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## Analysing trajectories of professional learning in changing workplaces

Harry Daniels

### **Abstract**

In order to study the mutual shaping of action and institutional setting there is a need for a method of analysing data which provides a window on the contingent and sequential emergence of new ways of thinking and speaking in specific institutional contexts. This paper addresses this challenge through a consideration of the developments that were made in a four year study of professional learning in settings which were subject to the legal requirements for multi-agency working in Children's Services in England.

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**Key words** -- Vygotsky, Bernstein, Children's Services, Interagency, professional learning, analysis of communicative action

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## **Analysing trajectories of professional learning in changing workplaces**

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## **A. Introduction**

This paper has two aims. Firstly to outline the methodology that was deployed in the course of a study of the emergence of new forms of professional learning in rapidly changing workplaces and secondly to discuss the method of data analysis that was developed in the course of this study. I will present an account of an approach to the analysis of data collected over an extended period of time as professionals, who provide services for children, participated in a series of workshops in which they discuss data which mirrors their professional action and try to bring about change in their own institutional settings which themselves have been subject to radical change. The data trace the emergence of new ideas which were formed as tools with which individuals and groups may act to change their professional work practices as the demands of such work change.

In order to establish the context in which these data were gathered and analysed I will summarise a recent report of an investigation of the relationship between human functioning and the social relations of institutional settings (Daniels, 2010). The Learning in and for Interagency Working project (LIW)<sup>1</sup> was concerned with the learning of professionals in the creation of new forms of practice which provide joined- up solutions to complex and diverse client needs. Working with other professionals involves engaging with many configurations of diverse social practices. It also requires the development of new forms of hybrid practice. The call for 'joined up' responses from professionals places emphasis on the need for new, qualitatively

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<sup>1</sup> TLRP-ESRC study ESRC RES-139-25-0100 'Learning in and for Interagency Working' was co-directed by Harry Daniels and Anne. Edwards. The research team included Paul Warmington, Deirdre Martin,, Jane Leadbetter, David .Middleton, and Steve Brown.

different forms of multiagency practice, in which providers operate across traditional service and team boundaries

This was a study which examined the challenges involved in doing what Victor and Boynton (1998) describe as *co-configuration* work. In the context of professional collaboration for social inclusion, co-configuration involves an on-going partnership between professionals and service users to support young people's pathways out of social exclusion. This work demands capacity to recognise and access expertise distributed across local systems and negotiate the boundaries of responsible professional action with other professionals and with clients. These are the key features of multiagency working which focussed our attention.

One of the project aims was to investigate the mutual shaping of human action and institutional settings. In order to fulfil this aim the project required theoretical tools which would generate a methodology (design) and methods that facilitated the examination reciprocal transformation of institutional structure and individual agency. In Daniels (2010) an account of institutional structures as cultural historical products (artefacts) which play a part in the implicit (Werstch, 2007) or invisible (Bernstein, 2000) mediation of human functioning and which are in turn transformed through human action was developed. Invisible semiotic mediation is concerned with the ways in which unself-conscious everyday discourse mediates mental dispositions, tendencies to respond to situations in certain ways and how it puts in place beliefs about the world one lives in, including both about phenomena that are supposedly in nature and those which are said to be in our culture (Hasan, 2002). Invisible semiotic mediation occurs in discourse embedded in everyday ordinary activities of a social subject's life. It is not just a matter of the structuring of interactions between the

participants and other cultural tools; rather it is that the institutional structures themselves are cultural products which serve as mediators. When we talk in institutions history enters the flow of communication through the invisible or implicit mediation of the institutional structures (Makitalo and Saljo, 2002). In the context of the research reported here we were interested in the mediational effects of different modalities of organisational structure in Children's Services on the actions of professionals in those services. Conversely, we were also interested in the ways in which these same professionals learned to act in new ways and in so doing brought about change in the institutions in which they worked. This research focus demands an appropriate theoretical stance on the challenge of macro-micro relations which can gain access to data on the processes of invisible semiotic mediation which are in play in rapidly changing workplaces. .

