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**An exploration of factors that contribute to
participants' professional identity development
whilst completing a work-based learning
programme.**

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Acknowledgements

To the friends, family and colleagues
who have supported me throughout.

Abstract

This research explores the factors that contribute to participants' professional identity development through their experiences on a work-based learning programme. In this context, professional identity is defined as a range of beliefs and attitudes about the professions for which they are preparing themselves (Schien, 1978). Set within the current Higher and Degree Apprenticeships agenda (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills 2015) the research has been framed using a constructivist approach (Creswell, 2014, Crotty, 2013) involving the collection of qualitative data. The analysis of the data draws on inductive thematic analysis of participants' oral narrative reflections, generated through semi-structured interviews. Research participants were sourced from two different WBLP's over a period of four years.

The development of professional identity was researched within a conceptual framework adapted from Canrinus, *et al.* (2012) and Puurala and Löfströme (2003). The framework contained elements that contribute to the development of professional identity including professional growth motivation, professional competence/self-efficacy, commitment to the organisation/job satisfaction and experiences of professional frustration.

The originality of this work lies in the relevance to the field of work-based learning, in particular degree apprenticeships and the importance of the role played by stakeholders such as policy makers, employer, HEI's and participants. Linked to the contribution to knowledge from the research, there is also a significant contribution to practice. The importance of the model developed through the research is in its use by practitioners as a tool to illustrate the significance of the different roles played by stakeholders in the success of degree apprenticeships.

Policy makers, within the degree apprenticeship arena, need to be mindful that, it is inadvisable for these organisations to encourage their employees to undertake degree apprenticeships without adequate support and alignment with career development. Dissemination of the findings from this research is important to the stakeholders within organisations to ensure there is not a disparity between those in an organisation that make the decisions regarding degree apprenticeships at a strategic level and those who function at an operational level. Finally, participants on degree apprenticeships, whilst they may be supported by their employing organisation, need to aware that there are business needs that may indeed create professional frustration but cannot be avoided for a business to survive.

The model is an invaluable tool for stakeholders to highlight the complex range of issues that contribute to the successful implementation of a degree apprenticeship programme.

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Glossary

Degree apprenticeships - Degree apprenticeships combine university study and work-based learning to enable apprentices to gain a full bachelor's or master's degree whilst in full-time employment.

Professional Identity - a range of beliefs and attitudes about the professions for which they are preparing themselves (Schien, 1978)

Professional identity development – general process of identity formation through work and is salient and critical to the employment relationship.

Work based learning – ‘what is learned by working – not reading about work or observing work, but actually undertaking work activities’ (Helyer, 2010, p2).

Workplace levy – Large organisations with a payroll exceeding £3 million are be required to contribute 0.5 per cent of their payroll bill to the workplace levy

1.0 Prologue

As an early career researcher, my reasons for pursuing research into work-based learning (WBL) are driven by my personal and career experiences to date. This consists of twenty years in management positions within the not for profit sector and nine years within academia. During my academic career, I have taught, mentored and supported a wide range of participants at undergraduate and postgraduate levels on full-time, part-time and distance-learning courses. The participants followed various learning routes - from traditional university pathways, adult participants in full and part-time work, participants trying to improve their chances of getting work and those on targeted courses in areas of high levels of deprivation. I have witnessed changes WBL participants have undergone both in terms of their professional development and personal growth during the time they have been studying. These changes have included participants securing new work roles with increased responsibility, those who appear to have gained a new-found respect from colleagues, and others who have an increased confidence in their everyday lives.

I have also experienced personal and professional change first hand through the completion of professional courses whilst working. This has culminated in the completion of a Doctor of Education whilst in full-time employment. WBL has had, and is still having, an enormous impact on my life. Learning has brought about personal and professional changes including the acquisition of new and enriched skills and knowledge to enable me to develop and improve my professional practice. This has manifested itself through increased understanding of the practical elements of my job roles and through improvement in skills around management and leadership. This has led to an increased level of confidence in my own abilities, given me a sense of belonging to a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and helped me gain acknowledgement and recognition. Within the Higher Education field this has been evidenced by becoming a fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

Such personal and observed experiences have led me to question whether these experiences were common to participants on work-based learning programmes (WBLP). This has informed the development of this research namely: an exploration of factors that contribute to participant's professional identity development whilst completing a work-based learning programme.

The aim is to carry out research to examine whether participants on two WBLP's perceive that they have changed during the university-accredited course. More specifically has it changed how they feel about themselves in their professional setting and, if so, has this shaped their sense of professional identity?

The section which follows introduces the area of research and its conceptual foundations.

