). With reference to professional development, Moon (1999) argues, that in general, individuals reflect for a purpose; reflection, being a cognitive process for purpose or outcome. She comments that complex issues can come to mind spontaneously which could imply reflection as an unconscious occurrence. She argues that reflection involves complex mental processes as described by Dewey (1933). Atkins and Murphy (1993) suggest the skills necessary for engaging in reflection, acknowledging that the process of reflection draws on affective dimensions of self; self-awareness, description, critical analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Johns (1993:23) also recognises this with individuals engaging in reflective practice 'to achieve more desirable, effective and satisfying work'.

Reflecting on practice experience is a highly skilled activity requiring analysis of the effectiveness of actions and judgements in the context of the experience (Andrews et al, 1998). Implicit in this I would argue, is the exploration of reasoning itself. The exploration of experience through the process of reflection, contributes to conceptual understanding of that experience (Thorpe, 1993). Indeed, for Dewey (1933) it is sense making where perplexity, muddle or confusion exists. Transformation of experience into meaningful learning must not be underestimated (Alsop, 2000); it requires connection between active thinking and doing (Thompson and Thompson, 2008). Boud et al (1993:9) focus on cognitive processes defining reflection as;

...those processes in which learners engage to recapture, notice and re-evaluate their experience, to work with the experience and turn it into learning.

The term, 'process' however does not go far enough to explain the concept. Fish and Twinn (1997:52) define it further as; '...systematic, critical and creative thinking about action, with the intention of understanding its roots and processes'. This certainly indicates that the learner is interrogating the experience to access greater depth of understanding. That is not only focusing on

the experience but also the interacting influences and 'its roots' from which theoretical tenets can be examined. Fish and Twinn (1997) point out that the outcome is conceptual understanding and new knowledge of the complex processes which interact in the dynamic nature of experience. These definitions contain no explicit reference to change in behaviour being an outcome of reflection; the emphasis is on the *intention* to learn through the process which is seen as a *change event in itself*. Andrews et al (1998) argue that if acquisition of knowledge is perceived as an outcome, then practice is unlikely to change. It is the inter-relationship of existing knowledge and practice from past experience integrated with new knowledge which can bring about change in practice.

Without action and change transformation does not occur (Lumby, 1998) and therefore being reflective in practice is 'unlikely to become legitimised in everyday practice' (Driscoll, 2001:102). Bulman (2000:5) discusses reflection in terms of a vehicle;

...for legitimising professional knowledge that develops from realities of practice and challenges more traditional forms of knowing.

In exploring and intellectualising experiences, practitioners' feelings and emotions must be acknowledged for transformation to take place with meaning. The work of Boyd and Fales (1983) considers the centrality of self in the process of reflection bringing together self, 'human agency and structure' (Ghaye and Lillyman, 2000:16) thus attending to the affective dimension.

Two dimensions therefore emerge; content and process. Cuffaro (1995) argues that action and thinking inform each other and they are inextricably linked. This gives rise to the question of whether both dimensions are afforded equal importance (Andrews et al, 1998). Various models have been presented in the literature ranging from structured models (Johns, 2000) and hierarchical models (Mezirow, 1981) to cyclical models (Gibbs, 1988), iterative cycles (Atkins and

Murphy, 1993) and learning spirals akin to the action research process (Ghaye et al, 2000). The latter model arguing that through the process of reflection individuals never return to the same psychological place. Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) have proposed a holistic model which they purport is more enabling than prescriptive and not bounded by a starting position to the process of reflection. The model requires high level skills of engagement to challenge personal and professional values, interrogate knowledge, concepts, practice thus exploring micro and macro perspectives and relationship between *my world* and the socio-political world in which interaction occurs.

The balance between the two constituents in reflection, content and process, vary in the models cited. Some are competence-based others focus on experiential, personal or transformative perspectives working from micro to macro worlds in the process. As discussed in Chapter Two, Johns (2000:34) sees the learning process itself as a learning journey. Learning about self (self-awareness) as well as extending personal and professional knowledge. For individuals to be truly reflective they must remain open-minded and develop self-confidence, honesty and self-awareness (Castle, 1996). In his earlier work Johns (1995) discusses not only being open but curious. He suggests that reflective practice provides emancipation, is enlightening, an opportunity for practitioners to 'see who they are within the context of their practice' and look 'outside themselves to envision new ways to practice' (1995:27). This highlights a third dimension of reflection that of development. Cranston (1996), like Johns, draws attention to the potential of emancipatory learning. This links to the dimensions of learning which November (1996) discusses in the context of journaling. It is the depth of learning and the distance of the psychological journey travelled which can be the indicator of personal development, therefore of particular relevance to profiling.

### 3.3 Reflective Practice

The concept of reflective practice is not unique to health and social care professions. In discussing critical reflection and reflective practice generically, Barnitt (1992:198) argues that it is important to enable learners to;

...develop the capacity to keep an eye on themselves and to engage in critical dialogue with themselves in *all* they think and do ... it is a reflexive process in which the students 'interrogates' their thoughts or actions. The learning outcome to be desired, from *every* student, is that of the reflective practitioner.

Defining reflective practice, reflection-on-practice and reflexivity is as slippery as defining profiles and profiling. Ghaye and Ghaye (1998:1) asked 50 experienced teachers to complete the phrase 'Reflection-on-practice means...'. Responses ranged from focusing on the day's chaos to increasing awareness and '...helping you to see what you would or would not do again and why...'. The responses focused on what individuals think, feel and do. Ghaye and Ghaye argue that reflection-on-practice is complex and potentially risky.

With reference to healthcare professionals, Ghaye and Lillyman (2000:xiii) provide twelve principles which in their words define a '..landscape of reflective practice..'. Central to the principles is the use of 'I' and the values that link knowledge, practice and accountability, thus suggesting that reflection attends to much more than the application of knowledge. They argue (2000:10) that reflection is 'a conscious and intentional activity' and that reflective practice is about learning from experience in its widest sense, similar to Johns' interpretation (1995). It is not just personal knowledge it is about learning with and from others and this includes clients in the practice setting. 'Living theory' acknowledges and values practice:

Practice interacts with theory. They need each other. Through reflection-on-practice we generate 'practical theory'. Reflection on practical theory, in turn, helps to inform and transform our clinical work. (Ghaye and Lillyman, 2000:30)

Reflective practice is multi-dimensional. Ghaye and Lillyman in their principles not only identify values, they highlight that learning is about accountability in

respect of self and engagement in practice (2000:xiii). The practitioner is not only interacting with but learning from '...patients, clients, managers, families' as well healthcare colleagues' (2000:9) to make a difference in clinical care and or service delivery and more importantly, '...to make wiser and more principled clinical decisions.' (2000:9). Emphasis is clearly about building new knowledge and better understanding. Guided reflection is strongly advocated by Johns (1995:49) to increase the depth of exploration in relation to *looking out* and challenging self in context and *looking in* to focus on the thoughts and feelings consciously. Duffy (2004:334) identifies the process as beneficial in that it 'liberates practitioners from oppressive constraints of practice'. Reflective practice, importantly, contributes to the process of valuing self in care-giving (Johns, 1995) and improvement in the quality of care given and consequently the environment (Ghaye et al, 2000).

Thinking on your feet is not carried out in any simplistic way but through knowledge building, experience and evidence. Practitioners may call it working intuitively. Schön (1983:62) identifies that reflection-in-action possesses several cognitive and affective processes central to the activity. In Schön's (1983:62) words it is: '..the art through which practitioners sometimes cope with the troublesome "divergent" situations of practice'. The processes are:

- reflection on tacit norms;
- judgement and the appreciations which underlie that judgement;
- strategies;
- theories of behaviour implicit in actions;
- feelings in regard to the situation;
- framing of the problem;
- role taken, this being in the wider contextual situation.

Knowing-in-action becomes knowledge-in-action if we go on to describe it (Brockbank and McGill, 1998). For Schön (1987) reflection-in-action is tacit, spontaneous and dynamic and therefore could be described as improvisational.



To make a distinction Brockbank and McGill (1998) argue that whilst knowing-in-action and reflection-in-action support each other; the former is 'the knowing' that occurs in routine practice, the reflection-in-action comes into being when practice becomes questioned, for example a planned therapeutic protocol does not 'fit' the client's presenting difficulties, complex cases present or the unexpected arises, for example a potentially volatile situation between clients occurs in a groupwork session. This is a centring on the dynamic nature of practice.

Eraut (1994) and Beard and Wilson (2006) discuss post-experience reflection as a key factor for extending the learning experience. Reflection-on-action is carried out with a view to enhancing the quality of the interaction, practitioner skills and the quality of future service. In considering the concept there appears to be two components. Firstly, there is reflection on the event and/or situation in which post-reflection can occur. This includes the context, interactions, feelings which arise and the practical strategies adopted with outcomes. Secondly, there is the more difficult process of reflecting on the 'reflections-in-action' and self-questioning. What cognitive processes and strategies did I engage in through the event? What did I work through to achieve that outcome? Were there alternatives that I did not consider at the time that might have been feasible, desirable or viable? Here there is an additional exploration of the problem-solving, clinical and ethical reasoning processes and the judgements and/or decisions that were made at the time.

Brockbank and McGill (1998) contend that it is the learner's capacity to reflect-on-action which is significant in developing critically reflective learning. Earlier in the discussion it was acknowledged that reflection alone does not access the higher order levels of knowledge that are akin to critical reflection and critically reflective learning. Therefore the learner needs to be facilitated and supported

in opening up opportunities to develop such skills. Brockbank and McGill (1998) propose a hierarchy of reflection; four dimensions in which propositional and tacit knowledge are highlighted, with the complexity of the process of reflection being acknowledged.

The first dimension identified refers to action: propositional knowledge; knowledge-in-use; knowledge-in-action. The second dimension builds upon the first through reflection-in-action. Increasing complexity of cognitive activity is the third dimension in which the individual describes what happens within the process of reflection-in-action. The fourth dimension involves reflection on actions taken as a result of dimension three. This deepens the level of understanding about the action itself, attending to the cognitive and affective dimensions of engagement. Although the dimensions are separated Brockbank and McGill argue that there is an inter-relationship, as in thinking, feeling and doing.

In later work, 'reflection on the reflection-in-action', a fifth dimension, is discussed in relation to double loop learning (McGill and Brockbank, 2004). In this process of reflection individuals are enabled to recognise the paradigm in which they work and shift paradigm (particularly in working with others) and maybe 'understand and work across paradigms'; double loop learning (Argyris and Schön, 1974). Greenwood (1998) similarly discusses double loop learning and argues that reflection prior to action is an important act. Prospective reflection is deemed valuable by a number of recent authors (Beard and Wilson, 2004; Thompson and Thompson, 2008). This acknowledges the notion of psychological preparedness for forthcoming experiences. Greenwood (1993:1186) is critical of Schön in that he 'implicitly undervalues reflection-before-action.' a significant dimension in profiling. The process of facilitation is the cornerstone to successful reflection at its deepest, most critical level.

Engaging in dialogue makes explicit that which may be implicit but remain unrecognised by the learner.

Schön's work (1987) places emphasis on the individual. Although he recognises the organisational context there is little exploration of the socio-political dimensions of the context or issue of externality. Neither does he explore the socio-emotional aspects of reflective practice discussed earlier in this chapter. These dimensions together with the prospective reflection are crucial for the reflective practitioner in modernised health and social care practice. Similarly, Ghaye and Ghaye (1998:7) with reference to teachers argue that a flexible and enabling model of reflection-on-practice is needed on the basis that; 'we begin to reflect-on-practice from different starting positions' and that in learning there is a need to be responsive. The model they propose is holistic not linear or mechanistic. It is: cyclical, flexible, focused and holistic. This model embraces the complex nature of experiential learning. It addresses the concerns raised earlier in this chapter about the roundedness of the experiential learning and development which was not fully captured in Kolb's (1984) cyclical model.

Whilst Brockbank and McGill (1998) discuss hierarchical structures prior to this, Mezirow (1981) focused on the notion of progression in the reflective process. He drew attention to the movement of learners through increasingly complex levels of reflectivity. This developmental model is presented as a Taxonomy of Reflectivity. Objects of reflectivity mirror closely the domains discussed earlier in the chapter, perceiving, thinking and acting. The act of reflectivity is according to Mezirow (1981:12) purely being aware of:

...a specific perception, meaning or behaviour of our own or of habits we have of seeing, thinking or acting.

From the state of reflectivity, Mezirow draws attention to six further levels, each increasing in complexity of activity. The capital letters denote Mezirow's emphasis:

- Affective Reflectivity
- Discriminant Reflectivity
- Judgemental reflectivity
- CONCEPTUAL REFLECTIVITY
- PSYCHIC REFLECTIVITY
- THEORETICAL REFLECTIVITY

Theoretical reflectivity Mezirow (1981:12) argues is the process central to perspective transformation.

Barnitt (1992:198) emphasises criticality for reflective practice; enabling learners to engage in 'critical dialogue with themselves in *all* they think and do'. Barnitt (1997) offers a model of critical reflection which focuses on knowledge, self and world. Like Mezirow, his work is theoretically driven in contrast to other models which have emerged from experiential learning and focus on cues or questions for reflection. Timmins (2008:133) suggests that Barnitt's work is useful 'as building blocks for reflection'. Barnitt presents differing levels of criticality related to each of the three domains under the headings critical reasoning, critical self-reflection and critical action. In contrast to other models this explicitly addresses advancement of knowledge and thinking skills.

In discussing portfolio building, Timmins proposes super-imposing Barnitt's work with Boud and Walkers's model (1990; 1993) thus blending theory-practice perspectives. Brechin (2000) takes this further and expands the framework for critical reflection, proposing three overlapping domains; critical analysis, critical reflexivity and critical action which map to Barnitt's critical reasoning, critical self-reflection and critical action respectively. Brechin deems Barnitt's work to be comprehensive, logical, congruent and credible. In Brechin's framework there is explicit reference in critical reflexivity to questioning personal values and assumptions and problem-solving in critical action. Both are essential dimensions in critically reflective practice.

It can be seen that the models of reflection presented have been become increasingly sophisticated yet comprehensive with latter models addressing explicitly the inter-relationship between theory and practice, leading to greater depths of exploration in three domains; thinking, feeling and action.

There is little reference in the literature to age-related developmental stages and levels of reflection. Mezirow (1981) clearly indicates that critical consciousness and in particular theoretical reflectivity, becomes realised through *perspective transformation*, a major learning domain in adult learning and he uses the word 'unique' to distinguish clearly the concept of andragogy as opposed to pedagogy. The issue of thinking about experiences which do not map into existing constructs may block reflection, raise anxieties and therefore become troublesome (Mezirow, 1990). A personal tutor may in this developmental process be helpful, enabling the individual to acknowledge the feelings and work through the issue(s) to find new perspectives and resolution.

Moon (2000) suggests that it is possible that maturation and personal development are factors in achieving reflective practice although implicit in most literature is the notion of education and training. Attitudinal factors such as the potential or openness to learn must be present and Boniface (2002:298), working with occupational therapists, argues that; '...reflection can be taught, but there needs to be a spark of ability present.' Again attitudinal factors are emphasised by Thompson and Thompson (2008) who argue openness is key to successful engagement, more specifically, open mindedness, openness to learn and open knowledge. The skills of critical reflection may take time to develop just as November (1996) found in using journals with students to develop skills of reflection. There is a moment of self-awareness which propels the learner to fresh insight. Some individuals may need greater degrees of support through the process to get to that point, perhaps in part because they are out of their

comfort zone or experiencing what Joyce (1984) calls 'dynamic disequilibrium' or adjusting to a new learning style. This supports the rationale for a framework such as profiling, where tools are used to enable the individual develop their ability to reflect and provide ongoing support in the journey of professional development.

### **3.3.1 The Process of Reflection: engagement**

From the discussion thus far, both the level (Brockbank and McGill, 1998) and depth (Ramsden, 1992) of reflection are important if practitioners are to be considered reflective practitioners. This leads to the question of how student therapists come to develop and enhance the skills of reflection to make the transition from novice to competent therapist achieving mastery in professional practice skills.

From the definitions of reflection presented earlier in the discussion, Fish and Twinn (1997) and Ghaye and Lillyman (2000) focus on the systematic nature of reflection. Ghaye and Lillyman (2000) in their principles argue that reflective practitioners develop themselves and their work systematically and rigorously. A systematic approach therefore, appears to enable the individual to explore all avenues associated with the situation at the centre of their reflections and focus on situations from both cognitive and affective perspectives. In addition it encourages the individual to move from a position of description *about* the situation to becoming critically reflective and evaluative *on* the situation with the intent to evoke some form of action.

From the literature, a plethora of models or frameworks have been proposed by authors as discussed earlier. They range from simplistic models (Gibbs, 1988) to frameworks of increasing complexity (Atkins and Murphy, 1993; Ghaye and Ghaye, 1998; Johns, 2000; Brechin, 2008). The first stage in all models of

reflection appears to be description of experience or an event. This may be by thinking through or concretising what happened, verbalising or writing down the thoughts which emerge as a consequence of engaging in this mental activity (Jasper, 2003).

'Stepping back' to review earlier reflections enables greater depth of perspective and relates to the concept of meta-reflection. Ghaye and Lillyman (2000) emphasise its value in the context of triadic reflective arrangements in clinical supervision. Johns advocates a model for structured reflection enabling practice to be explored in depth and breadth (1993; 1995). He argues that a model of reflection to be useful to practitioners 'needs to be responsive and reflexive' (Johns, 1994:74). As the model has been utilised and evaluated so he has enhanced it ensuring practitioners question not only their knowledge in relation to practice but socio-political contexts and ethical issues which emerge in practice (2000). From this refinement the process of reflection feels more challenging than other models. Individuals explore their attitudes, values and feelings together with building personal knowing in practice. The self within a lived experience is a central tenet in Johns' model in relation to looking inwards and looking outwards to self in context. The pushing of personal and professional boundaries appears to be more of a key feature than in other theorists' models.

Johns (2000:38) argues that the benefit of becoming more reflective is the element of positive feedback, 'Practitioners come to feel valued within a positive reinforcing spiral'. Reflective practice makes visible personal knowledge which can be used reflexively for future experiences (Johns, 1993). Having positive attitude and commitment to reflective practice is fundamental, particularly in the beginning, but it is not always easy as Johns recognises; 'Practice is not always a pretty sight and practitioners may be motivated to avoid the self gaze' (Johns (2000:38). Fearing self exposure may be a contributory factor in initial

reluctance or resistance. Johns (2000:36) sees commitment as taking responsibility for self, 'recognising the temporality of experience over time' and being prepared to challenge 'believing that self and practice matter'. This may mean working through negativity, conflicting demands, challenging attitudes, values and beliefs to move forward. Openness and curiosity are vital to the emergence of new perspectives and ways of practice together with connecting and constructing personal knowledge in practice to develop new insights.

Rolfe et al (2001) propose a model for practitioners with an action-orientated level of reflection; thus, focusing the outcome of reflection back into client-based practice. This may feel more comfortable as a novice, with reflection solidly grounded in the realities of daily practice. The three components being firstly a descriptive level, 'what?'; secondly theory and knowledge building, 'so what?'; and lastly the action-orientated level, 'now what?'.

Similarly, Alsop (1995) in writing for practitioners, adopts this type of systematic approach in posing questions, albeit less simplistic than Rolfe. Alsop's work has immediate relevance and utility like Rolfe to the practice setting. Triggers as aide memoirs to work through given situations (case briefings/de-briefings) within time-limited periods with supervisors are attractive to students and practitioners. Reflection should be regarded as an important and intentional activity (Driscoll, 2001:102). An adhoc episode makes it vulnerable to the pressures of *busyness*. Boniface (2002) acknowledges that conflict exists between the pressures to address the demands of the service and time to engage in a reflective process for the purposes of enhancing in practice. For high quality practice Thompson and Thompson (2008) argue that the 'busier' or more pressured practitioners are the more reflective they need to be in order to prevent errors or slipping into habitual patterns of poor practice.



Whilst the models offered by Alsop (1998) and Rolfe et al (2001) explore the narratives told by practitioners about their experiences, what is missing is the explicit probing of the 'salience or what was most demanding about the situation' (Bulman, 2000:159) and an individual's operational theories. The level of searching that Johns (2000) model seeks to address is not actively promoted. To become critically reflective, depth of exploration in all domains, cognitive and affective is essential. I would argue that challenging the tacit theoretical basis of personal decisions and intervention strategies, together with awareness of the inter-relationship of the dynamics of a given situation and their impact, are key aspects of learning and progressing CPD. This is particularly relevant in relation to profiling. However, Alsop (2002:201) acknowledges new learning and CPD;

...are dependent on how skilfully you can reflect on your own and others' practice, to gain new insights, see new relationships, make new discoveries and make explicit the new learning that occurs.

This does refer to being explicit about new learning and the contextual implications of individuals' engagement in the experience. However, without explicit reference to both challenging the theory base as well as narratives of practice, how will novice students understand the requirements of the reflective process? It is this level of critical reflection which is critical to active learning and development. The process of reflection offers opportunities for exploring the interplay between personal knowing and professional theory and practice. It not only offers the application of theoretical concepts to the experiences being reflected upon but also importantly recognises that theory can come from practice and therefore can be a theory building process if individuals allow it to be. Johns (1994:72) focuses on ways of knowing in nursing. Experience changes ways of knowing in practice in relation to; empirics, ethics, personal and aesthetic knowledge. Carper's work (1978) has been influential in Johns' development of a model of structured reflection. Embedded within the model are these dimensions and with guidance the user explores each dimensions to make sense of experience and gain greater insight.

From a theoretical stance Fish (1988) and Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) embrace the situational and theoretical aspects of experience. In these models, individuals are led from the descriptive or narrative element (telling their story) to a more critical evaluation upon that experience, drawing upon theoretical concepts and broader perspectives from which to identify strategies for future experiences and action. This may involve the exploration of differing forms of knowledge and/or the gathering of new knowledge to facilitate changed behaviour. Johns (2000) is in contrast explicit about changes in knowing and changes in action.

Johns specifies ten conditions for the process of critical reflection (2000:36). The conditions emphasise the personal responsibilities and attributes needed for exploring experiences beyond the obvious. Identified is the need for an open and willing attitude to work with more challenging aspects of the professional role to the point of working with negative feelings as well as positive ones. The conditions expose attitudes, values and beliefs to review thus challenging experiences to gain new insights for building personal knowing in practice. Johns' model, as previously discussed, sets out to empower the individual within their practice. This may be perceived to be risky as actual and desirable practice is internally debated with its potential to awaken ethical dilemmas and challenge personal values and *positions*. Nevertheless without the depth of exploration can reflexivity be achieved? In effect students have to learn **how** to reflect and the latter model acknowledges that individuals may not, initially, be capable of working through the process in depth. This has been found in the work of Benner (1984) and Dryfus and Dryfus (1986) on the acquisition of skills and the hierarchy or stages which individuals need to work through to gain competency at each stage.

### **3.3.2 Profiling: actively reflecting on experiences**

In the case study site the profiling process enables students in the way Boud et al (1993) describe to actively build on their experiences. That is to actively reflect on experience(s) in pursuit of learning about and from it to gain insight and be better prepared for future encounters. This involves utilising existing knowledge, using evidence and thereby extending personal knowledge and repertoire in relation to ways of working.

Experiences within health and social care are likely to be complex and unpredictable. The profiling process triggers students to reflect on a series of experiences. The series may be focusing on a similar theme yet differing situations or single events within a particular context (for example placement). Initially students, through a 'silent' process of intra-personal reflection, process the experiences and then with their PD tutor share their reflections (silent knowing) in an open-ended semi-structured, dialogic, experiential process. It is essentially an unpredictable process in which PD tutor is a critical friend facilitating the student to work progressively at deeper levels of reflection. Individuals are encouraged to reflect on action in order that new insights may emerge. An outcome of this self-analysis may be changed behaviour, altered patterns of thinking or perhaps an active decision to 'wait and see', a holding position.

Similarities exist in journaling. Journals, like profiles, serve as a spring board for learners, they move from a position of reporting events to being reflective in thinking about experiences. Two dimensions of reflection thereby emerge, content and process (Andrews et al, 1998). Personal development according to November (1996:119) concerns '...width, depth and distance...'. 'Distance' is a dimension of the process of profiling. A period for learners to familiarise themselves with the context, their expectations, skills and capabilities. As a

result they will (or begin to) feel more comfortable about constructing learning. This period varies between individuals and raises the issue of readiness to begin the process and preparedness to engage in a reflective process to achieve deep learning, beyond a surface exploration. The system is designed to enable students to integrate theory and practice and consider the multi-faceted nature of practice, including socio-emotional dimensions.

Formal learning in the context of this study is a social, experiential process. From the perspective of PPD, propositions 2 and 3 of Weil and McGill's work (1989) acknowledge that engaging with the socio-emotional dynamics of the context are necessary if critical learning is to occur. In later work Brockbank and McGill (1998) suggest it is through reflective dialogue with others that the conditions for critical reflective learning are created. This dimension of learning must be at the core of education for occupational therapists to become reflective practitioners in a complex world where circumstances can be unpredictable, unforeseen and unexpected. Students must acknowledge multiple identities; self-as-learner, self-as-student occupational therapist and self-as-potential therapist (work-based placements). The management of these multiple identities requires more than being reflective; being critically reflective in dialogue is a necessary constituent of being an evidence-based reflective practitioner.

Boud et al (1994) argue that reflection is a process, not an outcome but that the outcomes of reflection may include new ways of working, clarification and problem-resolution. Brookfield (1995) states that critically reflective school teachers have the ability to stand outside of their own practice and see the wider social and political perspective of what the curriculum offers. Likewise, major health policies and initiatives are an important reality. Reflection on experience with peers offers therapists and students a means of exploring such issues in a safe but supportive setting.

### **3.3.3 Reflection: a personal experience**

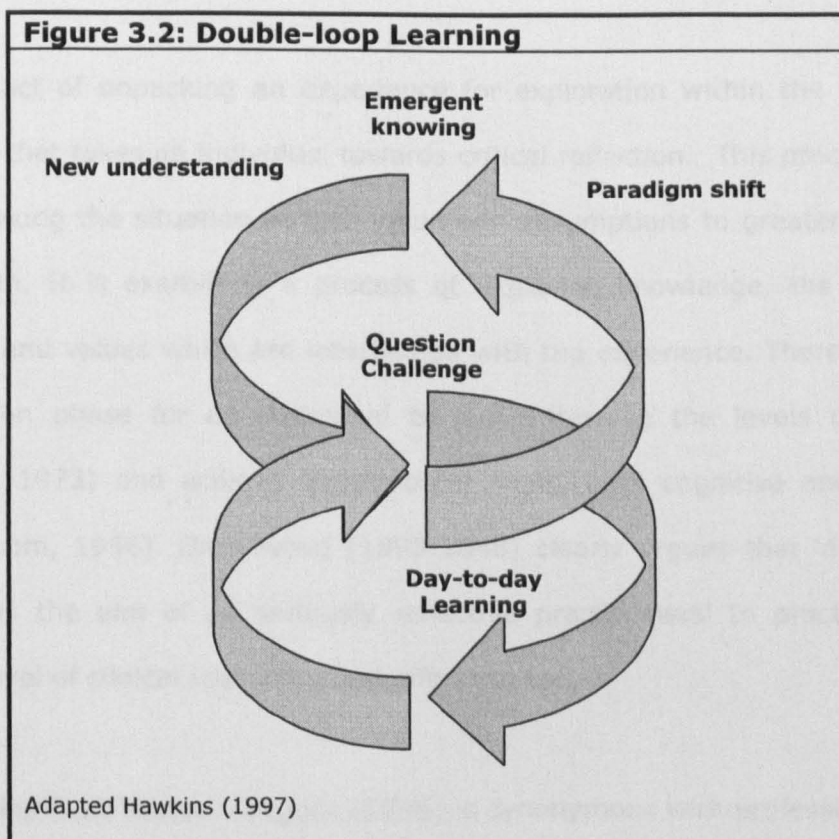
Burton (2006) emphasises that reflection 'remains an intensely personal experience' (even when it takes place in a group setting) and acknowledges the need to move from what Argyris and Schön (1974) would call single loop learning to double loop learning (Figure 3.4) in which reflection becomes more challenging and 'a powerful tool for changing practice' (Burton, 2006:300). The emphasis on 'intensely personal' and 'powerful' may lead to an assumption that self-exposure is at the core, giving rise to a fear of intimacy which may not exist in reality.

The need for reflection is triggered but the depth to which an individual reflects and discloses is self-regulated. In Bateson's (1973) typology of learning, this process would be akin to Level II, where the learner considers subjective as well as objective aspects of gaining new knowledge. Comparisons and connections are made and the learner moves outside of the 'confining frame'.

What appears to be missing in some models and emphasised in Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) and Johns (2000) is the progressive nature of learning, the pushing of the boundaries of knowledge and skills acquisition further through reflective dialogue which is a powerful agent. These dimensions are fundamental to the rationale underpinning profiling in this research. Single-loop learning (Argyris and Schön, (1974) is equivalent to Kolb's learning cycle. For Argyris and Schön, the term conveyed the instrumental nature of learning. However, high levels of criticality are not successfully acquired merely through reflection (Barnitt, 1997), either in or on action. Just as the notion of a critical learner has emerged earlier in this chapter, so then the notion of *critical* reflection must be considered. Double-loop learning (Figure 3.4) being the learning from which fundamental assumptions, beliefs, values (Hawkins, 1994) and underlying theory are challenged, clearly sits with Bateson's (1973) Level III typology,

where the learner learns about learning and develops the ability to challenge. These are crucial elements missing in Kolb (1984) and Gibbs' (1988) work.

Learning is by nature reflective; both content and process are important constituents. Hawkins (1997) discusses day-to-day learning in a working environment as the first and lower loop in the model proposed (Figure 3.2). The second and upper loop denotes the individual moving to question and challenge their assumptions enabling a move beyond the acceptance of habitual paradigms or ways of being. This resonates with the concept of critical reflection. This double loop, focusing on the potential for the emergence of knowledge, begins to correspond with the earlier discussion on the need for practitioners to manage complex, unexpected and unpredictable occurrences in practice.



Through the iterative process of reflection the quality of learning from experience is enhanced (Cox and Heames, 1999). Cox and Heames develop Kolb's (1984) concept by depicting a dynamic model in which the process of learning is portrayed as an upward spiral. With each new experience or iteration of similar experiences the structural analysis enables individuals to challenge their own perceptions and attitudes in a more profound way.

This is combined with the pursuit of acquiring new meanings, theory, knowledge and skills. This places the learner in a more enlightened position, in relation to learning from experience and about the constituent theoretical principles underpinning the experience. The dynamic nature of this model suggests a bridging process for the learner, facilitating their pursuit of increasing levels and sophistication of knowledge, understanding and greater preparedness for new or similar experiences in the future.

It is the act of unpacking an experience for exploration within the process of reflection that takes an individual towards critical reflection. This process moves beyond taking the situation at face value and assumptions to greater depths of exploration. It is examining a process of exploring knowledge, the emotions, attitudes and values which are intertwined with the experience. There has to be a transition phase for an individual to move through the levels of learning (Bateson, 1973) and achieve higher order skills, both cognitive and affective skills (Bloom, 1956). Greenwood (1993:1048) clearly argues that 'double loop learning is the aim of all seriously reflective practitioners' to practice at the highest level of clinical reasoning and effectiveness.

Self-development Marczely argues (1996) is synonymous with professionalism; a proactive strategy, rather than change for its own sake. Being 'self-directed', taking responsibility for learning and questioning taken-for-granted assumptions,

promotes a proactive rather than reactive response in thought and action. This attitudinal quality facilitates greater personal and professional self-awareness and development (Stark, 1994). Indeed, it promotes LLL; 'it teaches you that, however experienced you are, you still have things to learn.' (Bulman, 2000:159). Socio-emotional aspects of experiential learning must not be underestimated. This dynamic constituent is powerful; it can enable active learning or indeed create disengagement in the unconfident learner who finds self-disclosure a psychologically threatening activity.

If learners construct meaning out of their own practice, then the role of the tutor necessarily changes. In discussing the student-centred, constructivist approach to education, Rogers (1951) hypothesises that you can only facilitate learning and not directly teach the learner. The tutor therefore becomes a dialogic partner in the learning experience; a facilitator, a mentor. The power balance within this relationship also changes as a consequence of the changing nature of the roles. Jinks (1999) identified from interviews with nurse teachers that a balanced relationship between the student and teacher was a feature of andragogy. With an ever-changing world Rogers (1969) argued that education must mean the facilitation of learning. Harden (1996) supports this by arguing in relation to nursing students' practice experiences that they must learn to construe meaning from their own framework. This means tutors must enable, not control, facilitating students to explore meaning and not interpret experiences on their behalf.

Government changes in policies adds to the complexity of coping with changes in a post-modern society. With such change it is essential that learners are able to grasp emergent theory in the practice context, to support and move forward their theoretical knowledge base. There is the issue of psychological preparedness, the ability to be flexible, able to use experience and assess



personal progress. Some framework therefore for students needs to be in place to ensure that their learning is focused in order to achieve the learning outcomes of the overall programme. There is an inherent paradox in achieving learning outcomes from experiential learning if the outcomes of experiential learning are unique to the individual. However a profiling system has the potential to provide this flexibility without compromise to core skills and professional knowledge. From exploring Kolb's concept of experiential learning and distilling the literature on reflection, I propose a working model of experiential learning (Figure 3.3), constructed in relation to personal profiling.

**Figure 3.3:**  
**A Model of Experiential Learning in the Context of the Study**

*The model is; an upward spiral initially with a broad base that can be described as a metaphorical mountain (experiential learning). There is a pathway working its way in spiral, over different terrains (experiences). Differing perspectives come into view with the movement around the pathway (development), so broadening the scope of the journey maker. At strategic points there is a panoramic platform where time is spent reviewing and analysing what is within view (period of reflection on one's experience).*

*As progress is made along the pathway so exploration through curiosity, inquisitiveness or encouragement occurs and searching for what may be beneath the vision takes place to gain new insights and perspectives. Initially the pathway has on the outer-side a wooden rail for guidance and support. As the pathway climbs so the rail becomes a rope which continues to guide and offers some support. And so the periods of panoramic viewing accrue with depth and breadth of personal knowing through the journey being achieved. As the summit is approached sophistication emerges and an enhanced and rounded sense of knowing is experienced.*

### 3.4 Summary

The uniqueness and complexities of experience(s) have been discussed in this chapter as they relate to learners in the process of reflective practice. Definitions of experiential learning and reflection have been challenging along with the widely held acceptance of the work of Kolb (1984). Although the work of Kolb (1984) and Schön (1983) have been cited by recent authors to conceptually strengthen their argument, their work reveals only part of the theoretical basis of reflective practice. Emerging issues exist in the content, process and dialogic influences on the reflective dimension of experiential learning.

The *articulation* of the process and outcome of reflection has been highlighted as critical. Being explicit, particularly in reflective dialogue, allows individuals to gain insight, perspective and most importantly, depth in learning. The self has emerged as being central to the 'lived' experience and a dimension which brings about reflexivity. The profiling system in the case study institution offers students opportunities to document and explore their reflections dialogically and build on these through the partnership with PD tutors. Chapter Four will introduce the research design and methodology as well as exploring contextual and ethical issues in relation to the case study.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Methodology: the Design of the Study**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The contextual issues impacting on the study, together with the rationale for the final methodological design will be the focus of this chapter. A narrative of the ethical considerations and reflections on self as researcher is followed by a discussion of the overarching research methodology and tools of inquiry. This forms a prelude to Chapter Five, which presents the pilot study as preparation for the implementation of the full study.

The research question which gave rise to the study was: What are occupational therapy students' attitudes to and experiences of personal profiling? This exploration is set in the context of their lived daily experiences in both the HE and practice-based settings. From the research question a number of sub-themes emerged in relation to the process and practice of profiling and the mechanisms for potential or actual personal change and professional development. The question is examined in vivo together with a retrospective investigation which focused on second and final year students' experiences to assess the impact of the system, through the pre-registration life-span.

From the study in an occupational therapy context, it is envisaged that a contribution will be made to widen the theoretical base for the practice of personal profiling in education and provide fresh knowledge and concepts, which will be used to enhance existing practice or facilitate further development and research. The starting point for me as a researcher was to reflect on my previous experience of profiling as a tutor and consider the overall research question. Mindful that neither tradition nor experience should be the guiding

factor in the decisions to be made regarding the methodological stance and design, the words of Crotty (1998:216) guided my thinking to;

...devise for ourselves a research process that serves our purposes best, one that helps us more than any other to answer our research question.

It enabled me to consider not only the question but the context in which the study would be undertaken. In addition I considered the professional community which would potentially benefit from the outcomes.

Although personal profiling is discussed positively in health and education literature (Chapter One), some tentative questions have emerged from my review. There is little focus on the process, application and outcomes of such systems, and no evidence related to profiling can be found in the occupational therapy literature. What became apparent through the review was that the exploration of the 'real life' of a profiling system is overdue, aiming to gain greater understanding of the process, how students relate to the process, engage in reflection and utilise the outcome in the HE setting.

#### **4.2 Research Methodology, Epistemology and Ontology**

The dominant model of healthcare has historically been the bio-medical model (Bowling, 2002) and research in healthcare practice has been similarly medically led, grounded in the tradition of 'positivism' and scientific method with its quantitative approach to enquiry (Creek, 1997). Assumptions about knowledge have, however, changed with post-modernism. As a prelude to discussing new approaches to social research Grbich (2004) draws a distinction between modernity and the changes that have occurred with post-modernism:

...the universe is ordered and completely knowledgeable by observation (once sufficiently advanced tools have been developed) and that objective reality exists, have given way to a view that it is chaotic and unknowable. As social constructions and questionable discourses are increasingly seen to dominate knowledge, meanings become recognised as individual

creations, which require interpretation and negotiation. (Grbich, 2004:25)

In this post-modern era, the social model of care is gaining strength (Wright, 1998) with clients' needs being at the centre of practice, clients' offered choice in accessing services and community-based primary care. Qualitative approaches to enquiry lend themselves to finding the evidence for best practice. Exploring individuals' perspectives and their stories matter in this model of care. The Government's modernisation agenda supports this position by directing the workforce to evidence-based practice and user involvement (NHS Plan, DoH, 2000a; First Class Service, DoH, 1998). Even more recently the government has been moving forward in its reforms for patient-led services (DoH, 2005). Therefore listening to and understanding the patient/client experience as a way of improving services is gaining momentum. To achieve these aims qualitative research as a strategy for enquiry is gaining support in health and social care (Wright 1998).

Writers on occupational therapy widely subscribe to the social model and Creek (1997) suggests provocatively that for occupational therapists to continue to follow the pathway of scientific discourse and positivist research is to continue on a road to failure. A review of recent articles in the British Journal of Occupational Therapists reveals a predominance of qualitative research. Eva and Paley (2004:47) however argue that '...numbers provide a necessary dimension to our way of understanding.' They are firmly of the opinion that the distinguishing features between qualitative and quantitative research is concerned with the research tools rather than the researcher's 'philosophical stance'. Taking this view, quantitative approaches to research design can remain an option.

In discussing 'real world' research Robson (2002) identifies the use of quantitative and qualitative designs coming together to address the research

question as being legitimate. In relation to occupational science, Carlson and Clark (1991) argued that a mixed approach was particularly relevant for this field of research. Researchers are taking a more balanced perspective with the nature of the research question clearly leading the choice of approach, design and methodological tools.

Against a background of ongoing qualitative-quantitative debate in the nursing (Duffy, 1985) qualitative methods of research are widely used (Andrews et al, 1996). It therefore seems reasonable for the research methodology to reflect the ethos of the profession (Wright, 1998). With the focus of occupational therapy on client-centred practice, experience, actions and social environment are key concerns; these map well with qualitative research as defined by Polgar and Thomas (1995:109) accordingly;

...a disciplined inquiry examining the personal meaning of an individual's experience and actions in the context of their social environment.

The values of professional practice emphasise the importance of the individual's perspective and meaning;

Occupational therapy values are grounded in humanism. They espouse the dignity and worth of all people, regardless of the severity of their disability and hence their rights to full citizenship with opportunities and responsibilities that bestows. Associated with these values is a commitment to a relationship with the clients, that emphasises respect for each individual's point of view. (Lyons, 1994:27)

Likewise, Kielhofner (1982) explicitly points out that qualitative research attempts to appreciate the richness of everyday life and the realities of individual's perspectives. He draws attention to a 'special harmony', which he identifies exists between occupational therapy and the paradigm of qualitative research. The harmony is in the individual's meaning and perspective as it is set in the context of their environment and the impact this has on their being. Wright (1998) likewise points out the importance of context and its impact on an individual.

The values detailed by Lyons (1994) also underpin occupational therapy education, whereby educators respect students as individuals and value their views, perspectives and the contextual setting; they involve students in a collaborative process of learning. The American Occupational Therapy Association (1997) articulates this collaborative process as the integrating dimension in the underpinning philosophy of education. It embraces the notion of self-reflection, academic knowledge, clinical reasoning with experiential learning.

This definition mirrors, in sentiment, the four types of knowledge that Carper (1978) identified in nursing empirics, the science of nursing; aesthetics, the art of nursing; personal knowledge; and ethics or moral knowledge. Scientific knowledge in nursing, as in occupational therapy, is only one dimension. A positivist inquiry with a reliance on quantitative methodology does not satisfy wholly the pursuit of new professional knowledge and best practice in client-centred care. What must be considered is the focus on self, personal knowledge, reasoning with its inherent ethical dimensions and the professional artistry of occupational therapy. This is informed by phenomenological interpretivist traditions, where experience and the understanding of personal meaning are central (Polgar and Thomas, 1997). Koch (1999:20) highlights the increasing use of interpretative approaches in nursing for enhancing understanding of 'our client/community' and 'our reflections as researchers'. Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001:16) put forward reasons why a positivist model does not fit with social research and argue that it is charged with social power; 'it includes people as countable 'subjects', but excludes them as definers of meaning.'

In proposing a loose working definition of qualitative research, Mason (2002) pin-points its grounding in a philosophical position that is broadly 'interpretivist', in that it concerns itself with the social world, experiences and understanding and that data generation is flexible and sensitive to that social context; 'real life'

as opposed to contrived in laboratory conditions. Methods of analysis and explanation used are to understand the 'complexities, detail and context' with the purpose of achieving a '...rounded and contextual understanding on the basis of rich, nuanced, and detailed data.' (Mason, 2002:3). Koch (1999:20) highlights the increasing use of interpretative approaches in nursing to enhance understanding of 'our clients/community' and 'our reflections as researchers'.

Further consideration of the proposed working definition of Mason (2002) together with the philosophy of the profession strengthened the conclusion that the paradigm of qualitative research was most appropriate to the design of this research study. Participants, pre-registration students, would be centrally involved. Their experiences, the context, both educational and wider professional context would be explored. A qualitative research paradigm brings together a 'roundedness' that gives both breadth and depth to the exploration of the research question.

#### **4.3 The Research Framework**

As an insider researcher I was from the outset clear about entering into this research on the premise that the primary interest was listening to and *hearing* the lived experiences of students in order to develop an understanding of their attitudes to and experiences of profiling and to enhance the system.

Qualitative methods reach aspects of an individual's experiences which cannot be as successfully accessed through quantitative methods. Examples would be specific personal feelings, values and the inter-relationship between their personal meaning and practice. This is supported by Pope and May (1996) who claim that qualitative methods access complex behaviours, attitudes and interactions. A multi-methods approach to data gathering to validate and triangulate data is ideally suited to the variables being proposed for exploration



in this study. Namely, to consider the 'real life' learning environment in which the profiling system is sited, the exploration of students' attitudes to, and engagement in the process of profiling and to discuss the potential benefits of such a system which embraces the entire three year course. Limitations of each method can be compared from different perspectives 'ensuring sophisticated rigour' (Williamson, 2005:8) and transparency. Shih (1998) discusses completeness of function in triangulation as a strategy for deepening the analysis in studies. Shih (1998) discusses completeness of function in triangulation as a strategy for deepening the analysis in studies. Methodological reflexivity was considered an imperative, in relation to methodological considerations and the researcher's own practice through self-questioning and self-evaluation (Finlay, 1998).

#### **4.3.1 A Case Study Approach**

The profiling system being studied has been developed within one HEI; more specifically within one profession specific course, BSc (Hons) in Occupational Therapy. A case study approach, with its exploration of a contemporary phenomenon (Mays and Pope, 1996), '...within its real life context', (Robson, 1993:146) therefore emerges as the most appropriate approach which draws on multiple methods most of which are qualitative thereby drawing in-depth data. Likewise Jones and Lyons (2004:71) argue its strength is as a comprehensive strategy; with the potential to reveal multiple dimensions and address the challenge of person-centred phenomena which 'often follows an unpredictable path'.

A further strength to case study research is its specificity and sensitivity to a situation from which to attempt to identify the various interactive processes (Bell, 1999) which acts as a starting point, to increase the knowledge and application of profiling in occupational therapy. As Stake (2000) notes to

practitioners (and policy makers) case research is an extension of experience. From previous discussion, it has been identified that course evaluation has been the means through which data has been gathered to evaluate the profiling system. Whilst this has elicited some constructive feedback, greater depth of knowledge was required to gain an understanding of the process itself and how students feel about it, engage and use it. It is the students' perspective, their own personal meaning of its value, individual interactions, attitudes and experiences that the study sets out to explore. The case can therefore be identified as an 'intrinsic case' (Stake, 2000); a more profound understanding of one particular profiling system is the primary purpose of the study.

With reference to nursing, Sharp (1998) states that in a profession which gives emphasis to 'research-based practice', case studies are particularly relevant. The same could be argued for occupational therapy (and its education) as it strives to be evidence-based. Yin (2003) states that a case study as a research strategy has been adopted across a range of disciplines and situations. However, there is a stereotypical view that its focus and outcomes lack the capacity for generalisation. Yin argues it is however concerned with analytical generalisations, theoretical propositions to offer theoretical explanations of phenomena. Case studies are about generation of theoretical explanations. Sharp (1998:1) emphasises this point and suggests that;

...once it is accepted that theoretical generalisations do not depend upon representativeness for their validity, the full value of the case study, ... can be appreciated.

Yin (2003) is clear to indicate that it is a comprehensive research 'strategy' acknowledging that the phenomena is investigated within its real life context and that multiple sources of evidence (data) will be triangulated. Both Yin (2003) and Jones and Lyons (2004) are clear that case study research is not associated with a particular paradigmatic position as this may limit its scope. The approach

therefore maps well to the focus of the research and as a reflective practitioner, my own aspirations as a researcher.

The holistic perspective of case study research is congruent with the research question focusing on lived experiences from students' stories which denote their attitude to profiling. The research question very much focuses on students' perspective of the personal profiling process and system. In order to gain an accurate picture of students' involvement in the process there was a need to explore, discover and document their thoughts, feelings and opinions. Students' attitudes towards what is in place, would inevitably guide the future direction of the overall development and ethos of CPD that needs to be fostered within the health and social care arena and more generally in the social context where LLL is being advocated (DoH, 1998).

In designing the study, account was taken of the complexities underlying what at face value appears to be, in practical terms, a 'simple' system. There was a need to examine the process of profiling and students' interactions, their level of engagement and attitudes towards the concept of profiling as a means to facilitate personal and professional development. Alongside this the benefits of personal profiling as perceived by students, good practice and any difficulties needed to be explored as critical dimensions to gaining an appreciation of the perceived value to students and PD tutors.

A review of the literature, personal reflections and insider knowledge of how and why the system was implemented underpinned the process of refining the research question. From further analysis sub-themes were identified to inform the design of the study (Figure 4.1). It is essential that the various dimensions of students' engagement are examined to provide a depth of insight, rather than a

very narrow focus, if an in-depth enquiry is to be achieved. Multiple methods of data collection were deemed appropriate.

#### 4.4 Methods of Inquiry

Consideration of a case study approach, alongside the nature of the research questions determined the methods of inquiry. In this section, I outline the decisions made regarding the choice of methods of inquiry in relation to the question and sub-themes of the research as the research question must ultimately determine methodology (Mason, 2002) and not researcher preference. In the following chapter, the rationale, preparations for and the implementation of pilot studies and methods of inquiry are presented.

<b>Figure 4.1: The Research Question and Sub-themes</b>
<p><b>What are students' attitudes to and lived experiences of personal profiling?</b></p>
<p><b>The process of profiling</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were students' experiences of personal profiling prior to the commencement of the course?</li> <li>• How do students' interact, get involved?</li> <li>• How can students' levels of engagement be described?</li> <li>• What are their attitudes towards the concept of profiling as a means to facilitate personal and professional development?</li> <li>• Is there is a correlation between attitude and self-awareness, age and previous experience?</li> <li>• Do students' views change according to experiences/level of study and over time?</li> </ul>
<p><b>The practice of profiling</b>  <b>Good practice and difficulties as perceived by students</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are students lived experiences of profiling?</li> <li>• Is there a common understanding between student experiences and tutors' and practice educators' experiences of students' use of personal profiling? (University and practice-based setting)</li> </ul>
<p><b>A mechanism for potential or actual personal change</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the benefits of personal profiling as perceived by students?</li> <li>• Do students change?</li> <li>• How is the 'self' involved?</li> <li>• How much of the 'self' do students invest?</li> <li>• How do students receive the system and the expectations of them and how do students perceive the system at the end of the academic year, following the final component in year one?</li> </ul>

Exploration of students' attitudes and types of engagement in the process of PPD through profiling is the central focus of this research. Given that the profiling system is a requirement for all students enrolled on the pre-registration undergraduate occupational therapy course, I considered it essential to choose a research tool which would provide coverage and have the potential to provide all students with the opportunity to participate in the study and offer views on the system. An inclusive approach to participation across years of study could provide cross-cohort data. It would also address the overarching research question on students' attitudes to and experiences of personal profiling throughout the entire period of study.

In relation to the sub-themes of the research question, qualitative methods of inquiry as agreed previously were more appropriate for an in-depth understanding of students' perspectives of personal profiling and their engagement in the process of profiling. Triangulation of data sources, as discussed earlier, would widen the scope of the data and allow a more inclusive approach to exploring students' perspective.

#### **4.4.1 Triangulation of Data**

The strategy to triangulate was confirmed by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) who accept triangulation as an alternative to validation:

The use of multiple methods, or triangulation reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. Objective reality can never be captured. Triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation. (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:2)

My reflections in relation to an inclusive approach to data collection led me to consider the importance of hearing the 'quietest' voices. Qualitative methods generate rich in-depth data and this would enable me to gain deeper insight into the lived experience of profiling; however, I also felt I needed an overarching sense of a cohort of students and their perspectives and levels of engagement in

profiling. All students in one intake could be offered an opportunity to participate and offer an individual perspective.

In their work Sim and Sharp (1998) advise caution as validation via triangulation assumes a somewhat positivist approach. My view in using triangulation was to be inclusive, strengthen the understanding of participants' overall experience together with accessing in-depth insight from listening to individual stories of engagement. In exploring the concept of triangulation, participant or hierarchical triangulation has relevance for this study (Edwards and Talbot, 1999); offering the opportunity of gaining the perspective of students, University-based tutors and practice educators. This dimension would bring together the inter-relationship between theory and practice and deepen the understanding of all involved. In respect of the value that students place on the use of profiling through the course and its relationship to the work-based learning (practice) in a variety of practice settings, triangulation would yield a 360 degree perspective and provide completeness (Adami, 2005).

#### **4.4.2 Validity, Reliability and Generalisability**

Credibility and rigour in research is paramount. The integrity with which the research is undertaken must be explicit. Throughout the study the principle of transparency is adopted. Critical friends can make significant contributions to the process of validation (McNiff, 2002).

Rigorous analysis of data is crucial and to 'arrive at agreed interpretations of the data' (McNiff, 2002: 32) imperative. The multi-method approach has the potential to any biases a single methodology may develop (Williamson 2005). Through triangulation clarification of meaning can be achieved by inclusion of differing perspectives (Stake 2005).

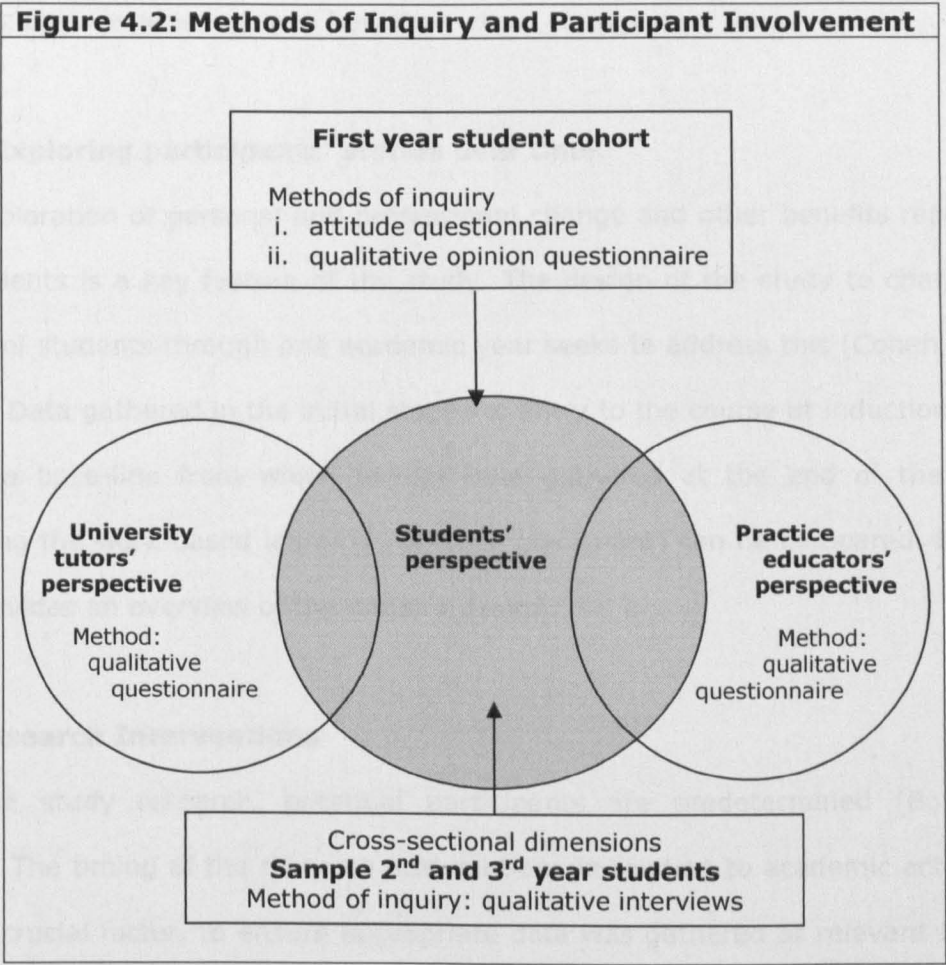
A case study approach is focused on one site with a particular set of people. As such there is no claim for generalisability in this study. However, the study is intended to be illuminative and the outcomes explored for aspects which have relevance to a wider education community. Transparency, being able to trace the steps taken throughout the investigation is therefore important Yin (2003). The researcher's reflexivity or critical self-reflection (Finlay and Gough, 2003) contributes to the process of credibility and integrity.

#### **4.4.3 Investigating Student Attitudes**

In order to investigate the nature of student attitudes to profiling an analytical survey was designed. This involved obtaining data from all first year students to explore associations between particular variables (Oppenheim, 1992). Oppenheim (1992) offers a note of caution and emphasised that attitude scales are not designed to gain subtle insights into individual participants' views. A complementary qualitative questionnaire to accompany the attitude scale would therefore potentially access greater depth of feelings and level of involvement. It could draw out a summary of individuals' previous experiences of profiling or any similar system with background data. The move in the schools sector to using RoAs in recent years may in some way impact on students' pre-conceptions or feelings towards profiling as an activity. Given the paucity of research studies available at this point in the investigation which captures students' attitudes to profiling I made the decision to construct a survey.

Experiences of students, both positive and problematic, need to be explored from all perspectives which includes significant others, University-based tutors and practice educators, involved in the process. To capture these multiple perspectives it was felt appropriate to invite tutors and practice educators to participate in the study and complete a qualitative survey. This would provide a triangulation of data from which to consider the relationships between profiling

and engagement in professional and personal development during practice-based education (Figure 4.2). In addition the questionnaire would assist in the identification of expectations in terms of engagement, procedural matters and interpretation of guidelines which all stakeholders follow.



#### 4.4.4 Qualitative Interviews

Qualitative interviewing is an important dimension of case study research which seeks, in particular to capture the voice and attitudes of participants (Mason, 2002). In this study, interviewing a small sample of students from each year of the course enables a cross-sectional approach to be taken to compare insights between students at different stages in their professional development. Though this means inconsistencies, misinterpretations in data can be reviewed (Bowling,



2002). The face-to-face contact provided by interview was considered necessary to facilitate and trigger students not just to recount the experiences but to provide an opportunity for the researcher to prompt deeper reflection on experiences and therefore uncover richer sources of attitudinal data. It was thought that this would provide some evidence of how students interact with the process, their experiences and how their views change over time.

#### **4.4.5 Exploring participants' stories over time**

The exploration of personal and professional change and other benefits reported by students is a key feature of the study. The design of the study to chart one cohort of students through one academic year seeks to address this (Cohen et al, 2000). Data gathered in the initial stages of entry to the course at induction, this forms a base-line from which further data gathered at the end of the year following the work-based learning (practice placement) can be compared. Figure 4.3 provides an overview of the enquiry design.

#### **4.5 Research Interventions**

In case study research, potential participants are predetermined (Bowling, 2002). The timing of the research interventions in relation to academic activities was a crucial factor, to ensure appropriate data was gathered at relevant times. This relates in particular to the sub-theme, potential change. A decision was taken to undertake a cohort study for its strength in charting developments over time and cross-sectional dimension with students at different stages (Drummond, 1996) (Figure 4.3). Studies which take place over a period of time have the potential to be problematic in relation to attrition. Participants may withdraw at any time during the schedule of data collection for a variety of legitimate reasons and not associated with the research itself.

<b>Figure 4.3 : Enquiry Design: tools, timing and milestones</b>		
<b>Cohort Analysis</b>	<b>Autumn Term</b>	<b>Summer Term</b>
<p>To investigate research question sub-themes:</p> <p><b>Autumn Term</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>process of profiling: prior knowledge, experience</li> </ul> <p><b>Summer Term</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>process of profiling: students' attitudes</li> <li>practice of profiling</li> <li>profiling: an agent of potential change</li> </ul>	<p><b>Year 1 Students</b> (Phase 1) Administer at Induction</p> <p>i. Demographic data: cohort characteristics ii. Qualitative questionnaire</p> <p><b>Rationale</b> Establish a baseline from which progress can be charted during students' first year.</p>	<p><b>Year 1 Students</b> (Phase 2) Post-practice placement</p> <p>i. Questionnaires - attitude questionnaire - opinion questionnaire ii. Semi-structured interviews (10% cohort)</p> <p><b>Rationale</b> Identify changes in students' attitudes to profiling. Gain insight into students' experiences in University and practice setting through first year which may impact on personal/professional development.</p>
<b>Cohort Analysis</b>	<b>Spring Term</b>	<b>Summer Term</b>
<p>Cross-sectional analysis to investigate sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>process of profiling</li> <li>practice of profiling</li> <li>profiling as an agent of potential change</li> </ul>	<p><b>Year 2 Students</b> Semi-structured interviews (10% cohort)</p> <p><b>Rationale</b> Gain in-depth insight: students' experiences of profiling at different stages in course (mid-point) and changes in attitude over time.</p>	<p><b>Year 3 Students</b> Semi-structured interviews (10% cohort)</p> <p><b>Rationale</b> Gain in-depth insight: students' experiences of profiling at different stages in course and changes in attitude over time.</p>

To avoid sample bias the cohort samples must be complete and response rates high enough at each point of the data collection schedule to make data analysis meaningful (Bowling, 2002). Planning to use a cross-sectional dimension 'snapshot' to the study for synchronic analysis (Cohen et al, 2000) and engage in semi-structured interviews with a student sample from each of the three years would minimise the effect of participant withdrawals. The nature of the data would be different, richer and in-depth and would provide a more accurate account of students' attitudes and experience for analysis. In the year prior to implementation of the full study, third year students were invited to participate in preliminary work, formulating the quantitative instruments. Once this was completed, a sample of first year students was invited to participate in a pilot

study of both quantitative and qualitative components and provide feedback on the process of participation.

#### **4.6 Student Participants' Demographic Data**

Demographic data related to students' age, gender, ethnicity and entry route were gathered from Year One students to assist in the overall analysis of student attitudes in relation to participants' backgrounds. With the University's widening access policy, the student intake is no longer all female or from the traditional level route at 18 years of age. Occupational therapy students, male and female, are drawn from a range of backgrounds and entry routes; for example Access, BTEC, first degree, can be between 18 and 50 years of age and from ethnic origins other than white European. It was hypothesised that age, gender and entry routes might be factors in students' attitudes towards and engagement in the process of profiling. Thus, collection of this data was a valuable resource in exploring the research sub-theme, the process of profiling, in relation to students' attitudes, age and previous experience.

A complementary questionnaire of a qualitative nature was designed to provide background information on students' initial understanding of the concept and process of reflection, which is fundamental to the process of profiling. Ballinger and Davey (1998) identify that questionnaires may be used to collect data relating to characteristics of groups. The gathering of such data is valuable as students enter the course from a range of academic routes, some non-traditional routes. Their previous experience of profiling is therefore an unknown.

In terms of the style of questionnaire, Bell (1999) states that structured questions present less of a problem at the analysis stage. This did not suit my purpose of wanting participants' own words and personal descriptions. I therefore chose a semi-structured approach (Bowling, 2002) with open-ended

questions (Polgar and Thomas, 1995) and an invitation to explain their understanding of key issues. Bearing in mind that participants were at a very early stage of the course, I felt that the questionnaire needed to be non-threatening and whilst providing space for comments, not giving too much space to be overwhelming but with the permission to continue overleaf if appropriate. The process of developing the questionnaire is documented in the following chapter.

#### **4.7 Investigating Students' Attitudes to Personal Profiling**

Student attitudes were measured on the assumption that the more positive an attitude the individual demonstrates towards an activity, the greater the potential level of engagement and sense of personal benefit there will be. This study focused on an existing and specific profiling system, therefore the formulation of an attitude questionnaire was necessary. This was informed by the work of Bullock et al (1995) in the schools sector who explored the attitudes of pupils to the implementation of personal development plans.