Post Vygotskian theory, which attempts to account for the social formation of mind mediated by artefacts, understood as cultural historical products, and Bernsteinian sociological theory (e.g. Bernstein, 2000) which seeks to forge analytical linkages between structure, communication and consciousness were both deployed (see Daniels, 2010 for details). Both approaches attempt to theorize and provide methodological tools for investigating the processes by which social, cultural, and historical factors shape human functioning. Neither account resorts to determinism in that they both acknowledge that in the course of their own development human beings also actively shape the very forces that are active in shaping them. This mediational model which entails the mutual influence of individual and supra-individual factors lies at the heart of many attempts to develop our understanding of the possibilities for interventions in processes of human learning and development. The theoretical move attempted in the work reported here was to show

how Bernstein (2000) provides a language of description which allows Vygotsky's (1987) account of social formation of mind to be extended and enhanced through an understanding of the sociological processes which form specific modalities of pedagogic practice and their specialized scientific concepts. The two approaches engage with a common theme namely the social shaping of consciousness, from different perspectives and yet as Bernstein (1993) acknowledges both develop many of their core assumptions from the work of Marx and the French school of early twentieth century sociology. As I have noted elsewhere much of the sociocultural and its near neighbour, Activity Theory, research that claims a Vygotskian root fails to fully articulate an appropriate theory of social structure and an account of how it directs and deflects the attention of the individuals it constrains and enables (Daniels, 2008,2001).

Vygotsky was concerned to study human functioning as it developed rather than considering functions that had developed. The essence of his 'dual stimulation' method is that subjects are placed in a situation in which a problem is identified and they are also provided with tools with which to solve the problem or means by which they can construct tools to solve the problem., When applied to the study of professional learning, it directs attention to the ways in which professionals solve problems with the aid of tools that may be in circulation in their workplace or may be provided by interventionist researchers.

We studied professional learning in workshops which were broadly derived from the 'Change Laboratory' intervention sessions, developed by Engeström and his colleagues in Helsinki on the basis of their work in the development of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 2007), which incorporates a

Vygotskian dual stimulation method. They seek to analyse the development of consciousness within practical social activity settings. Their emphasis is on the psychological impacts of organised activity and the social conditions and systems which are produced in and through such activity.

CHAT helped us explore the interrelated changes over time of the *subject* (the practitioners), the *tools*, material and conceptual, which they used, their conception of the *object* (what they were working on and trying to change), the *division of labour* (roles and power relations), the *rules* (procedures and protocols) and the *community* (all the people involved).

Engeström (1999) sees joint activity or practice as the unit of analysis for activity theory, not individual activity. He is interested in the process of social transformation and includes the structure of the social world in analysis, taking into account the conflictual nature of social practice. He sees instability, (internal tensions) and contradiction as the 'motive force of change and development' (Engeström 1999 p.9) and the transitions and reorganisations within and between activity systems as part of evolution; it is not only the subject, but the environment, that is modified through mediated activity. He views the 'reflective appropriation of advanced models and tools' as 'ways out of internal contradictions' that result in new activity systems (Cole and Engeström 1993) p.40. Much of Engeström's work involves developmental intervention based research. He argues that research has a dialectical, dialogic relationship with activity and he focuses on contradictions as causative and disturbances as indicators of potential. He sees interventions as enabling the construction of new instrumentalities, and bringing about through externalisation the 'transformative construction of new instruments and forms of activity at collective and individual levels' (Engeström 1999 p.11.)



In this way Engestrom studies transformations in work and organizations, combining micro level analysis of discourse and interaction with historical analysis and the macro modeling of organizations as activity systems working through developmental contradictions. CHAT underpinned the Developmental Work Research (DWR) sessions that provided the main data source for our examination of conceptual change.

DWR is used to help practitioners reveal understandings that are embedded in their accounts of their practices and the systemic tensions and contradictions they encountered when developing new ways of working. In DWR, 'second series stimuli' are used with the participants to achieve this. In DWR sessions these stimuli are the conceptual tools of activity theory. The research team shared these conceptual tools with the practitioners to enable them to analyse and make sense of their everyday practices, the things that they were working on and trying to change during those practices and the organisational features that shaped them. In the sessions, evidence of the practices of the participants, gathered in previous interviews, workshops or compiled with practitioners as case study examples, was presented by the facilitators. As they worked on the evidence using activity theory, practitioners revealed the conceptual tools they were using as they engaged in or hoped to develop their work. This methodology enabled the research team to see what practitioners were learning in order to undertake inter-professional collaborations, and what adjustments they were making to existing practices and their own positions as professionals within those practices.

In our work we also drew on a model of cultural transmission in order to nuance the micro –macro relation within the CHAT based approach. The British sociologist, Basil Bernstein (1993) argued that the enrichment of Vygotskian theory calls for the development of languages of description which will facilitate a *multi-level* understanding of discourse, the varieties of its practice and contexts of its realization and production. Bernstein's (2000) general model is one that is designed to relate macro-institutional forms to micro-interactional levels and the underlying rules of communicative competence. This is something that CHAT struggles to achieve. Bernstein focuses upon two levels; a structural level and an interactional level. The structural level is analyzed in terms of the social division of labour it creates (e.g. the degree of specialisation, and thus strength of boundary between professional groupings) and the interactional with the form of social relation it creates (e.g. the degree of control that a manager may exert over a team members' work plan). The social division is analyzed in terms of strength of the boundary of its divisions, that is, with respect to the degree of specialization (e.g. how strong is the boundary between professions such as teaching and social work). Thus the key concept at the structural level is the concept of boundary, and structures are distinguished in terms of their relations between categories. The interactional level emerges as the regulation of the transmission/acquisition relation between teacher and taught (or the manager and the managed), that is, the interactional level comes to refer to the pedagogic context and the social relations of the workplace or classroom or its equivalent. Bernstein's work has not placed particular emphasis on the study of change (see Bernstein 2000) and thus, as it stands, has not been applied to the study of the cultural historical formation of specific forms of activity.

