Integrated Learning in Social Work

A review of approaches to integrated learning for social work education and practice

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report was commissioned by the Scottish Social Services Council and written by academics from Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of Dundee as part of the Review of Social Work Education. The study adopted an approach informed by a social ecology framework which recognises the interconnectedness of the different elements in integrated learning and helps to conceptualise processes as complex and interdependent. The project concluded that, whilst there is much in the current delivery of social work education of which we can be proud, there is a need for a step change in how learning is owned and integrated if social work education is to achieve the outcomes required for a future focussed and sustainable social work practice. The key finding is that change is essential at a cultural and structural level, and it is important to move thinking beyond a number of the old dualities which include the academy and the workplace, theory and practice, tacit and explicit knowledge, professional and vocational education and formal and informal learning. This project has sought to take the opportunity to think beyond those dualities and not to be constrained by them.

Aims and Objectives

This project aims to provide a detailed and critical exploration of approaches to integrated learning. The over-arching aim of the project is to enhance the current provision and approach to social work education in Scotland and to maximise the efficacy of learning opportunities for social work students, which in turn will produce graduates who are equipped to meet the challenges and complexity of social work practice.

The project objectives are to:

- Explore the broader literature in relation to integrated learning which will address issues of pedagogy and approaches to adult learning; including recent initiatives in integrated learning within social work education in the UK
- Synthesise approaches taken to integrated learning in analogous professions, including professions allied to health, education and nursing
- Involve key stakeholder groups, in particular people who use services and carers, social workers, employers, students and academics
- Produce an option appraisal of future models of delivery of integrated learning in a social work context.

Terminology in this area is confused and in particular integrated learning has a number of loaded connotations in the current context. This leads to the recommendation for the adoption of the term, *shared professional learning*, which is defined as learning, in and between contexts that supports the development of professional competence and confidence as well as professional identity. Sharing in this sense refers to learning being shared by key stakeholders within qualifying social work education, in terms of responsibility for the design and delivery of curricula, but also crucially for learning to become embedded within the profession as a whole.

Sources of Evidence

The enquiry has drawn on a broad range of evidence including the following:

- The international literature on integrated learning and related concepts, including work based learning and practice-based education, across a range of professions. Account has been taken of a range of material, including:
  - policy documentation
  - theoretical writing
  - empirical studies.
- Key informant discussions with social work academics and partners in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in relation to the approaches in those jurisdictions.

- Key informant discussions with social work academics in Scotland and other key stakeholders
- Focus group or individual discussions with educationalists in the fields of medicine, educational psychology, community learning and development, initial teacher education, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and nursing
- Focus group discussions with service users and carers, students and newly qualified social workers, social work academics and local authority learning and development leads and Chief Social Work Officers.

Key Findings

The project found that the issue of the integration of learning is not a new issue, nor is it unique to social work. The challenges associated with successful integration of learning are faced by many professionals and across jurisdictions. A number of key findings emerged:

- There is a recognition of the need for change towards realising the ambition of shared professional learning. Currently there is a significant gap between rhetoric and reality in this regard. To address it necessitates moving towards a 'culturally integrated' approach, and a 'structurally integrated' approach – with the two seen to be interdependent
- The relationship between theory and practice is a complex one with elements of integration already existing, and the idea that knowledge is produced in the academy and utilised in practice being an over-simplified one. Rather than knowledge transfer we should be talking about knowledge recontextualisation
- The experience of other professions, including teaching and medicine, indicates that for integration to be achieved there requires to be a structure and culture in place that supports ownership of integrated learning from the most senior level in organisations
- There is a need for a different type of professional 'boundary spanner' who works across university and practice settings and who can make an active contribution to knowledge exchange

- Ultimately what is required is a cultural and professional shift towards a situation in which every social worker is a social work educator and every social work setting is a learning site.

The Way Forward

This project contends that for the required step change to be achieved, a number of things need to happen. As identified already, we need to implement a shift in culture that moves beyond the old dualities of thinking. Further, high level support and investment will be required from Scottish Government. This would include a public commitment to achieving shared professional learning outcomes across social work education and practice. In addition, this public commitment would be shared by key stakeholders, and agreed by the Social Work Services Strategic Forum, in line with meeting its commitment to supporting the workforce.

It is argued that key to the delivery of the required change agenda will be the establishment and funding of formal regional partnerships between employers, HEIs, students and service users and carers, with an overarching central governance framework. A foundation for the latter may be provided for in existing structures/resources, for example, Social Work Scotland. Learning from the Northern Ireland Degree Partnership highlights the value of a commitment to the principle of collaborative working, towards co-producing a model that is tailored to the Scottish context and meets all partners' needs. These arrangements will need to be supported by the development of clear, written terms of reference for the partnerships, which would include:

- Written contractual arrangements for the provision and quality assurance of practice based learning
- Arrangements for shared decision-making and ownership of both the curriculum and pedagogy of social work education
- A commitment to implementing best practice towards integrating learning in the curriculum, for example, through concurrent models, use of simulation, project based learning, linking research projects to practice learning sites, and exploring opportunities for further embedding practice learning in degree programmes

- Supporting a culture of integrated learning in practice through increasing the professional status of the practice educator role and tying this in with requirements relating to registration and continuing professional development

- Setting out responsibility for supporting and developing knowledge recontextualisation between the academy and practice, to work across HEI-employer boundaries and enable the dissemination of research evidence in social work, as well as supporting the recontextualisation of knowledge

- Closely connected to that the development of new roles, for example teaching consultants, that would be directly accountable to the partnerships and would contribute to innovations alongside practice educators; the outcome being an established and visible means of developing knowledge/research informed social work practice

- Developing a practice learning curriculum that draws upon existing best practice to increase the provision of targeted teaching and learning activity at the beginning, during and at the end of practice based learning; the outcomes being greater integrated learning for social work students and improved preparedness for practice

- The commissioning of a review of post qualifying education, training and learning leading to the implementation of a comprehensive continuing professional development framework for social work; the outcome of which would be the achievement of a learning culture in social work which is recognised as critical for the profession as a whole.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context

This introduction will set out the background to the project, placing it in the overall context of the Review of Social Work Education (RSWE). It will identify some of the challenges and opportunities presented by the project, before going on to explore the structure of this report.

The context of the RSWE was set out very clearly in the interim report (Scottish Social Services Council, 2015 (SSSC)) and has a direct connection to the overall Vision and Strategy for Social Services in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2015) and requires only the briefest of restatements here in order to place this project in its context. The Vision and Strategy has as one of its aims to:

> *'Adopt a strategic approach to the education of social services workers which identifies and embeds best practice in knowledge exchange, mobilisation, engagement and in research implementation models' (p.23).*

This aim relates directly to the issue of improving integrated learning. The headline message from the initial phase of the RSWE was that social work education in Scotland was generally 'fit for purpose', but was facing a number of challenges similar to those facing the profession as a whole. The challenges of integration of health and social care, continuing social inequalities and an ageing population with increasing demands for, and expectations of, services against a backdrop of increasing austerity are well-documented. However, in tandem with those challenges there exist strengths, capacity, activity and opportunity. Social work education, research and evidence are all recognised as having key roles to play in helping the profession to articulate its identity, contribution and method in a changing social landscape.

In particular, in relation to integrated learning it was recognised that there are many examples of excellent collaborations between social work employers and universities,

but that opportunities existed to increase the sharing of responsibility and accountability across both sectors, and that would be driven in part by seeking to come to a collective understanding about what everyone is working together to achieve. Consequently, this project will be used to collectively agree a definition of 'integrated learning' and develop an options appraisal in relation to how a transition to an integrated learning model for social work education might be achieved.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

This project aims to provide a detailed and critical exploration of approaches to integrated learning. The over-arching aim of the project is to enhance the current provision and approach to social work education in Scotland and to maximise the efficacy of learning opportunities for social work students, which in turn will produce graduates who are equipped to meet the challenges and complexity of social work practice.

The project objectives are to:
- Explore the broader literature in relation to integrated learning which will address issues of pedagogy and approaches to adult learning; including recent initiatives in integrated learning within social work education in the UK
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1.3 Challenges

This project faced a number of challenges that are inter-related, and it is important to acknowledge them at the outset. Firstly, there was seen to be a lack of clarity in the terminology that was used, with different terms apparently being used interchangeably

and the same terms being used to mean different things. An initial section will explore the different uses of terminology and offer a definition of 'shared professional learning' that will be of assistance as we move into the next phase of development. Secondly, and closely related to definitional issues, is the question of what we are seeking to integrate, which begs the question of what we mean by professional knowledge and how it is produced. An initial exploration of this area will provide a useful context for this report. Thirdly, what is clear from the exploration of the literature and the experience of other professions is that the issue of integration of learning, and in particular of graduate readiness for employment, is one faced by many professions and indeed it is argued that this tension is inherent in the nature of professional education. The scope and scale of the relevant literature is enormous and the reading of it for this project must inevitably be selective. Finally, there is a challenge of integration across the RSWE project areas. The issue of integration runs to a greater or lesser extent through the majority of the other areas of the RSWE, in particular the areas of employer- university partnerships and practice education and they will all need to be read through the lens of integration to ensure that the learning has been maximised and so far as possible that consistency has been achieved.

Finally, the ecological approach, which will be explored in more detail below, leads to an awareness that integration will not be achieved at one organisational level and that progress towards more successful integration will be dependent upon culture, structures, processes and people.

1.4   Opportunities

However, at the same time as facing a range of challenges, this project has been presented with a series of opportunities, the first of which was the opportunity to take a fresh perspective on the issue of integrated learning and its impact on social work education. The project has been underpinned by a brief which encouraged engagement with international perspectives and experiences of integrated learning across a range of professional groupings. Secondly, there has been the opportunity to draw on the work of colleagues who have been working on the other RSWE projects. Thirdly, the opportunities presented by the adoption of an ecological model have enabled us to look

creatively and to consider a wide range of possible options for achieving a more shared professional learning. Fourthly, implicit in any discussion of integration is the chance to think beyond the constraints of traditional dichotomies, which it is argued have become debateable and contentious and ultimately of limited assistance in advancing understanding. Indeed it is argued that these dichotomies have "influenced thinking in a manner that has been singularly unhelpful over the decades" (Cairns and Malloch, 2011, p.11). These dichotomies include the academy and the workplace, theory and practice, tacit and explicit knowledge, professional and vocational education and formal and informal learning. This project has sought to take the opportunity to think beyond those dualities and not to be constrained by them.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

The project has adopted an iterative methodology, where emergent themes from the literature were used to inform the development of schedules for focus groups and interviews, and to test out a range of models and approaches to integrated learning. In turn the findings from those data gathering exercises helped to sharpen the focus for further exploration of the literature. In addition, this project has been informed by findings from the other RSWE projects in particular relating to practice learning, partnerships between employers and HEIs, the core curriculum, a shared philosophy of learning and the revision of the Standards in Social Work Education (SISWE). Furthermore, and with an eye to the post-qualifying realm, cognisance was given to the options appraisal of a supported year in employment. At the outset it is important to acknowledge that there has been a significant growth in research interest in the area of integrated learning in recent years and the scope and scale of the relevant literature, combined with a lack of definitional clarity, has presented a significant challenge. The project has, for reasons of pragmatism, had to confine itself to searching in the English language. This has generated a significant amount of literature from Australia and New Zealand in particular.

2.2 Sources of evidence

The enquiry has drawn on a broad range of evidence including the following:
- The international literature on integrated learning and related concepts, including work based learning and practice-based education, across a range of professions. Consideration has been given to a range of material, including:
  o Policy documentation
  o Theoretical writing
  o Empirical studies.
- Key informant discussions with social work academics and partners in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in relation to the approaches in those jurisdictions

- Focus group or individual discussions with key informant educationalists in the fields of medicine, educational psychology, community learning and development, initial teacher education, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and nursing
- Focus group discussions with service users and carers, students and newly qualified social workers, social work academics, Chief Social Work Officers and local authority learning and development leads.

Data gathering was conducted by audio recording and transcribing focus groups and undertaking note taking from key informant interviews. Thematic analysis was employed to identify emerging themes, which were then tested across the data sets. There are a number of methodological limitations to the project, which include the limited number of key informants from each discipline that it was possible to access in the timeframe available and the necessity of using convenience sampling for some of the focus groups, which again related to accessibility. These limitations are, however, mitigated by the potential alignment with the research findings from the other studies undertaken as part of the RSWE and those from further afield, which together provide a rich source of evidence of multi-professional and other partners' perspectives on the subject of integrated learning.

2.2.1 Focus groups

Five focus groups were conducted with key partners in social work education. These included:
- One focus group with Chief Social Work Officers
- One focus group with practice partners with responsibility for learning and workforce development across Scotland
- One focus group with academics
- One focus group with newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) and final year students
- One focus group with services users and carers.

Individual focus groups lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were recorded digitally

and transcribed in full. Transcripts were analysed and synthesised using thematic analysis. Recorded sample data is as detailed in Table 1 below.

Focus group	Location of interview	Number of participants/ gender balance
Chief Social Work Officers	Glasgow	11 (8 female, 3 male)
Practice partners	Stirling	9 (6 female, 3 male)
NQSWs & students	Dundee	6 (4 female, 2 male)
Academics	Dundee	6 (3 female, 3 male)
Service users and carers	Glasgow	8 (6 female, 2 male)

Table 1: Focus group makeup

The key informants were drawn from the following areas of experience and expertise. The analysis of the data will be presented using the abbreviations below:

- Initial Teacher Education (ITE) – 2 senior academics from a Scottish university
- Educational Psychology (EP) – 1 senior academic/practitioner from a Scottish university/Local Authority
- Community Learning and Development (CLD) – 1 senior academic for a Scottish university
- Service User and Carer Representatives (SU) – 8 members from the service user and carer network of 2 Scottish universities
- Medical Education (MED) – 1 senior academic from a Scottish university
- Allied Health Professionals (AH) – 3 senior academics from a Scottish university. 1 representative from nursing, occupational therapy and physiotherapy respectively.

In addition, telephone interviews were conducted with social work academics in Belfast, Cardiff and Manchester and partners in the Northern Ireland Degree Partnership.

3 DEFINITIONAL DISCUSSION

One of the tasks set for this project was to pursue a level of definitional clarity. The literature in this area is beset by definitional challenges (Evans et al., 2011; Patrick et al., 2009). Terms used include the following: work based learning; workplace learning; work-integrated learning; and practice-based education. The project was asked to offer clarity of definition in this respect, ultimately to help to advance understanding and to assist in progress. Each of these terms will be explored in turn, and it will be argued that for the purposes of this project the introduction of a new term, "shared professional learning" is proposed.

3.1 Work based learning (WBL) and work place learning (WPL)

A recent Scottish guide asserts that WBL:

> '...*provides the reality of an authentic context for learning which produces the currency of transferable credit. It can enrich student learning, create a well-qualified workforce and open up new markets for HEIs. The term work-based learning includes a wide range of provision where the focus is on situations where the main location for the student is the workplace. The curriculum meets the needs of both HEI and employer and is jointly planned, delivered and assessed. It uses the immediacy of the work context to provide practice and to encourage reflection on real issues leading to meaningful applicable learning* (Ball and Manwaring, 2010, p.3).'

It is argued that this definition, which stipulates the currency of transferable credit and has a focus on the workforce and markets, is unduly instrumental and too narrow for the purposes of this project. The criticism here is consistent with that put forward by Evans et al. (2011) who argue that this kind of definition fails to recognise the combined significance of on- the-job, off-the-job, near-the job learning as well as learning beyond the workplace.

However, Raelin (2008) argues that there are three critical elements in the WBL process that are useful for the discussion of integration of learning and these are beneficial for the purposes of this project:

> *'1. It views learning as acquired in the midst of action and dedicated to the task at hand.*
>
> *2. It sees knowledge creation and utilisation as collective activities wherein learning becomes everyone's job.*
>
> *3. Its users demonstrate a learning-to learn aptitude, which frees them to question underlying assumptions of practice'* (Raelin, 2008, p.2).

Billett (2012) reinforces this, arguing that instead of the transfer of knowledge being seen as a top-down process, it is the capacity to adapt what is known to the requirements of particular circumstances where human performance is required. He argues for the importance of local knowledge and understanding of contacts, circumstances and requirements that are likely to be necessary for effective adaptability, and is in some ways this foreshadows the discussion of recontextualisation which will follow below.

The idea of work<u>place</u> learning (WPL) is suggested as an alternative with its focus on differing concepts of place, including physical, inter-personal, intra-personal, virtual and spiritual places (Evans and Guile, 2011). The challenge here is that this tends to be a loose collection of perspectives, rather than a coherent approach. These have the advantage of paying attention to the socio-cultural aspects and therefore helping to locate learning at work in social relations, but are less helpful in facilitating the social dynamics of organisations and the impact on individual learners, who are either out of focus or beyond the range of view (Evans et al., 2011). They argue that both WBL and WPL have inbuilt tendencies towards constraining vision and thinking rather than opening up possibilities for exploration.

They go on to argue that, rather than invent new terminology, what is required is a revised definition of WBL that encapsulates:

- Learning at work, for work and through work
- That expands human capacities through purposeful activity
- Where the purposes derive from the context of employment.

Although they are not writing specifically about social work, much of what they refer to

as the purposes that derive from the context of employment are relevant for the profession, including improving practice innovation and renewal, which is seen as a purpose that is driven from the 'bottom up' as opposed to innovation, which is seen as being much more of a 'top-down' process. Further, there is seen as being a commitment to social justice, and lastly - and this is something that resonates with much of the material that has emerged from the data gathering - is the issue of the development of vocational/ professional identity development. This purposely refers both to new entrants 'thinking/ feeling' their way into a vocation/ profession, but also extends to experienced workers who develop and reconstruct identities in and through work as positions, roles and contexts change.

3.2 Work- Integrated Learning (WIL)

Work- Integrated Learning is a term that is in common usage in Australia and New Zealand, although again it is beset by definitional differences. One major scoping study (Australian Learning and Teaching Council, 2009, p. v) simply defines WIL as, "*An umbrella term for a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum"*, and deliberately avoided a more detailed attempt at a definition, whilst recognising that a range of terms was used to cover essentially the same ground, including 'real world learning', 'professional learning' and 'social engagement'. As a definition this is too vague for the purposes of this project and a more detailed definition is required.

In a guide to WIL, Cooper et al., (2010, p.5) define it as:

> *'…the intersection and engagement of theoretical and practice learning. The process of bringing together formal learning and productive work, or theory and practice. Constructing one system using available knowledge from several separate sources. Other terms used to describe work integrated learning include practicum, internships, fieldwork, cooperative education, field education, sandwich course, service learning, international service learning.'*

This definition seems too broad and all-encompassing to assist in the development of the project. Further it seems to have an element of circularity to it, in that it is suggested that the terms listed are mechanisms for delivering WIL rather than synonyms for it.

In another Australian study, Smith (2012) attempts to develop a comprehensive framework for evaluating the quality of work-integrated learning curricula. His definition of WIL is, *"a curriculum design in which students spend time in professional, work, or other practice settings relevant to their degrees of study, and to their occupational futures"* (p. 247). His emphasis is on WIL curricula, and he suggests that they can include such familiar notions as placements, internships, practica, supervised practice, and even simulations. He differentiates WIL from work experience or work-based learning, neither of which require students to specifically learn, apply or integrate canonical disciplinary knowledge. He identifies 6 domains or constructs for WIL criteria as authenticity, alignment (of teaching and learning activities and assessments with integrative learning outcomes), integrated learning supports (both at university and the workplace), supervisor access and induction/preparation processes. It is worth exploring some of these criteria in a little more detail as they were developed and validated with students across a range of disciplines in both Australia and the United Kingdom.

Authenticity is seen as being at the heart of all workplace-situated learning, but for Smith this extends beyond physical authenticity, that is a real work environment doing real world work to 'cognitive authenticity' where students encounter, engage and/or participate in relevant learning within a particular disciplinary framework. To succeed, WIL curricula need to occur in authentic environments and contexts that will expose the students to real work settings and situations and where they can observe, interact and respond to that particular context (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Therefore they must feature authentic activities, with complexities that match those in real practice.

Smith draws on Biggs' (1999) theory of constructive alignment of both teaching and learning activities and assessment with integrative learning objectives. Involving students in activities takes students beyond mere application in order to developing an understanding as to why those in alignment with integrative learning choices are better than ones that are inconsistent with theory. It also includes the ability to use connected knowledge at the right time and the right place and the opportunity for the development

of students' professional identity and abilities and as well the transfer of learning from university to the workplace and back to university. Summarising this discussion on definitions of WIL, there are elements of these definitions that are useful as we move to evaluate WIL criteria.

3.3   Practice-based education

The last term that requires to be explored in relation to this project is that of practice-based education (PBE), perhaps a term less widely used than WBL and WIL. For Boud (2012) PBE is used not only to refer to those elements that have particularly taken place in a practice setting, but also any dimension of the higher education programme that engages students with the practice of study, and so can be seen as extending into the university, for example in respect of preparation for, and learning from, placement experiences. Boud addresses the use of WIL as a term suggesting that none of the elements of WIL as currently defined make a course practice-based, except in the loosest sense. Practice in the sense used by Boud refers to the practice of the profession or discipline, as represented by what practitioners do in their work, with the use of the term clearly going beyond knowledge of the practice to involve the conduct of the practice. Evans and Guile (2012) argue that WBL and PBE have considerable overlap but there are also differentiated features. WBL often emphasises the regulatory framework inherent in the employment relationship, whereas PBE emphasises the practices of the profession. Higgs (2012) foregrounds the development of professional identity as a key aspect of PBE.

3.4   Conclusion

For the purposes of this project, there are a number of elements of WBL, WPL, WIL and PBE that resonate with the theoretical position of situated learning and recontextualisation of knowledge that is outlined below. These include an emphasis on the development of professional identity as a component of the education process, an emphasis on professional practice, and a focus on learning to learn, with learning being a responsibility shared by a range of participants in the process. These factors taken

together, combined with the lack of clarity around terms such as WBL and some confusion amongst stakeholders, lead to the recommendation for the adoption of the term, *shared professional learning*, which is defined as learning, in and between contexts that supports the development of professional competence and confidence as well as professional identity. Sharing in this sense refers to learning being shared across and between contexts, and in terms of responsibility for the design and delivery of curricula.

4 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The overarching theoretical framework is social ecology, which has been applied in the context of work based learning (Evans et al., 2011; Weaver- Hightower, 2008). This approach recognises the interconnectedness of the different elements in integrated learning and helps to conceptualise processes as complex and interdependent. However, for the purposes of analysis they can be divided into:

- Actors, which include human and non-human actors
- Relationships, which in the ecological model may be of a co-operative, competitive or symbiotic nature
- Environments and structures, which include consideration of boundaries and recognises that there may be no one centralised mechanism of control
- Processes, which include emergence and adaptation.

In any discussion of integrated learning it is important to offer some exploration of what we actually mean by learning and under what conditions it takes place. This section draws on the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and of Evans and Guile (2012). Whilst this discussion is largely theoretical it is important to emphasise that it has an empirical basis. In particular Evans and Guile draw on a two year major ESRC funded project on Work Based Learning that looked at a range of professions (Evans et al., 2006).

Lave and Wenger (1991) argue for a framework of legitimate peripheral participation, a term which they describe as a conceptual bridge. For them, learning is a process that takes place in a participation framework, not in an individual mind. They see legitimate peripheral participation as not a simple participation structure in which an apprentice (the term for learner that they use throughout their work) occupies a particular role at the edge of a larger process, rather being an interactive process in which the apprentice is engaged by simultaneously performing in several roles - status subordinate, learning practitioner, sole responsible agent in minor parts of the performance, aspiring expert and so forth. Each of these roles implies a different sort of responsibility and a different type of interactive involvement.

They contend that learning is best understood as legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) and is not necessarily or directly dependent on pedagogical goals or official agenda, even in situations in which these goals appear to be a central factor. Rather than privileging the structure of pedagogy as the source of learning, their approach encourages a focus on the structure of social practice, and is therefore entirely consistent with the approach taken throughout this project. LPP is not a unidirectional process; rather it is a reciprocal relation between people and practice. This means that the move of learners towards full practice in a community of practice takes place within a dynamic context. In terms of the implications for curriculum development and delivery, they contend that learning is not merely situated in practice – as if it were some independent process that just happens to be located somewhere. Rather they see learning as a generative social practice in the lived- in world.