2.0 Introduction and context

'I felt like more part of the management, deciding how the business is actually run rather than just being a sales assistant with a set of keys' (Sarah, CRM, 2015)

The above quotation, taken from a participant on the Certificate in Retail Management (CRM) WBLP, highlights the perceived professional change experienced following the completion of a WBLP.

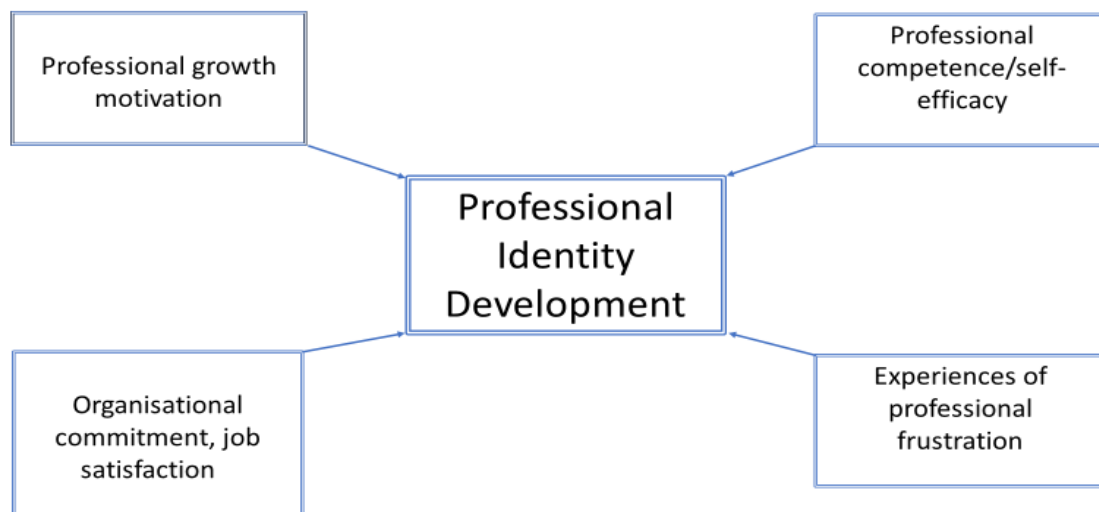
Findings from my previous research (Booth 2017a) indicated that, following completion of a WBLP, a common experience of participants was career change, or feeling ready for promotion, or additional responsibility. The research also uncovered unexpected outcomes experienced by the participants on

completion of the programme. These unexpected outcomes were linked with participants' personal development including greater confidence in their abilities to do their job and greater confidence in themselves.

The aim of this research is to explore the factors that contribute to participants' professional identity development through their experiences on a work-based learning programme (WBLP). In this context professional identity is defined as a range of beliefs and attitudes about the professions for which they are preparing themselves (Schien, 1978). The development of professional identity involves an understanding about the boundaries of their profession, and the ways in which they may interact with others (Adams *et al.*, 2006; Lingard *et al.*, 2003). The research will investigate elements of professional identity development and explore the links between the programme and the participants' perceptions of their development whilst on a WBLP. The elements of professional identity explored within the literature review (section 3) is framed by the findings of Puurula and Löfströme (2003) and Canrinus, *et al.* (2012). Their findings have been amalgamated to form a conceptual framework for the research, as shown in figure 1. The literature is explored in depth in section 3, but to frame the research the conceptual framework (figure 1) is briefly explained here.

Canrinus, *et al.* (2012) observed indicators that contributed to the development of teachers' sense of professional identity, these being job satisfaction, occupational commitment, self-efficacy and change in level of motivation. This aligns with Puurula and Löfströme (2003) findings from research within small and medium size enterprises (SMEs). They concluded that the following elements contributed to an individual's professional identity; growth motivation, experience of competence, commitment to the organisation and the experiences of professional frustration.

On commencement of the research, the conceptual framework was primarily focused on the indicators of professional identity as outlined by Canrinus, *et al.* (2012). However, through the process of data analysis a recurring theme of professional frustration by the participants in their organisation became apparent. Upon further exploration of literature relating to the development of professional identity, the work of Puurula and Löfströme (2003) resonated with the initial findings from Booth (2017b). The elements of professional identity outlined by Puurula and Löfströme (2003) were merged with the elements of professional development as discussed by Canrinus, *et al.* (2012) to form the conceptual framework to structure the research (figure 1).