## **A. The Interventionist Methodology**

In each of three local authorities our research interventions were organised around a sequence of six workshops involving operational staff and operational managers working in different areas of children's services. The workshops enabled the LIW research team to examine practitioners' 'everyday' interpretations of the professional learning emerging in the shift towards multiagency working and the organisational conditions that support such learning. Using activity theory as a shared analytical framework, the workshops were designed to support reflective systemic analysis by confronting 'everyday' understandings with critical analysis of the ways in which current working practices/ activities either enabled or constrained the development of innovative multiagency working.

In each workshop analyses of professional learning in and for multiagency working were developed collaboratively between the research team and children's services professionals. These focused upon:

- Present practice:** identifying structural tensions (or 'contradictions') in current working practices
- Past practice:** encouraging professionals to consider the historical development of their working practices
- Future practice:** working with professionals to suggest new forms of practice that might effectively support innovations in multiagency working.

The aim of the workshops was to address the challenges of multiagency professional learning by encouraging the recognition of areas in which there is a need for change in working practices and suggesting possibilities for change through re-conceptualising the 'objects' that professionals are working on, the 'tools' that

professionals use in their multiagency work and the 'rules' in which professional practices are embedded.

The workshops were conducted over a period of twelve months at intervals of around six weeks. Each session ran for two hours and was, on most occasions, conducted by a team of four or five researchers. Sessions were organised around the presentation of 'mirror data': that is, data derived from analysis of individual interviews with staff and from previous workshops. Professionals and researchers discussed the mirror data, using activity theory as an analytical framework with which to identify structural tensions (or 'contradictions') in their practice. The key elements of this analysis were: a historical analysis of the development of professional practices (i.e. how had current practice developed out of older ways of working, what changes might enable current practice to evolve) and identification of the constituent parts of present, past and future multiagency practice (what objects, rules, divisions of labour etc. did participants identify (Figure 1)).

Figure 1 about here

In this way critical incidents and examples from the ethnographic material were brought into workshop sessions to stimulate analysis and negotiation between the participants. The crucial element in a Vygotskian dual stimulation event is the co-occurrence of both the problem and tools with which to engage with that problem.

A Bernsteinian analysis revealed the boundaries where communicative action in each site was most engaged and how that action was regulated. In a situation where boundary crossing was required in the general drive for 'joined up' approaches we inferred that the weakest boundaries would be those that were most likely to be crossed and transformed. Analysis revealed how a focus on institutional boundaries and relations of control provided important tools for the understanding the shaping of transformative learning in specific settings.

This approach gives some insight into the shaping effect of institutions as well the ways in which they are transformed through the agency of participants. We modelled the structural relations of power and control in institutional settings, theorised as cultural historical artefacts, which invisibly or implicitly mediate the relations of participants in practices in which communicative action takes place. The Bernsteinian analysis was indicative of the points at which change was most likely to take place in specific institutional modalities as pressure for change was invoked from outside those settings.

### **A. Methods of Data Analysis**

There were two approaches to the analysis of data. Firstly a top down selective 'structural' analysis, using CHAT and cognate concepts to provide mirror data that would stimulate discussion of past, present and future work in the dual stimulation scenarios that constituted the workshops.

The second challenge was to develop an approach to the analysis of the audio visual recordings of the six two hour workshops that took place at each of three sites over one year with the practitioners who were working in multi- professional

settings or were moving towards inter-professional work. The data were collected by three teams of researchers from 3 English Universities.

The rest of this paper will consist of a discussion<sup>2</sup> of the analysis of:

- Communicative accomplishment in the facilitation of the workshops:
- Accomplishment and organisation of participant contributions and emergent engagement
- The emergence of what it is to learn as an analytic object across the workshops

The general analytic frame involves a shift from the 'given' to the 'to-be-established'.

### **B. Communicative accomplishment in the facilitation of the workshops:**

This section shows how there were moments of translation in which devices of recapping, reformulation and re-footing were deployed by workshop facilitators

While it might appear self evident that the practical organization of the workshops would have to be explained to participants, some representation of how this was accomplished is of interest. The workshops developed their own patterns and rhythms at each site. The workshops were introduced both in terms of the ground rules of participation and the continuing representation of the evolving content of the workshops at each site. Each workshop had extensive introductions setting out both the terms of reference and the selected aims for each session.