Whilst widely cited, Lave and Wenger's work is not without critique. Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) argue that the examples that Lave and Wenger cite are invariably small, tight-knit groups, and that it is much more often the case that networks are much more diffuse. Further, they suggest that learning takes place at least three different levels, and that a more developed exploration of context is required, and this will be explored below.

What this approach means for the purposes of this project is that in seeking to explore the integration of learning it is important to look beyond formal curricula and to recognise that being a learner in not a unitary process, rather involving a number of different roles. Further, as Wenger (1998) develops in his later work on communities of practice, learning is very much connected with the transformation of identity, and for this project this underscores the importance of attending to professional identity as part of the process of the integration of learning.

In moving beyond formal curricula it is important to engage with informal, or as Eraut (2000) prefers, non-formal learning. He defines formal learning as having the following characteristics

- a prescribed learning framework
- an organised learning event or package
- the presence of a designated teacher or trainer

- the award of a qualification or credit
- the external specification of outcomes.

Non-formal learning is essentially what goes on outside that framework, and he stresses that the development of tacit knowledge is "not a sideshow, but central" (p.14). He endorses Lave and Wenger's assertion of learning being situated both in context and in sets of social relations. Whilst it is difficult to access the process of the acquisition of non-formal knowledge, this does not mean that it is any less important. This view is endorsed by Hagar and Halliday (2009) who suggest that the balance has shifted towards stressing the importance of formal learning and that there is a need for the balance to be redressed and for non-formal learning to be reclaimed.

In a major study of formal, informal and non-formal learning, Colley et al., (2003) stress the scope and complexity of the issue. Their analysis is that there is a view within the literature that formal and informal attributes of learning are somehow separate, but that this view is mistaken. For them:

> *'The challenge is not to, somehow, combine informal and formal learning, for informal and formal attributes are present and interrelated, whether we will it so or not. The challenge is rather to recognise and identify them, and understand the implications of the particular balance or interrelationship in each case.'*

This resonates directly with the central thrust of this project which is that it is important to move beyond restrictive dualities, and that when we are discussing integrating learning we are also referring to integrating the formal and non-formal.

4.1   Recontextualisation

Evans and Guile (2012) build on their large-scale empirical research and on the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) as well as on the development of Bernstein's (2000) idea that concepts change as they move from their disciplinary origins and become part of a curriculum. Evans and Guile's central argument is that all forms of knowledge are contextual but not context bound. Thinking in the context of higher education, Evans

and Guile (2012) contend that this approach introduces fresh thinking by recognising that forms of knowledge in a degree that involves any aspect of workplace or practice learning have been recontextualised or changed in the move from one form to another to serve a new purpose. So, for example it is not the case that knowledge is produced in a university and applied in practice. The relationship is, or should be, much more dynamic with knowledge from universities being used in practice contexts and practice informing research and learning and teaching in universities. This underscores the importance of 'practice-near' research (Webber, 2014; Winter et al., 2015), and also reinforces one of the central themes of this project, that there is a need to move beyond thinking in terms of dualities.

The implication of this is that the challenge facing educators is to support learners progressively to use knowledge in different ways and in different contexts. In this approach the work environment can become an important locus for knowledge production. Evans and Guile suggest that recontextualisation takes place at a number of different levels, namely of content, pedagogy, workplace and learner. This layered approach allows the exploration of different strategies for working towards the integration of learning, and it is beneficial to explore each of these layers in more detail.

Beginning with the issue of content recontextualisation it is argued that most descriptions of the theory-practice relationship fail to acknowledge that knowledge viewed as content is knowledge that has been codified, that is organised in accordance with rules, procedures and systems of particular, sometimes competing disciplines, schools of thought and practices.

There are tensions inherent in this recontextualisation because knowledge logics that lead towards greater degrees of abstraction, on the one hand, and towards a series of practical operational connections on the other hand, differ and are not seen to be easily related to one another. The implications of this tension are that curriculum designers have clear criteria to use to determine the order in which disciplinary forms of knowledge should be introduced to learners, but less clear criteria for how to introduce other forms of knowledge, including tacit knowledge.

Turning now to pedagogic recontextualisation, which takes place as different forms of

knowledge are organised and structured into learning activities. Once different knowledge logics have been reconciled by curriculum planners making their decisions about how to incorporate and sequence disciplinary knowledge in a curriculum, the focus moves to design and organisation of the teaching and learning dimensions of programmes. Pedagogic recontextualisation sets the challenges of ensuring that the general principles that underpin disciplinary knowledge are presented so that learners can use them to understand and change the design of work processes, so that it then becomes possible to use work as a test-bed for both specific items of knowledge and general principles.

Integration processes start with pedagogic recontextualisation but don't end there, and the next stage is to enable the process of putting knowledge to work in the workplace environment. Workplace recontextualisation affects how knowledge is put to work and is strongly influenced by the nature and quality of learning experiences that the workplace affords. In the workplace, knowledge is embedded in routines, protocols and artefacts as well as organisational hierarchies and power structures.

All of these processes are embodied in the learner and the important part is what learners make of these processes and in particular, the learner recontextualisation process entails understanding and articulating the reasons for the constitution of their chosen occupation. It is critical to the development of a professional and/or vocational identity and the challenge is to use knowledge as a set of resources to develop those identities, using both curriculum and workplace knowledge as 'test-benches' for general principles and to meet academic requirements.

Guile (2014) takes the concept of recontextualisation a little further by suggesting a series of questions that may be posed at each of the levels. Context recontextualisation may be used to ask questions about whether the sequencing of modules facilitates immersion in the knowledge base of the profession or the discipline. Pedagogic recontextualisation could be used to ask questions about whether academic or practice supervisors are supporting aspiring professionals to infer the relationship between theoretical knowledge and professional practice, and if not how to assist the programme teams to develop their conceptions of pedagogy to achieve that goal. Workplace recontextualisation could be used to ask questions about whether aspiring professionals

are being supported in the workplace to commingle theoretical knowledge and experience to develop their professional reasoning and acting, and if not how to assist people with a managing, developing or coaching role in the workplace to develop their pedagogical approach to achieve that goal. Learner recontextualisation could be used to ask questions about the extent to which aspiring professionals are developing the identity and expertise to operate effectively in the contexts of education and work and if not, to ascertain which aspects of the process of recontextualisation is inhibiting the development of identity and expertise.

This departure into a theoretical discussion, albeit one with a firm empirical base, is intended to foreshadow some of the detailed discussion that will be undertaken in the option appraisal part of the project. Evans and Guile (2012) identify a number of pedagogic strategies that may assist in this respect such as the *'gradual release'* of knowledge and responsibility. They also suggest that other strategies such as what they refer to as *'industry educators'* or *'professionals who educate'* may supplement educational expertise while keeping academic requirements in view. This report will now turn to a substantive review of the literature.

5   LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1   Introduction

The literature review has drawn on a broad range of literature concerned with integrated learning, much of which is generic and rooted in the contexts of social work, initial teacher education, medical education and nursing.

The findings within this literature review provide a basis for consideration, however we acknowledge that there may be other emergent findings from other professions and different disciplines which may be of value, but are not included here. The emergent literature will first explore the place of integrated learning within social work education. Attention will be given to the location, content and roles within this. Links will be made to professional identity and more broadly the notion of professionalism. International perspectives will be highlighted with specific attention given to approaches in the four key jurisdictions of the United Kingdom. The review will also examine closely key approaches and initiatives arising from this inquiry.

The inquiry is not confined purely to social work contexts, and examines the range of contrasting professional disciplines outlined above. Synergies and differences are highlighted, as are alternative ways of thinking and the conceptualisation of integrated learning within each. Key messages and lessons for social work are drawn and highlighted at points within this discussion. Practical examples such as simulation and problem-based learning are presented to illustrate differing approaches to integrated learning. The review concludes with an introduction to the notion of apprenticeships and the potential roles that individuals may inhabit within any given construct of integrated learning.

5.2 Social Work Education and Integrated Learning

The place of integrated learning within social work is multi-faceted and contested. Mallick (2007) outlines that *'in social work education, integration is given prime importance though the concept of integration remains ambiguous'* (as in Sunirose, 2013, p81). This is echoed within the literature, which does not use the term 'integrated learning' as an explicit term. Authors talked about what skills and knowledge are required for social work practice, the importance of different types of knowledge and the *location* that it develops in. Further themes which will be examined later also include the notion that the development of professional identity is a process of 'becoming' (Scanlon, 2011) and that practice can provide a platform for rehearsal as part of this becoming. It is also noted that social work graduates who enter the workplace as qualified social work professionals are not 'practice ready', and indeed should not be expected to be 'practice ready'. Rather, their initial education provides a foundation which allows them to enter the workplace and embark on a career of lifelong learning.

Beginning with an exploration of skills and knowledge, Schaber (2014) argues that each profession has its own particular defined knowledge and belief system, with boundaries drawn around it. This is referred to by Shulman (2005, p.54) as a *'signature pedagogy'* and, *'implicitly define(s) what counts as knowledge in a field and how things become known: they define how knowledge is analysed, criticised, accepted, or discarded'*. This is of course a complex process, and in the context of social work this has been a significant challenge as the profession articulates its role and associated knowledge base.

In terms of professional knowledge requirements, Billett (2009a) suggests that there are different types of knowledge required for the professions. The first of these is domain specific conceptual knowledge, or *'knowing that'* (Ryle, 1949). This is the *'canonical knowledge'* of the occupation, which can be written down, Secondly there is domain-specific procedural knowledge or, *'knowing how'* (Ryle, 1949). This is the practice knowledge of the profession which is seen to be tacit in essence. Finally there is dispositional knowledge, which is the attitudes and values which underpin practice and theoretical knowledge (Perkins, Jay and Tishman, 1993) and criticality (Mezieow, 1981). This will be developed through individuals' beliefs, and will be

negotiated through their encounters with particular experiences (Billett, 2009a). Within social work it is argued that this comes through explicit engagement with ethics and values (Banks, 2001; Gray and Webb, 2010).

It is clear that the knowledge that is located within the concept of integrated learning is multi-dimensional and is influenced by context, individual perspectives and a fluid and contested knowledge base. This poses challenges for how it is delivered, received, assessed and understood.

5.2.1   The location of integrated learning

Intuitively, the location of integrated learning is the point where academic and practice learning comes together. One could look to practice learning as the point in which this most explicitly takes places, but to do so would be to overlook the role of location and the interplay between these 'learning sites' and the quality of learning achieved. In this section issues of authenticity, evidence based practice and critical reflection will help to unpick these complexities.

Billett (2009a) argues that conceptual knowledge is developed through academia and becomes situated in practice. However, practice or occupational knowledge is far broader than technical knowledge and as tasks increase in complexity there is a need to be strategic, innovative and adaptive. However Billett views the *locations* of learning as important as each of these settings has its own particular attributes, and it is when they are integrated that the learning experiences are most likely to lay sound foundations for future practice. Shulman (2005) develops this argument, contending that the pedagogies within professional education extend further than an understanding of theory alone, and should encompass all dimensions of practice: *'the technical, moral and the rational…. Forming… habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of the hand'* (p58-59).

A number of strengths of workplace learning, which are common across professions and a range of industries, have been outlined by Billett (2001). These include access to authentic work activities, opportunities for observation and listening, access to

more experienced co-workers and the ability to practice. Fieldwork is the *location* viewed to provide these opportunities (Bogo, 2006). Within social work the importance of fieldwork is widely discussed within the national and international literature (Fook et al., 1997; Fortune et al., 2001; Edmond et al., 2006; Zeira and Schiff, 2014). It is regarded as the bridge between academia and the reality of practice (Savaya et al., 2003) and the place where *'students learn to practise the profession through active involvement with 'real' experiences in which they perform a service or helping role'* (Wayne et al., 2010, p.330).

Shulman (2005) terms this as a 'rehearsal for practice', a chance for students to model their practice, draw on observations of other practitioners, to test their own skills and practice, and to also receive constructive feedback (Knight, 2001). The field is therefore a key environment in which learning is integrated and it provides the student with an authentic experience which is richly informative (Billett, 2006; Shulman, 2005). This preparation and rehearsal positions the student as an active performer, who is:

> *'Visible and therefore, vulnerable. They are expected to participate and contribute. This environment can result in an atmosphere of uncertainty, unpredictability, risk-- taking, and produce vulnerability, anxiety, excitement, fear, a sense of foreboding…Educators have the role of managing and containing these emotions and to encourage interaction, which promotes a culture of learning'* (Shulman, 2005, p. 57).

As part of this rehearsal, knowledge is constructed or recontextualised as a result of being situated in the practice setting (Billett, 2009b).

5.2.2   The need for learning in practice and academy

Developing from this position, it is argued that learning can be carried out in the classroom *and* in practice, (Brown, 1996; Boitel and Fromm, 2014) that both contribute towards the development of one another and thus, they are engaged in mutually influential dialogue (Brown, 1996).

For social work education to be most effective therefore, the student should be supported to make links between theory and practice *during* their fieldwork, but also to analyse practice, underpinning theory and ethical dilemmas *within* academic settings. Billett (2001) regards academic settings as being crucial to address the limitations of work-based learning. For example, in relation to the avoidance of development of bad habits and dangerous or inappropriate shortcuts; making sense of experiences that were personally or professionally confronting; and those which inhibit the development of professional identity. Wilson and Kelly (2010) highlight the inconsistent use of theory in practice learning settings, with practitioners often viewing theory as being a requirement for academic study, rather than practice. Thus, while practice provides important opportunities for learning, it can also hinder learning (Billett, 2009b). The academy is therefore crucial in order to address these shortcomings (Gould and Harris, 1996).

However, critics of the current model would argue that the theoretical basis taught within HEIs is often at odds with the reality of practice (Parton, 2000; Wilson and Kelly, 2010). This is the result of increasingly managerialist and bureaucratic social work practice, which has resulted in a focus on processes, outputs and risk management (Wilson and Kelly, 2010; Orme et al., 2009). This therefore highlights the increased need for greater integration of the two in *both* academic and practice locations.

5.2.3   Integration within the individual

Whilst practice and the academy have been positioned as important locations of integrated learning, ultimately learning is integrated *within* an individual (Boud, 2000). Integration in this context, means asking how knowledge is transmitted and recontextualised in the workplace. Future learning must therefore engage with these experiences as part of the curriculum to avoid learning being discarded (Humphrey, 2010). What is distinctive about integrated learning is therefore the element of critical reflection that aids metacognition and supports ongoing critical reflection (Billett, 2006).

However, whilst this review has examined the conceptual and procedural knowledge required for practice and how this becomes integrated within the three locations, it is important not to neglect the role of dispositional knowledge. This includes, for example, an understanding of diversity value based and ethical issues and also, how structural inequality and oppression has shaped the lives of service users (Seabury et al., 2010). An additional area for exploration in the context of social work is the need for research-mindedness within professional practice. The literature positions this as key in the development of critical thinking, problem solving ability (Zeira and Schiff, 2014), creativity (Peile, 1993, cited in Fook et al., 1997) and the use of evidence-based practice. Barriers to the development of EBP have been found to include resource pressures, practitioner resistance, unequal access to research, a lack practice orientated tools and guidelines and limited availability of accessible summaries of systematic reviews (Edmond et al., 2006). Furthermore, it is argued that EBP methodologies should be incorporated at all stages of social work education, in order to ensure that practitioners are able to critically evaluate evidence and practice (Howard et al., 2003). Field education is therefore a crucial opportunity to implement EBP skills, however requires in the involvement and integration of academia and practice (Edmond et al., 2006). The use of EBP, however, is regarded by some authors to be the result of the managerialism of social work (Wilson and Kelly, 2010) which does not provide an adequate basis for the development of knowledge for social work practice (Webb, 2001). Others argue that the use of EBP should not be prioritised over, or at the expense of the development of, critically reflective and sensitive practice (Wilson et al., 2005; Wilson and Douglas, 2007).

The above discussion highlights that there are multiple learning sites for integrated learning and it is a two-way process in which academia meets practice and vice versa. Indeed, the relationship is much less binary and more inter-meshed in reality.

5.3 The Development of Professional Identity and 'Competence'

The notion of identity and sense of 'self' are key facets of integrated learning. Social

work education requires students to bring themselves into their learning both within academic and practice arenas. This requires the development of self-knowledge in addition to theoretical knowledge and practical skills (Ingram, 2015).

Drawing on the work of Giddens (1991), Habermas (1987, 2004), and Bauman (2005) Trede (2012) argues that professional identity is formed from awareness of self and prior experiences (knowledge of who we are) and is constantly evolving as a result of interaction with others (how we fit in with others). The notion of self-identity is also derived from the use of language to describe oneself to others (how we negotiate 'fitting in'). Therefore professional development should be seen as participative and active, continuing and being defined and redefined by others, in short as 'becoming' (Wenger, 1998; Scanlon, 2011).

In this context academia and practice together provide early socialisation into the expected behaviours and values of the profession and therefore provide opportunities for students to test out different images and frames. The student will *'observe role models as prototypes, tacit rules and professional traits, which will lead to 'the real self [being] actualised'* (Scanlon, 2011, p.17). This concept of a frame (Schön, 1983; Srull and Wyer, 1984) can be used to consider the way in which professionals perceive and execute their professional task. Fieldwork therefore provides the *'space in the curriculum where professional identity is tested, threatened and reshaped... it is the in-between space, the space where self and professional meet'* (Trede 2012, p.162).

Gould and Harris (1996) contend that students' initial understanding of the social work role is limited, due to having little *exposure* to the profession. So in essence, many cannot experience the social work role until they actually 'rehearse' it within fieldwork. Like professional identity, notions of competence are also seen as developing on a trajectory (Brown, 1996; Billett, 2006). The lack of any single way of approaching problems necessitates the development of critical insights, (Holyoak, 1992; Billet, 2009)Gra and there is a clear consensus within the literature that the development of reflection is therefore an essential part of social work education (Gould and Harris, 1996; Billett, 2009b); and also the development of professional identity (Trede, 2012). Other authors highlight the role of emotional intelligence approaches: a focus on self-

awareness; social competence; understanding the emotions of oneself and others which impact on relationships and effectiveness at work (Howe, 2008; Ball and Manwaring, 2010); and self-confidence, which are all viewed as areas which are difficult to assess (Knight and Page, 2007).

Social work practice therefore demands flexibility, reflection, and lifelong learning. Initial education thus provides a foundational knowledge which is then developed in ongoing practice. However, whilst there is an emergent trend within the literature that 'mastery' takes time to develop (Seabury et al., 2010) it could be argued that there is a disconnection between this and the expectations of newly qualified practitioners and indeed qualified practitioners at a range of levels of experience.

5.3.1 Assessment and Integrated Learning

The diverse and multi-faceted picture emerging in the literature about what integrated learning is and how it can be constructed and recontextualised is echoed when consideration is given to the assessment of student performance in such spheres. Cree (2000) suggests that when thinking about how assessment is undertaken it is important to acknowledge that assessment strategies are *active* rather than passive and will motivate, focus and influence what is learnt and valued in integrated learning.

Orrell, Cooper and Bowden (2010) propose three key functions of assessment within integrated learning contexts: *a definitional* function which highlights what is valued within the learning process; a *formative* function which directs and scaffolds learning; and a *summative* function which confirms that the desired level of learning has occurred. Given that robust assessment underpins the legitimacy of the social work qualification this is of paramount importance (Trede and Smith, 2012).

The assessment of learning within practice contexts involves the assessment of the application of foundational theoretical knowledge and skills (Jonsson et al., 2014). Trede and Smith (2012) highlight that within any given integrated learning model, a bespoke and highly nuanced learning context occurs in which critical reflection,

contextual awareness and use of self are of central importance. Therefore the aforementioned 'distinctive habits of thinking' (Boitel and Fromm, 2014, p.609) form part of what is being assessed in practice settings. Simply put, the ability of students to *critically* use and apply skills and knowledge across a range of contexts is what provides social work programme assessors with confidence that students have attained the appropriate level of transferrable learning required of a generic professional qualification. Orrell et al. (2010) concur with this in their examination of the key features of 'work integrated learning' by highlighting that what is to be assessed involves deep theoretical understanding and critical application within the cultural, legislative and interpersonal spheres of organisations. Worth-Butler et al. (1994) suggest that any assessment of such learning needs to cast a light on observable behaviours *and* less observable attributes such as values and personal reflection.

5.3.2 Challenges, limitations and opportunities in assessment of integrated learning

Kemmis (2009) argues that practice based learning is by definition a diffuse concept with many facets including functional tasks, professional identities, moral and ethical dilemmas and application of skills and knowledge to complex and diverse situations. Issett (2000) suggests that professional knowledge is imperfect and its application in practice requires criticality, which should be incorporated into an integrated learning assessment strategy. Trede and Smith (2010) suggest that the inherent messiness of practice contexts poses a challenge to assessors as it is difficult to compare the performance and learning of individual students. They go on to suggest that whilst professional standards attempt, in part, to quantify and objectify practice, they can potentially overlook the important reasoning and reflection which takes place and requires capturing within assessment.

Subjectivity in assessment of integrated learning is highlighted as key issue (Wright et al., 2010; Cree, 2000). The primacy of the relationship between student and practice based assessor is cited as a key factor, and the individual interpretation of standardised assessment criteria (within a similarly fluid and diverse practice

context) make comparison and reliability a key challenge (Wright et al., 2010). Green (2009) notes that this relationship based aspect of integrated learning assessment can be seen to be a strength, as the relationships facilitate and prompt the reflection on the individual, societal and organisational dimensions of applying knowledge and skills in practice. Trede and Smith (2010) note that these relationships are threaded through all aspects of the learning journey and are assessed and scaffolded in universities and in practice contexts.

Gould and Harris (1996) highlight the role that students may have in their own learning and assessment. The process of reflection has an evaluative function and one which locates students as key participants and drivers in their learning (Ingram et al., 2014). Boud et al. (2010) note that learning is an ongoing career spanning process and as such the development of critical and participatory learners is crucial. Shulman (2005) emphasises that student agency within their learning is crucial within integrated learning contexts as the integration is not simply practical application but occurs intra-personally. Hence, students are required to work in partnership with their assessors to bring this internal learning to the fore. This prompts consideration of the role of students within assessment (of self and peers) and should be a consideration for any model of integrated learning.

Integrated learning involves the interaction and collaboration of a range of stakeholders and participants (Billett, 2009a). A key relationship is that between Universities and social work practice partners (Orrell et al., 2010). As already noted within this literature review it is far too simplistic to locate 'theory' within the university context and 'practice' within practice learning agencies. The identity and location of 'assessors 'in social work professional learning are diverse, as are the methods deployed to undertake assessment. To illustrate this point, Cree (2000) suggests that practice skills can be assessed through a combination of approaches including groupwork, role-play, observed practice, reflective logs and process recordings. These diverse assessment tools are likely to be located within many contexts such as classrooms, practice agencies, service user's homes and individual reflection. Cree (2000) argues that this requires a rich and diverse group of assessors rather than being constrained by an academic/practice axis.

Given the diverse range of stakeholders within social work education the priorities in terms of what is to be assessed may vary but all assessors act as "gatekeepers for the profession" (Trede and Smith, 2010, p.187). Trede and Smith (2010) suggest that these varying elements when brought together create the full picture of what is to be assessed through integrated learning. For example, they note that universities may have an emphasis on theoretical understanding, professional regulators may have a focus on the competencies required for professional practice and agencies may focus on readiness for practice and cultural integration. An awareness of priorities for individual stakeholders is crucial when considering models of integrated learning as the conflation of roles such as assessor/employer may lead to an emphasis on particular aspects of assessment.

In sum, it is clear that the varied landscape of integrated learning requires a similarly diverse range of assessments and assessors. Harmann and McDowell (2009) state that effective integrated learning and associated assessments require cognisance of a range of factors including practice tasks, personal development, regulatory requirements, those from further afield those from further afield objectivity and readiness to practice. Trede and Smith (2010) suggest that this context requires integrated learning to embrace a holistic and multi-assessor approach.