Adapted from Puurula and Löfströme (2003) and Canrinus, *et al* (2012)

Figure 1: Research conceptual framework

The research has been framed by a constructivist approach (Creswell, 2014, Crotty, 2013) involving the collection of qualitative data. The analysis of the data draws on an inductive thematic analysis of participants' oral narrative reflections. Research participants were sourced from two different WBLP's over a period of four years, 2014-2018. Details of the Higher Education Institutions, employing organisation and participants' have been anonymised throughout. The research was carried out in two phases. The initial phase involved adult participants working within the fashion retail sector who were identified as having management potential by their organisation. They completed a Certificate in Retail Management (CRM) over a nine-month period in 2014, whilst at work via distance learning, through a virtual learning environment (VLE). The next phase of the research involved participants employed within the health and beauty sector, studying for a Chartered Management Degree Apprenticeship (CMDA). The CMDA cohort completed their WBLP in 2018.

Research by Booth (2017b) indicated a link between work-based learning (WBL) and the development of the participants personal and professional development, as illustrated below:

'...the WBLP has boosted my confidence. It has made me see that I am good and competent at my job and that I am a valued member of my team', (Emma: CRM),

Personal and professional development of participants on the CRM was evidenced through analysis of 24 reflective written narratives and 3 semi- structured interview transcripts (Booth 2017b). These findings were augmented, for this thesis, with additional data gathered from participants on the CMDA interviewed towards the end of their studies in 2018.

Ely, Ibarra and Kolb (2011) discussed the issues faced when becoming a leader and concluded that it not only involves the acquisition of skills, but also a fundamental shift in identity. This observation together with questions arising from earlier findings from Booth (2017a, 2017b) have informed this thesis and will focus on

- factors that contribute to participants' professional identity development through their experiences on a work-based learning programme

The contribution to knowledge relates to areas of practice within the field of work-based learning and professional identity. This is particularly pertinent in the light of the current Apprenticeship agenda (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2015a), which relies heavily on WBL. The contribution to knowledge and practice will inform a wide range of stakeholders within the WBL arena. These will include practitioners, HEI's, participants, employers and policy makers. The findings will enable WBL programmes to be developed and delivered with consideration to factors that may influence the success of the WBLP for the participants and employer organisations.

National context

The following section sets the research in this broader economic and political context within the UK.

On 12th March 2015, the then, Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government announced, the roll-out of nine new industry designed Higher and Degree Apprenticeships (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills 2015). The long-term aim was to start three million new apprenticeships by 2020 to be funded through a new workplace levy from April 2016. Large organisations with a payroll exceeding £3 million would be required to contribute 0.5 per cent of their payroll bill to the apprenticeship levy (Rowe, Perrin and Wall 2016). Degree apprenticeships combine university study and work-based learning to enable apprentices to gain a full bachelor's or master's degree whilst in full-time employment. Initial forecasts indicated a target of 3 million apprenticeships would be generated under the workplace levy by 2020 (Woolcock, 2018). Of these, one million are expected to be degree apprenticeships (Chartered Management Institute, 2018).

The potential benefits to employers who engage with the Apprenticeship agenda have been stated by the professional body for human resource and people development - Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2018) as

- Maintaining or improving future skills in the business
- Provided improvements in the goods and services they offer
- Contributed to staff morale

These stated benefits should be approached with a degree of caution as apprenticeships are in their infancy. To date, there is no actual evidence relating to the benefits for the apprentices. The Department of Business, Skills and Innovation (2015a) presented a forecast of benefits for the apprentices relating to career prospects and earning potential. However, when the field work and initial research for this thesis (Booth, 2017a) was undertaken, the political agenda and economic drivers were different. The focus for the need for WBL were based around a predicted skills gap within the UK economy (Leitch, 2006).

The importance of WBL was relevant during the time the CRM WBLP was being developed in 2011 and delivered in 2013, in response to a skills gap within the UK, outlined within the Leitch Review of Skills Report in 2006, (Leitch, 2006). The report was commissioned by the then Government, to consider the UK's long-term ambition for developing skills, to maximise economic prosperity, productivity and to improve social justice. The report's findings showed that the skill levels within the UK were weak by international standards. This could have a long-term impact on the UK's productivity and employment levels. In addition to recommendations relating to the overall improvement of skills through investment and partnership, there was also a drive to increase employer engagement and investment in skills, improve relationships between universities and employers and co-funding of workplace degrees with an increased focus on Level 5 and above skills. As 70% of the 2020 workforce will have already completed

their compulsory education, any further learning or training will need to take place within a working context (Leitch, 2006). A further parliamentary report (Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons, 2009) published in January 2009 entitled '*Reskilling for recovery: After Leitch', implementing skills and training policies*, concluded that the Leitch review was produced during a period of economic optimism and the climate had now changed. It went on to say that the current economic situation has raised the stakes, and the skills policy could be the key factor that determines how and when the UK economy recovers and grows. The issue of a skills deficit was further reinforced through the UK Commission for Employment and Skills Employer Skills survey 2015 (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2015), in which it reported that some employers when faced with applicants who lack the requisite skills leave the post unfilled, whilst others choose to recruit someone with insufficient skills.