One device that was consistently used one of workshops by the facilitator was the 'pursuit of clarification'..

Workshop 1 So you've got continuity of staff staying for a long period of time and staying with the same areas as well. How does that- how does that reflect on other agencies?

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<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to David Middleton for permission to draw on project notes for this section

Workshop 2 Can I ask other people who may, they know about this new tool that's been trialled, is it, is it very recent from what you're saying?

Workshop 3 If you, if you hadn't had that dual role there it would have been a different action and would it, if somebody else had got exclusion?

These examples pick up on participant terms of reference and issues.

This approach to clarification tended to precede clarification in terms of CHAT issues. The use of CHAT terms of reference (e.g. rules, contradiction, tools, object, division of labour and community) were introduced gradually into the discussions and there was a gradual move back and forth between these terms and 'everyday' forms of reference.

Workshop 3 And what sort of **rules** would you be trying to bend?

Workshop 4 How much was there a, there was a **contradiction** between what the professionals thought was necessary and what the child wanted; how did you deal with that?

Recapping and reformulation were significant features of the facilitation of the workshops. In the following example recapping of emergent issues and reformulation of the issue in terms of the opportunity it provides for communication is evident.

Workshop 5 So am I right, you've had the review which has given you opportunity to talk where you wouldn't; you've got an extra person in behaviour support; you've got the agreement for a nurse, a designated nurse; you've got the reimplementation of new PEP responsibility, or reminder of-

Another form of recapping involves taking material from previous workshops as in the next example.

Workshop 5 So starting from the, the child. We touch on it at the meeting (workshop) where XX was here I think about how much the rhetoric of the child deciding who the invite letter goes to is actually happening, or whether all the other procedures take precedence - there's another area for development there.

Such recapping is part of the building of the discursive context in terms of issues continuity across the sessions. This is very similar to the sorts of analysis that can be done on classroom lessons across time (Edwards and Mercer, 1989)..

A further device for building the interpretative context is to take an individual contribution that is voiced in the first person and reformulate in the second person as a collective summary of action that can be taken as common to others, as in the next example

Workshop 5 So you've got new- new children coming into the system and- and new workers coming into the system essentially?

This example is interesting because if such a reformulation is not challenged in subsequent terms it becomes part of the default continuity of the sessions; a resource that can be referred to or taken as given.

In the workshops the facilitator can provide a basis for changing who should currently be given the floor. The 'footing' (Goffman, 1979) of the interaction is then explicitly oriented to and changed as in the next example where the facilitator acknowledges and directs collective attention to a contribution made by Y in a previous session.

Facilitator -- Well let's bring Health in on this triangle as well because there's that- I mean you've just painted the good sort of school and social worker [talking together]

Education Officer -- Yeah, but kind of Health is another point on that triangle [talking together]

Facilitator Yes, but I mean that- you, Y you said last time you started to raise some of the issues [inaudible ñ 00:17:55] thresholds.

Goffman (1979) points out that there is no necessary alignment between the speaker and utterance. We can say things in ways that displaces the utterances so as to indicate that it is not necessarily what we would take to be the case. The Facilitator is doing more than directing participation in the workshop in the above example. In raising the issue of thresholds she aligns that topic with that of one of the



participants, Y. This 'footing' of the topic in terms of the alignment of interests of a participant in contrast to it being directly aligned with the claimed interests of the facilitator provides a means for positioning the unfolding discussion as oriented to participant concerns and declared interests.

## **B. Accomplishment and organisation of participant contributions emergent engagement**

Workshop events consisted of much more than the facilitator orchestrating the communicative action. They are also made up of emergent engagement of the attendees. What is of interest in this section is with the means that allows for their engaged participation. In the workshops emergent engagement was realized both in terms of local concerns formulated in terms of local vocabulary and issues. We also see the appropriation of the CHAT vocabulary in the formulation of issues. There is an interesting question here with respect to the efficacy of the workshops which might be witnessed in the extent to which it is possible to note a shift to CHAT theoretic discussion over the sessions. In other words have the CHAT 'tools' become part of the ways in which participants work on and make relevant their analysis of new ways of working.

It was also possible to examine the sorts of devices participants used in warranting their claims about their work. In terms of building up a consensus concerning contributions different forms of ratification were used, including: latched completions where turns are completed by another participant; the use of local systemic analysis; the use of CHAT terms; the deployment of what it is to be a professional – professional footing; and the production of summaries of previous contributions; the repositioning of the ongoing contributions (refooting) in CHAT terms; and the recruiting of others in terms of reported speech and terms. The key thing about all of the above is that that are realized in communicative action focused on emergent distinctions between 'what was', 'what is' and 'what could be' Some examples are given below.