5.4 Structure of Social Work Education

In this section the literature review will examine the organisation of social work education across a range of jurisdictions. There are many similarities and differences which emerge from this inquiry, and these relate to factors such as professional standards, expectations of stakeholders, the nature of practice/academic relationships and the growing emphasis on continued professional development. A particular focus is given to new approaches to social work education in England and an examination of what these approaches entail is presented and the newly emerging evaluative data is reported. This scoping of the national and international picture will help to lay a clear foundation for understanding current opportunities and challenges in integrated learning.

5.4.1 International Social Work

The nature of social work and thus social work education varies internationally. Despite the existence of the International Definition of Social Work (IFSW, 2014) and Global Standards of Social Work Education, Kendall (1995) argues that social work education models reflect the social systems and values of the respective country. A scoping exercise undertaken by Hussein (2011) within the European Economic Area (EEA) indicated that in some countries social work is a 'new' profession (e.g. Bulgaria in the 1990s) only, recognised recently within law (e.g. Romania in 2005) and that statutory duties in relation to certain groups (including children) are not viewed as a social work role (e.g. Germany). Only six of the twenty-four countries surveyed at the time had fitness to practice systems in place and the title of social worker was not consistently protected in law (i.e. Norway). Whilst the IFSW reported in 2012 that the adoption of a three or four year Bachelor's Degree is becoming the norm, Hussein's (2011) review of the twenty-nine countries within the EEA which had signed the Bologna Declaration (1999) at the time, indicates that progress is still limited, with some countries viewing the process as bureaucratic, rather than understanding its original vision (Łybacka, 2015).

5.4.2 United Kingdom

In the UK, social work is a younger profession than medicine and teaching. The first form of social and philanthropic work training was introduced at The University of Birmingham in 1908 (Davis, 2008). The Council for Training in Social Work (CTSW) was established in 1962 following the first introduction of the National Certificate of Social Work (Davis, 2008). Many developments have occurred within both social work legislation and in pre and post-qualifying social work education since, within the UK. These developments have aimed to increase standards both in social work education and in practice, (Orme et al., 2009) in an attempt to restore public confidence in the profession (Munro, 2011). As part of the quality assurance process, regional regulatory bodies were introduced, in addition to the requirement that all qualified social work practitioners, and in some jurisdictions (including Scotland) students register with their regional regulator. Over the past thirty years, reforms have included the

introduction of the Diploma in Social Work in 1994 and most recently, the introduction of the social work undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in the early 2000s across the UK (Davis, 2008). Orme et al. (2009) highlight that this was further prompted by reductions in the numbers of practitioners qualifying annually, with a wider aim of modernising the social care workforce. However these reforms were also encouraged by some academics in order to ensure that practitioners had a sufficient knowledge and skill base in order to meet the complex demands of practice (Orme, 2001).

Whilst the trend has been to increase standards of education through the degree-model, (Davis, 2008; IFSW, 2012) the English system has seen recent developments which place increasing emphasis on work-based learning model, with less learning being undertaken in formal HEI settings. Unlike the generic initial social work education offered in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, there has also been a shift towards increasing specialism in the new programmes offered in England. The review will now in turn examine each of the areas in the UK.

5.4.3 Scotland

Many hybrid pre-qualifying routes have existed at different HEIs. These have included employer-based routes, part-time/long distance routes, courses adapted to attract students from different educational backgrounds and with different family commitments. At present, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees are offered via seven HEIs and an employer route in two. The latter sees students remaining in employment and being employer-sponsored. The majority of this learning is undertaken in the workplace, through two practice placements. This could therefore be regarded as a form of an apprenticeship model. In line with the Standards in Social Work Education (Scottish Social Services Council, 2003) social work students must spend at least 200 days in practice learning, with at least 170 days in supervised direct placement. The standards are translated into 'learning foci', and the Key Capabilities in Child Care and Protection, (Scottish Executive, 2006) which students must meet in order to pass their practice placements. Students who undertake the postgraduate route can apply for a postgraduate bursary from the SSSC, for both

fees and maintenance. Following qualification and successful registration as a social worker, Newly Qualified Social Workers must complete 144 hours of post-qualifying training and learning (PRTL) within twelve months following registration of which 30 hours must be in relation to identifying, assessing and managing risk of vulnerable groups to protect those from harm (SSSC, 2011). Like nursing, registration lasts for a period of three years, with social work practitioners being required to complete 90 hours of PRTL during this period (SSSC, 2011).

It is perhaps significant that the guidance document in relation to PRTL does not mention integrated learning, instead it talks about *consolidation* of learning (SSSC, 2011). Gillies (2016) also highlights inconsistencies in the level of resources dedicated to PRTL at employer level, with the costs of these being borne by the employer and HEIs (for final year students). The lack of governmental funding for this process, in comparison to teacher education, as will be explored later, therefore raises questions about the opportunities for post-qualifying support for Newly Qualified Social Workers in Scotland. Despite the existence of the PRTL requirements, there is also no formally agreed process of induction in Scotland, unlike teacher education. This is reflected in NQSWs' self-reported levels of readiness to practice (Grant et al., 2016).

5.4.4 Northern Ireland

Like other areas in the UK, the social work degree was introduced in Northern Ireland in 2004 in order to increase the academic benchmark standards of the profession (Northern Ireland Social Care Council, (NISCC, 2014). This aims to ensure that social workers have a sound knowledge base from which to practice, in order to be competent to 'assess needs, risks and circumstances as a core competence in working with individuals' (NISCC, 2014, p.2). Like elsewhere in the UK, students and qualified workers must be registered with the NISCC and students undertake two direct practice assessments, totalling 185 days in duration. A core part of this is the introduction of the Northern Ireland Degree in Social Work Partnership (NIDWSP) which formalised the collaborative working between HEIs and employers (Wilson and Campbell, 2013) which is underpinned by the Social Work

Partnership Governance Framework, (NISCC, 2013). This outlines that educational institutions and employers (statutory and voluntary) from senior level, should have shared responsibility for student selection, course content and practice learning, the development of the degree and its delivery. This fits with the Quality Assurance Framework which outlines focuses on increasing the standards of social work education. It talks explicitly about integrated learning within its Standards for Practice Learning:

> *'A partnership approach between academic and workplace staff is essential to support the integration of theory with practice, to promote the implementation of evidence-based practice and to ensure that there is coherence and progression between the academic and practice components of the course...Each student should have ongoing support from academic staff during each period of practice learning in the workplace'* (NISCC, 2009, p.1).

This positions the workplace as a key site for integration, with an emphasis on practice learning being everyone's responsibility. As with teaching, there is also a requirement for Newly Qualified Social Workers in Northern Ireland to undertake an Assessed Year in Employment, which is regarded to consolidate their learning through specified learning outcomes. This is also viewed to be a collective responsibility.

This theme is echoed in Northern Ireland's post-qualifying CPD model, 'Professionals in Practice' which has three core facets: 'Being A Professional' (demonstrating the skills and knowledge which make you a professional social worker) 'Being Professional in' (how you make decisions and how you work across disciplines) and 'Being Active in Practice' (continuously developing skills and knowledge to update and improve your practice). This approach is underpinned by the vision that lifelong and bite –sized learning is necessary for ongoing effective social work practice. It emphasises the importance of critical thinking, reflective practice and reflective, rather than passive learning. In addition, practitioners are asked to demonstrate the *impact* on practice as part of their reflective learning. The NISCC have developed a series of web-based applications, 'Free Mobile Solutions to support Being Active in Practice' which look at

things like child development in specific stages and case examples, reflecting this commitment to bite-sized learning.

Lifelong learning is also a key theme within Northern Ireland's approach to CPD, which recognises the accumulation of formal and informal learning within four different routes: the individual assessment of learning, credit accumulation through agreement with line managers as a result of learning in practice (more informal learning), approved programmes and professional awards. The latter offers practitioners at three different levels to gain awards certified by the NISCC, reflecting different levels of competence. These are the *NI Consolidation Award in Social Work*, (for NQSWs and returning practitioners) *NI Specialist Award in Social Work*, (those who are involved in complex decision making, requiring high levels of professional responsibility and accountability. The award supports practitioners with high levels of specialist knowledge, skills and expertise) and *NI Leadership and Strategic Award in Social Work.*

Wilson and Campbell (2012) undertook a review of the Northern Ireland Degree in Social Work Partnership drawing on the perspectives of academics. It was felt that high-quality practice learning was delivered within Northern Ireland, yet there existed frustration that there was increasing focus on 'technical interests' within the degree: 'an overemphasis on functional knowledge and skills acquisition' with technocratic 'training agendas' being detrimental to the development of anti-oppressive practice, social justice and critical reflection (termed by the authors, 'emancipatory interests'). Drawing on the work of Ayre and Preston-Shoot (2010) they summarise:

> *'…the views expressed by academic staff about the detrimental impact of procedurally and target-driven cultures on student learning are concerning and similar to those that have led some writers to question whether social workers can any longer practise ethically in contemporary cultures driven by government/employer performance-led agendas'* (p.1019).

Whilst the authors outline that the degree does not appear to be dominated exclusively by technical interest, they point to the development of an increasingly

technocratic form of social work, which is also exacerbated by the managerialism of social work in the UK; and in response to a move from community-based social work as a result of the 'troubles' in Northern Ireland. Further findings indicated that increased administration which resulted from the partnerships were also seen to negatively impact on the research capacity of academics; and increased emphasis was required on relationship-based social work in initial education. These findings raise concerns about how responsibility for practice learning can be increased at employer-level, without exacerbating an increasingly managerialist profession. The need to return to relationship-based practice is echoed elsewhere in the literature (Hennessey, 2011; Ingram, 2015).

5.4.5 Wales

The position in Wales is driven by the Social Service Inspectorate for Wales (SSIW) (2004) guidance. The opening statement of that guidance is as follows:

> *'Both the Welsh Assembly Government and the Care Council for Wales believe that professional social work training must produce practitioners who are both effective and reflective, and that therefore such training must develop academic and practice skills equally' (SSIW 2004, p.2).*

Neither this statement nor the document as a whole makes reference to integrated learning, although it remains implicit within the development of the document. The context of that guidance is not entirely dissimilar from some of the drivers for RSWE in Scotland, with the main concerns being about the availability and quality of practice learning opportunities; practice learning not being seen as part of core activity; and a deeper concern about graduate readiness for employment. This document can be seen as contributing to the required shift in culture, with a key aim seen as being establishing the centrality of employers to the process, as in the following diagrammatic representation (Figure 1).

The strategy associated with the document identifies a number of key levers for change beyond the placing of employers at the centre. Firstly, it seeks to put in place a 'whole

systems approach' where collaboration of all the key partners is under the umbrella of a local partnership, not dissimilar to those observed in Northern Ireland. The development of practice learning is supported by a 'Practice Learning Opportunity Fund' paid to local authorities, not universities. Importantly the guidance includes the statement that each student should have their practice learning managed by a local authority (or partnership) from day one. This is designed to allow the holistic identification of the learning needs of individual students to be met over the course of their social work education and the meeting of the requirement for at least one statutory placement. So although, the local authority (or partnership) will not necessarily be involved in the delivery of all the Placement Learning Opportunities (PLOs), they are responsible for identification and support of the placements.

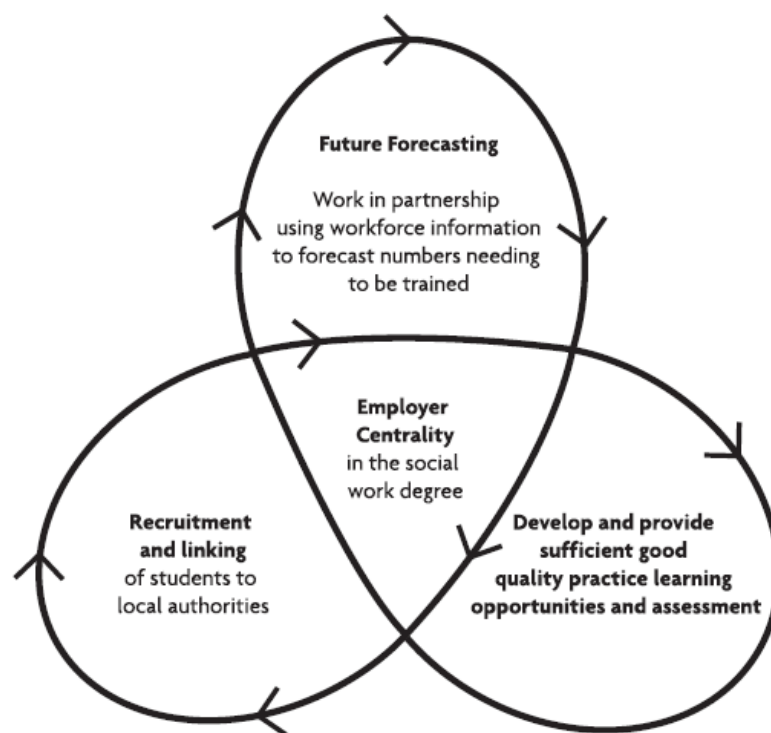*Figure 1: Employer Centrality (SSIW, 2004, p. 47.)*

In terms of responsibility of the HEI, whilst there is no specific reference to hosting in the Care Council or Wales's rules for programme approval. They do stipulate the need for:

- A formal partnership agreement between at least one director of social services and the HEI which specifies the resources (including sufficient practice learning

opportunities) to be provided

- Evidence of sufficient PLOs and practice supervisors and/ or assessors.

By stipulating that partnership agreements are in place, requirements are placed upon both the HEI and the employer, and at the same time the learning needs of the student are seen as central and something to be addressed over the life of their programme.

As with the Professionals in Practice model in Northern Ireland, Wales have adopted a similar model in the form of the National Career Pathway and the *Continuing Professional Education and Learning (CPEL) Framework.* This sees practitioners undertaking learning largely within the workplace to consolidate learning at different levels of practice as outlined below.

- Consolidation for NQSW – introduced 2013
- Experienced Practitioner – introduced 2014
- Senior Practitioner – introduced 2014
- Consultant Social Worker - Introduced 2015.

This is especially important for Newly Qualified Social Workers, for whom the Consolidation Programme is now mandatory. This begins in the second year of practice and lasts approximately eighteen months and is designed to consolidate learning in the first year of practice through a range of work based learning, including direct observations (Gillies, 2016). One can therefore see that there is significant investment in the Welsh and Northern Irish models outlined above, from which Scotland could draw a number of lessons.

5.4.6   England

The preceding introduction to social work education in the United Kingdom provides an introduction to the landscape, however in this section recent fast-track and specialist approaches will be examined in terms of their origins, intention and efficacy. It should be noted that the new approaches detailed below (e.g. Frontline), whilst significant, are still in their infancy and the majority of social work education in England is delivered through the established generic degree structure.

5.5 Fast-track and specialist approaches to qualifying social work education

The catalyst for the recent development and implementation of new models of social work education in England came from a series of high profile child deaths, particularly that of Peter Connolly (Baby P) in 2007, which led to the setting up of the Social Work Task Force (Task Force) in 2008 (Social Work Task Force, 2009). The Task Force was mandated to undertake a 'nuts and bolts' review of social work practice and make recommendations for social work education (Moriarty and Manthorpe, 2013). It published three reports *"...all of which strongly featured concerns about the perceived quality of some social work qualifying programmes and the abilities of some newly qualified social workers"* (Moriarty and Manthorpe, 2013, p.84), echoing findings from other inquiries and reviews (Laming, 2003, Laming 2009, Munro 2011) about a perceived need to *"...raise the quality and consistency of social work degrees and strengthen their curriculums to provide high quality practical skills in children's social work"* (Laming, 2009, p.88).

Despite concerns about an ideological impetus for change (Jones, 2015), as illustrated by a lack of published research to support reported failings in social work education (Moriarty and Manthorpe (2013, 2014), the Task Force's recommendations were subsequently implemented by the Social Work Reform Board. This included investigation of different models for delivering social work education: *"...such as alternative routes and regional collaboration"* (Social Work Reform Board, 2010, p.48). This set the context for the development of three new qualifying social work degree routes: Step Up to Social Work (Step Up) in 2010, Frontline in 2012 and Think Ahead in 2015. Each represents a move away from generic qualifying social work education towards specialisms; the first two designed to equip graduates to work in children and families' social work settings, the third in mental health social work contexts. Although each model is configured differently, they are all Masters routes aimed at attracting academically 'high achieving' graduates, who are paid to undertake training that is predominately situated in the workplace. They were also aimed at giving employers significantly more influence over the content of initial education and training of social workers (Baginsky and Teague, 2013); for example, Step Up was implemented though the formation of 'regional partnerships' between local authorities and HEIs to

devise the curriculum and validate training (Baginsky and Teague, 2013). In effect, it represented a structural means of achieving the aim of greater integrated learning and utilised a 'work based-learning framework' (Baginsky and Teague, 2013) designed to support a model of bringing the *"...field into the classroom as well as bringing the classroom to the field"* (Baginsky and Manthorpe, 2014, p.112).

In comparison to existing qualifying social work courses, Step Up, Frontline and Think Ahead have the same minimum 200 day practice learning requirement but differ in terms of the type and amount of academic content provided. Students in Step Up undertake academic components over a 14 month period, delivered through a mix of face-to-face and e-learning formats that run both concurrently with practice learning and in short 1-2 week blocks. Practice learning is facilitated in local authority teams, predominantly in children and families settings (Smith et al., 2013). Sharing the main features of the 'Teach first' model adopted in education (McAllister et al., 2012), Frontline 'participants' undertake a 5 week programme of learning activity around social work theory and law before moving into local authority children and families teams. This, together with a further 22 days of teaching and learning, is the combined academic and practice components that enable them to qualify as social workers after the first year, with the second year spent practising and undertaking the master's component of the degree. Frontline's curriculum has a very specific and restricted focus in comparison with established qualifying routes:

> '*The training model emphasises direct practice skills, with a single over-arching theoretical framework – a systemic model –and teaching of two evidence-based interventions, i.e. motivational interviewing and a parenting programme based on social learning theory*' (Maxwell, et al., 2016, p.10).

Think Ahead offers essentially the same model as Frontline, comprising of a two year fast-track, work-based learning programme based predominantly in mental health settings, supplemented with some experience working in children and families teams, with approximately 30 days teaching in year one and 8 in year two; this leads to the professional social work qualification after year one and a master's award after year two (Think Ahead, 2015).

These routes into social work have been the subject of intense debate. Advocates support the separation of social work education into adults' and children's routes, to allow each to become more focused (Narey, 2014), whereas critics, including social workers, have strong concerns about the limiting nature of fast-track specialist routes; in particular, how a 'silo' approach to education may fail to equip graduates with essential knowledge and skills for social work practice (Croisdale-Appleby, 2014; Jones, 2015). Given their relative newness, only a small number of evaluations have been completed thus far. These relate to Step Up (see below) and more recently, Frontline. The former are limited in that equivalent longitudinal studies with students on generic qualifying Masters Degrees were not undertaken at the same time. The findings are considered below. A further longitudinal study comparing outcomes for Step Up and generic Masters graduates is due to report in Autumn 2017 (Smith et al., 2015). A further evaluation of Frontline is currently underway (Warner et al., 2015).

5.5.1 Evaluation of Step Up

The experiences of the first two cohorts of Step Up students were evaluated using questionnaires at the beginning of the training, after six and twelve months and at the end of the programme (18 months) (Baginsky and Teague, 2013; Baginsky and Manthorpe, 2014). While trainees' evaluations were broadly positive, differences emerged across the timeframe and cohorts. The findings speak to some of the key tensions already signalled in this literature review regarding integrated learning. The practice learning elements of Step Up received a much higher satisfaction rating than the academic components, which in part appeared related to the extremely short time frame allowed for setting up the taught component of the programme. Academic input was rated positively when it was perceived to reach the high standards trainees expected from an intensive master's programme and where it was readily linked to practice, for example, teaching on law. Dissatisfaction with some aspects of academic input in cohort 1 - including organisational and delivery issues, and calls for more in-depth coverage of practice-related subjects, including domestic violence, disability, neglect and drugs and alcohol misuse (Baginsky and Teague, 2013, p.71) - contrasted with higher satisfaction with academic elements for cohort 2 (Baginsky and Manthorpe, 2014, p.10). In addition, the inclusion of practitioners in teaching was generally considered very favourably –

although this depended on how well they had been briefed (Baginsky and Teague, 2013). Criticisms of practice placements related to poor understandings of host-teams of the trainee's role and the tasks they could undertake. In sum, over 96 per cent of trainees in cohort 1 and 97 per cent in cohort 2 thought they had been adequately prepared for practice; although this differed across settings. For example, in cohort 1, 90 per cent of respondents felt adequately prepared for working with children and families in comparison to just under 60 per cent for work with adults (Baginsky and Manthorpe, 2014, p.10), reflecting the noted concerns about the impact of a silo approach to qualifying courses.

More specifically, the evaluations testify to challenges of achieving integrated learning. Baginsky and Teague (2013) note that promoting an on-going reflective approach to practice through the use of a work-based learning framework proved difficult to realise. Thus, while the objective of enabling trainees to integrate academic and practice knowledge in work-based settings was achieved for some, this was not the case for all. Key among the contributory factors identified was the role of practice educators, who were viewed as pivotal in enabling trainees to use theoretical frames to make sense of their practice learning experiences. There was, however, considerable variation in the capacity of practice educators to achieve this, with some seen as facilitators and others as obstacles to integrated learning (p.112). The importance of this issue is reflected in the satisfaction ratings for practice placements, the highest of which were those where trainees felt able to discuss the theory underpinning an intervention or assessment (Baginsky and Manthorpe, 2014). Baginsky and Teague (2013) conclude that more emphasis is, therefore, required in relation to the selection, training and support of practice educators, including fostering a greater awareness of the content and structure of qualifying courses. A further challenge related to trainees having high workloads and complex cases, reflecting the employee nature of the role, which for some impeded the integration of theory and research in practice (Baginsky and Manthorpe, 2014).

A separate evaluation of cohort 1 of Step Up explored the perspectives of the regional partnerships and employers (Smith et al., 2013). Key findings included a general consensus that the programme was valued by participants and had delivered, "…a significant group of highly capable and committed new entrants to the social work profession" (Smith et al., 2013, p.11) who appeared ready for practice. The partnership

arrangements in particular were valued and seen as representing a new approach to social work education, which had improved relationships between HEIs and LAs. Members of the regional partnerships reported more ownership of and involvement in the learning trainees received. The structure of the programme was felt to have significantly improved linkage between theory and practice. While this reported outcome was also related to the ability of the trainees (Smith et al., 2013, p.14), a key enabling factor was the support provided by 'host teams' for creating what amounted to a culture of learning for trainees, one better tailored to their individual learning needs. This adds weight to the above noted finding about the importance of the role of practice educator and the facilitation of learning in practice settings. The perceived success of Step Up was also felt to be illustrated by the high completion rate of trainees, despite the significant demands placed on them; although the impact of an employment contract must be acknowledged both as a motivating factor and a key financial resource, neither of which are available to students on established qualifying programmes. A further criticism related to the capacity of local authority staff to deliver a master's level curriculum, with variations apparent across the regional partnerships. This raises questions about the adequacy of planning and resourcing of fast-track routes if a dilution of academic learning is to be avoided.

5.5.2   Evaluation of Frontline

The recently published evaluation of Frontline (Maxwell et al., 2016) relates to the initial cohort of 'trainees' in 2012. The study involved a mixed methods design and included a comparative assessment of trainees' practice skills with students on established master's routes using actor-based simulations. The findings are broadly positive, with trainees receiving high ratings for their ability to communicate with and develop effective collaborative relationships with service users, and for the quality of their report writing. The comparative analysis found that Frontline trainees received significantly higher ratings for the quality of their interviewing than students on established routes; although the findings for the latter group were mostly positive. In terms of the integration of learning, however, Frontline trainees received lower scores than comparison groups for the application of theory. This result was not statistically significant, however. the study concludes that it may reflect the teaching model used:

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'Frontline trainees are schooled in one main theoretical perspective, compared to multiple perspectives on mainstream programmes, and that relatively narrow scope was reflected in the assessors' scores' (Maxwell et al., 2016, p.119).