Since the publication of these reports, along with the change in government, there has been a significant shift in relation to the UK's position within Europe following the decision to leave the European Union in 2016 (BBC, 2016b). The economy is projected to slow due to uncertainty about the outcome of the Brexit negotiations (OECD, 2017). However, to mitigate against this, one area that would have a positive impact, would be through the promotion of educational attainment and fostering lifelong learning. This could boost regional labour mobility and improve job prospects for workers (OECD, 2017).

The current Conservative Government continues to support the development of new degree apprenticeships for students starting in 2017, through a £4.5 million development fund, (Department for Education 2016). In response to this, it has been recommended (Universities UK, 2016) that universities across the UK, create degree apprenticeships to develop employer relationships which will enable them to diversify their offer, attract non-traditional students and provide opportunities to study to degree level. The aim is to produce highly employable apprentices that have benefited from studying a programme tailored to sector needs and have several years of workplace experience.

Current higher and degree apprenticeships offer an apprentice an opportunity to combine working while studying for a full bachelor's or master's degree, as a core component of the apprenticeship. The then Prime Minister David Cameron said:

'Equipping people with the skills they need to get on in life and backing businesses to create jobs are key parts of our long-term economic plan. Degree Apprenticeships will give people a great head start, combining a full degree with the real practical skills gained in work and financial security of a regular pay packet. They will bring the world of business and the world of education closer together and let us build the higher-level technical skills needed for the jobs of the future. I want to see many more businesses and universities begin to offer them.'

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2015a).

Work-based learning is at the centre of apprenticeships. The impact of WBL is therefore a crucial consideration for the employers and employees when assessing the value of undertaking a degree apprenticeship. A report commissioned in 2008 by the Higher Education Academy (Nixon, *et.al* 2008) highlighted the impact of WBL, concluding that the benefits of WBL extend beyond enhancing an individual's skills and knowledge. Benefits to the employees were described as 'capability extending' in terms of attitudes and approaches to work as well as gaining wider appreciation of how they fit into the bigger picture and has led to increased confidence in their performance at work. These findings were strengthened by conclusions drawn from an impact study prepared by the Institute of Work Based Learning (Costley, and Abukari 2010). Conclusions from this study indicate that the personal benefits of

WBL included newfound confidence as well as opportunity to demonstrate their new insights. These findings link to feeling of empowerment on completion of a WBLP noted by Costley and Abukari (2015) that led to changed career aspirations.

During the period of the research, WBL was subject to political interest and being advocated by the OECD (2016), who summarised the potential of work-based learning and sets in context the importance of this research, in terms of the contribution to knowledge, regarding the impact of work-based learning:

‘WBL is often seen as a powerful vehicle for developing workplace skills and promoting productivity of the labour force. Realising the potential of WBL requires firms and trainees to engage in WBL that effectively increases productivity. Understanding the dynamics of the costs and benefits of WBL and ensuring that those are reflected in the design of WBL schemes, is essential to ensure that firms provide high quality WBL and trainees perceive WBL as an attractive career option’.

These current policies have highlighted the priority and importance given to work-based learning and provide increased significance to the findings within this research. This is reinforced by the conclusions of a report from Towards Maturity (Dixon and Daly 2017) that examines the importance of measuring the impact of learning. Whilst the provision of learning whilst at work provides opportunities for employees and employers, they argue that it is important to be able to measure any impact the learning has had on business. The value of learning using learning analytics (learning analytics refers to the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of data about the progress of participants and the contexts in which learning takes place, Sclater, Peasgood and Mullen, 2016) was stated as a ‘powerful tool within the learning and development ‘toolbox’ to quickly see the direct benefits of specific training investments’, Sclater, Peasgood and Mullen, (2016). This provides further support for research such as this to assess impact of WBL.

Organisational context for the research

Research Phase 1: Certificate in Retail Management (CRM) at MU1

In 2011, Midlands University (MU1), committed to developing learning solutions that carried university credits through bespoke learning that addressed employer and employee needs delivered by Midlands University Corporate (MUC) - the corporate department of MU1. The university wanted to ensure that WBLP demonstrated impact to the participant and business, with assessment based on real projects relevant to the business. The Higher Education Funding Council for England also provided development funding to eight higher education institutes, to pilot forms of flexible provision, Outram (2011). The MU1 was successful in becoming one of these pilot studies to develop work-based learning courses, including a CRM. The CRM was the subject of the first phase of this doctoral research.