A range of attitude scales exist; most measures access attitudes by providing respondents with sentences which focus on beliefs about the attitude being measured and assume that a person's attitude can be represented by a numerical score (Bowling, 2002). Thurstone, Likert, Guttman and semantic differential scales are the most commonly cited in literature. The scales provide 'a degree of sensitivity and differentiation of response' (Cohen et al, 2000:253) together with a measure of frequency. The reliability of the Likert scale is considered to be good (Oppenheim, 1992) based on the grounds that it offers a greater range of responses for an individual. Participants respond to a series of 'opinion' statements indicating the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement. The scale provides ordinal level data and utilises an attitude continuum from which a numerical score is assigned (Bowling, 2002). The

continuum runs from 'strongly agree' assigned a score of 5 to 'agree' to 'uncertain' to 'disagree' and finally 'strongly disagree' a score of 1. Response set; the tendency to always respond in the same direction is dealt with by a blend of positively phrased and negatively expressed statements. Providing an 'uncertain' category permits a participant to make a response rather than having missing data. Missing data provides no evidence on whether the participant was abstaining or genuinely did not know how they felt at that point in time.

Developmental work on module evaluations was influential in the way that I approached the final formulation of the attitude questionnaire (Green and Heames, 1992). A questionnaire developed for analysis by an optical mark reader, was based on five point Likert scaling. The structure of the questionnaire is pre-set by the nature of the computer programme. It comprises a series of up to five statements, in clusters, with the Likert scale alongside each statement. All students being familiar with this style of questionnaire and the scales having known reliability, it was felt to be an appropriate form of attitude questionnaire for the study.

Whilst consideration was given to the means of data collection and analysis, there were advantages in using the same style for analysis through the same computer programme. This strategy did not appear problematic, being consistent with the recommendations Oppenheim (1992) makes regarding the numbers of statements, between six and 24.

Attitude scales normally consist of between six and 24 attitude statements (Oppenheim, 1992) which have been selected from an item pool (which may comprise 60 or more original items). A scale will then be developed from these statements. This pattern of development was followed. Statements created and filtered became a pilot questionnaire which was analysed and from this a final

questionnaire of 25 statements was formulated. The single attitude statement is designed to elicit a response which as Oppenheim (1992:174) states:

...expresses a point of view, a belief, a preference, a judgement, an emotional feeling, a position for or against something.

Oppenheim (1992) draws attention to the fact that some attitudes are more enduring than others and that they do not, generally, exist in isolation. Similarly, Rungapadiachy (1999:103) points out the consensus that 'attitudes, values and beliefs are abstract concepts which are intertwined'.

In appraising the literature on profiling itself, there appeared little of value to inform the methodological considerations of this study. Many accounts were of institutional systems which had similarities but were not really comparable. In order to make decisions regarding the formulation of statements a series of interviews was considered (Oppenheim, 1992). Meetings with experts in the field or direct questioning of the relevant populations, either through interviews or a panel can also be effective, bringing together a variety of statements with a range of views (Bowling, 2002). Whilst similar populations of occupational therapy students were not inaccessible, the fact that this is a case study focusing on a particular personal profiling system and particular experiences guided the final decision. The decision was to, through collaborative work with participants (Marshall and Rossman, 2006), define concepts and elucidate key dimensions of personal profiling to inform the development of the attitude questionnaire. The students involved would then be excluded from the main study. The feasibility of the focus group technique to seek views was thereby undertaken.

#### **4.7.1 Focus Group Technique to Inform Research Development**

As identified in the section above, I investigated the feasibility of using the focus group technique (Nyamanthi and Shuler, 1990) with student cohorts not included in the study in order to inform the development of the overarching design and attitude questionnaire specifically. Focus groups are recommended

for establishing the context and scope of individual experience together with an understanding of the nature of complex influences (Morgan, 1998). This inclusive approach and type of data generated is useful in designing a study and formulating questionnaire items in a way that will feel user friendly and meaningful to the prospective participants. Whilst rich and in-depth data may emerge a disadvantage is that focus groups can also encourage a consensus view.

Nyamanthi and Shuler (1990) report high face validity for focus groups which added support to the decision for their use in the design of the attitude scale. The decision was further confirmed by Morgan & Krueger (1993) who support the use of focus groups when investigating complex behaviours and motivations. Morgan (1998) notes that focus groups can assist in item and scale construction as the technique provides evidence of how participants normally converse on the subject area; that is 'learning their language' (Morgan, 1998:34) or discourse. The technique not only allows for experiences to be shared but is useful in exploring knowledge, clarifying views and coming to an understanding of how people think and why they think in the particular way that they do (Kitzinger, 1996).

In the context of health and health-related education, the focus group technique is becoming increasingly used to seek individual perspectives as well as clients' opinions on service satisfaction and to explore attitudes, values and health behaviours (Barlow and Harrison, 1996). In discussing the focus group technique and its relevance to health and medicine, Kitzinger (1996:299) highlighted the broader dimensions of understanding that can be gained from focus groups which conventional data gathering methods may not uncover. The focus group:

...helps researchers tap into the many different forms of communication that people use in day to day interaction, including jokes, anecdotes, teasing and arguing. Gaining access to such variety of communication is useful because people's

knowledge and attitudes are not entirely encapsulated in reasoned responses to direct questions. (Kitzinger, 1996:299)

The use of focus groups to establish a user perspective to inform the development of the attitude questionnaire for a survey of a wider population of occupational therapy students was therefore justifiable. Support was also drawn from the research of Lankshear (1993) who used the approach to research attitudes of student nurses to assessments which was similar in focus to this study.

Furthermore the benefits of this technique are that it was attractive to student volunteers. It has the potential to provide mutual support (Kitzinger, 1996), an opportunity to talk as they really think, a powerful means of exposing reality (Morgan and Krueger, 1993), the reality as defined by the participants (Barlow and Harrison, 1996). Also the process tends to be highly enjoyable as well as developmental (Patton, 1987; Morgan, 1998). Barlow and Harrison's (1996:539) study of self-help training suggests that the technique is;

...set within an emancipatory paradigm that can itself be an empowering experience for participants.

The technique enables participants to hear the responses from other members of the group (Patton, 1987) and this can then trigger further comments, which takes the power of the collective response beyond that of any one individual.

Spontaneity and candour are the hallmarks for the focus group (Nyamathi and Shuler, 1990). The focus group explicitly uses the group process to facilitate engagement and an open dialogue within a supportive context. Kitzinger (1996:37) states:

When group dynamics work well the participants work alongside the researcher, taking the research in new and often unexpected directions.

This dynamic dimension would ensure that I did not fall into the trap of making presumptions about the course of discussion in line with the note of caution by



Burgess (1984), identified later in the section 'Self as a Researcher' (4.8.5). An added benefit would be that the focus group would provide an opportunity to develop my credibility as a researcher among students before proceeding with the full research study. As O'Brien (1993) found when working in a community setting, it was the directness, respect, and face-to-face interactions that provided a positive step to enable the investigator to establish credibility within the community.

Two focus groups were set up to act as a pilot study for the development of the attitude scale, specifically and inform the formulation of the interview schedule, generally. Full details of the management of this aspect of the work are documented in the next chapter under the heading of the preliminary work and pilot studies undertaken to inform the study as a whole.

#### **4.7.2 The Attitude Questionnaire: format**

The attitude questionnaire was designed to gather general data on the participants' overall attitude to the process of personal profiling in the context of PPD. The initial section of the questionnaire asked participants to provide background information in relation to gender and age. This was needed to provide a profile of students against which comparative analysis could be undertaken.

The pilot study was helpful in bringing out both technical issues concerning the final statements for the attitude questionnaire and general data gathering. The final proforma was through statistical analysis (SPSS factor analysis) reduced to a single page. Bowling (2002) notes that structured questionnaires can force participants into responding in a way that does not fully represent their views. Therefore there was a need to provide a further page of similar design to page one with space to enable participants to be able to express ideas and opinions

which they felt important but had not been covered within the quantitative section. Details of the process of formulating the questionnaire are documented in Chapter Five.

#### **4.7.3 Exploring Participants' Experiences: qualitative interviews**

Interviewing participants from years two and three provided cross-sectional access into how students experience the process of profiling at different stages in the course. The term qualitative interviewing has been used to convey the notion of an in-depth opportunity to generate rather than to collect, data (Mason, 2002). Burgess (1984) describes the interview process as 'conversations with purpose' (1984:102). Qualitative interviewing is interactive and interviewers need to be sensitive to the ideas and responses being brought to the interaction by the interviewee (Britten, 1996). This is in contrast to the structured form of interview which can produce reasoned responses and as Fontana and Frey (2000:651) state, 'overlook or inadequately assess the emotional dimension.' The purpose of the study is to explore students' attitudes therefore the immediacy of response and the emotional dimensions are important to access. Case study research and the use of semi-structured interviews are well-suited to exploring individuals' views because of the interactive nature of the approach (Drever, 1995).

Conducting interviews ensures that contextual, situational and interactional issues can be heard. Mason (2002) points out that participants can only recount their experiences. The interaction is retrospective and interviews need to be skilfully managed if there is a need to explore meaning. As with the process of reflection, it is easier to describe experience than analyse it. The interviewer must be able to prompt the interviewee to enable them to unpack their lived and felt experience. Britten (1996) is clear in highlighting that professionally one may be skilled at interviewing but interviewing for research purposes is very

different. As a researcher the interview is used to gain an understanding of the interviewee's own framework of meaning and not the interviewer's frame of reference. It is imperative that the researcher prepares for and is confident in the role to the point of rehearsing how the interview may be conducted prior to a pilot interview.

By this method data generated is richer and has potential for greater depth than other methods of data collection. Mason (2002) notes that interviewing is one of the most commonly recognised forms of qualitative method but that it is difficult and involves creative work which requires planning and preparation. How interviews were planned and personal preparations undertaken are discussed in Chapter Five. As Britten (1996) and Mason (2002) emphasise, interviews require the researcher to possess both intellectual and social skills with the ability to think on your feet. The interview is a situation in which the unforeseen and unexpected may arise.

#### **4.7.4 Interviewees**

The decision to take an opportunity sample for qualitative interviews (Bell, 1999), with a view of engaging 10% of each of the cohorts was taken. The initial sample emerged through self-selection in response to the invitation to participate. Purposive sampling then followed for the individual interviews in accordance with Cohen et al's (2000:103) guidance:

...researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality.

The rationale was grounded in the realities of student life and the timing of the study for these particular students.

For the research, I needed to access students following their practice experience, on the premise that the practice may have an influence on students' opportunities to reflect on experiences and levels of engagement in personal profiling. Due to the structure of the course this coincided with students

returning from practice into the University and undertaking new subjects of study and assignments. For the year three students, there were the added pressures of seeking first post employment and the pressure arising from their own and their peers' research studies. This would, I felt, impact on the level of participation. Therefore self-selection was deemed appropriate. Cohen et al (2000) discuss the principle of typicality in participant samples. A representative sample matching cohort characteristics was a necessary inclusion for this study. Therefore purposive sampling was undertaken.

Timing was critical as the window of opportunity to conduct the interviews was small. Interviewing over a long period would potentially affect participants' responses. Their exposure to new academic activities, theories and concepts could potentially move one or more participants further forward in their own PPD. This is inevitable, but by interviewing all participants at approximately the same point in their course was to some extent minimised. The interview schedule was therefore set within a four week period of returning from practice. This was felt appropriate in that the freshness of the practice experience would still be present and students would not be distracted by having only just been introduced to new modules of study.

#### **4.8 Ethical Considerations in the Study Design**

At the outset of the preliminary work on the research question, permission to undertake the study within the research site was sought from the Dean of Faculty with overarching responsibility for all health and social care courses. This was an important process for a number of reasons:

- the research site is my place of work;
- students were based in the Faculty;
- academic colleagues were based in the Faculty;
- practice educators involved in the triangulation of data were in partnership arrangements with the Faculty.

Approval to begin the preliminary work involved in drafting the research protocol was given by the Dean of Faculty. Agreement to access the site for the implementation of the study was given in principle and subject to a full submission of the research proposal to the Faculty Research Ethics Committee. This procedure followed the research site's formal ethics guidelines. The formal research protocol was submitted for screening and approval by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee. Screening through this channel ensured that there were no procedural or ethical flaws in the protocol and design. It also ensured that the study would be beneficial to the institution and contribute to the potential expansion of education theory in the field of profiling. An additional benefit of the internal screening process was that due consideration was given to safeguarding the rights of students within the study and myself as 'an insider' researcher. The British Educational Research Association's Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2004) have been observed as part of the researcher's code of conduct throughout this study and any form of dissemination associated with its outcomes.

In respect of my position as 'an insider' researcher, my professional background must also be considered as an important factor. Reel (2006:87) in discussing the College of Occupational Therapists' Research Governance arrangements identifies the assumptions underpinning their procedures. Of particular relevance are the assumptions that the work of its members will be within the standards of professional practice and with this the 'belief in the integrity of its staff and members of COT and trust their intention to perform their duties ethically.' The study has been conducted in line with the principles set out for the development and conduct of research (COT, 2003).

The notion of non-maleficence is fundamental and a key responsibility of the researcher and a matter of professional integrity (Denscombe, 2002). Research

must be based on ethical practice and Mason (2002) makes reference to due regard to the political context. As an occupational therapist myself already working within a code of professional ethics and professional conduct (COT, 2005; HPC, 2007), I am thoroughly conversant with the ethical issues of working with individuals and a code of ethics is similarly critical in the research context. In relation to ethical issues associated specifically with engaging in research Denscombe (2003:79) argues that individuals 'should be open about the research aspect of their practice.' The participatory nature of this research with colleagues within the practice context brings with it partnership responsibilities. In research, Christians (2000) documents four aspects for attention:

- informed consent;
- deception free;
- privacy and confidentiality;
- accuracy.

Within the aspect of accuracy Christians is specific about what accuracy entails. It is not only about practices of fabrication, fraudulent materials and contrivances but errors and omissions also which are not ethically acceptable. The researcher has a duty to provide a balanced report on the research and provide details of analysis and findings of the research for external scrutiny.

While Christians' framework is helpful, there are additional aspects which extend this definition. There are principles of honesty, respect and integrity which are central to an individual's conduct and work and require due regard. Honesty was referred to by Hollway and Jefferson's from their own work as:

...approaching the data openly and even-handedly, in a spirit of enquiry not advocacy, deploying a theoretical framework which was laid out and justified, making only such judgements as could be supported by the evidence, and not ignoring evidence when it suited us. (Hollaway and Jefferson, 2000:100).

This statement had particular meaning for me as I thought through my position and responsibilities as a researcher and my roles within the study itself, as an employee, tutor, head of department and researcher. From my reflections I had a duty of care to all stakeholders within the research process, students, staff,

practice educators and the wider community of occupational therapy educators. I recognised the need for respect and integrity in relation to participants sharing experiences and perceptions together with their willingness to participate. Participants give both their time and a personal investment by being involved in the research process. My duty as a qualitative researcher is then to;

...find patterns within those words (and actions) and present those patterns for others to inspect while at the same time staying as close to the construction of the world as the participants originally experienced it. (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994:18)

#### **4.8.1 Self as a Resource**

As lone researcher, I considered my position and the involvement in the study as practitioner-researcher. To ensure that I maintained a clear perspective in the study I made a conscious decision to draw on external professional expertise to provide periodic peer review. Denscombe (2002:76) discusses the issues around the researcher as a resource and the need for the researcher to be 'conserved – protected and used to best advantage'. The concern is not only in terms of the intellectual demands of the activity but the physical aspects of social interaction and the emotional investment in working with participants. In terms of my personal emotional investment, I felt I needed to be prepared to support individual participants if concerns arose during the course of the study. Lyon and Walker (1997) suggest that interviews and questionnaires may, at face value, appear harmless but for some individuals evoke strong emotional reactions in unintended ways.

#### **4.8.2 Informed Consent**

Questions about profiling may appear to be superficially neutral. This however, had the potential to trigger some of the personal thoughts associated with and arising from the reflective work that they had engaged in both publicly and

privately. Informed consent was therefore of paramount importance together with issues of anonymity and confidentiality.

Throughout the implementation of the study, I ensured that participants felt able to decline to participate. Briefing them in advance of their participation, to allow informed choice, was a key stage in the process. The purpose and nature of the research was presented to whole cohorts through a short verbal presentation. A written briefing with response form giving informed consent to participate was circulated to students and time to assimilate it given. In relation to tutors and practice educators an information sheet and covering invitation to participate was provided to ensure a full explanation was given to ensure an informed decision-making process.

In organisations, power relations exist and subtle pressure to conform may result (Denscombe, 2002). A 'cooling off' period was provided in the face-to-face briefing for students to ensure they made an informed choice. The cohort analysis students (Year 1) were asked to indicate consent for each phase therefore clearly setting the boundaries of their consent.

#### **4.8.3 The Right to Withdraw From the Study**

Careful consideration was given to all aspects of the research in respect of the participants' right to withdraw. Explicit guidelines were given concerning participants' right to withdraw, without prejudice or detriment, at any stage throughout the study. Burgess (1989) draws attention to renewable consent in studies which have a longer life span so that participants do feel free to say 'no' and withdraw at any time. As students were participating throughout an academic year they were re-acquainted with the guidelines at the start of each phase of the study. This permission giving at strategic points links with the theme discussed previously in terms of the power relations and enabling



individuals to have and be able to make a choice. Two mature students (one male, one female), independently, following the briefing felt it important to say to me personally they did not wish to participate, rather than being a 'non-respondent'. I acknowledged and thanked them for their openness.

Interviews are dynamic and can be an empowering channel of communication which raises ethical issues. I considered carefully how to manage the questioning of the interviewees, ways of responding, including being sensitive to feelings expressed and vigilance for any signs of distress. It is crucial that the interviewer allows withdrawal if an interviewee is not comfortable continuing an interview. When issues appear to be disconcerting, Oliver (2003) advises the interviewer to ask if it is acceptable to continue. This allows the interviewee choice. Less confident interviewees may not find it easy to articulate that they are feeling uncomfortable therefore this provides 'permission' to withdraw.

#### **4.8.4 Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Assurance was given to all participants (students, tutors and practice educators) that as individuals they would remain anonymous in any documentation to be published later. This is critical in achieving willingness from participants to be open and share their thoughts and feelings. Careful selection and scrutiny of the data included in any documentation would be undertaken to ensure that individuals' anonymity was protected. Pseudonyms would be used to disguise any distinguishing features for example names of individuals, specific places, identifiable practice scenarios which may be discussed by participants. It was not envisaged that any changes would be made to extracts from the transcripts in terms of gender or the context; meaning and integrity of the data would be preserved.

Data collected and transcriptions have been appropriately logged and stored safely throughout, to comply with the Data Protection Act (1998). With student participants being involved in a longitudinal study they were asked to use their ID number on all data collection of a written form. The ID number is secure and separate from the listing of participants names (Burgess, 1984); all participants have a pseudonym for anonymity in written documents.

Access to data has been restricted to individuals involved in the peer review and supervision process. All participants were assured, as with anonymity, that confidentiality would be observed throughout the study. This is particularly important for the participants being interviewed. Assurance of confidentiality gives them opportunity to speak frankly in their interview (Keats, 2000). On conclusion of the study data will be destroyed (Morgan, 1998).

#### **4.8.5 Self as Researcher**

A central consideration from the outset was my role as a researcher in a case study which focused on an aspect of the curriculum which I had been instrumental in implementing. Researchers engaged in qualitative research need to be clear about how they are perceived by participants. I genuinely wished to hear students' lived experiences of profiling. Although it could be argued I had a vested interest to hear positive voices, to enhance opportunities for PPD it was important to gain rounded and honest views from participants and hear even the quietest or discordant voice. Accessing colleagues to verify data has been advocated by some researchers (Appleton, 1995; Cutcliffe and McKenna, 1999) and Kember et al (1997) discuss the role of the critical friend in action research, in relation to facilitating the researcher in the reflective process. This has meaning and relevance for this study. Given my position, the inclusive nature of this case study and as part of my reflexive engagement, I accessed 'critical

friends' for peer review to minimise bias and ensure trustworthiness of outcomes from an early stage in the research process and reflective dialogue.

With reference to the patient-doctor relationship, Britten (1996) identified that it is better not to interview one's own patients. If this has to be done then permission should be given by the researcher to the patients to verbalise exactly what they really think. This principle equally applies to the student-tutor relationship. As the researcher I was aware of the nature of the interaction which may change as a consequence of being part of the research process. Characteristics associated with gender, class, ethnicity and differential status can be disempowering for the participants and lead to a passivity in participation or a perceptual barrier. The Hawthorne Effect (Mayo, 1952) or researcher reactivity effects can emerge as identified by Cohen et al (2000) who highlight that respondents can react differently when placed in new situations or feel they are under scrutiny. Of particular note is the potential for participants to provide information or evidence that they believe a researcher wishes to hear.

Being an insider researcher does bring benefits in relation to understanding the living context in which the research is being undertaken. Professional socialisation has meant shared professional background, a common language and similar codes of jargon and therefore in the researcher role I was well orientated to the research setting. I recognised that there must be a climate of trust and openness in which participants could express their thoughts honestly whether they felt positive about the experience or not. In the researcher role I attempted to value participants' individual sentiments in whatever way they were expressed. For the study to be meaningful it was vital that difficulties, anxieties and issues of non-compliance were shared and explored. With reference to the evaluation of inter-professional education, Freeth et al (2005:47) state that insider evaluators are 'well placed to feed evaluation findings into course

development'. It is the knowledge and history of the context which is invaluable. This can be seen to be a positive position for participants that their experiences collectively will become findings to inform curriculum development.

Conflict between technical and ethical considerations can emerge when researchers are eager to gain high response rates and minimal bias (Raffe et al, 1989). This is important since, as the researcher, I was known to the participants. Students need to know that there would be no detriment to their status as a student if they chose not to respond. Uppermost in my mind as an insider researcher was that I had to own the research and that I would continue to work with colleagues who were involved in the study (Bell, 1999).

Confidentiality is a key responsibility particularly as an insider researcher remaining in the setting. Participants were aware that as a researcher I knew more about them and the way they engaged in their studies, their values and attitudes to their professional development. Oliver (2003:72) discusses the complexities of this type of situation and he notes that;

...it is often difficult to remember where one first learned something. It is then relatively easy to divulge information without the deliberate intention to break a confidence.

The issue of professional reciprocity was also considered in relation to the involvement of colleagues. Making explicit the role I was in during the research activities was crucial to avoid any tensions in normal department activities. To guard against the accidental disclosure of information, I made a conscious decision to separate the research activities from normal schedules of work both physically and mentally. In addition from the outset, I planned to report on the outcomes of the research at the end of the study and not engage in interim dissemination of findings within and outside the research site. This strategy would also ensure that the findings would include dissemination of all stakeholders' perspectives, students, practice educators and University tutors.

Time to reflect on my role as a researcher, my approach in the research process in general and my engagement with participants (students and colleagues) was critical. Reflexivity in the research process is aptly described by Lincoln and Guba (2000:163)

...a conscious experiencing of the self as both inquirer and respondent, as teacher and learner, as the one coming to know the self within the processes of research itself.

Within the research context Schwandt (1997) defines reflexivity as the fact that 'self' is part of the setting and context in which the research, the social phenomenon, is being undertaken together with the process of self-reflection. Reflexivity is used to improve the quality of the research (Barry et al, 1999). Subjectivity is a key issue in qualitative research. However, Finlay (1998:453) argues that subjectivity is a resource and that '...ignoring it could undermine the validity of the research...'. Travers (2001) draws attention to the issue of assumptions, a '...set of epistemological assumptions...' (2001:9) and the researcher may not be aware of bringing such assumptions to their research. These assumptions are influential in the research process in analysing the data and coming to an understanding of the findings and reporting the outcomes. It is desirable to be self-conscious (Travers, 2001). In entering into the research process and drawing upon my prior reflections a number of assumptions were placed on the table for further exploration. These can be categorised as personal and professional assumptions and the expectations I had about working with participants.

Mason (2002) discusses active reflexivity and critical self-scrutiny in the belief that no researcher can be detached or neutral from the knowledge and evidence being created. Being reflexive is about being systematic and thoughtful in analysis or more importantly engaged in disciplined self-reflection (Wilkinson, 1988). The research process should embrace both personal reflexivity and

methodological reflexivity that is to encompass the ongoing evaluation of personal responses, subjective responses and our method of research (Finlay, 1998). Lincoln and Guba (2000) refer to the work of Reinherz (1997:5) who suggests that there are many selves and categorises them, firstly, the research-based selves; secondly, brought selves, the selves that have historically, socially and personally created our standpoints and thirdly, situationally created selves. The process of reflexivity is thus complex and needs to be multi-dimensional in nature to gain a full and accurate insight into the research process and self as a researcher.

For me reflexivity, although initially developed as part of my becoming a reflective practitioner working in a mental health setting, is now fundamental to my professional practice in education and therefore a habitual, learned behaviour. Mason (2002) argues that reflexivity is critical in every decision and that one should be active in recognising that decisions are being taken. Reflexivity is not only about self in the research process. Gergen and Gergen (1991) argue that critical reflection, examination and exploration of the research process can provide an expanded view of the research; an understanding from different positions.

Through a process of peer observation, personal reflexivity and reflection with a colleague from another health discipline, I came to realise that students see me as a facilitator of learning (Burnard, 1992). Using the principles of andragogy (Knowles, 1990) I take a student-centred approach to learning; thereby encouraging group members to think about their life experiences, personal knowledge and skills (Burnard, 1992). I use the process of reflection, groupwork and discussion to progress their personal development and professional identity and skills as a healthcare professional.

For the period preceding data collection, in addition to research supervision, a colleague acted as a 'critical friend' (Swaffield, 2003), participating with the group's consent, in the whole of the Interactive Processes Module (15 weeks). In this way I received peer feedback on my ability to shift between multiple roles. That is my ability to make the transition between a more formal role outside of student sessions (Head of Department) and the role that I had within the group as a facilitator. It was particularly important that I had this form of feedback before entering into the interview phase of the study. For an open and effective dialogue to take place there must be an open and trusting relationship between interviewer and interviewee.

Field notes taken by my 'critical friend' were shared with me. One entry noted that students openly said that they did not want to miss these sessions, not because I led the group, but because I had created a milieu, a positive climate (Hopson and Scally, 1981) of openness and support which built the cohesion and closeness of the group (Finlay, 1993). As Douglas (2000:143) identifies:

A newly created group is an entity which did not exist before someone set it up. It has to be guided in its progress by some form of direction, however discreetly and democratically, but guided it will be or it will disintegrate.

The dialogue with the critical friend proved to be a mutually beneficial CPD opportunity. Together we were able to discuss how the interactive processes progressed. It re-assured me that I was able to engage as a researcher and move between differing roles successfully, having an open and non-threatening way of working with students.

I acknowledged from the outset of the research process that additional effort in a familiar setting is required with 'insider' researchers. It is important to ensure that even familiar situations are considered (Burgess, 1984) and not taken for granted. With a reflexive approach (Finlay, 1998) I have the potential to bridge the divide between reality and the interpretation of reality through consideration

of contextual factors (Stevenson and Cooper, 1997). Through my education as a therapist and practice-based work in mental health, I would work with integrity, be reflexive, engage with participants and the data and dis-engage sufficiently to be transparent and accurate in my work. I could reconcile the 'professional me' with being an insider researcher.

My process of reflection was in line with the four subject elements that Finlay (1998:453) in her study to explore the life world of occupational therapists shared; that is 'the researcher's assumptions, expectations, behaviour and emotions, and unconscious responses.' I reflected on my assumptions in working with participants. My personal and professional integrity influence the way I approach both my work and research. Both personal knowledge of the profiling system and prior working knowledge of the context, would benefit the study and assist in achieving an in-depth and honest account of students' attitudes. However, I acknowledged that throughout the study I needed to be aware that as an insider researcher I also had an understanding of the department's dynamics, roles and power relations. This, together with a shared professional socialisation as a tutor including experience of being a PD tutor and partnership working with the practice educators involved in the study, needed to be explicitly addressed to ensure that the gathering, analysis and reporting of data was undertaken in a balanced way. My experience as a reflective practitioner has been paramount in the way that I have approached the study together with my ability to communicate effectively in a multiplicity of roles including being a researcher. I reflected in particular on my assumptions in working with students as participants in this study and not as a teacher. Whilst I may have common experiences and shared meaning of the focus of the study this was an important issue to hold onto throughout the research process.



My expectations of the relationships with participants were based on the positive working relationships which already exist. On the basis of previous professional activities undertaken where I was in a team member rather than Head of Department, I felt that colleagues and practice educators would be willing to engage in the study. Likewise from the observational feedback from my critical friend on the open working relationship I have established with students I felt that students would feel able to work with me in a researcher role. However, I was aware that I would need to consider the potential for reticence particularly from first year students who were relatively new to the University and possibly newer members of the department.

#### **4.9 Summary**

The aim of this chapter was to identify and address the decisions initially made in respect of my approach to the study and design together with a narrative on ethical considerations and reflections on self as researcher. A case study approach has been adopted following conscious deliberation on methodological positions and design. To explore the research question and its sub-themes mixed methods of enquiry have been selected thus providing a 360 degree perspective on students' attitudes and levels of engagement with an in-depth insight into students' stories of the process of profiling.

The following chapter provides the commentary on the development of the individual methods of inquiry and pilot work to refine those methods and the implementation of the study.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Methods of Fieldwork Inquiry (I): the Pilot Study**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter on methodological and study design, it was determined that exploratory work would be undertaken at a preliminary stage with the purpose of supporting the development of the methods and tools of the main inquiry. This chapter discusses that preliminary work with commentary including a focus on the pilot studies conducted.

#### **5.2 Pilot Study**

Pilot studies are critical entities in the formative stages of the research process as Oppenheim (1992:47) argues: 'expert advice or spurious orthodoxy are no substitutes for well-organized pilot work'. Whilst Oppenheim argued this in the context of survey research, the rigorous preparation of data methods within the research process cannot be underestimated. It is critical in achieving high quality research, which is not only reliable and valid, but respected by professional colleagues. Oppenheim (1992:64) further claims that, 'Pilot studies can produce some nasty surprises, but is never dull.' It is better to discover flaws, technical or administrative, before the full study. Once participants have shared their views it is unethical to request an 'action re-play'. Through thorough preparation, the researcher can acquire techniques for the '*what if scenarios*' that cannot be predicted, to ensure they remain on track.

The decision to use a focus group at this pilot stage was to seek students' views to inform the design of attitude questionnaire of the study. Focus group technique is a form of participatory research (Foster et al, 1999), in which participants have a sense of being listened to (Morgan, 1998). The data is rich in

nature and 'valuable opportunity for exploring thoughts and feelings' (Mansell et al, 2004:85). This is essential for those seeking to access a user perspective.

### **5.2.1 Sample Group and Ethical Considerations**

Given the intention to facilitate an open dialogue between students, a naturally occurring group, such as a seminar group, had merit. Students would likely to be more at ease with each other and may be more open and willing to challenge; to bridge the divide between what they profess to believe and their actual behaviour (Kitzinger, 1996). Two focus groups were organised from years one and three. Data generated from these groups was envisaged to provide a comprehensive insight into students' current views on personal profiling. Their accounts could then be set in a more global context, based upon practice and University-based academic experiences. The first year students' focus group would provide a picture of the early impressions and attitudes to profiling of students. Students of one seminar group (n=15) were invited and eight gave informed consent to participate. Group membership was consistent with the numbers normally advocated (Greenbaum, 1988; Frey and Fontana, 1993). Eight third year students were invited and five agreed to participate to form the second focus group. Over-disclosure is always a potential issue in focus groups (Morgan, 1998). The issue of ethical boundaries was raised at an early stage and ground rules agreed so that confidentiality and anonymity of information was observed (Beyea and Nicoll, 2000) and regrets about the sharing of personal information did not arise.

### **5.2.2 Focus Group Format**

I acted as moderator for both groups. My decision to be semi-directive in style, to facilitate the group throughout the process, maintain the flow of the session and keep the group on task, was in line with the approach advocated by Frey and Fontana (1993) to generate hypotheses and respond to scenarios. To have a

semi-directive style does not compromise an enabling and open approach and it was considered to be a strategy to ensure that a 'group think' doesn't stifle opinions that differ from the majority' (Morgan, 1998:51). Participants need to be able to tell their stories and leave the group feeling satisfied that they have made a valuable contribution. Moderator techniques used during the focus group can improve the overall quality of the group and the quality of the information which is generated (Greenbaum, 2000).

Formulation of a focus group schedule was the opportunity to define and clarify concepts (Knodel, 1993) to be explored in the questionnaire and interviews.

Themes drawn upon in the focus group were:

- Concept and process of profiling;
- Process of reflection;
- Feelings emerging out of engagement;
- Level of engagement with the process.

Open-ended questions and triggers for key concepts were formulated to allow participants freedom to express an opinion on the issue (Nymanthi and Shuler, 1990) and to facilitate open discussion. My experience has taught me that students do need time and sometimes help to begin to articulate how they feel, which is more difficult than any descriptive or factual communication.

The focus group was scheduled for an hour mid-day with lunch provided to encourage attendance (Beyea and Nicoll, 2000), avoid participants being distracted by hunger and as a social act to engender a relaxed atmosphere (Lankshear, 1993). It also provided time to address any last minute queries or concerns (Mansell et al, 2004). The session was organised into four phases with time for emotional baggage, the concerns of the day, which can create barriers to be discarded (Porritt, 1994). Participants were briefed about the purpose, procedures and that they would contribute to the design of a study on profiling; including further assurance of anonymity and confidentiality.

As a warm up activity I used the 'write down' exercise advocated by Greenbaum (2000:161) which he suggests makes participants more likely to state their opinion if they have had an opportunity to engage in writing down 'top-of-the mind reactions' and to plan what to say. To ensure that the opinions, views and emergent themes were accurately recorded from participants, without mis-interpretation, a flip chart was used. As the facilitator I made an open invitation to the group to scribe. The volunteer members appeared to be trusted.

A 'summing up' phase was planned before moving into a concluding phase for this 'one-off' focus group. The verification element (Nymanthi and Schuler, 1999) of the final phase of the group is critical in assuring accuracy of opinions and view points. Burnard's (1992) warns that summing up is not always helpful; the facilitator is using their own forms of expression and words. Due care was taken to use exact words and expressions emerging within the session. Group dynamics were healthy, with participants respecting each others' participation and views. A genuine interest emerged from the participants; they wished to make a contribution to the future of the profiling system for other students; an 'altruistic' motive (Lyons and Walker, 1997).

Several strategies were used to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. A schedule of questions was used to ensure each focus group received the same triggers for discussion. This provided a consistent approach between groups thereby increasing the reliability. Consistency was enhanced by the same moderator (researcher) and both groups being facilitated rather than running on a non-directive basis. The verification phase (Nymanthi and Schuler, 1999) was essential in confirming data as a true record of the sentiments expressed during the group. Feedback from participants on the explanations being proposed is one of several ways of checking the validity (Denscombe, 2005). Krueger (1994)

identifies the high face validity achieved with participants' contributions to the group can be confirmed, reinforced or disputed.

Recall bias is a problem with retrospective data (Bowling, 2002). It is the selectivity of memories which occur in recall that must be duly considered as a factor in gathering such data. Both groups had developed trusting relationships and this trust would be prejudiced if any inaccuracies or inconsistencies were articulated. I felt confident that if the need arose, group members would challenge each other thus diluting the degree of bias. Attitudes are open to change through peer pressure (Rungapadiachy, 1999) and this can compromise validity and trustworthiness.

### **5.2.3 Focus Group Data**

Data generated by the focus groups was used to inform the development of the attitude and opinion questionnaires. An inventory (Bertrand et al, 1992) was compiled from the points documented and combined with the self-reporting points that individuals made on their warm-up sheets. This provided an overview grid as a descriptive summary (Knodel, 1993) with '...particular words or phrases used to describe experiences listed...' (O'Brien, 1993). From the inventory an analysis was made of key ideas and emergent themes (Foster et al, 1999). A theme was defined as a concept being expressed in one or more ways (Hisrich and Peters, 1982). Themes were documented according to similarities in feelings, content and behaviour. Each category was further explored for sub-categories (O'Brien, 1993; Dey, 1993).

### **5.2.4 Emergent Themes**

The purpose of using focus groups was to understand the experience of the process of profiling. However the practicalities of the profiling system became intertwined in the discussion including the reflective diary. This discussion was

permitted to run its course and considered valid, given the relationship with the process of reflection and students' engagement with the system. Documenting experiences has been used in developing students' abilities to engage in the process of reflection. Therefore, the document is a central reference point in the first profiling discussion between a PD tutor and tutee. Figure 5.1 summarises the emergent themes which have informed the formulation of key dimensions for the attitude statements and basis of the qualitative interviews (see 5.5).

**Figure 5.1 : Focus Group Emergent Themes**

**Concept of profiling:**

- Profiling as a tool for developing skills and self-awareness
- Profiling as a practical strategy
- Honesty and truthfulness underpins engagement in profiling
- Profiling is an individual process for self-evaluation
- Profiling helps to gain a new perspective
- Profiling becomes intrusive

**Concept: Process**

- The development of personal insight and growth

**Concept: Reflection**

- Facing challenge

**Concept: Cognition**

- Structured thinking

**Concept: Affect**

- Emotionally difficult with changeable feelings

**Concept: Empowerment**

- Internal integration process

**Concept: Theory and Practice**

- Bridging the theory to practice transition and vice versa

### 5.3 Design of the Attitude Questionnaire

Data generated by the focus group provided the dimensions to be explored in the attitude questionnaire (Figure 5.2). Statements were constructed using the emergent themes as triggers. From the item pool, 39 statements were selected as potential attitude statements. Due attention was given to keeping the items reasonably balanced with roughly equal numbers of positive and negative items (Oppenheim, 1992).

As a strategy to increase face validity, the statements were peer reviewed by two lecturers (occupational therapist and AHP) and a practitioner. The review ensured that statements and instructions were clear, purposeful and

unambiguous. With the use of a five point Likert scale there is a risk of participants taking a mid-point stance rather than thinking through statements and making an informed response.

Figure 5.2: Dimensions from Themes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Independence</li><li>• Enablement/empowerment</li><li>• Development:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ personal</li><li>◦ professional</li></ul></li><li>• Knowledge &amp; skills</li><li>• Feedback</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attributes</li><li>• Self:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ self-awareness</li><li>◦ self-concept</li><li>◦ confidence &amp; esteem</li></ul></li><li>• Personal integrity:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ honesty</li><li>◦ trust</li></ul></li></ul>

A 'forced choice' format was considered as a way of avoiding an acquiescent response mode occurring (Polgar and Thomas, 1995). Previous work provided evidence to support the five point scale but that amendment to the wording of the categories should be made (Green and Heames, 1992). The proposed statements were assigned an amended Likert Scale score and category:

- 5 agree
- 4 tend to agree
- 3 no opinion or don't know
- 2 tend to disagree
- 1 disagree

This strategy was used to avoid the tendency of over-using the central 'no opinion' category, if participants felt that they had some feelings towards a statement, but could not say they strongly or wholly agreed. The actual wording of statements is crucial, using appropriate, simple, language so that participants will want to respond. The focus groups had been designed with this in mind to 'learn the language' of students to inform this stage of the research. As a consequence of the peer review some minor amendments to the wording of the statements were made.

In the design of questionnaires with an attitude scale Oppenheim (1992) advocates the use of item analysis to ensure that the sub-scales are consistent and that there are not additional subscales involved. Further details of the



analysis are provided in the commentary following the discussion on the pilot study of the attitude questionnaire.

The success of the evaluation work previously cited (Green and Heames, 1992) informed the decisions regarding the design of proforma for the questionnaire. The design used in the evaluations utilised the Likert Scales, was suitable for optical mark reading and computer analysis of the data. A similar proforma was therefore used as a prototype in the pilot.

### **5.3.1 Pilot Study: attitude questionnaire**

A pilot study was undertaken by final year students who were not included in the main study. All students had participated in the profiling system. As a cohort of 67 students they were representative of the general profile of occupational therapy students. Knowing students were under pressure from their final term of study, I made a conscious decision to pilot the attitude scale only, to avoid any perception of being overburdened by 'extra' activities. Seeking guidance on the accompanying qualitative questionnaire could easily be undertaken through other channels. The potential of 67 returns was realistic for the validity of results from a scaling procedure. The purpose of this pilot work was to refine the statements and through statistical analysis, test the reliability of the scale to measure the dimensions identified for the investigation.

The proforma was produced to a high quality specification with all statements entered and a space for participants to make any comments about their individual responses or the attitude questionnaire itself. The accurate completion of the pro-forma is a critical factor. A disadvantage of using an optical mark reader is that responses have to be entered very accurately by participants for the computer analysis. This can be overcome by the personal administration of the attitude questionnaire and clear instructions. By administering the pro-forma

in person, queries can also be addressed, thus increasing the number of valid responses counted (Bourque and Fielder, 2003).

All students were briefed on the broad aims and nature of the study and an invitation to participate given. In terms of consent to participate, students were told this was a pilot study. To assure students of my role, that of researcher, not tutor or Head of Department, I explained the code of ethics so that any questions could be explored. This included explicitly addressing the issues of anonymity and confidentiality and that this stage would involve approximately 20 minutes of their time. I advised students that by completing and returning the questionnaire they would be giving their informed consent to participate in the study. A cooling off period (coffee break) was provided to emphasise that the decision to participate was theirs, not mine. Of the 67 students 60 returned to participate.

In administering the questionnaire, a brief resumé on the purpose and context of the study was given and I re-affirmed the responsibilities of the researcher. All participants were asked to listen carefully to the instructions for the completion of the pro-forma as precision is necessary for computer analysis. Participants were asked to remain where they were until the whole group had completed the questionnaire to avoid disruptions which may effect the concentration of others or place a sense of pressure on any participant taking longer to complete the pro-forma.

On asking the participants to commence working on the attitude questionnaire, I moved out of eyesight to avoid being obtrusive and potentially placing pressure on the participants to participate. I had at the very start given the participants permission to withdraw at any stage and even at this point they still had the option not to complete the questionnaire. Participants may have felt uncomfortable after reading the questionnaire and as a consequence changed

their decision. When all participants had completed the questionnaire they were thanked. An open invitation to participate in this next aspect of the pilot study, qualitative interviews, was made.

All questionnaire returns, via a secure box, were accepted for analysis and initially scanned by the optical mark reader for basic descriptive statistics on the response rates to the statements by category. Item analysis as advocated by Oppenheim (1992) was undertaken using computer software (SPSS) to identify the strongest attitude statements for the dimensions to be retained in the final questionnaire.

Qualitative comments produced few views on the style and nature of the questions with some participants offering brief details on their personal experience. These ranged from usefulness, to issues of tutor continuity and relationship and guidance which confirmed that valuable information could be gained by using an open 'further comments' section.

### **5.3.2 The Outcome**

Item analysis on the dimensions enabled the selection of the best statements for retention in the attitude questionnaire by correlating each item with the scores from the whole cohort. For reliability Oppenheim (1992) recommends an internal-consistency method. To apply the method, the correlation coefficients for each item are calculated with the total score and items with the highest correlation are retained. This method of internal-consistency provides some safeguards. As a result of the item analysis the number of statements was reduced to 26 items and therefore within the recommended level of statements as suggested by Oppenheim (1992). The dimensions detailed previously in Figure 5.2 were shown to be internally consistent using Chronbach's Alpha method. Oppenheim indicates that complex results can occur with a strong factor

represented into several variables. This factor loading pattern emerged in some statements. Kliene (1994) indicates that factor loadings are considered high if greater 0.6 (the positive and negative sign is irrelevant) and moderately high if above 0.3. The number of items in the scale has an impact on the loading values. Pallent (2001) identifies that the alpha values can be quite small and recommends an inter-item correlation where the optimal mean values range from 0.2 to 0.4. Considering that the questionnaire was one of several data gathering tools the analysis provided sufficient data on this basis to inform the selection of the strongest statements for retention in the final version (Appendix 2).

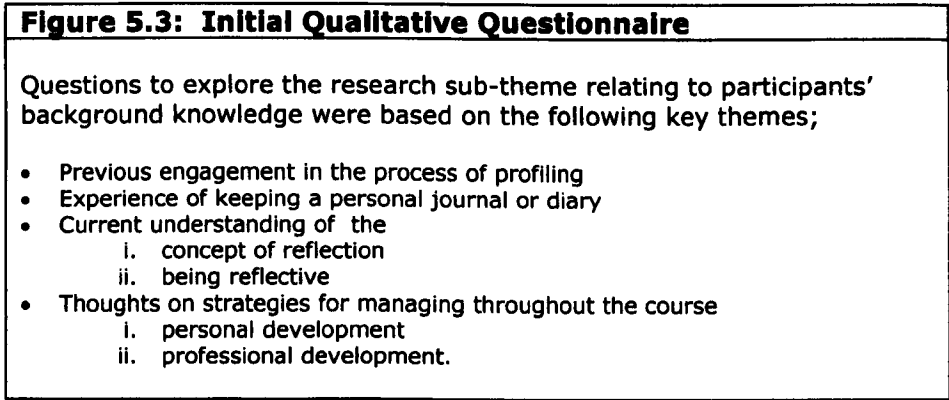
#### **5.4 Students' Background Experience**

This component of the study was designed to gather data on participants' characteristics and previous experience of profiling using a qualitative questionnaire. Students enter the course from a variety of educational backgrounds and life experiences. A précis of characteristics of participants is necessary to investigate similarities and differences in approach and attitudes towards the process of profiling. Issues of attitude, self-awareness, maturity and previous experience are relevant in relation to their impact on the way that participants engage in the process of profiling. Previous experience can be seen from the perspective of general life experience but account also needs to be taken of the possibility that some younger participants may have engaged in RoAs (Hitchcock, 1989) at school and that similar skills to those required in the profiling process may have been acquired.

The questionnaire provided open-ended questions for participants to use their own words for their accounts and closed questions to gain basic data on age and gender. Age is a sensitive issue as recognised by Bell (1999), who suggests the use of age categories, which are possibly less embarrassing (Walker, 1996). Categories were set in a way to broadly identify participants by potential entry

points. The first category for traditional entry into HE at 17-19 years, those who had a gap year or limited work experience 20-24 years and two categories for mature students 25-30 and 31 years plus. The division within the two mature categories was undertaken with the view that career changes may be more prevalent in the latter age group. Entering or re-entering HE may engender different perspectives, creating more challenges or different situational circumstances which impact on the 'study life' of students.

In designing the questionnaire it was recognised that participants were being asked to engage in several components for this first phase of the study. A short and to the point type of questionnaire was indicated. Only primary questions relating to participants' background knowledge and experience were asked at this stage (Appendix 3). This would form a baseline for understanding the relationship between previous experience and current attitudes associated with the profiling system, for example, use of a reflective diary. Figure 5.3 identifies the key themes for the questions.



To enhance the design, and more fundamentally provide variation and visual relief, coloured paper was selected for the qualitative questionnaire. It was deemed important to differentiate this component to ensure that participants worked through all documentation in the pack (Walker, 1996). Space was needed to allow participants freedom in their responses given that this was

seeking participants' personal views (Walker, 1996). Care was taken not to provide too much space as it could be threatening. Questions with a paragraph-sized space occupied one page with a further page appended to allow participants further comments should they so choose.

Basic information is needed to assist participants in the completion of a questionnaire. Sequencing of questions is important and a funnelling approach can be adopted with more sensitive, specific or difficult questions following broad, basic, or easily answered questions to acclimatise participants to the process of writing down their experiences and opinions (Bowling, 2002).

#### **5.4.1 Question Construction**

Four questions were constructed around each theme. The wording was simple ensuring that questions were easily understood. The use of jargon was avoided. The first question asked participants to identify their previous experience of profiling. If experience had been gained, the participant was asked to continue and explain the process of engagement and the type of documentation kept. The rationale was based on the need to know if participants had come to the course having experience of a process, the same or similar to the profiling system being investigated. This experience may influence individuals in their attitude towards profiling. It could also impact on the way or level of engagement which subsequently occurs and value placed on the process of reflection.

To articulate one's own thoughts and feelings is not an easy process particularly if the process is unfamiliar. To express these in writing can be a challenge for some individuals. The profiling system is based upon documenting personal reflections before entering into a reflective dialogue with a PD tutor. Therefore, to seek an explanation, in the participants' own words, of any similar form of personal writing would be valuable. The experience of similar writing activities, for

example personal journals or descriptive diaries, may have an influence on participants' engagement in profiling and may add to the insight gained. The concept of reflection is central to the process of profiling and indeed used widely in professional studies and preparation for practice (Healey and Spencer, 2008; Alsop and Ryan, 1996). Participants at this stage of the course may or may not be aware of this concept. To ask about their understanding would identify the base from which they are beginning to learn about their own professional development and engagement in the profiling process.

The final question was designed to be all embracing and asked participants to express their thoughts or plans on strategies they may implement in respect of managing their PPD throughout the course. The question was designed to seek the participants' understanding of their personal management capability and skills at the time of entry. This relates to the sub-theme of the research to explore the process of change.

The questionnaire ended with thanks for the participants' involvement in the study (Polgar and Thomas, 1995). This form of appreciation is essential, given the time and personal investment participants will potentially make in each phase of the study. The questionnaire was considered simple and effective and although the respondents of the questionnaire would be new students, the question about reflection was seen to be relevant.

### **5.5 Qualitative Interviews: cross-sectional approach**

An in-depth cross-sectional picture of students' experiences at different stages of the course to provide differing perspectives was to be accessed through qualitative interviewing; phase two of the study.

Although Burgess (1984:102) identifies interviews as 'conversations with purpose', interviews are more than conversations. Conversational style is desirable to create a relaxed atmosphere and elicit the best from an interviewee but interviews involve an understanding of the situation that casual conversations do not (Denscombe, 1998). The purpose of an interview is to explore individuals' views and what they are thinking and feeling about a topic. Stringer (1996:62) comments that interviews 'symbolically recognize the legitimacy of their (the interviewee's) points of view'. Interviews can also '...uncover new areas or ideas that were not anticipated at the outset of the research...', (Britten, 1996:30).

The value of preparatory work cannot be underestimated. Good qualitative interviewing involves 'hard, creative, work.' (Mason, 1996:42). In comparing qualitative interviewing with the design and use of a structured questionnaire, Mason emphasises that it is a complex and exhausting task, '...the informal and conversational style of this form of interviewing belies a much more rigorous set of activities...' (Mason, 1996:43). The remit for the interview is in the hands of the researcher and Denscombe, (1998:110) emphasises this;

There is a tacit agreement in the notion of being interviewed that the proceedings and agenda for discussion will be controlled by the researcher.

In my experience as an occupational therapist, teacher and, more recently a senior manager in HE, an interview is not an unfamiliar setting. I recognised that in the researcher role I would assume different responsibilities and situational behaviours, albeit that I would still be *me*. The pilot stage was an important preparatory phase and enhanced further by peer review.

### **5.5.1 Participants**

Two final year students, Susan and Amanda (pseudonyms) having participated in the attitude scale development work gave consent to be interviewed as part of



the pilot study phase. Susan entered the course through a traditional route and Amanda, a more mature student, studied in HE prior to entry.

### **5.5.2 Preparing the Interview**

The welcome was to be particularly critical in setting the scene and more importantly the boundaries for the interview itself. Prior to each interview, I proposed to take a short period of preparatory reflection with the specific purpose of relaxing into the researcher role and working through a mental schedule of my experience to safeguard my role. Several sources of literature, comment on issues of the interviewer-interviewee relationship and interactions in particular those of power relations (Scott, 1985) and defensiveness (Holloway and Jefferson, 2000). Consideration was given to managing the environment, content and structure of the interview and dynamic inter-relationship between myself (interviewer) and interviewees.

### **5.5.3 The Interview Schedule**

Unpacking the over-arching research question produced a number of key themes to be explored in the pilot phase of the study (see Chapter Four). Asking questions is an 'art' and not a 'science' just as it is in constructing questions. The literature on research methodology and '*doing research*' (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Denscombe, 1998) highlights this. Careful planning is needed to avoid the pitfalls frequently cited, for example loaded questions, double-barrelled questions, ambiguous phrasing, use of jargon, or where it is appropriate to use technical language and over use of technicalities. The construction of the questions needs to be tailored to the participant sample's needs and be 'user friendly' to achieve the best possible data and a quality interview. The final schedule was reviewed and peer reviewed against the research question and emergent themes.

#### **5.5.4 Conducting the Interviews**

The climate needs to be comfortable to allow the interviewee to relax, feel confident and in an 'open' position (Egan, 1994). Consideration was also given to timing and how to capture the generation of data. Between 30-45 minutes for an interview felt appropriate, bearing in mind that this would, realistically, be an hour of a participant's time. Interviews were scheduled during the working day, at a mutually convenient time to avoid it feeling an additional demand. Arrival with time to acclimatise was built in to ensure that the day's 'baggage' did not impinge on the interview.

Data capture is commonly achieved through audio-tape recording and is relatively unobtrusive (Stringer, 1996; Mason, 1996; Bell, 1999). However, the pilot study was being conducted for technical, practical and personal reasons. The purpose of this pilot work was to be able to review the practical arrangements and the following dimensions of the interview:

- effectiveness of interview schedule in eliciting relevant responses;
- provide data to address the research question;
- timing and direction of interview; opening, closing session;
- establishment of a rapport and dynamics;
- personal interview skills; ability to monitor progress, prompt, 'probe'.

A video-recording of the session was considered the most effective option for capturing not only the data but verbal and non-verbal dimensions of communication and underlying processes. The interviewees were fully appraised prior to the interview and both agreed to proceed on this basis. In explaining the rationale for the video, I said explicitly that the pilot was, with their consent, for peer-review to evaluate the interview schedule and support my personal learning.

#### **5.5.5 The Outcome**

Sequence by sequence the interview was reviewed and peer reviewed. The preparatory work paid off. Both interviews ran smoothly and were effective in generating data. Participants engaged fully and from the video recording I was

relaxed in my posture and confident in my management of the interview. This belies the feelings of apprehension I had experienced. I effectively put Susan and Amanda at ease and as a consequence they both shared their thoughts, feelings and experiences openly.

In reflecting on interviewees' engagement with the interview situation, I recognised that as final year students Susan and Amanda were very familiar with being interviewed by peers and prospective employers. In addition they were familiar with peer and tutor reviewed practice. Britten (1996) discussing the work of Field and Morse (1989) notes stage fright as a common pitfall in interviewing. With this in mind I recognised the need to prepare first and second year students for the interview in an effective way without pre-empting the interview experience.

Greenbaum (2000) in discussing issues of personal contributions to focus groups suggests that to write down what one might say assists an individual articulating those thoughts. The idea of providing the basic schedule of interview questions for participants to consider in preparation for the interview was endorsed by the work of Wright (2001) who had used this strategy. Bearing in mind Greenbaum's note about writing I moved to the position of deciding whether a questionnaire format would be helpful, thus allowing participants to write or 'jot down' their thoughts as they occurred. This document could then be referred to during the interview and be beneficial in 'kick starting' the interview if stage fright did occur.

An informal style of preparatory document on coloured paper would meet the needs identified above. It would be an informal, welcoming, 'user friendly' preparatory document (clip art, questions, space for jottings) was designed and peer reviewed. The document would accompany a letter to participants explaining the preparatory activity and confirming the interview. With

preparatory work undertaken and verification of the methods of inquiry the pilot study focusing on the student perspective was concluded.

## **5.6 Summary**

Through this chapter the sequence of exploratory and preparatory work underpinning the study design has been documented. Commentaries have been provided on the development of each phase of the pilot study. This includes the focus group from which rich data emerged and informed the development of the attitude and opinion questionnaires and outcomes associated with the individual methods of inquiry.

From the initial research question several sub-themes emerged during the pilot study. Being inclusive in approach to the study, the incorporation of these sub-themes is important, as the research design begins to be verified and core components prepared for the full study.

Initially methodological triangulation was suggested as a strategy to corroborate findings. Further reflection on the research question and themes to emerge from the exploratory process identifies the need to include participant or hierarchical triangulation (Edwards and Talbot, 1999). Chapter Six will discuss the work associated with achieving participant or hierarchical triangulation and the final review of the research design as a foundation for discussion, with commentary on the implementation of the full study.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Methods of Fieldwork Inquiry (II)**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The pilot study was illuminative not only in the sense of informing the methods of inquiry but unfolding dimensions of the process of profiling, from users' perspectives, not considered earlier. Student data generated from qualitative comments from the attitude questionnaire referred to the impact of the tutor-student relationship on the process of profiling. Similar comments emerged from the analysis of the pilot qualitative interviews. Whilst the pilot study is a methodological test-bed and only involved a small sample, the relationship with significant others in the process of profiling has the potential to influence students' attitudes to and ways of working with the profiling system and therefore could not be ignored in the final design of the study.

Much has already been written about the interface between education and practice (Stewart, 1998) and more importantly 'bridging the gap' between the worlds of academia and practice (Rolfe, 1998). The process of profiling was designed to contribute positively in this bridging process. Tutors and practice educators are integral to participants' lives and potentially powerful in relation to their eligibility to practice. As Wildy's (2003) metaphor of a statue conveys viewing different perspectives in research is important and realising significant others in the participants' lives and recognising their influence became imperative. Given their role as assessors of students' professional knowledge and practice, they are gate keepers of the profession and their views necessarily included in the study as key actors in the process. As a consequence, work began on participant or hierarchical triangulation (Edwards and Talbot, 1999)

with the development of qualitative questionnaires to generate data, to provide a 360 degree perspective of the process of profiling.

## **6.2 University Tutors' and Practice Educators' Perspectives**

Within the case study institution it is essential that there is parity in the experience offered to all students participating in the profiling system. Individual tutor/educator interpretations of the system can cause inequalities of opportunity and potentially create unmet needs and feelings of dissatisfaction among students which undoubtedly impact on their attitudes to this experience.

All University tutors act as PD tutors for the profiling system. I was the only exception during the period of this study, thus maintaining a degree of neutrality in my researcher role (Finlay, 1998). Each student has a designated practice educator (practitioner) for the duration of each placement. All tutors/practice educators are briefed and given training in their role as part of the quality assurance process.

A qualitative questionnaire was considered the most appropriate way of eliciting the perspective of University tutors and practice educators on profiling as a backdrop to illuminate students' stories. Face-to-face interviews for tutors felt too psychologically close a method for me. Whilst they may generate richer and deeper data, I was acutely aware of my role as their academic manager. In relation to practice educators, the widest possible inclusion was desired to cover the range of practice sites, therefore, interviews were not deemed as appropriate given the geographical locations.

Data gathering needs to be undertaken with a duty of care, particularly when there is a pre-existing hierarchical relationship between researcher and participants as in this case. It is essential that there is an awareness of the

impact that the role may have on existing group dynamics to avoid placing the study in a precarious position (Moreton-Cooper, 2000). As noted earlier I was, and still am, working within the community in which the research was undertaken. Marrow (1998) emphasises possible insensitivity or exploitation can put at risk the successful progress of a study. The cost benefit ratio was considered before the decision was made to implement a qualitative questionnaire to ensure I remained sensitive to the issue of professional reciprocity.

### **6.3 Developing the Qualitative Questionnaires**

The process of formulating both questionnaires (tutors and practice educators) was, in principle, informed by the work of Maykut and Morehouse (1994) discussed earlier in relation to qualitative interviewing. This process supported the procedures for generating the areas of inquiry, questions, prioritising and sequencing questions and structuring the questionnaire. Mind mapping facilitated the process of generating questions inductively from my knowledge of the system and experience as an educator and practitioner.

The purpose of the questionnaires was to surface tutors' understanding of the profiling system, expectations of students' engagement in the profiling process and how they worked as a facilitator including preparedness of self, dialogic interaction. For practice educators' it was to elicit their perspective on how students approached the process of reflection and the inter-relationship of profiling with practice learning; how the outcomes of profiling were operationalised (goal setting, strategies for practice, CPD). Practice educators' attitudes in relation to the centrality of reflection would potentially influence current practice and professional development. Therefore, to elicit their views was important in relation to strategies for CPD in light of the changing political emphasis on CPD for practitioners (HPC, 2007; COT, 2004).

From each of the categories open-ended questions were generated (Appendix 4). Question style, general direction of questioning (Denscombe, 2003) and wording was considered and re-reviewed to ensure they were appropriate for target participants, elicited the data required and were structurally sound, for example not ambiguous or double-barrelled. Following this different patterns were reviewed for the most logical and effective sequencing of questions and sub-questions with continuity of category. A sense of flow assists participants thinking about their views. Positioning of more complex questions within the later sections of the questionnaire rather than at the start was undertaken (Denscombe, 2003); participants thereby more likely to persevere.

From the nature of questions to be addressed some were better suited to closed, yes/no responses followed by space for participants to write qualitative responses. Listings with categories (Likert-type ) seemed more appropriate in some instances For example; for the use of guidelines it felt more appropriate to ask if they were referred to on a 'yes/no/sometimes' basis. In contrast the Likert scale was designed to gain an understanding of how informative the guidelines were, with space for comments following the scale.

The questionnaires were printed on coloured paper to avoid being mislaid and kept within the conventional boundaries for length, not demanding more than 30 minutes of the participants' time (Walker, 1996). Research etiquette was observed. A preliminary statement on the front page was written to remind participants of the purpose of the study with brief instructions on how to proceed.

A pilot study with a representative sample of participants was not feasible for University tutors as all members of the Course Team were to be offered the opportunity to participate. Neither was it appropriate to seek a sample group



from another institution as this is a case study. A review of the questionnaire was, however, essential given the rationale already cited for pilot work. Peer review was achieved; I approached a practitioner with experience of University lecturing, with insider knowledge of the profiling system and practice education to review both questionnaires.

#### **6.4 Practice Questionnaire: practical considerations**

Given the wide geographical span of practice sites and need to target individual practice educators postal access was the preferred method. Only department e-mail addresses were available at the time and control over access and would-be participants (Bourque and Fiedler, 2003) therefore ineffective. The potential response rate was a concern initially, particularly with the timing (mid-July, post-practice). The strength of this method was that educators would receive the questionnaire individually and be invited to participate therefore minimising any informal discussions between educators and student participants on their experiences, perspectives and attitudes (Bourque and Fiedler, 2003). In this way greater clarity and focus on educators' opinions would be achieved. A follow-up letter was considered as a strategy to improve the response rate if necessary (Cohen et al, 2000).

In preparing the questionnaire, guidance was taken from Robson (2002) in terms of designing postal questionnaires which had the potential to produce a good response rate. Particular note being made of activity patterns within organisations. Robson suggested, although no rationale given, that dispatches on Monday or Tuesday are more likely to produce a better response. Anecdotally, practice mirrored this. Mondays are high pressure days particularly in acute settings with week-end admissions requiring attention. Similarly, in rehabilitation services pressures build up on Fridays due to preparing discharges. The timing of the questionnaire for busy practitioners was critical.