Mirroring findings in the Step Up evaluations, Frontline trainees highlighted the importance of the role of practice educators, in this case consultant social workers, along with academic tutors for facilitating the translation of theory in practice. Interestingly, despite achieving better performances overall, Frontline trainees reported lower levels of confidence than comparison groups, which the authors of the report suggest may be linked to the short duration of the programme. The findings also raise concerns about the potential of specialist routes to foster narrow definitions of the social worker role. This was reflected in some trainees' perceptions of placements in adult settings as, *"a distraction from child and family work"* (Maxwell, et al., 2016. p.12).

The evaluation acknowledges that it is not possible to determine which characteristics of Frontline led to the reported results, indicating this could result from its, *"...very well-resourced and highly selective recruitment campaign..."* (p. 12), as reflected in the finding that Frontline candidates had significantly better qualifications, including A level results and first class degrees, than students on established master's routes, and underwent a rigorous selection process that involved interview simulations with service users that were designed to be particularly challenging. Alternatively, the report recognises that the design of the Frontline training model may have helped facilitate the positive outcomes, including practice readiness of trainees. It concludes with the view that while the results appear mostly positive, there are unanswered questions about how they might translate into outcomes for children and families, and on the retention of and career trajectory of graduates from this route in social work practice.

In sum, fast-track and specialist routes to developing social work education in England arose from a particular set of concerns about social work graduates being adequately prepared for child protection work. They represent a view that social work education should be split into child and adult domains. Initial evaluations are limited in scope, but they suggest that adequately prepared practice educators and placement sites that are supportive of learning are key to facilitating the integration of practice and academic

learning. This appears contingent, however, on sufficient staff expertise, funding and capacity. Step Up's partnership approach to devising and delivering social work programmes seems to have to lead to significant gains in communication between employers and HEIs, and to increased levels of ownership and satisfaction for employers with the curriculum. Frontline's evaluations suggest that a very generously resourced route that pays particular attention to recruitment and attention may attract 'trainees' with highly effective communication and writing skills. Findings at this stage are limited and based on a mix of self-reporting of trainees, employers and regional partnerships and some comparative analysis with students on established courses. Consequently, reports on both initiatives caution against drawing 'unqualified conclusions' about the models' value in leading to high quality graduates with the attributes to achieve better outcomes for children and who will remain in social work practice (Smith et al., 2013; Maxwell, 2016).

Thus, while these evaluations may usefully inform social work education more broadly, they do not support the development of similar routes in Scotland, where the commitment to generic social work education continues. Concerns remain about fast-track and specialist approaches' potential for reducing the complexity of the context for social work practice (Croisdale-Appleby, 2014) and for achieving a holistic integrated learning. It is important of course to note that generic social work education remains the key mode of delivery of social work education in England, and a multi-modal approach is emerging.

It is now important to broaden the scope of the literature review to encompass other professional contexts. Integrated learning and the issues around definition, organisation and conceptualisation exist across a range of professional groupings and much can be learnt about the synergies and differences with social work.

5.6   Other Professional Models of Initial Education

It is evident from the literature that integrated learning is a challenge and an opportunity for a range of professional disciplines and that there are some generic issues that

transcend context and others which are specific to the nature of the profession in question and the context in which they operate. The contested nature of professional knowledge recurs across contexts and the role that policy, regulation and professional role has on how this is conceptualised is explored. This section will examine a range of professional disciplines in order to expand the understanding of integrated learning.

There is difficulty defining the term 'professional' as professions are not a homogenous group, they represent different sectors and have different interests (Scanlon, 2011). However professionals are regarded as the most influential group in society (Cheetham and Chivers, 2005; Freidson, 2001) as Scanlon (2011) argues that a profession has:

> '...a body of knowledge based on abstract concepts and theories and requiring the exercise of considerable discretion, an occupationally controlled division of labour, credentialing procedures, training programmes and an ethic which emphasis doing good rather than economic gain' (p.19).

Prior to examining other professional models of initial education, it is first useful to consider how social work differs as a profession from others. There is no one model for intervention, no one theory to inform, or indeed a correct one. Research indicates in fact that even when a group of experienced practitioners working in the same area of social work, they will generate different hypotheses and different models of intervention (Fook et al., 1997). As outlined in earlier sections, social work is unique in its development of professional identity and each area of social work practice differs. Unlike colleagues within different health professions or teaching, it has a political basis: one which seeks to promote social justice and bring about change within society. Unlike medicine and teaching, it is also a relatively new profession. Whilst the following sections therefore outline lessons which could perhaps be learned in social work education, there is a lack of research to support the extent to which policy transfer between the two might be possible.

As outlined in earlier sections, there is a political appetite for change in social work education in England. As Shulman (2005) outlines:

'Severe critiques of the quality of professional practice and service…can accelerate the pace with which the most familiar pedagogical habits might be re-evaluated and redesigned. The ethical scandals that have beset many professions…may create the social conditions needed to reconsider even the most traditional signature pedagogies' (p.59).

5.6.1 Initial Teacher Education

As in the social work literature, the concept of integrated learning has not fully emerged within teaching. Like the wider literature on integrated learning, reference is made to the different types of knowledge required for the profession. Florian (2012) describes this 'pedagogical content knowledge' as encompassing, *"professional knowledge and understanding, professional skills and abilities, and professional values and personal commitment"* (p.276). This is seen to fit with Shulman's (2005) 'heart, hand and mind' analysis (Florian, 2012). Similar debates exist in relation to the difficulties in making the transition to qualified practice, including adjustments to workload, the number of stressors experienced, the ability to cope with classroom management and the level of support received as part of the first year in practice (Cains and Brown, 1998; Haggerty and Postlethwaite, 2012; Hobson et al., 2009). Similar concerns have been raised about and the lack of specialist knowledge required for different areas of practice, for example, children with 'special educational needs' (Florian and Rouse, 2009). These factors suggest the need for ongoing learning and support.

The purpose of ITE is seen as being *"to prepare student teachers to become competent, thoughtful, reflective and innovative practitioners, who are committed to providing high quality teaching and learning for all pupils"* (General Teaching Council Scotland, (GTCS) 2013, p.1). One can draw similarities from the social work literature around the different knowledge, skills and values required to practise the profession. In addition, the above definition by the GTCS demonstrates a similar shift towards increased emphasis on notions of competence.

Within the UK, teacher education varies in its delivery (Florian and Rouse, 2009). Whilst all local authority schools provide placements during initial teacher education,

the nature of partnerships and the location of teaching differs. To demonstrate these differences, the review will focus on initial teacher education in Scotland and England.

5.6.1.1 *Initial Teacher Education in Scotland*

In Scotland, full time undergraduate Bachelor in Education degrees are offered to students on a four year basis, however the structure and length of placements being undertaken differs, according to the university attended. Postgraduate teacher education in Scotland is structured across a year, (full time) or two years (part-time/distance route) in the form of a Professional Graduate Diploma in Education, (PGDE). All programmes are accredited by the GTCS (2006) in line with the Standards for Initial Teacher Education Courses. Placements are jointly assessed by school-based and university-based staff and all schools offer placements (Florian, 2012). This is in contrast to Scottish social work education, where some universities contract out the supervision of placements; and the local authority and voluntary sector are under no obligation to provide placements for social work students.

5.6.1.2 *Teacher Induction Scheme in Scotland*

In Scotland, the transition from student teacher to professional is acknowledged as requiring support and recognition. There is also an emergent theme within the literature that initial teacher education does not produce NQTs who are the finished article, but rather learning is lifelong (Florian and Rouse, 2009; Florian, 2012). Upon completion of ITE, unlike Newly Qualified Social Workers, NQTs are guaranteed a place in a statutory school setting, as part of the Teacher Induction Scheme. Introduced in 2002, this year-long induction is regarded as a training post. Workloads are in theory set to 0.7 FTE, with reduced teaching hours, time for CPD and receipt of support from an experienced teacher, who acts as a mentor (Conway et al., 2009). Qualified Teacher Status will only then be awarded by the GTCS once the practitioner is assessed to meet the 'Standards for Registered Teacher' (GTCS, 2007). In a review of initial teacher education in nine countries globally, Conway et al. (2009) concluded that the Teacher Induction Scheme in Scotland 'has attracted considerable interest internationally' and is regarded as the gold standard. The Teacher Induction Scheme has also been explored by other projects as part of the RSWE, namely Gillies (2016). We would therefore direct the reader to this

report for a full analysis.

5.6.1.3 *Initial teacher education in England*

Like social work education in England, similar developments in ITE in the region have ignited the debate as to whether traditional routes into the profession equip student teachers for practice. There have been a number of significant developments in initial teacher education in England as a result. This has seen increasing emphasis being placed on work-based learning environments in schools, with a shift away from HEI. This shift has its policy origins in the National Partnership Programme (NPP), established in England in 2001, which saw a shift away from HEI-based education, to work-based learning environments in schools. This is manifested via Teach First and School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (Furlong et al., 2006) (the latter being delivered on a salaried, or non-salaried, fee-paying route). Whilst traditional HEI routes are still offered on an undergraduate and post-graduate basis, the emphasis on work-based learning is evidenced in England's White Paper *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE, 2010a). This also removes the need for Academies to employ teachers with Qualified Teacher Status (SCETT, 2011). These changes promote the development of technical skills over the understanding of theory, which McAllister (2015, p.40) argues is omitted entirely from the Paper:

> *'helping student teachers acquire 'what is really important', namely 'the key skills that they need as teachers, for example the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics as the proven best way to teach early reading, and the management of poor behaviour in the classroom'.*

However authors such as Carr (1992), Furlong et al., (2006) and Pring (2007) have all highlighted the short-sightedness of such schemes, as summarised by McAllister (2015):

> *'The knowledge base of the competent – let alone excellent – teacher is not wholly practical; teacher knowledge rather involves a combination and fusion of both the theoretical and the practical. In short, it is my view that any teacher education that focuses only on technical know-how and does not invite teachers to consider educational theory will only provide teachers with an incomplete knowledge base from which to make practical educational judgements'* (p40-41).

Similar arguments are also made in relation to the prioritisation of practical knowledge over theoretical knowledge and interplay between the two. This has been argued widely within the literature (Carr, 1992; Furlong et al., 2006) that over the last twenty years there has been a shift to focus on 'technical means–end thinking' and an 'instrumentalist and 'production model' of teaching and learning (Dunne, 1996 as in McAllister, 2015) *"where knowledge is generated for largely instrumental reasons, which in turn tends to encourage largely instrumental and technical thinking in students"* (McAllister, 2015, p.43). Whilst the need for practical knowledge is not minimised, it should be based on the 'more general principles' studied within the context of educational theory and philosophy (Whitehead, 1967).

However teaching is not only concerned with the transfer of information. It is viewed as a profession which entails, *'a human rather than technical association between teacher and pupil, and the disciplines offer student teachers a foundation in humanistic thinking'* (Carr, 1992 as in McAllister, 2015, p46). Teachers are require support to develop their ability to 'think more clearly about the real ethical and practical problems that confront them in the classroom' (Standish, 2007) and they play a *'vital role of breaking practical and public problems down, so that logical actions to meet those problems may result'* (Lawn and Furlong, 2009, as in McAllister, 2015, p46). Teaching knowledge also requires an understanding of the political, economic, technological, social and environmental factors that shape society, to ensure that teachers know what pupils need to learn in the present and for the future (SCETT, 2011).

The role of the teacher is further exacerbated in Scotland by increasing policy rhetoric which has expanded the role of teachers, via Getting it Right for Every Child (2005) with little training to undertake the task (Florian, 2012). The function of initial teacher education therefore, is 'not that of training technicians to perform routine functions' (Carr, 1992, p. 247). Instead, it should involve,

> *'…a prior engagement with general principles pertaining to a given career, followed by a 'period of technical apprenticeship' where the more practical and routine aspects of the profession are learned, but in a manner that is illuminated by the more general principles first studied'* (Whitehead, 1967 as in McAllister, 2015, p.44).

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Schemes such as Teach First and School-Centred Initial Teacher Training, however, continue to be promoted by the government, *"despite the low rating of many of them by Ofsted"* (Furlong et al., 2006, p.35, as in McAllister, 2015). They are aimed at *'improving and expanding the best of the current school-based routes into teaching – school-centred initial teaching training and the graduate teacher programme'* (DfE, 2010b, p. 23). However Dall'Alba (2009 as in Aldridge, 2015) argues that these:

> *'typically focus on developing specific knowledge and skills to be applied in practice contexts within and beyond the educational programme'* which are *'insufficient for skilful practice and for transformation of the self that is integral to achieving such practice ... A focus on epistemology occurs at the expense of ontological considerations relating to who students are becoming'* (Dall'Alba, 2009, p. 41, cited in Aldridge, 2015, p.116).

5.6.1.4 Role of HEIs

In England, the nature of partnership working between HEIs and schools has a long history and was a recommendation of the McNair report in 1944. However formal partnership agreements between the two were not established until 1992, when this was made a condition of teacher education (DES, 1992, as in Furlong et al, 2006). The foundation of these recommendations however, was on the basis of 'complementary partnerships' and that integration was the responsibility of the student: to critique what was learned in university and in practice, to develop their own knowledge base (Furlong et al, 2006). In reality, these were found to be HEI-led, with difficulty bringing practice and academia together, as they were seen as being distinct entities. However, the tensions between the two were argued by Furlong et al., (2000) to bring the sector together as a whole to think creatively about their responsibilities for teacher education. What resulted was found to be an increased commitment to teacher education from the sector. However in view of the current varying models of initial teacher education in England, Furlong et al. (2006) outline:

> *'partnership arrangements are no longer predicated on the complex task of bringing together partners who provide access to different conceptions of*

professional knowledge … when schools offer their own mentor training – in a competitive market … there is a real danger of undermining the complexity of professional education' (p. 41).

5.6.2 Lessons from Initial Teacher Education in Scotland

There are a number of apparent lessons from initial teacher education in Scotland:

- All local authority schools offer placements to student teachers as part of their initial teacher education, reflecting a shared responsibility for learning
- Whilst the structure of placement length varies depending on the HEI, placements are undertaken throughout initial teacher education in Scotland
- There is recognition that students are not practice ready and that they require support to
- make the transition from initial teacher education to professional practice. This is reflected in the Teacher Induction Scheme
- The commitment to the Teacher Induction Scheme is reflected in the salary that NQTs receive and in the governmental funding it receives
- NQTs only receive their qualification following successful completion of the Teacher Induction Scheme and if they are viewed to meet the 'Standards for Registered Teacher'
- The Teacher Induction Scheme is regarded as the gold standard and has been reported to have attracted international interest.

5.6.3 Lessons from Initial Teacher Education in England

- There has been significant concern raised within the profession in relation to the prioritisation of technical and practical skills, 'learning to do' over the theoretical and philosophical foundational knowledge required for teaching and learning. Teaching is regarded to be multi-faceted and requires a holistic knowledge about the political, social and cultural context in which learning operates.
- The removal of the need to recruit teachers with Qualified Teacher Status in Academies moves against the trend internationally towards increased quality in educational standards.

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5.7   Medical Education

This section will explore the ways in which professional learning in medical education are constructed and delivered. Key themes emerge in this inquiry including the emphasis on continued professional learning and the role that simulation can lay in scaffolding integrated learning and practice skills/knowledge. Additionally, the role that problem-based learning can have in facilitating student engagement with hypothetical 'real world' practice situations to encourage the co-development of knowledge and links to practice will be explored.

Medical education in the UK focuses on providing initial medical education as a basis of foundational knowledge. Post-qualifying education thereafter centres around specialist training undertaken after two further foundational years with practitioners thereafter undertaking specialist training. Medical students do not register with the General Medical Council and are only given partial registration during their first Foundational Year (FY1). Following completion of set standards in FY1, full registration will then be awarded in order to progress to FY2.

When undertaking specialist training, the medical practitioner registers with the speciality college, for example the Royal College of General Practitioners, which sets the speciality examinations and assessments required to qualify in the speciality area. These are then delivered by the Local Education Training Board (of which there are 13 in England at the time of writing)/Deanery of the geographical area (NHS Education for Scotland; Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency; Wales Deanery). The length of training depends on the specialism. The content and assessment must meet certain standards, as set out in the Medical Act 1983 (and subsequent Medical Act 1983 (Amendment) Order 2002 and Promoting Excellence: Standards for Medical Education and Training (GMC, 2015a). The latter replaces previous GMC policy Tomorrow's Doctors (GMC, 2009) and the Trainee Doctor (GMC, 2011).

5.7.1   The structure and content of initial medical education in Scotland

The structure of initial medical education in the UK varies dependent on the bespoke approaches taken by individual universities. Looking at the structure of training in the five medical schools in Scotland, one can see that the types of 'canonical knowledge' centre around not only medical knowledge and diagnostic skills, but also core engagement and communication skills; ethics and law; research and wider public health issues. A problem-based learning approach is used to cover these aspects using a number of different approaches to learning, including small group discussions, clinical teaching, lectures, e-learning, clinical skills sessions, peer learning and simulation. All of the Scottish-based medical schools see medical students being submerged in clinical settings from the beginning of their training. In the earlier years, this focuses on students shadowing others and adapting to the medicine-based environment. Time spent in clinical practice increases incrementally, with significant shifts in the second term of third year towards preparation for practice.

Whilst all currently offer a five medical schools in Scotland offer a five year degree, Edinburgh University will increase this to six years in its 2016/2017 intake. This will see all medical students sit an additional science/medical degree (known as an intercalated degree) within a year as standard between years 3 and 4. *'The drivers to this are not only Edinburgh's research strengths, but also that we see highly developed analytical and critical skills and independent thinking as being critical for the doctors of the future'* (Edinburgh University, 2016).

Students sit a number of theoretical and clinical exams throughout their training, which include the use of actors, patient-actors and models. Their use will be discussed in the following sections.

5.7.2   Standards of undergraduate medical education

The overall standards of medical education are outlined by *Promoting Excellence: Standards for Medical Education and Training* (GMC, 2015a) which encompasses those for undergraduate education, outlined in *Tomorrow's Doctors* (GMC, 2009). The integration of academic and practice learning is at the core of these standards. The overarching aim of undergraduate education is described below:

> *'Medical students are tomorrow's doctors. In accordance with good medical practice, graduates will make the care of patients their first concern, applying their knowledge and skills in a competent and ethical manner and using their ability to provide leadership and to analyse complex and uncertain situations'* (GMC, 2009, p.5).

The standards of undergraduate education are underpinned by three main outcomes: the doctor as a scientist and a scholar; as a practitioner, and as a professional (GMC, 2009). It outlines that *'the categories and the specific outcomes should not be considered in isolation from each other. Doctors need to link them routinely in clinical practice'* (p.5). These standards therefore set out expectations in relation to *the 'knowledge, skills and behaviour students must demonstrate by the time they graduate'* (p.5). These centre around the value base of doctors, demonstrated through expected standards of behaviour; the need to ensure patient safety; a culture of honesty, reflection and learning; ensuring that early learners have close supervision and that responsibility for patient care is incremental depending on experience and training levels (GMC, 2015b). This positions doctors with appropriate levels of training and experience as having responsibility to oversee and teach learners. There is a core emphasis on team working:

> *'It is not enough for a clinician to act as a practitioner in their own discipline. They must act as partners to their colleagues, accepting shared accountability for the service provided to patients. They are also expected to offer leadership, and to work with others to change systems when it is necessary for the benefit of patients'* (GMC, 2009, p.4).

There is also a specific standard which relates to reflection, learning and teaching of

others. This outlines the GMC's vision that learning is life-long, with reflection being a core facet of this. It positions the integration of learning as being to, *"learn to adapt to changing circumstances and ensure that patients receive the highest level of professional care"* (GMC, 2015b, p. 8). The use of standards such as these in medical education is regarded as a competency-based approach (Brokaw et al., 2011).

5.7.3   An international overview of integrated learning in medicine

There have been a number of developments within the field of medical education over the past 100 years, which have shaped the way that integrated learning has been delivered. In the 1910, the researcher Abraham Flexner recommended a move away from a practice-based model to a professional model of training, based on the science-based approach adopted by Johns Hopkins, which includes admissions criteria and standards of education (Scanlon, 2011). The Flexner model is still used in medical training today (Scanlon, 2011).

The integration of learning in medicine is interpreted within the literature as being driven by problem-based learning and simulation. For the purposes of this review, a brief overview of the history of simulation within medicine will be outlined; however its merits will be discussed within the section which reviews nursing education. The review will then move to examine the use of problem-based learning, an approach used extensively within medicine.

5.7.4   A brief history of simulation within medicine

The use of simulation within medicine is not new. In fact, it has its origins in medicine in the form of dissection, which has been used for decades (Springer et al., 2013). The expansion of simulation within medicine occurred in the 1960s, largely drawing on innovation from the military's use of flight simulators to improve safety (Rosen, 2008). The use of simulation with patient actors was first piloted in the University of Southern California in 1963. Barrows and Abrahamson (1964) outlined that its development was the result of written and theoretical examinations being unable to test students'

engagement and interaction with patients; their observations and examination skills; to ascertain what information was taken within the patient history; and how abnormal symptoms were determined. They concluded that, *"in short, a patient-oriented method is needed to test the student for clinical skill expected of a physician"* (Barrows and Abrahamson, 1964, p. 2). This sees the use of actors and patient actors being coached to present certain symptoms, or to present their own illnesses in a standardised way. The use of mannequins was also largely rolled out in the 1990s alongside other medical innovations, such as the development of effective resuscitation teaching (Rosen, 2008). Further technological advances now include the use of electronic mannequins or models to perform certain examinations.

The use of simulation has been utilised for medical students to practice and demonstrate a wide variety of skills and behaviours (Springer et al., 2013). The uses of actors/patient-actors were evaluated as being reliable and valid methods in the 1990s and have been internationally adopted in assessment, titled, 'the Objective Structured Clinical Examination' (OSCE) (Rosen, 2008). This seeks to assess students' inter-personal skills and communication, in addition to clinical examination and competencies (Royal, 2011). Aggarwal et al. (2010) concluded that 30 years later research indicates that the OSCE continues to represent a valid and reliable method of evaluation for various learners. Reviewing their use in medical training, they have been found to improve overall performance, reduce response time, improve team interaction skills under crisis, and reduce deviation from the standard of practice (McGaghie et al., 2010; Springer et al., 2013). The use of OSCEs has also been associated with increased student confidence and less error (Clapper 2010) and they are regarded as being effective when used repetitively until proficiency is achieved (Nishisaki et al., 2009, as in Springer et al., 2009). The use of educational feedback and repetition of practice through these methods has also been reported to be viewed as helpful by students (Royal, 2011).

As outlined above, whilst simulation is widely used within medicine, it will be examined within the context of nursing. The review will now turn to look at problem-based learning in the context of medical education.

5.7.5 An introduction to problem-based learning in medicine

Problem-based learning (PBL) originated at the University of McMaster in the 1960s, as a result of concerns that medical education placed too much emphasis on the memorisation of facts, rather than the development of clinical skills, (Barrows, 1983) with little relevance to practice (Hoidn and Kärkkäinen, 2014). Following its adoption internationally, PBL resulted in significant changes in the way that medical education is delivered (Polyzois et al. 2010). PBL has its origins in constructivist theory, where learning is seen as active and directed by the student (Hoidn and Kärkkäinen, 2014).

It is important at this stage to present definitional clarity about how problem based learning is constructed and delivered. It is characterised as:

> '...an approach to learning in which students are given more control over their learning than a traditional approach, asked to work in small groups, and most importantly acquire new knowledge only as a necessary step in solving authentic, ill-structured, and cross-disciplinary problems representative of professional practice' (Walker and Leary, 2009, p.12).

Barrows (2002) identifies four key components of PBL: ill-structured problems (multiple analyses with multiple solutions); a student-centred approach (students analyse the problem, gaps in their knowledge and the pursuit of the knowledge required); the teacher as the facilitator (provides prompts with mega-cognitive questions); and there is authenticity in the problem presented (it represents the 'real world'). Within the literature there is a tendency to view PBL as being carried out in small groups, (Barrows, 2002) although others argue that its principles and techniques can be utilised in larger groups. Drawing on Wilkerson and Gijselaers (1996) and Wood, (2003) Hoidn and Kärkkäinen (2014) outline that within the group setting, this involves students brainstorming to discuss the problem and possible explanations. Knowledge is then shared between students, with possible solutions generated. Students then record areas of incomplete knowledge and agree on learning objectives with guidance from the facilitator. Private study is then undertaken by students, with the results being shared with the group. This process allows examination of prior learning, which fits with the notion that integration occurs *within* the individual.