The first phase of the research involved complex relationships between MU1, MUC, the participant employed by one of two high street retail fashion brands, the participants’ employers and the fashion brands head office. These parties had their own agenda for the development of the CRM. During the period in which the research took place, MU1 underwent an organisational restructure. This resulted in uncertainty around the role of MUC within the MU1 structure. This resulted in staff changes in the academic and administration teams that supported the participants.

This was compounded by the fact that during the early stages of the research, the fashion brands, consisting of the two high street retail outlets, underwent a demerger which brought with it a new management team and organisational structures, Felsted (2013). There were numerous key changes in staff within the senior management and learning and development team following a consultation period because of the demerger.

The research presented within this thesis explores changes WBLP participants have experienced using a trustworthy methodology. Wider organisational context will clearly have impacted upon the participants' experiences and this is captured within the findings. However, as with case-based research it is challenging to isolate the impact of other factors. For example, this study cannot draw any conclusions as to how organisational changes may have impacted on the fashion retailer. This is, in part due to external factors, including the demerger and restructuring of the two brands, that resulted in job losses and reduced hours for staff within the brands (Neilan 2014).

Research phase 2: Chartered Management Degree Apprenticeship (CMDA) at MU2

The second phase of the research took place at another Midlands University (MU2). The research was situated in a WBLP that was a partnership between a large multinational health and beauty retailer and MU2. The aim of the WBLP was to provide a work-based learning solution to enable organisational 'talent' to undertake a CMDA. The degree was funded through the apprenticeship levy.

As with the CRM the employer partner underwent considerable change before and during the time the participants were studying for the CMDA. In August 2014, a large US retailer took full control of the UK based health and beauty retailer (Tresidder, 2017). Following the sale, the newly formed international health and beauty retailer announced cost cutting within the organisation of £594 million by 2017 (Ford Rojas, 2014). Part of the cost cutting consisted of the loss of between 300-350 store management roles in February 2016 and voluntary redundancies of 500 support staff as part of plans to cut 700 jobs over 3 years (BBC 2016a).

Work-based learning programmes researched

The research was undertaken with participants of 2 WBLP's.

1. Certificate in Retail Management with participants from the fashion retail sector.
2. Chartered Management Degree Apprenticeship with participants from the health and beauty retail sector.

The Certificate in Retail Management was designed and developed in 2011 in partnership with a high street fashion retail company. The development of the programme involved the company's senior learning and development team and workforce development fellows from the university. The motivations of the organisation to develop the programme, was to encourage 'top talent' to progress within the company. The business context in which the course was developed was that the fashion retailer had no clear definition of talent or talent management process. In some areas of the business, there was difficulty in recruiting for vital roles within the organisation, a situation that created under resource and vulnerability (Vessey 2011). This was in response to internal difficulties in recruiting to supervisor/store manager roles as well as the economic and competitive pressure on high street brands (Sanbdu, 2011).

Following the launch of the Chartered Management Degree Apprenticeship (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2015a), a large multinational health and beauty retailer, in partnership with the MU2, mapped a BA (Hons) Management & Leadership degree to the Chartered Management Institute

Standard (Institute of Apprenticeships, 2018). The health and beauty retailer had an existing apprenticeship as part of its Future Leaders Programme NVQ Level 4 in Business Administration (■■■■■, 2016). The CMDA aligned with the companies learning and development strategy which states

'... we not only encourage people to join us from outside the business and develop great careers with us, but we also invest in developing the talents of all of our colleagues who work for us today.' (■■■■■, 2018)

Employees, put forward by their line manager, were selected for the CMDA programme via an assessment centre process to establish their suitability.

In summary, this research focuses on participants from two WBLP's and the factors that contribute to the development of their professional identity. The research is situated within the context of a current government work-based learning initiative and will contribute to the in-practice knowledge of WBL and how this impacts on both participants and their organisations.

3.0 Literature review

Introduction

Within the following literature review, the key concepts pertinent to this thesis will be explored. Firstly, the concept of WBL will be investigated, followed by the notion of identity and professional identity, its construction and relationship to a professional context. Further components of professional identity including, transitions of identity, leadership and identity and reflection on identity, will be critiqued within a WBL context. Finally, a conceptual framework is presented to structure the research. This will enable the analysis and findings to be framed conceptually in relation to the elements that contribute to the development of an individual's professional identity.

In earlier documents, Booth (2017a, 2017b) I identified the key expectations of participants embarking on a WBLP and compared these to their experiences on completion. Participants indicated the WBLP had brought about unexpected outcomes including, increased confidence in themselves and in their job role, and a belief that they could undertake a managerial role. This thesis builds on the findings from this previous work Booth (2017a, 2017b) and analyses new and existing data in terms of the concept of professional identity as outlined by Canrinus *et al.* (2012) and Puurula and Löfströme (2003).