A defining property of participation in the one of the series of workshops was the capacity of participants to engage in local systemic analysis. The following exemplifies this in terms of benefits of boundary crossing.

WORKSHOP 1 Education Officer Well- sorry- I was going to say, in (Local Authority A) I think that's one of the advantages we do have is that Z is the teacher and we've planted him in Social Services and I'm a social worker planted in Education. So I'm able to advocate the Social Care needs of the young people as a social worker through the education systems. And Z is able to do that in terms of teaching in social work systems. And the other sort of little advantage we have is W was not only [unclear ñ 01:35:54] but a looked after' children's officer in District M when she came to Local Authority A. So there it's for me they're all like major bonuses that assist our system working more effectively. We've got along way to go but they have assisted.

Emergent participation was also configured in terms of the use of CHAT to address systemic analysis of practice. There was evidence of increasing use of CHAT concepts in attendees, but not dense usage

Use of Rules in Workshop 3 by an Educational Psychologist --- Well I think it's a systemic level, um you know I think we all to some extent rule bend on occasions. And part of, you know for myself now that I've been and EP for two years I'm beginning to see a little bit more now where it's okay to bend the rules and where it's less okay. But, and that's on an individual level. But I think at a systemic level where there's a lot of that happening we should be learning lessons from it and say, well we need to redefine the rules never mind about rule bend, you know we need to look at- so for example I think you know, we've raised the issues of um this, you know planning meetings and schools often not prioritising or sometimes not prioritising children who as an authority, share purpose including the children in public care we feel should be being prioritised. So therefore we may need to redefine our rules around how we allocate EP time. And as we've said before there's a pot of if there was a pot of time that we could allocate to almost rule bending the pot of time. But then the constraints that we're working in that are national constraints that it's difficult to recruit EPs. So then it's about prioritising our rules in a sense.

## **B. The emergence of what it is to learn as an analytic object across the workshops**

In order to identify evidence trails of professional learning in multi-agency settings in this multi-site and multi-centred study over time a 'bottom-up' comprehensive analysis of audio-visual recordings of workshops was needed. David Middleton proposed an approach to analysis which focussed on the forms of social action that are accomplished in talk and text and the sorts of communicative devices that are used (Middleton et al, 2008). This was termed the 'D-analysis'. It was designed to focus the analytic attention of the research team on emergent distinctions that were argued by participants. This involved the examination of the shift from the 'given' to the 'to-be-established'. 'What-it-is-to-do' or 'to learn' was not assumed to be an analytic 'a priori' (Middleton, 2004). Rather such issues are approached as participants' concerns or 'members categories' (Sacks, 1992; Edwards and Stokoe, 2004). This analytic shift aimed to move from framing communication as descriptions corresponding to states in and of the world, to the performative organization of communicative action. In other words, what we do with talk and text can be analysed in terms of it accomplishes (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Edwards and Potter; Edwards. 1992). We emphasised that addressing such issues required a focus on the sequential and contingent organisation of session communicative action. That is, how people's contributions to the sessions are contingently related to each other in terms of the sequential organisation of their talk (Middleton et al, 2008).

Its cyclical application enabled: reading, reviewing, interrogating, collating and comparing all the audio-visual evidence from the intervention sessions in order to identify the emergent strands of learning and proposals for change. The approach was developed as a means of identifying strands of communicative action which witnessed the sequential and contingent development of concepts over the course of the year in which the 6 workshops were organized at each site. In drawing analytical

attention to the significance of claims to experience we were also able to highlight the temporal organisation of communicative action. We also used forms of discursive analysis to trace the emergence of what can be taken as the collective and distributed knowledge of people who are charged with the task of working together. We aimed to track the emergence practical epistemologies (c.f. Wickman and Ostman, 2002) that come and need to be taken-as-given in order to take account of hitherto unaddressed gaps in the realisation of multi-agency practice. Such gaps were identified and worked on through participation in the DWR sessions at each research site.

In the first instance we approached the data with what could be termed a minimal operationalisation of what-it-is-to-learn from a participant's perspective. We examined the data for ways participants signalled some forms of awareness that theirs or others knowledge state is at issue. . Such 'noticing's' provide the resource that engages the participants in their definition, delineation, deliberation of the nature of the practices that make up their multi-disciplinary work. In the data we could identify many such strands of noting and noticing such distinctions that make the difference. Indeed this sort of analysis provided us with a basis for defining a protocol for guiding interrogation and analysis of the data in terms of the sequential organisation of such strands. The analysis was therefore initially guided in terms of the following protocol:

**Deixis:** - identify when there is some nomination or 'pointing' to a particular issue in terms of drawing attention to a distinction that is then worked up to make a difference in subsequent turns. (e.g. *It's interesting, it just makes me think of boundaries again. There's a sense in which although the child is the same child outside and inside we sort of feel that we can almost draw a boundary around the school and say when you're inside here all of that outside*

*you can leave it at the gates or we can minimise the effects of... yeah... And I think, you know, perhaps we set ourselves a target which is almost unachievable, unattainable in that sense. Um, and perhaps the way in which schools with others needs to be bridging that boundary differently. Um but... and also resonated was um [unclear – 00:20:38] at city B where the teachers feeling was although a lot of the cause of under achievement and so on are... lie aside school. It's their responsibility to do something about it. And there's a terrible bind that I think teachers put themselves into um feeling responsible um for doing something about it. Um of course one hand tied behind your back.)*

**Definition and delineation:** look for how that issue is elaborated in the uptake of others in terms of how the following are warranted and made relevant through: (i) qualifications identifying further distinctions; (ii) orderabilities in the organisation and delivery of past, present and future practice; (iii) expansive elaborations of the problematics of practice. (e.g. *But I think one of the unspoken things is that to actually enable a child to do that, you have in some sense to deal with or help the child deal with the issues that the child carries with them, which are home based issues. Um, and whether you do that explicitly or implicitly, do a nurture approach or in just a school which is welcoming and nurturing and... however you do it I think you have to do it somehow. Because I think it's not impossible but incredibly difficult to expect a child to be able to come to a school, divest themselves of all the emotion, the baggage that they carry, leave it at the gates and come in and focus on the academic and...)*

**Deliberation:** identify how some working consensus on what is the case emerges in terms of evoking both particularities and generalities of marking

distinctive features of past, present or future practice. (e.g. *But isn't this where we feel that we're working in isolation, that the school is really quite apart from those -- it's quite apart from the rest of what's going on. We are... this is different therefore we can move up this way because it's not going to come in. And that's what we're trying to say*)

The analysis then turned to examining in what ways such sequences mattered. If we identified strands of deixis, definition/ delineation and deliberation what were their contingent consequences for participants. Did they make visible distinctions that made the difference in ways that participants could be identified as attending to what it was necessary to attend to in order to learn to do multi-agency working? In other words, did they lead to some form of departure or development in claims concerning the practice of the participants? Thus enabling us to complete the definition of the protocol with:

**Departure:** identify shifts towards qualitatively different position in practices in terms of the formulation of emergent distinctions. (e.g. *It's not simply about doing presentations to schools. -- we are doing some work with schools --- It's a necessity for common assessment and so there needs to be something built on that in terms of protocol and procedures. So something like the um, the panel is an excellent sort of way of taking forward --- because you've got It's not simply about doing presentations to schools. One of the things that we're doing in this area, we are doing some work with schools on looking -- the um assessment format then we need to be [unclear -- 01:45:33] (coughs) it's the first stage. It's a necessity for common assessment and so there needs to be something built on that in terms of protocol and procedures. So something like the um, the panel is an excellent sort of way of taking forward -- because you've*

*got the relevant professionals who meet on a regular basis. And based on an assessment, a common assessment, which is added to, action can be decided upon. And I think the first sort of reason you gave us in making sure that people actually do things is an important function of it, um, because people do need to be held to account for what they're going to do for a family. Um, so panel could work with the relevant professionals who meet on a regular basis. And based on an assessment, a common assessment, which is added to, action can be decided upon. And I think the first sort of reason you gave us -- in making sure that people actually do things is an important function of it, um, because people do need to be held to account for what they're going to do for a family).*

**Development:** identify when participants specify new ways of working that provide the basis for becoming part of, or have become part of, what they take to be and warrant as a significant reformulation of their practices. *(e.g. You're probably repeating yourself here, Educational Psychologist B. (laughs). You've even said the school would burst if it takes any more. If you've got a system and the school is under stress one way of relieving it is to take out the stressor, the child or the case and hand it to somebody else and it's their problem then. So we need to change that attitude, just think about looking at joint assessments, joint problem solving, sharing our expertise and knowledge across the school boundary. So it's sort of challenging, Sue, really what you were saying just now, because that argument is going to horizontal links. (Pause) I mean you were talking about here, keeping the child safe).*

Sequences of communicative action were analysed in the transcripts of the

workshops and the development of these sequences were collated in strands which stretched across the series of workshops. Related sequences were identified and these were grouped into strands of talk that wove their way through the progress of the each series of workshops. These strands are given in Table 1.

Table 1 here

Some sequences progressed to departures others remained at other stages within the model. Each Local Authority workshop witnessed distinctive patterns of development as shown in table 2.