## **6.5 Summary**

As a result of data generated by the pilot study a review of the research question was undertaken. On the basis of this and reflections on the qualitative comments of the pilot study, the role of 'significant others' in the formulation of students' attitudes to and experiences of profiling students' professional lives emerged and needed to be embraced in the study design.

This chapter outlines the theory-practice interface. Practice educators have a significant influence on students' experiences and the learning culture within the practice environment. Although not directly responsible for students' engagement in the process of profiling, they are responsible for working with the outcomes of students' profiling and goal setting. From the pilot work the role of PD tutor (University) was envisaged as a key element in students' engagement in the Personal Profiling System.

Informed by the data generated in the pilot study the sub-themes of the initial research question were developed to include the theory-practice interface for exploration in the final study. This provided both methodological and participant triangulation, thus gaining a fuller and more rounded picture of the process of profiling from the users' perspective. The research process; the design, methods and tools of inquiry and stages in the implementation of the study, are presented in figures 6.1 and 6.2 overleaf.

The next two chapters will document the implementation of the full study. The perspective of students will be examined first with the broader perspective of the University tutors' and practice educators' views presented in the subsequent chapter.

**Figure 6.1: The Research Process**

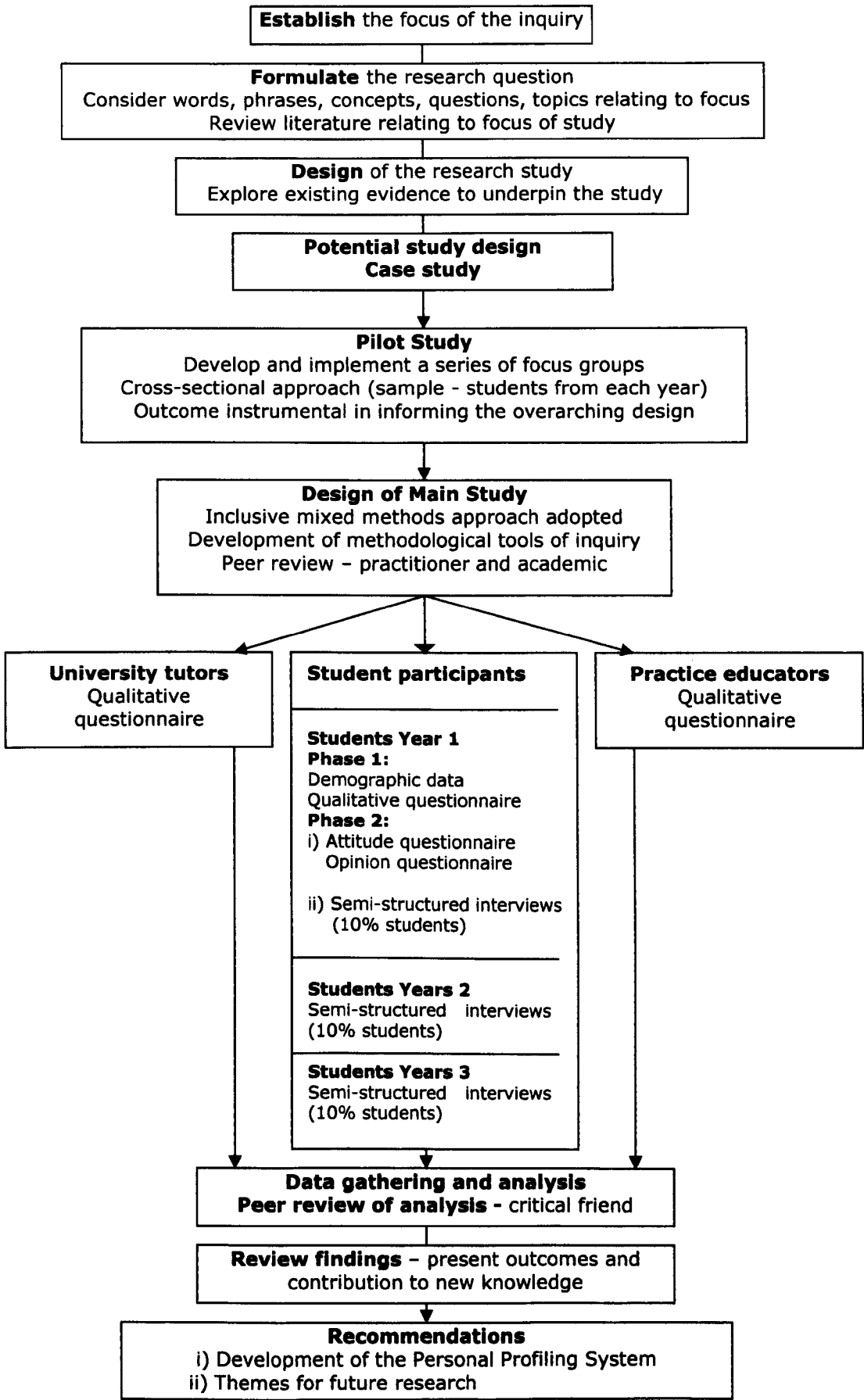
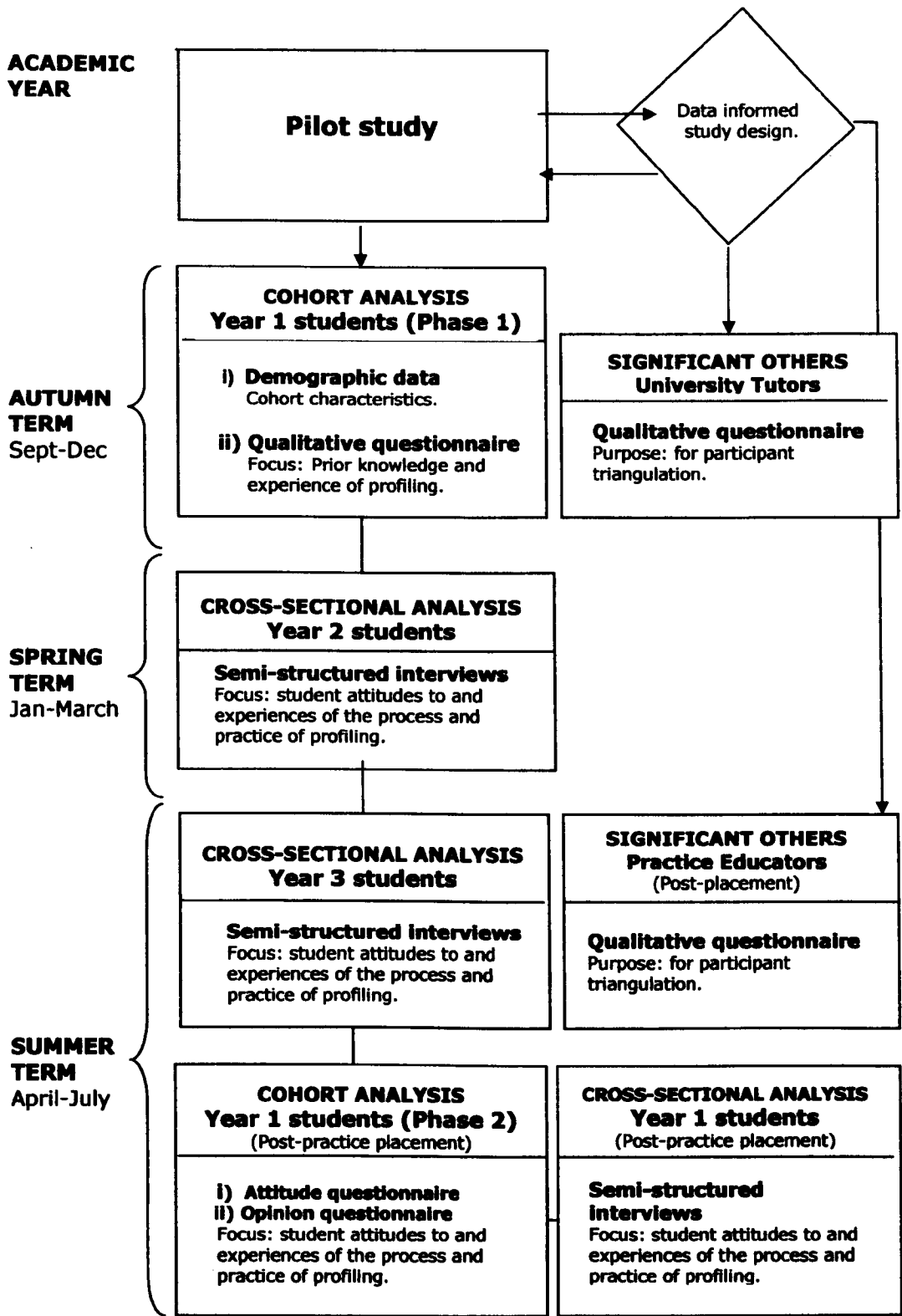


Figure: 6.2 Research Study Implementation Timelines



## **Chapter Seven**

### **Research Findings (I)**

#### **Analysis of Data: Students' Attitudes to and Experiences of Personal Profiling**

##### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter charts the data collection phase in respect of student participants with an analytical commentary. The first section provides details of the characteristics of the student cohort involved in the longitudinal aspects of this study together with a brief outline of the launch of the study. Following sections detail questionnaire data and then focus on interview data with an analytical commentary. Chapter Eight presents data from University-based tutors and practice educators who are partners within the profiling system.

##### **7.2 Student Participants: background**

The study followed one intake of students during the course of one academic year. The cohort totalled 115 students, of which 101 were full-time students, 96 females and five males. Part-time students within the cohort (n=14) were not included in the study. The rationale for this was based on a number of factors connected with their route of entry. The part-time students are employed in health or social care settings and study on a day a week basis. They all had a working knowledge of occupational therapy albeit from the perspective of being unqualified (occupational therapy assistants). Therefore, there is a clear exposure to client-based work and occupational therapy services, thus, exposure to occupational therapy as a profession and opportunities for CPD.

In-service students come into the University with accreditation of prior (experiential) learning. This and life experience helps to inform their studies

particularly in their first year. Work-based learning is an integral feature of the course and underpins University-based studies. For these students their day-to-day experience has informed their studies from the beginning of the course whilst full-time students engage with practice at the end of the first year. It is not until they progress to year two that they begin to draw on practice experiences. These were considered justifiable reasons for in-service students' non-inclusion in the study.

Overall characteristics of this cohort of students (n=101) were similar to cohorts of the past five years. Approximately a quarter of students (n=23) were traditional school leavers, 18 years of age, with three quarters (n=78) being 19 years and over. Students came from a range of backgrounds, with approximately half registering 'home' as being located in the region. The demographic data is detailed below (tables 1 and 2).

Table 7.1: Full-time Student Cohort by Age and Gender		
		Numbers
Gender	Female	95
	Male	6
Age	18	23
	19-21	35
	22-21	12
	26 +	31
Total students		101

Table 7.2 : Entry Route	
Qualification	Numbers
First Degree	13
A level	44
BTEC Nat. Dip.	4
Access	18
GNVQ (Adv)	16
Other *	6
Total students	101

\* combination of qualifications or professional qualifications e.g. nursing

Student participants in the cross-sectional aspects were similar in characteristics. Participants were from across the age range and with different experiences of education and life in general.

### **7.3 Launch of the Research Study**

Following the pilot, gathering of the research data was undertaken over a single academic year. The starting point was September; during the 'Freshers' Week' for first year students, induction week for second year students and following the final practice placement for the third year students. Data from the cross-sectional dimension of the study were collated during that same year.

The study was introduced to student groups by the researcher and the rationale for the study explained. This was to ensure that all participants were fully conversant with the nature of the study and understood the code of ethics being followed. It also provided an opportunity to respond to any queries. Particular emphasis in respect of the longitudinal nature of the study was given in the meeting with first year students. Key stages were explained in relation to periods of data gathering, the introductory phase of gathering students' background knowledge and experience of profiling, phase two administering questionnaires and the final phase of interviewing a sample of participants. Transparency was considered important so students were fully-informed of the level of engagement before committing to the study.

During the briefing, the nature of the research study was presented and an explanation about informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality given. Students were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time. A letter inviting them to participate with a reply slip attached to indicate their willingness to participate was circulated to all groups with an announcement about the arrangements for the return of the replies. For first year students the longitudinal process of the research was discussed and the pack of questionnaires to be used was introduced. Students were advised that if they did not wish to participate in this first stage of the research process that the

packs could be posted back as incomplete packs into the collection box. The packs at this stage of the study comprised the following documents:

- an introductory overview of the study, setting out the time scales;
- consent form if the participant wished to be considered for interview;
- qualitative questionnaire to gather background characteristics of the participants.

To maintain anonymity, participants were asked to enter their student ID codes. It was explained that in a longitudinal study it was important to be able to match the responses over time and that the ID code was a way of achieving this. They were assured that academic staff would not have access to the data or listing of these particular codes.

Following the initial launch of the study to first year students, two students declared that they did not wish to participate (documented in Chapter Four). From students present at the study launch, 93 returns were received; a 92% return rate. Given that students had only just made contact with the Course Team and known the researcher for four days, this return rate was seen to be positive. Whilst the 'eager' to please factor may be present, it is unlikely to be a whole group phenomena.

#### **7.4 First Year Student Participants: knowledge of profiling**

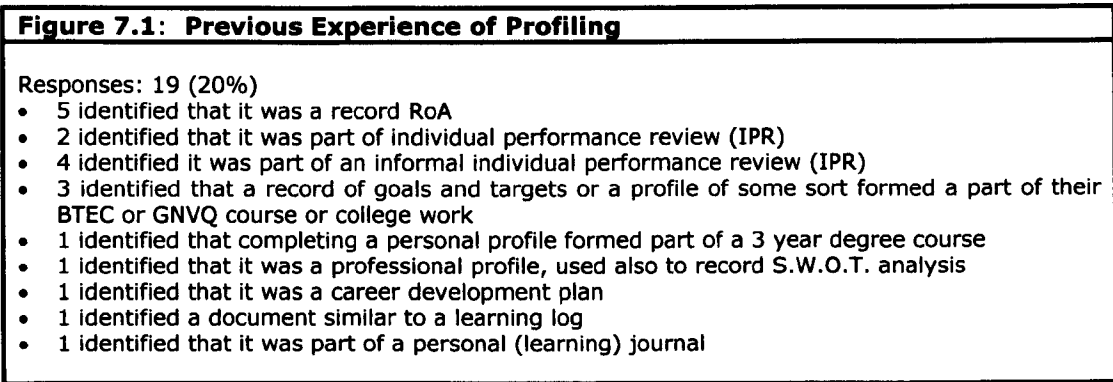
A qualitative questionnaire was administered during Freshers' Week (Questionnaire 1). It was designed to gather background information relating to the participants' previous experience of profiling or similar form of personal and or professional development. The findings are as follows:

*Questions 1: Have you engaged in the process of profiling before?*

Nineteen (20%) participants provided descriptive responses as charted in Figure 7.1. From this data a fifth of the participants had some form of experience of documenting personal plans, achievements and/or goal setting. Six participants (highlighted in *italics* in the chart) had work-based experiences which focused on

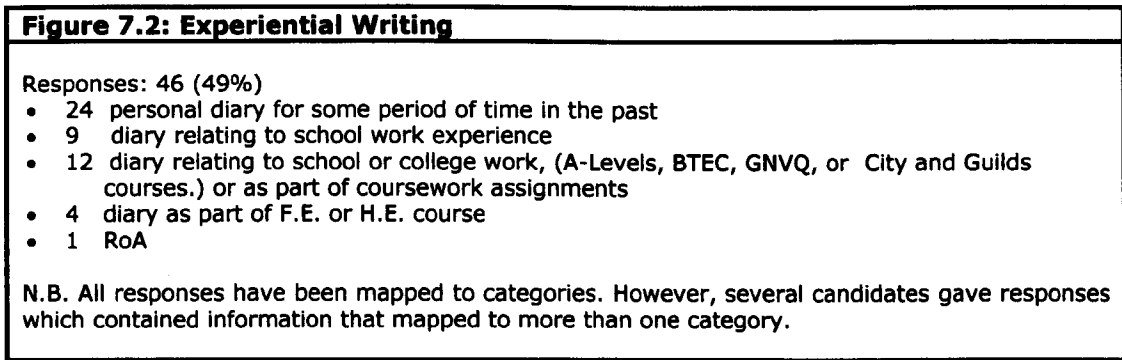


individual performance reviews and three indicated some form of documentation which was individual but possibly more reflective and personal in nature.



*Question 2: Have you ever kept a personal journal or descriptive diary?*

The question focused on the participants' experience of writing in some form of experiential way through personal journals or descriptive diaries (Figure 7.2). Approximately half of the participants, 46 (49%) responded to this question with just a quarter of the total participants of the study, 24 (25%) explaining that they have kept a personal diary.



A quarter of respondents had some form of written documentation associated with work experience organised as part of school or college activities. It is not known whether this had been in any formalised way or subject to public scrutiny that could be described as assessment. From this preliminary review it would suggest that half of the participants have had some form of encounter with

writing about self and their personal understanding of experiences before engaging in the process of profiling.

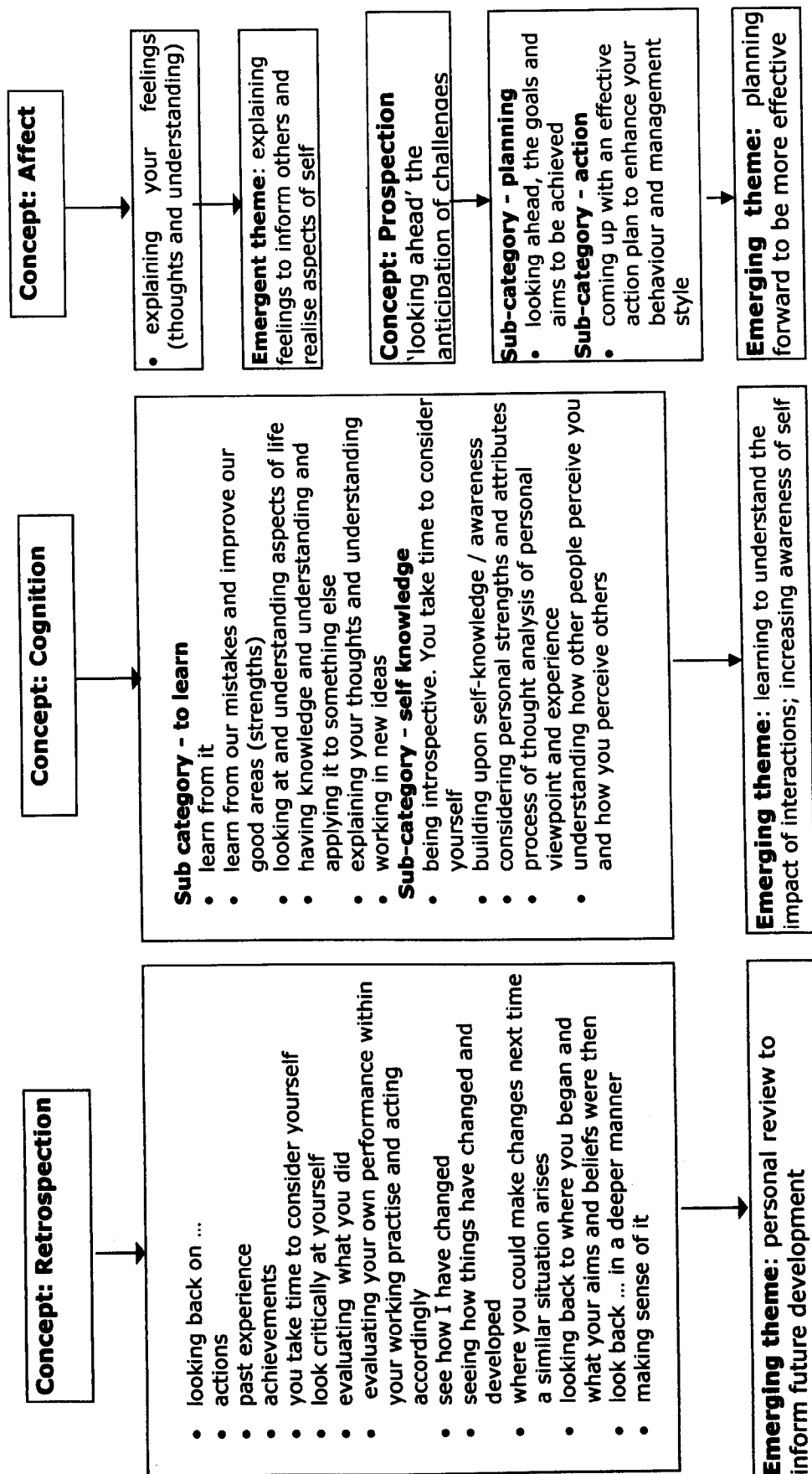
From the review of literature on the use of profiling, journaling and portfolios, reflection had emerged as a key concept. It was important to ascertain the participants' understanding of the term.

*Question 3: The term reflection and being reflective is often used in occupational therapy education. What is your current understanding of the term/s?*

The main themes from Question 3 are summarised in Figure 7.3. All participants responded. It is apparent that there was exposure to and some understanding of the term/s at this early stage of the course and from the words used in the responses.

The final question, Question 4, was to elicit whether the participants had, at this early stage, given any consideration to their personal or professional development. More importantly the question raised in formulating this aspect was whether anyone had drawn on past experiences, particularly if there was experience of some form of individual performance review. As part of the admissions process, information sessions are held to brief prospective students on occupational therapy as a career and on the process of HE in terms of personal and professional development and the acquisition of skills, (cognitive and practical) for LLL. It was therefore assumed that students would have had some, albeit limited, exposure to the concept of profiling.

Figure 7.3: Reflection and being reflective (Question 3)



*Question 4: How are you going to manage your personal and professional development throughout the course?*

All participants responded to this question (93). Fourteen (15 %) claimed they were unsure or did not know how they would manage their personal and professional development. The remaining 79 (85%) participants had clear ideas. These ranged from personal support; friends, tutors to strategies of planning, goal setting and time management to more nebulous responses (Figure 7.4).

**Figure 7.4: Personal and Professional Development**

Responses: all participants (n=93), 79 (85%) participants identifying ideas of how they would manage their personal and professional development

- *setting realistic goals and targets* (20)
- *keep a personal record of development or a diary* (18)
- discussion and communication were important (10)
- time management, planning and organisation were key skills (9)
- stick to deadlines and pace yourself (8)
- help would be sought from their personal and course tutors (6)
- *regular documentation* was important (6)
- friendship and help from fellow students would be factors (5)
- important to remain open-minded (4)
- background reading was important (4)
- maintain discipline (2)
- do everything to the best of your ability (2)
- *learning from good and bad experiences* (2)
- work in a steady manner (1)

N.B. Highlighted (*italics*) responses match some of the features of the profiling system being studied.

Several candidates gave responses, which mapped to more than one of the categories, all responses have been counted.

It could be suggested that 'time management, planning and organisation' overlap, potentially being derived from the process of reflection, goal setting and development of strategies. The number of participants identifying documentation, diary-keeping and goal setting is consistent with the number responding in question one that they had used some mechanism for documenting/ writing about experiences.

To summarise; of the cohort participants, 19 (20%) claimed that they had previous experience of some form of profiling or RoA. For some participants this

was part of college work; others as part of their employer's commitment to staff development and appraisal through an individual performance review system. Personal and professional development was a familiar concept to 79 (85%) of participants with a range of ideas being given to explain how they might manage this aspect of their learning. The number of participants citing strategies akin to those used in a profiling system was consistent with the number having engaged in some form of profiling or RoA prior to entry.

### **7.5 Data: students' perspective on profiling**

The final week of the students' academic year was chosen to gather the data on students' attitudes and opinions of personal profiling. All modules of study had been completed including the practice experience. The final week was designed to be a period of reflection on the year, in particular the practice experience which had just ended and preparation for the second year. Having experienced the process of profiling for a complete academic year students were asked to complete two questionnaires, attitude and qualitative opinion questionnaires.

Whilst the timing appeared convenient from an organisational perspective, in retrospect there were a number of factors which may have had an influence on students' level of engagement. The level of attendance had not been perceived to be a variable. All students were expected to return to the University following their practice experience. However, attendance was uncharacteristically poor. Some students had sent apologies, claiming that it was too far to travel from their placement location to the University and then to home for the vacation at the end of the week. Ninety three students began the study at the start of the academic year. From the cohort present at the time of data collection, 57 students (61%) engaged at this stage; this was not necessarily an indictment on the cohort's commitment for the study.

The researcher observed a sense of fatigue in the students attending. Whilst this was an intuitive feeling at the time of administering the questionnaire, later it was a feeling which was fed back in tutorial sessions. The year had been intellectually and emotionally demanding. The placement had required a five day week of work and study to underpin practice duties. The working week for many had been in excess of 40 hours. This level of tiredness they experienced may have had a significant impact on the way that some responded.

Students were asked to participate in two different data gathering questionnaires which were brought together to form a small pack for the participants to work through. These were:

- an attitude questionnaire;
- a qualitative opinion questionnaire.

#### **7.5.1 The Attitude Questionnaire**

The one page attitude questionnaire was included in the pack (Appendix 2). Previous chapters have discussed the pilot work undertaken to construct the questionnaire. Participants were familiar with the format, a Likert scale, as a similar approach had been adopted throughout the course for module evaluations. The five point scale enabled participants to express their agreement or disagreement with a series of statements. A mid-point score of 3 indicates no opinion.

The data generated from the questionnaire was analysed using a social sciences statistical package (SSPS). The number of participants in this stage of the study was lower than envisaged at the outset, 57 (61% of the total number of initial participants). Descriptive statistics have been used to present the data in the form of averages. The sample size became too small to achieve stability in the statistical manoeuvres across the dimensions which had originally been planned. Given that the study was accessing a number of sources of data it was

considered that descriptive statistics would provide a sufficiently robust presentation of findings from which to triangulate other sources of data. A commentary on the findings will be presented in this chapter.

Fifty-seven participants responded to this aspect of the study and 57 questionnaires were returned completed. Generally, responses indicated that participants were positively inclined towards using the profiling system. The overall pattern of responses tended to be around the central points of the Likert scale rather than definitive 'agree' 'disagree' responses. Given that participants were in their first year of study, it was not surprising to find that the score of 3, no opinion, was used relatively frequently in responses. When there is little experience and perhaps an uncertain vision, respondents are often cautious in their responses. It may have been that they were still not clear about their overall progress and their vision of occupational therapy. An example of this uncertainty can be seen in responses to some of the statements:

I feel I am developing a greater insight into the real me by using profiling. (Statement B1)

I am discovering what I want out of life through profiling (Statement B7).

## **7.6 Qualitative Questionnaire: personal profiling**

To complement the attitude questionnaire (Appendix 2), a qualitative opinion questionnaire was used to provide a deeper understanding of the participants' responses (Appendix 5). It was an opportunity for participants to write as fully as they wished on how they used the personal profile and its perceived value.

The method of analysis for the data generated from the qualitative opinion questionnaire was that of thematic content analysis. Burnard (1991) describes this method of analysis in relation to semi-structured interviews and this was the proposed form of analysis for the semi-structured interviews in the cross-sectional dimension of the study and it was deemed relevant for this aspect of

the study with participants using free-flowing text in response to open questions which were seeking their opinions.

The process of analysis began with systematically reading the data generated, on a single question basis, for every participant so that full immersion was being achieved for one topic at a time. The single question was re-read and key factors, important aspects, learning milestones were highlighted in pencil. Each question was analysed in this way using open coding and then a review process undertaken. For each participant's response to an individual question a chart was developed for mapping key concepts which were emerging. From a further iteration of reading the data, so the data was refined using themes and sub-themes to group re-current and similar themes. At this stage annotation were made to identify individualised responses from the questionnaires. To ensure reliability in the analysis peer review was undertaken with an academic colleague and practitioner (not involved in this study). Furthermore this helps protect the study in respect of potential researcher bias.

Responses from participants are presented below.

*Question 1:* The opening question invited participants to describe how they used their personal profile. Forty-one respondents completed this question (72%) with 16 (28%) not offering any statement or opinion, although triggers were given to help participants focus their thinking. Analysis of the responses suggested that this question may have proved too difficult question for them to answer. A 'how' type question frequently enables an individual to be descriptive. It appeared not to be so in this case. Keats (2000:4) in reviewing the use of questionnaires identifies that the opportunity to add further comments is not taken up by many respondents. This is possibly because respondents 'find it difficult to express their ideas succinctly'. This may have relevance to this question. Participants may have found it too difficult to articulate their process of

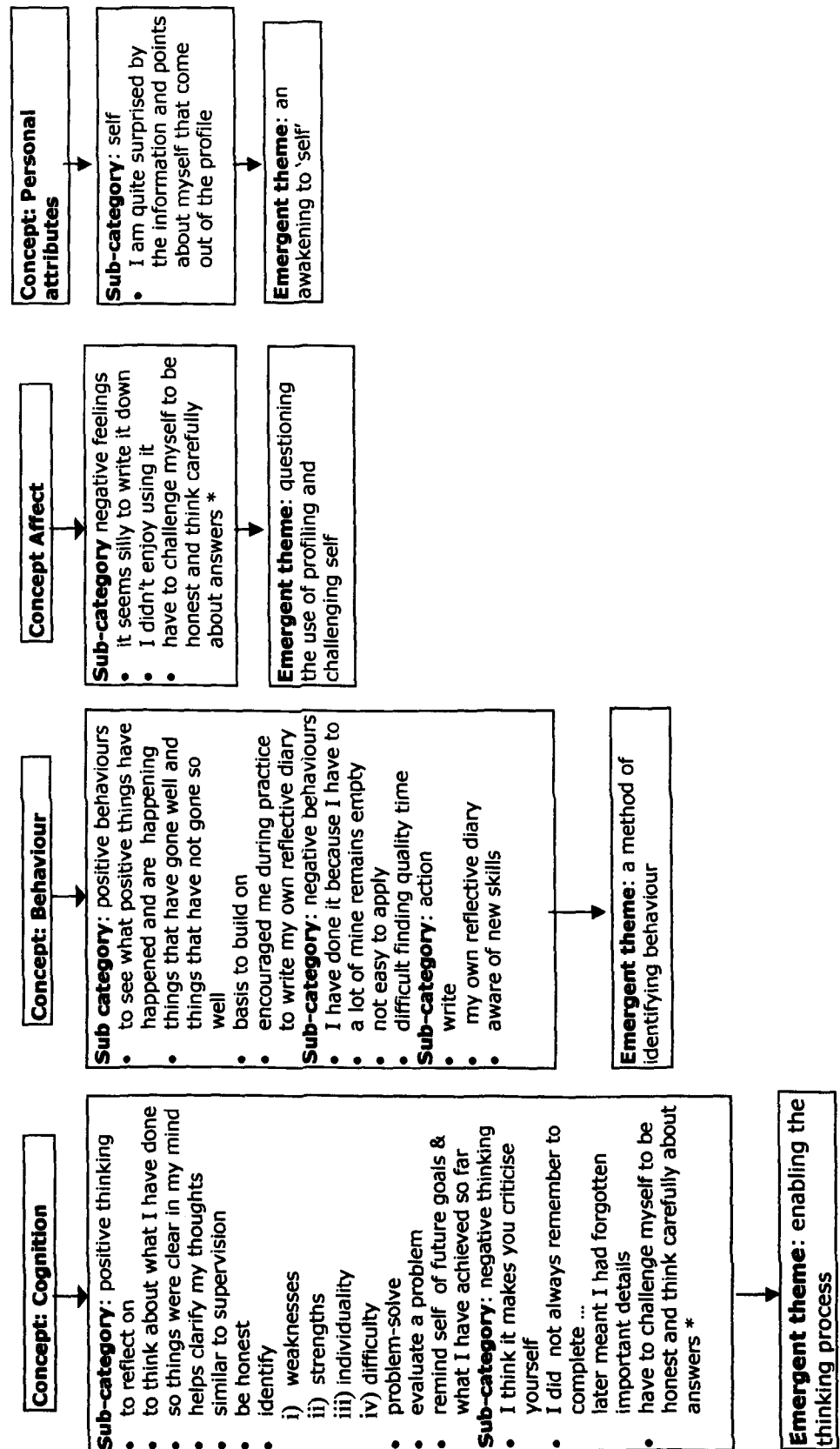


engagement or they may in some way felt daunted, overwhelmed or uncertain about how to start a response.

The responses were extremely varied. Some participants used this as an opportunity to provide an overall opinion of the system without being specific in answering the question posed. Overall, the responses clustered around matters concerning cognition, emotions, personal attributes and behaviour. The emergent themes are cited in Figure 7.5.

Five participants (9%) found the profile difficult or challenging in some other way and this may have been due to a lack of experience in using such a tool or a new technique to handle which demanded personal insights, not theoretical concepts to be documented: 'hard work', 'a strain to fill it in', 'often difficult to put in to words' .

**Figure 7.5: Use and application of the profile (Question 1)**  
 Key: \* (cognitive and affective dimensions)



For some participants there was a sense that engagement was because it was part of the course, the sense that it was mandatory, rather than through personal volition.

I have done it because I have to. It may be useful, but at times it seems silly to write down the kind of thing required.

I don't find profiling an important part of my life therefore I complete when and where I have time.

Paradoxically when briefing students for the profiling meeting with their PD tutor, the co-ordinator draws particular attention to preparation for the meeting.

*Question 3* asked specifically for a description of how they prepared for and the process they worked through, prior to the meeting. Thirty-five (61%) participants responded to the question with 22 (39%) leaving this question blank. Six (11%) students identified the process of reflection with 18 (32%) students describing a process of 'thinking through' experiences, events or trigger questions on the profile proforma. One student indicated an avoidance of such processes stating:

.....have tried to avoid conscious and deliberate process of evaluation and reflection. If I do process I go through a rather negative one. I find it hard to feel positive having completed any section.

For one participant thinking involved trying to envisage what lecturers would wish to see. This apparent 'aiming to please' also had a note of 'how much would be enough?' One other participant felt that 'no real process of preparation was necessary'. This may possibly suggest independence or conversely dependence. The participant by making this statement may prefer to leave their options open and use spontaneity in the dialogue and work with the emergence of ideas or alternatively, is reliant on the PD tutor's direction within the meeting.

Writing down, in some form, was a process that 16 (28%) participants engaged in. Ten participants had recorded that this followed a period of thinking or reflection. The words thinking and reflection were used by respondents. Where the word reflection was used a clear process of harnessing thoughts in a systematic way was evident. The use of thinking for some participants was in relation to a process of reflection. For example, two participants followed up their thinking by talking to a friend on some occasions and the culmination of this process was to 'draw it into some sort of order'. For other participants completing the proforma was the focus. One participant highlighted that feelings changed over time and that the process was to complete the proforma initially in pencil and then, 'revisit it in a week or so'; implying the transitory nature of feelings.

*Question 4:* This question asked participants whether personal profiling affected their personal life. In designing the profiling system, the initial intention was that students would transfer the skills developed through its use in the course to the everyday setting of home and social life. In this way both personal and professional development opportunities would be promoted. Only 17 participants (28%) provided some form of comment. There may be several reasons for this. Respondents may have felt that the question was probing or too personal for them to be able to articulate. Perhaps this was an aspect of profiling they had not considered before or too broad a question to be able to address in a succinct way. Generally participants who responded felt that profiling had affected their personal life in terms of developing their self-awareness. To evidence this, extracts are cited in Figure 7.6.

**Figure 7.6: Outcomes of Personal Profiling**

- It has highlighted my character and made me more aware of my actions
- Makes me more reflective
- I think it has made me think more deeply about aspects of myself and the way I interact with others. I think now I am more likely to think about something deeply rather than just rushing in, in conversation with poorly thought out comments - so maybe in my personal life I am more accepting
- Helps me reflect more on other activities carried out
- Sometimes I ask other peoples' opinions to see if they match my own ideas of myself
- Yes, it made me more aware of myself and has given my confidence a boost. It has encouraged me to try new things
- It helps you think before you act in all situations, and in some ways makes you analyse all actions both public and private

Of particular note are the following quotations which demonstrate not only an increasing awareness but a 'preparedness' to take a step forward, to change.

I think it has made me think more deeply about aspects of myself and the way I interact with others. I think now I am more likely to think about something deeply rather than just rushing in, in conversation with poorly thought out comments - so maybe in my personal life I am more accepting.

Yes, it made me more aware of myself and has given my confidence a boost. It has encouraged me to try new things.

In the commentaries three participants began their statement by responding 'not really' and then followed this by citing instances when a greater sense of awareness had been experienced. For these participants there was no sense of wholeness but aspects that had been helpful to them. This may suggest that there are hidden benefits that other participants do not realise at this stage in their development. Alternatively 'willingness to please' may be a factor in that disclosure of negativity may be uncomfortable. Equally acknowledging and owning negative thoughts and feelings can be a challenging position to be in and for some, may be painful. It may also be that this aspect of the course had not been considered before. In caring for others there must be an element of caring for self to enable caring for others.

*Question 5* explicitly addressed the issue of perceived value. Of the total number of participants (57), 3 (5%) participants responded totally negatively. In the commentaries some, as in the last question, experienced a few benefits. One

participant acknowledged that they could 'identify strengths and weaknesses, discuss how to improve' also felt that it was 'quite intrusive, tedious, analysing everything you do'.

For another there was uncertainty about the process of profiling at that particular point, 'unsure at the moment'. Whilst this was only one response, it does tie in with the notion of 'readiness', being able to engage and 'preparedness', emotionally and perhaps intellectually mature enough to engage in the process of profiling.

The majority of participants identified positive features of the profiling and benefits to them (Figure 7.7). The final section of the questionnaire allowed participants to write down any further comments. Four (7%) comments were made, three highlighting the benefits of engagement in profiling:

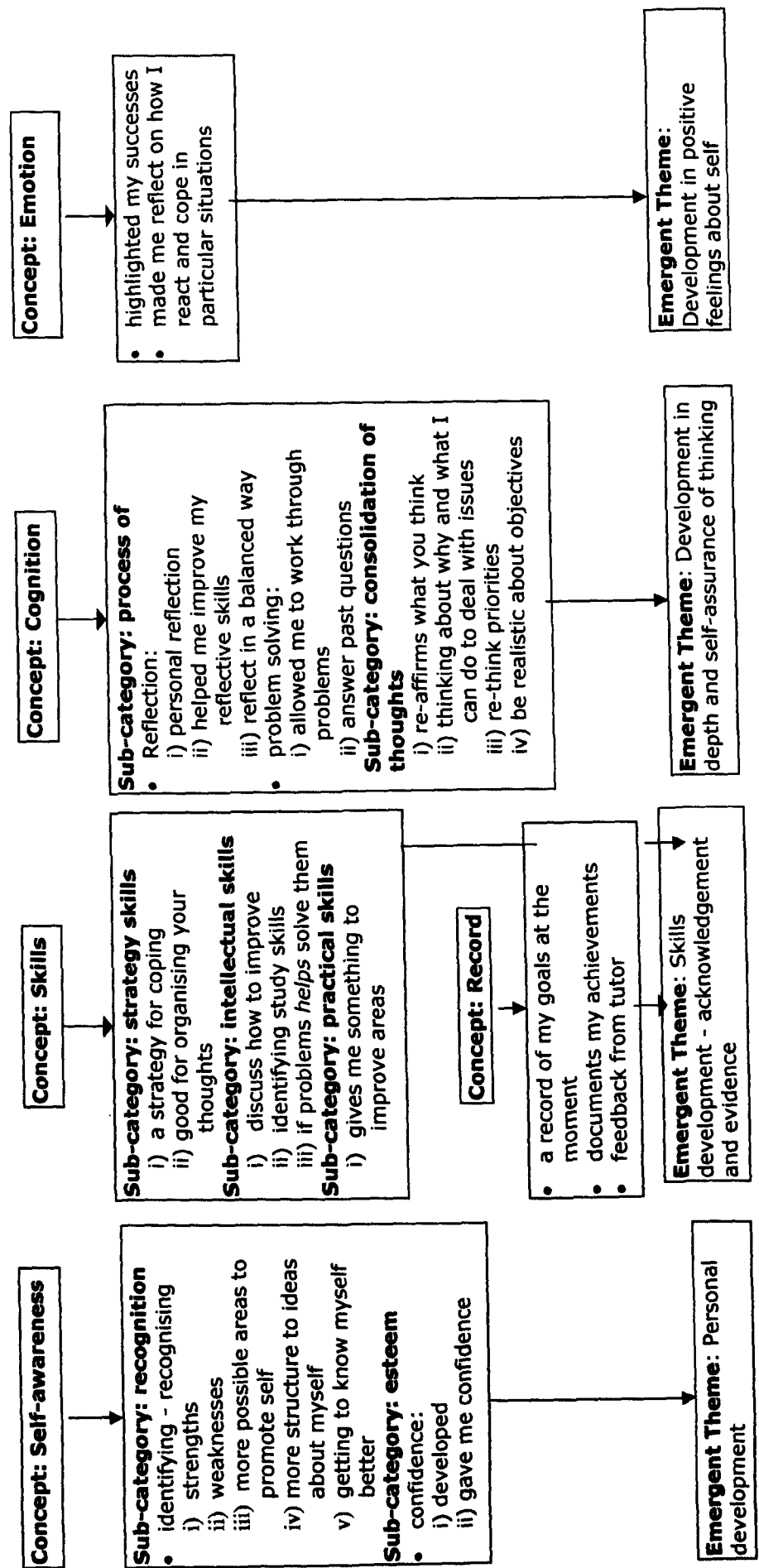
Professional Profile II was good. Very beneficial by discussing your progress and highlighting any problems I experienced and discussing them with my personal tutor.

Very pleased - perhaps more profiling sessions i.e. twice the amount as is running at present.

Profiling is a very useful concept.

One participant made a personal statement, offering a judgement on behalf of others; 'I feel this is something a lot of people find hard to take seriously'. Keats (2000) indicates that many respondents do not use the opportunity for 'any other comments'. At this stage in a questionnaire there may be a possible lack of ability to articulate thoughts succinctly due to fatigue or question overload.

Figure 7.7: The Value of Personal Profiling



### **7.6.1 Opinion Questionnaire: interim summary and analysis**

Overall, the majority of participants managed their personal profiles in a way that appears to be in tune with the underpinning philosophy and principles of the profiling system. The demands of other aspects of the course seemed to impinge on the preparatory work for the meeting with their PD tutor. One participant identified that as more assignments were due so less time was given to the personal profile. Time and perceived workload emerged as issues in several responses. There was a sense that the profiling system was time-consuming, an addition or burden on top of the workload demand for modules of study.

It was interesting to note that at this initial stage of the research there was no reference made by first year participants to professional practice. The schedule for data collection was to enable participants to look back, draw upon and embrace the whole year of experiences in their responses. Professional practice is an integral feature of the students' studies. All modules of study within the University-based course (September to May) prepare students for the first practice-based learning experience at the end of the year (June and July).

In retrospect, an explicit question or section would have been helpful to remind first year participants that the questionnaire was about the whole academic year which included the practice placement. The reference to professional practice appeared just once in the entire set of returns. In asking how participants used and applied the personal profile one participant said,

...it has encouraged me during my practice to write my own reflective diary at the end of each day. This has helped me to become aware of all the new skills I have learnt.

Five respondents (9%) indicated that whilst they had questioned the process or did not understand it fully in the first instance the benefit or value had emerged over time. The majority of qualitative comments conveyed aspects of personal profiling that participants have used or found to be of value. The fact that 9%



(n=5) of participants explicitly stated that they had a change of view over time is worthy of further exploration. Few critical comments were expressed.

### **7.7 Interview Data**

A sample of first year participants were invited to attend a one-to-one interview as detailed in the methodology section. This was with a view to accessing richer data in relation to the focus of the research. Interviews can provide a source of rich, quotable material (Bowling, 2002), enabling greater insight into individual's experiences of profiling. It would not only provide an opportunity to explore the reasons for the responses but would verify the reliability of the responses given in the interview and triangulate the data gathered through questionnaires (Keats, 2000).

All students involved in the first part of the study were invited to participate in the interview phase. Seventeen responded positively and gave consent to be interviewed. The reminder call to interview was by a personal memorandum. At this stage only three students wished to continue to be involved. These interviews were held in July towards the end of the final week of the academic year.

To complement the study, a cross-sectional view of the profiling system was undertaken which involved a series of interviews with second and third year students. The interviews were semi-structured and closely followed the schedule of questions in the qualitative questionnaires designed for first year students. An additional trigger question was incorporated as a consequence of the outcome of the tutors' qualitative questionnaire. The trigger prompted the participant to talk through the working relationship they experienced with their PD tutor. This question emerged as a consequence of finding that there were differences in the

approach tutors adopted in respect of engaging with students for their reflective discussions.

The same schedule was used in order to provide an equitable basis from which to draw the analysis, interpretation and discussion. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes and permission to record the interview given. Prior to the interview an explanatory letter with an indication of the interview schedule was sent to participants allowing them time to think about their contribution (Wright 2001).

#### **7.7.1 Process of Analysis**

Thematic content analysis was used as the method of analysis for the data generated from the face-to-face interviews with participants from years one, two and three of the course. This method described by Burnard (1991) is appropriate for semi-structured open-ended interviews. Open-coding was used to ensure that the themes were emergent from the data and not becoming funnelled into any pre-existing categories. Whilst it is important to draw out from the analysis emerging themes from the participants' interviews it is also important to acknowledge contextual data. The focus group undertaken in the pilot study generated rich data which really highlighted the importance of the context, that is, to learn from individuals' stories as a whole. For this reason a computer based analysis such as NVIVO was not used. Vignettes have been used to illuminate and add further richness to the data generated.

The process of analysis undertaken began with full immersion in the data, as Tarling and Crofts (2002:171) state: 'The only way to extract the true meaning of the data is to get as close to them as possible'. Initial immersion in the data was through listening to each interview tape and following the dialogue with the transcription. This enabled me to become familiar with the individual participants' way of engaging in the interview, becoming more aware of the

perspective participants hold their 'frame of reference' and their world (Rogers, 1951). This enabled a re-orientation of the researcher's perspective and enabled me to begin the process of discerning what was to be potentially appropriate and what may be extraneous to the focus of the study (Field and Morse, 1985).

When allowing participants to tell their story they may inter-link issues which are unrelated or inappropriate. Whilst the interviewer may intend to maintain the focus of the session, it is not always possible and the unusable data emerges until the interview can be re-focused in an appropriate way. This happened in one interview in particular. A first year participant found it difficult to talk about profiling in general and wider issues before personalising experiences. One aspect of profiling had particular significance and real personal meaning. This became a recurrent theme, intertwined with the responses to other questions during the interview thus highlighting the importance of all voices not only the loudest but the lone voice also.

The next step was to listen to the tapes again with a copy of the transcription and to annotate the document where the participants in sharing their stories identified key factors such as, important aspects of profiling for them and learning milestones. Annotations were made by underlining in pencil and any immediate thoughts noted in the margin.

Where students' specific opinions were cited these were underlined in the same way. This open coding helped to focus the stories individually as well as beginning the process of seeing patterns of similar or dissimilar experiences.

In a third iteration, transcripts were reviewed for category headings using key concepts and each concept was coded by shading in a coloured pencil. From this point I felt in a position to begin the process of grouping together identical and similar statements made by participants under a concept heading. Transcriptions were re-read again, to begin the process of refining the groupings under potential sub-category headings.

As the categories were being refined, I became very conscious that I must not lose sight of individual participants in the study; each would contribute their own unique perspective. Ely (1997:70) highlights how vignettes can 'encapsulate what the research finds'. The notion of encapsulating is also supported by Hughes and Huby (2002) who suggest that vignettes can be used with other research techniques or alone. Grant (2002) used vignettes in clinically-based research and Yager et al (1999) as an illustrative dimension in a clinical case conference paper. Their work informed the decision to use this tool.

Contextual data is also important through the process of exploration and in the analysis and interpretation of data. The exploratory use of vignettes by Spalding (2004) in a study on a pre-operative (hip replacement) education programme facilitated the process of reflection within the research process. Vignettes therefore had the potential to be both illuminative and a means of conveying a more rounded picture of an individual's experience of personal profiling in a 'snapshot'. The vignettes would provide an illuminative complement to the data being gathered in categories and sub-categories. Hughes and Huby (2002) support the notion that this is a meaningful tool for reflection on data concerning

individuals' lived experiences, attitudes, perceptions and beliefs which this study seeks to explore.

From the process of refinement identified in the previous paragraph, transcriptions were read further to draw together initial emergent themes. Mapping and thematic coding process charts for the purpose of review were produced and examples are presented in appendices 6 and 7.

As with other aspects of this study, a critical friend was sought from academic and professional peers to provide a reality check and ensure reliability in the analysis. An academic colleague and a practitioner (not involved in the study) were engaged in the peer review of the research process and entered into dialogue as part of my personal and methodological reflexivity (Finlay, 1998). Peer review strengthens the trustworthiness (Cutcliffe and McKenna, 1999) and helps to protect the study against researcher bias. This process mirrors the process of reflective practice which is embedded in the way I work as an academic and an occupational therapist.

In the next section the method of data collection and analysis of data will be presented by each year studied and a commentary provided. In the initial section, by way of introduction, a briefing on the key themes to discover patterns of similarity and more unique themes is provided prior to a full discussion. Vignettes of each year group are used to provide insight into the 'world' of the participant.

### **7.8 Interviews: third year students**

The third year students were invited to participate in the study on return from their final practice in January. The study was introduced to them within a cohort context and each student was provided with a written summary of the study and

a reply slip for interest to be expressed, which could be returned via student pigeon-holes. This allowed students time and space to think through whether or not to participate.

Thirty students expressed an interest. This high rate of responses may have been due to their appreciation of research or a wish to support research activities given that each student was engaging in the process themselves for the honours component of their degree. A schedule of interview dates with a choice of times was given to each student.

From the overall responses a total of seven returns were made which matched the diary dates given. No further follow-up was undertaken on the basis that students were managing considerable workloads with other commitments in this final year of study and any further attempts to set interview times may be perceived as pressure to participate.

#### **7.8.1 Participants' Stories and Views of Personal Profiling**

Seven students, all female, were finally interviewed on a one-to-one basis. Two students were mature students (over 24 years of age) and one student, although not classed as mature by age on entry, had undertaken a degree prior to this course.

Whilst the interview schedule followed key questions previously used within the qualitative questionnaire for first year participants, additional, trigger questions were asked as the interviews progressed. These provided an opportunity to explore each question in greater detail. The interview schedule served as a guide only. In reality, where participants brought key issues or themes pertinent to the overall purpose of the interview but not immediately relevant to the question, they were given the opportunity to explore them. This was to allow them to

develop their thoughts as they emerged rather than risk what may have been valuable insights and thoughts being lost by the researcher moving them back to the original question too quickly. There appeared to be natural connections for participants at particular moments and allowing spontaneity was felt to be an important dimension. This strategy prevented valuable data from being lost. Looking for underlying logic and 'feel for the context' (Denscombe, 2003:181) are important aspects of the interview process and assist in gaining a real sense of the individual's perspective.

The data generated from the seven interviews will be presented according to emerging themes. Where a particular participant is considered on an individual basis or later in comparison with others, a pseudonym is used to ensure anonymity.

### **7.8.2 Uncertainty: a new process**

From the interviews with third year students, it emerged that the process of profiling was a new experience for them at the start of the course and this provoked range of emotions and reflections. These appeared to focus around the issue of the 'unknown'. 'Daunting', 'difficult', 'awkward' and 'mixed feelings' were words commonly used to describe these initial feelings. One participant said that it was, 'somewhere you've not been before'. It was not only not knowing *what* to expect but *how* to engage in the process. It was evident that profiling was a new experience for participants but as important was the notion of reflecting on 'self'. Any potential benefits or gains as learners had yet to be perceived. The uncertainty appeared to be connected with not knowing or understanding and stepping into a conscious process of personal reflection for the first time. Added to this were contextual issues; the formality of the framework and it being embedded in the course.

Out of the discussion on first thoughts and feelings about profiling, there also emerged a feeling of *weightiness* or burdensomeness about the process, 'another piece of paper', 'just another thing to do', 'many bits of information'. One participant noted that, 'it can be a bit of a drag'. This *weightiness* may be due to participants feeling that the spontaneity of more informal processes of reflection is overtaken by the formality of documenting their reflections through a process of writing. Furthermore writing may not come naturally as a form of self-reflection. This does not mean that participants do not engage in a form of personalised reflection.

Despite the burden, one participant said that it was good 'you'd got to see a tutor'. This also emerged later in an interview with another participant who made reference to feedback in general and that much feedback on the course was written rather than face-to-face. This suggests that there may be an issue with the culture in which they are now expected to live.

The transition between school or college and HE may be difficult to manage initially for some students. The teacher-pupil and tutor-student relationship is different. Talking with tutors and managing this new relationship may be anxiety-provoking or difficult for some. Engaging in a reflective dialogue may be a further challenge and an unknown entity with the requirement of talking openly to a tutor being problematic.

All participants recalled uncertainty in the early days of engaging with the profiling system:

'I didn't have a clue'.

'How could I use it? ... pull out anything from this process of actually filling out a form like that ....'.

'I thought it was going to be a little bit vague'.

'I didn't quite know what to expect'.



'I don't analyse myself...oh no ...'.

For one participant there was an additional concern about what was going to be 'done' with the profile in the early days. So although assurances had been given to students at the launch of the profiling system and in briefing papers that the profiling documentation was within their own hands, a feeling of insecurity or distrust still existed. This feeling may be rooted in previous educational experiences where written work is read by teachers and assessed.

### **7.8.3 Thinking About Self**

These third year students recalled some difficulties in the early days of using the profiling system (first term, Year 1). The focus on thinking about 'self' was a new experience,

'I didn't really know how to tackle it and think in any sort of depth about myself and things like that, so the reflective process was very new to me, so I found it quite difficult actually'. (Amanda)

Preparation for engaging in the process of profiling was for one participant helpful. Having learnt about the reflective process in the Interactive Processes Module, the participant felt that profiling was easier.

It was apparent that all participants recognised that the profiling system was of value. The sense of value for them however did not emerge until the course was underway. Each individual came to recognise the value at different points in their studies. Some participants recognised that the practice experience was a significant point. Amy for example needed to see the wider context of profiling. Gradually by engaging in the Interactive Processes module (during first 15 weeks of Year 1), in which professional roles, skills and managing the therapeutic relationships were introduced, the purpose behind profiling became clearer. The use of the reflective diary within the programme of that module helped her prepare for the process of profiling. This gathering of evidence in learning about

the profession, its knowledge base and professional practice had an impact on Amy. Equally the effects of the culture and the ethos of professional education therefore needs to be acknowledged within the process of profiling.

Jessica felt that she began to appreciate the usefulness of the profile just before her second practice placement (18 months into the course) and for Amanda it was during that placement itself (20 – 22 months).

Linda realised the value of profiling in hindsight. During a period of retrospection the 'penny dropped'. Whilst she was unable to pinpoint the exact moment, she said that in the first year the value is not recognised and that 'it's only in the process of looking back', '...you see how you have progressed and what you have achieved'. The process of writing down appears to serve as a log for these milestones, which may otherwise be forgotten. Progoff (1980) suggests, in relation to diary writing, that whilst engaging in the activity of making diary entries (the visible level of the diary) there is a process of 're-crystallisation' of the individual's life. It is a self-balancing and self-integrating principle that Progoff argues enables an individual to work towards a deep level of knowing. This sense of perspective appeared to be felt by Linda.

#### **7.8.4 Becoming an Occupational Therapist: capturing experiences**

The notion of 'logging' progress, important or significant events, emerged in connection with participants' comments about their future as qualified therapists.

Two participants saw the process as helpful in applying for their first post:

'Doing application forms for jobs now, and I'm finding it really useful, it's really helpful for that' (Jessica).

'...especially the written bit where you've got like a personal overview' (Kim).

For Amanda, she felt more capable, being able to reflect on what she had undertaken on her own and this enabled her to develop professionally. Mastering

the technique of reflection, having the 'tools' was the key to this ability and Amanda went on to comment,

'... so I think when you come to do your IPR (individual performance review) in the future then you can use those skills' (Amanda).

Two participants drew on the process of profiling whilst on practice. Amy felt that:

'...personal development is affected by my placement ....it's very inter-related...and I find when I'm on placement it's useful, even though I won't have the structured form and I won't always use those kind of questions, I'll try and be reflective on past placements and what I would like to achieve and I'll use the same process' (Amy).

Kim was more specific about the experience and said,

'I've looked back and thought, well, what are my development areas, and if it's something like time management or something like that, I might do specific things in my placement to build on those skills'.

The practice experience for Kim was an opportunity to realise, 'how much you know' and so she drew on this to identify her strengths to cite in the profile.

The process of change can be catalogued and reviewed through the profiles which students compile and thus made explicit. One participant felt that the process had enabled her to think about herself in the sense of 'self' and allowed her to think about what she really wanted from life.

#### **7.8.5 Engaging In the Process**

Evidence of real engagement in the process emerged as being 'owned'. Participants found personal space to engage in the process away from the University setting. For some, being in a quiet place without distraction was important. Preparing for the professional development meeting with a tutor was for one participant a point at which to 'take stock'.

Whilst the goal setting aspect of profiling is understood by participants, engagement in the whole process of profiling is much more one of exploration through reflection. Therefore greater depth is achieved in the process of development as the process of reflection accesses thoughts, feelings and actions. Some participants not only shared the outcome of their reflections with PD tutors, they shared with others (peers, colleagues) and one participant talked to other professionals whilst on placement. Pattie found talking to the PD tutor helped to gain a perspective on how others saw her particularly if she was being too harsh on herself. She found this confidence-boosting.

All participants felt able to share their thoughts with their PD tutor and some spontaneously expressed there was trust within the relationship. The process of dialogue was perceived to be valuable in gaining a wider perspective.

'I feel happy and relaxed in sharing ....' (Amy).

'I feel quite confident about talking to them (tutors)' (Amanda).

'I'm comfortable with whatever I say, even if I say something about myself that wasn't, because you know it's not going outside that room anyway.' (Jessica).

'The tutor will pick up something and we will discuss that further and so we get the wider picture' (Pattie).

All participants were able to articulate not only the key issues and experiences but the underlying feelings and defining how they were thinking. Pattie experienced the tutor's role as facilitative and this enabled her to think more broadly. Whilst positive experiences may be disclosed with relative ease, difficult experiences, negative thoughts and aspects of self-capabilities were more of a challenge initially for participants.

There was evidence emerging that there was more depth to the process of reflection as time passed. Searching, sifting and change in the pattern of thinking

to encompass wider perspectives came through the analysis of transcripts and an element of discernment:

'.....sometimes you put things down ... seem important... but then they settle down ... you think maybe that's not quite so important' (Kim).

'....a step back out of where I am, and consider what I am doing, so, on different levels as well ... the more I go through the more layers come off' (Amy).

Self-questioning or being asked challenging questions was an important feature of the process for Kim. She felt that she needed to challenge herself and be honest and also alluded to feelings that arose in being 'challenging'. The first reaction appears to be one of 'stage fright'. It is a new and different experience, 'we get frightened and we panic'.

In relation to the content of reflection, Pattie expressed that she was 'okay' with the more negative dimensions of her self-disclosures. It was the positive things that ironically proved more difficult to handle. This was a new experience for her when she started the course and she clearly stated that she did not, in her words, 'analyse' herself. For Pattie there was a degree of discomfort in the writing process. The writing made the issues explicit and this appeared to be challenging. Whilst discomfort, in an emotional sense, in the process of documenting reflections has been acknowledged there is also the act of writing. Kim talked of 'jottings' which she collected but in coming to document her reflections she found the profile proforma too formal and said:

'...it feels like you've got to fill out a page, you've got to get this task done'

'..it makes it too formal, it makes it more academic.'

Participants made reference to the process linking in with the steps towards professional practice. The focus in relation to this was on exploring practice experience, preparing for an interview and the link with individual performance

review (IPR) which would be part of their first post as a newly qualified occupational therapist.

Kim identified the pressures of time; that time is not always built in to the course (weekly timetable for University and practice-based studies) to think and reflect. She clearly felt it should be and part of working life. Perhaps Kim needed the confidence to make time and permission to acknowledge that it was as valuable as reading an article for an assignment.

### **7.8.6 Vignettes: participants' individual stories**

Emerging themes from third year student interviews are presented in Figure 19 at the end of the chapter. This section concludes with vignettes of Kim and Amy's stories to provide further insight into the individual nature of the profiling experience from a mature student's and traditional entry student's (21years of age) perspective.

The vignettes have been created from an analysis of an individual's entire transcript. The selection of a mature and traditional entry student from all of the interviews conducted was deemed important to reflect the background of the third year student cohort. Each vignette was produced using an iterative process of listening to the interview tape, listening to the tape whilst following it with the transcript, then making notes on the key theme for the participant. Once created the vignette was reviewed by returning to the tape and transcript for validation. Any background details were included from supporting documentation.

The vignette of Kim, a third year student, illustrates how an individual has the potential to move from no experience of profiling, to taking responsibility for utilising it as a tool for personal and professional development and contextualising it in this way. Kim entered the course as a mature student. In

contrast, is Amy's story. Amy is also a third year student and her story portrays a perspective from a traditional entry student (21 years old at interview). The profiling process assisted Amy in bringing together an awareness of personal, emotional and professional issues and the inter-relationship in her experiences as a student. The proforma and PD tutor (as a critical friend) helped her in the process of reflection and being able to reflect at different levels. The interviews were held in a comfortable interview room in the University during the Spring Term of their final year.

In summary, the process of reflection for Kim appeared enjoyable and fruitful. However turning thinking into writing, formal writing on a proforma made the process for Kim feel like hard work, a task for University purposes. There appeared to be a tension between the process for her and the process for professional learning. This may be an issue around the transition to studying a degree which is held to be *academic* versus the perception of the vocational nature of the career she is pursuing.