The effectiveness of PBL has been examined widely within the medical literature (Walker and Leary, 2009; Hoidn and Kärkkäinen, 2014) and thus more research is required to explore how it could be utilised within social work. The findings drawn from the field of medicine will now be explored.

5.7.6   An overview of the effectiveness of problem-based learning

A number of meta-analyses have reviewed the effectiveness of PBL, (Dochy et al., 2003; Gijbels et al.. 2005; Walker and Leary, 2009) which are outlined in an international review conducted by Hoidn and Kärkkäinen (2014). Whilst there is not the space to conduct an in-depth analysis here, a number of themes can be identified from the evidence reviewed by Hoidn and Kärkkäinen (2014).

Firstly, standard assessments often do not reveal any positive difference when using PBL in comparison to traditional methods (Berkson, 1993; Mennin et al., 2003; Vernon and Blake, 1993; Smits, Verbeek and de Buisonjé, 2002; Dochy et al., 2003). In addition, traditional methods of teaching and learning, such as lectures, may be more suited to learning facts and general information (Bligh, 2000). However, the authors highlight that the evaluation of PBL may be restricted by using traditional methods of assessment aligned to traditional methods of teaching. When a range of outcomes are measured, PBL is suggested to produce more positive results (Ravitz, 2009; Strobel and Van Bameveld, 2009; Walker and Leary, 2009).

The positive results of PBL are most notable in the development of problem-solving and critical thinking skills (Bransford, Brown and Cocking, 2000; and Schwartz, Lindgren and Lewis, 2009); the long-term retention of information and its application in practice (Norman and Schmidt, 2000; Schmidt and Moust, 2000; Strobel and van Barneveld, 2009; alongside increased levels of understanding (Gijbels et al., 2005). Utilising PBL as a teaching method is also suggested to increase student motivation and independent self-study (Schmidt et al., 2009; Mennin et al., 2003); factors which were highlighted in early meta-analyses in the 1990s, which positively associated PBL with higher satisfaction among learners and increased confidence to practice (Albanese and

Mitchell, 1993; Vernon and Blake, 1993).

PBL students have also been found to generate more coherent and detailed explanations (Patel, Groen and Norman, 1993; as in Hoidn and Kärkkäinen, 2014). However Walker and Leary (2009) suggest that PBL uses hypothesis-driven, rather than data-driven explanations in problem solving, which is more suited to novice students. This is in contrast to practitioners with a significant knowledge base, who are able to recognise a range of symptoms as being indicative of a particular illness. They argue that this aspect of PBL requires further exploration in the research.

The effectiveness of PBL, however, is dependent on the facilitator. This includes their level of planning, preparation, delivery and willingness to challenge students and provide clear explanations (Hoidn and Kärkkäinen, 2014). However the use of PBL is argued to be labour-intensive, thus its success is compromised where resources, investment and training are inadequate (Hoidn and Kärkkäinen, 2014). Further research is required to examine the specific support structures required (Strobel and Van Bameveld, 2009) and to examine its effectiveness in other disciplines (Hoidn and Kärkkäinen, 2014). The existing evidence base is argued to lack sufficient theoretical frameworks in order to assess the research design, data and results (Hoidn and Kärkkäinen, 2014). As a result, Hoidn and Kärkkäinen (2014) argue that there is not enough research from which to draw reliable conclusions.

Walker and Leary (2009) attempt to account for some of the varying results within the literature. They found that some *problems* may be less suited to PBL. Weakest in their application is their use in lecture-based cases, where there is the least opportunity for free enquiry, and the best, in small groups where students lead the inquiry and also return to the case with further knowledge and examine whether anything could have been done differently (closed-loop problem-based approaches). Problems such as dilemmas are not perhaps suited to PBL, as there is no discernible answer. This therefore suggests that not all aspects of social work practice may be suited to PBL, however it represents an opportunity to engage and motivate students and increase their confidence to practice. Further research is required to evaluate the opportunities and limitations within social work.

5.7.7 Lessons for social work education

There are a number of lessons for social work education:

- Undergraduate medical students are given the opportunity to be immersed in practice from their first year
- Their exposure to practice is increased incrementally, with the final years being spent increasingly in hospital and GP practice
- Problem-based learning is operated on a whole curricula basis
- Problem-based learning is associated with higher student satisfaction, motivation and self-led learning
- Students are not only assessed on their theoretical knowledge, but also their practice ability (OSCE)
- Following completion of their undergraduate training, students must undertake further foundational training (FY1 and FY2 as a foundation for all other areas of practice)
- Students only receive partial professional registration with the GMC until successful completion of FY1 and they are able to meet certain standards)
- Learning is regarded as lifelong and this is reflected in the ongoing examination of practice knowledge at certain stages in specialities.
- Problem-based learning is associated with higher satisfaction, which may impact on overall levels of practitioner confidence.

5.8   Nursing Education

In this section the focus will turn to nursing education. The balance between academic learning and a more vocational approach to nursing education has been a key issue in recent years. The messages from professional frameworks will be highlighted and the ambition to embed continued professional learning will be revealed. A range of challenges will be explored, including the impact of limited resources on the ability of nurses to engage effectively with opportunities for reflection and learning. This is then linked to the desirability of simulated experiences to complement learning situated directly in clinical settings.

Like the other professions outlined within this review, internationally nursing has

undergone a number of changes in line with its professionalisation and attempts to increase standards of competency (Rosen, 2008). All nurses, midwives and doctors undertaking professional training in the EU need to undertake a minimum of 3 years full-time study (4600 hours) (2005/36/EC). Clinical practice is required to represent half of this training, with at least a third providing a theoretical basis for practice (Eaton, 2012). Currently, those who wish to study nursing must have a minimum of ten years general education. This remains in place, despite recommendations that this is increased to twelve (RCN, 2014a). The legislation does not specify whether nursing education should be undertaken in HEI, nor the level of qualification required. It does stipulate a list of subjects which must be covered in the nursing curriculum, however Eaton (2012) notes that these standards have not been harmonised across the different member states. In addition, those who undertake specialty training (i.e. in mental health, learning disability, and children) in the UK do not have automatic recognition of their qualifications in Europe.

The increasing trend away from largely vocational training to theoretically based academic programmes (Ehrenberg and Häggblom, 2007) is also the result of a number of other reasons: the changing healthcare needs of the population, ongoing advances in technology, concerns about providing effective and appropriate treatment, in addition to increasing consumer expectations in relation to healthcare, which is echoed by policy directives (D.o.H 2000a, 2000b). These changes and the subsequent demand for increasing professional education are reflected in the World Health Organisation (WHO) Europe's recommendation that all nurses and midwives should obtain a degree as part of initial education (Eaton, 2012). The following section will briefly give an overview of changes in nursing education in the UK, before exploring the structure of nursing education within the UK and then give an overview of the international literature which looks at integrated learning within nursing.

5.8.1 Nursing education in the UK

In the UK the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) gained its Royal Charter in 1930 and the first degree of nursing was established at Edinburgh University in 1960 (Eaton, 2012). A number of reforms have been introduced since in order to increase the standards of education and quality of practice. Within the last thirty years, this has included the introduction of a regulatory body within nursing, now called the Nursing and Midwifery Council, (NMC) and regional educational boards within each of the four areas of the UK, e.g. NHS Education for Scotland (Eaton, 2012). In 2011-2012 the new undergraduate degree was also introduced as the educational standard for nursing in all four regions of the UK, with the option to exit early from the degree award with a diploma in nursing (Eaton, 2012). These changes were in respond to further pressure to restore public confidence in the profession, (Eaton, 2012) as is echoed within the other professions within this review.

The professional standards within nursing centre around four themes: professional values; communication and interpersonal skills; nursing practice and decision making; and leadership, management and team working. They are also used in conjunction with the code of conduct (NMC, 2015) and the Guidance on Professional Conduct for Nursing and Midwifery Students (NMC 2009). They are explicit in the need for the profession to adopt theoretically-based knowledge and evidence-based practice in order to uphold the remaining competency standards. These competency standards are also reflected in the standards for nursing education (NMC, 2010). The standards stipulate the programme content, in line with the European Directive (2005/36/EC) and outline the framework of nursing education, based on the competency standards, from the admissions process, through to the expected outcomes and assessment of students. It also outlines standards in relation to the support of students and educators.

In Wales, following the introduction of its *All Wales Fitness for Practice* (National Assembly for Wales, 2001) policy to increase the consistency in teaching, all HEIs now used shared course materials and documentation as part of programme delivery. This aims to increase the students' consistency in their learning experiences and assessment of clinical practice.

In Scotland, students are supported by a non-means tested bursary, which has resulted in pressure when determining student numbers (Eaton, 2012). In addition five non-commissioned HEIs offer pre-registration nursing programmes, including the Open University (primarily to remote and rural areas). There are 14 territorial health boards in Scotland which are the practice learning providers. Practice learning is being expanded to include the independent and third sectors.

5.8.2   Continued professional development in nursing

New requirements were established at the end of 2015 for nurses to maintain their registration (which lasts for a period of three years). As part of their registration renewal, they must demonstrate that within a three year period they have practiced for at least 450 hours; undertaken at least 40 hours of continued professional development (CPD), with a minimum of 20 hours of these being participatory learning; collected practice-related feedback from at least five sources; reflected on their CPD, feedback they have received and the Code; had an appropriate professional indemnity arrangement in place; obtained confirmation from a third party about their compliance with the revalidation requirements and the absence of unaddressed concerns about their practice (NMC, 2013). Those nurses who hold dual nursing and midwifery registration must undertake a minimum of 900 hours practice within the specified period.

The NMC (2013) outlines that this new model is an effort to increase patient safety and care, within an overall framework which aims to improve patient outcomes and ensure a high quality of workforce (RCN joint statement 2014b). This is underpinned by reflective and participatory learning and demonstrates the lifelong learning approach echoed within medicine and teaching outlined in this review.

5.8.3   An international overview of integrated learning in nursing

The term work-based learning is used most widely when examining integrated learning in nursing. The benefit of this noted by Chapman, (2006) who outlines that it *"has the potential to meet the needs of nursing by promoting learning that is practice driven"*

(p41). However, echoing trends within the social work literature, Kenny (2002) stresses the need for practice and education to be linked, as "*one cannot be developed without the other*" (as in Chapman, 2006, p.41). The increasing professionalisation of nursing is also linked to changes in the *types* of knowledge nurses are expected to possess and use in practice. This a reflection of the expansion of nursing research in the past few decades which has increased the knowledge base of the profession (Ehrenberg and Häggblom, 2007) and also, the literature in relation to nursing practice and the theoretical base which underpins it (Emillson et al., 2014). However a meta-analysis undertaken by Ehrenberg and Häggblom (2007) reveals that nurses' likelihood of utilising or accessing research is positively linked to their age and educational background. Other barriers noted relate to being unaware of the existence of research, not knowing how to access it, viewing it to be too abstract, or being unsure how to apply it in practice. However, similar to findings within the social work literature, those nurse practitioners that do utilise research skills in practice are more likely to experience increased professional confidence (Ehrenberg and Häggblom, 2007).

The academisation of nursing has also resulted in nurses being required to draw on theoretical knowledge within the context of assessment, problem-solving and decision-making (Emillson et al., 2014). Its importance is captured by Hindsé and Fridlund, (1995) "*a competent nurse should have theoretical knowledge and be able to put this knowledge to use as well as develop and change professionally*" (as in Ehrenberg and Häggblom, 2007).

As is echoed elsewhere in this review, integrated learning is often positioned as involving the integration of theory and practice, in combination with other important issues for the profession, such as ethics, and wider contextual issues, such as public health and pedagogics (Emillson et al., 2014). Theoretical knowledge is positioned as 'formal learning', is viewed to as essential foundation knowledge and without it, practice can be negatively impacted (Jonsson et al., 2014). Whereas practice is positioned as informal learning, '*a basis for being able to act in specific situations*' (Emilson et al., 2014). However there is often a tension between 'the ambitions to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical knowledge, and one challenge for nurse education is to elaborate a way to satisfy educational needs, workplace needs and, above all, students' needs (Newton et al., 2009, as in Emillson et al., 2014, p.3).

Jonsson et al. (2014) further argue that integrated learning is not merely about the practical and theoretical knowledge, but *"scientific knowledge and professional values with practical knowledge and clinical competence in order to develop praxis"* (p91). This echoes the theme within other professional models of education that learning requires to be situated, or 'recontextualised' (Jonsson et al., 2014). It *"needs to be embedded within an activity, context and culture…to provide students with tools to bring theoretical and practical knowledge together to form a whole"* (Jonsson et al., 2014, p94). However the focus on developing technical skills within the literature is also evident, with authors such as Emillson et al. (2014) highlighting that students also need to understand what is most important in the clinical situation. Without this, *"students find it difficult to sort and prioritise the mass of knowledge received, and fail to understand how the knowledge can be used in clinical situations"* (p.12).

However, the reality of practice is also viewed to differ from nursing education. Jonsson et al. (2014) locate pressurised work environments and a lack of support as underpinning these experiences:

> *'Despite having completed their clinical training and being equipped with humanistic values and theoretical knowledge based on science, harsh working conditions and organisational circumstances still hamper the nurses' professional development. Practice also involves unspoken implicit rules and sometimes lack of support and poor role models. Today's healthcare organisations often involve time pressure, limiting the opportunity for newly registered nurses to develop their theoretical and practical knowledge into praxis. The support they receive from their workplace mentors is insufficient. In such organisations, it is difficult to obtain the desirable support'* (Jonsson et al., 2014, p.96).

This creates a culture of fear around making mistakes and nurses being labelled as being incompetent (Jonsson et al., 2014). It also results in increased anxiety and decreased confidence (Jonsson et al., 2014) which in turn impedes critical thinking (Chan, 2013). Higgins et al. (2010) also outline that despite the introduction of the degree, there is variation in practical skills at the point of qualification. These findings all point to emergent themes in the wider literature on integrated learning in relation to

'preparedness for practice' (which includes the emotional level) and that ongoing support is required to make the transition from student to nurse, combined with effective supervision (Jonsson et al., 2014).

A number of different approaches are used in an attempt to integrate learning within academia. These include, but are not limited to, the use of case studies within problem-based learning, vignettes within small groups, role playing and gaming and other methods of technological interaction, such as simulation (Ridley, 2008). Simulation enables assessment of clinical skills, rather than focusing solely on the development of theoretical knowledge and it is used widely within health-based professions (Royal, 2011). Many authors have praised the use of simulation in medicine, arguing it is, *"the future of medical technology"* (Rosen, 2008, p162). Others have argued that it can be used out with medicine and health-based settings, where professional confidence and critical thinking is required for practice (Royal, 2011).

Research examining its effectiveness concluded that it can increase student confidence and as a result, feeling more prepared for practice (Traynor et al., 2010; Hope and Garside, 2011; Ricketts, 2011). It offers students the opportunity to practice skills and develop proficiency (Traynor et al., 2010; Schwindt and McNelis, 2015) and rehearse these until competence is achieved (Royal, 2011). However there is a need to ensure simulation is authentic to 'real' practice situations (Pike and O'Donnell, 2010) and it should not be used as the sole method for teaching clinical skills, as this can impede practice and hinder clinical assessment (Shepherd et al., 2010). Springer et al. (2013) found that where simulation is repeated, it is more likely to be effective. In their meta-analysis of 17 different simulation studies within health care, Boling and Hardin-Pierce, (2016) found that in all of the studies examined an improvement in the knowledge base of the participants. Whilst these findings are encouraging, more exploration is required to consider how these may be used effectively within social work out with healthcare environments.

5.9   Apprenticeships

Apprenticeship routes to professional qualifications are of increasing interest to policy makers in the UK and internationally, and have proliferated in recent years (European Commission, 2013; Audit Scotland, 2014; Demos, 2015; Economic and Social Research Council, 2015). Traditionally focused on craft industries, they have expanded into engineering and technology, and more recently into other sectors including social care (Audit Scotland, 2014; Ofsted, 2015). A key principle of apprenticeships is that skills are aligned with the needs of the relevant profession. Thus learning is situated predominantly in the work place, but is typically supported by a significant amount of classroom-based learning, delivered by a range of public, private and third sector education providers (Audit Scotland, 2014). Apprenticeships are in essence jobs with structured training that contain a number of elements, including: a competency element (in Scotland, apprentices work toward SVQs); a knowledge element (such as a technical certificate); and transferable or key skills, including communication, personal learning and thinking skills (Richard Review of Apprenticeships, 2012). In Scotland, the push to increase apprenticeships has been led by Skills Development Scotland, the Government funded 'national skills agency,' in conjunction with the SSSC in the role of 'skills sector council', with the remit of consulting employers across all sectors to define the skills and standards required for their industry (The Federation for Industry Sector Skills and Standards, 2016). This has resulted in an emerging framework that articulates an apprenticeship pathway from school to graduate level.

Apprenticeships have become a core strand in the Scottish Government's economic policy towards improving youth employment opportunities and tackling social inequality (Scottish Government, 2015), a key part of which requires *"…ensuring that planning of further and higher education provision is aligned with economic and labour market need"* (Scottish Government, 2015 p.5). Apprenticeships are the principal policy initiative aimed at rebalancing education provision, which is currently seen to prioritise academic learning over technical and vocational learning, as well as being insufficiently flexible to address the problem of youth unemployment, in particular for young people who leave school with few or no qualifications (Audit Scotland, 2014; Demos, 2015). Proponents argue that the undervaluing of technical and vocational work is particularly evident in the UK, in contrast with European neighbours (Demos, 2015). The Scottish

framework consists of four types of apprenticeships:

- **Foundation Apprenticeship**: Aimed at 'closing the gap between the classroom and the workplace' by providing secondary school pupils with 'real-world experience'. They are taken in conjunction with National 5s and Highers and provide accredited, work-based learning opportunities for pupils in S4 and S5

- **Modern Apprenticeship (MA)**: SCQF 5 and SCQF 6/7. Aimed at training new staff and up-skilling existing employees

- **Technical Professional Apprenticeship**: SCQF 8/9. Aimed at training new staff and up-skilling existing employees for jobs at management level

- **Graduate/Professional Apprenticeships (GA)**: SCQF 10/11/12. Aimed at providing a new way into degree and higher degree level study for people in work or for others who wish to go straight into work (Skills Development Scotland, 2016).

Policy documents refer to these generically as 'modern apprenticeships'. Apart from the entry-level foundation apprenticeship, which is delivered to school pupils, the prerequisite for accessing modern apprenticeships is to be employed by the agency to which the training is tailored; as indicated, training is delivered by a range of providers including colleges, universities and private training organisations. For social care in Scotland, the SSSC manages the post-school apprenticeship framework, with current provision including technical/professional apprenticeships in Childhood Practice, Children and Young People, Social Services and Health Care and a professional apprenticeship in Care Services Leadership and Management (Skills Development Scotland, 2016). More broadly, recent policy has seen an increased focus on higher-level apprenticeships across sectors, which is aimed in part at increasing the status and value of apprenticeships overall (Audit Scotland, 2014).

The theory of learning that underpins apprenticeships is encapsulated in the work-integrated learning concept discussed in this literature review. In essence, research indicates that all forms of work can help reinforce academic concepts and skills learned

in the classroom, including those that are paid work placements and form an integral part of an academic degree programme (Kramer and Usher, 2011). Apprenticeship theory hypothesises the development of mastery through activity in the workplace and through learning from skilled educators and engagement with key stakeholders (Pratt, 1998). Skills Development Scotland employs a work-based pathway model to represent the journey towards mastery, charting the types of skills and knowledge needed throughout the course of a career, with general work/technical skills predominating at the beginning and over time being consolidated through the development of sector-specific skills, both of which are seen to contribute to a continuing increase in professional capability. Emerging research into knowledge acquisition at SVQ level suggests that mastery is supported by a range of approaches, whose diversity is identified as important in accommodating a multiplicity of learner needs (pending publication). Of particular significance is the role of the assessor-guide for 'nurturing' and enabling learners to make sense of professional knowledge, which tallies with findings for the role of the practice educator in qualifying social work routes that is reported elsewhere in this review. Employer-based training and on-line learning were also reported as effective approaches, each appearing to help learners overcome a reluctance to apply professional knowledge, which was deemed essential for developing good practice. While these emerging findings relate to learners at pre-qualifying stages in their careers, they nonetheless hold wider relevance about the processes of knowledge acquisition and mastery and how these may be facilitated in the work place.

Despite the reported increasing policy focus on and development of apprenticeships, questions remain about their underpinning principles and how these may shape integrated learning; being explicitly driven by economic imperatives and being work-based, and targeted at enabling employees to learn what is required of them by the employing agency. Many of the evaluations of their effectiveness tend to focus on the economic outputs, rather than learning processes; for example, impact on job retention, wage gains and subsequent employment patterns (European Commission, 2013; Audit Scotland, 2014; Economic and Social Research Council, 2015); however, there is growing recognition of the need for evaluation of learning processes and outcomes (Audit Scotland, 2014). Research into the effectiveness of apprenticeships in Scotland has shown them to be rated highly by apprentices, with key themes including perceived improvements in long-term career prospects and increased job satisfaction and salaries

(Skills Development Scotland, 2013). They have also been associated with increases in learners' self-confidence and the development of new skills for example, communication. A more recent evaluation of the 'off-the-job' training elements of modern apprenticeships, focused specifically on engineering, rated them as excellent or very good across a range of criteria including outcome and impact, and quality of training (Education Scotland, 2014). It found that apprentices were actively engaged in learning and that colleges were using effective learning and teaching approaches. Areas for development included improving the gender balance of apprentices and increasing apprentices' involvement in planning and delivering their training (Education Scotland, 2014, p.11). In contrast, a recent report by Ofsted (2015), which surveyed providers of 19,000 apprenticeships found that a third of providers, including the care sector, had criticised the quality of the training that was delivered. While this report relates to the English context it identifies the need for robust quality assurance mechanisms for apprenticeships as they grow in number. More broadly, meta analyses of apprenticeship studies across the EU suggest they have economic benefits, for example, by easing the school-to-work transition, giving young people a positive start in the labour market and improving youth employment patterns for nation states (European Commission, 2013).

This generally positive picture therefore suggests that there is a range of potential benefits as well as challenges to developing an apprenticeship route into qualifying social work education. Apprenticeships offer greater parity of esteem between vocational and academic learning and qualifications. They could potentially widen access to the professional social work qualification by being part of a modern apprenticeship framework that recognises the value of work-based and informal learning from school onwards; thus providing a clear career pathway for people who wish to go straight into employment rather than undertake the traditional degree. They would also enable skilled and experienced practitioners who may not have the financial means to embark on a degree course to achieve the professional social worker qualification through access to a paid route. Apprenticeships may also gain greater employer buy-in to develop better partnership working with education providers and increase the number of high quality placements. In Scotland, the political commitment to further developing apprenticeships is reflected in the increased funding they have received; with an increase from £60 million in 2008/09 to £75 million in 2012/13 (Audit Scotland, 2014). Their central position within educational policy may therefore also attract additional

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government funding to social work education. Challenges to developing apprenticeships in qualifying social work education may include cultural connotations associated with the word 'apprenticeship'. As such, the emphasis on an employment-led education and training experience may raise concerns about the potential development of a narrow range of work-based knowledge and skills that limit critical thinking and the ability to challenge institutionalised cultures and practices. It is also possible that the development of a further path to the professional social work qualification may to lead to differences in perceptions about the quality and status of the respective routes. Further research to explore the merits and limitations of apprenticeships in facilitating integrated learning would help build on the evidence considered here.

5.10 Potential roles in integrated learning

In terms of moving towards more effective integrated learning, one of the recurring themes is the role of individuals as agents or conduits in the recontextualisation of knowledge, and this in an area where it is possible to learn from other disciplines. One generic term for someone who works across organisational boundaries is a 'boundary spanner' which Williams, (2011, p. 27) defines as, *"a set of individuals who have a dedicated job role or responsibility to work in a multi-agency and multi-sectoral environment and to engage in boundary-spanning activities, processes and practices"*.