Table 2 here

## **A. Conclusion**

The data suggested that while relationships between their organisations were re-configured around them, practitioners remained focused on what they saw as the needs of children and adjusted their ways of working. In many ways their practices raced ahead of both local and national strategies as the practitioners worked creatively for children in shifting systems. Our research suggests that in some instances professional practices have moved to *co-configuration* with an attempt to adapt practices to respond to the changing needs of clients and to involve clients in co-designing the services they receive. We also identified the challenges to the learning that was needed to move to this new way of working. These challenges arise from contradictions in working practices when different professionals collaborate. Management structures, for example, could inhibit the development of collaborative working, not least because supporting the use of expertise distributed among different professionals made line-management hard to maintain. The professional identity of practitioners working in this way became de-stabilised, and



this subverted established patterns of authority and accountability. Working with professionals we discovered and developed what, using the terminology of CHAT, can be described as new *tools* and *rules* for co-configuration working. These included a professional approach to rule-bending and risk-taking to enable joined-up service provision working around systems which were not changing as fast as the child-focused inter-professional practices being developed.

The overall challenge of the project was to show how institutionally established categories and ways of arguing could be reformulated and transformed into new strategies and activities as part of learning what it is to become engaged with and in multi-agency work. In Daniels (2010) it was shown how Middleton's D analysis taken together with an application of Bernstein's sociology of pedagogy provided empirical evidence of the mutual shaping of communicative action by organizational structures and relations and the formation of new professional identities. However without the comprehensive analysis of the communicative action within the sessions across all the research sites we would not have been able to progress to the final analysis of those transformations (Daniels, 2006). The D analysis provided a means of tracking the sequential and contingent emergence of new concepts. It permits analysis of interaction as mediated by / in the institutional context and the identification of the ways on which attention and action was directed and deflected by history of professional cultures. This form of analysis of communicative action provides evidence of the ways in which the institution itself is shaped as well as shapes the possibilities for action.

In order to refine an understanding of organisational, discursive and transmission practices in such situations new theories of concept formation which emphasise the complex nature of concepts will need to be deployed. There is a need to develop current work on the predictive relationships between macro structures and micro processes. Research in this field requires a unified theory that can give rise to a coherent and internally consistent methodology rather than a collection of compartmentalised accounts of activity, discourse and social positioning which have disparate and often contradictory assumptions.

This approach to modelling the structural relations of power and control in institutional settings theorised as cultural historical artefacts which invisibly or implicitly mediate the relations of participants in practices in which communicative action may be analysed in terms of the strands of evidence of learning in and for new ways of working gives some insight into the shaping effect of institutions as well the ways in which they are transformed through the agency of participants. It opens up the possibility of developing increasingly delicate descriptions of the rules and division of labour that obtain within and between settings.