### **Vignette: Kim**

*For Kim personal profiling was a new concept. She had previously kept a personal diary although she had not felt there had been a cause to reflect further on her entries in the past. The prospects of the profiling experience gave rise to a plethora of questions for her. She saw the process as a change in her thinking, because it was about 'self'. It was personal and not academic or theoretical. The personal dimension for Kim was interpreted as how she felt about herself in the process of life. In the early stages she questioned how she could pull anything from the process of writing, filling out the profile, and where the time to do it would come from. Kim looked for potential gain, she wanted to know what the constructive aspects were for her. She did not mind sharing personal thoughts and ideas but wanted to know how the outcome of the profiling was going to be used during the course.*

*Early on Kim felt there was a dichotomy between the role of self and the role of the University. The profiling was asking for a personal stance yet she felt it seemed to be set within the rules of academia. Peers, from Kim's perspective, were thinking differently, and this reaffirmed to her that she could not see how it would work through the course. Kim, although without any real vision, did begin to see the purpose of profiling as time progressed. Now as a third year student she felt that individuals needed to be equipped with the framework, the pro-forma and related guidance/information initially to become involved.*

*Kim engaged in the process of personal reflection, when she was away from the University setting, particularly when she was out walking and then she would jot down her thoughts. Translating the jottings into the proforma felt constraining. Kim found that writing became a task, and identified that she felt that she had got to fill out a page and get the task done but that it should not feel like that. The structure the proforma offered made the process more formal, academic.*

*Kim felt comfortable sharing with her tutor but explained that she did not feel able to share it in her words with the University. By this she meant beyond the dialogue she had with her PD tutor. The issue of the documentation was important to Kim. She clearly said that she did not share her jottings. Her jottings were her very first thoughts within her time of reflection. Kim said she looked at what she had (in her jottings), refined her thoughts and then revamped it. She said that the writing becomes like a writing process and it then becomes a constructive task to be done. It feels as though the thinking is play but the writing is work, a task with accompanying negativity about it. The consequence of this process was that she focused the profile on academic issues. The reflective diary used as part of the Interactive Processes module was highlighted as useful to her personal reflections and potential personal development. The diary was clearly cited as a private document within the module and she has continued to use it as she has progressed through the three years.*

### **Vignette: Amy**

*Amy, like the majority of other participants from her cohort who were interviewed, had no previous experience of profiling. She had mixed feelings about the profiling system. She thought that this may have been because she did not fully understand the value. It felt like another piece of paper to fill in.*

*For Amy it was not until she began to reflect throughout her placement and other professional development opportunities that she realised the value of profiling for her. She said that when "she got into it" she enjoyed the experience. It had been however, on reflecting back, quite difficult at first.*

*Both course activities and placement experiences were integral in this process of reflection. Using the profiling process had, she felt, helped her develop her self awareness. It was an opportunity to 'step out', to reflect on what she was doing. With this process Amy said she was reflecting on different levels. She explained this was about personal, emotional and professional issues. What she was doing was thinking through in terms of, how she had developed and what she had improved upon and what she would like to develop further.*

*Strategies to help her achieve her goals were part of her reflections. Within this process she would explore how past strategies had worked and how she might continue to develop. The open dialogue with a PD tutor helped to trigger her thoughts and thus enhanced the discussion time with her tutor.*



In summary, profiling was a new experience for Amy and although reluctant at first she then came to realise the benefits. Benefits as she expressed them were in terms of articulating and making more concrete development goals and strategies to achieve them. She became 'converted' to the system.

### **7.9 Interviews: second year students**

The personal profile review with a PD tutor was scheduled to take place in the early part of the Spring Term in Year Two, just before the second period of practice. The interviews were arranged prior to this experience for two reasons. Firstly to avoid impinging on the placement time and secondly any influence that the practice experience itself may have in the terms of the participants' responses. Furthermore scheduling the interviews well in advance of the placement was to avoid the focus of the interview becoming dominated by any feelings of stress which can occur about the forthcoming practice experience. Students frequently feel under pressure prior to practice due to meeting coursework deadlines, preparing for the experience theoretically and coping with the potential anxiety of moving to a new location and new area of practice. The latter being a requirement of the professional body to ensure a balance of experience is achieved throughout the course between working in physical and mental health settings and being based in hospital and community practices.

The research was introduced to the second year cohort in the same way as it had been to third year students, with time allowed for the group to think through whether or not they wished to participate. Eleven students expressed an interest in participating. The interview schedule previously used with third year participants was felt to be appropriate for use with the second year interviewees. It provided a consistent approach and added to the reliability of data. The interview schedule served as a guide only. In reality, where participants brought key issues or themes pertinent to the overall purpose of the interview but not

immediately relevant to the question participants were given the opportunity to explore them. This strategy had been adopted previously. This minimised the loss of valuable insights and thoughts from the researcher returning to the original question too quickly.

#### **7.9.1 Participants' stories and views of personal profiling**

The interviews with second year students were conducted and analysed as detailed in the previous section. From the initial expressions of interest received, five students were interviewed, all female. One student was a mature student (over 24 years of age). Each participant was offered a selection of dates for the interview.

In the following pages the data from the five interviews will be presented according to emerging themes and not systematically through the schedule of interview questions and triggers. This was in light of the spontaneity of some participants connecting and exploring different aspects of profiling under one question as detailed above. Where a particular participant is considered on an individual basis or later in comparison with others, a pseudonym is used to ensure anonymity. The emergent themes and thematic strands will be compared and contrasted and a summary chart presented at the end of this chapter.

#### **7.9.2 Uncertainty: a new process**

The concept of profiling appeared to be new to four of the five participants when they started the course. Cas reported that she had completed some form of personal profile at college. She was not sure whether it had been part of the GNVQ or the general college work. In explaining she said that she didn't talk it through with anyone and that her tutors were not involved in the process. Cas indicated that she never returned to the document for any reason. Like Cas,

Natalie and Katrina were not expecting a personal focus or element to studies and Natalie said she was 'baffled' by the use of such a system:

'I think I was quite surprised because I wasn't expecting that from university, I was expecting a very education focus. I think I was quite surprised that this interest was being taken at how we coped and were encouraged to look at ourselves straight away...' (Cas).

'I remember being a bit baffled and thinking why have I got to do this, talk to somebody about my competence and stuff....' (Natalie).

'.....having worked for .....where they stress the soul searching type of questions on training courses, I didn't think I would come up against it when I got here.' (Katrina).

### **7.9.3 Engaging in the Process**

In interviewing participants from the third year cohort, there appeared to be a clear theme around a sense of 'weightiness', a feeling of being burdened in that the personal profile was another 'thing' to be done, a task. This did not emerge in quite the same way with the five participants of the second year. Only one participant began by talking about 'all these bits of paper'.

Throughout the interviews references were made to pressures being experienced by participants, but the profiling was seen as an opportunity to stop and re-gain an overall perspective. Pressure was expressed by Cas as her 'mind being so crammed'. She realised she had the time for a while to 'stop and think about self-evaluation'. The timing of discussions was highlighted explicitly. It appeared that tutors were arranging meetings which coincided with coursework deadlines. Of all the participants, Natalie felt particularly pressured. In her words:

'..you find yourself rushing (the reflections and profiling) because you want to be getting on with your work..' (Natalie).

She did complete the profile and meet her PD tutor, but she likened the experience of the meeting accordingly, '....if you work it out it's about 200 words

in an essay'. Time for Natalie was a key issue. Natalie's response seems to indicate that there is 'real' work, assignments and then there is profiling which may suggest that it is the assessed work that draws Natalie's attention in her time and workload management. Participants were thoughtful on the issue of pressure and time. They offered suggestions about the timing of profiling.

The participants appeared to grasp the procedural aspects of the process and what to do, but it was not easy. This is in contrast to third year students' views. Feelings of uncertainty or of being overwhelmed, in the early days of engaging in the process, come through the interviews with third year students. Just one second year participant said she was a bit confused at first and another was not sure about what to write initially. Katrina found that it was quite difficult to articulate her thoughts through writing:

'If you actually think about the questions and try to answer them honestly, it's quite difficult to put down in words what you actually mean as opposed to how somebody else might read what you've said. ...they're very soul-searching' (Katrina).

#### **7.9.4 Realising the Relevance of Personal Profiling**

Four of the five participants, Cas, Anna, Natalie and Jenny, came to realise the relevance of the profile slowly. Cas reported that the realisation came gradually, almost insidiously during the first year. On looking back she had appreciated that the reflective diaries within the Interactive Processes module which she reviewed weekly, were connected to the personal profiling. The connection was that the issues and areas explored in the diary were the foundations for engaging in the process of reflection and reflective dialogue. The use of a reflective diary had been influential for Anna. It helped her to see the relevance of personal profiling. It was in preparing for her first practice experience that the value was fully realised. Natalie found that after the first meeting with her PD tutor she could see the relevance of profiling, having initially been a bit confused.

### **7.9.5 Profiling to Support Professional Practice**

The relevance of profiling to professional practice was evident for three of the five participants. Anna saw that by reflecting on her personal qualities in this way this process would transfer into her practice also. She took her identified areas for development into practice and said she would continue to think through, in the context of practice, what skills she had to offer.

The theory-practice interface and wider application of profiling became obvious for Katrina after the first placement, as she recounted a critical incident from her experience. It was at that point she began to realise the need to address an individual aspect of self which is core to working as a therapist and she needed to acknowledge this.

For Natalie, profiling had focused on everyday course matters and skills. Little attention had been paid to practice-based learning. Prior to her first practice experience she had written a broad statement, 'to achieve the best I could...' and she said that she would be thinking more about the experience if it 'had been bad'. This perhaps suggests that Natalie has consciously chosen to use profiling as tool for goal setting in a context of addressing areas which need improvement rather than setting goals to create learning opportunities, enhance skills and further develop practice. The potential value of personal profiling for Natalie was seen in relation to the 'here and now', being able to think more objectively and explore what had previously been taken for granted. It increased her understanding and helped her to identify areas to work on.

The changes reported had the clear theme of increased understanding of self. The process of profiling appears to have helped the interviewees to focus on areas of personal development. The profile may be seen as a learning tool to increase both the depth of understanding and achieve a more meaningful understanding

of 'self' which works alongside the more strategic elements of the profiling. That is using the profiling system as a learning tool for personal goal setting in the context of the course and ongoing CPD. This is particularly evident in the following sentiment:

'...made me understand what's going on ...not looking at face value' (Natalie).

' ...I think everyone's got strengths and weaknesses and until you are aware of them you can't really function as a person, I don't think you can. I know I can't..' (Jenny).

#### **7.9.6 Better Prepared for Practice**

Being better prepared for practice was a clear feature of the profiling system at this stage for these second year participants. Few of the participants indicated any sense of longer term uses of profiling, such as being part of ongoing professional development process, CPD or a potential link for preparing for individual performance reviews as a qualified therapist. This may be due to their position in the course. Participants are at a mid-point in Year 2 and this may bring with it a sense of 'mid-course crisis' from not being at the start nor the end.

Throughout the interview Jenny indicated that the importance of the profile had not been emphasised enough by tutors. In her view it was clear that it was to do with building a CV and for 'when you get out into work'. In her own way Jenny was talking about professional development:

'I think everyone has strengths and weaknesses and until you are aware of them you can't really function properly as a person. Well, I don't think you can, I really can't.. When you set aims and objectives for your placement you can set realistic things. You know it's not just developing theory and practice it's developing as a therapist as well.' (Jenny).

The focus on 'self' was more apparent through the interviews with second year students. Emergent themes are cited in Figure 7.9 (end of Chapter).

This section concludes with two vignettes which illustrate experiences of the profiling system from two interviewees at the mid-point of their second year. Natalie was an entrant at 21. She seemed focused on the goal setting aspects of the profile and appeared to adopt a 'take it or leave it' approach to profiling. She engaging in the process with the PD tutor, useful. However, at the time of this interview she appeared not to accept the responsibility for moving the outcomes of her reflective dialogue and goal setting forward.

In contrast Anna took a 'gap year' before starting University. For Anna profiling was a new concept. She understood from the outset the purpose of profiling as was explained to her and engaged in the process in a more focused way. As Anna developed her skills in using the profiling process it became an integral feature of her preparation and experiences in the University and practice setting. The interview took place in the Spring Term before her second practice placement.

### **Vignette: Natalie**

*Initially Natalie said that she was confused and a bit 'baffled' by the introduction of the personal profile. She recalled questioning its value, thinking, why had she got to do this? In particular, she questioned why she had to talk through her competence as a student. It was after the first meeting with her PD tutor that she came to recognise the relevance of the process, just before her first practice experience.*

*The process of profiling and the opportunity to talk through her profile enabled Natalie to become more aware of the areas in which she needed to improve. Natalie highlighted "some weaknesses in myself and obviously some strengths too". She found the goal setting difficult and she said that her tutor had advised her on ways in which she could address the areas of need and set appropriate goals.*

*Natalie said the pressure of the second year was having an effect on her, she felt rushed and pressured. The timing of the meeting with her PD tutor was not good. She felt it was rude to turn up to the PD tutor without having completed her profile. Sometimes she could not, in her words, "be bothered to explain" referring to the trigger questions for completing the profile. She reported she thought more about the goal setting. To Natalie the process of reflection was simply explained as about reflecting on her progress over the year and identifying the negative and positive aspects of the progress she had made. She said this was her understanding of the process and that she did not know whether this was correct or not.*

*Initially she felt a bit nervous in the session with her PD tutor, but she felt she shared quite a lot, especially as they established a working relationship and she became more open with her tutor. Natalie felt it was important to have ownership of her profile and in writing her profile wrote points that she wanted to talk about and discuss with her tutor. Natalie indicated that during the discussion other issues would emerge and she knew that she could talk to her tutor about 'anything'.*

*The face-to-face relationship was a positive feature of the system for Natalie. She valued seeing her tutor and having the discussion. Natalie explained that two months on she had forgotten everything and she said she was back doing her 'own thing'. She did not transfer any of her goals to the practice experience and said that profiling was more for everyday course activities and skills. In her experience, you think about it as you are writing it down and say that you must try and work on the area, but it is then 'up to you to do it'.*

Anna took a different approach to profiling compared with Natalie. Anna was structured and systematic in the way she approached her process of reflecting retrospectively. The interview was held in the Spring Term before her second practice experience.



### **Vignette: Anna**

*Personal profiling was a new concept to Anna. She understood from the start that personal profiling was focused on being able to "look at and question yourself". Anna said this was not something she would have done in the workplace. At work she said that there was no time, the focus was on getting the work completed. Anna found the reflective diary in the Interactive Processes Module helpful to the process of thinking. It appeared that her thinking became more focused just prior to her first practice experience. She felt at that point she was beginning to think about the skills she had.*

*In describing the process of profiling Anna identified that during her period of reflection, she broke things down, she would look back at the profile, see what she had completed and then think about what had happened since the last point of entry. In this way Anna felt able to consider her progress and how she had coped or not coped with various aspects. She felt it was a means of moving away from purely academic aspects of the course and an opportunity to reflect on her strengths and identify whether there were areas, in her words, "to be worked on within herself". She found it very useful to reflect upon developments and whether there had been changes for her.*

*The personal profile provided Anna with a log which she found helpful to refer back to periodically. It became a mechanism for regaining a sense of perspective and enabling her to re-assure herself that she was progressing when she felt anxious about her work and progress. She had also come to realise the effect that personal interactions had on what was going on for her. For Anna, it helped her to think more objectively.*

*Anna like Natalie found the time with her PD tutor very useful. It was she felt, another perspective to her thinking. This also provided reassurance. Anna felt able to share all that she had written down during her discussions with her tutor. She felt that by articulating her reflections she was able to think a lot more about how she was coping and how was she was transferring her learning into her practice. She was conscious that she could get 'bogged down' with academic work and panic. The personal profiling was a way of stepping back from that, and realising the skills she had and questioning herself on why she was panicking and saying to herself, 'yes, I can do this'.*

*The personal profile became an integral part of Anna's preparation for studies within the University and in practice. Anna felt that it was in her words "comforting" to know that there was a PD tutor aware of her personal and professional development needs.*

### **7.10 Interviews: first year students**

First year students returned to the University for one week at the end of the first academic year following seven weeks of practice. During this time, all students were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview. The rationale for the series of interviews was to enrich and extend the questionnaire data gathered from the attitude and opinion questionnaires. Differences in opinions and the reasons behind them can be explored or in Keats' words 'uncovered' (Keats 2000:20). The researcher planned the interviews in this 'window' to capture the

immediate responses of participants in respect of the inter-relationship between profiling undertaken within the University and practice experience.

All full-time students (n=101) in the cohort were invited to participate in phase one of the research. The background data and qualitative questionnaire focusing on knowledge and experience of profiling was administered. A cooling off period was built in to allow students the opportunity to change their minds if they did not feel able to participate. Ninety-three students engaged in the first phase of the study. Seventeen initial expressions of interest were received for this second phase and these students were invited to interview. The invitation made clear that there was flexibility about dates and times to ensure convenience, however, only three students finally participated. An interpretation of the low response rate may be that the apparent post-practice fatigue in the cohort as a whole had an influence together with the voluntary nature of the interviews.

This brought about a dilemma for the researcher. Should the interviews be delayed to encourage greater numbers of students the opportunity to volunteer. The risk of delay was that it might impact on the quality of reporting on the events in the first year, further fatigue or saturation and still not increase the number of participants. The original research time frame agreed with students was one academic year. It was therefore felt to be important to honour this and to interview the three participants who offered to engage in the study immediately following placement, but be mindful that this could not be a representative sample.

#### **7.10.1 Interviewees' Stories and Views on Personal Profiling**

To complete the cross-sectional approach in this study three first year students were interviewed. The same interview schedule was used to provide data for

comparative analysis between participants in all three years. First year interviewees' views are discussed in this section using vignettes which will be presented to provide a more in-depth perspective of their experiences of the profiling process. The interviewees are known by the pseudonyms Rhea, Debs and Georgie. All three students were from non-traditional entry backgrounds and post 18 years of age on entry. Two students were mature, as defined by the admissions criteria of over 24 years of age. Two students were married, one with a young family.

Like many of the interviewees in this study, personal profiling was a new concept for all three. Although one interviewee had been familiar with some of the key principles, this was through a previous degree course. Rhea had engaged in diary-keeping and journal writing in a self-advocacy course linked with her work in social care.

#### **7.10.2 Personal Profiling: unfamiliar and unexpected**

From the start Rhea thought that profiling had been useful. This was not how other interviewees felt at the start of the course. For them, the introduction of profiling was unexpected. They had not envisaged anything of this nature. They expected to focus on professional issues only. They seemed to need to work on professional identity, at this early stage.

'you thought you were going to do OT stuff and it didn't seem very OT orientated ....' and '.....we should be looking at (OT) ... that's not OT.' (Debs).

There was a suspicion that this was going to become a very personal activity. One interviewee anticipated that it would be 'delving', that is was a 'bit deep'. This interviewee conveyed a lack of emotional readiness for engagement in an unfamiliar process of personal reflection.

The two other interviewees expressed a nervousness about the process in different ways; 'frightening', 'embarrassing' and 'oh no!'. However these anticipatory anxieties about the process were not borne out in experience. There appeared to be a settling in process. Rhea's comment focused on emotional aspects of reflecting on self and suspected that, 'lots of people were going to be in tears .and it wasn't like that.' There was also concern that the profile would have to be disclosed to others. This was expressed even though tutors believed that they had been explicit in giving students assurances about the confidentiality of the process. The information about the process and ownership had been communicated at both the launch and the specific briefing sessions. Emphasis was placed on the profile being under their ownership and that it was not mandatory to show the profile to anyone else. Rhea during her interview claimed that she had felt reassured after reading the documents associated with the profiling system and her copy of the reflective diary. The diary had clarified the purpose of the overall process of profiling. There was uncertainty about the purpose of the profiling system in the early stages of the course and this was embedded in statements for the two other interviewees; 'what's the point?', 'it was a bit airy-fairy'. Deb's uncertainty seemed to stem from recognising that it was not in her nature to reflect on her actions. It seemed that Deb's was struggling to articulate this personal challenge for her and therefore difficult emotional work.

### **7.10.3 Support from Peers**

Interviewees identified that their peers within the small working group in the Interactive Processes Module had had an impact on their engagement with the profiling system. This appeared to be a pivotal experience for them. The group had become a cohesive group with members working well together, as a consequence a positive climate existed. The issue of mutual respect and trust was raised through the interviews. As the Interactive Processes group developed,

so there appeared to be an increasing sense of psychological safety. Supporting each other and sharing was evidenced by the following quotations:

'One student in the group wasn't sure of what to do. I shared what I had put with her.' (Rhea).

'It was a lot easier to give and it was give and take.' (Debs).

Debs in her interview revealed that she had questioned the profiling system. The group was important to her as she says above, but she saw the profiling as an extension of the work from the Interactive Processes module and that she had enjoyed these sessions. This had influenced her approach to the profiling. For one student, the group setting was a place where she felt 'under the microscope'; did not feel as secure as the others.

The importance of the module group context did not feature in the third year interviewees' responses and only minimally in those of the second year interviewees. Possible reasons may be that the groupings change at the end of year one. Groupings are determined by option choices in years two and three. This element of choice creates the opportunity for more individualised pathways through the programme of study. Therefore students begin to undertake the process of profiling alongside the range of Level Two modules in contrast to the first year. In the first year the profiling is an integral feature of one module in the first half of the year and then overarches modules in the second half of the year. These modules become focused on preparations for the first practice experience.

#### **7.10.4 Developing Self-responsibility**

The underpinning philosophy of the profiling system is founded on the principles of encouraging student autonomy and self-responsibility. Personal responsibility is therefore encouraged from the mid-point of year one and expected from the start of year two. Georgie, when asked about the meeting with the PD tutor emphatically stated, 'we haven't had any paperwork...' in referring to the preparatory work which then feeds into the meeting. For Georgie there appears

to be a lack of self-responsibility or may be ownership of the process of profiling at the end of the first year. No further reference to the paperwork, the reflective diary or guidance notes which are provided for all students was made.

#### **7.10.5 Realisation of the Purpose of Profiling**

The purpose of the profiling system for first year interviewees ranged from a lack of understanding about the system, to thinking it was useful but it lacked clarity in its purpose. The realisation that the system may be useful came later (and at different points) in the first year:

‘useful for fieldwork (professional practice).’

‘useful exercise but I didn’t feel it to begin with’.

‘I found it really useful.’

‘It made me think to put them (personal objectives) in achievable sizes.’

One interviewee suggested that there should perhaps be some more profiling sessions because of its usefulness. From the start the profiling system had meaning for Rhea. She expressed the value of the system in terms of two explicit examples from her experience in practice before starting the course. The examples had reminded her of the importance of socially skilled, ‘adept’ professionals. She related the profiling to ‘making students reflect’ and this awareness encouraging more effective communication and interaction. Debs began to think that the profile was actually quite important and was beginning to ‘click’ mid-way through the first half of the academic year (November).

Realisation of the potential benefits for Georgie came at a later point. Georgie began to think about the profiling system at a peak pressure time (January/February). This was a time when a number of assignments were due. But the value was only realised in hindsight, ‘this side of it’; that is following practice experience. Georgie became very focused on the use of the profile in

working towards a resolution of personal time management which had been a live issue particularly during the placement.

The realisation that the profiling system had potential benefits appears to emerge earlier than reported by the second and third year interviewees. This may be due to a number of factors. It has already been noted that first year interviewees interviewed are not representative of the cohort as a whole and all are non-traditional entry students. Their accuracy of recall may have been sharper given that they were closer to the initial period of professional practice than second and third year interviewees.

The other dimension to consider is that through the module evaluation process some adaptation has occurred over time. There was evidence of this from the outcomes of the qualitative questionnaires that PD tutors, although engaging in staff development workshops on the profiling system, made their own individual interpretations. This has resulted in some tutors modifying the process of profiling with their own set of tutees.

#### **7.10.6 The Theory-Practice Relationship and Professional Self**

The inter-relationship between theory and professional practice was clearly identified by all interviewees. Debs had set her personal objectives for the practice experience prior to starting the placement. She used her personal objectives alongside the objectives set by the practice educator. Debs had been proactive and was from the start very focused on professional issues. Other interviewees identified the relevance of the profile to professional practice with examples.

When asked, "What do you think about?" there was a wide range of responses, from being focused on thinking about academic abilities and personal interactions to more complex matters as described by Rhea and Debs:

'Seeing other people's opinions'

'...different things you can't mark'

For Deb's there was a strong emphasis on abilities and changes that would constitute a 'good therapist'. There appeared to be a strong desire in Debs, an aspiration to be a successful therapist:

'I thought about things I wanted to change in myself, things I wasn't happy with, that I felt I could change....it's very much related to things that would be beneficial to change to be a good therapist.'

Debs talked about some of the areas she had highlighted through the process, for example being more assertive and wanting to think before she spoke. Debs then identified these in her personal objectives and continued to work on them throughout her practice experience.

#### **7.10.7 The Process of Reflection**

The process of reflection for each interviewee involved retrospection and analysis. All interviewees tried to think in new or different ways and see the outcome from different perspectives together with exploring what they could have done differently. What could be changed was integral to this process. One interviewee only appeared through the discussion to consider the affective domain in the process of reflection. The trigger questions or prompts from the profiling document were identified, by one interviewee, as having been facilitative: 'They were good...led from one thing to another'. Rhea saw herself as fairly reflective but she reported that she really needed the trigger questions to prompt her thinking:

'If the trigger questions weren't there I don't think I'd have a clue what to write really' (Rhea).



For Rhea, the triggers then appeared to provide a 'jumping off' point. This aspect of the profile was also made explicit by other interviewees as a useful mechanism. It would also suggest that if engagement is to be achieved in the reflective process at this early stage, some form of outline structure is necessary. The triggers for the profiling relate to both personal and professional development. However, aspects relating to personal development appear to be more challenging. This began to emerge in the interview with Debs. Debs kept focused on professional matters and in reporting discussions with her tutor, said that she sifted out responses from her profile which were about professional practice or of importance to the profession. Having a strategic vision and being prospective seemed a more difficult cognitive task for interviewees and in terms of personal development presented an emotional challenge, 'I still haven't got quite used to then looking forward'.

The professional self was evident from the interviewees' stories. Georgie was in particular, very focused on the use of the profile for assisting with strategies of immediate concern, time management was one example given, while Debs similarly emphasised her keen focus on matters relating to practice experience.

The process of reflection and documenting the outcome seemed to be undertaken in a very private way. In all cases this was carried out away from the University, at home or quietly on the train. Debs found that it was important to engage in the reflective diary, which helped in the writing of the personal profile immediately after the Interactive Processes sessions, in order to capture immediacy, thoughts and feelings present at that time. On returning to her diary later, she found that she would think differently about the experience she had written about. This immediacy of response appeared important to her. She recognised that her spontaneous thoughts were different to her more considered

ones. Other interviewees reported less considered approaches to completing their profile:

'when I have a few minutes'.

'.. don't go out of my way to set time aside.'

Documenting thoughts and ideas was identified as helpful. Although for Debs with a busy life schedule, thoughts and ideas of a more personal nature were not always committed to paper or memory. Taking time to reflect on experiences from a personal perspective and writing them down was not a habit she followed. This was in contrast to what she had said about being very systematic about her use of the reflective diary following Interactive Processes sessions which focused on the more professional self, the public face.

#### **7.10.8 Working with a Professional Development Tutor**

The time with the PD tutor was a key trigger for interviewees to begin to engage in the process of profiling. All interviewees said they used the reflective diary on a regular basis. The PD tutor was accessed and used as a resource for practical matters. The role of the PD tutor as a critical friend was however under-utilised. Rhea spoke of not being inhibited in sharing with her PD tutor but there was a sense of reluctance on the part of other interviewees. Rhea gave an example of a difficult situation she had experienced and through the reflective process she was trying to make sense of it and explore a strategy for managing any similar situations in the future. She shared this with her tutor who, through reflective dialogue, facilitated Rhea through considering different perspectives. During her practice placement Rhea found herself in a similar situation and said as a consequence of reflective dialogue, 'I coped with it better'.

Talking to a tutor was difficult for Georgie consequently there appeared to be an editorial process with the engagement with an uncertainty about openness and what was considered acceptable. Georgie explained:

'it's difficult when you're talking to a tutor to try to think of everything. What do I need to go forwards? What don't I need? ..... as a first year, how honest can you be?'

This dilemma of the difficulty with and degree of disclosure appears to emerge in Debs' interview although she does not articulate the dilemma precisely. In this extract Debs refers to her responses to the trigger questions:

'I wrote them out (responses to the trigger questions), if you like from the heart, I wrote everything, and then when I put them on the paper (profile proforma) I sifted out the ones I felt were more important to the profession or going out on practice and I talked it through again. I perhaps picked out the ones that were more relevant. Perhaps there's a degree in there of what I think I ought to have put down or said. I probably gave them a ranking order as well.'

The trigger questions appear to prompt and guide Debs in her thinking. The questions enabled her to think through both personal and professional issues and she then edited her thoughts in terms of what she felt comfortable sharing with her tutor and what she holds privately. In the meeting with the tutor she felt that there was a sense of formality and therefore she would share with her tutor parts of her profiling; the parts relating to her professional self. Debs also recalled that the timing did not feel right. There had been a lot happening for her in her academic life and her first practice experience was just a week away from the meeting with her tutor. In retrospect, Debs felt she would have shared more if the timing of the tutorial had been different. Debs said she had completed the profile in advance of time, but it was the timing of the appointment which to her did not feel right, she felt under pressure with her studies.

Two interviewees reported talking with their peers about their process of reflection and profiling. This provided a wider perspective for them. This process of affirmation without challenge or widening perspective appeared to be valuable. Similar sentiments were expressed by some interviewees in other years. Whilst this may be an unchallenging approach it does provide an opportunity for rehearsal before meeting with a PD tutor who will be expecting a reflective dialogue.

### **7.10.9 The Value of Profiling**

From first year interviewees' accounts, there was no evidence of the feelings of 'weightiness' and overwhelming paperwork which was a significant theme from interviewees in years two and three. All, at some point, during the interview reported that the reflective diary and the trigger questions given on the profile proforma had been useful to them as prompts.

Although profiling was new to them, as the year progressed, the first years began to understand the value of it. Initially the value was seen in the context of professional development. A more personal dimension emerged over time and there was an impact on 'self' as illustrated by the following:

'It made me stop and think.'

'It started making me think about different roles we take, makes me think of my personal life as well, how it is a balance between college and personal life.'

'I've never reflected as much as I have since October, ever in my life.'

Engaging in the personal profile did bring about time to focus on issues:

'...reviewed the issue on the second profile'. Some changes were gradual in nature until the interviewee took time out to recount on progress:

'made me aware of my shortfalls'.

'(aware of) the little things which perhaps I just assumed...took for granted'.

'Perhaps I had been aware ... but never as clearly....'

Rhea was very open and relaxed in her interview in contrast with Debs and Georgie who needed time to settle into the interview. From the start she indicated that she had understood and engaged in the profiling system. Towards the end of the interview Rhea said that whilst she used and benefited from the process of profiling she knew of friends and peers who felt it had been a waste of time. Whilst this is third hand it is a consideration in relation to the sample group. Participation was voluntary basis and all interviewees were mature

students which may suggest they felt more comfortable or confident voicing their views.

A summary of the substantive themes which emerged from the analysis of the interview are cited in Figure 7.9. To conclude this section, two vignettes are presented to provide rich individual perspectives. They are illustrations of the differing starting point for students. The differences in perspective are derived from life experiences as well as psychological maturity. By the end of the first year of study, the value of the profiling system appears to have been realised and personalised to fit individual students' own perceived needs at that time. Debs was a mature student with family commitments.

#### **Vignette: Rhea**

*Rhea had been very quick to make assumptions about the personal profiling system when it was launched. Her recollections were that she had mis-interpreted the remit. Her first thoughts were that it was going to be very personal. She thought it would be "coming out with confessional things...." Rhea said she was worried she would have to show the profile to others. Once she read through the information which accompanies the profile, she realised it was not like that at all.*

*Despite her initial concerns Rhea felt the profiling was useful and saw the relevance immediately because of her previous experience. She indicated that she had met professionals who she personally felt were not suited to their role and she was hoping something like the profiling would help to improve such situations and increase levels of awareness.*

*The style of the profile with its trigger questions had helped to guide Rhea, in her thinking. In Rhea's words the profiling "forced people to be reflective" and without the triggers she would not have "had a clue" what to write. Although Rhea found the profiling helpful in sharing with her peers, she felt that some students had had difficulties in appreciating its value and felt that it was a waste of time. Rhea gave an example of how she had tried to help a colleague and work through how she might complete the profile by giving her some examples of how she had worked through hers.*

*The initial stages of the course were difficult for Rhea due to a number of issues outside of University which were impacting on her personally and she was also experiencing the demands of travelling some distance, daily. She found that the personal profiling started to make her think about how to balance University and personal life. Rhea remembers in particular thinking about her different roles. She used her profile during her practice placement to guide the experience. For Rhea, although worried in the initial stages about the depth and level of disclosure she may have to work with, the relevance was clear. This insight came from her previous engagement with a similar system in a social care setting*

Rhea graduated with an arts degree and then worked in the social care sector. From that experience she made the decision to pursue a vocational course for a career in health and social care. There are opportunities nationally for graduates

of another discipline to study a two year accelerated programme in occupational therapy. This was not the route Rhea wished to take and so she enrolled for this three year course. Debs and Rhea came to the profiling system from different personal positions. Rhea reacted vibrantly and quickly to the notion of profiling and was to a degree resistant initially through misinterpreting the remit which lead to some distrust in relation to the nature of profiling and the personal boundaries of the process. This was soon resolved and Rhea realised the purpose and began to encourage and facilitate her peers who seemed to have some difficulties adjusting to engage in the process.

### **Vignette: Debs**

*Debs said it was not in her nature to reflect on her actions and so this process seemed daunting. When personal profiling was introduced she felt that it was a 'bit deep' and she was not ready for it. This was something she had not anticipated.*

*Debs was questioning why she needed to engage in this process of reflection and profiling. It did not, initially, feel as though it was orientated to occupational therapy. Debs' uncertainty manifested itself in her expressing that it was "frightening in a way". As the Interactive Processes module progressed so Debs saw the profiling going alongside the sessions. She enjoyed the sessions and said that she saw it (the profiling) as an extension of them.*

*To begin with Debs felt that she 'had' to participate but that she was lucky because in her view she had a good group and members were responsive and it became a lot easier for her to contribute and give something of herself. Debs identified that a reciprocal engagement developed of "give & take". As the workshop sessions progressed, so the group became more comfortable with each other and "more mature". Trust was a key issue for Debs, particularly in the context of the PD tutor being in the role of 'critical friend'. Personalities, as Debs described it, were important within the tutor-student relationship and a particular factor was being able to feel relaxed and trust the tutor. In thinking about herself, Deb said she was quite a negative person and that she would think about what to change, what she did not like rather than thinking about her strengths.*

*A clear focus in Deb's thinking was being a good therapist. In preparing herself for the practice placement Debs reported that she felt the use of the profile had helped her focus on what she wanted to achieve from the placement. Debs did set three objectives for her placement. Although she had set three, she only shared one with her practice educator to begin with and then a further one later in response to her educator raising a particular point in one of her supervision sessions. She then identified that this was an area she had already considered. The third objective did not become explicit during her placement. Debs felt that her placement experience had been very positive and this enabled her to think, "I can do it" (be a therapist).*

Debs was openly unprepared and had a strong emotional response. A clear focus for her was to become a good occupational therapist. Debs was reluctant to engage in the process. Debs was self-contained in her demeanour and considered herself quite a negative person. She felt that she had to participate

but did not invest in the process at any emotional level. The lack of preparedness raised the issue of trust. Being able to relax and trust the student-tutor relationship emerged as a key factor. There was an absence of reflectiveness and Debs worked on the basis of problem-solving rather than engaging in appreciative enquiry.

### **7.11 Summary**

A summary of emergent themes (Figure 7.9) is cited overleaf. Where themes appear to have some consistency across all three years an italic typeface has been used to highlight the similarities. An example of the mapping process and the system of categories are presented in Appendix 6.

<b>Figure 7.9: Emergent Themes by Year Group: cross-referencing similarities and differences</b> Key: <i>italics</i> denote consistency across all years			
YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	
<b>Concept: Process (of profiling)</b> <b>Initial experience</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partial understanding</li> <li>• Sense of obligation</li> </ul> <b>Experience now</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process to enhance aspects of 'self'</li> <li>• Realisation that profiling can be a learning tool</li> </ul> <b>Organisation and action</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The need for personal space</i></li> <li>• <i>No dedicated time</i></li> <li>• Helping others</li> </ul> <b>Engagement with process</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Some hesitance about sharing with tutors</i></li> <li>• <i>Questions and writing provide support and a structure</i></li> </ul>	<b>Concept: Process</b> <b>Initial experience</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The unexpected</li> <li>• Questioning the rationale</li> <li>• Difficult to articulate thoughts</li> </ul> <b>Experience now</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognising progress, a journey</li> <li>• Getting feedback</li> </ul> <b>Organisation and action</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Need for personal space</i></li> <li>• <i>Time consuming</i></li> </ul> <b>Engagement with process</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sharing helps thinking process</i></li> <li>• <i>Writing helps depth of thinking</i></li> <li>• <i>Needing time and space to think</i></li> </ul>	<b>Concept: Process</b> <b>Initial experience</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacked sense of direction</li> </ul> <b>Experience now</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing depth of reflection</li> <li>• Using profiling as a strategic tool</li> </ul> <b>Organisation and action</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Finding personal space</i></li> <li>• <i>Finding personal time</i></li> </ul> <b>Engagement with process</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Using others to support the process</i></li> <li>• <i>Private and public aspects of sharing</i></li> <li>• <i>Feelings of discomfort with the process (writing) and expectations</i></li> </ul>	<b>Concept: Cognition</b> <b>Initial thoughts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncertainty about the unknown</li> </ul> <b>What do I think now?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Thinking about self and professional self</i></li> <li>• Thinking about progress</li> </ul>
<b>Concept: Cognition</b> <b>Initial thoughts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of preparedness</li> <li>• Need for professional identity</li> </ul> <b>What do I think now?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Profiling as a tool for identifying personal abilities</i></li> <li>• <i>Aspiration to be a good therapist</i></li> <li>• <i>Gaining a perspective</i></li> </ul>	<b>Concept: Cognition</b> <b>Initial thoughts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An analytic process</li> </ul> <b>What do I think now?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Self-analysis</i></li> </ul>		



<b>How do I think now?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Partial engagement in the reflective process</i></li> <li>• Preparing to be a therapist</li> <li>• Insecurity in 'self'</li> </ul> <b>Concept: Emotion Initial feelings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Uncertainty</i></li> </ul>	<b>How do I think now?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Emerging levels of reflection</i></li> <li>• Being strategic</li> </ul> <b>Concept: Emotion Initial feelings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-awareness and valuing self</li> </ul>	<b>How do I think now?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Unfolding the layers around self - a personal process</i></li> </ul> <b>Concept: Emotion Initial feelings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Uncertainty in new experience</i></li> <li>• Perceived to be difficult</li> </ul> <b>Feelings now</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased confidence in 'self'</li> <li>• Enjoying the experience</li> </ul>
<b>Concept: Change*1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Awareness of personal need</i></li> <li>• Preparing for the future</li> <li>• Affirmation for positive change</li> </ul> <b>Concept: Value*2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Preparing for professional practice, becoming a good therapist</i></li> <li>• Realising profiling tool for change</li> </ul>	<b>Concept: Change *1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Developing self and self-worth as an individual</i></li> </ul> <b>Concept: Value*2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Developing professional 'self' and responsibility to self and others</i></li> </ul>	<b>Concept: Change*1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>'Self' becoming a practitioner</i></li> </ul> <b>Concept: Value *2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Benefits - helpful to the 'professional' me</i></li> <li>• Perceived challenge or 'hassle' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ It's time consuming</li> <li>■ change is disagreeable (one interviewee)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<i>No specific reference to skills</i>	<i>No specific reference to skills</i>	<b>Concept: Skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognising 'self' as having skills and emerging as a practitioner</li> </ul>

\*1 - **Change** with engaging in profiling      \*2 - **Value** as perceived by individual

# **Chapter Eight**

## **Research Findings (II)**

### **Analysis of University Tutors' and Practice Educators' Perspective on Personal Profiling**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

The importance of University tutors to the students' development of attitudes in the process of profiling emerged during the pilot study. Although not the main focus of the study, data generated from participants' comments concerning the role of University-based tutors identified the need to incorporate their perspective within the final study design. In acknowledging the role of University tutors in the way students experienced profiling, consideration was also given to the role of practice educators as this was also seen to impact on students' academic lives. This chapter will begin by providing background on the nature of the role fulfilled by University tutors and practice educators to set the data in context.

As detailed in the Introduction, students undertake supervised professional practice as an integral component of their course. For approximately one third of the course, students are placed in a practice setting where new knowledge and understanding is achieved and professional skills are applied in a real-life context. The practice educators therefore have a significant role in students' education and the process of becoming an occupational therapist. In making the final decision about the study design, it was considered that practice educators were at least as influential as University tutors in students' academic lives. Students' personal goals from the process of profiling inform the practice placement learning agreement which they negotiate with their practice educator. For that reason their voices needed be heard to provide a more holistic view of

students' experiences of personal profiling; their attitudes, levels of engagement in the process and the relationship of profiling in and between academic and practice-based activities as seen from the tutors' perspective.

Inclusion of practice educators in the study is further justified as all therapists are required to engage in CPD as a means of ensuring currency and competency in service delivery in a changing world (COT, 2005; HPC, 2007). The key purpose of the profiling system is intended to be preparation for the transformative nature of practice.

Chapter Five detailed the development of a qualitative questionnaire for University tutors and a parallel questionnaire for practice educators. Although similar questions were posed for practice educators, the questionnaire was tailored to elicit their views on students' performance in a client-based setting. The analysis of both questionnaires will be presented in this chapter and used to complement students' 'stories' of their experiences of compiling and using the profile. It will assist in the exploration of students' potential to transfer the principles of profiling from their University-based to practice-based learning.

Practice has a significant place in occupational therapy students' overall programme of studies. It gives shape to students' professional education and preparation for the client-focused world of occupational therapy. Practice experiences are varied and must reflect the range of settings in which occupational therapists work. As documented previously, students must work with a diversity of clients to fulfil the requirements of the professional and regulatory bodies (WFOT, 2002; HPC, 2004).

The ability to relate theory to practice is a key element of placement learning. From day one for example, students are communicating with clients and not only

using everyday language (rather than clinical jargon) to establish a rapport but also engaging in discussing their particular health problems and needs from which to consider an appropriate therapeutic intervention. This demands professional knowledge from students underpinned by a working knowledge of the applied sciences and the theory of communication, relationships and group dynamics.

The profiling system is designed to enable and support students in the process of becoming an occupational therapist. Within the profiling system, prior to and following their practice experience, students are provided the opportunity to reflect upon their knowledge base in relation to their future practice and development needs. The ability to articulate this in writing and through reflective dialogue with University-based PD tutors is central to developing greater awareness and *becoming* a reflective practitioner. The posing of questions Bannigan (2005) argues is very important and is a mutually beneficial process. The ideas presented in the dialogue evolve and move on and this is a central tenet in critical thinking and reflective practice. The tutor therefore becomes a 'critical friend' (Swaffield, 2003) supporting the student in the process of becoming an occupational therapist.

The practice educators' role is equally crucial in students' development. Practice educators have a multi-faceted role as identified by Alsop and Ryan (1996). Whilst being a practising occupational therapist, the practice educator is an active educator of the student within the practice setting. Inherent within the occupational therapy model of practice educator is the role of assessor. Ilott (1995) suggests that the practice educator is a 'gatekeeper of the profession' and this makes the overall role complex and significant one for students and the Course Team. The practice educator is responsible for the following areas of students' experiences;

- organising and managing – experience, workload;
- teaching new knowledge - clients' health issues, interventions;
- guiding and facilitating learning;
- support;
- evaluating performance;
- assessing competence to practise.

From the pilot interviews with third year students it became apparent that students did not naturally embrace the use of the profile in the practice context. Yet the underpinning philosophy driving the system is preparation for practice and development of professional and transferable skills to become a reflective practitioner. The inclusion of both University tutors and practice educators within the final design of the study was to illuminate further what was being experienced by students within the University and during their practice placement.

## **8.2 University Tutors' Perspective: Personal Profiling**

As identified earlier, the tutors' perspective became increasingly important as the outcome of the pilot study began to emerge. Students expressed the view that tutors were a critical ingredient in the reflective dialogue associated with the process of profiling. At the time of the study 15 University tutors were invited to participate in the study to enable the researcher to explore themes relating to tutors that student participants identified. A qualitative questionnaire as discussed in Chapter Six was circulated to all tutors who agreed to be involved (n=15).

The questionnaire focused on gathering data in relation to tutors' perspectives of the profiling system and how they prepared for and facilitated the students' learning process. This aspect of the study was implemented to gain a fuller understanding of how tutors entered into 'partnership' with their own group of students. Additionally this gave the potential to provide data on how and when they perceived students becoming involved in the system. Findings are

presented question by question with an analytical commentary; with key issues and emergent themes discussed in subsequent sections.

### **8.2.1 Key Features of the Profiling System**

University tutors are responsible for launching the personal profile to students at the outset of their course. The questionnaire reflected this responsibility and focused tutors' attentions on their specific remit before branching out into the general issues of CPD. The layout provided an opportunity for participants to be free flowing in their written responses beneath each question.

*Question 1: In your opinion what are the key features of the Personal Profiling System in the BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy Course?*

Previously it was explained that tutors were introduced to the Personal Profiling system through a staff development workshop and accompanying guidance booklet. At the start of each academic year tutors are re-acquainted with the process of profiling, their role and students' responsibilities. This initial question was designed to provide a clearer sense of how individual tutors interpret the Personal Profiling System and enable them to describe their role within it. From the data generated, there was clear evidence that tutors were aware of both the personal and professional dimensions of the process and that it was a tool through which exploration and development could occur.

The key features of personal profiling from the tutors' perspective were varied and ranged from preparation for specific outcomes to acknowledging the processes of engagement and how this relates to PPD (Figure 8.1).

One tutor was explicit about the notion of progression and development and its potential as, '...an opportunity to track PPD throughout the course.' implying that it is evidence-building. Reference was made to the continual review of progress and goal setting, '...to engender a process of lifelong learning.' However, LLL was

not an explicit dimension from other tutors' responses. In this context, profiling was perceived to be; '...forming a habit of a life time (only possible if the student is committed to and understands the process)'.

**Figure 8.1: University Tutors' Perspective on Profiling**

- Opportunity to reflect
- Develop self-awareness/exploration
- Encourage personal responsibility and engage in personal responsibility
- Engage in personal evaluation - gain insight
  - identify strengths and weaknesses
  - achievements and accomplishments
  - explore progress to date
  - evaluate performance
  - identify problem areas
  - identify individual needs
- Consider professional issues
- PPD: links academic and practice work
- Goal setting and making changes
- Develop strategies for the future
  - self-management
  - future developments
- Preparation for
  - 'work', references, CVs
  - professional life
  - individual performance review
  - LLL

Commitment to profiling was detailed by tutors with two identifying the perceived mandatory nature of the system. One tutor wrote simply wrote; '?? voluntary'. This needs to be considered in the context of student induction. All students are briefed on the system, the process and its relevance to professional practice. It is a system based on 'opting out' rather than 'opting in'. This may lead to questioning whether this guidance into a system to 'taste' the experience and what it can offer, is the most effective way forward.

The tutor making this response portrayed her perceptions of how current professional development students had interacted in recent sessions. A key theme was, 'missed opportunity'. The tutor alluded to student-tutor 'performance' claiming that if guidelines are followed it 'produces politically correct surface responses', suggesting that a partial response is offered and that

depth of response may not be achieved. Although there was no direct reference made, this does raise issues about the perceived or actual balance of power within the working relationship between students and tutor. The tutor further claimed; 'there is a lack of consistency/clarity in the process by tutors resulting in variable purpose/rational'.

In the following quote the nature of the interaction is expressed in terms of a dynamic exchange; a 'sounding board' opportunity with the tutor being a facilitator; 'student + own tutor + sounding board/facilitator'. Another tutor thought that the one-to-one relationship was a key feature. This is in contrast to other components of the course (except practice supervision;1:1 model).

### **8.2.2 Personal Profiling Discussions**

*Question 2: Do you prepare for the personal profiling discussion/interview with students? Please explain your response:*

Tutors identified various types of preparation. This was mostly in terms of practical activities, with few responses indicating personal reflection on the part of the tutor and or personal role in the process of profiling. Of the 14 tutors who responded, five (33%) spent time reflecting on how they would prepare themselves and four identified how they would plan to facilitate the engagement of their student(s);

...consideration of relevant questions to facilitate discussion if student is finding it difficult.

Two (14%) of the 14 tutors identified preparing for the process itself, together with practical preparations;

(examples of practical activities).....and consider the approach I might adopt rather than going in unprepared mentally.

If you mean do I prepare by booking low stress times, to mentally prepare, and spend time in reflection prior to meeting the student the answer is yes.



The milieu in which a cohort of students exists is an important aspect of academic life. One tutor identified this as a factor to consider in preparing for student discussions 'I consider the type of year it has been – any dominant events and trends'. From experience, different corporate 'life events' can have an overall impact on how students view their academic world and their professional practice and therefore a consideration when facilitating students to reflect on their academic year as a whole.

Practical preparations most frequently cited were; reviewing student files (n=5) and previous profiles (n=9), with one tutor reviewing practice reports and another, the modules (assumed by descriptor in the course document) students were involved in throughout the year. Tutors explained they referred to these documents to provide background information prior to seeing students. One tutor explained that she looked at student files to see if there were any areas of a 'delicate' nature that may potentially arise during the discussion with the student. All but two tutors (n=12) said they prepared in this way. One tutor gave a very clear message about why student files were not helpful to her, saying that she preferred 'to have my own open perspective' and that from her experience 'most of what is on file is only negative'.

The need for further background knowledge emerged through a number of responses. Two tutors indicated that they would contact other tutors in addition to other forms of preparation 'if concerned for any reason', 'when appropriate'. The criteria for what constituted concern was not given. One tutor asked students to present a piece of coursework for review 48 hours before the session, as a way of gaining greater background knowledge before a meeting. No rationale was given for this preparation. This may link with considering study skills or academic writing, which is part of a general induction programme.

Reviewing previous profiles was reported by nine tutors (64%). One tutor noted in particular the goals set from previous discussions as part of their preparation. One tutor indicated that she asked her students to bring their previous profile(s) as this forms a good basis from which to begin the session.

Time was a significant consideration in relation to setting up meetings with students (five tutors, 35%) and the impact of work pressures on preparation (three 21%); '...this varies and is rather inconsistent' and 'Not always done - depends on time available and knowledge of individual students.' Two tutors expanded, identifying positive strategies that they adopt in response to the pressures; namely booking sessions and preparing in less stressful periods.

Responses suggest that the focus for tutors in the preparatory phase of profiling with students is on gathering background information, with the emphasis on student information. Time was a pressure for some tutors implying that varying degrees of preparation are achieved. However, five tutors explained that they took time to reflect, two on a personal basis so that they were mentally prepared for the reflective dialogue.

In general, reference to student documentation features in the tutors' responses on preparation. However, only two tutors reviewed the process of profiling prior to the meeting. Question 3 was designed to ask specifically if the tutor guidelines are used as student interviews highlighted that consistency of approach may not be present in the system. Briefing on the profiling system, as part of the department staff development programme, identified the need for some preparatory work to be done on the part of the tutor and student alike. A number of areas for preparation prior to meeting students are expected. Time to reflect on the role and how to facilitate students through the areas for discussion and reflection is crucial. This together with being well-acquainted with the

profiling proforma used by students as a baseline for their reflections establishes a sound basis for the meeting. Having the background knowledge of possible learning opportunities on offer within the University for PPD is important to the discussion on moving forward from goal setting to action and strategy planning. Thorough preparation leads to a richer and more satisfying experience for both tutor and student.

*Question 3: Do you refer to the Personal Profiling Guidelines?*

On asking about the level of use tutors made of the guidelines, 12 stated that they sometimes referred to them, two did not use them and one tutor openly explained 'not until now'. The main purpose of the guidelines however, was to serve as a reminder of the process and responsibilities within the institutional and course framework, so this was clearly not operating in this way.

*Question 4: How informative are the guidelines?*

This question attempted to elicit how tutors felt about the guidelines as a support mechanism for them and the level of utility. The majority of tutors (n=11) found the guidelines useful (two very useful) with two identifying that they were not useful at all. Comments ranged from, 'Points made are clear .....I was left with no questions following its reading', 'They are useful to remind oneself of the process and responsibilities.' to indicating that the guidelines were not used or rarely used; '...sometimes issues are raised where further help is required.' and 'Tend to ask advice from other tutors rather than guidelines'.

*Question 5: How do you set up the interview/discussions?*

Tutors were asked to explain how they set up the profiling interview, given that the environmental context and climate are critical in facilitating students' entry into a dynamic process of communication. Responses ranged from contact methods, for example notices on student boards, personal memos in the pigeon-hole, to arranging a quiet location and asking the student to complete the

proforma in advance of the session. Two tutors (12%) asked students to bring their reflective diary from the Interactive Processes Module to complement the discussion. One tutor identified the procedure undertaken from welcoming the student, the introductory phase of the discussion in which the scene was set and the purpose of the discussion clarified at the end. Responses to this question were illuminating. Tutors appear to adopt their own style and approach to the implementation of the profiling system for their students. Following this set of questions around the purpose and procedures of the profiling system tutors were asked a series of questions pertaining to the process of profiling and discussion, the reflective dialogue.

### **8. 2.3 Engaging in the Process of Profiling**

*Question 6: How do you facilitate your student during the discussion?*

Tutors' responses focused on their style and approach to promoting students' engagement. The majority of tutors responded by identifying techniques they used to facilitate students during the reflective dialogue. Two tutors provided quite different responses, a descriptive account of how they facilitate the discussion to encourage a reflective dialogue. One tutor's response is presented in full below and demonstrates a student-centred approach to the process.

Usually ask them (*the student*) to reflect upon the year to date & how it has been & invite them to lead (*the discussion*) according to the area they wish to discuss. We usually end up looking at the highs & lows & what made it so. This leads often into specific areas: personal contribution, academic achievement, areas of conflict, aspects of self development they wish to address. I tend to adopt a fairly non directive style but this varies according to how engaging the student is. Sometimes the exercise can feel like 'pulling teeth' and I will then adopt a more directive style.

The tutor's approach is flexible and she adapts a style according to the student's immediate needs during the discussion. In contrast, one tutor alluded to direct tutor intervention. 'I explore in detail any aspect I consider important.' The emphasis is on 'I consider' rather than being led by the student in identifying

areas for exploration. This sense of 'directing' by the tutor in the dialogue was un-common among tutors' responses. A direct comparison with practice educators' responses is given in the following section, however, it is problematic. Their responses were more general, giving neither specific technique(s) used to facilitate students nor examples to support their comments.

University-based tutors are experienced occupational therapists with expertise across health and social care. However, from the responses given some appear to feel more comfortable in this facilitative role than others. It might be suggested that tutors who have worked predominantly in mental health services feel more comfortable with the process of facilitation and critical reflective dialogue, as they are more familiar with the 'not knowing' factor. From the very nature of the process of reflection, the emergence of the content of the reflective dialogue cannot be predicted before both parties begin to engage in the interaction. The interaction itself moves the focus of the discussion forward. Initial thoughts and tentative ideas are shared and progressed as the tutor uses facilitative techniques to enable the student to view their reflections through a different lens to gain a new perspective and find alternative ways of working.

In mental health services therapists are often working with clients in crisis and therefore drawing upon their interpersonal and professional skills to engage with individuals in the intervention process. The unpredictable and unexpected can happen as clients struggle with their thoughts, emotions and actions. Managing difficult dynamics and tense situations is very much part of the therapist's working day. In contrast working within physical medicine, therapeutic intervention is more protocol driven and focused on clients' specific needs. The experience of working in a very flexible way in an unknown territory may be a contributing factor to the (dis)comfort level experienced while engaging in a reflective dialogue.

#### **8.2.4 Students' Understanding of Profiling**

*Question 7: In your opinion, do students understand the concept of personal profiling? If yes, at what stage do you feel that students understand? Please give examples to explain your response.*

Overall the majority of tutors (n=10) felt that students had an understanding of the concept of personal profiling. Four tutors reported that some students did not have such an understanding. Further comments from tutors suggested that mature students are more aware;

'in my experience mature students seem to grasp it from year one, whereas 'standard' students seem to struggle and feel that it is a bit of a pointless exercise'.

Three tutors clearly identified the experience as progressive in nature with one of the tutors suggesting that previous work experience and consistent support are influential:

From year 1, students understand the mechanics and can articulate the purpose. In year 2 they can appreciate its value, in year 3 they are going through the process naturally and maturely (can vary from student to student).

In year 1, process very mechanistic – everything is gone through question by question. Students seek confirmation that their self-evaluation is correct. In year 3 the issues are addressed in a free flowing conversation.

The first year students have little understanding unless they have had previous work experience and they are familiar with appraisals. The students have more understanding at level II and III – if there has been consistency of supervisor.

A tutor had found that school leavers were often 'defensive/apprehensive' and lacked understanding of the purpose and therefore needed the process of personal profiling clarified, further supports these comments. From the second tutor's comments (above) the need for skilled facilitation is emerging, to enable students to use the opportunity to its potential. A broad and superficial grasp of the process of profiling was identified by one tutor. This superficial approach is explained further:

In the 1<sup>st</sup> year many 'standard' entry students (under 21) give superficial responses...e.g. I want to increase confidence...but they find it hard to explore beneath the surface of these.

The practice experience emerged as a potential turning point:

The penny begins to drop after the first placement. Up until that point many students are unfamiliar with the idea of personal reflection even though it is introduced in 109OT (Interactive Processes Module). Making the link takes time.

*Question 8: Do students know how to use the Personal Profile?*

This was a closed question, to ensure data was collected for each year of students. From tutors' responses a sense of progression emerges, as students move from year one to year two they gain a clearer vision of the process. An open question to explore tutors' views on how students come to an understanding of the purpose, expectations and the process of profiling followed.

From the responses four key themes emerged:

- the curriculum;
- professional practice;
- interaction;
- process of personal profiling.

The underpinning philosophy of the course was highlighted by one tutor as 'backing up' the concept of profiling. The implication being that the strategy for developing reflective practice promotes the development of reflective practitioners. The interactive nature of modules was identified as contributing to encouraging such awareness. Year Two of the programme appears to be a critical year for achieving a greater understanding of the process and the purpose:

By year two they (students) seem more willing to give the exercise time and reflection.

Reinforcement in many of the modules. I believe that some of them (students) identify the OT profession and their role and begin to recognise that good practice does involve personal and theoretical reflection...

Some students seem to understand immediately – for others – understanding of the purpose of personal profiling seems to grow as their understanding of the need for self awareness grows.

Professional practice has already been highlighted as a crucial influence on students' understanding of the purpose of profiling. A range of responses was received from three tutors concerning aspects of practice which were perceived to

be influential in the developmental process. These included the following; the general experience of a practice placement, the 1:1 relationship in practice (student-practice educator), good supervision and the opportunity for reflecting on their own practice in the practice setting:

.....experience (practice) helps them (students realise) that reflection is important in the work place and that it enables them to achieve more and to develop the skills needed to be a therapist.

Other tutors attributed interactive aspects of the course as likely influences in students coming to an understanding of the process of profiling. Included in tutors' responses were; asking questions, guidance, tutor explanation and discussion, peer discussion and facilitation of the student through exemplars. The process of profiling itself was identified by three tutors as encouraging the ongoing development of students' understanding:

Just having the experience of doing this session enables them to prepare the next one in a more informed way.

Part practice - i.e. more they use it, more they understand it.

Partly the reinforcement it receives through placement and other modules of study.

The process of change comes through in the following response, as one tutor explained;

...expectations of students change. They begin seeing it almost as a piece of coursework and move to adopting it as a coping mechanism/self development tool.

Also reported, was 'going through the motions'. One tutor explained at length that from her perspective preparedness and attitude are a factor:

First year students come to the meeting in varying states of preparedness. This appears to mirror their attitude towards the course...The reflective student who will be a reflective practitioner uses preparation time to consider the previous year ... Other students who do not see the point take a more flippant attitude to this process.

There was a sense that the initial mechanistic approach to profiling finally evolves into a more personalised approach and there is greater willingness to give time and be reflective in the approach adopted by Year 2.



The profiling system has been designed strategically so that the process is owned by the student. From the pilot work for this study, there had been a suggestion from student participants that tutors implemented the system in different ways. This potentially raised issues of equity in the experience for students. It was therefore essential to ask tutors how they implemented the system and approached the documentation associated with the final stage of the reflective dialogue in which a summary statement is compiled. The summary statement acts as a brief record of the reflective dialogue and should be a record of students' achievements, identified difficulties and development plans (goals and strategies). The summary is an explicit and open record for students' portfolios.

*Question 10: Please describe the nature of the written record of discussion and identify how the record is kept.*

Responses to this question varied; of the 15 tutors, five (33%) explicitly indicated that students completed the summary proforma and three identified that they had completed it on behalf of the student. Each tutor followed this by saying that they asked the student to confirm the nature of the documentation and sign to agree the contents or amend it if they felt it did not reflect the nature of the discussion accurately. This process takes away the notion of student ownership and the summary of the dialogue comes under the 'authorship' of the tutor. Jointly signing the summary was identified by three tutors. One tutor explicitly addressed the notion of partnership and indicated that during the session the;

...personal profile sheet is worked through with the student – key areas identified student signs (the summary sheet) to confirm the accuracy of discussion...tutor signs to establish partnership.

A second tutor also indicated partnership working yet acknowledged that ownership remained important by allowing 'space', a period of further reflection before the student writes his/her comments:

I add my comments (to the summary proforma) during the interview. Student takes it away to draft comments. When both parties are happy we sign it.

### **8.2.5 Difference in Approach**

From the data, differences in the tutors' approach to profiling and individual style began to emerge. In designing the questionnaire it was felt appropriate to explicitly ask whether the system had been adapted to meet specific student needs. Further variations became evident.

*Question 11: During the time that you have been working with the Personal Profile System, have you had a need to adapt the system in any way to meet a particular student(s) need?*

Five tutors (33%) identified that they had adapted the system, with three (21%) continuing to use their own modified system. A further tutor responded 'no' to adapting the system and explained; 'I need to adapt my style of facilitation'. Of the five tutors identifying modifications, four detailed tailoring the process to meet students' needs rather than the system. Examples given were; building in reflection time during the session, more flexibility in the time frame used, being more directive in helping the student. One tutor detailed significant changes, including additional sessions which provides further evidence and confirms students' views of differences in their experiences.

*Question 12: Do tutors feel that the aims of the Personal Profiling System are being achieved?*

The majority of tutors (n=12, 79%) expressed a view that the aims were being achieved:

Students are aware of how they have changed....more confident, more knowledgeable, and more skilled. They also develop more honest self appraisal skills and develop a habit of reflection.

One tutor made a clear statement that the aims were not clear. Two tutors (12%) identified that the majority of students do benefit but there are a minority of students who do not view profiling as important.

I feel for some students it is a paper exercise which does not really impact on their development in any significant way. For others it is deeply meaningful and powerful because they understand it and fully use it.

The quality and dynamics of the interaction were not explicitly expressed in the data gathered. However, one tutor in responding simply said; 'I feel it depends on the student and the facilitator'. One of the tutors alluded to the issue of 'maturity', not chronological maturity but maturity in professional development:

I'm not sure we can speed up the developmental process to enable all students to use the system to maximum advantage. Many 'late starters' may have gained a great deal retrospectively.