He is writing largely in the context of the integration of health and social care and defines the activities of the boundary spanner under 4 areas. Firstly, there is the issue of making connections, and this demands a diverse range of competencies, including: an ability to develop and sustain a network of inter-personal relationships; and a capacity to perform at both strategic and operational levels, using network management techniques. Secondly, there is the role of making things happen, where the entrepreneurial aspect of the boundary spanner reflects the need for innovation and experimentation in the search for effective solutions. This requires risk-taking and opportunism – characteristics which Williams notes have traditionally been stifled in the public sector because of bureaucratic modes of organising. Thirdly, there is the role of managing relationships where the essential competencies revolve around the initiation and sustaining of effective inter-personal relationships, building upon an infrastructure of communication,

using listening, negotiation and conflict resolution skills amongst others. Finally there is what Williams refers to as 'housekeeping' by which he means the tasks of organising, planning, co-ordinating and servicing the collaborative machinery.

Whilst Williams is writing about inter-disciplinary working, in particular between health and social care, and about service delivery rather than learning, there is much in his analysis on which it is possible to draw. The term 'boundary spanner' has somewhat technocratic connotations that make it less than entirely appealing, but the concepts behind easily translate to contributing towards more effective integration of learning.

Writing in the context of practice based education, Evans and Guile (2012) use the term 'industry educators' who occupy boundary roles, supporting work shadowing who they see as having a key role in acting as knowledge brokers, expanding beyond business as usual and acting as facilitators of workplace recontextualisation. Their roles are seen as going beyond the standard 'visiting lecturer' and become knowledge brokers, supporting learners not just in reflection, but also in the production of new knowledge delivered by a learning conversation approach.

Evans and Guile (2012) are writing in a general practice-based education sense, but there are other models closer to social work on which it is possible to draw. For example, GCU's School of Health and Life Sciences have a category of employee called practice academics. They are seen as fulfilling key roles in generating research questions from practice and in working to ensure the new evidence shapes and influences service delivery as well as policy. There are practice academics in a number of areas, including nursing, occupational therapy and physiotherapy, and a role similar to this could contribute to the process of knowledge recontextualisation in a social work context. Relatedly, the social work team at The University of Edinburgh are developing the role of 'academic in residence', whose role is to encourage the integration of learning and dissemination of research evidence to students in practice placements and to the practice teams they are hosted by.

Finally, there is what Morrison (2009) refers to as the scholar-facilitator. Morrison was writing about the generation and dissemination of practice knowledge which is created by, and for, social workers operating under conditions of uncertainty and risk. Morrison

saw the role of the scholar-facilitator as contributing to practice knowledge and theory generation by bridging the worlds of practice, academia and policy.

Whilst the emphases of the four approaches outlined above are different and it is possible to take issue with the terminology that is used, there is certainly a case to be made for further exploration of different and more creative roles that contribute to the more effective integrated learning.

5.11 Conclusion

This literature review has covered significant ground in terms of the theoretical and practical aspects of integrated learning across social work and other professional contexts. It is clear that integrated learning is a complex concept which can be conceptualised and articulated in different ways depending on context and need. It was evident that despite differing contexts, there are recurrent themes and challenges that can contribute to and inform the inquiry into the shape of integrated learning in social work.

It was clear that integrated learning must be underpinned by a *"signature pedagogy"* (Shulman, 2005, p.54). Simply put, clarity around what needs to be learned and how this is best achieved and assessed is required. The content of such learning is multi-faceted and encompasses a range of factors including use of self, theory, context, values and organisational culture. These factors are seen to be at play at an individual, organisational and professional level. Florian (2012) talks of pedagogical knowledge which highlights such learner attributes as learning skills, values and commitment. These are seen to be an important *outcome* of integrated learning and an important *foundation* for engaging within it. A key message from this theme is the sense that narrow technical approaches to learning overlook the richness and complexity of integrated learning.

The location of integrated learning is contested and nuanced. A key theme that emerged was that academic and practice environments are valid and appropriate *learning sites* for integrated learning. A raft of potential approaches such as simulated learning and PBL were explored and the role that these approaches can have in in providing authentic and

inspiring integrated learning experiences was highlighted. Additionally, practice environments emerged as important learning sites for learning theory and professional knowledge. In sum, integrated learning can take place in a range of environments, and utilise a range of approaches, and the perceived boundaries between academia and practice are neither helpful nor realistic.

The role that professional identity plays in driving the learning priorities of differing professional groups was explored and this was linked closely to standards and frameworks overseen by regulatory bodies. The expectations and relationships often flowed and/or were facilitated by the role that a regulatory body undertook. All parties involved in professional learning were seen to have a role in developing professional cultures where continued professional development emerged as the most common and salient theme.

The concept of apprenticeships was explored and provided a useful counterpoint to the university driven approaches which are reported in much of the literature. The benefits of situated work based learning were explored and were balanced with the potential issues of depth, quality and criticality which may exist within apprenticeship type arrangements.

The review explored a plethora of issues and perspectives which help to create a fuller picture of current and historical developments both nationally and internationally. This provides a robust and multi-faceted foundation for proceeding with the collection and analysis of data from a range of relevant sources. The themes for this literature review will contribute to the focus of the data collection phase and in supporting the interpretation and analysis thereafter. Furthermore, the contents of this literature review will contribute significantly to the conclusions and recommendations which emerge from this project.

6 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This section reports on the findings of focus group discussions with key partners in the provision of social work education in Scotland and on individual and group interviews with key informants. The findings are presented in three parts under the following headings:

- Messages from key partners in social work education
- Messages from informants in other UK jurisdictions
- Messages from other professional groups.

6.1 Messages from key partners in social work education in Scotland

As outlined, five focus groups were conducted with partners involved in the delivery of social work education in Scotland. This section provides a summary of their views as they relate to the following key themes:

- Constructing integrated learning
- Existing approaches to integrated learning
- Efficacy of existing approaches
- Future models and approaches
- Moving forward.

In addition, in the final phase of the project, there was opportunity to consult with Chief Social Work Officers (and those aspiring to this role). The findings from this focus group are presented separately, and follow the findings from key partners.

6.1.1 Constructing integrated learning

As may be expected, constructions of integrated learning in social work education varied across partners. While the integration of theory and practice has a long

history in social work education and practice, in emergent contexts of integrated services, inter-professional working and co-constructivist approaches to professional learning, 'integrated learning' emerged as an increasingly elastic term.

Relatedly, partners often approached integrated learning from different vantage points. For example, learning and development partners focused predominantly on practice-based learning as the primary site and method for integrated learning. By contrast, academics described a variety of approaches and sites within which integrated learning can occur. Despite then an evident ease in discussing the concept, process and practice of integrated learning, in its various forms and shapes, partners did not necessarily share or start from a common understanding of what integrated learning means in evolving constructions of social work education in Scotland. We return to this theme below.

6.1.2 Existing approaches to integrated learning

Discussion with partners covered a variety of approaches to integrated learning reflecting their varied experiences of that. Discussion highlighted the diversity and interplay of current practice in this area, alongside a sense that educational providers enjoyed relative autonomy to co-design and co-develop integrated learning approaches to fit and respond to particular target markets, student populations, agency preferences, learning philosophies and cultures, sector developments and emerging research and evidence.

Some practice partners were less positive about the observed diversity of approach which was seen by some to occur 'variously and piecemeal' across programmes, and often 'without our involvement'. In part, this appeared to reflect a growing distance between campus and practice based learning, wherein it became apparent that some practice respondents lacked detailed knowledge of evolving approaches to integrated learning being utilised within and beyond campus based learning settings, including, for example: enquiry and action learning, learning with and from service users and carers, and integrated assessment approaches.

Relatedly, all partners described significant and increasing constraints on practice and development in this area arising from: agency and HEI funding cuts, shrinking staff teams and associated resource tensions, the perceived erosion of learning cultures in the workplace and rising pressures on learners. In sum, partners experienced a direct tension between ambition and rhetoric relating to integrated learning in social work education and the experienced realities of that.

Discussed approaches to integrated learning in social work education in Scotland broadly fell into two 'models':

- *A partnership approach*
  The current *Framework for Social Education in Scotland* prescribes that learners spend a minimum of 200 days in structured academic learning and 200 days in practice based learning settings, through which they are required to demonstrate the Standards in Social Work Education. For most providers this was delivered by various models of sequencing and integrating 'campus based' learning with 'practice' or 'work based' learning. For students, academics and service user and carers the boundaries between these two learning sites were seen to be increasingly blurred as developing models of teaching, learning and assessment involved an interplay across sites (though this varied across providers)

- *A 'work-based learning route'*
  Also described variously as a 'sponsorship', 'trainee' 'grow your own', 'apprenticeship' and 'distance learning' model of learning.

Both routes appeared highly valued, often for different reasons, relating to the different learning populations served. However many service users, students and academics were hesitant about the expansion of work based routes in current climates (more of which below). Employers were ambivalent, many valued traditional 'trainee' routes though were concerned by some of the more recent work based initiatives currently developing in England.

Discussion also referenced the former 'fast-track' routes, which respondents located within a work-based/ traineeship model. Discussion around these routes was largely

critical and noted an absence of substantive research literature which might provide opportunity to appraise such models critically.

Beyond the above identified models, participants described a variety of approaches, both traditional and innovative, designed to support, deepen or enhance integrated learning outcomes. These included:

- *Practice based learning*; for practice partners this was the principle mechanism for supporting and achieving integrated professional learning, though its efficacy was seen to depend on a variety of factors
- *Enquiry and action learning;* vis-a-vis problem based learning models
- *Co-production/ co-delivery of teaching, learning and assessment*; variously involving academics, practitioners, newly qualified social workers, service users and carers and/or students
- *Concurrent models of learning;* where learners move regularly between learning sites
- *Assessment led modules*; which require students to learn and demonstrate learning through learning projects completed in the work place, i.e. the delivery of a knowledge exchange event and/or the completion of a policy consultation with service users and carers
- *Shared academic and practice posts*.

Discussion in this area suggests that providers and educators (in the broadest sense) are regularly involved in reviewing and enhancing learning and assessment methods with particular attention given to achieving integrated learning outcomes. Further, some of this work has received external recognition within and beyond the social work sector. Yet, with some exceptions, innovations can be piecemeal and fragmented, continue to be developed and delivered locally and 'quietly' and are thus rarely in the public domain.

6.1.3   Efficacy of existing approaches to integrated learning

Broadly, partners were satisfied with existing *models* of integrated learning in

social work education though they identified clear limitations and areas for development:

> 'I feel pretty prepared …. I think, like the whole … obviously social work for me is that academic and practice so [I] like the whole fifty-fifty approach. I think it should be like equal amount of hours in class equal amounts in practice, [it] makes sense'. [Final year student]

> 'I think, I'm hoping that my course has developed my skills to be flexible, so even though I've not had the placement that I need to have the job that I want, I would hope that the way that I've been taught and the experiences that I've had have prepared me to be a flexible learner, and to take those skills and transfer them into the role that I want. … So I'm hopeful, I'm quite confident that the skills are transferrable and flexible'. [Final year student]

> 'I think there are huge strengths in the way that things are done right now. And I appreciate the SSSC don't want us to say: 'we'll have more of the same but just a wee tweak', but actually it's not just about wee tweaks. There's some, I think quite significant, tweaks that might actually help integrated learning'. [Academic]

> 'It's important to keep both elements … exposure to practice learning is essential but classroom time is also essential'. [Service user and carer]

Practice partners supported the above, though expressed particular concern regarding the 'huge variations' in practice based learning. This concern was echoed across respondents and by students and NQSWs in particular:

> 'I think when a placement is well matched, [when] the university and the student have thought of their needs and we get something that matches roughly what they're looking for. And you've got an experienced practice teacher and a kind of committed team, I think, that can provide fabulous learning. … So, I think that model works really well. But, I do think it is a wee bit the Rolls Royce model, it is a wee bit the fabulous experience, and I

don't think everybody gets that. Opportunities vary across the service'.
[Practice partner]

'I found the practice on placements very useful however my experience with my practice teacher has been less than helpful. ... my colleagues who are working with me on a daily basis, that's been really positive. However in terms of practice teachers, I don't know what other people's experiences are, but it seems as though they do their own thing and I've not really had a consistent experience in terms of supervision from my practice educators. It's been, you know, I've had two placements and it's been two different experiences'. [Final year student]

Practice partners also questioned the extent of, and structures for, integrated learning within current provision:

'I don't think it's an integrated package throughout. Like there is the placement, which almost stands as a separate module, to some extent, and there's not necessarily involvement from the beginning. ... We tend to come in at year two and three of the degree and it is just around placement. And even when the students are in placement, they quite often go back into university for a day, but there's no involvement really of the practice teachers in, I suppose, creating a coordinated approach to that and a through flow'.

Here integration extends beyond notions of integrated learning to include opportunities for learning and development practitioners to be involved throughout educational journeys/ programmes. Practice partners acknowledged that 'other' practitioners were involved at other stages in programmes but again felt contributions to be various, dependent on informal networks and piecemeal:

'We contribute to EAL, teaching inputs, admissions and stuff but it's inconsistent and not really structured ... kind of somebody knows somebody. There's more we can do in a structured way than we currently do'.

Though there was clear appetite for broader practitioner involvement within campus

based learning, comment in this area was sometimes in tension with discussion relating to learning and development resource within organisations:

> *'Local authorities are just getting decimated by the cuts and in terms of the learning development teams we are literally being slashed to the barest bones and, you know, before there would be a whole learning development team, now you've got kind of one person and actually practice learning is only ten percent of their job'.*

Partners also voiced concern regarding a perceived disconnect between approaches to integrated learning pre-qualifying and post-qualifying as post-qualifying learning was increasingly delivered 'in house'.

In common with the broader findings emerging from the review of social work education in Scotland, practice partners and others went on to highlight additional obstacles to achieving integrated learning outcomes within current economic, organisational and professional climates. Cited obstacles included:

- Variations between providers and a 'drift' in 'learning partnerships', 'most of which appear resource led'
- A significant shortage of statutory practice learning opportunities
- A dwindling supply of experienced practice educators
- No central governance of practice educators
- Questions relating to the currency, accessibility and integrated nature of the practice learning award
- Problems of co-ownership: 'we're not equal partners'
- Mismatched expectations of graduates.

In conclusion, there emerged a general consensus that existing models of and approaches to integrated learning were the right ones *but* that these now required urgent and considerable investment; specifically, towards improving the quality, consistency and connect of practice based learning opportunities. As one respondent put it:

'I think the current model is the right one but it needs to be resourced and allowed to work'. [Learning and development partner]

6.1.4   Future models and approaches

Partners were invited to explore enhanced or alternative models of integrated learning for social work education in Scotland. All partners agreed that there was clear scope for enhancement and innovation and many were engaged in related albeit small scale activity at local levels. At the same time, partners expressed little appetite for 'new' models without first addressing the foundations, cultures, and supports considered critical to realising and sustaining integrated learning outcomes – irrespective of the model(s) adopted. The findings below unpack this view.

6.1.4.1   Apprenticeship/ work-based models

While some respondents clearly valued and/or saw the potential of work-based routes – largely for their perceived capacity to provide an accessible route and option for learners with considerable experience in social work services – most were reluctant regarding significant expansion of this model. In part this appeared to be because respondents were unconvinced that existing work based routes would improve the *integrated* aspect of professional learning, indeed many feared that, in current climates, it may result in the opposite. Relatedly, many found the language and history of 'apprenticeship' a particular stumbling block and thus struggled to imagine this as opportunity to reconstruct and reimagine work based learning as a route to integrated learning outcomes. NQSWs, students and service users and carers expressed particular concern that apprenticeships/ work based routes would bring a shift from education to training, a narrowing of learning opportunities, and a weakening of critical social work:

'My worry about that model is you're then training up social workers focussed on that particular agency that you're in. You're not getting the generic teaching that we've had'. [Final year student/ NQSW]

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'Their training would then be probably specialised wouldn't it? Cause they would be focusing on a particular area rather than doing social work as a whole'. [Final year student/NQSW]

'It is kind of just words but I'd say that education for me is like a classroom, a professor, teacher, whatever; a classroom of students that can like debate, discuss so obviously there's a lot about a degree … . But then training is kind of like I'd say learning daily on the job. … I think you need to … I think there's more to develop in people than just actually training them and showing them the procedures and things like that. I think we need … it's something that's taught quite a lot on the Masters course, about critical thinking and being critical and reflective. And I think if you're just taught something from a manual and just told stuff I think you would actually be probably dumbing down the profession. That would be my kind of concern'. [Final year student/ NQSW]

'I think too, I'd say there's quite a lot of solidarity in terms of Scottish social work thinking, a lot of that can't be chucked away. If you've only been trained by your local authority or your local agency rather than having a more generic sense of 'what is social work?' … So, I don't know, it just feels like if you're a trainee and you're just learning on the job then maybe you lose sight of, you know, structural issues? That hasn't really been something that's been talked about in my placement so if I had only been learning like on placement then I don't think there would be that sort of critical thinking element'. [Final year student/ NQSW]

Service users and carers echoed these concerns and considered an apprenticeship model as 'a retrograde step'. This group brought a clear call for future social workers to continue to be educated at university:

'What would worry me is that the role of social workers and sociology in society would diminish…these are important things, theories and ways of looking at structures in society'.

'There is a war of attrition – employers will obviously tell you they want a product from your course that meets with what we do... 'don't give me someone who is a liberal, I want someone to come out and work for me'... and that's not the purpose of education, it's a by--product of education in my view.'

Practice and academic respondents were more varied in their views though similar concerns emerged. Some respondents celebrated the opportunities apprenticeship routes can present for widening access and choice as well as for supporting employer 'buy in'. Most however expressed concern regarding the potential impact on academic learning and on progress made in recent years to strengthen the professional identity of social work and social worker:

'I'm a bit anxious about a model that says, 'well the student shouldn't be in the university as much' because I'm worried about what that does to their knowledge base. And I think in the complex world in which we're asking practitioners to function, they need knowledge about addictions, about trauma, about ... and they won't get all of that. They'll get it at a practice wisdom level but they won't get the underpinning knowledge out there in the field because they bring it to the field. ... And it's that interchange between what the students bring and what they get that's the important part of integration for me'.

'I cringe when I hear the word 'apprenticeship'. It smacks of training and not education, it smacks of sub-degree level. Even if it's by another name I think that the term apprenticeship has to be avoided at all costs. I think to talk about apprenticeship in social work, it just sends out all the wrong kinds of messages.... It's the language that I'm very wary of and what apprenticeship in particular can be taken to imply. And how it may work against so much that we've tried to build'.

'Yeah, I think there is a danger that, of it feeding into the kind of anti-academic, anti-university thinking, which still persists in social work'.

'We have to be careful, it's not about being sniffy but I'm so conscious that at various times over our history as a profession, we have imported ideas from industry or from business that actually don't fit, and we try tae make them fit. We use the language and it doesn't work, you know?'

At best, academic respondents supported further consideration of work based routes, if these could be reconstructed beyond existing constructions of apprenticeship. Relatedly, all shared a view that this should not be progressed without clear action to address the cultural, structural and organisations barriers to professional learning and knowledge transfer seen to exist within social work organisations at the present time.

6.1.4.2 Expanding an enquiry and action learning (EAL) approach

A small number of students discussed EAL as an alternative model for integrated learning in social work education. This approach is variously used in social work education in Scotland and has, at different stages, been explored by educational providers as a route to more radical change. Currently, EAL is used mostly as a means of strengthening (i) self-directed and life-long learning, (ii) integrated learning, and (iii) learning relationships between academics, practitioners, students and service users and carers.

Students and NQSWs also referenced discussions regarding virtual models of EAL. Most felt these models reinforced individualised models of practice and would likely exacerbate existing problems of professional isolation and stress.

More broadly, partners supported the development of more co-productive models of learning and assessment though cautioned that such approaches should not be seen as resource light. Opportunities and developments in this area were seen to vary across providers and were seen to counter some of the 'narrowing' of professional learning touched on above.

6.1.4.3 Concurrent models of learning

Academics saw little new in this approach as some educational providers already

made use of it where appropriate. Most partners were unconvinced that it would bring added value. Students and NQSWs felt that as a learning approach it was at odds with the needs and realities of the people they work with: 'people don't have problems just like two days a week, you know?'

6.1.4.4   Re-envisioning practice learning

All partners identified a need to look more creatively at practice based learning and many were involved in local discussions towards this.   Academic and practice respondents identified a need to look beyond individual 'placements' towards group learning/practice models. This could involve groups of students working in particular localities on particular projects, perhaps for longer periods of time. Students could be supported by a learning team involving, for example, practice educators, practitioners, academics in residence, service users and carers and NQSWs. Thinking in this area was very much 'under development' but reflected a clear intent to strengthen an exchange model of learning for social work education and practice.

Relatedly, a small number of academics described a model of learning which re-configures practice as the primary *learning* site as opposed to a site for 'practice'. In this model learning is structured by a series of assessment led modules, completed mostly in practice and supported by a learning team. Time did not allow for detailed discussion of this model though it is one that has been discussed and tested, by degrees, in Scotland. Interestingly, this model aligns well with recent reconstructions of work based/ graduate apprenticeship models and suggests, again, that some of the obstacles here lie more in terminology than in an openness (or otherwise) to change and innovation.

6.1.4.5   Reconfiguring social work education and practice

Though respondents struggled to imagine alternative models of integrated learning for social work education there was considerable consensus around what was needed to realise integrated learning outcomes in social work education. Partner conclusions in this area highlighted a need for a cultural and structural shift in social work education, towards a position in which supporting social work education is seen as 'everyone's

business'. Some of this ambition and challenge is captured in the excerpts below:

'I there are huge strengths in the way that things are done right now … but there's some I think quite significant tweaks that might actually help integrated learning, and I think some of those lie with employers in terms of what's the place of social work students in the overall scheme of the workforce, you know? And some of my colleagues in employment, when I've said: 'I think every social work unit or team should have a student all of the time' have looked at me as if I've got horns and said: 'How on earth could we manage that?' And I'm saying: 'Well, we manage it in teaching, we manage it in nursing'.

'It seems to me that there is a need for a cultural shift because in terms of integrated learning, whatever we teach students in the university they need time to process, to reflect on, and the practice element of that helps them to integrate what they've learned. And I actually think some of the [models] that we have in place right now are absolutely fit for purpose but there are bits of the overall jigsaw that aren't in place and are resisted'.

6.1.5   Moving forward

In looking towards future or enhanced models of integrated learning, partners identified a need to first *clarify what is key* to achieving integrated learning outcomes in social work education. Relatedly, partners identified a need to *build on and invest in existing strengths*, alongside a need to *invest in creativity and innovation*. Partners observed that there were a number of initiatives 'bubbling up' in relation to integrated learning across Scotland but that progress and outcomes were significantly constrained by the impact of acute resource shortages facing all partners.

More broadly, partners identified a clear need for a *cultural shift* in attitudes to, engagement with and responsibility for social work education and learning across the profession, and for *the development of an infrastructure* which can support and

sustain that. Discussion in this area frequently drew parallels between the culture and infrastructure supporting integrated learning outcomes in initial teacher education and/or nursing with a clear view that these present working models to learn from. Last, partners identified a need to *strengthen forums for local and national dialogue and innovation* in relation to social work education and learning in Scotland, particularly at *strategic levels*. Some of these conclusions area captured in the excerpts below:

'I think this has to be looked at from the other end of the equation. ...the whole culture of learning has be embedded throughout the organisation, throughout the service. So, that whether somebody's coming in as a student, a graduate, whether as a young inexperienced worker, that it's seen as everybody's responsibility. I think we have to get back to those core principles. Because certainly, in my experience, it's been variable. People have said there are patches of good practice, you know where teams are committed, but you don't have the strategic buy-in, and I think that's the issue. If the strategic buy-in isn't there, if there isn't motivation or a requirement to actually be seen to meet this.

'... so, I think there has to be an ownership of this whole agenda across the board. And I know it's a big ask and... but we really do have to move the culture on. And I think nationally, the government has to help with that. We have to take responsibility as well but all the partners have to say 'This isn't an option. This is not an option. It's something that we, that has to be, everybody has to take part in'. It has to be underpinned by that or it's not going to work, so, I think we're not seeing the woods for the trees, as it were. And there's these core things that we really have to push for' (Learning and development partner).