The work of Canrinus, *et al.* (2012) and Puurula and Löfströme (2003) will be used to frame the discussion relating to the development of participant's professional identity. Ibarra's (1999) and Ibarra and Barbulescu's (2010) work will inform the dialogue around identity work and play as well as identity changes during role transition. Finally, the concept of liminality (Ibarra and Obodaru, 2016) will be used to examine the implications of liminality on the participant's sense of identity.

The process of reviewing literature relevant to this research has been an iterative process throughout the duration of this professional doctorate. This review has evolved through exploration of the literature and has been informed by the findings from Booth (2017a, 2017b). The method involved in the completion of this literature review has informed the research process and distilled the research focus into the elements that contribute to the development of professional identity.

Work-based learning

Work-based learning (WBL) has been described as 'what is learned by working – not reading about work or observing work, but actually undertaking work activities' (Helyer, 2010, p2).

Work-based learning within higher education differs from traditional learning in that, according to Boud and Solomon (2001), it has the following key characteristics

- The learning opportunities are not contrived for study purposes, but arise from normal work
- The learning tasks and work tasks are complimentary
- WBL meets the needs of learners, contributes to the longer-term development of the organisation and is formally accredited as a university qualification

Helyer's (2010) definition and Boud and Solomon's (2001) characteristics of WBL can be applied to the two researched cohorts. The participants are all in full or part time work in roles that are relevant to the learning outcomes of the WBLP. The WBLPs are designed to enable the participants to learn through their normal work activities. Both WBLPs are university accredited and the content of the programmes are such that they meet the needs of the participants in terms of learning and career development. The

WBLP's also meet the needs of the organisations through development of the participants to progress through the organisation.

Durrant, Rhodes and Young (2009) also add that WBL is learner managed and driven rather than delivered by the HEI. This is achieved through a blended learning approach, not just through a delivery approach. Within both WBLP a blended approach was used through a combination of face to face interaction and VLE content. This was combined with independent learning in which the participants used their working environment to apply course content.

WBL within higher education is situated within a tripartite agreement between the HEI, learner and the learners employing organisation. This tripartite agreement is at the core of WBLP and is the driver for two further characteristics of WBL, noted by Young and Garnett (2007). These being the combination of academic and conceptual knowledge with work-based skills and the importance that the assessments are fit for both academic and professional purposes.

For WBL to be beneficial to the HEI, learner and employer, the perspective of all parties needs to be considered at the initial stage in the formation of a tripartite arrangement.

Higher Education Institutes perspective

WBL within the context of this research is geographically situated within the participants' work place and temporally located whilst they studied for a university level qualification. One of the key principles of WBL within HE is to recognise higher learning wherever it takes place. This can be achieved by a process of capturing and recognising informal learning, and rewarding those who have achieved it, with university qualifications (Durrant, Rhodes and Young 2009). WBL within a HEI was described as a 'disturbing practice' by Boud and Solomon (2001) – and one that challenges the disciplinary structure of a university. For example, HEI's develop academic processes and pedagogy based on traditional undergraduate provision. There is a clear and proven structure situated within the academic year, with learners who are based at the HEI. By contrast, WBL requires the participant's context and previous experience as a starting point for the curriculum (Costley 2001). Participants are not situated within the HEI and are employed by organisations that have priority over their employee's time and resources. The HEI needs to be mindful of this fact by ensuring that the processes can adapt to the needs of the employer and employee.

WBL needs to be achieved within an academic framework, which must ensure academic rigour, including appropriate learning outcomes, assessment tools, assessment boards, moderation and external verification. These processes are primarily designed to meet the needs of full-time undergraduate students (Garnett 2007). The academic framework is an important element to ensure academic rigour within a WBLP that is situated within a partnership between an organisation and a HEI. According to Minton and Whitmore (2012) there is a continuum of employer engagement from HEI that is influenced by the priority the HEI places on employer engagement. This continuum ranges from employer engagement being embedded within the formal HEI systems and structures to engagement being situated outside the formal HEI systems and structure and operating as a separate business. At the time of the research MU1 had a corporate department that was situated outside the formal HEI system and had its own set of policies and procedures for the implementation of WBL. Whilst this framework maintained the academic rigour of the HEI, it provided a flexibility of response to the WBLP, employers and participants' needs. MU2, by contrast, delivers its WBLP within the existing HEI structures. This

enabled additional support available from the wider university, however it meant that some of the processes and procedures did not align with the requirements for WBLP.