This idea is worthy of consideration. There is a potential for delayed outcomes, which as a Course Team we do not see. This suggests there is a period of dormancy or sleeper effect and that early post-qualifying practice becomes an awakening experience.

From the data there is an emerging theme focusing on engagement, students level of involvement; a buy-in factor. Tutors indicated that the majority of students buy-in to the system and although it may not be obvious in the early days, they do come to realise the purpose and potential of engaging in the system. The level at which the engagement occurs varies and can be seen as a continuum from high buy-in to low buy-in.

Individualised style and different ways of implementing the system was reported by some tutors. This may suggest that tutors interact similarly on a high buy-in to a low buy-in basis. That is they either value the system, believe in the underpinning philosophy and feel comfortable working in partnership with students in the process of facilitating reflective dialogue or position themselves along a continuum towards feeling ambivalent towards the system or lacking in confidence in how to manage the process itself.

### **8.2.6 Enhancing the Profiling System**

Of the 15 participating tutors, 13 (86%) identified potential developments to enhance the profiling system.

*Question 13: How would you develop the Personal profiling System? Please identify practical strategy.*

Contact time emerged as a key feature for development. Almost half (n=7) of tutors made reference to increasing the contact time. However, concerns about the pressure on time to arrange the discussions already on the schedule were also expressed and additional sessions would further impact on tutors.

Three tutors suggested working within a group setting as well as on an individual basis. The group meeting, it was suggested, could form the basis of establishing working relationships with the potential benefit of providing intra-group support for students. This could maximise the use of time. One tutor recommended setting up a base-line meeting at the beginning of the first year to identify individual needs and aspirations. A formal timetable in which interviews could be planned was suggested by two tutors, as a practical way forward for managing time more effectively.

The process of profiling was referred to by several tutors in different ways. Time for reflection was identified, although it was not clear on whose part, tutor or student. One tutor suggested the use the reflective diary (from the Interactive Processes Module) as a tool to assist in the reflective dialogue. A more flexible structure was recommended by one:

Perhaps make it a little more flexible in terms of structure.  
Increase face-to-face contact, but not necessarily the amount  
of documentation which can impede interaction.

This quotation is an example of more freedom being desired within the system. Although the need for greater freedom was identified by this tutor, she had not adapted the system. From data gathered however, other tutors did adapt the

system to provide greater flexibility. Differences in the way of working between tutors were shared by another tutor and further supports the notion of high and low buy-in factors:

...tutors that have taught on 109OT (Interactive Processes Module) have a very thorough understanding of the process and expectations of the Profiling System.

This statement was followed-up by a suggestion that tutors outside of the Interactive Processes module team have the scheme of work for the module to be clear about the expectations for students engaging in the process of reflection.

One tutor suggested starting personal profiling in Year 2. The rationale was not provided however, drawing upon the themes which have emerged in the study; this may be about students' ability to engage in the process initially, or about levels of motivation and or a sense of purpose in profiling. The suggestion from another tutor of developing skills of reflection through 'buddy' teaching may be a way of addressing the issue of student preparedness and complementing more formal ways of developing skills.

In respect of prior knowledge of students' ability, a strong sense of their 'preparedness', was evident from one tutor. Having prior knowledge about students' strengths, problems, difficulties and academic outcomes appears paramount for this tutor.

This would make it easier to challenge students who have difficulties but do not acknowledge or want to discuss them.

What emerges here is the congruence between what a student *wishes* to place on the agenda (ownership) and *what* the tutor believes should be on the table (directorship). The basic premise, on which the system operates, is one of facilitating students to explore their own self-perceptions, personal professional aspirations and achieve a greater sense of personal autonomy (ownership). This also suggests that the process of facilitation may not be comfortable for some,

that the tutor needs evidence in some form to be able to start the process of exploration with the student. Another tutor suggested extending the Professional Development Portfolio to encourage the reflective process between practice and theory. Seeking students' perceptions of what they want from the PD tutor was suggested and complements the following statement on the process of profiling:

...this process...is only useful if the student has a positive attitude to it. This attitude can be improved by my attitude.....the students only get as much from the process as they put in.

These themes illuminate further students' views that tutors work in different ways within the Profiling System. Embedded within the responses are important clues to the level of preparedness and confidence tutors feel in adopting a partnership with students to progress their students' professional development.

### **8.3 Practice Perspective: Personal Profiling System**

As detailed in the previous section the practice educators have a significant role in the students' education. Under the guidance of the University, they have the responsibility of delivering the professional practice programme. Although professionally responsible through the Code of Ethics and Professional Code of Conduct for Occupational Therapists (COT 2005), practice educators are not employed by the University or in receipt of financial benefit for their role. They remain under the management structure of their employing trust or social care agency. Quality assurance processes are therefore the joint responsibility of the two partners. As the Department of Health moves the Government agenda forward, partnership working and quality assurance of practice placements has been a key feature of recent work (QAA 2004, SfH 2007).

A placement is much more than an experience. Alsop and Ryan (1996:57) clearly indicate active learning and the role practice educators in this process. In the following student excerpt 'your' refers to the student;

...(practice) educator manages and facilitates your learning, takes time to give you regular feedback on your performance and evaluates your practice...

The practice educator is expected to provide a programme of active learning opportunities to facilitate the acquisition of new knowledge; tutorials (for example, pathology), seminars on complex cases, activities to apply newly acquired knowledge (for example, producing a patient information leaflet) and in-service CPD (for example, journal club (Sherratt, 2005)). This, together with the explicit expectation that both theory and practice will be explored through supervision with the practice educator constitutes an assessed module of study.

A 17 item qualitative questionnaire was administered by post to every practice educator involved in the first year cohort's (n=95) first practice-based learning experience following the placement. Chapter 6 details the design of the questionnaire. The method of enquiry suited the range of geographical locations in which the practice educators were based. Each practice educator received a letter with an explanation of the purpose of the research study (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000) and a questionnaire to complete, if they agreed to take part. At the outset it was recognised that some trusts and agencies take more than one student and have a practice education co-ordinator who has oversight and responsibility for the placement organisation and management, although not involved in supervising students themselves on a daily basis. It was envisaged that the personal contact would gain access to each practice educator rather than a collective response through the co-ordinator. However, in one return it was evident that individual practice educators had responded through their designated co-ordinator. The placement administrator for the course regularly finds that, despite personal mail shots, this approach is frequently adopted. With the anonymity of the questionnaires, it has not been possible to ascertain the degree to which this has occurred.

Of the 95 questionnaires distributed, 42 (47%) responses were returned completed. Polgar and Thomas (1995) highlight that self-administered questionnaires have a higher incidence of non-respondents. Whilst it is accepted that postal questionnaires have a low return, at least a 40% response should be possible if a postal questionnaire is well planned (Cohen et al 2000) with follow-up reminders increasing the return. If individuals are interested in the subject then between 40% and 60% may be achieved (Drummond, 1996). A response rate of 47% was achieved. Although lower than expected, it falls within the boundaries that Drummond (1996) accepts. It is not uncommon for a response rate to be as low as 15% for a postal questionnaire (Denscombe, 1998). This return was therefore relatively high and seen to be a positive outcome given the time of year in which the survey was undertaken (July). Whilst Cohen et al (2000) discuss follow-up strategies in the context of education research follow-up techniques were not employed in this study. The responses received did represent the range of practice settings in which occupational therapists work including social services. This together with the fact that University had scheduled postal mail shots for placement offers it was felt that follow-up reminders may be perceived as over-burdening practice educators.

Whilst the summer may have been a factor in lowering the potential response rate, to leave the questionnaire until the Autumn would have distanced the practice educators' experience of first year students. Opinions may have also been coloured by the preparations being made for third year student placements in the early autumn.

Due consideration was given in designing the questionnaire to the phenomenon of a ghost interviewer (Oppenheim, 1992). Oppenheim discusses the potential of an image being conjured up of the researcher or the research organisation.



Practitioners can sometimes feel uncomfortable, possibly threatened by the presence of 'the University'; perceiving as academic and at a distance from their daily world. They may anticipate that there will be a right or wrong set of responses to the questionnaire. It is recognised that these perceptions of the University may have had a sufficiently strong sense of personal discomfort to make a conscious decision not to participate in the study.

The relatively high response rate was due in part to the practice educators' declared commitment to the education of students by virtue of having offered a first year placement opportunity. It may also be attributed to an interest in the study and/or the opportunity of being asked their opinion by the University and therefore their personal views. A valuable insight into the practice experience and its impact on student attitudes to the process of reflection and profiling has been gained through the practice educators' involvement in the study.

### **8.3.1 Analysis of the Data**

The Personal Profiling System is used to prepare students for professional practice and the development of professional and transferable skills to become a reflective practitioner. It is the element of transferability that is being explored in this aspect of the study. The views of the practice educators are being embraced within the overall design of the study to explore whether students are using the personal profile to further their own development ideas and needs and progress these through both University and practice settings. In this way data will be triangulated, bringing together students stories with tutors and practice educators views.

A sequential approach to the positioning of the questions in the questionnaire was adopted with the initial focus on activities which occur in the early part of the placement. The two week induction period was explored first to elicit whether students brought to the practice experience their own ideas and development needs for setting the overall placement objectives. It then moved on to seek practice educators' views on students' use of profiling and their level of reflective practice. Students are required to agree the objectives within a learning agreement in discussion with their practice educator. The agreement is similar to the concept of a learning contract as described by Walker (1999). The learning agreement sets out the overall agenda for the experience and is used as a monitoring tool throughout the placement. It clearly defines the learning outcomes, identifies the activities to achieve the outcomes and charts the milestones. Once the detail of the agreement has been formalised the practice educator signs this to confirm the learning outcomes to be achieved during the placement.

The overarching questions to be addressed in this aspect of the study stem from the themes set out in Chapter 4 (Figure 4.1) concerning the practice of profiling and profiling as an 'agent' of or practical mechanism for potential or actual change. Data on the students' ability to transfer their personal development strategies and engage in the practice setting as evidenced by practice educators is explored.

*Question 1: During the induction period did your student(s) introduce their own ideas for the placement objectives?*

Twenty-three practice educators (55%) said that their students introduced their own ideas for placement objectives without prompting. Eighteen practice educators (43%) explained that their students did not engage in this way. Five educators (12.5%) suggested that this was a new experience and therefore students would not necessarily be expected to be proactively involved as they

had much to learn. Two educators placed the responsibility onto the University rather than the student, stating that the University had inadequately prepared the student.

*Question 2: How did you prepare for and accommodate the student's personal objectives for the placement?*

Three key themes emerged from the practice educators' responses; offering opportunities, flexibility and pre-prepared strategies. Practice educators identified offering opportunities to the student which were practice-based and provided a perspective beyond the student's immediate caseload. The responses included the followings:

- arranging opportunities in other areas of the setting
  - in occupational therapy
  - with specialist therapists
  - visits to other departments in the trust/agency;
- offering range of lecturers/tutorials;
- providing list of skills which could be practised;
- giving pre-placement skills checklist to assist in identifying needs.

The University programme is approved by regulatory and professional bodies. The aims and learning outcomes set for a placement are in accordance with the requirements for eligibility to apply for registration on successful completion of the course (HPC, 2004; COT, 2008). Practice educators are responsible for working to the standards and common core learning outcomes detailed in the placement descriptors. From this, the educators can shape the specific objectives for their particular setting. In larger trusts, practice educators have formed their own support group, providing an opportunity to work together on preparing for students' induction and developing study packs. This was reflected in six practice educators' (14%) responses; pre-set departmental objectives from which all educators in that particular trust/agency work. One practice educator referred to the University Student Handbook for the learning outcomes as the starting point for setting the objectives. The remaining 36 respondents (86%) indicated varying degrees of flexibility and discussion with the student to establish specific

objectives, with 10 (24%) practice educators identifying that weekly objectives or discussion on a weekly basis in supervision were a feature of setting and monitoring objectives using the placement learning agreement.

*Question 3: Did your student(s) refer/link the objectives to the Personal Profiling System which runs throughout the course?*

From practice educators' perspective 20 (48%) felt that students linked or referred to profiling undertaken as part of the University-based programme without prompting, 13 (31%) were uncertain and 8 (19%) claimed that their student did not appear to make any links in discussion with them. Two of these respondents offered an explanation;

...but towards the end, (*the student*) began to make the connection.

The personal profile was written on experience gained rather than experience desired.

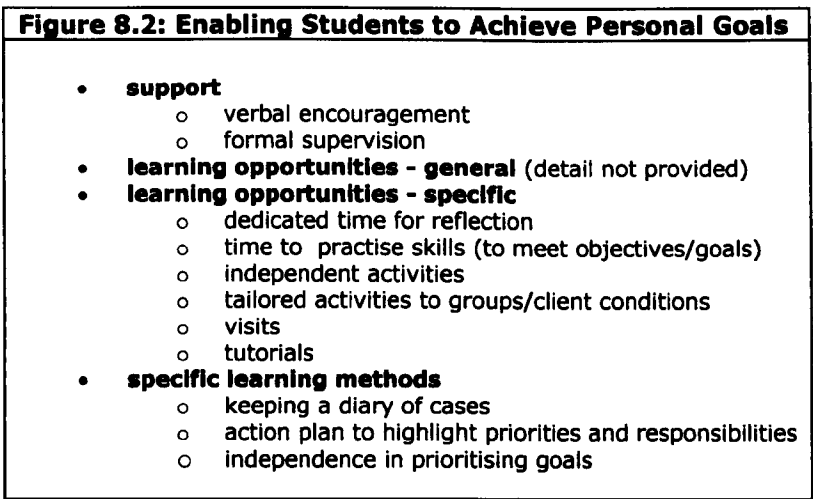
Although these educators felt that students had not been explicitly linking their personal profile initially, there is an indication that students were coming to realise the relevance of the profile to the placement experience. In the quotation above whilst this student did not explicitly indicate at the beginning of the placement the links with the personal profile, it appears that there was a realisation of the inter-relationship with the use of the word 'connection'. The placement experience itself may have been the trigger in awakening the student's understanding of the integral nature of theory and practice and sense of purpose for personal profiling.

The practice educator in the second quotation also noted that this was the student's first experience and that there had been much to take on board. This suggests that the placement may have been daunting or overwhelming and had an influence on the student's ability to be proactive. Thus it was only with more experience the student was able to acknowledge personal achievements and appreciate the range of experiences. Delay in engaging with the personal profile

could be attributed to lack of perceived relevance or vision and that the placement provided the missing link for the student with client-focused practice being a trigger for action.

*Question 4: Did the student(s) share their personal self-development goals and strategies with you?*

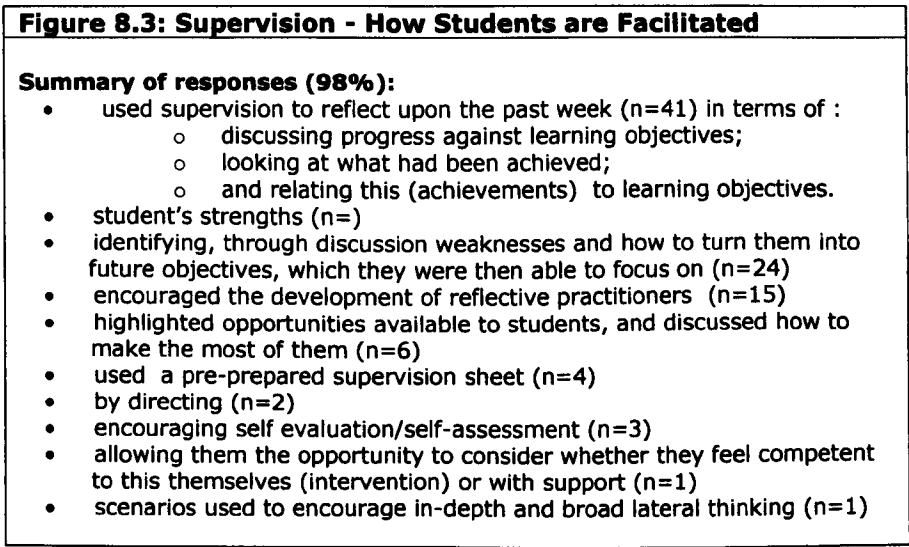
Twenty (48%) practice educators reported students demonstrated evidence of linking or referring to the personal profile (Q3). In question 4, 18 (43%) said students shared, voluntarily, their goals and strategies. Fifteen (36%) practice educators reported 'as sometimes sharing' and nine (21%) 'not sharing'. Question 5 followed-up this question and asked respondents whose, student(s) did share their personal/ self development goals and strategies to explain how they enabled students to achieve them. Four categories emerged; support, learning opportunities (both general and specific) and specific learning methods (Figure 8.2)



Eleven practice educators (26%) identified supervision as a means of enabling students to achieve their personal goals. In designing the questionnaire it was anticipated that supervision would feature in the responses. Question 6 therefore explores the facilitative mechanisms practice educators used to ensure students thought about their objectives in an explicit way during supervision.

*Question 6: Please explain how you facilitate your student(s) to think about their objectives (professional and personal) during supervision?*

All but one participant (n=41, 98%) responded (Figure 8.3). In discussing the review of activities against objectives, one practice educator identified the need to break tasks down 'into smaller steps - students can often take a global view'. This practice educator highlighted the need for honesty within the supervision process and provided details about her most recent student who was struggling with theoretical knowledge. Once the student had been able to verbalise this struggle the objective setting and review process became less difficult.



Self-evaluation or self-assessment featured in three responses (7%) with one educator identifying clearly that students were encouraged to prepare for supervision and expected them to attend with their own objectives having thought about their progress.

*Question 7:How did your student(s) engage in the monitoring and review process of their objectives?*

Practice educators reported that 29 (69%) students engaged in the monitoring and review process of their overall objectives effectively (including personal objectives addressed within the learning agreement). Of the 29 students, nine (31%) were reported as being very effective in self-monitoring and engaging in

the review process. Eleven (41%) students were identified as finding difficulty, being ineffective in this process of self-monitoring. Two practice educators did not respond to this question. Passivity in the process was reported by two educators one of whom wrote '...only engaged when requested to do so....not always accurate in her reflections'. The process of learning was highlighted by three practice educators who responded 'effectively' and placed a footnote. One educator simply wrote 'eventually' and two were more explicit and indicated their student needed guidance to develop the skills required.

Exploring students' understanding of the concept of reflection in the practice setting as evidenced by practice educators was an important dimension given that student data (from this first year cohort) indicated that they had some appreciation of the concept. Question 8 was designed to establish whether this understanding was translated by students through a practical application in the practice settings.

*Question 8: In your opinion, did your student(s) understand the concept of reflection?*

Practice educators' responses indicated that 32 (76%) students demonstrated an understanding of the concept and seven (16%) appeared not to have an understanding. One educator stated that the student had an idea about the concept and some understanding. However, the student did not always know how to apply the concept in practice. There were four (9.5%) nil responses.

It has been argued previously that theory and practice are inter-linked and at the heart of practice-based learning. Anecdotal evidence suggests that University tutors assume that students are able to make this transition. A question relating to this transition was deemed essential.

*Question 9: Did your student(s) relate theoretical principles to the therapeutic interactions/practice setting?*

The practice educators' were asked to respond to pre-set descriptors in relation to students' engagement in reflective practice (Table 8.1). Their responses were unexpected.

<b>Table 8.1: Students' Reflective Practice</b> (reported by practice educators n=42)		
<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
always	1	2.25%
often	13	31%
sometimes	25	60%
never	1	2.25%
no opinion	1	2.25%
no response	1	2.25%

From the student data presented in Chapter Seven it was anticipated that some students at this stage would struggle with the application of theory and principles of reflective practice in the practice setting. Collectively, practice educators reported that all but one student engaged or attempted to engage in the process of reflection in relation to the application of theory to their practice experience. Few educators wrote comments to accompany their responses although invited to comment. Of those who did, several comments related to the placement being a first experience for the student. In answer to the question above, examples of accompanying qualitative responses are as follows:

...often (related theoretical principles to the therapeutic interactions/practice setting), with encouragement to begin with.

Often (related theoretical principles to the therapeutic interactions/practice setting) - not always appropriately.

Others appeared to suggest a lack of confidence or initiative on the part of the student:

...(the student) didn't ever ask questions. Did complete the learning package but never tried to discuss links...

Only following discussions with supervisor or other therapist...

Needed constant reinforcement.



Two practice educators indicated that the position of the placement may have had an influence:

Limited by stage of training.

Demonstrated knowledge but combining (*relating the theoretical principles to the therapeutic setting*) was harder, understandably...

Following this theme of reflective practice, the relationship of reflection within the process of an occupational therapy intervention was explored. Three phases of the process were identified for which a 'yes/no' response was required for each. The purpose was to ascertain which phase(s) the student was able to reflect upon.

*Question 10: Did your student(s) engage in the process of reflection in any of the following situations?*

- a) before a treatment session
- b) during a treatment session
- c) following a treatment session.

Differences between students' engagement emerged. Practice educators reported that engagement occurred at different points in the occupational therapy intervention process. As discussed earlier, Schön's (1988) work has been very influential in practitioners' search for a model of reflection to develop their skills for reflective practice. He identifies different stages in the process of reflection and discusses reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action. Three significant phases of the occupational therapy intervention process were identified for practice educators to comment upon. The identification of two phases is aligned to Schön's reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action model. Prospective reflection was included as part of 'preparedness' for action (Beard and Wilson, 2006). Practice educators reported students' activity levels on reflection;

- before intervention/treatment sessions      n = 25 students
- during intervention/treatment sessions      n = 20 students
- following intervention/treatment sessions      n = 37 students

Students, as expected for this stage in their professional development, were inclined to consider the retrospective aspects of the reflective process that is

after the intervention session. Just under a half of students (n=20) engaged in reflection-in-action. This is a more challenging activity and constitutes 'thinking on your feet'. A degree of confidence in personal abilities and clinical skills underpins such an activity. Of the 20 students reported as having engaged in reflection-in-action, 13 (31%) of these students utilised the full potential of the reflective process; beginning with prospective reflection, reflection-for-action then reflection-in-action and finally retrospective reflection-on-action. These students were likely to be performing well in practice and demonstrating professional skills beyond the minimum level of achievement for this first experience.

In order for the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of how students reflected on practice experiences, educators were asked to describe what the student(s) did and how they communicated their reflections to them. From practice educators' responses the most reported way that students reflected on practice (n=27, 67%) was through open discussion, formal and informal, and verbal self-evaluation (individual and in groups). Of the 27 responses, half (n=13) reported that the above took place mainly in feedback sessions following intervention/treatment sessions with clients. Three educators added that it also took place during supervision sessions.

The use of a reflective diary for post-intervention or daily entries was reported by five practice educators (12%). Six educators (15%) reported some other form of written work as a means through which the student reflected on practice. Eight educators (19%) highlighted that case work was the prompt for reflection on practice. This provides an opportunity for ongoing dialogue. Some students (n=8, 19%) used this case work discussion as an opportunity to clarify, procedures, their expected role as a student and their behaviours in relation to clinical practice situations and actions. Eight practice educators (19%) noted little, if any

evidence of reflection from interactions with students and mentioned their student had to be prompted by questions in order to initiate reflection-on-action.

In relation to the use of theoretical models of reflection only three practice educators (7%) articulated using a model or practical strategy, one educator specifically identified Gibbs (1988), to facilitate student's self-reflection. This was significantly lower than expected. Only four (9.5%) of the 42 educators noted that the sharing of thoughts and feelings was an integral part of the reflective process. This suggests that practice educators may not necessarily be encouraging students to reflect beyond the behavioural and cognitive dimensions of the reflective process. The practice educators' training course provided by the University addresses the process of underpinning theory of reflection with practical guidance for reflective practice, through a workshop session. This allows practice educators to consider the programme of practice learning for students in the context of their own setting, discuss ideas for facilitating reflective practice with colleagues on the course and seek guidance from the workshop tutors.

Questions about the professional profile which students undertake as an RoA were included in the questionnaire. The rationale being that it is an explicit requirement of the placement that it is 'signed off' by the practice educator and links with the personal profile. The professional profile documents the acquisition of professional and technical skills through the placement and the level at which the skill can be performed. The intention is that this type of profile explicitly documents students' skills and therefore forms part of students' global self-evaluation during the post-placement period. Where there are skills deficits for example, lack of confidence in moving and handling clients, poor clinical report writing, students are expected to address their needs and any issues of concern with University tutors prior to the next placement. Personal and professional goal setting must emerge out of the tutor-student dialogue.

*Question 12: With regard to the Professional Profile document, how did your student(s) approach the work associated with the profile? Please explain giving examples.*

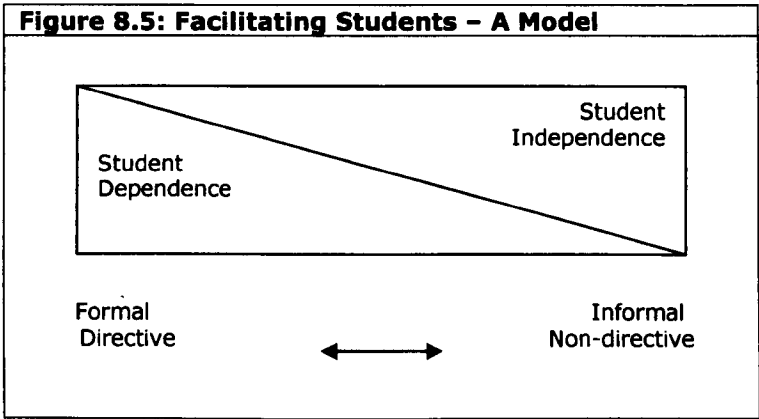
Only one practice educator identified that their student responded enthusiastically when completing the professional profile. Nineteen (45%) students were reported as undertaking the activity without problems while 17 (40%) students were identified as being confused by the profile activities. Students approached it in an apprehensive manner, unsure of what to include and often neglected it until later in the placement. Four educators (9.5%) reported that their student appeared to need input from either themselves or the University visiting tutor for support in completing the professional profile. To follow-up this question, practice educators were asked how they facilitated the student in working towards completing the Professional Profile (Question 13).

The approaches to facilitating students varied (Figure 8.4) with supervision and specific opportunities most frequently mentioned. Three educators identified that it was the student's responsibility, that is, they were not themselves actively engaged in this activity. In considering the types of techniques and activities used a continuum begins to emerge (Figure 8.5).

Figure 8.4: The Professional Profile
<p><b>Ways of facilitating students:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Formalised time:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ supervision (n= 11)</li><li>◦ tutorials (n=1)</li></ul></li><li>• Providing specific opportunities (11)</li><li>• Discussion (n=6)</li><li>• Informal feedback sessions (n=2)</li><li>• Indicating learning opportunities (n=1)</li><li>• Indicating learning opportunities when student requested (n=2)</li><li>• In liaison with the University visiting tutor (n=1)</li><li>• Keep a working diary (n=1)</li><li>• Practice educator identified - it was the student's responsibility (n=3)</li></ul>

Techniques move from formal techniques directed by the practice educator, for example from indicating learning opportunities to expecting the student to take some responsibility and offering support and guidance when required, through to

the student being expected to take full responsibility. From the wording of the question, the focus is on the practice educator's role and therefore it is assumed that the practice educator expects autonomy rather than the student necessarily wanting or requesting autonomy.



Assisting students in identifying skills deficits was reported by five (12%) practice educators. One educator reported techniques to facilitate students' clinical experiences, talking through scenarios and role-play. This links with the point that some students required significant input to action the professional profile. It appears that as a consequence the educators felt a need to audit skills. The pattern of responses almost mirror those offered in response to the questions relating to students' engagement with the Personal Profile. Just under half of the students, nineteen (45%) effectively engaged with the Professional Profile and 20 students (48%) were reported as demonstrating their ability to transfer their personal and professional objectives from the Personal Profile to the practice placement learning agreement without prompting. These students appear to be well-prepared, aware of the expectations of a degree of autonomy with just over a half appearing to need support or prompting from the practice educator to reflect and or articulate their reflections.

In order to gauge the level of perceived value of the profiles, the researcher asked the practice educators to express their feelings towards the profiles (personal and professional), in terms of being mechanisms through which to achieve PPD. If the responses revealed low levels of confidence and lack of belief in the system, students may not be encouraged in the same way during the practice experience.

*Question 14: Do you feel that Professional and Personal Profiling Systems are useful mechanisms through which to achieve PPD?*

All practice educators (n=42) responded to the question with 25 participants (60%) responding without reservation that it was a useful mechanism to record a student's success and a way of identifying development needs. A further three (7%) partially agreed by stating that the profiling system is only as good as the student completing it. One educator explained about the student's lack of awareness and specificity in recording skills, '...sometimes very basic, sometimes too broad.' This practice educator's response conveys a little of the student's struggle with the process.

The system appeared to pose difficulties for 10 practice educators (23%) who said that it was time-consuming (bureaucratic), confusing, needed more structure and be simpler to complete. There was however a clear recognition that the system did provide an explicit record of specific skills, achievements and developments and two educators saw the value in a wider context of occupational therapy, saying:

...and see where skills may be generalised within the role of the OT.

..to achieve (referring to specific areas to work towards) during placement or take to the next one (placement).....helps students' reflective practice.

There was a covert message from practice educators to the University within some of the comments. The sub-text being that the University needed to prepare students more thoroughly for engaging with and using the profile effectively.

'They are only useful if the student understands the purpose of them', and 'yes, ...this needs to be clearly relayed to students at University.'

For some practice educators, however, the 'student-centredness' of the system was acknowledged and valued: '....because they're the students' responsibility and it makes them think.' It was appreciated that the system embraced and celebrated students' strengths as well as areas for development and saw this as a positive feature:

It is useful to record skills which may otherwise be forgotten by the end of the course.

As the student data suggested, students often focus on weaknesses to develop rather than strengths. Sometimes this attention to identifying weaknesses is to the exclusion of recognising their achievements. As noted by one practice educator personal professional development is 'to build both'. Other comments referred to confidence building and enabling reflective practice:

...initially gives confidence to a student .....gives them satisfaction about how much they have learnt and developed.

..it (*the Professional Profile*) allows students to record specific skills appropriate to each placement and see where skills may be generalised within the role of the OT.

(*use of profiles*) structures feedback sessions – helps student's reflective practice.

In the final section of the questionnaire, practice educators were asked for their views on what the key features of PPD are for students at pre-registration level. From the 42 participants 38 (90.5%) responded giving a range of ideas with the development of reflective practitioners cited by eight (19%) respondents. This was less than expected, given that the concept of reflective practice is so much a feature of the discourse of professional language. The need for reflective practitioners has been highlighted in the public arena (conferences, journals and texts).

Practice educators in Question 16 were asked to identify any practical strategies that they felt might support and/or facilitate students in their PPD. There were 32 responses (76%) to this questions. Strategies clustered into the following categories:

- *dialogue*: through supervision or a form of feedback mechanism;
- *documentation*: diary, some form of record, reflection on practice proforma;
- *goal setting*: including learning contract;
- *specific learning opportunities*: assertiveness training workshop, tutorials;
- *support*: peer support, induction, mentorship, use of role-play, emotional support and encouragement;
- *dissemination of experiences*: sharing experiences of practice placement.

### **8.3.2 Working with Students**

From the data practice educators adopted differing approaches in working with students and a diversity of ways in relation to how students' make the transition from University based-studies to practice emerged. Two practice educators in particular identified that whilst having some difficulty making the transition from University-based studies to client-focused practice, their students did begin the process of reflective practice.

Some students appear to adjust more easily than others. One practice educator's response revealed the two students working with her had experienced difficulty grasping the concept of reflection and recognition of its place in practice. The work undertaken within the Interactive Processes module prior to professional practice on the process of reflection, the concept of CPD and developing a CPD portfolio was not evident from the educator's account of the two students' clinical work. Understanding the expectations of the learning experience, setting realistic objectives and negotiating the learning agreement are areas embedded within the preparatory University-based sessions. The link between theory including exploration of practice-based scenarios (in University) and the realities of client-based work appeared unrealised for one of these two students.



## **8.4 Summary**

Exploration of University tutors' and practice educators' management of the Personal Profiling System and perspectives of students' engagement in profiling provided valuable data both in terms of how these variations might impact on student attitudes and experience as well as ways in which the system might usefully be modified. Data gathered illuminated students' own experiences and stories. This confirmed that students found assimilating the process of reflection difficult initially. Engaging in the process of reflection and profiling appears to come more naturally to some students than others, as reported by tutors.

Tutors talked of a need for clear support and facilitation to ensure students articulate their reflections and use their development strategies, particularly in practice. The transferability of such goals needs to be explored. Students' ability to work with theoretical concepts in the University and how this becomes transferred to the application of theory in practice and the reciprocal process of practice to theory needs particular exploration.

The study has identified that there are some tutors who are clear advocates of the system, seeing it as a facilitative tool for students' PPD. Others appear to feel less comfortable in using the process and have used more directive approaches in working with their students. Some tutors have adapted the system and been flexible in the way they manage the process and work with students to meet their needs at that moment in time. Differences in approach were also gathered from practice educators' as the vignettes demonstrate.

It has become evident that both University tutors and practice educators have an impact on students and the ways they perceive the process of profiling. Different ways of working appear to have an influence on the level of engagement in the process of reflection and use of profiling, which was indicated by the student

participants in the pilot study. The depth of personal exploration and self-disclosure is also influenced by the way in which tutors and practice educators work with students. A range of dialogic techniques to promote sharing and in-depth reflection have been identified by University tutors. Practice educators in contrast have been more focused on supervision as a global tool for promoting reflection. Their responses were more general in nature and techniques for facilitating students' articulation of their personal goals and reflections were not proposed. What is very clear is that both University tutors and practice educators share the same vision of PPD.

## **Chapter Nine**

### **Discussion of the Findings**

#### **9.1 Introduction**

At the outset of this study the over-arching question was to investigate occupational therapy students' attitudes to and experiences of personal profiling in the context of early PPD. The conceptual framework was identified as experiential learning. In the review of the literature the role of reflection emerged as a critical dimension of experiential learning as related to profiling and subsequently became a cornerstone of the conceptual framework.

This chapter will discuss key findings from multiple perspectives; students, University tutors and practice educators in relation to the research question and sub-themes. The areas identified from the research question will be discussed in chronological order, drawing upon the complete data set. There are a number of inter-related issues which have emerged and will feature under thematic headings which inform the discussion. The chapter then draws together the key findings and proposes theoretical explanations as a stepping stone to making recommendations for practice, which moves the concept of personal profiling forward in the conclusion.

#### **9.2 A Changing Context**

As the study has progressed, the macro political context for occupational therapy has changed. The importance of becoming a reflective practitioner has gained momentum within healthcare professions (Johns, 2000; Rolfe, et al 2001; Thompson and Thompson, 2008). As participants' stories have been heard so it has been recognised that becoming an occupational therapist is a complex

process and becoming a reflective practitioner is, for some, a troublesome aspect of that process.

The health and social care sector is in a state of change and uncertainty which leads to an unpredictable environment in which newly qualified occupational therapists will practice. Kember et al (2001) note the complexity and multi-faceted nature of the problems professionals face. The personal profiling system has been developed by the Course Team in the case study institution as a framework for PPD to assist in the transition from professional education to professional practice. Managing the process of change as well as guiding theoretical principles can not be ignored.

The study set out primarily to investigate students' attitudes and experiences of the profiling system in relation to early PPD. Subsumed in this was the need to explore the context in relation to the process, practice and practical mechanism of profiling and profiling as an agent for potential or actual change (Figure 9.1).

A global view of the profiling system and process was derived from gathering qualitative and quantitative data from student participants in their first year of study. The intention of collecting quantitative data for a cohort analysis was to gain an overall perspective on the position of the first year cohort, recognising that by themselves convenience samples may not be representative and only embrace participants who feel positively about profiling. The research design ensured greater depth and fuller insight through a cross-sectional cohort approach in qualitative interviews, sampling all three years of students. During the pilot phase the importance of significant (professional) others for participants emerged. These significant others related to the involvement of University tutors and practice educators in the profiling system. The researcher took the decision

to gain a more complete set of data with multiple perspectives from all of the key players in the case study site involved in the process of profiling.

<p><b>Figure 9.1: The Research Question and Sub-themes</b></p>
<p><b>What are students attitudes to and experiences of personal profiling?</b></p>
<p><b>The process of profiling</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were students’ experiences of personal profiling prior to the commencement of the course?</li> <li>• How do students’ interact, get involved?</li> <li>• How can students’ levels of engagement be described?</li> <li>• What are their attitudes towards the concept of profiling as a means to facilitate personal and professional development?</li> <li>• Is there is a correlation between attitude and self-awareness, age and previous experience?</li> <li>• Do students’ views change according to experiences/level of study and over time?</li> </ul>
<p><b>The practice of profiling</b></p> <p><b>Good practice and difficulties as perceived by students</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are students lived experiences of profiling?</li> <li>• Is there a common understanding between student experiences and tutors’ and practice educators’ experiences of students’ use of personal profiling? (University and practice-based setting)</li> </ul>
<p><b>A mechanism for potential or actual personal change</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the benefits of personal profiling as perceived by students?</li> <li>• Do students change?</li> <li>• How is the ‘self’ involved?</li> <li>• How much of the ‘self’ do students invest?</li> <li>• How do students receive the system and the expectations of them and how do students perceive the system at the end of the academic year, following the final component in year one?</li> </ul>

**9.3 Students’ Attitudes Towards the Concept of Profiling as a Means to Facilitate Early Personal and Professional Development**

This research data indicates that profiling is perceived by students to be an investment in their future development as an occupational therapist and that it is a thought-provoking experience. Overall they expressed positive attitudes. First year students were generally positive about the experience. A third of first year

participants claimed that engaging in the process felt that it was a satisfying experience and two thirds that it was an encouraging process. From the interview data, participants talked of a positive relationship with their PD tutor and this may be a factor in finding the process an encouraging one and influential in early engagement. Participants recognised the significance of the relationship of personal profiling to professional life although it was evident that this came at differing points within their programme. Two thirds of first year students at the end of their first year felt that it was preparing them for professional life.

A partial cohort analysis was undertaken for second and third year students. Qualitative one-to-one interviews with a sample of second and third year students supported the view that personal profiling was an important preparation for professional life. Overall a positive attitude towards personal profiling was expressed. Amy's words demonstrate this (the sentences in brackets denote the context of Amy's words):

'I have found it incredibly useful and even though it's been a formal element in terms of everyone's been filling one in (profiling proforma for reflection prior to reflective dialogue with PD tutor), I've been able to use the experience in other areas....on placements and so on, other modules when I've needed to reflect. It's been a really good way of carrying on the seeds that were planted if you like...When it comes now to interviews and so on and there's so much emphasis on being able to reflect and a reflective practitioner, then the fact that I've been able to use those skills all the way through (the course) has been valuable.'

The participants' individual stories suggest that there is a crystallisation process which appears to take place as part of the transformational learning which occurs. The sections to follow will provide some illumination of this process.

#### **9.4 The Living Context: the process of profiling**

Research Sub-theme: *What are the students' experiences of personal profiling prior to the commencement of the course?*

To set the study in context, all first year student participants were asked about their previous experience of profiling so that an accurate understanding could be gained about the level of familiarity with the concept of profiling. Although a third of participants had experience of documenting personal plans, personal achievements and or goal setting, writing of a more reflective and personal nature was reported by only three participants. The examples given were, personal profile, learning log, personal (learning) journal. However, some form of diary-keeping was reported by just over half of participants. Of the participants who had kept a diary, half of them indicated that the diary writing had been related to work experience through school or college or as part of an assignment. Within this context, it is not known to what extent the diary was used to inform classroom-based discussion or de-briefing nor whether the writing was the medium through which to draw on personal thoughts or was a description of the experience and therefore a log.

##### **9.4.1 Writing From a Personal Perspective**

Writing from a personal perspective had been experienced by a quarter of participants through personal diary-keeping for some period of time in the past. This suggests some degree of engagement with the experiential process of writing about 'self' in a private context. This does not indicate that the participants have been using a personal diary to gain an understanding of self and self in relation to experience. The diary may be a tool through which to log events of the day or vent the emotions rather than a reflective tool from which meaning, understanding and learning emerges.

#### **9.4.2 The Process of Reflection**

From the responses to the qualitative questionnaire at this early stage of the study, it was apparent that all participants had some form of understanding of the concept of reflection and could express this in their own words. The responses ranged from short, dictionary-type definitions, to others which were more imaginative or insightful. They provided an explanation of the term, though often the type of explanation which might be found in course texts. Few participants wrote freely from their own personal perspective. This may be attributed to the level of exposure or experience of active reflection and writing from a personal perspective.

Internalising the notion of reflection from a 'practitioner' position requires not only experience but a realisation of the complex inter-relationship with self, others and the environment. The inter-relationship is dynamic and contextual. This inter-relationship impacts further on the nature of the individuals' lived experiences. O'Connor and Hallum (2000:239) discuss the complexities of self which has relevance here for considering the professional self;

...a transcendent unitary self is required to 'know' that the many voices or roles are part of self, and not, say, emanating from the furniture. The multiple self must have a reflexive dimension to define self as self.

A naïve understanding of the concept of reflection was presented by many participants. A few conveyed the 'beginnings' of becoming reflective, not being reflexive. Finlay and Gough (2003:ix) identify a reflection-reflexivity continuum. Reflexivity is defined by them as involving 'more immediate, dynamic and continuing awareness'. This is more than 'thinking about' which is at a superficial level, it is engagement in thinking, feeling and doing; it is a process of exploration beyond the obvious. The level of sophistication, given in the definition of reflexivity by Finlay and Gough, relates to the understanding about self that O'Connor and Hallum (2000) offer. The notion of a reflection-reflexive



continuum provides a theoretical model for exploring the findings around the process of profiling.

Some participants referred to the concept of 'retrospection' and embraced this in their personal meaning of reflection. Retrospection was explained as 'looking back'. Participants who explained this concept felt that it was a personal review to inform future developments and some incorporated the notion of 'prospection' in that it was about forward planning to be more effective.

'I write down the stage I feel I am at present, then what I wish to achieve, what I have achieved, and how to develop further. The personal profile has helped me to identify difficulties and where there are areas that can be improved.'

This highlights the dynamic interplay within an individual's cognitive schema between learning, learning from experiences and learning about self. Gaining knowledge was seen in terms of learning to understand the impact of interactions and personal consequences thus increasing awareness of self. This indicates a degree of volition and self-motivation with potential for some progression and change.

A crucial theme which emerged at the end of the analysis of interview data which has relevance to this part of the discussion was the 'preparedness' of students. This means the preparedness to engage in the profiling system and also to engage in an authentic process of reflection, for example John's model of reflection (2000). According to Jasper (2003:98) this enables the individual to develop 'a personal awareness of ourselves, our knowledge and actions.' Alternatively the more complex framework of Rolfe et al (2001) is designed to encourage reflexive practice and draws upon cognitive and affective skills for theory and knowledge building to inform future actions, including consideration of contextual issues. In this context 'preparedness' is seen to be students' psychological, emotional as well as intellectual capabilities to engage in the

process of profiling. The 'doing reflection' can be achieved in a mechanistic and superficial way (a chronological description of events). However, for it to be meaningful, engagement is required and a commitment beyond what is happening in the here and now. That is to explore what has happened, why it has happened using the process as an active learning opportunity to build new knowledge and strengthen the individual's existing theoretical understanding.

The process of profiling was for the majority of participants a new experience and because of this, a naïvety about the process of reflection was evident. Preparing students for this new way of working is paramount and as this research suggests vital for it to be accepted and realised in relation to the need to become a reflective practitioner.

#### **9.4.3 Managing Personal and Professional Development**

The focus on learning was in relation to being able to plan and be more effective in terms of future action and behaviour. This was borne out in the exploration of how participants would manage their PPD through the course. Setting realistic goals and targets was for a fifth of participants the way they would manage their development. Of these half specified time management, planning and organisation as key skills in this process.

From the literature reviewed in the initial chapters this process of learning featured in Godfrey's (1993) work in which supporting students to become more effective learners was the central tenet. The participants who had some previous experience expressed a greater appreciation and some understanding of the nature and process of reflection. The theoretical naïvety is understandable in light of few participants having had any previous experience of profiling or engaging in a reflective process prior to the course. Reflection in a simplistic form to reach specific goals is the most frequently reported form of reflection. As

participants progressed so the depth of their reflections increased. There was evidence of a shift in emphasis embracing cognitive and affective dimensions in keeping with Goodman's model of levels of reflection (1984).

Participants reported a strong need for personal contact and interaction with others. These needs were defined as; contact with others, friendship, help from colleagues, contact with personal and course tutors and discussion and communication. The importance of self-discipline was often stated for example: 'stick to deadlines', 'pace yourself', 'to do everything to the best of your ability' as a way of managing PPD. However, the predominance of strategies involving other people indicates a clear need for support in the process, rather than a lone journey. This need is often stated by authors who have for example advocated group activities to provide such support including group reflection (Henwood and Sidhu, 2001; Jasper, 2003).

### **9.5 Students' Commitment to Personal Profiling**

*Sub-theme: How do the students' interact, get involved, with profiling?*

The qualitative questionnaire complemented the attitude questionnaire to elicit how first year students engaged with the profiling system and how they become involved in it. This appeared to be difficult for students to articulate at this stage in their programme, with almost a third of participants not volunteering a response. A pattern of varied responses were received. A small minority (five students) found it particularly difficult to engage with the process. From the cross-cohort qualitative interviews the nature of the difficulties began to emerge. For some participants there was a sense of obligation or duty initially rather than a willingness to engage in the process of profiling. This sentiment is captured in the following quotation:

'..have tried to avoid conscious and deliberate process of evaluation and reflection. If I do process I go through a rather

negative one. I find it hard to feel positive having completed any section.' (First year participant)

She clearly avoided the process of self-evaluation because she found this a negative experience emotionally.

The process of profiling resulted in a conceptual change for students. Profiling was a new learning framework and the process of reflection a new method. Commonly used words used by participants in relation to beginning the process were 'daunting', 'difficult', 'baffling', 'mixed feeling'. It was felt to be an emotional challenge. Kember et al (2000) draws attention to students' fear of new ways of working in general and the uncomfortable feelings that beginning reflection can evoke in his research on reflection with healthcare students.

Although the cognitive dimension of the process was perceived as a positive experience initially there were challenges for some participants. Thinking alone was reported and explained by a first year participant as a negative process, hence her wish not to think about profiling very much:

'I think it makes you criticise yourself more and strain to fill it in. I don't think I have gained much from it.'

At this early stage, self-analysis seemed to elicit strong negative self-evaluations with the result that the experience was not rewarding. This relates to the issue of cognitive readiness. In the context of reflective practice in nursing Burrows (1995) highlights this and claims that practitioners under the age of 25 may lack the readiness to engage in 'mature critical reflection'.

Many participants reported that the system was a learning tool and an opportunity to identify strengths as well as weaknesses. For other participants the difficulty with profiling appeared initially to be a lack of understanding and a lack of appreciation of its potential in the context of professional life (CPD, LLL).

### **9.5.1 Time and Space for Reflection**

From earlier discussion and review of literature (Fenwick, Assister and Nixon, 1992; Godfrey, 1993; Gifford, 1994) profiling does provide a framework within which to engage in a period of reflection. However, 'pressure of time' was constantly reported throughout the data. Finding time to work on the profile was a problem. It has been felt to be a constraint on the part of all stakeholders; PD tutors, practice educators and student participants. This appears to have led to some students reporting that profiling has become a burden, yet another dimension of the academic programme which has to be 'coped with' in relation to the demands of coursework and professional practice. The profiling was not seen as a core activity by some participants in the early stages of the course. For others, whilst it felt at times to be another aspect of a very heavy schedule, it has been perceived to be of value in their pathway to a career in occupational therapy.

Underlying the theme of time, the time 'to do' (the documentation) was the emergence of thinking space and the need to trigger the process of intellectual engagement in preparation for the reflective dialogue. Some participants solved this difficulty with time away from the University campus, somewhere quiet in the home environment and in 'dead time' on the way home; for example on the train.

The issue of time was reported in the case study work on developing progress files undertaken by Fry et al (2002). A cyclical, iterative approach was adopted in the case study and feedback was used to inform the development of the work as it progressed. The recommendation on positioning of the work associated with the personal development aspect of the file was identified as a minor change in the project;

...stronger recommendations to tutors to schedule in time for completion of activities, thus integrating the file more firmly into the curriculum. (Fry et al, 2002:103).

Clouder (2004) identifies the issue of space for thinking in the context of curriculum design, as does Dawson (2003). The curriculum is tightly bounded by the requirements of regulatory and professional bodies for all AHPs. The implications of this are that the curricula have become tightly packed with 'must haves' to ensure they meet the current and ever-changing demands of the health and social care services. Space for thinking, let alone reflection, has been squeezed giving responsibility to students to create these opportunities. However, fitness for practice, fitness for purpose is paramount as well as fitness for academic award.

For many, life no longer appears to have any natural pauses or quiet times. The pace is fast, goal-oriented and filled with activity mediated through ubiquitous technologies such as mobiles and e-mails. Additional pressures exist for students, for example part-time employment for basic financial support alongside their education. These pressures will continue to exist as students become occupational therapists. Within the working culture of health and social care, AHP services have moved to extended hours and services. In occupational therapy the traditional Monday to Friday posts have in some areas extended to other patterns of working, developed in response to the modernisation agenda. For example, accident and emergency week-end duties (Jenkins, 2006; Lee, 2006).

Nevertheless, the creation of psychological, social and physical spaces, are essential for the process of profiling to take place. Psychological space is needed to enable students to give due care and attention to the process of reflecting on experience so that they are able to turn experience into learning opportunities

and gain a meaningful and enriched personal perspective. Unless this becomes a reality then it becomes more difficult to follow this through into the practice context. The depth and quality of the reflective process is then compromised. More importantly learning, action and change are essential components of being and becoming a reflective practitioner. Lumby (1998) warns that unless time is found for reflection, it is unlikely to become legitimised in everyday practice. The social space to reflect alone or with others to engage in a reflective dialogue is important as is the place, the physical environment which allows for this to happen.

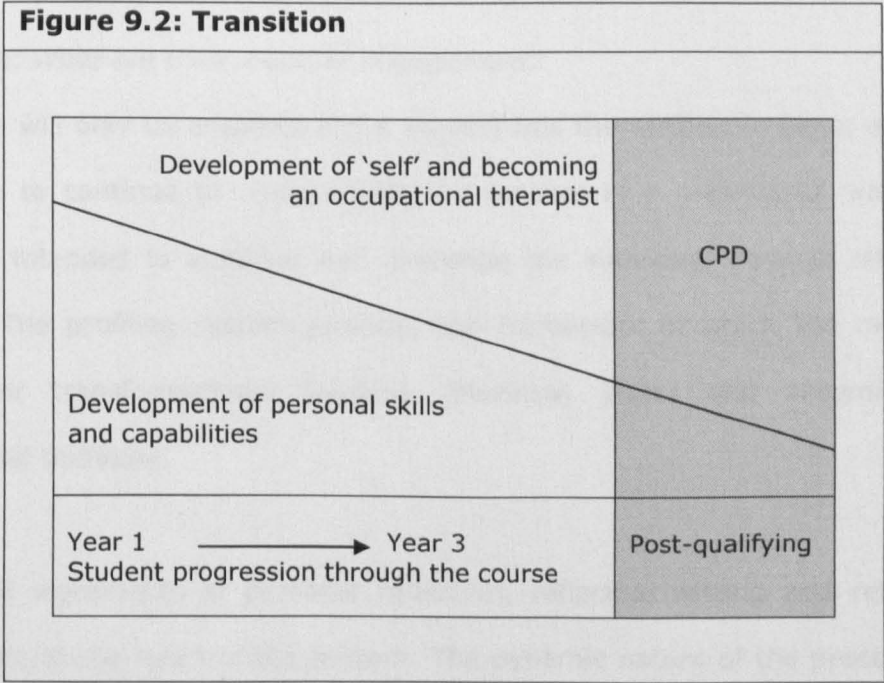
### **9.5.2 The Profile as a Learning Tool**

The profile was identified positively as a learning tool by participants from each of the three years. The way in which engagement with the profiling system occurs and the focus of the profiling does change over time. However, skills, personal skills and capabilities with tangible practical activities and actions are the main focus in Year 1. There is then an increasing sophistication in these areas as the course progresses with the development of a more robust self-concept developed by Year 3. Accompanying this is the change from 'self' as a student, to self as a student practitioner, to 'self' as a practitioner. There emerges an 'awakening' of the self and an increasing degree of self-knowledge.

The points at which change is triggered appears to be variable among participants interviewed. However professional practice seemed to be a turning point for the realisation that personal profiling had some form on meaning in a professional context. Hall et al's (1996) research with teachers following a human relations course found a 'sleeping effect' was present. Change as a consequence of learning in this study became evident some months after the training had ceased and there are similarities in this study. Learning brings about

cognitive change but emotional and behavioural changes are also evoked and the change becomes evident at a later point in time or place.

In the interviews with third year participants, the activities they reported associated with the profiling included preparation for their first professional post. This embraced the notion that the preparation being undertaken in the University would be helpful for a newly-qualified practitioner in appraisal systems. Figure 9.2 attempts to capture diagrammatically the transition which appears to take place where the emphasis is more on personal skills and capabilities in the earlier stages of the course to more sophisticated dimensions of developing self and becoming an occupational therapist.



Throughout this study I have argued that theory and practice (University or in practice) are inextricably linked. However, in discussing professional practice, Rolfe (1996) and Stewart (1998) have identified a gap between theory and practice in the patient/client-based world of nursing and occupational therapy respectively. The case study site profiling system was designed to assist



students to bridge this gap. The learning intention being that students would consider their own development goals in relation to University and practice experiences and learning opportunities as they were presented in the course. This is mapped against the conceptual model of reflection as an upward spiral (Cox and Heames, 1999), with the iteration of each loop increasing the depth of knowledge and the degree of insight held; thus encouraging a seamless transition rather than a building block process. However, participants in Year 1 failed to make this connection. It was only on return from practice and for some in Year 2, that the value of profiling had begun to be felt in relation to the integration of theory and practice.

## **9.6 Students' Level of Engagement in Profiling**

Sub-theme: *What are their levels of engagement?*

The profile will only be enabling if the student has the volition to begin and the motivation to continue to engage with the process in a meaningful way. The process is intended to question and challenge the individual through reflective dialogue. The profiling system provides the framework in which the milieu is created for transformational learning (Mezirow, 1981) and *becoming* an occupational therapist.

The critical ingredients of personal reflection, reflective writing and reflective dialogue are at the heart of the system. The dynamic nature of the process and dialogical interaction are the facilitative factors. The system was designed to provide the lenses that Brookfield argues are complementary yet vital to achieving critically reflective practice. Brookfield (1998:197) states in the context of reflective practice in health and social care:

To become critically reflective, we need to find some lenses that reflect back to us a stark and differently highlighted picture of who we are and what we do.

What Brookfield is describing is the development of self-awareness and similar to Dirkx's four strands of transformation (1998).

The strands described by Dirkx (1998) can be tracked through the qualitative data gathered from participants' interviews (cited in brackets alongside the strand given below);

- consciousness-raising (theme - awakening of self);
- critical reflection (theme - emerging levels of reflection);
- development (theme - valuing self);
- individuation (theme - unfolding the layers around self, a personal process).

The transition that the majority of participants made from engaging with the personal profile as a learning tool for skills development, to engaging in profiling as a reflective process to explore aspects of self, follow the strands presented by Dirkx. Transformation as individuation is described by Dirkx through the work of Boyd who focuses on the emotional-spiritual dimensions of learning and self-knowledge. He comments that this strand of transformative learning has not been given the same degree of attention by adult educators as other strands.

Consciousness is emphasised by Boyd as Dirkx (1998:7) states;

His (Boyd's) concern is primarily with the expressive or emotional-spiritual dimensions of learning and integrating these more holistically and consciously within our daily experiences of life.

This concept of individuation clearly accords with participants' process of increasing exploration of 'self', from public self to private self, through the process of profiling. Zohar and Marshall (2000:4) argue that spiritual intelligence is our 'ultimate intelligence';

...the intelligence with which we address and solve problems of meaning and value, the intelligence with which we can place our actions and our lives in a wider, richer meaning-giving context, the intelligence with which we can assess that one course of action or one life-path is more meaningful than another.

The profiling system focuses on personal development but more specifically, the development of self-awareness.

### **9.6.1 Preparedness**

Preparedness for engagement in the process of profiling was a theme which reoccurred throughout the study, arising out of both the qualitative questionnaires and interviews. This theme links with the participants' level of engagement. The issue of psychological preparedness to engage in self-reflection from a first year student's perspective and creating time and space to engage is more understandable if set in a wider context of educational experience. Zohar and Marshall (2000:285) highlight that from the very start of our educational experience we are 'trained to look outward rather than inward'. Therefore it is understandable that for some participants engaging in personal profiling was a surprise. Considering the self had not been a recognisable part of their previous educational experience and they had not considered it part of becoming an occupational therapist.

However, spirituality in general has been increasingly discussed within occupational therapy (Meyers, 2004). The focus has been in relation to attending to clients' needs and meaningful occupation. This further supports the need for student practitioners to be self-aware and be both in tune with emotional and spiritual dimensions of their own caring self to be able to work with and facilitate these aspects in others' lives.

### **9.6.2 Readiness**

Engagement in a process not only requires the preparedness as discussed but it also needs the competence and volition to act and explore. The role of reflection can not be underestimated in relation to this aspect of personal profiling. Burrows (1995) referred to earlier, claims that practitioners (nursing) under the age of 25 may lack the readiness to engage in 'mature critical reflection'. The cognitive readiness of students and depth of reflective thinking undoubtedly requires further research.

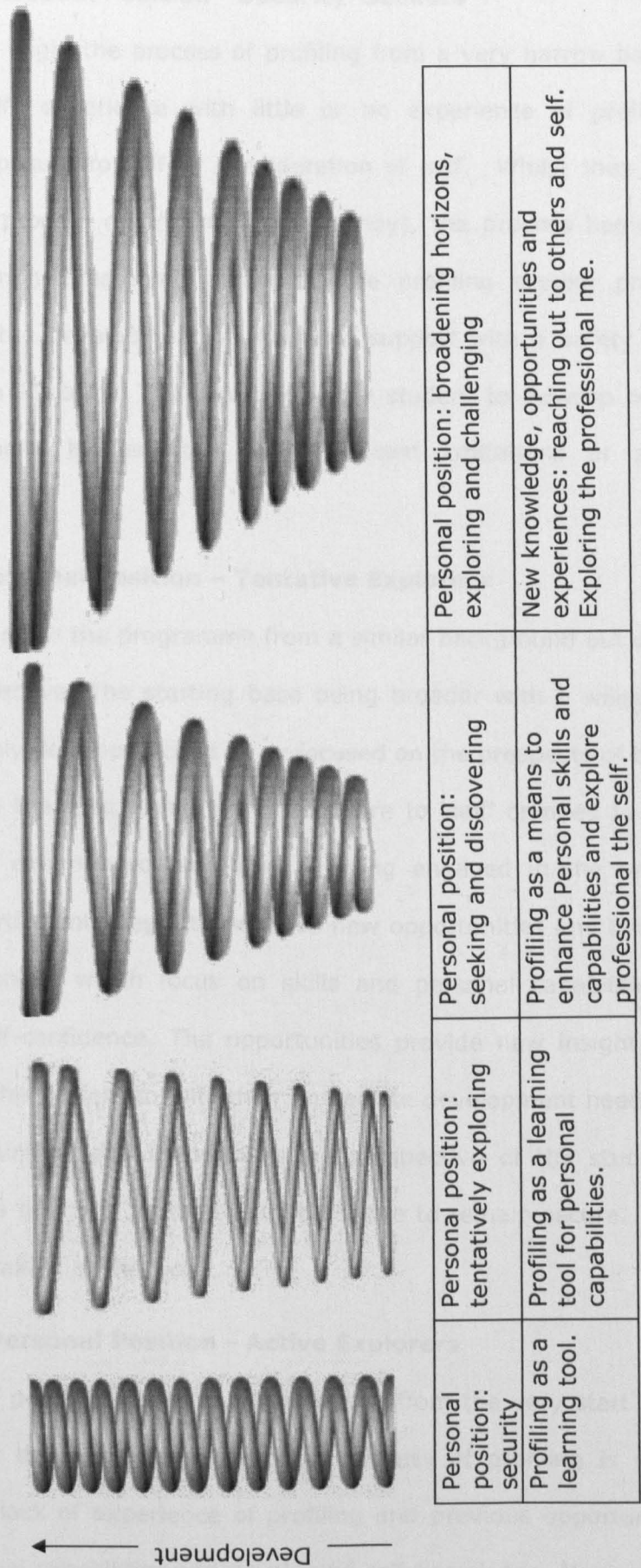
### **9.6.3 Personal Profiling as an Individual Activity**

In the case study site, personal profiling is meant to be an individual activity. The institutional framework and guidelines are designed as a guide for students only. Students, as argued previously, come to the process with different experiences, from different backgrounds and varying degrees of psychological and emotional maturity, as the vignettes have richly illustrated. The level and depth of participants engagement is multi-faceted as a consequence of these experiences and the influences which prevail on their lived experiences. Any assumptions that mature students can adapt to the concept of profiling readily can be dispelled as the data suggests that even some more mature students find the concept troublesome and engagement with it initially difficult. A similar picture of unease in mature students was apparent in Clouder's (2000) study of professional socialisation. From considering the present data it is proposed that the critical ingredients in the initial engagement are the individuals' willingness to learn and their capacity to face change and embrace new challenges. All of which I would argue can be related to their maturity in emotional and spiritual intelligence.

### **9.6.4 A Model for Levels of Engagement**

Based on the analysis of participants' experiences of personal profiling, an explanatory model has been constructed (Figure 9.3). The model I present draws on the earlier model of the process of reflection, that of an upward spiral and is designed to illustrate the preparedness of students in personal profiling and the levels to which they then are able to engage in the process. The model utilises the upward spiral to draw attention to an ongoing process and the consequential implicit or explicit learning which may take place.

Figure 9.3: A Model of Levels of Engagement



- **Spiral One: Personal Position - Security Seekers**

Some students begin the process of profiling from a very narrow base. They have limited life experience with little or no experience of profiling and possibly no exposure to self or consideration of self. Whilst they begin to engage in the process of profiling (the journey), the process begins slowly with tangible non-threatening activities. The profiling system provides a framework for the development of skills and support with a 'safety net', the availability of a PD tutor. The capacity of the student to develop personally and professionally is restricted by their own limitations or sense of 'boundedness'.