6.1.6   Messages from Chief Social Work Officers

As outlined, in the final phase of the project, there was opportunity to consult with Chief Social Work Officers (CSWO) (and those aspiring to this role). The focus group was

held in Glasgow and involved 11 participants: 8 women and 3 men. All were candidates on the CSWO post graduate diploma programme and were therefore actively engaged in their own learning.

6.1.6.1 Defining and constructing integrated learning

Perhaps unsurprisingly, for CSWOs, the term integration was connected to the integration of health and social care and for this reason respondents suggested that this term be avoided. The concept of shared professional learning was seen as useful, but didn't fully reflect the nature of knowledge production. The emphasis for this group was on co-design and co-production, and in particular stressing the need for service users and carers to be directly involved in the co-construction of learning. No clear consensus was reached, but the preference was for terminology emphasising co-production and co-construction.

6.1.6.2 Existing approaches to integrated learning

The current approach to professional learning was seen as offering a degree of integration, but not in a sufficiently sustained or deep enough way to meet future needs. Whilst there were observed strengths, many described the ad hoc nature of current provision, with too much being left to chance and relationships. Relatedly, respondents noted the divide between practice and the university which again resulted in activity - and innovation - being left to chance.

6.1.6.3 Efficacy of existing approaches

"We already have a fair amount of integration", as one CSWO put it. Current arrangements were felt to be successful in delivering *a level of* integration, but it was possible and desirable to do better. Importantly, this was not just about integration between university and practice. Some CSWOs identified a need for closer integration within agencies between staff with responsibility for learning and development and managers and practitioners. In summary, there was consensus that the current arrangements and frameworks needed to be significantly altered, that the status quo was not fit for purpose in the longer term, and that more needed to be done to strengthen

arrangements for integrated learning.

6.1.6.4 Future models and approaches

CSWOs identified a need for a cultural shift in relation to professional learning towards an integrated, holistic and co-owned model and practice:

> *'Part of the real challenge for us is ... really setting out that vision of what the model needs to look like, because we might end up with a hand knitted version of what we've got. ... and in actual fact we need to describe a vision of the future and what that would look like and we need to focus on the practice and cultural change that we need to bring about, and then the structural arrangements that need to be in place to support that'.*

Discussion took place about the value of regional partnerships, for which there was much support. However, many acknowledged that unless this was accompanied by overarching governance then the impact of regional partnerships was likely to dissipate.

Connected to cultural change, respondents identified the importance of stronger exchange between the academy and practice, with practitioners physically entering universities and academics physically entering practice settings. As one CSWO put it, "*if that exchange is there, then you are changing the culture as well*".

There was an acceptance that in whatever arrangements emerged that the CSWO, in their professional leadership capacity, had a significant role to play in building bridges between the employer and the academy, and it was suggested that they should have responsibility for controlling any emerging resource in order to ensure that it wasn't lost in partnership arrangements. Further, there was recognition that arrangements needed to extend beyond the prequalifying level, as change at this level would only have a sustained impact if there was also action to tackle post-qualifying professional education.

CSWOs also identified a need to shift the status and/or role of practice educators. Practice educators were considered crucial to the success of future arrangements for

integrated learning, however, again, discussion highlighted a need for holistic and joined-up change else this could merely lay more responsibility on practice educators and so result in unintended consequences:

> *'My worry is, do we make it so unattractive to be a practice educator that we end up in a position where we have got fewer of them, not more of them and that has an overall negative impact, rather than the positive one that we are aspiring to'.*

CSWOs remained firmly committed to generic qualifying social work education and as such there was little enthusiasm for a detailed discussion on the merits or demerits of specialist routes, such as those in place in England.

The notion of apprenticeship was also seen as having something to offer to future arrangements and thus warranted further exploration. Again, for most, this connected to traditional notions of apprenticeship/trainee routes rather than emerging/specialist models. A number of CSWOs referenced that they had either come into social work through what they described as the old Strathclyde trainee scheme or had staff who had come into social work via similar schemes. CSWOs noted that they were not often aware of the route through which their staff had come into social work (i.e. undergraduate, post-graduate, distance learning) and so it was difficult to assess the apparent merits of different routes.

6.1.7 Moving forward

Discussion concluded with a reassertion of the need for a culture shift towards an integrated, holistic and shared model and practice for professional learning. Further, it was concluded that such a shift needed to move beyond short term initiatives and that CSWOs and Social Work Scotland should be key actors in progressing that agenda.

6.2 Messages from social work education informants in other UK jurisdictions

Consistent with the project's brief to explore initiatives towards integrated learning across the UK, the views of key informants at HEIs in Belfast, Cardiff and Manchester and were sought through telephone interviews, comprising of discussions with one senior social work academic at each of the institutions. Discussions were also held with two members of the Northern Ireland Degree Partnership. Particular focus was afforded to approaches, models and practices that are not currently used in Scotland. The key themes are now considered.

6.2.1 Structured approaches to integrated learning

In essence, there is greater emphasis on more structured approaches to the integration of qualifying social work education across the rest of the UK. This was reflected particularly in the development of national frameworks in Northern Ireland and Wales.

6.2.1.1 Northern Ireland

As signalled in the literature review, the *'Northern Ireland Degree in Social Work Partnership Governance Framework'* (Northern Ireland Social Care Council, 2013) represents a strategic partnership responsible for the design and delivery of professional social work training. It was implemented following the introduction of the degree in social work, with a view to formally requiring and supporting close collaborative working between HEIs and employer agencies. The key informants considered it a highly structured means of integrating academic and practice learning, with a comprehensive remit, having responsibility in three key areas including: audit and governance; admission and selection; and practice learning and degree delivery. They advised that academic and employer agency representatives serve on the various committees that undertake the work of the NIDP, which include decision-making about curriculum context and quality assurance of practice learning.

6.2.1.2 Wales

The key informant in Wales advised that change in Wales was driven by a strategic document produced in 2004 by the Social Services Inspectorate in Wales, *Ensuring Consistency in Learning to Practice.* The context of that guidance is not entirely dissimilar from some of the drivers for RSWE in Scotland. This is explored in more detail in the literature review, but it is important to note some key features. Firstly, it seeks to put in place a whole systems approach where collaboration of all the key partners is under the umbrella of a local partnership. The development of practice learning is supported by a Practice Learning Opportunity Fund paid to local authorities, not universities.

The arrangement contains a stipulation that each Social Services Department has in place written agreements with at least one HEI in respect of what is referred to as 'hosting' of students' practice learning for the duration of their programme. This does not mean that the placement will be in the statutory sector, but that the local authority is responsible for identifying, developing and supporting practice learning opportunities. This has the advantage of their being a level of consistency of demand as well as putting employers at the heart of the process, but also emphasises the issue of ownership. Whilst there were no developments akin to Frontline or Step Up, there was a degree of specialism. For example Cardiff University offered an MA in Social Work, whereas Cardiff Metropolitan offered a BA, so different student markets were being created. Although Wales is smaller than Scotland, there was the same numbers of universities offering social work programmes.

The key informant advised that in general the arrangement has been successful in stabilising the position in respect of practice learning, but that there was beginning to be pressure for change with some councils beginning to want to shift the balance between different HEIs.

6.2.1.3 England

It is important to acknowledge that the situation in England is very complex, with Social Work Education being delivered in a very different climate to Scotland with provision currently being regulated by the HCPC, although recent announcements

appear to indicate the development of a new regulatory body for Social Work in England.

Against that backdrop, it is worth noting that the key informant interviewed was part of a 'teaching partnership arrangement' (the terminology that was used in the documentation) referred to as the Greater Manchester Social Work Academy (GMSWA), which involved HEIs, employers and third sector partners. It was one of four partnerships that had been successful in achieving central government funding to support the development of partnership arrangements. This was only coming into being in late 2015, so it was not possible to measure the impact of the arrangements to date. The key informant shared the bid document and it is interesting to note a number of key features. At the time of writing the evaluation report of the first phase of the teaching partnerships is due to be published, but already the Department for Education and Department of Health have invited bids for a second phase of projects that will be funded for two years, but it is noteworthy that priority will be given to those partnerships that guarantee two statutory placements to students.

In respect of the GMSWA it is important to note firstly that this was a unique arrangement in that it connected to financial devolution arrangements that were in place for Greater Manchester as a whole. As the bid document states, "*Grasping this opportunity, we are committed to moving from the pre-existing collaborative partnership model for social work in the region (GMSWPB) to a partnership that is strategic, accountable, transformative and evaluative*".

Secondly, the intention to:

> "*use the frameworks of 'The Child's Journey' (children and families), 'Integration for Independence' (adults and carers) and 'The Professional's Journey' (the professional social worker) as a means of reimagining and restructuring the initial and continuing education opportunities for social workers in our region, supported by more permeable boundaries between HEIs, employers and service users and carers to maximise the opportunities for student learning and professional development*".

So although integrated learning is not referred to explicitly the aim of more permeable boundaries is clearly in sympathy with the intention. A further aim is:

> '*to develop and implement a three year change management process for public reform, aligned through agreed governance structures to Devolution Manchester, which repositions social work as central to the reform process for work with children, families, adults and communities across integrated health and social work/care delivery organisations*'.

The bid document proposed a number of additional posts, including the establishment of 'Teaching Consultants' who will be primarily responsible for delivering some of the objectives related to the practice/research interface. It is also important to note that within Greater Manchester there already exist both Step Up and Frontline programmes, but also that there are social work programmes delivered within Greater Manchester that are not part of the GMSWA arrangements. As stated above, it is early in the development of the project, but this is clearly one potential model for structural and cultural change. The key informant was also able to advise that other teaching partnerships were operating to different models, and so there was an issue of comparison. What is clear is that a range of structural solutions are being sought to reform social work education and practice.

6.2.1.4 Benefits of more structured approaches to integrated learning

The key informants agreed that there were tangible benefits to the structured arrangements described. The model in Wales generally seemed to meet the current needs of the sector and NIDP was considered to be effective in creating a structure for practitioners and academics to work together. It was felt to facilitate better exchange of knowledge, particularly, in bringing field perspectives into education and also for increasing a sense of joint ownership of the curriculum:

> '*Partnership allows bringing practitioners in to teach and is a mechanism for making changes to curriculum content*'.

This was reflected in a co-facilitation approach towards preparing students for practice learning, with practice educators jointly teaching modules on communication skills and theories of intervention. The NIDP was also felt to better support the inclusion of service user and carer perspectives in qualifying social work education, with mechanisms to ensure formal and systematic input and feedback, and a requirement to involve service users and carers in the delivery of programmes, which is funded by the regulatory body.

Significant benefits were also reported in terms of streamlining access to practice learning opportunities through formal processes for the approval of providers and placements:

> *'It's regional so means we're not competing with [name of other HEI] for placements. Employers and HEIs work closely together'.*

Moreover, mechanisms for dealing with problems in the provision and quality of practice placements were also found to be positive features of the respective partnership arrangements.

6.2.2   Challenges of more structured approaches to integrated learning

Some of the challenges to the more structured approaches described are evident in other forms of intra-professional working. As such, key informants spoke about issues of role clarity and power as factors that emerged at times, which needed to be negotiated. In essence, the structures were felt to facilitate long-term relationships, which while on the whole were considered productive and harmonious, were also subject to periodic fluctuation in intensity. Interestingly, frictions were felt to originate in work pressures, rather than significant ideological differences; for example, regarding curriculum content. Informants pointed to a trend, however, of employers wanting more of a focus on skills and HEIs on theoretical knowledge, consistent with findings from the literature review (Wilson and Campbell, 2013).

Limits to partnership working were also reported, for example, in resolving the issue of variations in the quality of practice learning provision, and there was a consensus

that placements would always differ in the learning opportunities offered. In addition, the partnership structures were at times considered to be inflexible, for example, in relation to student attendance.

6.2.3 Resourcing

Each jurisdiction's partnership model was supported by different funding mechanisms. While representative of a highly structured approach, the NIDP was reported to be small scale, with relatively low costs for resourcing the respective committees which were funded by central government. The academic key informant indicated, however, that academic and employer staffing costs were not included in this and if added up would amount to a considerable allocation of resource, for example, through co-facilitating elements of the curriculum as described. The GMSWA was supported by substantial funding and arrangements in Wales by development funding for practice placements that was routed through the local authorities.

6.2.4 Development

A key issue to emerge from discussions with members of the NIDP was the importance of the development phase of their partnership model. Much of its success was attributed to engagement in a process that from the outset was committed to the principle of collaborative working, which then allowed for the development a model that could broadly meet all stakeholders' needs. It was recognised that the initial period required detailed discussions to clarify expectations, address concerns and jointly work towards a shared understanding of the model's specific details. Relatedly, the model's ongoing success was in-part ascribed to being flexible and having the ability to adapt to changing organisational and policy demands. These findings offer valuable design principles to the process of co-creating a partnership model for social work education in Scotland. As such, while acknowledging the many attributes of approaches discussed here, any Scottish model would be advised to start by recognising the unique range of expectations, opportunities and limitations that apply here and work collaboratively towards creating a model that will best address and capitalise on them.

6.2.5 Views on initiatives including specialist, fast-track and apprenticeship models of qualifying education

As noted in the literature, specialist, fast-track and apprenticeships models are largely restricted to England at the present time. In general, responses reflected concerns about the rationale for each and their potential for diluting the knowledge and skills based required for professional social work practice:

> *'I would have concerns about them; the emphasis on integration is about social workers thinking holistically whereas those models aren't supportive of that'.*

The graduate apprenticeship route was generally considered to reflect models that had existed previously in social work education, for example, employment-based routes, which while viewed positively had been criticised for prioritising practice learning over academic learning. Graduate apprenticeships were thus problematised in this way and for the potential to open up a two-tier system of social work education:

> *'There was a deliberate decision in NI to move away for that to ensure that everyone has the same academic education'.*

As stated above in Manchester, Frontline and Step Up were very much part of the partnership arrangements that were in place, and so were not explored in particular detail.

6.2.6 Post qualifying education and training

While the project's remit was to explore approaches to qualifying education, key informants also discussed post qualifying education and training. The strategic frameworks described were believed to play central roles in facilitating and supporting continuing professional development. The NIDP model, the 'Professional in Practice' which was developed from general practitioner training, was considered to have introduced more flexible arrangements for progression, i.e. learning from the job and not only through academic qualification. The academic key informant saw this as

enabling practitioners to use many different type of learning opportunities. As such, social workers could gain qualifications through attending agency training, through self-directed professional development as well as the traditional route of postgraduate courses. The emphasis on each was on demonstrating how the knowledge and skills development impacted on outcomes for services users, but there were difficulties noted in the assessment of 'informal learning'.

6.3   Messages from other professional groups

Looking beyond social work, the project identified a range of key informants from others professional communities. The intention was to identify commonalities, synergies and differences in approaches to integrated learning. The findings provide a valuable stream of evidence regarding the varied ways in which integrated learning is delivered and experienced across professional communities.

Interviews with key informants followed a semi-structured model, which allowed for individual perspectives and expertise to be explored whilst addressing core ideas and concepts arising from the literature review. The emerging themes from the interviews will be grouped under the following broad headings below:

- Definitional issues
- Structural and organisational issues
- Innovations and ideas
- Relationships, roles and responsibilities.

The key informants were drawn from the following areas of experience and expertise. The analysis of the data will be presented using the abbreviations below.

- Initial Teacher Education (ITE) – 2 senior academics from a Scottish university
- Educational Psychology (EP) – 1 senior academic/practitioner from a Scottish university/Local Authority

- Community Learning and Development (CLD) – 1 senior academic from a Scottish university
- Medical Education (MED) – 1 senior academic from a Scottish university
- Allied Health Professionals (AH) – 3 senior academics from a Scottish university. 1 representative from nursing, occupational therapy and physiotherapy respectively.

6.3.1 Definitional issues

All respondents were asked to explore what the term integrated learning meant within their context, and also to consider how the conception of integrated learning from a social work perspective links with their understanding and experience. There was some variance in initial responses to the definition of integrated learning, with one constant theme running through all responses: theory and practice. This is unsurprising as it is a cornerstone of the literature (both social work orientated and across contexts) and the notion that integrated learning is the integration of these two key spheres of learning is common across professional boundaries. There was some variance in how the integration of learning was broadly conceptualised. For ITE there was a sense that despite theory being seen to be largely the remit of universities and practice the remit of schools, there was significant theory generated and engaged with within practice placements and as such they were deemed to be a 'learning site'. ITE also broadened the concept of integrated learning to encompass broader streams of knowledge and influence such as governmental policy, regulatory requirements and the centrality of the student voice. MED and EP spoke of a spiral curriculum where the strands of theory and practice were inextricably linked and integrated throughout the curricula of their programmes. In this sense the integration of learning is constant with students moving between both spheres concurrently. When conceptualised in this manner, respondents felt that integrated learning was an intuitive and natural orientation of their teaching and learning strategy rather than two spheres to be united at specific points.

CLD highlighted that integrated learning had to be about seeking out 'why' practitioners operate rather than simply 'how' which underlined the role of

criticality and reflection. It was noted that integrated learning was crucial and that social work students should be offered as many diverse experiences as possible to test knowledge and respond to complex situations. They emphasised that a key facet of integrated learning was the opportunity to engage in critical reflection in terms of their own practice but also in terms of the wider issues impacting upon social work delivery across statutory and voluntary sectors. The role of universities in this was regard was seen as crucial as it offered critical distance from the priorities of service providers and the associated issues of resources and power.

The term 'integrated learning' gave rise to a degree of uncertainty in some responses. For example, ITE and MED felt that it could also relate to the integration of different professional groups in practice and reflect the multi-disciplinary context of practice. In this conception of integrated learning the emphasis would be on the benefits of learning and working alongside other professionals. This is of course a natural occurrence in many practice learning opportunities rather than this very specific notion of integration.

6.3.2 Structural and organisational issues

Respondents were asked to describe the model of integrated learning currently used in their context and to reflect upon its key features and efficacy. The responses were inevitably discursive and there is likely to be significant structural and contractual information underpinning these approaches which is not included. It should also be noted that all respondents viewed the integration of learning to be something that ran through *all* elements of their programmes (for example lectures, problem based learning, groupwork, essays, thesis etc.) and were keen to note that the model used for the specific practice components was part of a wider approach.

MED spoke specifically about the initial phase of medical education (year 1-3), noting that medical education is split into 3 distinct phases which are construed differently: years 1-3 – systems of practice; years 4-5 – preparation for practice; post-qualifying – specialisms. The programmes are regulated by the General Medical Council (GMC), and in the phase discussed, a spiral curriculum was in place to meet the intended learning

outcomes. This was university led, and the clinical aspects of the curriculum were interspersed throughout the curriculum through practice experiences and inputs for clinicians. This spiral curriculum is intended to have clinical practice at the heart of all learning, indeed the central premise is to have the patient at the forefront of all learning. In this sense the case for integration of learning was seen to be essential and compelling. Moving forward, through the phases of medical education the practice components become more sustained with students sharing the opportunity at all points to identify particular foci and specialisms. The framework for outcomes of learning for medical students was seen to be sufficient in ensuring students integrated their learning appropriately, with this being achieved in different ways across the sector. The supply and content of clinical practice experiences are constructed through negotiation between universities and clinical partners. It was noted that this makes the approach vulnerable to resources, staffing and willingness of clinical partners.

CLD described a model of integrated learning whereby students are in engaged in practice learning blocks in years 2 and 3 of their programmes. There is an overall 60/40 split between campus based and practiced based experiences for students (albeit with an integrated curriculum throughout). The CLD Standards Council sets the benchmarks to be met by programmes and students, however the identification and delivery of practice learning opportunities is by negotiation rather than through a structured commitment. CLD have built an additional model of integrated learning into their final honours year with an 'internship' whereby students are linked to agencies and through negotiation undertake a research project that contributes to the practice delivery of the host agency. In this model the integration of academic and practice learning is seen through a different lens with the practice issues becoming the prompt for the focus and direction of academic enquiry. It was noted that this approach was underscored by a commitment to reciprocity between the university and practice agencies.

The model of integrated learning used by EP (only delivered at masters' level) is a concurrent one. Students receive discreet short blocks of campus based inputs, and then engage in a model which involves 2 days in practice followed by 2 days on campus per week. The purpose of this is to consolidate and integrate learning at every stage and is possible due to nature of the EP role and nature of workloads. The

programme (similar to ITE) engages with very specific practice learning sites (i.e. educational psychology services and schools). The arrangement is based on good will and reciprocity. The reciprocity element relates to the added value to service delivery from having students within services and the production of future employees. ITE spoke of the centrality of their relationships with the field and that the integration of learning is at core of the professional identity of teachers. The focus on teachers as learners was seen as key and the professional culture of providing learning opportunities (pre and post qualifying) flowed from this. ITE noted the supportive role of the General Teaching Council (GTC) in facilitating and encouraging the culture of integrated learning across the sector.

The interview with AH programmes highlighted variations in approaches but with all disciplines valuing and requiring a significant proportion of time in practice. Nursing programmes have a highly regulated integrated learning model which requires a 50/50 split between campus based and clinical based learning experiences. This was in part seen to be necessary to cover the broad range of roles and remits that nursing encompasses. This has evolved over time from what could be described as an apprenticeship model whereby students were located in clinical settings and sought academic inputs to support learning arising from practice. For occupational therapy and physiotherapy, the requirement was a minimum of 1000 hours (approximately 25%) direct practice with an emphasis on simulated experiences in addition to this to increase the integrated elements to the programmes.

6.3.3   Innovations and ideas

The respondents were asked to discuss developmental ideas around integrated learning and potential alternative approaches which could be adopted. Responses were understandably constructed through the lens of their own context and as such varied according to the perception of the efficacy of the approaches noted above.

A key theme emerging from across all the key informant groups was the increasing emphasis on lifelong learning and continued professional development. This was seen on one level to be a cultural phenomenon whereby the need to 'learn' and to

continue to see the links between practice and the academy were an essential component of professional identity. The location and nature of continued learning varied across the disciplines with ITE, MED and nursing noting both agency and university based opportunities. Whilst occupational therapy, CLD and physiotherapy noted that continued professional development had a greater practice focus and tended to be located at agency level. The notion of professionalism appears to underpin this emphasis on 'learning practitioners' with the associated responsibilities and accountabilities being cited as a key factor. AH felt that the demand for ongoing professional learning was coming from the field (particularly new graduates) in terms of readiness for practice.

The availability of funding was seen to be a crucial aspect of engaging in innovations and development of integrated learning. ITE reported that funding is currently being directed towards strengthening the relationships between Local Authorities and universities. MED noted that clinical/academic roles are being developed but are subject to the availability of funding. The financial aspect of integrated learning recurred across all respondents with reduced resources and austerity measures being seen to be a threat and a compromise to integration and innovation.

6.3.4   Relationships and responsibilities

A key theme emerging from the interviews with key informants was the importance of relationships between universities and practice partners and the development of a *culture* where the integration of learning was encouraged and facilitated. The most positive example reported was from ITE where there is a perceived culture that learning was the responsibility of all stakeholders and that this culture of learning was embedded deeply in the professional identity of teachers and located prominently in professional policy such as the Donaldson report. It was noted that this was underpinned by strong public and political support for the importance of education, and this has encouraged the development of a culture whereby the integration of academic and practice learning is intuitive and the boundaries are blurred. It was noted that this ethos was facilitated by the GTC and that it was seen as a shared

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responsibility. The notion that practice based opportunities might be vulnerable to willingness and resources was refuted with the overall picture summed up in the following quote:

> *'in over 20 years I've rarely come across a teacher or a school that doesn't want students'.*

This positive culture was echoed by EP who noted that their profession operate largely within specialised local authority services that rely on their graduates to provide a workforce. This dynamic encourages integration of learning and benefits from the sustained relationship building and trust that can evolve between individuals and organisations over time. This was seen to be less easy for other professions such as CLD where there are multiple employers and settings to establish and maintain relationships. The ability to develop a cohesive culture of shared responsibility was seen as more difficult and may require greater compulsion and/or regulation to facilitate it.