Participant's perspective

There are several key challenges for participants embarking on a WBL course. One could argue that work-based learners may find the transition into university challenging, and as outlined by Wingate (2007), may need to 'learn how to learn'. The skills required to 'learn how to learn' include

- Understanding 'learning' and becoming an independent learner
- Understanding 'knowledge' and becoming competent in constructing knowledge within a discipline

This can be viewed in conjunction with the fact that, according to Haggis and Pouget (2002), unrealistic perceptions of learning at university are the major factor for failure and could result in a student either dropping out or feeling dissatisfied with their time studying. This links in with the responsibility of both the participants and the HEI to provide adequate support and guidance for work-based learners. Helyer (2015) presented several considerations that are pertinent to participants embarking on the CRM and CMDA. These include, management of academic expectations, academic skills, unfamiliar HE setting and how participants can plan their study route. Work-based learners may need different or further support as they may have been out of education for an extended period of time. These considerations are important to a HEI to ensure they are equipped to provide this flexible and tailored support to ensure the success of the work-based learners in their studies.

WBL offers new and challenging learning opportunity for participants that will develop individuals because 'it is project based, grounded in practice and tailored to the requirements of people at work.' (Costley, 2013a p.403)

Employer perspective

The role of the employing organisation needs to be taken into consideration, when developing a WBLP. This is achieved through aligning the WBLP with the business needs and linking this to the value of the learner's outputs to the business. Garnett (2009, p.27) argues that 'if university WBL is to have a major impact on the employer organisation, it needs to fully recognise and use the structural capital of the employer in fostering performance knowledge recognition, dissemination, creation and use'. The tripartite arrangement within WBL between the HEI, employer partner and learner are crucial to the success of any WBLP. This is highlighted by Garnett (2009) who endorsed the importance of establishing the academic value of learning held by the employer, providing models for possible partnerships and a framework for the operation of the partnerships to maximise their success. Billet (2001) discussed the dual bases, in terms of the learner and the organisation, and the importance of co-participation. Billet (2001) summarised this concept as workplace affordances where the workplace enables opportunities for individuals to engage in and be supported in learning within the workplace. Through this research the concept of workplace affordances has been observed as being unique to each of the participants' employing organisations. It has also been observed as being impacted by a participant's relationship with their line manager and their attitude towards WBL, both to a positive and negative effect.

Work-based learning pedagogy

Raelin (2000) states that WBL is centred around reflection on work practices and not merely a question of acquiring a set of technical skills, but a case of reviewing and learning from experience. The learners not only acquire new knowledge, but meta-competence that enables them to learn how to learn. Support in this area in terms of assessment, tutorage and feedback may well be crucial to the success of the learners. Based on Ramsden's (2003) research, teaching is concerned as much with the process involved, as with the content. That is, teaching isn't just structured around content but also must consider the personal dimension students bring to the learning experience (for example, previous experience, the topic, gender, culture & age). All these factors have a bearing on those students who are studying through and whilst at work. Although the content within the researched WBLPs can be applied to participants within any organisation, the assessments are structured to ensure they are relevant to the participants own experiences and organisation.

Gray (2001) discussed two central elements of WBL. These are stated as action learning and virtual learning. He also argues that a reflective learning cycle can be integrated into these elements. The use of reflection within WBL is an important tool to enable participants to learn from experiences about themselves, their studies, their work, the way in which they relate at home and work and the wider society (Boulton & Delderfield, 2018). To ensure that quality of WBL provision is high, the QAA (2007) stresses the importance and inclusion of a Personal Development Programme (PDP) module. A PDP module promotes the learner's reflective skills and challenges the learner to further themselves through the development of a series of personal and professional goals. The elements recommended for inclusion within WBL, i.e. virtual learning and PDP module, have all been considered within the development of the researched WBLP's to ensure a quality provision and provide the learner with a well- thought out opportunity for learning.

For the work-based learners to engage in learning, a student-centred model that supports learning (Biggs and Tang 2007) is a more appropriate pedagogical approach. Student-centred learning has four key characteristics

1. Teaching and learning is personalised, meaning that it addresses the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students.
2. Students advance in their education when they demonstrate they have learned the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn.
3. Students have the flexibility to learn "anytime and anywhere," meaning that student learning can take place outside of traditional classroom, such as through work-study programs or online courses, or during non-traditional times, such as on nights and weekends.
4. Students are given opportunities to make choices about their own learning and contribute to the design of learning experiences.