- **Spiral Two: Personal Position – Tentative Explorers**

Some students enter the programme from a similar background but each with a unique perspective. The starting base being broader with a willingness to learn and actively develop excited by or focused on the prospects of becoming an occupational therapist. Little or no exposure to 'self' or need to consider 'self' has been experienced previously. Having engaged in the process of profiling the participants begin to perceive new opportunities and the process opens new avenues which focus on skills and personal capabilities which boosts their self-confidence. The opportunities provide new insight and the process allows the student to fulfil their immediate development needs. Whilst opening opportunities and broadening the perspective of the student, this position remains bounded by the student's desire to remain secure. There is little or no risk taking at this point.

- **Spiral Three: Personal Position - Active Explorers**

The potential of personal profiling is recognised from the very start by these participants but the base for starting the process of profiling is narrowed because of the lack of experience of profiling and previous opportunities for exploring personal capabilities and developing self-knowledge. Having realised

the potential within the profiling system there is a willingness to engage and motivation to continue and pursue a journey of seeking and discovery of both the public and private selves.

- **Spiral Four: Personal Position – Experienced Explorers**

Psychological preparedness is evident and the potential of the personal profiling system is cognitively realised. Therefore active engagement with learning occurs immediately. New opportunities for learning and development are sought and new knowledge and experiences are taken by students in their stride. There is a confident approach with a willingness to explore the intra as well as inter-personal dimensions of relationships. Reflective dialogue with PD tutors, peers and others is used constructively. Exploring 'self' and the 'professional me' is core and the journey to *becoming* an occupational therapist is kick started, self initiated in partnership with a critical friend.

Whilst the model presents four personal positions in relation to engagement in profiling it has already been argued that the pace of change and development has multiplicity of influences which therefore make it an individual process. For some individuals there may be periods of treading water and or 'stuckness' for security until levels of confidence become an enabling rather than an inhibiting factor.

*Sub-theme: Is there is a correlation between attitude and self-awareness, age and previous experience?*

No evidence is apparent in the data to link previous experience or chronological age to attitude. What appears to be the critical factor in students' level of engagement is psychological and emotional preparedness to take a step forward in their development, see change as an opportunity, not a risk to self-esteem:

'...it (personal profiling) made me more aware of myself and has given my confidence a boost. It has encouraged me to try new things.'

This appears to relate to an individual's self-awareness. Atkins and Murphy (1998) assert that self-awareness is a critical component of reflection and this therefore drives the individual's ability to engage at more than a superficial level. Individuals may have self understanding but it is the volition, motivation and commitment to ongoing development which governs the depth and quality of their engagement with profiling.

*Sub-theme: Do students' views change according to level of study?*

A strong theme which emerged from the qualitative interview data was a perceptual change in attitudes to profiling during the three year course. Whilst some participants clearly saw a purpose and value in profiling in the early stages of their programme the majority of participants indicated that the purpose and value of the process became clearer to them as they progressed year on year. Figure 7.9 summarises the emergent themes and clearly documents the transition in course stages.

Personal profiling is initially seen by student participants as a personal learning tool. A tool which is helpful in the development of the skills needed to practice as occupational therapists, not something which will challenge their self-image or self-esteem. However, from the data, it became apparent that the process of profiling moves from being a perceived learning tool for skills development, to providing a framework for developing personal skills and capabilities and knowledge of self, both private and public self, commensurate with becoming a reflective practitioner. For example, time management was a key issue for a first year participant:

It (the Personal Profile) helped start me defining (my time)....  
We have a house we just bought when I started University



here and because I'm a very practical person I wanted to do things on my house but I knew I had to do stuff for University – I needed to pass my degree. So it helped quite a lot in that, to actually try to address the balance because I tended towards practicalities rather than studies.

As a second year participant prepared to enter her second practice experience, she began to reflect upon her own personal style in interacting with others and how she felt and responded to difficult situations. She recognised that she had to work within a multi-disciplinary team and that you have got to 'get along with people'. She used the profile to reflect on situations and the reflective dialogue with her PD tutor to explore ways of working.

I had a problem with some people who were unco-operative and perhaps I felt to be rude. But perhaps it's just from my point of view..... I felt like I didn't want to be near them or form any groups with them because other people who'd formed groups with them had problems. So I was keeping away from them and felt that perhaps I shouldn't do that because when I qualify there's going to be problem people isn't there? You're going to have to work in a multi-disciplinary team. You've got to get on with people haven't you? You can't avoid people.

This may be as a consequence of students becoming more adept in using the profile and or that they begin to become more accomplished and/or confident in the process of self-reflection. The data from the different cohorts indicated a process of change but the process of change experienced varied among individuals within the same cohort. As participants progressed so profiling took on a more personal meaning and purpose for them. This purpose can be likened to wearing new shoes. For some the shoes fit comfortably from day one, for others, it takes longer to wear them in.

Whilst some students progressed at a pace along the continuum, described by Finlay and Gough (2003) from reflection to reflexivity, others developed more slowly. I would however, argue that as the individual's confidence in the process of reflection is reached, greater awareness can be fostered to enable critical reflection to become second nature.

Exploration in relation to self-knowledge (private self, to self as a practitioner) is encouraged in the process of moving from student to therapist, not all students have engaged in this way. The explanatory model of levels of engagement presented (Figure 9.3) and discussed previously, to some extent mirrors the continuum of skills acquisition that Benner (1984) identifies in nursing, the transition from novice to expert practitioner. However, in this study the transition is about both skills development and personal professional development.

Participants' attitudes appear to change over time. Debs whilst initially questioning and feeling that she 'had' to participate over that first academic year, found that the profiling had helped her focus on what she wanted to achieve in her professional practice. Similarly, one participant thought that the personal profile:

'.....would not be any use in the short-term, yet now I believe it was useful....if I wish to look back on it....'

indicating that the written documentation was actually a record, providing a mapping of achievements, experiences and change.

The pivotal point at which a change of attitude seems to have emerged for many participants was around the first practice experience, towards the end of the first academic year (identified in the vignettes of Amy and Anna). University tutors also believed that this was a critical turning point for students, particularly those experiencing difficulties engaging with the profiling system and or the process of reflection.

Qualitative questionnaires from practice educators and first year students did not reveal the active use of the personal profile whilst in practice; nor evidence that the PPD goals (outcomes of the reflective dialogue with PD tutors) were

actively embraced in the placement learning agreements of students. However, in this quotation from the interview with a first year participant, a changed perspective is evident as she shares her first thoughts and feelings about the profile, immediately after the placement:

....Why? What is the point of this? But now having worked through them (the profiles) I can see that filling it in (the proforma) has helped me to realise things about myself. These things are often positive and show me I am capable of doing....

A 'penny-dropping' phenomena appears to be experienced by participants on return from the first practice placement experience. This relates well to the 'sleeper effect' previously discussed (Hall et al, 1996) in that there is a delayed outcome of learning and realisation of the relevance of profiling to the process to learning and recognition of achievements.

### **9.7 The Practice of Profiling - Good Practice and Issues**

Practice experience is a key feature of the three year occupational therapy pre-registration course. Whilst demanding in its own right, much value is placed upon it by students. It is the 'client-based world' and for them it is the real professional world to which they aspire to become part. University tutors said that the personal profile would underpin work-based learning, prepare students for supervised practice, the work place in general and enable them to harness the experiences and opportunities available to them within a practice setting. This assumption was based on the recognition that the education of future occupational therapists is a joint venture with practice partners. Furthermore, both practice educators and University tutors facilitate students to set objectives, focus on development activities and to achieve learning outcomes.

*Sub-theme: Is there a common understanding between student experiences and tutors' and practice educators' experiences of students' use of personal profiling?*

A key question which emerged from working with student participants in the exploratory phase of setting up this study was around whether there was

commonality in the way personal profiling was understood and implemented by the three key stakeholders; that is occupational therapy students themselves; University-based tutors and practice educators. The experiences of each stakeholder were examined in order to explore similarities and differences which might lead to difficulties in the implementation and process of profiling for students. Practice educators are potentially a major influence on students.

The majority of practice educators indicated that there was flexibility to accommodate different practice experiences within the placement. Discussions took place with the student to establish practice specific objectives in the form of a learning agreement. This being so, there appears to be an opportunity for students to bring their own personal professional development needs which they identified through their personal profiling, for inclusion in the negotiated learning agreement. Yet just under half of the educators reported that students linked or referred to their personal profile and almost the same number of students explicitly shared their personal/self development goals or strategies with their practice educators. Just under a quarter of students did not share their goals at all. Three of those students were placed in a department where the practice educators worked with departmental objectives for the learning agreement. This therefore took away the opportunity for the student's individual needs to be embraced.

One practice educator, in what appeared to be defence of the student stated that the practice experience was the student's first experience and that there was a lot to take on board and the '...personal profile was written experience rather than experience desired'. The student was therefore keeping the profile, merely as a record of episodes and events rather than going on to reflect on experiences. Another educator identified that her student lacked clarity and

understanding of the expectations of the profile and this was the University's omission in preparing the student for practice.

### **9.7.1 Reflective Practice and the Role of Supervision**

Supervision is central to any work undertaken in the practice experience and a prime means of ensuring that students have a sense of direction in their practice. This was followed through in the questionnaire. The purpose was to understand how practice educators facilitated their students through the supervisory process. Over half of the practice educators identified using supervision to enable students to reflect on the past week, in terms of;

- discussing developments;
- looking at what had been achieved in the practice setting;
- student's strengths;
- identifying how weaknesses could be turned into future learning objectives to be focused upon in the coming week(s).

Encouragement to become reflective practitioners was highlighted specifically by a fifth of practice educators when asked to specify key features of PPD. Three quarters of students were reported by practice educators as understanding the concept of reflection. In considering the degree of engagement of students in the monitoring and review process, practice educators felt that just over two thirds of students were effective, while a quarter found difficulty. Some of those reported experiencing difficulty were also identified as not having completely grasped the concept of reflection.

Given the centrality of the reflective process to the personal profile it was clearly expected by University tutors that all students would be able, ready and competent to apply the principles to practice issues including their first practice experience (in July). From the evidence of this study, these expectations appear overly optimistic and somewhat naive. Making the transition from University-based studies to practice-based studies as this research shows appears difficult to manage for some students. Similarly engaging in the process of reflection was

not experienced as a natural or habitual process from practice educators' reports. All but one student was reported to be engaging in the process of reflection in practice. However, only one third were considered by the practice educators to have engaged in a consistent way. The remaining students were reported as engaging 'sometimes'. The need for constant reinforcement and encouragement was expressed by practice educators; 'if prompted', 'with prompting', 'with support and prompts'.

There was some indication that a lack of confidence in initiative taking may be underlying the reticence to engage in the process of reflection. Two practice educators highlighted the position of the placement in the first year as having a potential influence on the level of student's confidence. One practice educator identified that the student had attempted to engage with the process of profiling but found it very hard. The curriculum must include one period of practice experience in each year of the programme (WFOT, 2002). The placement is therefore a requirement and not negotiable.

The data which emerged from practice educators concerning students' reflection on their interventions in professional practice begins to enrich our picture of students' level of engagement in the process of reflection on practice experiences. Well over three quarters of students were reported as engaging in the process of reflection following treatment sessions (retrospective reflection). This seems to suggest that students were able to reflect on and articulate what happens in these client-based experiences (in terms of interaction and therapeutic interventions). A third of students were reported as engaging in reflection on a frequent basis and able to reflect throughout the intervention process:

- the preparatory phase; prospective reflection, reflection for action;
- during the implementation phase; reflection-in-action;

- retrospectively; to inform future actions (learning, client therapy), objectives or strategies, reflection-on-action (Schön, 1987).

From this data it appears that two thirds of students do not engage in reflecting upon the whole process of intervention and that retrospective reflection comes more easily than other aspects of reflection, prospective reflection and reflection-in-action. The latter is more understandable given that reflection-in-action is a more demanding process and linked with clinical reasoning skills. First year students are at the early stages in their development of these skills in the practice setting.

A reflective practitioner needs to be capable of articulating their clinical reasoning and judgements. Practice educators reported that this articulation of experience by students and subsequent reflections were communicated verbally, albeit in varying degrees, in both informal and formal settings. The ability to dialogue with self as a form of expression to facilitate reflection was noted by only five practice educators who explained that the student had kept a reflective diary which they referred to during supervision. It is assumed that the way in which a practice educator facilitates and supports a student is critical to the quality of the learning and depth of the overall experience. The educator's understanding of the process of reflection is therefore a key element in the learning process. Only a fifth of the practice educators expressed this as an important dimension of PPD in pre-registration education in their responses although reflective practice has been prominent in the health arena for the past two decades (Taylor and White, 2000; Bulman and Schutz, 2004).

In respect of relating underpinning theory to the way of working with students, only one practice educator referred to a theoretical model of reflection by name (Gibbs, 1988) when describing how they facilitated the student in the process of reflection and two educators to local (Department-based) initiatives. A local

initiative identified by one practice educator was 'a reflection on practice sheet' which was shared during supervision. Engaging in reflective activities with others invariably enhances the process (Pollard, 2002).

The process of reflection and Gibb's seminal work together with a number of models are presented and discussed in the practice educators training and workshop days at the University. Yet models of reflection have not been considered within the majority of practice educators' responses. This suggests that practice educators may be drawing upon intuitive knowledge in their own setting. Reflecting with others helps to complete the jigsaw, making sense of the parts (Jasper, 2003). All aspects of interaction with others and an individual's inter-relationship with the environment/context in which interaction occurs, can be attended to by the very nature of this type of reflective process. Behaviour, cognition and affect are the dimensions that are integral components in theoretical models (for example Johns, 2000). Only four practice educators said that sharing their own thoughts and feelings were part of the reflective process. This suggests that students may not be facilitated to move beyond the initial levels of reflection and explore their work from both a professional and personal perspective or underpin their explorations with theoretical concepts to appreciate the inextricable links between theory and practice.

This suggests a lack or low level of engagement that both practice educators and students find themselves in, or may be facilitated to be in. Heames (1998) identifies progressive stages within the process of reflection moving the learner from describing experiences to exploring the key issues emerging from the experiences and then examining the theoretical concepts which may inform learning from the experience. Goodman (1984) considers levels of reflection, each level thus increasing the depth of thinking. The levels move from consideration of issues and principles drawn from personal concerns to wider



contextual and political issues and moral dilemma's that can ensue; thus moving an individual from being reflective to reflexive. However this can only happen if the learner is motivated and the potential to be reflexive exists.

### **9.7.2 Theory and Practice of Reflection**

Dissonance between theory underpinning the process of reflection and practice emerged as a key thread in data from practice educators and University tutors. The use of theory to inform and explore the nature of the reflective process does not appear to be as explicit or transparent for students as it does within the University setting. It may be that practice educators as practitioners are experts or masters of the process of reflection and therefore not as conscious of the need to articulate this to students. Perhaps they no longer understand or empathise with the struggles of the novice.

Beginner learners are often understandably hesitant in the steps they take. Benner (1984) discusses the progression of skills acquisition in nurses from novice to expert. This, I suggest, mirrors the process of mastery, mastery of the art of reflection and reflective practice. University tutors are conscious of the need to be explicit in their expectations of students. They are used to openly articulating both process and practice of professional skills and respond to the need for them to think aloud for learners. The experienced practitioner may cease to articulate the constituent components of their own reflections (or show their workings) to novice students who may value the practice educator as a professional role model. In the pursuit of helping students develop reflective skills Clouder (2000:519) suggests that practice educators, as powerful role models, may achieve this by:

'exposing their own reasoning processes, and sharing their own experience and knowledge as they inform the decision-making process during the assessment and treatment sessions.'

Formal supervision sessions, as the vehicle for reflecting on practice, were described by practice educators in detail. Supervision focused on the past week and on students' practice. Facilitation meant using discussion, identifying strengths and weaknesses, looking at what had been achieved and highlighting opportunities. Responses provided little insight into the depth to which practice educators facilitated students to move beyond a descriptive account of the week and explore personal professional development more globally.

Depth in the exploration of experiences comes from opportunities for students to debate, challenge and evaluate issues and dilemmas of and in practice. For example, ethical issues, conflicts within the management of the client, personal coping strategies for dealing with difficult situations. This appeared to be a missing dimension. Bulman and Schutz (2004:84) highlight the criticality of 'being openly reflective' to model critical thinking in mentoring practitioners and supporting them in their reflective practice. It is argued, by Clouder (2000) that dialogical reflection is vital within the process of professional socialisation. This equally applies to profiling and the argument for being explicit about engagement in articulating reflections.

In contrast, the University tutors, who were asked the same question, provided an array of techniques which they utilised to encourage the student to explore experiences, to get beneath the surface of the experiences, together with practical strategies to move the student forward in their development. Many of these are grounded in the core conditions of counselling (Egan, 1994). Tutors were drawing upon their portfolio of professional skills as an occupational therapist as well as an educator. These skills, acquired as part of their pre-registration professional education, are not unique to tutors.

### 9.7.3 Reflective Dialogue

The missing link for moving students beyond superficial dialogue into the exploration of the inter-related issues emerging from practice appeared to be the range of techniques employed to encourage students to look beyond the obvious. Pivotal in this is the willingness to 'being openly reflective' (Bulman and Schutz, 2004:84). The potential for a rich dialogue is there within the practice setting. Ryan (2001:525) identifies,

Experienced therapists have tremendous stores of knowledge that need to be shared with and questioned by the next generation in alternative ways of learning.

The individual University tutor's approach emerged as a theme in the qualitative interviews with student participants. This was also acknowledged by the tutors themselves. The responses tutors gave focused on exchanging information and a degree of mutual self-disclosure; 'sharing experiences' and 'read together' which suggests the development of a genuine partnership. Through the use of a range of techniques the majority of tutors promoted self-exploration and development and led students, in the early stages, into and through the process of reflection. From the data gathered a multiplicity of roles emerged which the PD tutors sought to fulfil. The actual role assumed for a period of interaction was dependent on the nature of the meeting and to some degree students' course stage:

- Facilitator;
- Skilled Helper;
- Guide;
- Coach.

It was difficult to elicit from the data whether practice educators also use a similar range of techniques to facilitate students. As previously cited, prompting and support were identified as techniques to encourage engagement in the reflective process. Questioning was also cited. Reviewing objectives was a clearly defined activity and giving feedback was a theme running through the responses with descriptors relating to the nature of the feedback for example, 'honest

feedback' and 'constructive feedback'. It was also difficult to gauge how active students were in initiating reflective dialogue within supervision sessions. Several practice educators identified their use of a reflective tool/s, to support the student in noting thoughts and feelings which could be brought up during supervision. This moves the dialogue towards a student-owned dialogue which seemed to be the situation in all but one response. One practice educator who reported that her student found difficulty reflecting within the therapeutic intervention, identified a strategy which became rather more directive rather than facilitative:

(the student) kept a diary - wrote down thoughts and observations - from her own initiative. At beginning had to ask for her opinions and request to read diary - meant that thoughts were not shared initially. (Practice Educator)

Yet in contrast, two practice educators identified explicitly how the student engaged in the process which mirrored very closely Alsop's (1998) protocol for reflection in practice.

It is possible that practice educators may not have responded as fully in their completion of the questionnaire because of time constraints and feeling distant from a system which was initiated by the University. The pressure of time may have led to expressing thoughts which were immediate and tangible. This possibility may have therefore created less well developed thoughts and superficial responses. Due to an absence of data this question cannot be addressed here but further exploration of this may prove scope for further research.

Evidence from data gathered indicates that communication skills such as phrasing, re-phrasing, probing, using triggers are all techniques which had become part of a University tutors' interpersonal repertoire or tool kit and become an integral part of facilitation expertise. As indicated above it is difficult

to ascertain this level of detail from the practice educators' responses. However, I would argue that practising therapists will draw on similar techniques as they communicate with their clients and work towards understanding the clients' experiences. Furthermore, the Health Professions Council Standards of Proficiency for Occupational Therapists (HPC, 2007) require a therapist to satisfy the requirements of effective communication skills to be eligible for registration and practice.

#### **9.7.4 Recording Student Success and Development**

Two thirds of the practice educators without reservation identified that the profile (both personal and professional) was a useful mechanism for recording students' success and to identify areas to work on and develop further. Partial agreement was noted from three respondents and in the words of one educator, the system is: '...only as good as the student is in completing it (the profile).' This view implies that it is solely students' responsibility and does not embrace or acknowledge the practice educators' role within the context of profiling for a personal professional development system. Although practice educators receive briefing on the systems in place during their initial training programme, just under a quarter of practice educators found the profile to be time consuming, confusing and needing more structure in their view. Overall, however there appears to be a perceived value in the use of the profile for student learning.

When asked about their views on the key features of PPD, practice educators provided a range of answers. The key concepts were unsurprising. Many responses were focused around self, communication, knowledge and professional practice. Emerging themes from this were awareness of self and interaction with others, fundamentals of building relationships and therapeutic working. Skills for practice and the professional persona in terms of attitude, behaviour and clinical/therapeutic intervention were also identified.

Following this through, three quarters of practice educators suggested practical strategies which might support or facilitate students in their PPD. The number of responses was lower than envisaged by the researcher. Some strategies were the same as those cited in the sections which focused on their work with students. Different strategies had been identified under the category of support. Peer support, mentorship, emotional support, which feel more 'in tune' with the nature of support offered by PD tutors. However these did not emerge as strategies in working with students. This suggests that there may be some compartmentalised thinking and action; students are in the practice setting to learn practice skills rather than be supported in their CPD and LLL.

The development of the student as a reflective practitioner was cited by just under a fifth of the practice educators as important. Given the current need for reflective practitioners in occupational therapy (Boniface, 2000) and in other healthcare professions (Bulman and Schutz, 2004) there appears to be some dissonance here. A higher response rate could have been expected. A possible interpretation is that the profile is being used by the practice educators as a learning tool for the development of tangible aspects of professional practice: the skills for practice, the 'hands on' skills needed to work with clients for example effective use of a standardised assessment. Given the practice context this may feel more relevant to them. The focus on professional skills rather than promoting the development of skills to engage in the reflective process and development of self as a practitioner in students is about the 'here and now' in practice. They may feel their immediate responsibility lies in the professional/technical skills rather than the less explicit aspects of education necessary in the process of becoming an occupational therapist. There may also be the possibility that this mirrors a lack of confidence in their own self-awareness and ability to promote it in others.

This difference in approach between practice educators and University tutors needs to be acknowledged. Tutors may more naturally move into facilitating students in aspects of self-awareness, enabling them to explore their attitudes, values and beliefs as they are away from the pressures of day-to-day management of clients. They can see that these are aspects which enable students to cope more readily to the pressures that they are going to face in the practice environment. In comparing data gathered from tutors and data from practice educators, there is a common view about what constitutes PPD. However, in the case study site practice educators do not appear to recognise these aspects of PPD as their responsibility in the students' education.

The University-based PD tutors' views appear to stem from the core philosophical beliefs espoused by the occupational therapy profession as deemed by the professional body (COT, 2004; COT, 2005) and thus empowerment of the student remains an important premise for them. The personal profile was designed to be under the ownership of the student to embrace this philosophical position. Tutors work towards establishing a milieu in which the student is facilitated rather than directed, acting as a critical friend, with questions that are open so that a dialogic encounter is promoted as part of the learning culture. Working in this way there is more of a partnership and it differs from a traditional hierarchical model of tutor-tutee.

In discussing the concept of critical friend, Swaffield (2003) makes reference to the imbalance in power dynamics between tutor and tutee, supervisor and supervisee models and therefore this approach of a critical friend differs. He suggests it is a partnership in which reflective dialogue can take place openly. This is a crucial issue and needs to be recognised in relation to practice educators and the relationship they have with their students. Partnership

working may not be feasible given the educators' role of assessor of practice competence. This may account for the practice educators' focus of attention in relation to seeing that their immediate responsibility lies in the professional/technical skills for professional practice and this being their prime responsibility to the educational process. They are the gate-keepers to the profession in this aspect of pre-registration education.

#### **9.7.5 Enabling Students' Learning**

The University tutors' current position and experiences in an academic community together with their professional skills may influence their style and approach to enabling and empowering students' learning. The humanistic influence in occupational therapy is unlikely to be part of the shared value system in the wider academic community in which the tutors now engage. Evidence from data suggests that there are differences in the way that PD tutors approach their role and student participants interviewed confirmed this interpretation. For some tutors there appears to be a rather covert tension in balancing their former role of therapist/educator with the current role of tutor/educator within the University context. The influence of their practice experience should not be underestimated.

The professional background and previous clinical expertise of tutors may be an important underpinning influence in relation to their approach in the dialogic process of profiling. Tracking an individual's specialist area of practice is not possible as the questionnaires were completed anonymously. Differences in ways of facilitating students emerged from the tutors' responses and student participants raised the issue of differences in the approach of tutors. It can only be surmised that tutors having practised in mental health or community settings may be more able to be adept at maintaining a balance between their roles as facilitator and assessor than tutors who have specialised in physical medicine.



This supposition is made on the basis that as occupational therapists they have worked within two distinct models of care; that is a social model, where occupational therapists work *with* rather than *on* individuals and establish a rapport and working relationship with a client/service user rather than a patient. Therapists in these settings (mental health, community work) work with the unexpected, the unpredictable and set boundaries to their practice rather than working within a given protocol of care which derives itself from the traditional medical model of a physical health setting. This form of *modus operandi* has become the means within the modernisation agenda (DH, 2000a) implementation plans for a streamlined approach, setting clear guidelines for commonality, reducing waiting lists and consistent service delivery as a modernised way of care.

Being comfortable in the role of facilitator together with possessing the skills to facilitate appear to be important factors in the approach adopted by tutors and practice educators. Personal profiling focuses on enabling students to develop personally and professionally and a critical aspect in this process is to enable students to develop their self-awareness. Freshwater (2000) draws attention to the demands that facilitating self-awareness in others makes. Therefore she argues that the facilitators need to possess high levels of self-awareness themselves. Earlier chapters and the research data have suggested that students also need to be in a state of psychological preparedness to engage in personal profiling in the sense of cognitive and emotional maturity.

In considering the diversity in approach between university tutors as reported by participants and the differences between university tutors and practice educators which has emerged through the research, university tutors and practice educators alike need to be in state of preparedness to engage in facilitating the reflective process as part of practice-based reflective practice and personal

profiling. They need to be able to mirror the process. This preparedness has been assumed by the Course Team, yet the findings lead to the tentative proposition that a degree of emotional and spiritual intelligence may be lacking or lack of confidence which manifests as a reluctance to move to a position of open and in-depth dialogue. It is emotional intelligence that gives rise to an individual's level of general confidence. If facilitators feel uncomfortable within the reflective dialogue themselves then they may not feel able or capable of encouraging students to push their personal boundaries to discover and bring about development. They may remain content with the limitations that some students may bring to the reflective dialogue.

If the ways to being and becoming a reflective practitioner are not explicit or perceived important in the day-to-day clinical activities by practice educators then this leads to question its perceived level of importance in students' experience of practice. Given the high regard placed on the practice experience and the client-based world of the occupational therapist this may have an impact on students' level of engagement and their attitude and experience of profiling.

Because of the pressures and demands of the modernisation agenda (2000) on the practice setting, some practitioners become reductionist in their approach to maintain and improve service provision targets. Occupational therapists, working in the NHS who participated in Boniface's (2002) study identified that lack of time was a barrier to reflection and that superficial reflection can occur as a result of an organisation's own environment and demands.

Problems appear to have emerged at this level of reflective thinking. The assumption by University-based PD tutors has been that students' learning about reflection and the reflective skills developed in the University, however partial or complete will be transferred, continue to be used and have currency in the

practice setting. It is this process of 'thinking on your feet' that PD tutors wish to facilitate in students so that they may feel more effectively prepared for working in the practice setting. Profiling was considered by one University tutor to 'engender a process of life long learning' indicating a helicopter view of the process and its potential long term benefit, 'forming the habit of a life time'. The concept of LLL is clearly embraced by the Professional Body as fundamental to professional life (COT, 2002) and in the words of one PD tutor: 'The profiling system is very important in developing the reflective OTs that our profession needs.'

For students the mechanics of the process are understood, yet the appreciation of the system and active cognitive and affective engagement tends to emerge more strongly in Year 2, with Year 3 being the point at which there is an at ease feel with the system. The experiences of Year 1 enable the student to engage with greater preparedness for subsequent levels. From qualitative interviews some students found that their first experience of professional practice had an impact and enabled them to realise the purpose of profiling. Student participants reported in the pilot study that there appeared to be differences in the way tutors approached both the organisation of the individual reflective dialogue meetings and the overall management of the process. The findings support this assertion. Some tutors drew on their experience of profiling with previous years of students and in some cases modified the organisation of the meeting to match the individual student needs based on this experience. This also embraced modifying their style of facilitation to enable the student in the process of reflection. Changes in the overall management of the profiling system included the overall schedule of meetings. This more flexible approach was intended to be supportive to the student.

### **9.7.5 Differences: tutors' and practice educators' perspectives**

Convery (1998) explores a teacher's response to 'reflection-in-action' and critiques Schön's work. He argues that Schön encourages the focusing *in* on the *situation* rather than the *professional* who is a contributory factor by engaging in that situation. Convery (1998:201) further argues that:

If the underlying personal interests of the teacher are not considered when engaging in reflection, then the implicit values of the teacher are also unlikely to be questioned in the reflective endeavour and the potential of reflective practice is unlikely to be realised.

Practitioners' expectations of students appear to be that they will focus *in* on a given situation as Schön advocates. However, this seems to be where the process of reflection ends for some students rather than it being just the beginning of the process. Progression can be facilitated by moving students' focus to the emerging 'professional self' or indeed the underlying values of practice (occupational therapy specifically and health and social care in general) and interests of the student.

Convery (1998) makes clear reference to intuitive knowledge; 'knowledge-in-action'. He suggests that this concept is well received by teachers who claim expertise which cannot be ascribed to a body of knowledge but which is '..founded on tacit craft wisdom borne from experience'. He continues:

For a hard-pressed teacher it becomes increasingly tempting to claim allegiance to Schön and identify oneself as a reflective practitioner. (Convery, 1998:200).

Occupational therapists are certainly under pressure. Alsop (2002:201) highlights the challenges and the, 'new era of openness, scrutiny and public accountability' in which occupational therapists (and other AHPs), will be required to demonstrate their competence for continued professional practice and retention on the HPC Register (DH, 2001). Providing evidence-based practice and being a reflective practitioner is now an imperative not an option.

Eraut (1994) clearly argues the temporary nature of professional knowledge and 'competence decays', (Alsop, 2002:201).

Practitioners, including practice educators, may be drawn to focusing in and problem-solving as part of their reflective practice to achieve the demands made upon them. Day (1993:88) argues, in the context of discussing teachers' professional development:

...reflection is a necessary but not sufficient condition for learning. Confrontation either by self or others must occur. Teachers need to challenge and support if their professional development is to be enhanced.

This is the basic premise on which the Personal Profiling System was developed within the research site. Yet there is a fine balance between challenge and support for students. There is evidence from this research that some University tutors are attending to this in a sensitive way and engage in the process naturally. For others it appears there is a lack of readiness to engage at this level. Similarly practice educators from the findings clearly support students in the process of reflection but appear to lack readiness to engage in challenging students to move them forward in developing their professional self.

Where a University tutor is comfortable and in a state of readiness to become a critical friend they can begin to move towards partnership working, whereby the student has the potential to achieve deeper levels of reflection; in Day's terms they can provide the 'challenge.' This is evident through some of the interviews with third year student participants in that personal profiling has been a facilitated journey of PPD and the beginnings of reflexivity. Convery (1998:203) describes the qualities and attributes of a critical friend and poignantly identifies the role in professional development as 'to help us through...'. ' (

Practice educators do explicitly help the student to re-frame, focus-in and problem-solve a situation in order to learn from it. However, from the findings it appears that the process of self-reflection and self-evaluation which is needed to develop the professional self remains implicit, if not a hidden dimension within their working partnership. Participants in Boniface's study (2002:298) found that whilst reflection can be undertaken alone, it was, 'better with someone else'.

Elliott (1988) argues that reflection can be inhibited by authority figures and the involvement of a line manager was also raised as a problem in Boniface's work (2002). Practice educators by the very nature of their role undertake a multiplicity of sub-roles in their interaction with students including for example, professional role model, supervisor, assessor. The practice educator is the prime assessor for the placement and this may be perceived by the student as a powerful dimension of the role. It also emerged as a concern for student participants in Clouder's study (2000) on professional socialisation. This is a critical factor and possible source of tension in the dynamics of the practice educator-student relationship.

#### **9.7.6 Space and Time for Reflection**

Creek (2003:495) identifies the need to create space to think and emphasises that it is the responsibility of managers and every occupational therapist to ensure we do create it. She asserts that:

...occupational therapists have a theoretical interest in clinical reasoning and reflection but we are mostly far too busy to try it.

Reference here to 'every occupational therapist' includes practice educators (and students). This space should be quality time. Quality time that could be considered by managers as CPD, not an indulgence but time valued and used for

productive thinking and reflection. The words of Schaef (1990) bring to mind that everyday is new, nothing is exactly the same. What happened yesterday can not be wiped away, 'Each day is a journey. Each day is a process' (Schaef, 1990:i). If thinking time and time for reflection is difficult to achieve for practice educators and students alike but essential, then it would seem that it must be considered in the same way as other clinical commitments and be built into the diary. In this way reflection can become as routine as for example, team meetings.

With the issue of time itself arising in this study and the assertion by Creek (2003:495) cited previously, this study would suggest that models of supervision need some active consideration. In relation to the profiling system, University tutors are known as PD tutors. This title certainly articulates the nature of the role within the academic community and gives it the recognition it requires among academics. It provides the credibility tutors need to engage in a process which on the surface may appear to be more of a guidance role than have professional and academic standing. In this way the individual sessions with students are returned as formal contact time which from the University tutors' perspective is beneficial, achieves recognition for their role in the process and students have greater opportunity and parity for time with tutors. In this way profiling then becomes an integral part of the programme of studies as the curriculum claims and not a 'bolt-on' feature. This however does not always guarantee protected timetabled time.

With the practitioners' demands, supervision sessions have become the day-to-day monitoring of performance and standards and the *becoming* an occupational therapist. The opportunities for them to take time out, to reflect for themselves and their students appears to have featured less, as clinical priorities have

increased. Mentorship, with the benefit of involving junior therapists rather than practice educators, may be a possible resolution.

## **9.8 Personal Profiling as an Agent for Personal Change**

Sub-theme: *What are the benefits of profiling as perceived by students?*

First year students' Perceptions of Profiling Post-practice

Overall evidence from the various sources of data; students, University tutors and practice educators highlighted a positive attitude toward the profiling system. Student participants considered that the system was an investment in their development of becoming an occupational therapist and felt that it was thought provoking. The attitude questionnaire used to embrace all first year participants revealed that a third of them found completing the profiling was satisfying, with a quarter feeling enabled by the process. In terms of feeling responsible for the profiling process nearly three quarters of student participants felt that the system engendered this feeling. Although not feeling fully independent, it is encouraging to note that a sense of personal responsibility was present. The question, 'how do we encourage independence in learning?' is a frequent area of discussion by University tutors in relation to students who enter from school or courses which are didactic and outcomes driven. The majority of participants did not feel that the process was intrusive in relation to 'private self'. Only two participants (4%) expressed that it was an issue with eight (16%) tending to agree.

### **9.8.1 Profiling as a Practical Tool for Learning**

Considering more practical purposes of profiling, half of first year participants found that the process had enabled them to develop new strategies of working and coping with their studies. The majority declared that it was a mechanism through which to recognise their existing personal skills. In a study on the use of personal professional profiles (similar but not the same as personal profiles) by



qualified nurses as part of the statutory requirement for re-registration, two thirds of participants agreed that it had many benefits (Richardson, 1998). A similar response was reported that it helped them to focus on their clinical practice with almost half seeing it as being useful in Individual Performance Reviews (IPR). Some form of framework for focusing in on experience appears valuable.

In this study, all participants interviewed and two thirds of first year participants in the cohort study felt that profiling had helped them learn about themselves. Considering the 'here and now', just under a half of the participants felt that it had helped them enhance their self-awareness. In contrast, considering 'self' in the context of interacting with others, three quarters of participants acknowledged that it had assisted in increasing their awareness. Clearly there is a relationship with the development of the 'public self' and *becoming* an occupational therapist and development of the 'private self' *me*.

Whilst profiling was identified as being a helpful tool in developing new strategies, it appears not to make an impact on the levels of motivation for studying in general. Only a quarter of participants actively prioritised time for reflection. The process of reflection is worked through by two thirds of participants, suggesting that these individuals do take more than a superficial consideration of events and situations. The importance of dedicated time needs to be taken seriously, as this has emerged from the perspective of both student participants and University tutors.

Nearly half of the participants expressed the view that personal profiling should be an integral part of the course. There was a high level of 'no opinion' responses around this aspect as opposed to responses to the statements of disagreement. This is consistent with the general trend in responses to questions

which involved looking ahead to their future *professional self*. Students in Year 1 find it difficult to be prospective at this stage and without a practice experience find difficulty in being able to vision around occupational therapy as a profession and the professional responsibilities of occupational therapists. I suggest that some students feel they are not in a position at such an early stage in the course to make an informed response and therefore offer no opinion. The relationship between personal profiling and professional practice was not recognised by first year participants and this corresponds with practice educators lack of acknowledgement of the inter-relationship cited earlier in this chapter.

The strong pattern of 'no opinion' responses evident throughout the attitude questionnaire may have been because it is a safe place, a more comfortable position to be in rather than making a firm commitment. May be, at this stage, participants do not have a sufficiently strong vision of occupational therapy or clear sense of where they stand in terms of their progress and development as mapped against their aspiration to become an occupational therapist.

### **9.8.2 Benefits of Personal Profiling**

*Sub-theme: Students' Perceived Benefits of Personal Profiling? Do students change?*

Earlier in this section I have argued that the data which emerged from the research indicates that personal profiling actively promotes learning. It provides a framework in which a milieu is created for transformative learning. All student participants identified some form of learning and personal change taking place. The realisation of change for many participants was with the value of hindsight. The progression for many appeared to be a move from seeing the process of profiling as a collection of 'piece(s) of coursework' (student participant) to a framework for development and tool for self-development together with a means of coping with University-based studies and practice.

The whole notion of change for some students was difficult to handle. The process of reflection on self in terms of skills, capabilities and attributes was a 'surprise' (Debs), baffling (Natalie) and a new concept (Anna) and the journey for some has been messy and troublesome (Kim). In discussing individual's needs in relation to organisational change Carnall (2003) highlights the need for re-building self-esteem and self-knowledge and this has been a key function of the PD tutors in their critical friend role. He proposes, four main categories of need in individuals:

- Empathy;
- Support;
- Skills;
- Intelligible information.

Given that profiling is within the constructs of a new system for many participants, attending to the needs defined by Carnall (2003) is imperative. Students need to be assured through what might be an emotionally taxing or troublesome process of change and to benefit from and feel positive about change. This process of change needs to be explored further.

In the context of professional practice, Khanna (2004) discusses the progression of students in their process of self-reflection. Students move from narrative reflection (level 1) through integrated reflection (level 2) to context reflection (level 3) where engagement is at a level of self-talk; the complex interface of professional self, practice and the political context is the focus. What I would argue is that whilst University tutors may aspire to fostering this progression through personal profiling or indeed professional practice as Khanna identifies, progression cannot be guaranteed as it is unique to the individual.

A student's pathway cannot be charted in clear cut developmental stages. Students, it appears, have to come to a point of preparedness both psychological and emotional; preparedness to make the transition from where they stand in

the here and now to where they aspire to be as an occupational therapist. This transition is a process of PPD not purely a change in their knowledge base. I recognise that in any explanation or documentation that some form of map is required which sets boundaries for students to work within. This avoids confusion and anxiety. However, this does need flexible boundaries for the student to develop at their own pace albeit that there are requirements to fulfil and specific time scale relating to the award and eligibility to apply for professional and regulatory body registration. If the pattern of progression Khanna (2004) describes is seen in general terms and mapped against the findings of this study a similar pattern is apparent.

New learning and knowledge can be messy and troublesome (Perkins 1999) whether this is concerning tangible facts or self-knowledge. Meyer and Land (2003) put forward the notion of a threshold concept and explore the concept in relation to troublesome knowledge. This conceptualisation helps in coming to a greater understanding of the relationship between self-knowledge and the transitional continuum from 'self' as a student to 'self' as a practitioner. In Meyer and Land's words (2003:1):

A threshold concept can be considered as akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress. As a consequence of comprehending a threshold concept there may thus be a transformed internal view of subject matter, subject landscape, or even world view. This transformation may be sudden or it may be protracted over a considerable period of time, with the transition to understanding being troublesome.

This is central to the discussion and provides an explanation to the transitional positions that students take through their engagement in the process of personal profiling. The transformation students make enables them to become reflective practitioners and more effective in their professional client-based world and beyond into their own personal world of other roles and responsibilities.

## **9.9 Summary**

From the findings students in general have a positive attitude to personal profiling. The process of profiling becomes more valued as students progress through the programme. It appears that during the first year participants engaged in the process of profiling whilst in the University and then left the process in suspension during their practice experience. It was not until the second year (or later for some participants) that participants began to see that there was some benefit to embracing the practice experience in the process of profiling to gain a more rounded view of their development and to prepare for future practice experiences.

From the practice educators' perspective, few first year students actively and voluntarily engaged in the process of reflection consistently during their first practice experience. At this stage, profiling as a learning tool is not an automatic process at the forefront of students' minds. Yet, this first exposure to the client-based world is a critical time in students' development. It is a time when students sometimes struggle to apply their knowledge and turn theory into practice or transfer skills from one setting to another. The framework of support that the profiling system offers is therefore needed to enable students to make the most of the experience. Guidance and signposts or triggers can help students achieve the required learning outcomes by prompting them to engage, be curious, to question and to test out their existing theory base in the practice environment.

An influential factor in this learning support process is the practice educator and their myriad of roles, the professional role model, the expert therapist, supervisor, educator and most importantly from the University's point of view, assessor role. The practice educator is one of the gatekeepers to approving professional competence to practice in the same way as the school-based

mentor in teacher education. The significance of the gatekeeper role is not always fully appreciated by practitioners themselves and cannot be underestimated in its importance. The assessor role is a very powerful dimension to being a practice educator. However this power will influence the relationship with the student. Failing the practice element of the course initially means a further placement experience (of the same duration) during the summer. If the student fails a subsequent placement this leads to withdrawal from the course (COT, 2008). Therefore, this is perhaps a more powerful relationship than the relationship with a PD tutor.

From the qualitative data some complex issues have emerged which have an impact on the individual's engagement in the process in relation to cognitive readiness and emotional preparedness to engage. As Boud and Walker (1990:63) clearly articulate in discussing experience-based learning;

What the learner brings to the experience has an impact on what is experienced and how it is experienced.

This very much applies to individuals engaging in personal profiling as evidenced through analysis of participants' responses in this study.

It is good to have an end to journey towards; but it is the journey that matters in the end. (Schaef, 1990 quoting Ursula K Le Guin)

## **Chapter Ten**

### **Personal Reflections, Recommendations and Further Research from the Findings**

#### **10.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a review of the study from my personal reflections as a researcher, having discussed the literature, methodologies, data analysis and findings in earlier chapters. In order to move understanding and knowledge forward and increase the evidence base of personal profiling, recommendations for future research will be proposed. These are based around the three groups of participants; University-based tutors; practice educators and most importantly students.

#### **10.2 Personal Reflections**

At the beginning of this study the focus was to explore students' attitudes to and experiences of personal profiling in the context of professional development. As the pilot work began and work progressed as anticipated the emerging issues and sub-themes became more complex. The focus on students' attitudes to personal profiling became inextricably linked with the process of reflection as a fundamental aspect of the process. Other issues that arose were students' past experience of exploring 'self' through profiling or similar system(s) of evaluation and their level of preparedness to engage in not only personal profiling but the process of reflection itself. Student participants in the pilot study emphasised the role and impact of significant others in their engagement in personal profiling. This became an important aspect of the study. University tutors' and practice educators' perspectives were explored as they were seen as integral to and potentially impacting on students' attitudes.

### **10.2.1 The Researcher's Approach**

This case study was undertaken in a snapshot of time and as such the findings are illuminative yet do not claim to be generalisable. There was a perceived institutional need to explore the user perspective of a system, which at the outset was regarded as novel, not a mainstream activity in HE. Given my position of teacher-researcher (Stenhouse, 1979) and my commitment to reflective practice the methodological framework was considered to be appropriate. As an 'inside researcher' I felt in a position to contribute to the ongoing development of the profiling system, with the findings having the potential to provide an exemplar for the wider academic community.

Reflection and action are identified by Rolfe (1996) as essential constituents for the integration of research and theory with practice. In discussing the issues of research in nursing, Rolfe puts forward the argument that informal theory at a micro level is also needed alongside more formal theory-building that is generalisable at a macro-level. For me, Rolfe's view has been influential. It was not curiosity alone, which gave rise to this study. There was a real pragmatic need for both education and professional practice to have a greater understanding of ways in which profiling might contribute to students' professional development. Rolfe emphasises the importance of micro-level research in bridging the theory-practice gap and its contribution to informing, changing and developing practice which this study seeks to do.

The nature of the research and research questions to be explored determined the methods and tools of inquiry. They are reported in a transparent way, thus enabling the study to be replicated. My position as an inside researcher, it could be argued, has implications for the credibility of the research. I was therefore very careful in the way I worked throughout the study, to be transparent, honest and work with integrity within an ethical framework. A critical issue in research



is trustworthiness. As a researcher I have engaged with this study and carried out fieldwork with due respect for the participants and the settings in which they 'live'. Yin (1994:34) in his discussion on case study design identifies the importance of being able to trace the steps taken in the process by conducting the research, 'as if someone were always looking over your shoulder'. For this reason process charts and diagrams have been used to provide transparency in the reporting of the study.

I came to this research having been centrally involved in the implementation of the profiling system. My insider research status meant I was conscious some of the of assumptions colleagues made about students' engagement in the process and anecdotal evidence around issues that had been presented and discussed at Department review days. Issues of status, perceived power and authority were uppermost in my mind as I began to work with the participants; particularly in the qualitative aspects of the study, the focus groups and semi-structured interviews. I wanted to work with students in the role of researcher, not a tutor. In the same way I recognised that practice educators might feel it was 'the University' seeking to evaluate activity in the practice settings rather than understanding that I was seeking their participation in a research project. This living history was with me from the start of the study. Thus I consciously acknowledged this position and any possible tensions and worked with diligence accordingly, making every effort to be transparent in my engagement with and reporting of the research process.

An aspect of this diligence was the involvement of critical friends to peer review aspects of the qualitative data collection. This was a conscious researcher strategy to minimise bias and ensure trustworthiness of the findings. (McNiff 2002). The critical friends have practice expertise and a clear understanding of the nature of the study and context in which it is set. Their involvement has

contributed to the rigour with which the research process has been conducted. They reviewed, questioned and at times challenged my interpretations of the findings and enabled me to become more aware of the assumptions and taken-for-granted ways of looking at the emerging data. In this way the interview data and analysis have been reviewed to establish credibility, the ring of truth and enhance the trustworthiness.

As each phase of the data analysis was undertaken the critical friends reviewed the diagrammatic representation and then re-reviewed it with a qualitative commentary. Written comments and annotations were made, followed by in-depth discussions around the emerging themes, the use of language and interpretations. The outcome provided the basis for further work on the reporting of the study. The approach adopted with the critical friends provided an invaluable source of systematic peer review and added to the final trustworthiness of the data.

Accessing 'experienced' or 'expert' colleagues to verify data categories is advocated by Appleton (1995). The 'critical friends' have fulfilled this role. Similarly, Burnard (1991) discusses working with a colleague in general and for working with data; that is for both researcher and colleague to be involved in generating patterns and emerging themes independently before collaborating. However, Cutcliffe and McKenna (1999) argue that there are potential difficulties in this approach, from both a philosophical and epistemological stance. Their argument is around 'expertness' and whether, when theory is lacking, there can be experts. Schutz's (1994) work highlights the researcher's process of creativity; that is the creativity in the engagement with the data. The critical friend may from this perspective cause a possible tension and 'stifling' of meaning as a process of averaging out takes place in the analysis of qualitative

work. Having argued this point Cutcliffe and McKenna (1999:377) then state that:

...sharing their interpretation with colleagues would be the opportunity it provides for challenging the robustness of the emerging categories and themes...

They proceed to argue that this process of sharing together with the opportunity to explain provides 'the thinking behind the choices' and moves the researcher to a position of, a 'more reasoned and complete interpretation'.

### **10.2.3 Listening to Participants**

A principle I adopted throughout the study was one of inclusivity and thereby consciously and actively listened to participants and, as themes emerged, carefully considered these and the issues surrounding them. Within the study there have been some lone voices and small clusters of differing opinions within the participant group. They have been considered in an equitable way and presented in the commentaries. Care has also been taken in maintaining a sense of balance in the participants' portrayal of their stories and perspectives. Primeau (2003:15) draws attention to the authority that researcher hold in respect of 'whose voice and therefore, whose story is heard'. At each stage critical friends reviewed the writing up of the data analysis, a post analysis phase (Ahern, 1999) which has been beneficial. Equally, I have reflected upon the way I have worked, my role as a researcher and in particular my position as an 'inside researcher' in this case study with my need to be immersed in the data gathered and findings.

Of particular note is the preliminary work undertaken to inform the design of the study and in particular the focus group element as part of the pilot study. The emergence of rich data at the pilot stage added an important dimension to the study. Through the analysis of the focus group data, sub-themes emerged which had not been considered in the initial phases of the study. Student participants

highlighted the importance and influence of significant others (tutors, practice educators) in the process of personal profiling and it therefore become imperative to incorporate the emerging sub-themes into the main study.

#### **10.2.4 Participants of the Study**

The preliminary work, in particular the focus groups, were instrumental in making crucial decisions about the methods of inquiry. The outcomes furnished me with a sense of direction and insight into how I should tap into the views and opinions of participants. What was unexpected, although in hindsight not surprising, was the openness and honesty with which student participants became involved in the study.

A complete cohort of students (Year 1), were included in this study. This felt an appropriate decision and justified on the grounds that in order to capture student attitudes as many possible voices need to be heard. Anecdotal evidence from working with student course representatives suggests that there can be a tendency for the *loudest voices* to be heard in cohort activity or personal agendas proffered as a collective rather than being personally owned. By adopting this approach I was able to embrace the continuum of views within a cohort of students thus generating more representative findings and add to the credibility of the study. The qualitative questionnaire was successful in achieving a complete cohort perspective. It is recognised that cohort samples can have a 'cohort effect' (Bowling, 2002), hence the emphasis on a 'snapshot of time' for this study.

A cross-sectional dimension was built into the study to access student cohorts at chronological stages of their exposure to the personal profiling system. Participants' perspectives gathered through semi-structured interviews were essential to capture the changes in attitudes to profiling over time. Data

generated in this way not only enriched the qualitative findings and brought depth to the study but also a more profound level of data and insight to underpin the potential theory generation phase. The implementation of a cross-sectional dimension was to chart the process of professional education and engagement in profiling, any personal change as well as intellectual development that would potentially take place. The richness of data generated from the interviews has become a real strength of the study and provided a tapestry effect, giving character, texture and colour to the overall findings.

As a consequence of this study, a significant number of issues have emerged that contribute positively to the development of profiling within HE. The pilot study flagged up the importance of tutor-student and student-practice educator relationship in forming students' attitudes to personal profiling. The relationship also had an impact on their lived experience of personal profiling. Bringing together the perspectives of students, University tutors and practice educators provided breadth, depth and richness to the study from which students' attitudes could be analysed. The use of vignettes involved 'life as experienced' by participants, providing thick description to the findings.

The involvement of University tutors and practice educators in the study needed to be considered carefully and managed particularly sensitively, from the point of professional reciprocity. Sword (1999:276) in recognising the notion of reciprocity in research, presented a brief summary of 'salient findings' to participants and based her presentation on the 'multiple realities'. My approach to disseminating research findings will be underpinned by presenting the multiple perspectives and provide a balanced consideration of the findings to all recipients. The findings must be both honest and have a 'ring of truth' to ensure that working relationships remain sound trusting relationships. If challenges are presented to a professional audience this must be with open dialogue. A clear

rationale for the research design and process must be given with opportunities to discuss the implications of the findings.

#### **10.2.5 Gathering the Data**

Data gathering was phased according to students' activities within one academic year. It was important to access students whilst they were in the University to avoid any interference with their practice experience. Each stage ran relatively smoothly within the designated timescales. An unforeseen issue however was around the impact of timing for the second phase of the first year students' longitudinal cohort analysis. The launch of the questionnaire to students and practice educators necessarily coincided with the conclusion of the practice placements in July. The seasonal impact was influential. Participants returned from their placement tired from the demands of practice and lacking in energy and drive for the final week of the University year. The lower than expected level of participation was understandable in that context, yet disappointing, given the high level of participants in the first phase. Attrition over time is a problem and cited for this type of method (Bowling, 2002). However, at the design stage, there were sufficient positive factors, such as expressions of interest and a willingness to commit to the study, which led to the decision to proceed on the basis of a post-practice questionnaire. The rationale for post-placement data collection was to capture the immediate impact of this first practice experience on students use and attitudes to profiling.

The consequence of this fall-off in participation rate had an impact on all statistical analysis undertaken on the quantitative data. For statistical analysis to be meaningful it had to be almost a full return. This element of the research was designed to provide a global sense of the cohort's opinions and the context

from which to set the qualitative findings. Descriptive statistics provided this base line for further analysis of trends in the cohorts' opinions.

#### **10.2.6 Reporting Outcomes**

The findings explore key issues and themes around student attitudes and use of personal profiling. The system is intended to facilitate PPD for students willing to commit to the process of *becoming* a reflective practitioner albeit a professional requirement to be a reflective practitioner on entry to the profession. Whilst there are intrinsic factors which motivate an individual to engage, the support from PD tutors and practice educators is crucial. A coherent and relatively seamless relationship between University-based theory and practice-based learning is a critical ingredient in enabling students to gain the most from the process of profiling.

PD tutors have made assumptions that practice educators will facilitate students in the profiling dialogue, challenge and debate critical issues with them in the context of PPD in the practice. This snapshot has been a valuable insight, demonstrating the fragility of this assumption. It calls into question the apparent seamlessness of the partnership.

In coming to understand the students' perspective, I have been able to envision different ways of working based on the data and proposals for a new model. Alongside the proposal, a series of recommendations have been made to bolster the student support mechanisms which underpin the system. It is envisaged they will enhance the ways students learn about their own personal professional development and the potential future benefits of deep engagement in personal profiling for CPD.

The outcome of this study will contribute to the ongoing development of a personal profiling system, founded on the philosophy of occupational therapy. It enables and facilitates students to begin to reach their potential and make choices in their development. This study has highlighted a practice for which there is a paucity of literature and 'user' evaluation. From my personal position as an occupational therapist and tutor the inclusive approach adopted within the research has been paramount. Enabling the voices of students to be heard and influence the development of the practice of profiling, as key stakeholders, has been crucial and a strength of the research.

What has emerged through the study should not be underestimated. The focus group outcomes underpinned the design and implementation of the study by way of ensuring, not only appropriate engagement of participants (and significant others were included) but that the methodological tools were developed in a user friendly way to enable the participants to be able to respond in an open and honest way. It is intended that through publication, the study will contribute to the body of knowledge around the concept of profiling and offer an opportunity for the wider academic community to consider profiling and further debate its merits and drawbacks.

The next stage will be an evaluation of any new proposals, which may be adopted (Macintyre 2000) as a result of this study. Whilst this will be a routine process through the quality enhancement system, a full exploration of the effects the changes have for students, University tutors and practice educators will be undertaken once (and if) the recommendations have been fully implemented. The focus group technique for qualitative evidence has been successful in informing this study and therefore is deemed an appropriate method of evaluation for this next stage.



### **10.2.7 Self as Researcher**

Previous chapters have emphasised the importance of continuing PPD (COT, 2002; HPC 2008) and likewise this applies to myself. The opportunity to engage in this research provided a new context in which to continue my own learning and be reflexive and evidence-based in my practice. Hawkins and Shohet (2006:17) state that there is a need to stay at the learning edge that is at 'the boundary between what we already know and what is waiting to be learnt' as a means to 'continue to learn and flourish at work'. They argue that, 'we need to be able to always return to a beginner's mind'. It is on this premise that I began the study with the desire to be able to see more clearly the effects of personal profiling and better understand students' experiences and perspectives to develop the proofing system further.

At times my personal reflections on the process of research have been challenging. I have been working with troublesome knowledge (Meyer and Land, 2003), moving from being reflective to being reflexive as an inquirer and a learner (Finlay, 2006). I have drawn on my inner resources to sustain the research activity alongside developing my knowledge base, critical thinking and skills as an inquirer. At times I found myself in a discomfort zone, a liminal space, not being in a position to bring together the jigsaw of all the dimensions of the research. This was experienced particularly in the early stages when exploring students' stories and coming to understand the complexities of personal profiling for each cohort of participants. The feeling of responsibility as a researcher, particularly as an 'insider researcher', has been powerful. From my reflections I feel I have worked with integrity, valued and respected the perceptions of participants and been sensitive to individuals' needs and the context.

It has been a privilege to work with participants as a researcher. The reciprocity and level of trust particularly with student participants has not gone unrecognised. Participants interviewed talked openly and honestly with me. Throughout I have been acquainted with the complexities of students' lives and the impact this has on their academic and professional life.

The dynamic inter-face with two critical friends has been supportive and I have come to a new understanding of self. From engaging in this process there has been a sense of self-renewal and further grounding as an academic having explored personal profiling through the eyes of the student participants.

Having taken a positive approach to personal profiling since its inception I was conscious of my potential bias and as a consequence at every stage of the study put strategies in place to minimise any influences. However, from the research findings there appears to be some evidence that it is a supportive and beneficial mechanism for the promotion of early professional development and a structured basis from which LLL is fostered.

#### **10.2.8 Final reflections**

As detailed in section 10.2.7, the feeling of personal responsibility in the researcher role has been a particularly powerful source of learning for me. The reciprocity and level of trust shown particularly with student participants in the research process, I believe provided vivid and rich accounts of personal profiling. The study highlights the inherent complexities of the relationship between theory and practice in the journey of personal and professional development and becoming an occupational therapist.

My concern at all times was to attend to and be sensitive towards the socio-emotional aspects of the process of personal profiling and was demonstrated

through an inclusive approach adopted throughout the study. This was evidenced in particular during the focus groups in which participants were in charge of the process. The focus group provided the opportunity for participants not only to actively engage in generating data but also be involved in the recording of the data themselves and be part of the verification phase at the conclusion of the focus group. A warm up activity, 'top-of-the-mind-reactions', was used to assist participants in tapping into their personal thoughts on personal profiling before engaging in the open group discussion. Each participant was able to make a written record of the warm up activity to use as a trigger for the open dialogue. Participants contributed immediately to the discussion once the warm up activity was closed and the scene was set for the main discussion. As themes arose participants engaged spontaneously to further the discussion adding depth and richness. From within each group a reporter came forward to capture the key themes of the group's discussions. In this way the data was not exposed to my words, phrases and interpretations as a facilitator and I was able to learn the participants' language (Morgan 1998) from which to formulate more meaningful questions for both questionnaires and interviews. Candour and spontaneity are hallmarks of focus groups (Nyamathi and Shuler 1990). There was reciprocity of trust within the group and participants were spontaneous, open and honest in sharing their stories and their thoughts and feelings on personal profiling (the system, the process of profiling and the influences of significant others) all of which has enriched the data generated.

The focus groups were a successful dimension of the research in terms of informing the research design. This together with the frankness and honesty of participants in the focus groups and qualitative interviews, undertaken in the cross-sectional dimension of the study, has generated rich data to inform practice. The dynamic inter-relationship of the critical friends in the peer review has also been a real strength as discussed in Section 10.2.1.

## **10.3 Implications and Recommendations of the Study**

### **10.3.1 University-based Aspects of Personal Profiling**

From the study, differences in common understanding of the system and/or expectations of the roles within the process emerged, although briefing and guidelines are provided annually. Lack of consistency in the tutors' approach was a key theme to emerge. Through the interviews students articulated this by comparing their experience relative to that of their peers on the course. The study points towards a need to provide greater clarity for all partners.

The value of University-based PD tutors has not been contested by participants in this study. However, there is emerging evidence, which highlights issues of the psychological 'preparedness' and organisational 'readiness' for the process of facilitating personal profiling. Some tutors move more easily than others into the role of a critical friend, drawing upon their experience as a therapist. Other tutors adopt a more traditional teacher-student style, being more directive than facilitative, expecting students will be reflective, rather than facilitating them to be reflective. As students progress, this more directive approach may possibly inhibit students' ongoing development in that they remain in a position of reflectiveness and may not be facilitated to explore and push the boundaries to become reflexive. As with any relationship the quality of the critical friendship is crucial. A poor relationship may lead to an overly self-critical student or an under confident student. Taylor and White (2000) highlight this point citing the client/worker relationship and that the process of reflection concerns itself with improving that contextual situation also. Relationship building is an essential component of this type of learning partnership.

The use of the term 'critical friend' is not commonly used within HE for a working relationship between tutor and student. Personal support is normally available through a Personal Tutor and much of the literature on Progress Files identifies a

Personal Tutor (Cotterill, 2002). To convey the exact nature of the role the term Professional Development Tutor should remain, to acknowledge that the focus is more than personal support. Without this recognition there is a risk that this overarching aspect of the course may become submerged in a world so pressured towards administrative duties, research targets and so on, activities which Dawson (2003) identifies.

Tutors who adopt a directive approach provide a framework for a reticent or reluctant student. If this approach is used for all students it may not enable students capable of being reflexive to reach their potential. The development programme therefore needs to focus on facilitative elements of the role more clearly and the role of **reflective** dialogue together with preparation in relation to the process in general and ongoing support of tutors.

Fundamental to engaging in CPD is the development of skills to be able to reflect and think beyond a personal position to wider professional practice issues. To reflect on the political context and impact this has on practice is an important part of students' progression. It is also essential to be able to be self-evaluative; to examine the professional self and to critically analyse assumptions, underpinning theoretical tenets and debate issues concerning the body of professional knowledge. This reflexivity or critical self-reflection (Finlay and Gough, 2003) brings a new dimension to personal and professional practice. The model proposed in Chapter Nine will assist tutors in coming to an understanding of the students' potential learning journey.