For CLD and MED there was a culture of integrated learning, but one that was more vulnerable to availability and factors such as funding and resources. These types of relationship require significant negotiation and flexibility with the distinction between the academy and practice being present and acknowledged. Indeed CLD suggested that there is an element of anti-intellectualism within the field whereby the validity and efficacy of academic learning was questioned and the importance of learning in practice was valued. It is also worth noting that for CLD there is not a formal post qualifying framework for ongoing learning. This is something which is in development and may bolster the learning culture of the profession.

6.4 Summary

The above findings make clear that the concept and practice of integrated learning remains key to both social work education in Scotland, and to professional learning and practice more broadly. While conceptions of integrated learning continue to expand, reflecting ongoing developments in learning and practice, existing

constructions continue to foreground the criticality of the theory–practice interplay.

SW education providers in Scotland appear to employ a variety of approaches to achieve integrated learning outcomes, across academic and practice learning sites. While these approaches are governed by the *Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland*, there is evidence of reasonable flexibility of approach, innovation and responsively to local markets and networks.

Notwithstanding the above strengths, all partners identified considerable limitations, practical obstacles and tensions between current ambition and experienced realities.

Broadly, Scottish partners were satisfied with existing *models* of integrated learning in social work education though were clear that these models were increasingly aspirational, left to goodwill and not working as they should. Partners identified a need to better articulate what 'matters' in achieving integrated learning outcomes across learning/practice sites, to build on strengths and to invest in development and innovation. In addition, partners identified a need for cultural and structural change in social work education and practice, towards a model where responsibility for social work education and learning was co-owned across the sector and at all levels. Specifically, there was a widespread call to push beyond current models of integration and partnership, which were perceived to rest on 'goodwill', towards a structure and framework which drew responsibilities more clearly and which provides the resource, incentives and supports required to realise and sustain integrated learning outcomes across learning journeys. Relatedly, partners identified a need to look beyond qualifying learning routes if a learning culture is to be sustainably embedded in practice. Lastly, partners identified a need to develop opportunities and frameworks for regular local and national dialogue and innovation in relation to social work education and learning, particularly at strategic levels.

Many of the above 'areas for action' connect (and push beyond) reported initiatives and developments in social work education beyond Scotland. In particular, both Wales and Northern Ireland have introduced structured frameworks to strengthen integrated learning outcomes through improved and more accountable partnership arrangements. These initiatives have been seen to produce tangible benefits in the

form of strengthened relationships, improved knowledge exchange between learning sites and actors, a more co-productive approach to teaching and learning, and a more streamlined approach to the provision and quality assurance of practice-based learning. Notwithstanding the above, challenges remain and discussion with key informants underscores that structural change should not be constructed as a salve, rather it needs to be seen as part of a broader whole systems process of collaborative and cultural change and improvement.

Interview discussion with other professional groups affirms the above and reminds us that the opportunity and challenge of progressing integrated learning is not unique to social work education and practice. In particular, discussion in this area highlights that commitment to integrated learning outcomes need to run through all elements of professional learning programmes (and beyond), rather than being the responsibility of one particular part (i.e. practice based learning) or stage (i.e. pre-qualifying education). Relatedly, looking across professional communities we can observe varying frameworks to support integrated learning outcomes, ranging from local negotiation and autonomy to highly regulated structures. Across these variations issues of professional culture, professional governance and leadership, commitment to lifelong learning and adequate resourcing emerge as salient and interdependent themes.

7 DISCUSSION AND OPTIONS APPRAISAL

7.1 Towards a Shared Professional Learning: The Case for a Step Change

The collective findings from this study's literature review and data gathering activities provide an extremely rich and detailed picture of the subject of integrated learning. Through extensive engagement with key stakeholders in social work education and employment, and in other professional spheres, this iterative study has explored and tested a plethora of definitions and approaches to integrated learning. Perhaps inevitably, these endeavours confirm integrated learning as a contested term and complex practice, representing a multiplicity of intersections of theory (learning, education, professional practice), policy, professional cultures and identity, competing ideologies, funding and organisational practices and constraints, among others. Lessons from other professions illustrate that achieving a more integrated learning is a significant challenge and one that requires a multi-modal and long-term strategy to attain. That social work faces particular challenges is also clear. Research evidence for the efficacy of the qualifying curriculum in Scotland is developing, however, it remains relatively limited and contested (Grant et al., 2014; Welch et al., 2014; McCusker and McCulloch, 2016) reflecting a similar picture across the UK (Moriarty and Manthorpe, 2014). The uniqueness and diversity of the social work role, the influence of political ideology and economics, together with the wide range of stakeholder views, suggests that the disputed nature of the education of social workers is likely to remain a defining feature of the profession's discourse; one that is informed by on-going practical and pedagogic limitations to the curriculum meeting the expressed needs of all stakeholder groups. This means that it is neither possible nor desirable to import structures or solutions from other professions or jurisdictions, and that a fresh approach requires to be taken.

Notwithstanding the complexity of the challenge, the research evidence emerging from this project provides a very strong imperative, as well as some very clear pointers for what needs to change and how to proceed. It confirms that there are many excellent examples of the integration of academic and practice knowledge in qualifying social work education, facilitated by evolving approaches including enquiry and action

learning and integrated assessment approaches. Indeed there are many aspects of current qualifying social work programmes that respondents to this project valued highly and did not wish to lose. However, the findings also reflect that integrated learning is not experienced consistently by students and social workers to a degree that is satisfactory to all. As such, a perceived gulf between academic and practice learning in qualifying social work education persists; one which appears to have been exacerbated by significant and increasing constraints on practice and development arising from cuts to employer and HEIs budgets.

In this challenging context, there are a number of key themes that emerge clearly from the literature review and data analysis. This section will summarise these as a way of leading into the option appraisal section.

7.1.1   Integrating at a structural level

The first key theme which is reinforced by other professions, other jurisdictions and the analysis of the data is that the achievement of a consistently more integrated learning requires a new structural framework for social work education; one that undertakes a whole-systems approach to changing the culture of social work, towards the embedding of education as a core principle of the profession, built on a shared responsibility between all participants. In other words, bridging the conceptual and physical divide between academic and practice learning requires a recontextualisation of the curriculum as learning enacted equally in academic and practice settings. In short, the boundaries between the academy and practice are required to be much more permeable than they are currently. In arriving at this conclusion, we propose the adoption of the term 'shared professional learning' on the basis that it more accurately defines the activity of integrated learning and better informs the task of realising it. Whilst there is much in the current mode of delivery of social work education to be proud of, in triangulating the different sources of information we believe that the case for change in this respect has been very clearly made.

A second major theme is that while this project's remit was to propose options for the qualifying curriculum, the findings suggest that embedding and realising a learning

culture within social work necessitates a much greater emphasis on developing a professional pathway from learner to experienced professional, charting the length of the social work career. As such, urgent and detailed attention is required in the post-qualifying realm to enable social workers to engage in and remain committed to a shared professional learning, and also to reinforce it is an integral part of the role of the professional social worker to contribute towards the learning of others.

Messages from other professions and from jurisdictions in the UK illustrate that any change needs to be supported by financial investment, for example in the support to teaching partnerships in England. There is a strong message that the accomplishment of these goals in Scotland is contingent on the provision of adequate funding and support from central government. The challenge at a prequalifying level is to set down a clear and co-owned foundation for lifelong learning.

7.1.2 Recontextualisation

A further central theme from this project is that knowledge is not something to be 'transferred' from one location to another. Rather knowledge is developed within a specific context and its use in other contexts is dependent upon it being successfully recontextualised. Further, that recontextualisation takes place at a number of different levels, namely: structure, curriculum and pedagogy, and at the level of the individual: both educator and learner.

7.1.3 Integrating at the level of the curriculum

As indicated, the project found that all qualifying social work degree programmes in Scotland met with the requirements of the current SiSWE and were viewed in largely positive terms. Provision is diverse in nature and while this was celebrated as a strength by most stakeholders it also raised a call for more coverage of applied knowledge and skills, and co-ownership of decision-making about social work education from students, NQSWs, employers and academics alike (Gordon and Davis, 2016; McCusker and McCulloch, 2016). As such, a new framework for social work education is required to

develop the partnership mechanisms that will facilitate the co-production and shared ownership of the curriculum. Stage 2 of the RSWE identified many strong and long-standing examples of effective partnerships working (Gordon and Davis, 2016). However, it also signalled a requirement for systemic change in the form of 'strategic and formalised' approaches to partnership, in order to support a greater and consistent focus on the integration of academic and practice knowledge (Gordon and Davis, 2016).

Required changes to the university-based curriculum relate to more coverage of and exposure to applied learning, as well as addressing other discrete topics (McCusker and McCulloch, 2016). As such, these actions need to be taken forward in the next phase of work. Research evidence from Phases 1 and 2 of the RSWE and more broadly consistently identifies practice learning as the component of the qualifying curriculum in need of major attention. In comparison to the university-based curriculum, practice learning in terms of content, mode of delivery and quality assurance mechanisms is the focus of considerably less regulation. Moreover, there is significant variation in the quality of practice based learning, which disrupts the 'cognitive authenticity' - the relevance of the learning experience - which is central to achieving integrated learning (Smith, 2012). In this way, while the current equal split between time spent in practice and academic learning – a minimum of 200 days each, as prescribed by *The Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland* (SSSC, 2003) - was considered the optimum model by a majority of partners, it hinged on the availability of high-quality placements that provide the level of stimulation, support and authentic learning opportunities to prepare students sufficiently for practice. As indicated, the degree of variation in terms of placement quality emerged as a core impediment to integrated learning. In relation to practice education, there are three sites for successful sharing of professional learning, namely before, during and after practice placements. The inconsistency of approaches leads to the conclusion that there is a need for a clear and consistent approach to what is being termed here as the practice curriculum which builds on the established pedagogic principle of 'gradual release' and envisages an enhanced role for the recognition of prior learning, both formal and informal, that learners bring to their qualifying education.

7.1.4   Integrating at a pedagogical level

Beneath the level of the curriculum, there is a requirement to ensure that the pedagogy of the social work curriculum also contributes to improved integration of learning. Whilst pedagogical approaches such as problem based learning are used widely across social work education, the evidence base is scant and the potential exists, for example, for action learning approaches to further develop the evidence base in this respect.

7.1.5   Integrating at the level of the educator

This level of variation also applies to the extent to which practice educators and agencies are equipped to host and effectively support students. As indicated in this report, research evidence highlights the key role of practice educators in enabling social work students to integrate academic and practice knowledge in work-based settings; to 'recontextualise' knowledge (Guile, 2014) and use theoretical frames to make sense of their practice learning experiences. However, there is considerable variation in the capacity of practice educators to provide that theoretical context for learning, with some seen as facilitators and others as obstacles to integrated learning (Baginsky and Teague, 2013).

In each of these areas, the review of the literature and discussions with key informants has indicated that social work can learn from other professions, particularly initial teacher and medical education. Both professions require HEIs and employers to share responsibility for resourcing and facilitating practice learning. Whatever model of delivery is finally adopted it is envisaged that there will be an enhanced role for practice educators and careful consideration needs to be given to how this can best be achieved, for example in terms of their own registration and continuing professional development.

7.1.6   Integration of learning- new roles

However, in terms of better integrated learning, the literature has identified a number of 'boundary spanning' roles which have much to offer social work education as

contributing to improved shared professional learning. Whatever these new roles are called, be they academic facilitators, practice academics, professionals who educate or boundary spanners, the important aspect will be in the detail of the role and how they are funded, positioned and supported. These new roles could be nested within any new structural arrangements.

7.1.7   Integration at the level of the learner

For the above to be able to succeed, there needs to be integration at the level of the individual learner, and this relates to a clear mapping of the learner's journey from selection through completion of qualifying education to experienced professional, and asking the question at each stage of how learning is being integrated, not only between the academy and practice, but also within the curriculum.

7.2   Options Appraisal

The following section appraises the options that have emerged against the criteria of (i) meeting the aims of shared professional learning and (ii) feasibility in relation to the time-frame, resources and costs required to deliver. It is important to reiterate that whilst this project would argue that the case for change has been made, any kind of change is going to require an investment of resources, both financial and human.

7.2.1   Status quo

In any option appraisal, the status quo is always an option. Whilst the current system and approach to delivery has evolved over a long period of time, and has elements of success attached to it, it is argued that the case for change has been clearly made, and it is not intended to spend time offering a detailed exploration here.

7.2.2 Modify current provision

The second option would be to undertake incremental change. Phases 1 and 2 of the RSWE have highlighted many strengths of qualifying social work education in Scotland, including examples of effective partnership working arrangements between HEIs, employers, students and service users. As such, this option would seek to modify existing initiatives, which could include:

- Setting up regular HEI/employer partnership fora to take forward the work of sharing and developing the curriculum
- Using the revised SiSWE to inform changes to the curriculum
- Building upon the work done in the RSWE Phase 2 practice learning project and using the partnerships fora to increase the number of good quality practice placements and improve quality assurance mechanisms
- Increasing the visibility of academics and their contributions to practice learning settings through knowledge exchange schemes between universities and employing agencies
- Building on the progress made by the Social Work Academics Group towards sharing knowledge and good practice among HEIs. This relatively recent development provides a forum for sharing best practice.

The merits of settling for modifying qualifying education are related chiefly to cost and resources. This approach would rely on arrangements with partners that are already in place and consequently the additional funding required would be minimal.

There are significant demerits to opting for an incremental change approach, the principal one being that it would fail to meet the objectives for social work education and practice that are needed, as detailed in this report. Without structural change the ambition of embedding a shared professional learning culture in social work education and practice would not be realised. A host of organisational imperatives, driven in part by spending cuts for employers and HEIs, is likely to impede the achievement of meaningful partnerships and change. Developments in approaches to teaching and learning are likely to remain ad hoc and to be dependent on local initiatives, with limited mechanisms for sharing good practice across the sector. The objective of achieving a

marked increase in the number and quality of practice placements, along with robust support and CPD arrangements for practice educators is also highly improbable. Similarly, proposals aimed at cultivating other roles, including professional educators, would be dependent on local circumstances, arrangements and constraints. In effect, any solution that is cost-neutral needs to take account of the significant reductions in learning and development staff within social work resources, and the likely demands of the integration of health and social care agenda. It could be argued that 'doing more with less' by increasing the input of practice educators to social work education and increasing the input of social work academics to knowledge exchange flies in the face of the current realities.

The suggestion of incremental change also runs counter to the evidence from Wales, Northern Ireland and the Teaching Partnerships in England, which is consistently that formal agreements, which whilst they may involve some hard bargaining and robust discussion, are absolutely required if positive change of the kind required is to be achieved.

Further, this incremental change could well increase diversity of practice across the sector and contribute further to a lack of consistency. Whilst multiple actors and voices are to be valued at one level, it could be argued that this is a time where the voices of social work practice and social work education need to be in much closer harmony. There is also a real danger that the momentum for change that has been built up over the course of the work around the RSWE to date could be dissipated and the opportunity to implement the kind of step change that is required could be lost.

7.2.3 Introduce an apprenticeship model

The development of an apprenticeship model would require all potential partners to revisit and reappraise their understanding and pre-judgements of what apprenticeship actually means, as opposed to what it is thought to mean and how an apprenticeship model could be achieved without losing the progress that has been made towards social work as a graduate profession. A creative approach to the development of an apprenticeship degree could be built upon principles of Recognition of Prior Learning

and Work Based Learning with some obvious parallels to the Chief Social Work Officer Award. The advantages of further development of an apprenticeship model are that it could:

- Act as a test bed for the development of new thinking about shared professional learning
- Possibly attract a different kind of entrant to the profession
- Provide an alternative route into the profession for entrants who would otherwise be debarred by the financial outlay of the traditional degree. This might also offer an opportunity for 'future- proofing'
- Actively engage employers in the development of high quality work-based learning
- Build upon the work being undertaken nationally by Skills Development Scotland on graduate apprenticeships and take advantage of the incoming Employer levy as a source of funding.

The disadvantages of the development of an apprenticeship model are:

- It does not explicitly address the need for cultural and structural change outlined above
- On the basis of the stakeholder consultation undertaken to date, building a coalition of support for an apprenticeship scheme might present a significant challenge
- The programme development required to deliver a graduate apprenticeship within a HEI context is a lengthy and time consuming process, which might be seen as diverting energies from the structural change that is required
- Previous experience of employment-based routes into social work education suggests that a prioritisation of practice learning over academic learning may recur
- An apprenticeship route holds potential to precipitate a two-tier status for qualifying education.

In summary, a graduate apprenticeship route has potential for widening access to qualifying social work education and for further testing the processes that underpin

successful shared professional learning. Further work with partners would, however, be required to reimagine 'apprenticeships' and address concerns about the potential of a narrower work-focused curriculum.

7.2.4 Introduce a structural framework that takes a whole-systems approach to achieving cultural change in social work education and practice

The consistent message running through the review of the literature to the data gathering from stakeholders is that an ecological approach that works at a number of different levels is needed if the step change that is required is to be achieved. The appetite for change and development that this project and other strands of the RSWE have identified has two underpinning and inter-related objectives. The first is to take advantage of this opportunity to improve outcomes for social work students and social work practitioners in terms of the development of knowledge, skills and professional identity, by embedding a culture of learning through knowledge exchange and research in all parts of qualifying education and social work practice. The second and ultimately the goal of these developments is to improve outcomes for people who use social work services.

Realising these ambitions in practice requires a long-term process of change. The first prerequisite is that a clear structure is in place that ensures ownership and understanding across key stakeholders. A structural framework would be introduced that would foster a commitment to shared professional learning in social work education and practice. Learning from the models in place in initial teacher and medical education, and from social work education in Northern Ireland, Wales and England, it would also consolidate, strengthen and channel existing initiatives and good practice in Scottish social work education. In line with the findings from the literature and the data that has been gathered, structural change would require to be multi-modal and co-owned by key stakeholder groups. A caveat here is that given the complex nature of social work education with its changing context, multiple stakeholders and proposals for multi-modal intervention, lessons from complexity theory would indicate that the possibility exists for interventions to combine with unanticipated outcomes (Miller and Page, 2007; Pycroft, 2014). While these may be positive in nature, nonetheless it would be important that an overview was maintained to, wherever possible, take account of the possible

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consequences and to facilitate consistency in meeting standards across the sector.

This structural change would require:

- Moving beyond thinking beyond the constraints of traditional and limiting dualities including the academy and the workplace, theory and practice, tacit and explicit knowledge, professional and vocational education and formal and informal learning

- High level support for, and funding from, Scottish Government. This would include a public commitment to achieving shared professional learning across social work education and practice. In addition, this public commitment would be shared by key stakeholders, and agreed by the Social Work Strategic Forum, in line with meeting its commitment to 'supporting the workforce'

- The establishment and funding of formal regional partnerships between employers, HEIs, students and service users and carers, with a central governance framework. A foundation for the latter may be provided for in existing structures/resources, for example, Social Work Scotland. Learning from the NIDP highlights the value of a commitment to the principle of collaborative working, towards co-producing a model that is tailored to the Scottish context and meets all partners' needs

- The development of clear, written terms of reference for the partnerships, which would include:
  o Written contractual arrangements for the provision and quality assurance of practice placements. The arrangement in Wales, whereby local authorities agree to host students' practice education from the start of their social work education, supported by funding for placement development going to local authorities rather than HEIs, is one model that appears to have much to recommend it. Whilst at one level Wales is smaller than Scotland and there are fewer councils, there are the same number of HEIs providing social work programmes
  o Arrangements for shared decision-making and ownership of both the

curriculum and pedagogy of social work education. This will require drawing on the learning from other RSWE projects in a sustained way, ensuring that the central lessons are learned. Further, the governance structure of the NIDP offers an example of how decisions about curriculum and pedagogy may be shared on an on-going and iterative basis

   o A commitment to implementing best practice towards integrating learning in the curriculum, for example, through concurrent models, use of simulation, linking research projects to practice learning sites, and exploring opportunities for further embedding practice learning in degree programmes

- Supporting a culture of integrated learning or as this project proposes, shared professional learning, in practice through increasing the professional status of the practice educator role and tying this in with requirements relating to registration and continuing professional development

- Setting out responsibility for supporting and developing knowledge exchange between the academy and practice, to work across HEI- employer boundaries and enable the dissemination of research evidence in social work, as well as supporting the recontextualisation of knowledge

- Closely connected to that, the development of new roles, for example teaching consultants that would be directly accountable to the partnerships and would contribute to detailed work on the role of practice educators

- Developing a practice learning curriculum that draws upon existing best practice to increase the provision of targeted teaching and learning activity at the beginning, during and at the end of practice placements. This could involve structured inputs and contributions from practice educators and other staff in local authorities to teaching and learning activities, and could make significant contribution to increasing the permeability of the boundaries between HEIs and placement agencies

- The commissioning of a review of post qualifying education, training and learning leading to the implementation of a comprehensive continuing professional development framework for social work, that would include:
  - Reviewing evidence from other jurisdictions, e.g. Northern Ireland's 'Professional in Practice' model, to open up new ways of understanding and accrediting shared professional learning that acknowledge reflective learning through informal 'on-the-job' activities, agency training and accredited HEI post-graduate provision
  - Reviewing in detail evidence from other professions, including teaching and medicine, to establish mechanisms for embedding a continuous learning and research culture in social work practice
  - Exploring options for the incentivisation of continuing professional development.

There are risks attached to adopting the kind of change that is being proposed here. There is a clear consensus that there is much good work to build upon in the current mode of delivery. Unless sensitive to that, any proposed developments could have the unintended consequences of destabilisation and as well diverting energies from the delivery of services and education, particularly as integration of health and social work is still very much in the process of being established. Consequently, commitment to the principle of collaborative working through facilitating the active engagement and co-ownership of all partners in each stage of developing the proposed framework would appear essential to its success.

7.3 Conclusion

This option appraisal has explored a range of options that cumulatively it is anticipated will contribute significantly to the improvement of shared professional learning. It has been clear from all sources of information that systemic change is required and this must involve all partners. However, it is also clear that change needs to be driven and supported from the centre.

8 CONCLUSION

This project represents an extensive engagement with the question of integrated learning; specifically, to explore what it is and how it might be further developed within qualifying social work education and into social work practice. Analysis of multiple definitions of integrated learning and research into the many sites at which it takes place, and processes through which it is mediated, has illustrated its complexity at theoretical and practical levels. These activities have, however, also provided valuable evidence of how integrated learning might be facilitated both from within social work education and from other disciplines. Moreover, in reaching its conclusion, the project notes an overwhelming consensus about the importance of integrating theory and practice to the realisation of an ethical, informed and sustainable social work.

While the project's findings convey a picture of qualifying social work education in Scotland as intellectually rigorous and stimulating, they also reflect a strong appetite for change and investment from partners across the sector, many of whom expressed fears about the impact of wider political and economic contexts on social work; about the profession becoming potentially fractured, reductive and managerialist in nature, with associated threats to professional identity. In concert with the other strands of the RSWE, the findings testify to the importance of taking this unique opportunity to shape social work education and to set in motion a process of change and development that will precipitate significant improvement across the sector.

At its heart, the project has concluded that a step change is required to achieve the ambition of integrated learning. It is clear there are considerable gaps between academic and practice learning, challenges in practice learning and also that learning in the post qualifying period is significantly under developed and, unlike some other professions, is not culturally embedded within social work's identity. In seeking to move the debate about integrated learning forward we have firstly proposed a definitional response, in the term 'shared professional learning'. We believe this more accurately captures the requirement for social work education to become co-owned across the sector and at all levels and stages in the career-long learning journey. Secondly, and with the intention of

achieving shared professional learning, the project and options appraisal has set out the case for structural and cultural change in social work education and practice. The project confirms the importance of taking this opportunity to re-envision the role of learning in social work. This would require a commitment to a long-term change process that would see the introduction of a governance framework and formal partnership arrangements. Its success would be dependent on engaging partners in co-producing the framework, partnerships and outcomes that are required, in order to ensure co-ownership and to tailor their development to Scottish and local contexts.

The project has concluded that the shared ambitions for social work education and practice elucidated here need to be matched by a financial commitment from government at a level that will facilitate a whole-systems and cohesive approach to change. This commitment would be repaid through key improvements to social work education and practice, and ultimately to the experience and outcomes for people who use social work services.

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