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Figure 1 Workshop Layout

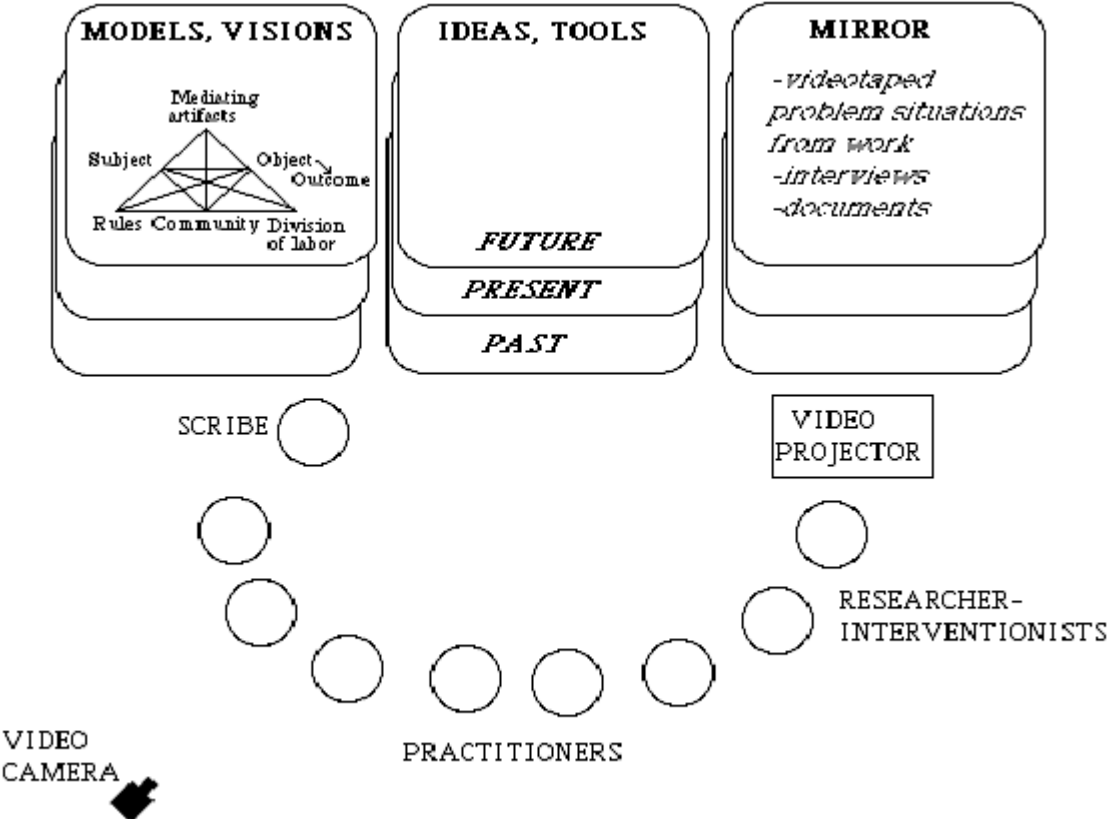


Table 1 Strands across workshops

- **Focusing on the whole child in the wider context.** Practitioners found this crucial to the diagnosis of vulnerability which may not be evident unless they look across aspects of a child's life and build a picture of accumulated risk. It was also essential in their orchestration of responses.
- **Being responsive to others: both professionals and clients.** Professionals claimed and demonstrated a growing awareness of the need to work relationally with each other and moved towards working more responsively with the strengths of their clients to build resilience.
- **Clarifying the purpose of work and being open to alternatives.** The discursive work in constructing explicit understandings of previously tacit assumptions of the practices of others opened possibilities for alternative ways of working. These were resources for identifying how to work together.
- **Knowing how to know who (can help).** Practitioners identified the importance of knowing the people and resources distributed in their local networks. For example, established networks were not sufficient for working on the new objects of activity that co-configured multi-agency working demanded.
- **Rule-bending and risk-taking.** Practitioners described taking risks involving rule-bending as responses to contradictions between emergent practices and systems of rules, protocols and lines of responsibility. They demonstrated the need to question the legitimacy of the existing rules in relation to their professional actions on increasingly complex objects of activity and the necessity of making visible the ways in which they worked around the barriers to action
- **Creating and developing better (material and discursive) tools.** Practitioners identified the limitations of tools such as assessment protocols. They responded to the contradictions between currently available tools and new and emergent objects of multi-agency activity by developing and refining new conceptual and material tools, e.g., electronic assessment and communication devices.

- **Developing processes for knowledge sharing and pathways for practice.**

Practitioners recognised the importance of demonstrating an outward-looking stance and an awareness of what it takes to be 'in the know' as the complex landscape of multi-agency work changes. DWR sessions provided a forum for precisely this form of activity.

- **Understanding oneself and one's professional values.**

Participants recognised that articulating the particularities of their own expertise and values in order to negotiate practices with other professionals was a basis for questioning them. Enhanced forms of professional practice arose from questioning how values-driven practices might be reconfigured in relation to other professionals.

- **Taking a pedagogic stance at work.**

Participants described mediating professional knowledge across boundaries in response to: contradictions between practitioner priorities and client demands (e.g. from a school or parent); needing to communicate across boundaries between professions; the need to enable operational staff to communicate the implications of emergent practices with strategists.

Table 2 The distribution of emergent strands across research sites

Concept	Local Authority 1	Local Authority 2	Local Authority 3
<b>1. To know how to know others</b>	Delineation	Departure Delineation	Delineation
<b>2. Rule bending and risk taking</b>	Delineation <b>Development</b>	Departure Delineation	
<b>3. pedagogic and developmental stance at work</b>	Delineation <b>Development</b>	Delineation <b>Development</b>	
<b>4. creation and development of better tools</b>	Delineation	Delineation Departure <b>Development</b>	Departure <b>Development</b>
<b>5. work on understanding oneself and professional values</b>	<b>Development</b> Delineation	Delineation Departure <b>Development</b>	Departure
<b>6. to be clear what they work on and to be open to alternatives</b>	<b>Development</b> Delineation	Departure <b>Development</b>	Departure <b>Development</b>
<b>7. to organise to be able to be responsive to clients and other professionals</b>	Delineation Departure	Delineation	Departure <b>Development</b>
<b>8. to focus on the whole child in a wider context</b>	Delineation Departure	Departure Delineation	Delineation Departure
<b>9. to develop processes for knowledge sharing e.g. two-way flows, new pathways for practice</b>		Delineation Departure <b>Development</b>	Delineation <b>Development</b>
<b>10. to negotiate their institutional strategies</b>			Departure <b>Development</b>
<b>11. to recognise different assessment regimes and practices within different services and agencies</b>			Delineation Departure <b>Development</b>