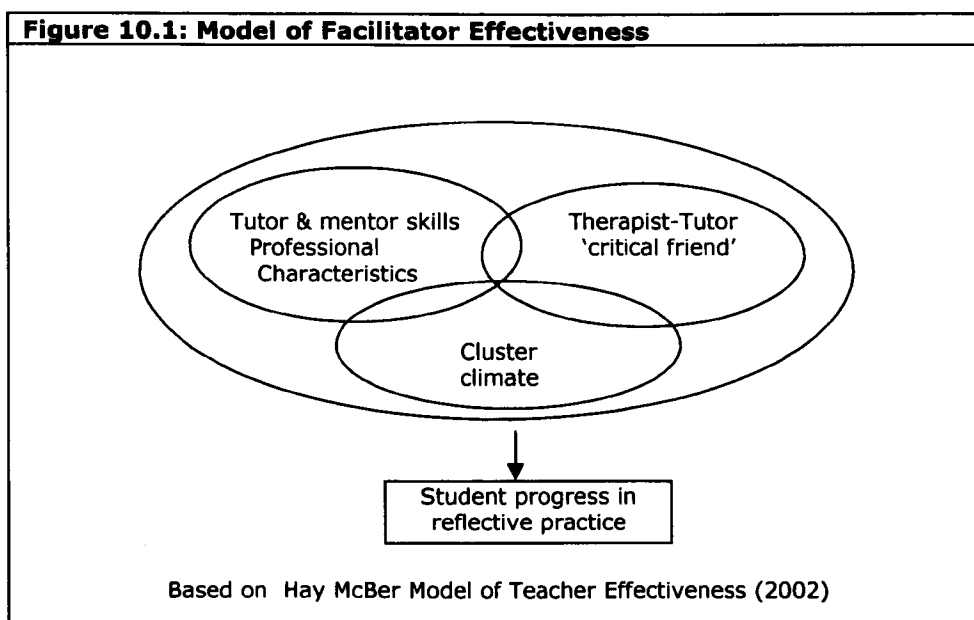
Dadds (1993) in discussing issues of reflective learning and professional development of teachers, draws out an important discussion of the self and the potential gap between the perception of self and actual self and/or the ideal self (Burnard, 1991) when studying ourselves as practitioners:

Where these established self-images are challenged, questioned and perhaps threatened in the learning process we may experience feelings of instability, anxiety, negativity, even depression. This is especially so if the 'self' we come to see in self-study is not the 'self' we think we are, or the 'self' we would like to be. (Dadds, 1993:287)

Having a critical friend who is supportive, sensitive and caring in that support, increases the likelihood of individual students remaining open to further learning, professional development and responsive to being a reflective practitioner (Dadds, 1993). Vulnerability emerged as an issue from Boniface's (2002) study of practitioners who were reluctant to be open with someone in a management position. The profiling system does appear to offer a safe environment for discussion and disclosure.

Creating a sub-set of tutors attached to each Interactive Processes group forms a professional development cluster. This cluster would provide continuity should staff changes occur and provide support for tutors. This form of stability in the cluster is important to students as they build a particular kind of rapport and working relationship through development sessions.

Assigning members to clusters needs careful consideration to ensure that individual clusters embrace tutors with a range of complementary skills. The Hay McBer (2002) model of teacher effectiveness provides a guide for PD facilitator effectiveness with the specific purpose of enhancing student experience and progress in reflective practice (Figure 10.1).



A significant number of students disclosed that they found they were floundering in the early stages of profiling particularly around the perceived value and direct relationship with practice. Contextualised briefing, grounded in reality to capture its potential value is crucial. Until students have greater confidence in their reflective skills and abilities a scaffolding approach (Vygotsky, 1978) may be advantageous to promote and support psychological preparedness. However, there must be vigilance to avoid imposition of structure such that it becomes constraining to personalised reflective processes.

### 10.3.2 Thinking to the Future

With increased IT literacy, e-portfolios and e-PDPs have been developed. Student preferences and learning styles must be accommodated and such e-based resources can and should be developed as an adjunct. However, careful consideration of the face-to-face reflective dialogic processes and its synchronicity, which has been valued by participants must be continued and not lost to an e-based world. There is also the key question of staff development in relation to the more complex skill of facilitating students in reflective dialogue through a web-based environment.

Dawson (2003) like Creek (2003) identifies the pressure on 'space' for such activities. The need for, in her words, 'fallow' time in students' timetables (Dawson, 2003:39). This notion appears as relevant to CPD as it does to issues of critical reading, writing and thought to which she refers. The time set aside for personal profiling is essentially protected time in which to engage in meaningful self-reflection and reflective dialogue. Clouder (2004) calls for reflexivity on the part of those responsible for course design and to ensure that the preparation for reflective practice is embedded in the curriculum and occurs in a meaningful way.

### **10.3.3 Professional Practice: practitioners' role in profiling**

Practice educators *do* have a role to play in the process of profiling. In fact, it is a critical role given the impact of professional practice for students in their becoming and learning to be an occupational therapist. Further consideration needs to be given to the ongoing preparation of practice educators for this role in a number of important areas. It is essential that they have an understanding of both the operational aspects of the placement and the underpinning philosophy of the programme in order to provide a quality learning experience. This will also contribute to the professional development of educators by strengthening their own capacity for critical reflection and thereby facilitating LLL. Developing their skills in this way will enable them to foster future practitioners as reflective practitioners. Partnership is a crucial ingredient in developing the profession and educating the next generation of therapists.

A proposal for a more flexible form of learning is recommended, which is designed to bridge that theory-practice divide. Flexible learning might be through a combination of learning packs and interactive web-based learning to complement current provision of support. This type of learning resource has the potential to present learning through the eyes of the student thereby strengthening the understanding of the inter-relationship of theory and practice



of reflection as well as providing a more time-friendly (just-for-me) mode of delivery. The rationale being that the theories students engage with in the classroom and how they learn would be more explicit, therefore enabling educators to become more insightful. The study has demonstrated that becoming a reflective or reflexive student is not an automatic or easily accomplished aptitude. Becoming a reflective practitioner is a complex intellectual and emotional journey for some students.

Benner's (1988) work on the acquisition of skills and concept of novice to expert needs to be borne in mind by both University tutors and practice educators. With experience comes a developing expertise. As a consequence practice educators and University tutors move away from the feelings of being a beginner and what it is like to be faced with new experiences and activities for the first time. It is important to share with educators how students are presented with the concept of reflection together with learning and teaching methods and techniques used to foster reflection. We can never rewind our experience and start from a stance of naivety but we can use emotional intelligence and empathy and learning theory to better understand the learners' journey and multi-faceted dimensions of experience.

Practice educators need to be reflective if Scanlon and Chermonas' (1997) premise to be able to teach reflectively is subscribed to, it is necessary to start with being reflective oneself. To encourage students to be reflective through profiling, there is a need to have reflective teaching strategies and methods in place (Stanley and Ranage, 2004). In this way practice educators' approaches may become more closely aligned to those of the University tutors previously discussed.

#### **10.3.4 Students' Engagement in Profiling**

The qualitative findings of the study indicate students come to value the process of profiling as they make the transition from their pre-entry preconceptions and assumptions about occupational therapy to a realisation that they are in the process of becoming an occupational therapist. The inter-relationship between theory and practice becomes increasingly important to students.

Bailey et al (2001) discuss the use of peer coaching as ways of managing CPD. Whilst this has been written about teacher development, this could be applied to the education of occupational therapists, once the new way of working has been established and evaluated. Exley and Dennick (2004) provide examples of senior students (proctors) drawing upon their relative expertise to assist more junior students in a range of work. Senior students with some experience and student perspective may have greater resonance with new students. However, consideration does need to be given in relation to multiple demands. Whilst the buddy system works for inducting freshers this may be perceived as more resource intensive due to its ongoing nature.

The recommendations made in the following section are intended to support students gain the most of opportunities open to them and continue to provide a safe environment in which to develop and prepare for practice.

## **10.4 Recommendations Emerging from the Study**

### **1. For the Institution/Department:**

- Recognition of the need to have protected time for the reflective dialogue of profiling.
- Resources to complement and support the preparation and development processes.
- A collaborative model of preparation and development in the process and engagement in the Profiling System.
- A cluster model for allocating PD tutors for internal support.

### **2. For tutors:**

- Enhance the briefing to be more explicit in the ways students respond to and engage in the process of profiling, based on the working model proposed in Chapter Nine. Thus enabling tutors to gain greater understanding of the students' potential journey.
- A resource pack (tool kit) to complement the person-to-person briefing and current guidance (Course Handbook); ensuring greater consistency in preparation and development activities.

### **3. For practice educators/partners:**

- Create a 'bridge' between the course and work-place in relation to personal profiling through flexible support mechanisms.
- A feasibility study to explore the viability of a mentorship programme for students' CPD needs during placements.

### **4. For students:**

- Briefing and guidelines for students should be strengthened emphasising the nature of the learning journey in LLL.
- Re-acquaint students with various models of reflection (year-on-year). Support them to review their own style of reflection and question whether it meets their current needs as they progress to more critical levels of exploring theoretical concepts and complex practice-based issues.

- Provide protected opportunities/time for reflective dialogue.
- Explore peer support; a 'buddy' system with new students.

### **10.5 Dissemination of the Research Outcomes**

As Oliver (2003:142) suggests:

Part of our concept of research may well be that we wish to use it to enhance the world, and to add something to the quality of life of other people.

Being an inside researcher my commitment to the study is to gain new insights into profiling and enhance the experience of students in the case study site. From the data there is potential relevance to other similar and emerging initiatives and therefore contribute to the wider community of education through three levels of dissemination:

- Micro level: all parties involved in the study;
- Meso level: the institution;
- Macro level: wider community of occupational therapy and education.

A priority is to disseminate key findings and recommendations to participants by offering a synopsis of the study to acknowledge their involvement; an ethically sound part of the research process. Denzin and Lincoln (1998:70) are explicit in their message regarding respect of participants: 'to learn about people we must remember to treat them as people and they will uncover their lives to us.'

In considering various aspects of research ethics, Oliver (2003) discusses the notion of feedback to participants in case study research through, for example, a meeting. This provides an opportunity for participants to openly discuss their respective perspectives alongside those of the researcher. Such a discussion can be used as a forum for learning; learning from the experience as a participant as well as learning about the research findings and its contribution to practice or new knowledge. Participants may experience increased confidence and enhanced self-esteem through having a listener respecting their views and valuing their contribution to the research, together with 'enjoyment, satisfaction and learning

gained' (Oliver, 2003:148). Maximising positive benefits of engagement in research must be on the agenda of ethical issues. The research process Oliver suggests may help participants;

....look at their own situation in a different light, and to learn from the process of reflection.

Based on Oliver's work, time with University tutors and practice educators to discuss the findings of the study, will form an important part of the dissemination process. To move personal profiling forward the recommendations will be disseminated to all stakeholders now currently involved. A realistic action plan will be phased; student recommendations can be introduced to a new cohort of students. Likewise new ways of working for University tutors can be phased with a particular cohort. Work with practice educators will be longer term. A change of protocol has wider implications and will need to be undertaken through a curriculum review. The implementation of new strategies and evaluation will be a key focus of the commitment to feedback directly into practice (Denscombe, 2003).

### **10.6 Future Research**

This section has presented emergent issues together with a series of recommendations. Whilst it is understood that profiling draws on a range of sophisticated concepts, principles and values, the level of complexity became increasingly apparent through this study. The areas worthy of further exploration are:

- *The relationship between profiling and engagement in early career individual performance review.*

From the outset, I was interested in understanding the outcomes of profiling for PPD. This was not only in terms of how students progressed through the course but how engagement in such a system prepared them to become newly qualified occupational therapists. Through the cross-sectional aspects of the study, there is evidence that some students realise the potential of the

profiling system at a later stage of their studies than others. The practice context in which regular supervision is a key feature appears to trigger the realisation that reflective practice and CPD are necessary. From qualitative interviews with third year students, there has been an increased appreciation of the benefits of profiling in preparing for their first post interviews. An exploration of the ways in which this supports the transitional period between University and first post would provide further insight and link the implementation of preceptorship in Agenda for Change (DH, 2004).

- *Structured reflection*

The process of personal profiling is supported by students' engaging initially in using a reflective diary and during professional practice a reflective journal. These featured in some students' responses. Further work is needed to consider how diaries, logs and reflective journals support the process of reflection, as in the words of Clouder (2004:107). 'Written reflection is a skill in itself'. The relationship between such written forms of reflection and PPD is important.

- *Mapping the development of reflective and reflexive skills*

The individuality and impact of intellectual and personal maturity became a critical factor when exploring participants' stories in personal profiling. The emergence of issues around the process of reflection indicates further research would be beneficial and complement the study. Boniface (2002:298) in her research on reflective practice with occupational therapists identified:

Reflection can be taught, but there needs to be a spark of ability present. Professional courses need to develop ways of identifying reflective potential in their candidates.

The profiling system seeks to address this issue. However further work in understanding students' perspectives is required to advance this particular notion of reflective potential.

- *Reflective dialogue*

The nature and quality of the relationship between students and the PD tutors were highlighted by participants. The dynamics of the interaction and interchange of thoughts and ideas are pivotal to the quality of the experience and certainly at the heart of a quality learning experience in profiling.

- *Psychological 'readiness'*

An emergent issue in data from some University tutors was their state of psychological or emotional 'readiness' to engage in partnership with students. Staff development sessions enable them to be prepared intellectually. However, from interview responses, 'readiness' in an emotional sense appeared to be an issue. If this has emerged as an issue for tutors, there is a need to identify the prevalence of the phenomena within the community of practice educators. The 'readiness' of educators has the potential to impact on the dynamics of the working relationship and the quality of the reflective dialogue itself.

- *The complexity of 'self'*

What has become explicit in this study are issues around 'self' and coming to know 'self' as part of personal profiling. Until this point only anecdotal evidence had been available. An in-depth exploration focused on students' narratives would be enlightening. Reeves (2000) through a longitudinal study explored the self-concept of student nurses to find that the impact of their studies was considerable. A similar investigation would provide further insight into students' personal learning journeys through pre-registration experiences.

- *Mentorship*

Part-time in-service students engage in profiling with a work-place mentor in a similar way as full-time students work with their PD tutors. This well established scheme has the potential to inform the implementation of a mentorship scheme for full-time students during their practice placements.

### **10.7 Contribution to Knowledge and Pedagogic Community**

The outcome of this research study has direct application for occupational therapy education and has relevance more widely in the promotion of early professional development of future practitioners in health and social care. At the start of this study the discussion centred on defining personal profiles and profiling. Within this there was a need to dis-aggregate the use of the term portfolio. Therefore, the findings have relevance in relation to aspects of some types of portfolio building. With e-learning environments being a means of enabling students in their learning so e-portfolios are being used more widely to provide a showcase of abilities, evidence of learning and a means to demonstrate that learning outcomes have been met (Gomez, 1994). Barrett and Wilkerson (2004) address the underlying philosophy and conceptual frameworks and discuss conflicting paradigms. Alongside this there has been the implementation of progress files in HE (Jackson and Ward, 2004). There is much to debate in these emerging areas and the outcomes of this study are pertinent.

The key themes of the research outcomes have applicability across disciplinary boundaries. The substantive theoretical contribution emerging from the proposed model of student engagement and experiential learning makes a contribution to the wider academic community, on the grounds of providing evidence of students' level of preparedness and motivation to engage in experiential learning for personal evidence building, with the purposes of early career development or preparation for a complex trans-disciplinary world.

### **10.8 Conclusions from the Findings**

By the very nature of engaging in a research study which explores a live system, a personal profiling system and connected issues, it is still 'alive'. Therefore the conclusions drawn here are from the outcomes within the boundaries of this particular study.



The overarching research question relates to occupational therapy students' attitudes to and experiences of personal profiling in the context of professional development and conclusions drawn are;

- students appear to have a generally positive attitude towards engaging in the process of profiling, in principle.
- students appear to recognise, articulate and acknowledge, at a conscious level, that personal profiling can facilitate their PPD.
- students appear to have the potential (intellectual capability) to benefit from the process of personal profiling and its focus on reflection but at differential levels depending upon their willingness, psychological preparedness and motivation to engage.

In the process of exploring the research question and design of the study, sub-themes emerged. These were inextricably linked and therefore embraced in the study to gain a greater insight into students' perspective of personal profiling. In relation to the sub-themes, the following conclusions are drawn thus far:

- The process of profiling appears to have the potential to enable students, with support, to progress along a continuum, of reflection - self-reflection - to the point of reflexivity if students have the capacity (intellectual, emotional and spiritual intelligence) and volition to *begin* and motivation to continue.
- Profiling is an individualised pathway of PPD; the level of engagement and rate of progression are determined by individual influences and to some extent the quality of the relationship with PD tutors.
- Personal profiling appears to enable individuals to develop their self-awareness and self-esteem.
- First year students appear to find personal profiling difficult to conceptualise initially if they have little or no experience of evaluating 'self'.
- The inter-relationship and transition between theory and practice and practice and theory within the lived experiences of students is not seamless.

- Practice experience is influential in providing meaning for students and promotes engagement or re-engagement in personal profiling for some. Practice educators' roles and attitudes are powerful, also, in promoting students engagement in the process of reflection and profiling.
- Personal profiling appears to be a challenging, messy and uncertain process. Preparedness and readiness are critical ingredients in the quality of the experience and sense of achievement and or satisfaction.

The personal profiling system provides a framework in which a milieu for transformational learning and *becoming*, an occupational therapist, is created.

Students' stories:

'I've found it (personal profiling) incredibly useful....I've been able to use the experience in other areas.... like placements and other modules when I've needed to reflect.

I think when it comes to say, interviews and so on, there's so much emphasis on being able to reflect and being a reflective practitioner, then the fact that I've been able to use those skills all the way through (the course) has been really valuable.'

Throughout this study a rich array of attitudinal evidence has emerged from students' stories to support personal profiling as a facilitative approach to their personal and early professional development. Most importantly the process prepares them for working *with* contextual (political and professional) change and the unpredictable and unexpected events of day-to-day practice as occupational therapists.

## **Bibliographic References**

## References

- Adami, M. F. (2005) The Use of Triangulation for Completeness Purposes. *Nurse Researcher*. 12.4:19-29
- Ahern, K. J. (1999) Ten Tips for Reflexive Bracketing. *Qualitative Health Research*. 9.3:407-411
- Alsop, A. (1995) The Professional Portfolio - Purpose, Process and Practice, Part 2: producing a portfolio from experiential learning. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 58.8:337-340
- Alsop, A. (2000) *Continuing Professional Development: a guide for therapists*. Oxford: Blackwell Science.
- Alsop, A. (2001) Perspectives on Competence. *British Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*. 8.7:258-264
- Alsop, A. (2002) Portfolios: portraits of our professional lives. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 65.5:201-206
- Alsop, A. and Ryan, S. (1996) *Making the Most of Fieldwork Education*. London: Chapman and Hall.
- Andrews, J. (2000) The Value of Reflective Practice: a student case study. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 63.8:396-398
- Andrews, M., Lyne, P. and Riley, E. (1996) Validity in Qualitative Health Care Research: an exploration of the impact of individual researcher perspectives within collaborative enquiry. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 23:441-447
- Andrews, M., Gidman, J. and Humphreys, A. (1998) Reflection: does it enhance professional nursing practice? *Reflective Practice*. 7.7:413-419
- Appleton, J. V. (1995) Analysing Qualitative Interview Data: addressing issues of validity and reliability. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 22:993-997
- Argyris, C. and Schön, D. (1974) *Theory in Practice: increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Atkins, S. and Murphy, K. (1993) Reflection: a review of the literature. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 18:1188-1192
- Bailey, K. Curtis, A. and Nunan, D. (2001) *Pursuing Professional Development: the self as a source*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Barlow, J. and Harrison, K. (1996) Focusing on Empowerment: facilitating self-help in young people with arthritis through a disability organisation. *Disability and Society* 11.4:539-55
- Bannigan, K. (2005) Asking Questions and Being Scrutinised to Develop Scholarship. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 68.3:103
- Ballinger, C. and Davey, C. (1998) Designing a Questionnaire: an overview. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 61.12:547-550

- Barnitt, R. (1994) *The Limits of Competence: knowledge, higher education and society*. Buckingham: Society for Research and Higher Education and Open University.
- Barnitt, R. (1997) *Higher Education: a critical business*. Milton Keynes: Society for Research and Higher Education and Oxford University Press.
- Barrett, H. C. and Wilkerson, J. (2004) Conflicting Paradigms in Electronic Portfolio Approaches.  
<http://electronicportfolios.org/systems/paradigms.html>  
 (13 Jan. 2008)
- Barry, C. A., Britten, N., Barber, N., Bradley, C. and Stevenson, F. (1999) Using Reflexivity to Optimize Teamwork in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Health Research*. 9.1:26-44
- Bateson, G. (1973) *Steps Towards Ecology of Mind*. London: Paladin.
- Beard, C. and Wilson, J. P. (2006) *Experiential Learning*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Kogan Page.
- Bell, J. (1999) *Doing Your Research Project: a guide for first-time researchers in education and social science*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Benner, P. (1984) *From Novice to Expert: excellence and power in clinical nursing practice*. Melo Park: Addison-Wesley.
- British Educational Research Association (2004) *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*. Southwell: British Educational Research Association.
- Bertrand, J. T., Brown, J. E. and Ward, V. M. (1992) Techniques for Analysing Focus Groups. *Evaluation Review*. 16.2:198-209
- Beyea, S. C. and Nicoll, L. H. (2000) Methods to Conduct Focus Groups and the Moderator's Role. *Association of Operating Room Nurses Journal*. 71.5:1067-1068
- Blacker, H. (2001) Learning from Experience. In Deer Richardson, L. and Wolfe, M. (eds.) 2001. *Principles and Practice of Informal Education: learning through life*. London: Routledge Falmer: 86-92
- Blom-Cooper, L. (1989) *Occupational Therapy - an emerging profession in health care*. Dulles: International Publishers Marketing.
- Bloom, B. (1956) *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: the classification of educational goals: handbook one: cognitive domain*. New York: Mackay.
- Boniface, G. E. (2000) A Collaborative Inquiry into the Nature of Reflection as Viewed by Occupational Therapy Practitioners. University of Wales, Cardiff. Unpublished PhD Thesis.
- Boniface, G. E. (2002) Understanding Reflective Practice in Occupational Therapy. *British Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*. 9.8:294-298
- Boud, D. (1990) Assessment and the Promotion of Academic Values. *Journal of Higher Education*. 15.1:101-111

- Boud, D. (2000) Sustainable Assessment: rethinking assessment for the learning society. *Studies in Continuing Education*. 22.2:151-167
- Boud, D. and Walker, D. (1990) Making the Most of Experience. *Studies in Continuing Education*. 12.2:61-80
- Boud, D., Cohen, R. and Walker, D. (1993) *Using Experience for Learning*. Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.
- Bourque, L. B. and Fielder, E. P. (2003) *How to Conduct Self-Administered and Mail Surveys*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Bowling, A. (2002) *Research Methods in Health: investigating health and health services*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Boyd, E. and Fales, A. (1983) Reflective Learning: key to learning from experience. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. 23.2:99-117
- Boyd, R. D. and Myers, J. G. (1988) Transformative Education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*. 7.4:261-284
- Bradbury, N. M. and Mackie, C. D. (eds.). (2001) *Improving Access to and Confidentiality of Data: report of a workshop*. Washington, D.C: National Academic Press.
- Brechin, A. (2000) Introducing Critical Practice. In Brechin, A., Brown, H. and London, E.M. (eds.) 2000. *Critical Practice in Health and Social Care*. London: Sage Publications: 25-47
- Brockbank, A. and McGill, I. (2004) *The Action Learning Handbook: powerful techniques for education, professional development and training*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- British Educational Research Association (2004) *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*. Southwell: British Educational Research Association.
- Britten, N. (1996) Qualitative Interviews in Medical Research. In Mays, N and Pope, C. (eds.) 1996. *Qualitative Research in Health Care*. London: BMJ Publishing: 28-35
- Broadfoot, P. (ed.) (1986) *Profiles and Records of Achievement*. London: Cassell.
- Brockbank, A. and McGill, I. (1998) *Facilitating Reflective Learning in Higher Education*. Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher education and Open University Press.
- Brookfield, S. D. (1995) *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brookfield, S. (1998) Critically Reflective Practice. *The Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions*. 18.4: 162-184
- Brown, R. (1995) *Portfolio Development and Profiling for Nurses*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Salisbury: Quay Books.

- Bullock, K. and Jamieson, I. (1996) The Effect of Personal Development Planning on Attitudes, Behaviour and Understanding. *Educational Studies*. 21.3:307-321
- Bulman, C. (2000) The Role of Mentor to Aid Reflective Practice. In Burns, S. And Bulman, C. (ed.) 2000. *Reflective Practice in Nursing*. Oxford: Blackwell Science: 80-105
- Bulman, C. and Schutz, S. (eds.) (2004) *Reflective Practice in Nursing*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Burgess, R. G. (1984) *In the Field: an introduction to field research*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Burgess, R. G. (1989) Grey Areas: ethical dilemmas in educational ethnography. In Burgess, R. G. (ed.) 1989. *The Ethics of Educational Research*. London: Falmer Press: 60-76
- Burley, P. (2000) Linking Registration to Demonstration of Continued Competence. *British Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*. 7.10:413
- Burnard, P. (1991) A Method of Analysing Interview Transcripts in Qualitative Research. *New Education Today*. 11:461-466
- Burnard, P. (1997) *Effective Communication Skills for Health Professionals*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cheltenham: Nelson-Thornes.
- Burrows, D.E. (1995) The nurse teacher's role in the promotion of reflective practice. *Nurse Education Today*. 15:346-350
- Burton, J. (2006) Reflective Practice Revisited. *Work Based Learning in Primary Care*. 4:297-300
- Calderhead, J. (1987) The Quality of Reflection in Student Teachers' Professional Learning. *European Journal of Teacher Education*. 10.3:269-278
- Calderhead, J. and James, C. (1992) Recording Students' Learning Experiences. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. 16.1:3-12
- Campbell, J. (2006) *Making Britain Better* [online]. BBC. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/events/nhs\\_at\\_50/special\\_report/119803.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/events/nhs_at_50/special_report/119803.stm) (11 Jan. 2006).
- Carnell, C. (2003) *Managing Change in Organisations*. Harlow: Prentice-Hall.
- Carnall, L. (1998) Developing Student Autonomy in Education: the independent option. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 61.12:551-555
- Carper, B. (1978) Fundamental Patterns of Knowing. *Advanced Journal of Nursing*. 1:13-23
- Castle, A. (1996) Developing an ethos of reflective practice for continuing professional development. *British Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*. 3.7:358-359
- Cayne, J. V. (1995) Portfolios: a developmental influence? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 21:395-405

- Christians, C. G. (2000) Ethics and Politics in Qualitative Research. In Denzin N. and Lincoln Y. (eds.) 2000. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. Beverley Hills: Sage Publications: 133-155
- Clifford, V. (1999) The Development of Autonomous Learners in a University Setting. *Higher Education Research and Development*. 18.1: 115-128
- Clouder, L. (2000) Becoming Professional: an exploration of the social construction of identification. University of Warwick, Coventry. Unpublished PhD Thesis.
- Clouder, L. (2000) Reflective Practice: realising its potential. *Physiotherapy*. 86.10:517-522
- Clouder, L. (2004) Key Points and Future Developments in Reflective Practice within the Education of health professionals. In Tate, S. and Sills, M. (eds.) 2004. *The Development of Critical Reflection in the Health Professions*. London: LTSN: 101-107
- Clutterbuck, D. (1991) *Everyone Needs a Mentor: fostering talent at work*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Institute of Personnel Development.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2000) *Research Methods in Education*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Routledge Falmer
- College of Occupational Therapists (1998) *Curriculum Framework Document for Occupational Therapy Education Leading to Eligibility for State Registration*. London: College of Occupational Therapists.
- College of Occupational Therapists (2002) Position Statement on Lifelong Learning. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 65.5:198-200
- College of Occupational Therapists (2005) *Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct*. London: College of Occupational Therapists.
- College of Occupational Therapists (2006) *Occupational Therapy Enhancing Lives: career handbook*. London: College of Occupational Therapists.
- College of Occupational Therapists (2008) *Standards for Education: Pre-registration Education Standards*. London: College of Occupational Therapists.
- Convery, A. (1998) A Teacher's Response to 'Reflection-in-Action'. *Cambridge Journal of Education*. 28.2:197-205
- Cottrell, S. (2003) *Skills for Success: the personal development planning handbook*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Cowan, J. (1992) Learning Journals: What are they for? *British Journal of Educational Technology*. 23.2:137-140
- Cox, S. and Heames, R. (1999) *Managing the Pressures in Teaching: Practical Ideas for Tutors and Their Students*. London: Falmer Press.
- Cracknell, E. (1983) Diploma Course 1981. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 46.10:284
- Cranston, M. (2002) Clinical Effectiveness and Evidence-based Practice. *Nursing Standard*. 16.14:39-43



- Cranton, P. (1996) *Professional Development as Transformative Learning: new perspectives for teachers of adults*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Creek, J. (2003) Is Thinking a Waste of Time? *The British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 66.11:495
- Crotty, M. (1998) *The Foundations of Social Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Cutcliffe, J.R. and McKenna, H. P. (1999) Establishing the Credibility of Qualitative Research Findings: the plot thickens. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 30.2:374-380
- Daley, B. J. (2001) Learning in Clinical Practice Nursing. *Holist Nursing Practice*. 16.1:43-54
- Dawson, J. (2003) Reflectivity, Creativity and the Space for Silence. *Reflective Practice*. 4.1:33-39
- Day, C. (1993) Reflection: a necessary but not sufficient condition for professional development. *British Educational Research Journal*. 19.1:83-93
- Dearing, R. (1997) *The Summary Report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education* [online].  
<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/ncihe/sumrep.htm>  
 (27 Jan. 2006).
- Dennison, B. and Kirk, R. (1990) *Do, Review, Learn, Apply: a simple guide to experiential learning*. Oxford: Blackwell Education.
- Denscombe, M. (2002) *Ground Rules for Good Research*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Denscombe, M. (2003) *The Good Research Guide*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) (1994) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Department of Health (1990) *National Health Services and Community Care Act 1990*. London: HMSO.
- Department of Health (1998) *A First Class Service: quality in the new NHS*. London: HMSO.
- Department of Health (2000a) *The NHS Plan*. London: Department of Health.
- Department of Health (2000b) *Meeting the Challenge*. London: Department of Health.
- Department of Health (2001a) *Working Together – Learning Together: a framework for lifelong learning in the NHS*. London: Department of Health.
- Department of Health (2001b) *Establishing the New Health Professions Council*. London: Department of Health.
- Department Of Health (2001c) *Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care*. London: Department of Health.

- Dewey, J. (1933) *How We Think*. Boston: D.C. Heath and Company.
- Dewey, J. (1938) *Logic: the theory of inquiry*. New York: Rinehart and Wilson.
- Dey, I. (1993) *Qualitative Data Analysis: a user-friendly guide for social scientists*. London: Routledge.
- Dirkx, J. (1998) Transformative Learning Theory in Practice of Adult Education: an overview. *Journal of Lifelong Learning*. 7:1-14
- Douglas, T. (2000) *Basic Groupwork*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Routledge.
- Drever, E. (1995) *Using Semi-structured Interviews in Small-scale Research*. Glasgow: Scottish Council for Research in Education.
- Driscoll, J. and Teh, B. (2001) The Potential of Reflective Practice to Develop Individual Orthopaedic Nurse Practitioners and their Practice. *Journal of Orthopaedic Nursing*. 5:95-103
- Drummond, A. (1996) *Research Methods for Therapists*. London: Chapman Hall.
- Dryfus, H. L. and Dryfus, S. E. (1986) *Mind Over Machine*. New York: MacMillan The Free Press.
- Duffy, M. E. (1985) Designing Nursing Research: the qualitative-quantitative debate. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 10:225-232
- Duffy, A. (2008) Guided reflection: a discussion of the essential components. *British Journal of Nursing*. 17.5:334-339
- Edwards, A. and Talbot, R. (1999) *The Hard Pressed Researcher*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Longman.
- Egan, G. (1994) *The Skilled Helper: a problem-management approach to helping*. Pacific Grove: Brooks Cole Publishing Company.
- Ely, M., Vinz, R., Downing, M. and Anzul, M. (1997) *On Writing Qualitative Research: living by words*. London: Falmer Press.
- Eliot, T. S. (1944) *Four Quartets*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Elliott, J. (1991) *Action Research for Educational Change*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Ellinor, L. and Gerard, G. (1998) *Dialogue*. New York: Wiley.
- Eraut, M. (1994) *Developing Professional Knowledge and Competence*. London: Falmer Press.
- Eraut, M. (2004) Informal Learning in the Workplace. *Studies in Continuing Education*. 26.2:247-273
- Eva, G. and Paley, J. (2004) Numbers in Evidence. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 67.1:47-49
- Exley, K. and Dennick, R. (2004) *Small Group Teaching Tutorials, Seminars and Beyond*. London: Routledge Falmer.

- Fenech, A. (1999) The A-Z of Continuing Professional Development: part one. *Occupational Therapy News*. 7.9:14-15
- Fenwick, A., Assister, A. and Nixon, N. (1992) *Profiling in Higher Education: Guidelines for the Development and Use of Profiling Schemes*. London: Council for National Academic Awards.
- Field, P. A. and Morse J. M. (1989) *Nurse Research: the application of qualitative approaches*. London: Chapman Hall.
- Finlay, L. (1998) Reflexivity: an essential component for all research? *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 61.10:453-456
- Finlay, L. (2006) 'Rigour', 'Ethical Integrity' or 'Artistry'? Reflexivity Reviewing the criteria for Evaluating Qualitative Research. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 69.7:319-326
- Finlay, L. and Gough, B. (2003) *Reflexivity: a guide for researchers in health and social sciences*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Fish, D. (1988) *Turning Teaching into Learning: TRIST and the development of professional Practice*. London: West London Institute of Education.
- Fish, D. and Twinn, S. (1997) *Quality Supervision in the Health Care Professions: principled approaches to practice*. Oxford: Butterwoth-Heinemann.
- Fontana, A. and Frey, J.H. (2000) The Interview: from structured questions to negotiated text. In Denzin N. and Lincoln Y. (eds.) 2000. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. Beverley Hills: Sage Publications: 645-672
- Frances, D. (1995) The Reflective Journal: a window to pre-service teachers' practical knowledge. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 11.3:229-241
- Freeth, D., Reeves, S., Koppel, I., Hammick, M. and Barr, H. (2005) *Evaluating Inter-professional Education: a self-help guide*. London: Higher Education Academy.
- Freshwater, D. (2000) *Transformatory Learning in Nurse Education: a reflexive action research study*. Southsea: Nursing Praxis International.
- Frey, J. H. and Fontana, A. (1993) The Group Interview in Social Research. In Morgan, D. L. (ed.) 1993. *Successful Focus Groups*. Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.
- Fry, H., Davenport, E. S., Woodman, T. and Pee, B. (2002) Developing Progress Files: a case study. *Teaching in Higher Education*. 7.1:97-111
- Gartside, G. (1990) Personal Profiling. *Nursing Times*. 4.8:9-11
- Gergen, M. M. and Gergen K. J. (2000) Qualitative Inquiry: tensions and transformations. In Denzin N. and Lincoln Y. (eds.) 2000. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. Beverley Hills: Sage Publications: 1025-1046
- Ghaye, A. and Ghaye, K. (1998) *Teaching and Learning Through Critical Reflective Practice*. London: David Fulton Publishers.
- Ghaye, T. and Lillyman, S. (2000) *Reflection: principles and practice for healthcare professionals*. Dinton: Quay Books.

- Ghaye, T., Gillespie, D. and Lillyman, S. (2000) *Empowerment Through Reflection: the narratives of healthcare professionals*. Dinton: Quay Books.
- Gibbs, G. (1988) *Learning by Doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. Oxford: Further Education Unit, Oxford Polytechnic.
- Gifford, S. (1994) Evaluating the Surrey New Teacher Competency Profile. *British Journal of In-Service Education*. 20.3:313-32
- Gilpin, A. and Jorge, J. M. R. (1995) Can Diaries Bridge the Gap? *Teacher Education for Professional Development*. 4.3:22-27
- Glen, S. and Hight, N. F. (1992) Portfolios: an 'affective' assessment strategy? *Nurse Education Today*. 12:416-423.
- Godfrey, J. (1993) Developing a Profile and Record of Achievement in HE. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. 17.3
- Gomez, S. (2004) *Electronic Portfolios in Higher Education* [online]. [http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/id446\\_electronic\\_portfolios](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/id446_electronic_portfolios) (13 Jan. 2008)
- Goodman, J. (1984) Reflection and Teacher Education: a case study and theoretical analysis. *Interchange*. 15.3:9-26
- Grant, M. (2001) Mothers with Arthritis, Child Care and Occupational Therapy: Insight through Case Studies. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 64.7:322-329.
- Grbich, C. (2004) *New Approaches to Social Research*. London: Sage.
- Greenbaum, T. L. (2000) *Moderating Focus Groups: a practical guide for group facilitation*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Green, M. and Heames, R. (1993) Course Evaluation: a case study from health sciences. *Educational and Training Technology International*. 30.1:67-71
- Greenwood, J. (1993) Reflective Practice: a critique of the work of Argyris and Schön. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 27:1048-1053
- Greenwood, J. (1998) The Role of Reflection in Single and Double Loop Learning. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 18:1183-1187
- Hall, D. (1992) Professional Development Portfolios for Teachers and Lecturers. *British Journal of In-Service Education*. 18.2:81-86
- Hall, E., Hall, C. and Siron, A. (1996) Professional and personal development of teachers: the application of learning following a counselling module. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*. 66:383-398
- Halsall, R., Hustler, D., Carter, K. and Green, J. (1995) Recording Achievement and Higher Education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. 19.1:30-39
- Harden, J. (1996) Enlightenment, Empowerment and Emancipation: the case for critical pedagogy in nurse education. *Nurse Education Today*. 16:32-97
- Hart, C. (1998) *Doing a Literature Review*. London: Sage Publications.

- Hart, E. and Bond, M. (1995) *Action Research for Health and Social Care: a guide to practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Harvard, G. and Hodkinson, P. (eds.) *Action and Reflection in Teacher Education*. Norwood: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Hawkins, P. (1994) Organisational Learning: taking stock and facing challenge. *Management Learning*. 25.1:71-82
- Hawkins, P. (1997) Private Communication. In Brockbank, A. and McGill, I. 1998. *Facilitating Reflective Learning in Higher Education*. Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.
- Hawkins, P. and Shohet, R. (2006) *Supervision in the Helping Professions*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Hay McBer Consultancy (2002) *Research into Teacher Effectiveness: a model of teacher effectiveness*. London: DfEE.
- Health Professions Council (2004) *Standards of Education and Training*. London: Health Professions Council.
- Health Professions Council (2007) *Standards of Proficiency: Occupational Therapists*. London: Health Professions Council.
- Heinze, C. (1987) Gaining Insight Through 'Journaling'. *Academic Therapy*, 22. 5:489-495
- Henwood, S. and Sidhu, K. (2001) Group Reflection: is it worth exploring? *Occupational Therapy News*. 9.7:13
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate (1988) *The New Teacher in School*. London: HMSO.
- Heron, J. (1981) *Experiential Research Methodology*. Wiley.
- Hirst, P. H. (1974) *Knowledge and the Curriculum*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Hitchcock, G. (1990) *Profiles and Profiling: A Practical Introduction*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Essex: Longman.
- HMSO (1991) *Higher Education: A New Framework*. London: HMSO.
- HMSO (1999) *Government's Vision for a First Class Service*. London: HMSO.
- Hocking, C. and Ness, N. E. (2002) *Minimum Standards for the Education of Occupational Therapists*. Forrestfield: World Federation of Occupational Therapists.
- Holloway, W. and Jefferson, T. (2000) *Doing Research Differently: free association narrative and interview method*. London: Sage Publications.
- Holly, M. L. (1987) *Keeping a Personal-Professional Journal*. Victoria: Deakin University Press.
- Holly, M. L. (1989a) *Writing to Grow: keeping a personal-professional journal*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Holly, M. L. (1989b) Reflective Writing and the Spirit of Inquiry. *Cambridge Journal of Education*. 19.1:71-80

Holly, M. L. H. and McLoughlin, C. S. (1989) *Professional Development and Journal Writing: Perspectives on teacher professional development*. London: Falmer Press.

Holman, D., Pavlica, K. and Thorpe, R. (1997) Rethinking Kolb's Theory of experiential learning in Management education. *Management Learning*. 28.2:135-148

Hopson, B. and Scally, M. (1981) *Lifeskills Teaching*. London: McGraw-Hill.

Hughes, R. and Huby, M. (2002) The Application of Vignettes in Social and Nursing Research. *Journal of Advances Nursing*. 37.4:382-86

Hull, C., Redfern, L. and Shuttleworth, A. (2005) *Profiles and Portfolios: a guide for health and social care*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Hurst, P. H. (1974) *Knowledge and the Curriculum*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Hutchinson, D. (1994) Competence-based Profiles for ITT and Induction: the place of reflection. *British Journal of In-service Education*. 20.3:303-312

Ilott, I. (1995) Success and Failure in Professional Education. University of Nottingham, Nottingham. Unpublished PhD Thesis.

Ilott, I. and White, E. (2001) College of Occupational Therapists Research and Development Strategic Vision and action Plan. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 64.6:270-277

Jackson, N. and Ward, R. (2004) A Fresh perspective on progress files: a way of representing complex learning and achievement in higher education. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*. 29.4:423-449

Järvinen, A. and Kohonen, V. (1995) Promoting Professional Development in Higher Education Through Portfolio Assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*. 20.1:25-36

James, C. R. and Denley, P. (1992) Using Records of Student Experiences in an Undergraduate Certificate in Education Course. *Evaluation and Research in Education*. 6.1:23-37

Jarvis, P. (1999) *Adult Continuing Education*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Routledge Falmer.

Jasper, M. (2003) *Beginning Reflective Practice*. Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes Ltd.

Jenkins, J. (2006) A Personal Challenge. *Occupational Therapy News*. 14.4: 28

Jinks, A. M. (1999) Applying Education Theory to Nursing Curricula. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. 23.2:221-230

Johns, C. (1993) Professional Supervision. *Journal of Nursing Management*. 1.1:9-18

Johns, C. (1994) Guided Reflection. In Palmer, A. (eds.) 1994. *Reflective Practice in Nursing*. Oxford: Blackwell Science.

- Johns, C. (1995a) Nuances of Reflection. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*. 3:71-75.
- Johns, C. (1995b) The Value of Reflective Practice for Nursing. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*. 4:23-30
- Johns, C. (1995) Framing Learning Through Reflection within Carper's Fundamental Ways of Knowing in Nursing. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 22:226-234
- Johns, C. (2000) *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner*. Oxford: Blackwell Science.
- Johns, C. (2007) Deep in Reflection. *Nursing Standard*. 21.8: 24-25
- Jones, C. and Lyons, C. (2004) Case Study: design? method? or comprehensive strategy? *Nurse Researcher*. 11.3:70-76
- Joyce, B. R. (1984) Dynamic Disequilibrium: the intelligence of growth. *Theory into Practice*. 23.1 26-34
- Karlowicz, K. (2000) The Value of Student Portfolios to Evaluate Undergraduate Nursing Programs. *Nurse Educator*. 25.2:82-87
- Kaur, S. and Hamer, S. (1995) Implementing Professional Profiling. *British Journal of Nursing*. 4.4:226-229
- Kayes, D. C. (2002) Experiential Learning and its Critics: preserving the role of experience in management learning and education. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*. 1.2:137-149
- Keats, D. M. (2000) *Interviewing: a practical guide for students and professionals*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Kember, D., Ha, T., Lam, Bick-Har., Lee, A., Ng, S., Yan, L. and Yum, J. C. K. (1997) The Diverse Role of the Critical Friend in Supporting Educational Action Research Projects. *Educational Action Research*. 5.3:463-481
- Kember, D., Jones, A., Yuen Loke, A., McKay, J., Sinclair, K., Tseones Webb, C., Kam Yuet Won, F., Wai Lin Wong, M. and Yeung, E. (2001) Encouraging Reflective Writing. In Kember, D. (ed.) 2001. *Reflective Teaching and Learning in the Health Professions*. Oxford: Blackwell Science: 113-125
- Kember, D. and Leung D. Y. P. (2000) Development of a Questionnaire to Measure the Level of Reflective Thinking. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*. 25.4:381-395
- Kemmis, S. and McTaggart, R. (2000) Participatory Action Research. In Denzin N. and Lincoln Y. (eds.) 2000. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. Beverley Hills: Sage Publications: 567-606
- Kemp, P. (2001) Empowering the Supporters: enhancing the role of unqualified support workers in a housing scheme for people with mental health problems. In Winter, R. and Munn-Giddings, C. (eds.) 2001. *A Handbook for Action Research in Health and Social Care*. London: Routledge: 88-101
- Khanna, R. (2004) Reflective Practice in the Occupational Therapy Curriculum. In Tate, S. and Sills, M. (eds.) 2004. *The Development of Critical Reflection in the Health Professions*. London: LTSN: 47-53

- Kielhofner, G. (1982) *Conceptual Foundations in Occupational Therapy*. Philadelphia: F A Davies.
- Kitzinger, J. (1996) Introducing Focus Groups. In Mays, N. and Pope, C. (eds.) 1996. *Qualitative Research in Health Care*. London: BMJ Publishing: 36-45
- Kline, P. (1994) *An Easy Guide to Factor Analysis*. London: Routledge.
- Knapp, J. 1975. *A Guide for Assessing Prior Experience Through Portfolios*. Princeton: Co-operative Assessment Experiential Learning 2.
- Knodel, J. (1993) The Design and Analysis of Focus Group Studies: a practical approach. In Morgan, D. L. (ed.) 1993. *Successful Focus Groups*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications: 35-50
- Knowles, K. (1990) *The Adult Learner: a neglected species*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Texas: Gulf Publishing Company.
- Kobert, L. J. (1995) In Our Own Voice: journaling as a teaching/learning technique for nurses. *Journal of Nursing Education*. 34.3:140-142
- Koch, T. (1999) An Interpretive Research Process: revisiting phenomenological and hermeneutical approaches. *Nurse Researcher*. 6.3:20-34
- Kolb, D. A. (1984) *Experiential Learning*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Kolb, A. and Kolb, D. A. (2005) Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing experiential learning in higher education. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*. 4.2:193-212
- Kolb, D. A., Boyatzis, R. E. And Mainemelis, C. (2000) Experiential Learning Theory: previous research and new directions. In Sternberg, R. J. and Zhang, L. F. (eds.) 2000. *Perspectives on Cognitive, Learning and Thinking Style*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum: 5
- Krueger, R. A. (1994) *Focus Groups: a practical guide for applied research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Lankshear, A. J. (1993) The use of focua groups in a study of attitudes to student nurse assessment. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 18:1986-1989
- Latham, G. (1996) Collaborative Theory Building in Pre-registration Teacher Education. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*. 21.2:43-47
- Law, B. (1984) *Uses and Abuses of Profiling: a handbook on reviewing and recording student experience and achievement*. London: Harper Row.
- Lee, D. (2006) Preventing Re-admission. *Occupational Therapy News*. 14.4:29
- Lincoln, Y. S and Guba, E. G. (2000) Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions and Emerging Confluences. In Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) 2000. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications: 163-188
- Loughran, J. (1996) *Developing Reflective Practice: learning about teaching and learning through modelling*. London: Falmer Press.
- Lumby, J. (1998) Transforming Nursing Through Reflective Practice. In Johns, C. and Freshwater, D. (eds.) 1998. *Transforming Nursing Through Reflective Practice*. Oxford: Blackwell Science: 91-103



- Lyons, M. (1994) Reflections on Client-centred Relations. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*. 41:27-29
- MacIntyre, C. (2000) *The Art of Action Research in the Classroom*. London: David Fulton Publishers.
- Malkin, K. F. (1994) A Standard for Professional Development: the use of self and peer review; learning contacts and reflection in clinical practice. *Journal of Nursing Management*. 2:143-148
- Marczely, B. (1996) Personalizing Professional Growth: staff development that works. California: Corwin Press Inc.
- Marrow, C. (1998) Keeping Above the Surface in an Action Research Study. *Nurse Researcher*. 6.2:57-70
- Marshall, C. and Rossman, G. B. (2006) *Designing Qualitative Research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Maslow, A. (1962) *Towards a Psychology of Being*. New York: Van Nostrand.
- Mason, J. (2002) *Qualitative Researching*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Sage Publication.
- Mayers, C. (2004) Towards Understanding Spirituality. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 67.5:191
- Maykut, P. and Morehouse, R. (1994) *Beginning Qualitative Research: a philosophic and practical guide*. London: Falmer Press.
- Mayo, E. (1952) The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Harvard: Swinfen.
- Mays, N. and Pope, C. (1996) Qualitative Methods in Health Care Research. In Mays, N. and Pope, C. (eds.) 1996. *Qualitative Research in Health Care*. London: BMJ Publishing: 1-9
- McGill, I. and Brockbank, A. and (2004) *The Action Learning Handbook: powerful techniques for education, professional development and training*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- McGrother, J. (1995) *Profiles, Portfolios and How to Build Them*. London: Scutari Press.
- McNiff, J. (2002) *Action Research: principles and practice*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Melville, E. (1995) The Implications of PREP for Practitioners. *Professional Nurse*. 10.7:474-476
- Meyer, J. H. F. and Land, R. (2003) Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge (1): linkages to ways of thinking and practising. In Rust, C. (ed.) 2003. *Improving Student Learning*. Oxford: OCSLD.
- Mezirow, J. (1981) A Critical Theory of Adult Education. *Adult Education*. 32.1:3-24

Mezirow, J. (1990) *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood*. San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miettinen, R. (2000) The Concept of Experiential Learning and John Dewey's Theory of Reflective Thought and Action. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*. 19.1:54-72

Mills, G. (2003) *Action Research: a guide for the teacher researcher*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.

Mitchell, P. (1994) A Guide to Profiling and Portfolios. *Nursing Standard*. 8.4:25-28

Moon, J. A. (1999) *Reflection in Learning and Professional Development: theory and practice*. London: Kogan Page.

Moon, J. A. (2004) *A Handbook of Reflective and Experiential Learning: theory and practice*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Moon, J. A. (2006) Good Practice in Teaching and Learning [online]  
<http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/good/lea/htm>.  
(9 Jan. 2006).

Morgan, D. L. (1998) *The Focus Group Guide*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Morgan, D. L. and Kruger, R. A. (1993) When to Use Focus Groups and Why. In Morgan, D. L. (ed.) 1993. *Successful Focus Groups*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications: 3-19

Moreton-Cooper, A. (2000) *Action Research in Health Care*. Oxford: Blackwell Science.

Munton, R. (1995) Developing your personal professional profile. *Mental Health Nursing*. 15.6:8-10

Noffke, S. (2002) Action Research: towards the next generation. In Day, C., Elliott, J., Somekh, B. and Winter, R. 2002. *Theory and Practice in Action Research: some international perspectives*. Oxford: Symposium Books: 13-26

November, P. (1996) Journals for the Journey into Deep Learning: a framework. *Higher Education Research and Development*. 15.1:115-127

Nyamanthi, A. and Shuler, P. (1990) Focus group interview: a research technique for informed nursing practice. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 15:1281-1288

O'Brien, K. (1993) Improving Survey Questionnaires Through Focus Groups. In Morgan, D. L. (ed) 1993. *Successful Focus Groups*. Thousand Island: Sage Publications: 105-117

O'Connor, K. P. and Hallum, R. S. (2000) Sorcery of the Self. *Theory and Psychology*. 10.2: 238-264

O'Connor, A., Hyde, A. and Treacy, M. (2003) Nurse Teachers' Constructions of Reflection and Reflective Practice. *Reflective Practice*. 4.2:107-120

O'Hanlon, C. (2002) Reflection and Action in Research: is there a moral responsibility to act. In Day, C., Elliott, J., Somekh, B. And Winter, R. (eds.) 2002. *Theory and Practice in Action research: some international perspectives*. Oxford: Symposium Books: 111-120

Oliver, P. (2003) *The Student's Guide to Research Ethics*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Oppenheim, A. N. (1992) *Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Pinter Publishers.

Pallant, J. (2001) *SPSS Survival Manual*. Buckingham: Open university Press.

Patton, M. Q. (1987) *How to Use Qualitative Methods in Evaluation*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Pierce, R. (2005) *Profiles and Portfolios of Evidence*. Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes.

Polgar, S. and Thomas, S.A. (1995) *Introduction to Research in Health Sciences*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone.

Pollard, A. (2002) *Reflective Teaching*. London: Continuum.

Porritt, I. (1990) *Interactive Strategies: an introduction for health professionals*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone.

Primeau, L.A. (2003) Reflections on Self in Qualitative Research: stories of family. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 57.1:9-16

Proff, I. (1975) *At a Journal Workshop: the basic text and guide for using the intensive journal*. New York: Dialogue House Library.

Quality Assurance Agency (2001) *Benchmark Statement for Health Care Programmes*. Gloucester: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

Quay, J. (2003) experience and Participation: relating theories of learning. *The Journal of Experiential Education*. 26.2:105-116

Quality Assurance Agency (2001) Policy Statement on a Progress Files for Higher Education [online]  
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/progressFiles/archive/policystatement/d>  
(24 Mar. 2006).

Quinn, F. M. (1998) *Continuing Professional Development Nursing: a guide for practitioners and educators*. Cheltenham: Stanley Thornes.

Ramsden, P. (1992) *Learning To Teach In Higher Education*. London: Routledge.

Redfern, L. and Hull, C. (1997) Professional development PREP and Profiles: knowledge for practice. *Nursing Times*. 93.1:1-7

Reel, K. (2006) Summary Report on the College of Occupational Therapists' Research Governance Arrangements. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 69.2:86-90

Reeves, J. (2000) Past Caring? A longitudinal study in the modes of change in the professional and global self-concepts of students undertaking a three year Diploma in Nursing course. University of Nottingham, Nottingham. Unpublished PhD Thesis.

Reynolds, P. J. (2005) How Service-Learning Experiences Benefit Physical Therapist Students' Professional Development: a grounded theory study. *Journal of Physical Therapy*. 19.1:54

Reynolds, F. and Prior, S. (2006) Creative Adventures and Flow in Art-Making: a Qualitative Study of Women Living with Cancer. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 69.6:255-262

Richardson, L. (1994) Writing a Method of Inquiry. In Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) 1994. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. 516-529

Richardson, R. (1995) Humpty Dumpty: reflection and reflective nursing practice. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 21:1044-1050

Richardson, G. and Maltby, H. (1995) Reflection-on-practice: enhancing students learning. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 22: 235-242

Riley-Doucet, C. and Wilson, S. (1997) A Three-Step Method of Self-reflection Using Reflective Journal Writing. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 25: 964-968

Robson, C. (2002) Real World Research: a resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Rogers, A. (2002) *Teaching Adults*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Buckingham. Open University Press.

Rogers, C. (1951) *Client-centred Therapy*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

Rogers, C. (1969) *Freedom to Learn*. Columbus: Merrill.

Rogers, C. (1981) *A Way of Being*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Roe, M. F. and Stallman, A. C. (1994) A Comparative Study of Dialogue and Response. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 10.6:579-588

Rolfe, G. (1996) Closing the Theory-Practice Gap: a new paradigm for nursing. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Rolfe, G. (1998) Expanding Nursing Knowledge: understanding and researching your own practice. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.

Rolfe, G., Freshwater, D. and Jasper, M. (2001) *Critical Reflection for Nursing and the Helping Professions: a user's guide*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Rowland, S. (1993) *The Enquiring Tutor: exploring the process of professional learning*. London: Falmer Press.

Rungapadiachy, D. A. (1999) *Interpersonal Communication and Psychology for Health Care Professionals: theory and practice*. Edinburgh: Butterworth-Heinemann.

- Ryan, S. (2001) Breaking Moulds - Shifting Thinking. *The British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 64.11:525
- Scalon, J. and Chermonas, W. (1997) Developing the Reflective Teacher. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 25:1138-1143.
- Savin-Baden, M. and Fisher, A. (2002) Negotiating 'Honesties' in the Research Process. *The British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 65.4: 191-193
- Saylor, C. R., (1990) Reflection and Professional Education: art, science, and competency. *Nurse Educator*. 15.2:8-11
- Schaef, A. W. (1990) *Meditations for Women Who Do Too Much*. London: Harper Collins.
- Scheurich, J. (1997) *Research Method in the Post Modern*. London: Sage Publications.
- Schön, D. A. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner: how professionals think in action*. Aldershot: Arena.
- Schön, D.A. (1987) *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Schutz, S. E. (1994) Exploring the benefits of a Subjective Approach in Qualitative Nursing Research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 20:412-417
- Schwandt, T. (1997) *Qualitative Inquiry: a dictionary of terms*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Sharp, K. (1998) The Case for Case Studies in Nursing Research: the problem of generalisation. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 27:785-789
- Sherratt, C. (2005) Importance of Journal Clubs in Continuing Professional Development. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*. 12.9:378
- Shih, F. J. (1998) Triangulation in Nursing Research: issues of conceptual clarity and purpose. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 28.3:631-641
- Silverman, D. (2001) *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Sage Publications.
- Sim, J. and Sharp, K. (1998) A Critical Appraisal of the Role of Triangulation in Nursing Research. *Journal of Nursing Studies*. 35:23-31
- Simco, N. (1995) Professional Profiling and Developing in the Induction Year. *British Journal of In-service Education*. 21:3
- Slusarchuk, R. and Nicholl, N. V. J. (1990) APA and Portfolio Development - a Review. *The Vocational Aspect of Education*. XLII.113:109-112
- Spalding, N. J. (1998) Reflection in Professional Development: a personal experience. *British Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*. 5.7:379-382
- Spalding, N. J. (2004) Using Vignettes to Assist Reflection within Action Research Study on a Pre-operative Education Programme. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 67.9:388-395

- Stanley, H. and Ramage, C. (2004) Reflective Practice in Teacher Preparation. In Tate, S. and Sills, M. (eds.) 2004. *The Development of Critical Reflection in the Health Professions*. London: LTSN: 88-95
- Stein-Parbury, M. J. (2000) *Patient and Person*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Churchill Livingstone: Sydney.
- Stake, R. (2000) *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Stark, S. (1994) A Nurse Tutor's Experience of Personal Growth Through Action Research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 19:579-584
- Stenhouse, L. (1975) *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development*. London: Heinemann.
- Stevenson, C. and Copper, N. (1997) Qualitative and Quantitative Research. *The Psychologist*. 10.4:159-160
- Stewart, S. (1998) The Place of Portfolios in Continuing Professional Development. *British Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*. 5.5:266-269
- Steward, B. (2003) Writing a Literature Review. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 67.11:495-500
- Stringer, E. T. (2007) *Action Research*. 3<sup>rd</sup>ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Swaffield, S. (2003) The Role of the Critical Friend. *Managing Schools Today*. 12.5: 28-30
- Sword, W. (1999) Pearls, Pith and Provocation. *Qualitative Health Research*. 9.2:270-278
- Tarling, M. and Crofts, L. (2002) Reporting Results. In Tarling, M. and Crofts, L. (eds.) 2002. *The Essential Researcher's Handbook: for nurses and health care professionals*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Baillière Tindell: 171-177
- Taylor, C. and White, S. (2000) *Practising Reflexivity in Health and Welfare*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Teasdale, K. (1996) Using Personal Profiles in Reflective Practice. *Professional Nurse*. 11.5: 323-326
- Thompson, S. and Thompson, N. (2008) *The Critically Reflective Practitioner*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Thorpe, M. (1993) Experiential Learning at a Distance. In Boud, D., Cohen, R. Walker, D. eds. 1993. *Using Experience for Learning*. Buckingham: Society for Research in Higher Education and Open University Press.
- Thornbury, S. (1991) Watching the Whites of Their Eyes: the use of teaching practice logs. *ELT Journal*. 45.2:140-146
- Timmins, F. (2008) *Making Sense of Portfolios: a guide for nursing students*. Maidenhead: Open University Press McGraw-Hill.
- Travers, M. (2001) *Qualitative Research Through Case Studies*. London: Sage Publications.

- Turner, C. (2006) Informal Learning and its Relevance to the Early Professional Development of Teachers in Secondary Schools in England and Wales. *Journal of In-service Education*. 32.3:301-319
- Usher, R. And Solomon, N. (1999) Experiential Learning and the Shaping of Subjectivity in the Workplace. *Studies in the education of Adults*. 31.2:155-163
- Van Manen, M. (1977) Linking Ways of Knowing with Ways of Being Practical. *Curriculum Enquiry*. 6.3:205-228
- Vaughan, G. (1992) Profiling: a mechanism for professional development of students? *Cambridge Journal of Education*. 22.2:163-175
- Vince, R. (1998) Behind and Beyond Kolb's Learning Cycle. *Journal of Management Education*. 22.3:304-319
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978) *Mind in Society: the development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Walker, E. M. (1996) Questionnaire Design in Practice. *British Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*. 3.4:229-233
- Walker, E. M. (1999) Learning Contracts in Practice: their role in CPD. *British Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*. 6.2:91-94
- Ward, D. and Ritchie, R. (1994) Profiling in Initial Teacher Education to Support Professional Development in Primary Science. *Teacher Development*. 1994:105-119.
- Weil, S. W. and McGill, I. (eds.) (1989) *Making Sense of Experiential Learning: diversity in theory and practice*. Milton Keynes: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press: 246
- Wildy, H. (2003) Meaning and Method: using metaphors in qualitative research. In O'Donoghue, T. and Punch, K. (eds.) 2003. *Qualitative Educational Research in Action: doing and reflecting*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Williamson, G. R. (2005) Illustrating Triangulation in Mixed-methods Nursing Research. *Nurse Researcher*. 12.4: 7-18
- Wilson, S., Hine, A., Dobbins, R., Bransgrove, E. and Elterman, J. (1995) The Use of Reflective Journals in Undergraduate Teacher-Education Courses: a multi-campus perspective. *South Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*. 23.2:165-176
- Winter, R. and Munn-Giddings, C. (eds.) (2001) *A Handbook for Action Research in Health and Social Care*. London: Routledge.
- Wright, R. (1998) Research Pathways for Occupational Therapists. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 61.9:418-422
- Wright, R. (2001) Occupational Therapy: what makes you stay in the profession. *British Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*. 8.11:418-425
- Willis, J. (1997) Building Confidence. *Nursing Times Learning Curve*. 1:8
- Yin, R. K. (2003) *Case Study Research*. 3<sup>rd</sup>ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Zeichner, K. M. and Liston, D. P. (1987) Teaching Student Teachers to Reflect. *Harvard Educational Review*. 57.1:23-48

Zohar, D. and Marshall, I. (2000) *Spiritual Intelligence: The Ultimate Intelligence*. London: Bloomsbury.



## **Appendices**

**Personal and Professional Development**

**Personal Profiling System in the Case Study Site**

# Personal Profiling System

## Guidance Notes

### Introduction

Personal profiling is a dynamic learning process designed to enable individuals to identify their strengths, needs and aspirations in order to set strategic and behavioural goals. The profiling system aims to support students through the process of integrating their University-based and practice-based learning experiences for personal and professional development.

### Personal Profiles

A working definition for Personal Profiles in the HE case study site is as follows:

**A personal profile** is a document compiled and *owned*, by an individual for a professional or academic purpose, which provides a framework from which to engage in retrospective and prospective reflection on experience, alone or with another person. The process of reflection acknowledges the integrated nature of cognition, affect and behaviour.

### Profiling

Working with a personal profile and engaging in activities within its framework is termed profiling. Profiling in the HE case study can therefore be defined as;

a dynamic process which enables the individual, alone or with another person, to identify their abilities, strengths, needs and aspirations, whether personal or professional, and set their own personal goals and development strategies. The process of profiling is ongoing with strategic in-built points where the individual formalises the outcome of their reflections by written entries within a given framework of the profile/profiling system.

### Personal Profile Documentation

The personal profiling documents comprise guidance notes, triggers to enable individuals to engage in prospective and retrospective reflection and space for reflective writing to capture the essence of the reflections in preparation for the reflective dialogue with a 'critical friend', PD tutor or significant other(s). A series of exemplars are presented in electronic form at the end of this thesis.

### Role of the Professional Development Tutor (PD Tutor)

Students are assigned a Professional Development Tutor who offers individual support. The tutor adopts the position of 'critical friend' using specific one-to-one meetings to engage in a reflective dialogue with each student, focusing on their personal profile. Tutors are encouraged to consider a flexible approach towards students particularly those who find this a challenge and to be responsive to their individual needs.

## **Responsibilities of the Student**

The profiling process aims to assist students bridge and integrate the theoretical and practice components of the course by embracing academic, university-based blocks of study and professional practice (placement experience). Students are expected to draw upon the profile in setting their practice objectives and formulating a learning agreement for each of the three placement experiences with their individual allocated practice educator (practitioner).

The Personal Profile remains under the ownership of the student and therefore is not submitted to the PD tutor for review or as a component of assessment. It becomes a framework for capturing and reflecting upon experiences. Students then draw upon the profiles to engage in a reflective dialogue with their PD tutor, 'critical friend' or significant other(s).

## **Scope and Purpose of Meetings**

During the one-to-one meetings the reflective dialogue will focus on the student's Personal Profile and likely include the following areas:

- the student's progress in University-based studies;
- the process of change - how the student feels he/she is about in their personal and professional development; the progress they are making, difficulties, challenges;
- personal achievements;
- highlights, challenges and or difficulties encountered;
- particular personal goals, professional goals;
- strategies to achieve the goals set;
- how the student will prepare for professional practice experience or what has been achieved during a recent placement.

## **Schedule of Meetings**

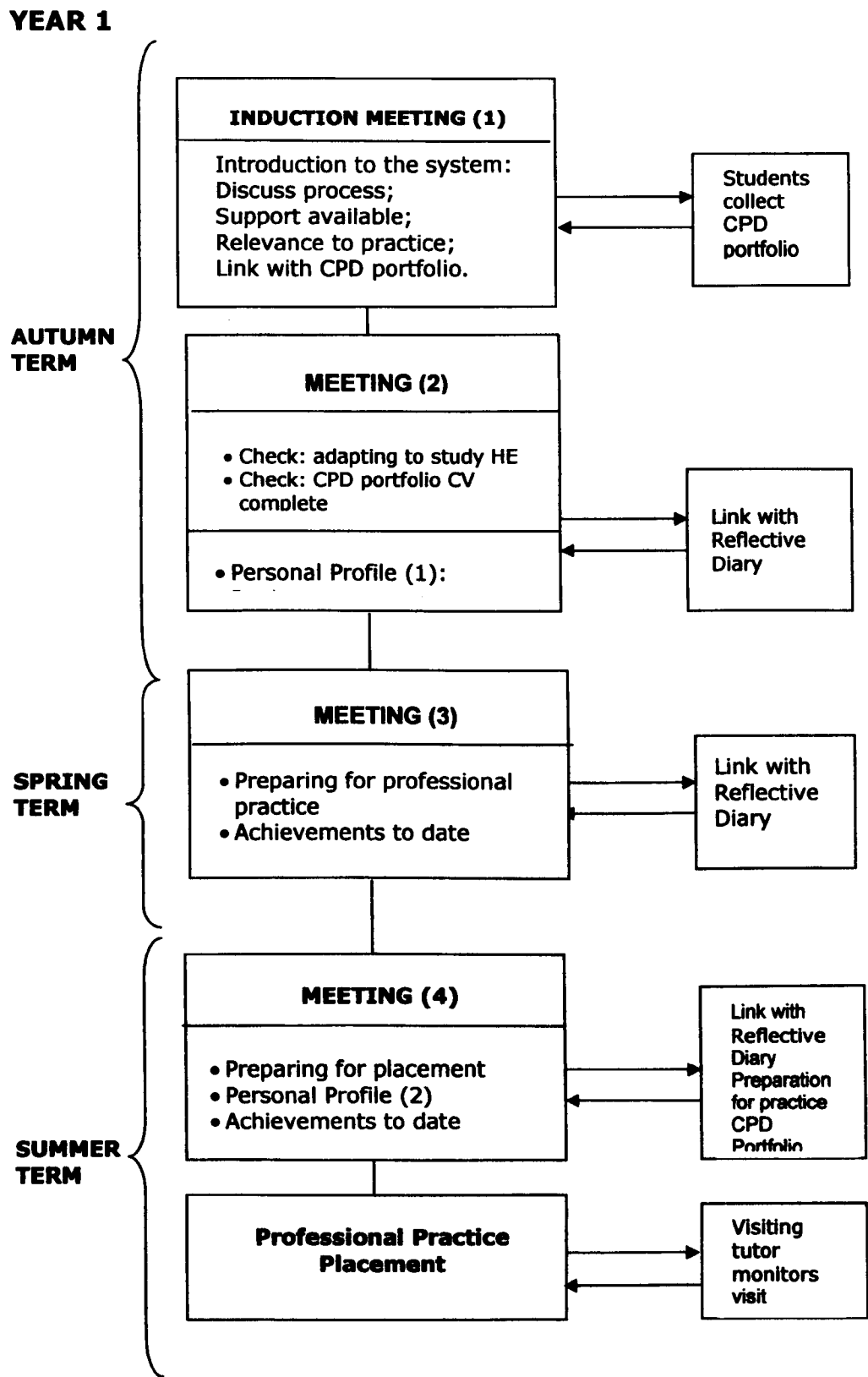
Meetings take place strategically throughout the year. Thus, enabling students to reflect upon University-based studies and prepare for professional practice and through post-placement meetings reflect back on the experiences to inform future University studies and the next period of professional practice. For diagrammatic representation of the schedule of meeting and key purpose of each meeting identified see pages to follow (Figures 1.1, 1.2, 1.3).

## **The Role of the Practice Educator**

A Practice Educator is a designated practitioner assigned to a student(s) for a period of work-based learning (a placement); that is whilst the student(s) is engaging in supervised professional practice experience. The Practice Educator although not directly responsible for the personal profiling they are responsible for working with the outcome of the student's personal profiling and goal setting as this informs the development of the learning agreement which underpins the programme of learning and assessment for the practice placement experience.

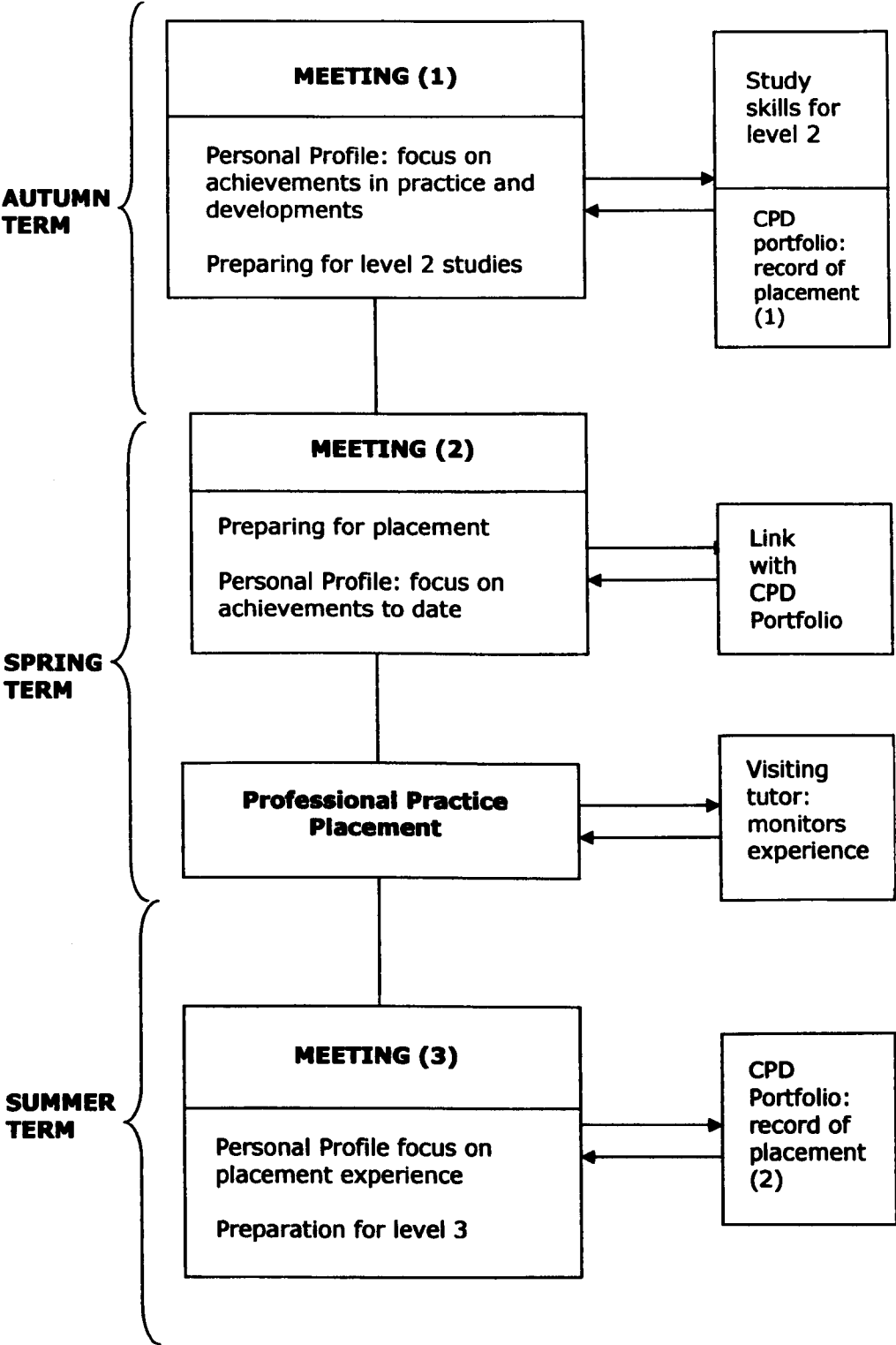
The Practice Educator is responsible for facilitating the student's learning in practice and the engagement in the professional profile; assessing the student's professional practice performance against the standards for pre-registration education and training for occupational therapy (HPC, 2004; COT, 2005).

**Figure 1.1 Personal Profiling: Schedule of Meetings Year 1**



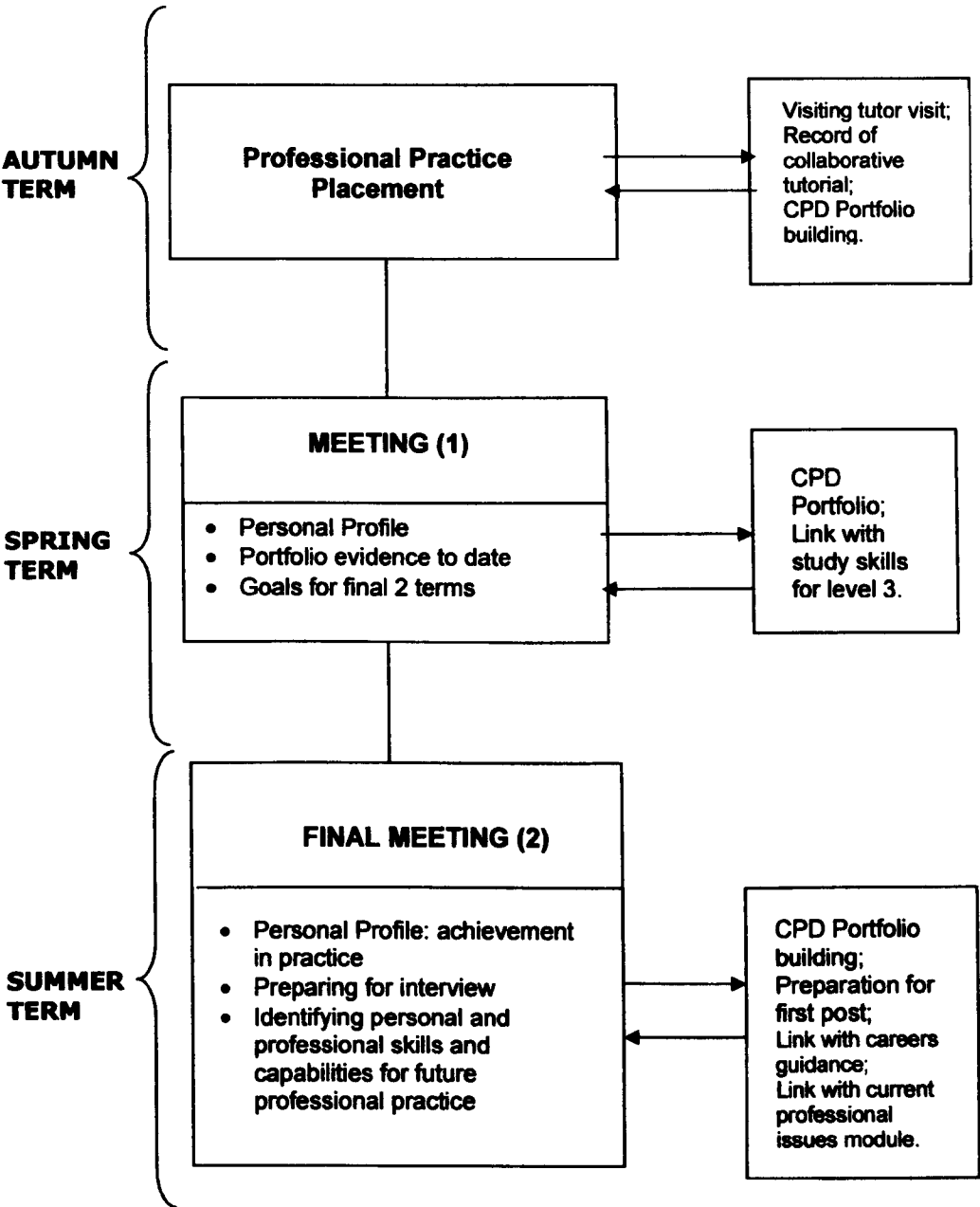
**Figure 1.2 Personal Profiling: Schedule of Meetings Year 2**

**YEAR 2**



**Figure 1.3 Personal Profiling: Schedule of Meetings Year 3**

**YEAR 3**



**Personal Profiling Attitude Questionnaire**



## Personal Profiling Attitude Questionnaire

Your name (optional) ..... Student ID .....

*Please respond by placing a tick in the appropriate box below:*

Gender            Male    ☐            Female    ☐  
Age                17 - 19    ☐            20 - 24    ☐            25 - 30    ☐            31 +    ☐

***Please work through each statement in order; placing a circle around the response which represents your feelings, most closely***

**All statements refer to the Personal Profile. Please mark on a scale 1 to 5**

**1 = disagree; 2 = tend to disagree; 3 = no opinion; 4 = tend to agree; 5 = agree**

<b>A1</b> Profiling is an investment in my future	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>A2</b> I find personal profiling thought provoking	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>A3</b> Profiling helps me 'sell myself'	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>A4</b> I haven't learnt anything about myself in the process of profiling	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>A5</b> I am not able to discuss how I really feel with my personal tutor	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>A6</b> I am learning a lot about the way I feel in respect of myself	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>A7</b> I found the Interactive Processes module enjoyable	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

<b>B1</b> I feel I am developing greater insight into the real me by using the profile	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>B2</b> Completing my profile is satisfying	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>B3</b> The profile helps me to develop new strategies for coping	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>B4</b> I feel motivated in my studies when I have completed my profile	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>B5</b> I feel empowered by working through the profiling system	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>B6</b> Personal profiling is a positive experience for me	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>B7</b> I am discovering what I want out of life through profiling	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

<b>C1</b> I find the process of profiling discouraging	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>C2</b> I don't feel that profiling is a preparation for professional life	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>C3</b> I wish I didn't have to evaluate everything I do	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>C4</b> I feel that personal profiling should be an integral part of the course	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

<b>D1</b> Periods of reflection for profiling are a priority in my workload schedule	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>D2</b> I feel I must identify a problem even if there isn't one	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>D3</b> I am able to acknowledge personal skills through profiling	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>D4</b> I feel that personal profiling is intrusive	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>D4</b> I feel responsible for my profiling	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>D5</b> Profiling helps me be aware of myself and how I interact with others	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

<b>E1</b> Working through the process of reflection is essential in my profiling	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>E2</b> Practice experience has had an impact on my commitment to profiling	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

***Thank you for completing this questionnaire***

**Personal Profiling Questionnaire**

Personal Profiling Questionnaire

Your name (optional) ..... Student ID .....

Please respond by placing a tick in the appropriate box below:

Gender            Male    ☐            Female   ☐  
Age                17 - 19   ☐            20 - 24   ☐            25 - 30   ☐            31 +    ☐

Please write your responses to the questions in the boxes below

<i>Have you engaged in the process of profiling before? If yes, please explain what you had to do and the type of documentation you had to keep, in the box below.</i>

<i>Have you ever kept a personal journal or descriptive diary. If yes, please explain below.</i>

<i>The term reflection and being reflective is often used in occupational therapy education. What is your current understanding of the terms? Please explain below.</i>

<i>How are you are going to manage your personal and professional development throughout the course? Please explain, briefly, your strategies below.</i>

Please continue by completing the printed questionnaire included in this pack. Thank you for your help in this study.

**Evaluation of the Personal Profiling System**

## EVALUATION OF THE PERSONAL PROFILING SYSTEM

### TUTORS' PERSPECTIVE



---

As a Professional Development Tutor you have a key role in the process of personal profiling. This questionnaire is designed to complement the evaluation being undertaken and provide you with the opportunity to give your opinion, a tutor's perspective. Your involvement in the study would be appreciated.

Please may I ask you to take a little time to complete the questionnaire. Your responses via the questionnaire will remain confidential. Anonymity will be assured throughout the study in respect of your personal identity. The research site will from the very nature of it being a case study will be identified in any documentation produced.

Thank you for your time and support of this study.

## Evaluation of Personal Profiling

In this part of the questionnaire you will be asked questions about your understanding of the Personal Profiling System please answer as fully as possible, in the space provided. Further comments on each question can be written overleaf.

1. In your opinion what are the key features of the Personal Profiling System in the B Sc (Hons) Occupational Therapy Course. Please explain in the space below:

2. How do you prepare for the Personal Profiling discussion/interviews with students?  
Please explain in the space below:

3. Do you refer to the Personal Profiling Guidelines?  
(found in the Subject Group Handbook and Student handbook)

Yes ☐

No ☐

Sometimes ☐

4. How informative are the Guidelines?

Very informative ☐

Informative ☐

Not informative ☐

Not at all informative ☐

No opinion ☐

5. *How do you set up the interview/discussions?  
Please explain in space below:*

6. *Please explain how you facilitate your student during  
the discussion:*

7. *In your opinion do students understand the concept of  
personal profiling?*

*Please write any further comments that you feel would be  
helpful to the study below:*





**EVALUATION OF THE PERSONAL PROFILING SYSTEM**

B Sc (Hons) Occupational Therapy

**PRACTICE EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVE**



---

As a practice educator you have a key role in the students' professional development. Personal development over the three years of study has an impact on a students' professional education.

This questionnaire is one aspect of an evaluation which is being undertaken on the Personal Profiling System which operates throughout the course. This part of the study is designed to explore the degree to which you feel, as a practice educator, the student(s) have become involved in personal/professional development activities in practice as a consequence of engaging in the personal profiling system within the University.

Please may I ask you to take a little time to complete the questionnaire. Your involvement in the study would be appreciated.

Your response via the questionnaire will be considered as informed consent and will remain confidential. Anonymity will be assured throughout the study, in respect of your personal identity, the placement site and any examples you may give pertaining to students with whom you have worked.

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Please may I ask you to return the questionnaire in the envelope provided.

Thank you for your time and support of this study.

## Evaluation of Personal Profiling

### GUIDELINES FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire relates to the most recent student placement in your department/unit. Please answer each question as fully as possible, in the spaces provided. Further comments on each question can be written on the reverse side of the page.

In some questions you will be presented with a choice of response and a box for a tick to be placed according to your opinion. Comments may be added to justify a response or to explore an idea you have on or around that particular question.

1. *During the induction period did your student(s) introduce their own ideas for placement objectives? If yes, please explain the nature/detail of the objectives:*

Further comments may be written overleaf

2. *How did you prepare for and accommodate the student's personal objectives for the placement? Please explain in the space below:*

Further comments may be written overleaf

3. *Did the student(s) refer/link the objectives to the Personal Profiling System which runs throughout the course?*

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
no	<input type="checkbox"/>
do not know	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments may be written overleaf

4. Did the student(s) share their personal/self-development goals and strategies with you?

Yes ☐  
no ☐  
sometimes ☐

Comments may be written overleaf

5. If yes, did you enable them to work toward achieving their goals during the placement? Please explain in the space below:

Further comments may be written overleaf

6. Please explain how you facilitate your student(s) to think about their objectives (professional or personal) during supervision:

Further comments may be written overleaf

7. How did your student(s) engage in the monitoring and review process of their objectives?

Very effectively ☐  
effectively ☐  
no opinion ☐  
ineffectively ☐  
very ineffectively ☐

Comments may be written overleaf

8. In your opinion, did your student(s) understand the concept of reflection?

Yes ☐  
no ☐

9. Did your student(s) relate theoretical principles to the therapeutic interactions/practice setting?

Always ☐  
often ☐  
no opinion ☐  
sometimes ☐  
never ☐

Comments may be written overleaf

10. Did your student(s) engage in the process of reflection in any of the following situations?

i) before a treatment session? Yes ☐ no ☐  
ii) during a treatment session? Yes ☐ no ☐  
iii) following a treatment session? Yes ☐ no ☐

11. Please describe how the student(s) reflected on experiences. What did the student(s) do? What did they communicate to you?

Further comments may be written overleaf

12. With regard to the Professional Profile document;  
How did your student(s) approach the work associated  
with the profile? Please explain giving examples:

Further comments may be written overleaf

13. How do you facilitate your student(s) in the  
work associated with the Professional Profile?

Further comments may be written overleaf

14. Do you feel that a Professional Profile and a  
Personal Profiling System are useful mechanisms  
through which to achieve personal and professional  
development? Please explain in the space below:

Further comments may be written overleaf

15. In your opinion, what are the key features of personal and professional development for students at pre-registration level? Please explain in the space below:

Further comments may be written overleaf

16. Please identify any practical strategies which you feel may support/facilitate students in their personal and professional development, below:

Further comments may be written overleaf

17. Please write any further comments that you feel would be helpful to the study below:

Further comments may be written overleaf

**Thank you for participating in this study.**

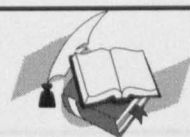
**Please return your completed questionnaire, in the envelope provided. Thank you.**

**Personal Profiling Opinion Questionnaire**

## Personal Profiling Opinion Questionnaire

Your name ..... Student ID .....

**Please write your responses to the questions in the boxes below**



***How do you use/apply your personal profile?***

*You may wish to think about where you complete the profile, what you write, how you feel when completing the profile. Please describe below:*

*Does the process of profiling affect your personal life?*

*If your answer is yes, please describe below:*

Further comments may be written overleaf

***What were your first thoughts/reactions when the profile was introduced to you?***

*Please describe them below:*

*Has the Interpersonal Skills Test had an influence on your personal profiling?*

*In what way? Please describe below:*

Further comments may be written overleaf



***How do you prepare your profile?***

*Please describe the process you go through in the box below:*

Further comments may be written overleaf



***Does the process of profiling affect your personal life?***

*If your answer is yes, please describe below:*

Further comments may be written overleaf

***Has the Interpersonal Skills Unit had an influence on your personal profiling?***

*In what ways? Please list below:*

Further comments may be written overleaf

***Has the process of personal profiling been of value to you?  
Please give specific examples below:***

Further comments may be written overleaf

***If you have any further comments which may help in evaluating the process and system of profiling please write these below:***

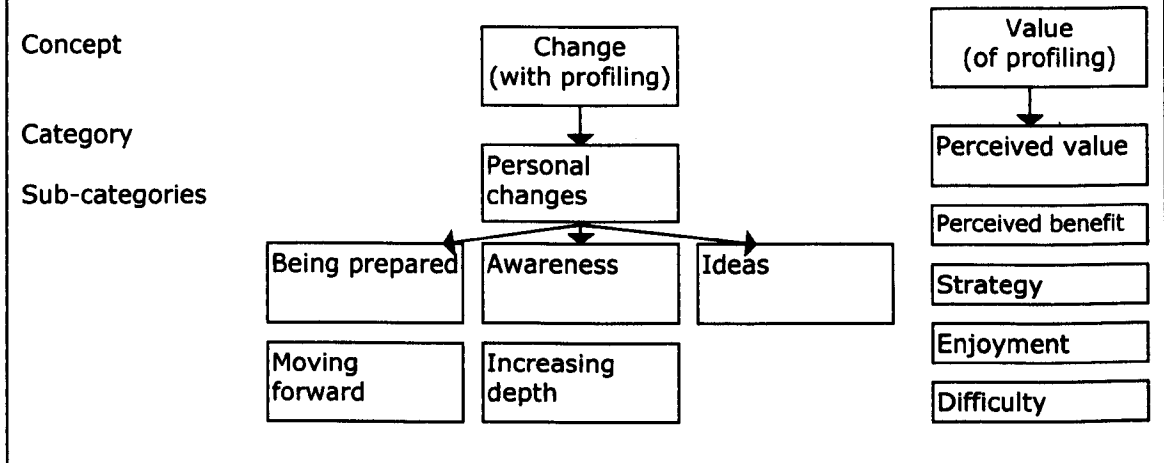
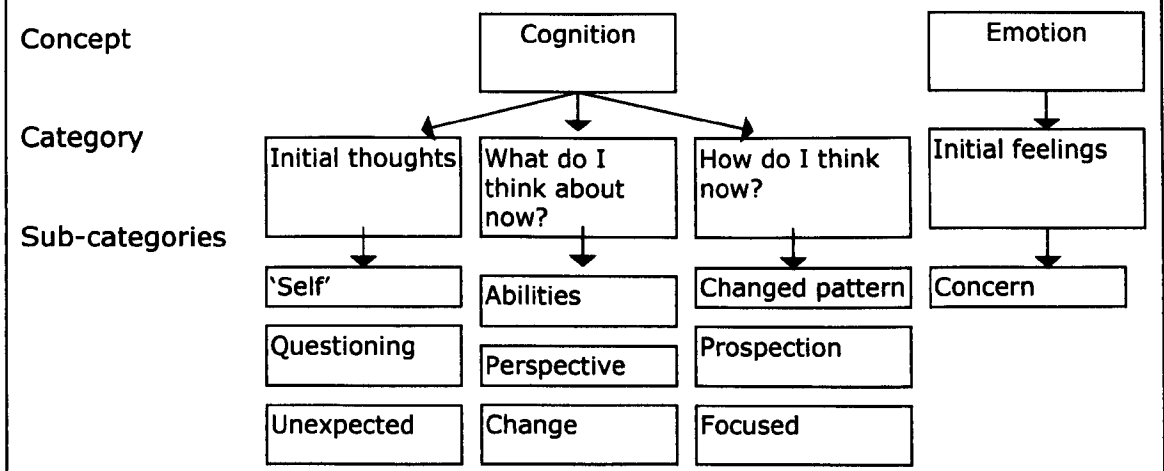
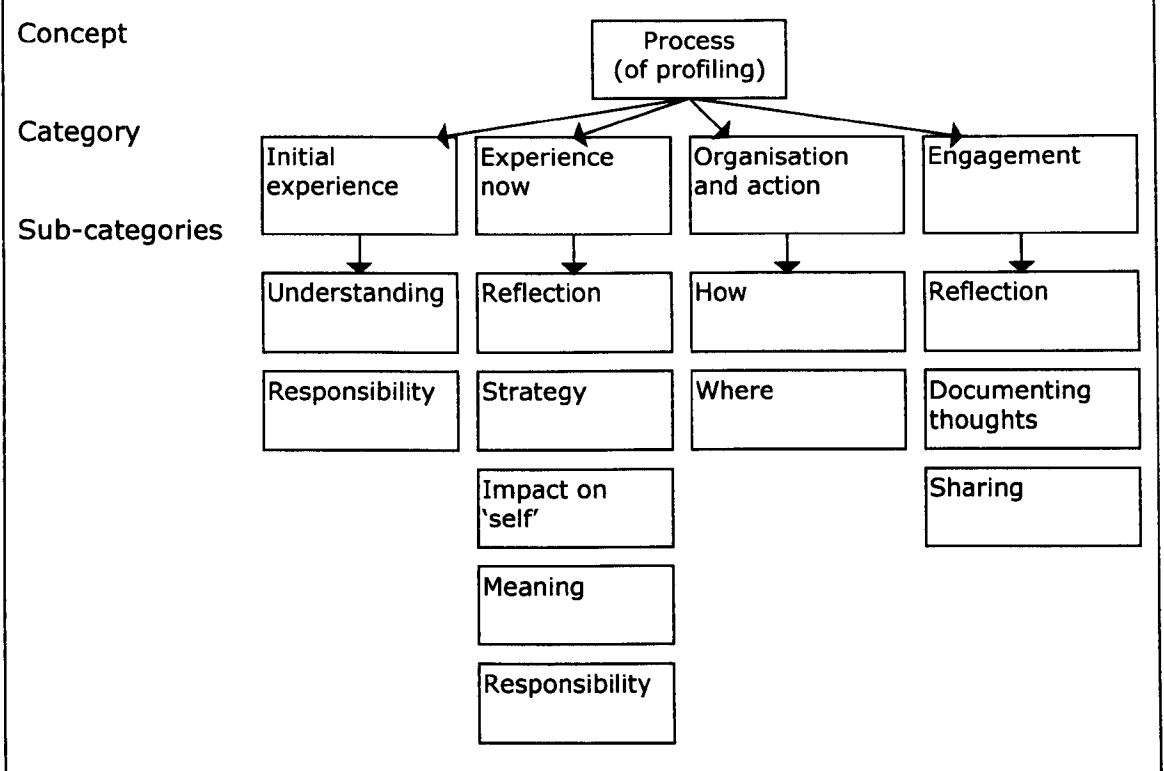
Further comments may be written overleaf

***Thank you for completing this questionnaire***

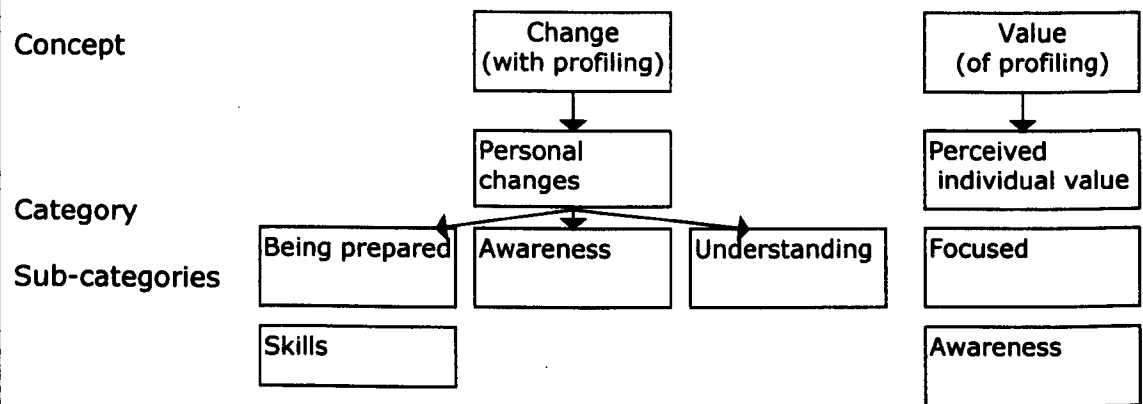
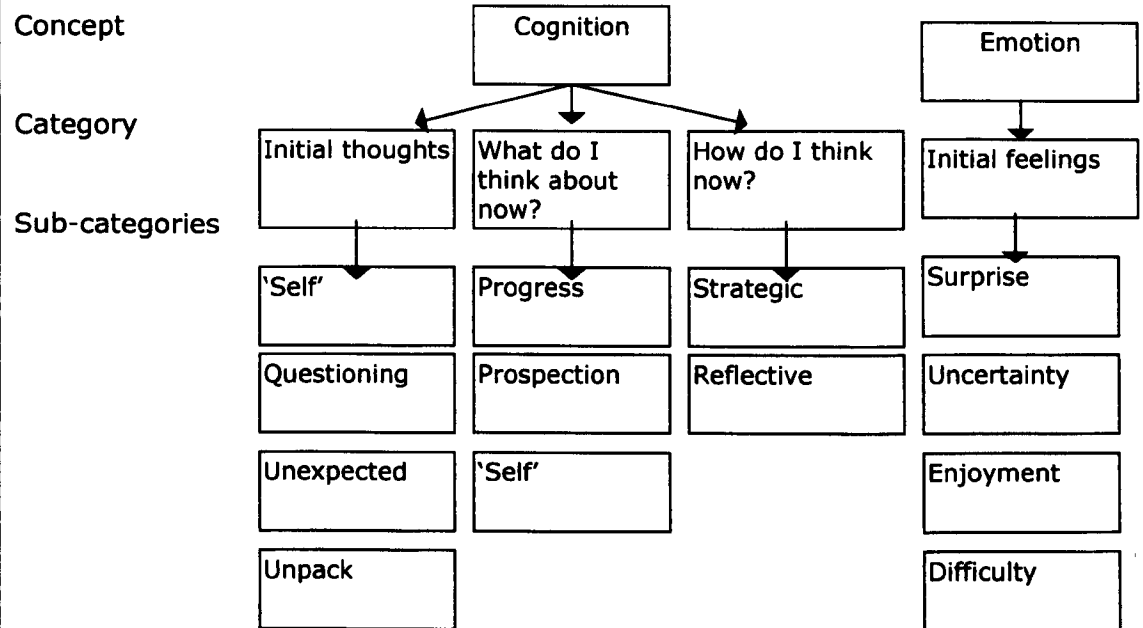
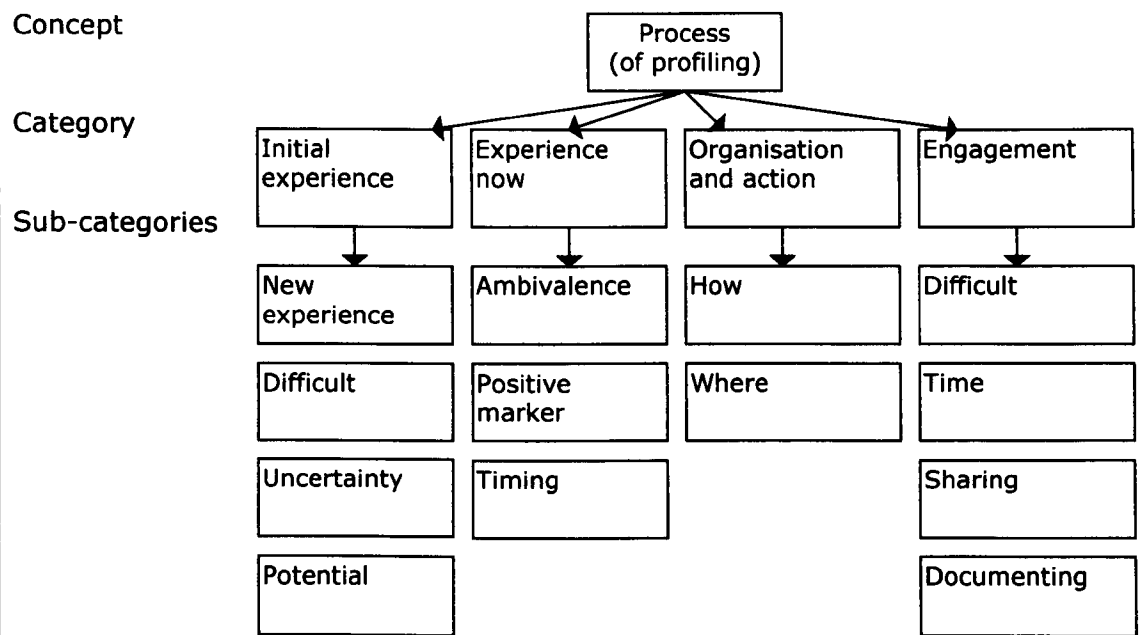
## **Appendix 6**

### **Qualitative Data Analysis: category mapping**

**Appendix 6.1: Data Analysis - Category mapping Year 1 cohort**



## Appendix 6.2: Data Analysis - Category mapping Year 2 cohort



**Appendix 6.3: Data Analysis - Category mapping Year 3 cohort**

Concept

Process  
(of profiling)

Category

Initial  
experience

Experience  
now

Organisation  
and action

Engagement

Sub-categories

Uncertainty

Reflection

How

Reflection

New  
experience

Strategy

Where

Documenting  
thoughts

Impact on  
'self'

Sharing

Time

Concept

Cognition

Category

Initial thoughts

What do I  
think about  
now?

How do I think  
now?

Sub-categories

Uncertainty

Progress

Search

Understanding

'Self' - personal  
reflection

Change in  
pattern

Concept

Emotion

Category

Initial feelings

Feelings now

Sub-categories

Difficult

Confidence

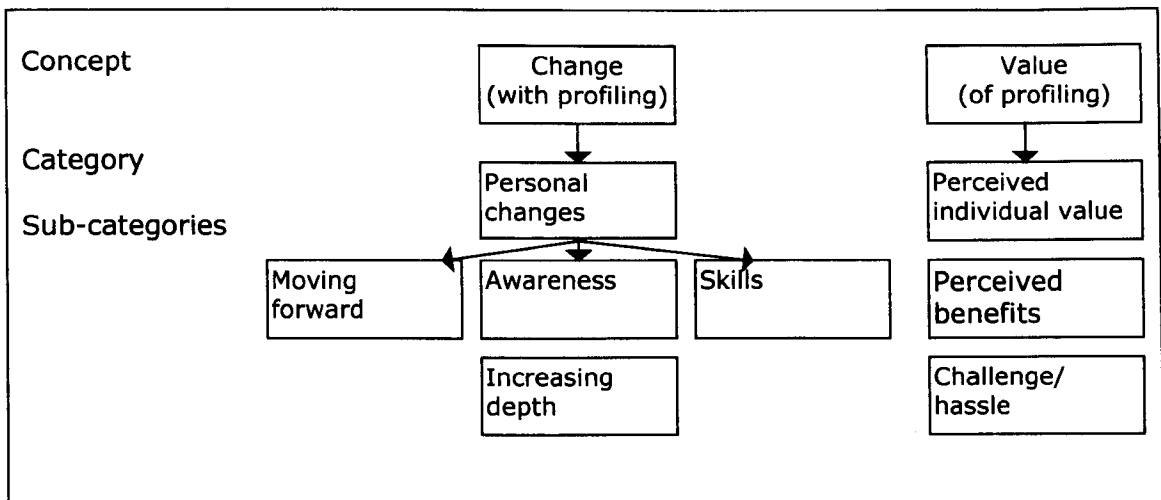
Ongoing  
difficulty

Positive  
feelings

Positive  
experience

Uncertainty

Perceived level  
of ease



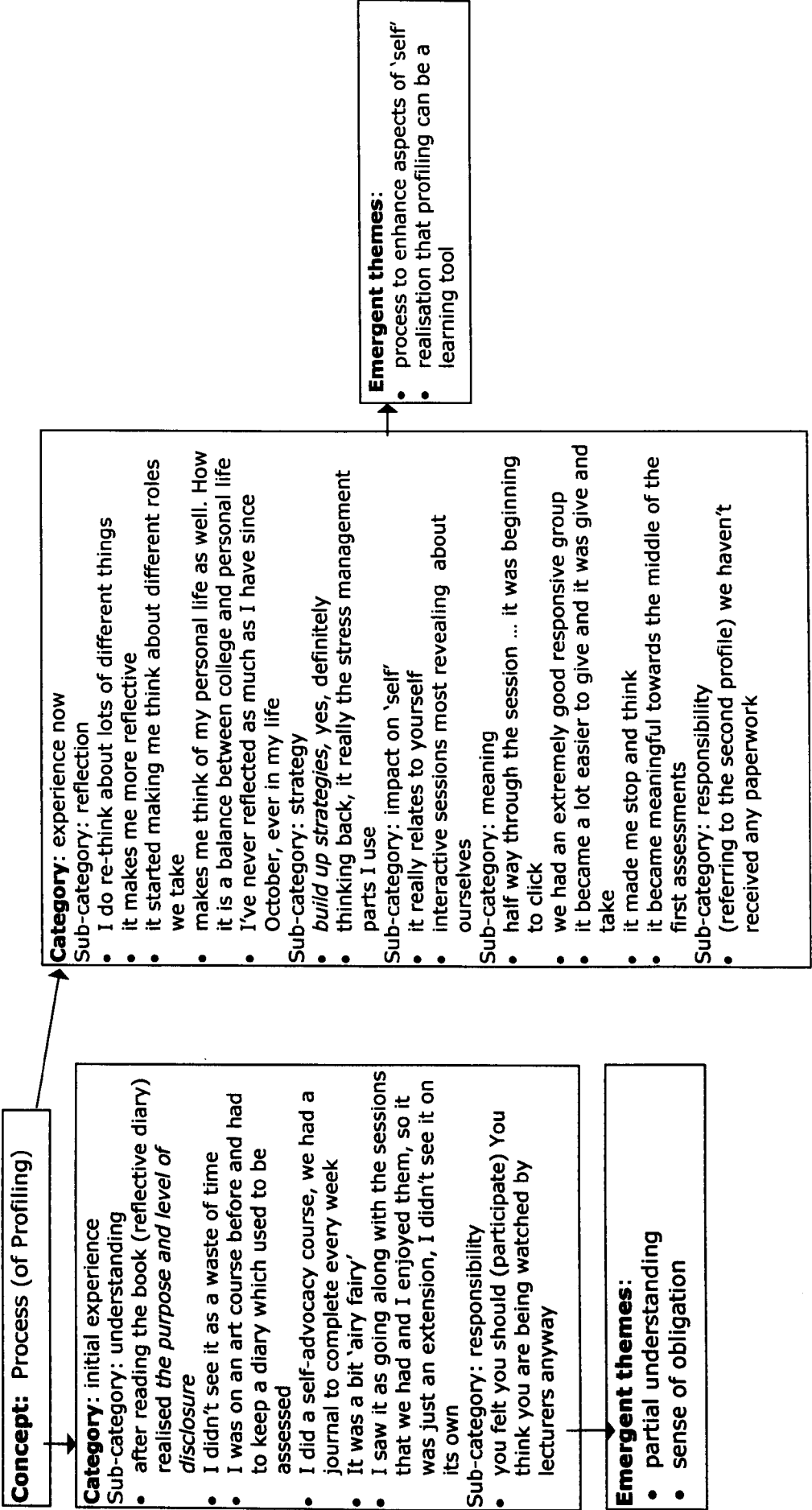
## **Appendix 7**

### **Examples of Qualitative Data Analysis**



**Appendix 7.1: Interviewees' Views: First Year Cohort**

Any word in *italics* indicates the word used by the researcher to clarify what the participant was trying to articulate.



**Concept:** Process (of Profiling)  
continued...

**Category:** organisation and action  
**Sub-category:** how

- complete when I have a few minutes
- don't go out of my way to set time aside
- best time do this book (reflective diary with profile) after placement
- one student in the group wasn't sure of what to do, I shared what I put with her
- in the quiet

**Sub-category:** place

- on the train
- at home

**Emergent themes:**

- the need for personal space
- helping others
- no dedicated time

**Emergent themes:**

- questions and writing provide support and a structure
- some hesitance about sharing with tutors

**Category:** engagement with the process  
**Sub-category:** reflection

- if the trigger questions weren't there, I don't think I'd have had a clue what to write really
- (trigger questions) forced people to be reflective
- I'm quite a reflective person
- I do think about even trivial matters to a ridiculous degree

**Sub-category:** documenting thoughts and feelings

- I wrote them (responses to trigger questions) from the heart, I wrote everything ...
- Information I put on the proforma emerged from the classroom situation
- it took me a lot longer than I thought
- my life is so busy that I don't always commit that idea ..to memory
- certainly it does help me if I write things down
- I wrote a lot (before fieldwork)
- wrote them out, sifted out ...talked it through ..picked out the ones more relevant.
- Perhaps there is a degree in there of what I think I ought to have put down or said. \*
- I broke it (objectives) down

**Sub-category:** sharing

- shared with two or three peers. It is because you think you might be doing something and others don't perceive you like that.
- (sharing) its whether I think I could trust them
- I felt it more as a formality (meeting the tutor)
- I wasn't taught by my professional development tutor and I didn't have a problem with that
- I'm not inhibited (in sharing with my professional development tutor)
- I had some friends who worried about seeing their professional development tutor
- different people click with different lecturers

**Sub-category:** editing thoughts and feelings

- (wrote them out), sifted out ...talked it through ..picked out the ones more relevant.
- perhaps there is a degree in there of what I think I ought to have put down or said. \*

**Concept: Cognition**

**Category: initial thoughts**

- Sub-category: 'self'**
- that's a bit deep
  - it's going to be really personal
  - coming out with a confessional ..things about their lives
  - I'm not sure I'm ready for that
- Sub-category: questioning**
- you thought you should be doing OT stuff
  - that's not OT
  - we should be looking at OT
  - lots of people going to be in tears ...(and it wasn't like that)
  - I thought what's the point
  - I thought it was useful
- Sub-category: unexpected**
- it's not in my nature to reflect on my actions

**Emergent themes:**

- need for professional identity
- lack of preparedness

**Concept: Emotion**

**Category: initial feelings**

- Sub-category: Concern**
- frightening ..because I was thinking
  - really embarrassing
  - really worried I would have to show it (the profile) to other people
  - mutual respect and trust that actually emerged

**Category: what do I think about now?**

- Sub-category: abilities**
- academic abilities
  - personal interaction
- Sub-category: perspective**
- seeing other people's opinions
  - different things you can't mark
  - looking back
- Sub-category: change**
- (personal objectives) they were alongside them (fieldwork objectives) I actually set them for myself before I went (on placement)
  - things I want to change in myself.... that I felt I could change
  - related to things that would be beneficial to change to be a good therapist

**Emergent themes:**

- aspiration to be a good therapist
- profiling as a tool for identifying personal abilities
- gaining a perspective

**Emergent theme: uncertainty**

**Category: how do I think now?**

- Sub-category: change in pattern**
- think in different ways about things
  - try to see it in different ways
  - I suppose I am quite a negative person about myself. I didn't tend to think ..what am I good at. It was a case of what don't I really like? what do I want to change?
  - look back, analysing what you did, what you felt
- Sub-category: prospection**
- I'm OK looking back and thinking that's what I did, how would I do that differently?
  - but I am still haven't got quite used to then looking forward
  - trigger questions ..they were good...led from one thing to another
- Sub-category: focused**
- I kept it very focused on going out on practice
  - I sifted out the one (responses) that I felt were more important to the profession or going out onto practice

**Emergent themes:**

- preparing to be a therapist
- insecurity in 'self'
- partial engagement in the reflective process

**Concept:** Change (with engaging in profiling)

Sub-category: being prepared

- raised an issue in the 2<sup>nd</sup> profile and discussed it with my tutor. As a result ...I coped better (on a similar issue in placement)
- if the same situation came up again, then it might trigger something off. I think well I've tried that, it didn't work. But it doesn't always come up the same way

Sub-category: awareness

- made me aware of my shortfalls
- (aware of the ) little things I wanted to change
- perhaps I had been aware .. but never as clearly (example given)
- helped me set objectives in a personal way not just I think over time I started to think .. to be a good therapist, you have to know yourself, reflect and be able to reflect on all those sort of things which perhaps I just assumed ...took for granted

Sub-category : increasing depth

- it got more personal as the weeks went on
- it did delve quite deep

Sub-category moving forward

- but I can't yet get to the stage where I do it differently
- it would be a case of getting into the habit of just jotting down
- I did check it out
- it would be nice to say I'd use it (the profile) off my own bat, but I don't think I would, not yet
- people felt more comfortable as the group matured

Sub-category: ideas for change

- thinking about it perhaps handing it (reflective diary) out separate to the unit (Interactive Processes) would ease people's worries (*about sharing*)
- perhaps there should be one after placement, so that if any problems arise you could unpack it ...work out where these problems arose (*and talk through positive experiences too*)

**Concept:** Value (perceived value of profiling)

Sub-category: perceived benefit

- I found it really useful
- very useful, this side of it (reference to stress management) also through placement
- useful for fieldwork
- it had meaning from the start of the session
- I think it is important ...I've met so many scary professional (example given)
- we should have more profiling sessions

Sub-category: strategy

- a way that this course was making students reflect ... you don't want socially inept people qualifying as OTs
- first set of assessments
- I thought it would be useful before the real pressure
- useful exercise but I didn't feel it to begin with
- it (proforma with prompts) made me think to put them (personal objectives) in achievable sizes

Sub-category: enjoyment

- the booklet (reflective diary) I didn't find it a chore at all, quite enjoyed it

Sub-category: difficult

- a few colleagues ...found it a waste of time

**Emergent themes:**

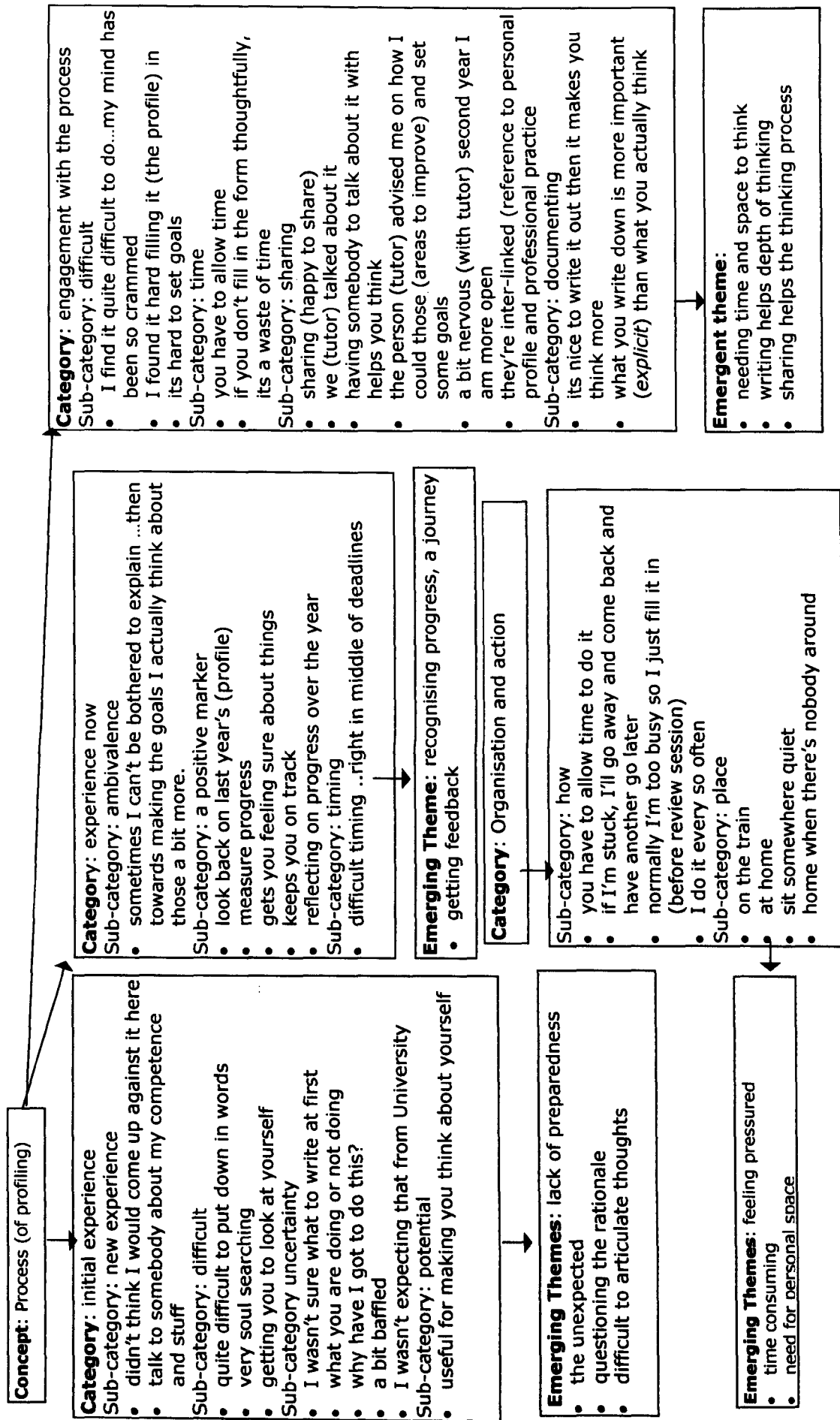
- realising profiling as a tool for change
- preparing for professional practice, becoming a good therapist

**Emergent themes:**

- awareness of personal need
- preparing for the future
- affirmation for positive change

## Appendix 7.2: Interviewees' Views: Second Year Cohort

Any word in *italics* indicates the word used by the researcher to clarify what the participant was trying to articulate.



**Concept:** Cognition

**Category:** initial thoughts about profiling  
**Sub-category:** 'self'

- it was getting you to question yourself
- before you wouldn't think about these sort of things
- made you think about things
- very useful for making you think about:
  - i. yourself
  - ii. what you are doing
  - iii. or not doing
  - iv. what you say
  - v. the effect it (saying) has on people

**Sub-category:** questioning

- why have I got to do this?

**Sub-category:** unexpected

- did not think I would come against it (the profile) here
- practice later ..it hits you, like in reality, its alright putting it down in theory
- some sections were easy to fill in

**Sub-category:** unpack

- break things down more

**Emergent theme:** An analytic process

**Category:** what do I think about in profiling?

**Sub-category:** progress

- what has happened since (last profile)
- look back at what I've done with it (the profile) have I've got on with it
- how I've developed
- reflect on progress over the year my negative points and positive points
- ask, is there anything I've not coped well with?
- ask, whether things have changed

**Sub-category:** prospect

- what would I improve?

**Sub-category:** 'self'

- looking at my own character and personality
- strengths and weaknesses
- finding incidents where I didn't do too well

**Emergent theme:** Self-analysis

**Emergent theme:** self awareness and valuing self

**Category:** how do I think?

**Sub-category:** strategic

- Break things down
- measure progress
- think more objectively
- just think about it and then wrote ideas down and then wrote paragraphs

**Sub-category:** reflective

- how I feel
- sort of mulling over (proforma acts as a trigger with its questions)
- lots of different sorts of reflection

**Emergent theme:**

- being strategic
- emerging level of reflection

**Concept:** Emotion

**Category:** initial feelings about profiling

**Sub-category:** surprise

- quite surprised that interest was being taken of how we coped
- encouraged to look at ourselves

**Sub-category:** uncertainty

- bit baffled
- they're very soul searching

**Sub-category:** difficulty

- it was quite hard to be honest with yourself

**Sub-category:** enjoyment

- I quite enjoy doing it (the profile)

**Concept:** Change (with engaging in)

**Category:** personal change

**Sub-category:** awareness

- it made me more aware of the sort of areas that I needed to improve on
  - it helped highlight some weaknesses and obviously some strengths too
  - I suppose it helped me identify more about myself
  - the profile and the course together makes you a different person
  - it's made me more aware of what I say, I've been in a habit
  - when you write the profile you become aware of how you do things and from then on you can't forget
  - why my strengths are my strengths and weaknesses are my weaknesses
- Sub-category:** understanding
- made me understand what's going on ..not looking at face value
  - helped me think things through
- Sub-category** skills
- skills I haven't needed before are coming into play and that sort of affected my character a bit and my personality a bit
  - it helped me to be more assertive not just in university

**Sub-category:** preparation

- I'm more prepared for fieldwork this year
- makes you think a bit more about that sort of thing (ref to thinking and interacting with others) and in the way that you treat the rest of the world. It makes you more patient

**Emergent theme:**  
Developing self and self-worth as an individual

**Concept:** Value (of profiling)

**Category:** perceived individual value

**Sub-category:** focused

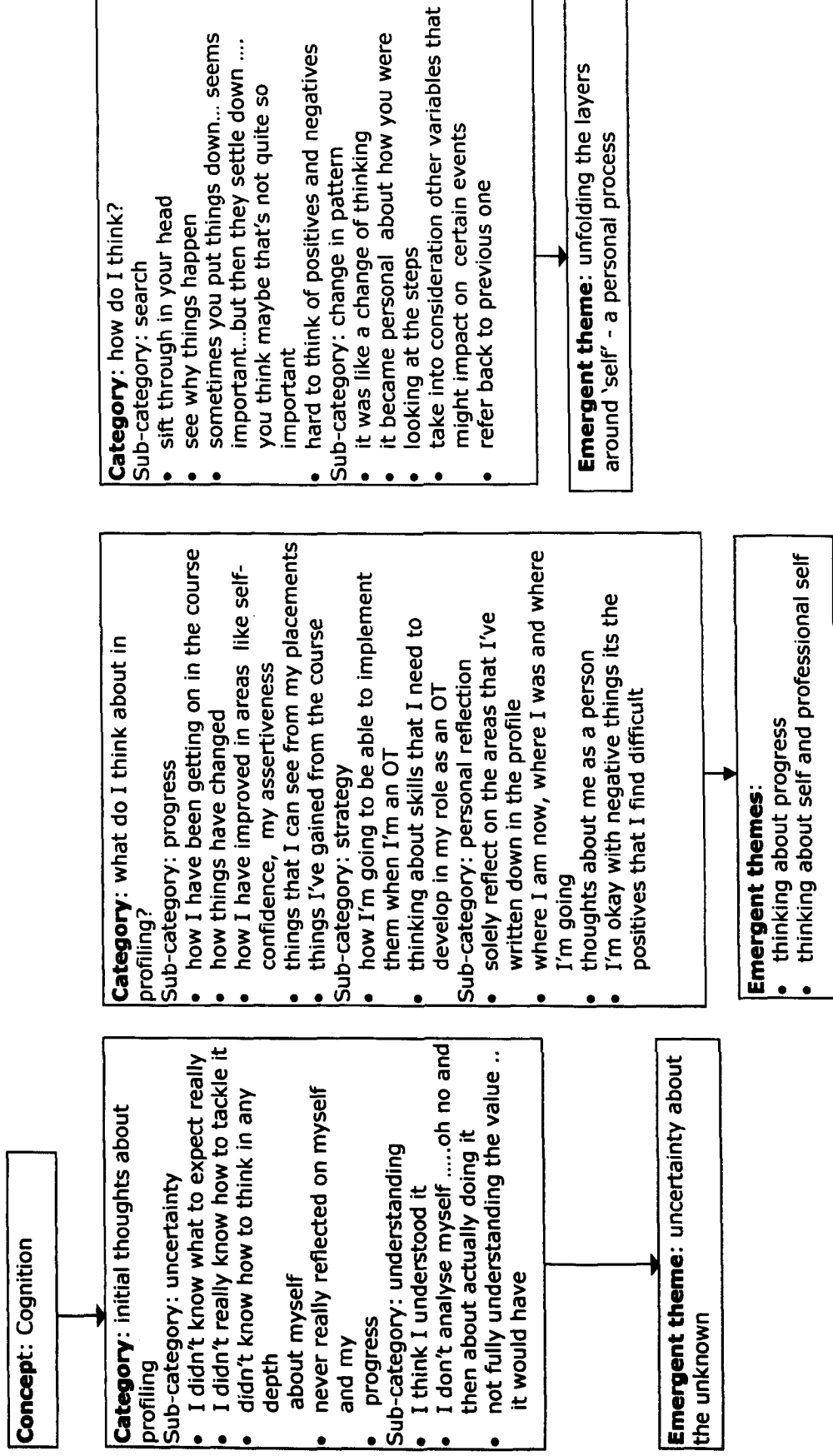
- think more objectively
- useful when I've got to write a CV

**Sub-category:** awareness

- explore things taken for granted
- affect on what is going on around
- quite a positive thing because I can now think... on areas to work on
- quite useful, makes you think about what you're doing and what you say and the effect it has on other people
- ..it's not just developing theory and practice its developing as a therapist as well
- it's had a concrete positive effect
- I've discovered more about why I was feeling the way I was feeling

**Emergent theme:**  
Developing professional self and responsibility to self and others

## Appendix 7.3: Interviewees' Views - Third Year Cohort





**Category: Value**

- Sub-category: benefits
- help me in my practice
  - I think it is a good thing really
  - being able to identify areas that relate to practice
- Sub-category: perceived challenge/hassle
- it can be a bit of a drag
  - how can I pull out anything from the process?
  - I don't like changing myself very much
  - haven't got time to do it
  - you're having to fill it in (framework document)
  - another thing to do

- Emergent themes:**
- benefits - helpful to the 'professional' me
  - perceived challenge or 'hassle'
    - it's time consuming
    - change is disagreeable

**Concept: Skills**

- skills for IPR in the future
- we need to develop
- to move forward we need to ask ourselves challenging questions
- its a skill that you use personally
- I might do specific things in my placement to build on those skills
- you suddenly develop skills and find (*practice*) areas you are good at.
- can put these (*skills*) down
- being a reflective practitioner
- get a balance in life

**Emergent theme:** recognising 'self' as having skills and emerging as a practitioner

**Concept: Change**

- I can see now how I have changed
- but then the penny dropped exactly how useful at a later date
- personal level
- cross over University and fieldwork
- can see the progression
- only come about through placements and other CPD
- it helped me become a lot more self-aware
- having learnt about that (*reflective process*) it's easier to do
- recognising how to channel certain aspects
- a lot calmer more aware of myself
- thinking about who I am and what I really want from life
- we (the tutor and I) get the wider picture

**Emergent theme:** 'self' becoming a practitioner