Great Schools Partnership (2014)

These characteristics are common to both the WBLP's researched. The application of a student-centred approach enables the participants to fully benefit from their studies whilst in full time employment. Benefits derived from a student-centred approach have been explored by Fallows and Ahmet (1999). They

concluded from a case study of undergraduates, that students flourished in a student-centred environment and demonstrated increased motivation and mastery of course content. This can be further developed using the concept of constructivism (Biggs and Tang 2007). Constructivism engages students in active learning, building their knowledge in terms of what they already understand, focusing on how students learn rather than on what topics the teacher is to teach. The design of the WBLP's within this thesis, was such that it embedded elements of learning that participants could apply within their daily role. This included elements such as the use of financial reports, strategy in practice, managing people and marketing. There were also tasks that challenged the participants to review their organisations practice, as well as personal current working practices through for example business improvement projects, research projects and personal reflections. All of which were relevant to the individuals' current job role and potential career progression.

Impact of WBL

Nixon *et al.* (2008) report commission by the Higher Education Academy, indicated that WBL has a positive impact on employers and their employees in terms of personal and professional benefits. The impact extends beyond enhancing an individual's skills to the exchange or generation of new knowledge in the workplace. This resonates with the work of Booth (2017a, 2017b) who reported participants on a WBLP had achieved unexpected outcomes, in addition to the career development they had anticipated. There is limited evidence of the impact of WBL within the context of degree apprenticeships to date, the available research is based on generic research of WBL set within a different political and economic context.

Whilst WBL can be beneficial to the participants (Nixon, *et al.* 2008) the application of WBL within the workforce needs to be considered to enable the employee and employer to fully benefit from the learning. Tannenbaum (1997) argues that the work environment can have a tangible effect on the extent to which newly acquired skills are used on the job. He concluded, based on empirical data, that each organisation has a unique learning profile. He maintains that organisations with a strong learning environment demonstrate greater organisational effectiveness. This is critical to the success of the current apprenticeship agenda (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2015a), as organisations that exhibit a strong learning environment could maximise the benefit of their employee's participation in WBLP. The organisations learning culture and opportunities following completion of the WBLP need to be considered to maximise the impact of the learning for both the employee and employer. A positive learning culture that leads to opportunities for the employees could make a positive contribution to their organisational commitment, (Yang *et al.* 2012). Fletcher, Alfes and Robinson (2016) examined the relationship between perceived training and development and employee retention. They concluded that during periods of economic instability and organisational change, investment in training and development is important to motivate and energise employees. This is pertinent to this research as both WBLP's were undertaken during times of uncertainty for the UK economy as well as for fashion and health and beauty retail sectors (The Guardian 2016).

The impact of WBL can be explored by considering the demographics of those who undertake WBL. Higher-level university WBLP's attract participants who would not have otherwise engaged in higher education (Costley, 2013b). Costley, (2013b) goes on to say that many WBL participants are experienced practitioners who have developed the ability to learn autonomously and wish to improve themselves and their practice. Whilst this may be true for participants on the researched CMDA programme, participants on the CRM were at the beginning of their career so were not necessarily experienced practitioners

(Booth 2017a). It is important to note for future consideration, the proposed target market for degree apprenticeships is from 18 years upward so could include participants who have no work experience (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2015a). The implications of this is yet to be evidenced but anecdotally, this lack of experience, could disadvantage those who are embarking on a degree apprenticeship.

Personal & professional development through WBL

As previously stated, the content of the WBLP can impact on the participant's acquisition of skills and knowledge. These skills and knowledge are tangible and may include, for example understanding of finance management, employment law and marketing. There may be other outcomes of learning that are less tangible including an individual's personal development throughout the WBLP and beyond.

The term 'personal development' implies improvement and therefore a change from one state to another (Moon 1999). The link between this and professional development is forwarded by Eraut (2003) when he discussed a conceptual structure from awareness of self, to the application of the awareness for personal improvement and improvements in one's life position.

In terms of personal development, the WBLPs researched are structured to include a large amount of self- reflection as well as the creation of personal development plans. Schön (1983, p.18) wrote that 'reflective practice is aimed at helping students acquire the kind of artistry an essential competence in the indeterminate zone of practice'. The two critical elements to reflection according to Coghalan and Brannick (2002, p.31), are 'the ability to critique your own thought processes and to attend to your feelings'. Both WBLPs contained elements of personal reflection throughout, rather than at the end of the programme. This was to ensure the participants had the opportunity to critic their thought processes and feelings, but more importantly to act on these and learn from these reflections.

Rodgers (2002) discussed Dewey's model of reflection which implies that reflection contributes to the individual's personal development. 'The process of reflection moves the learner from one experience into the next with deeper understandings of its relationships and connections to other experiences and ideas. It is the thread that makes continuity of learning possible and ensures the progress of the individual' (Rodgers, 2002, p.845).

Whilst concepts of reflection are important in terms of what and how the participants experience WBL, it does not explicitly indicate how personal and professional development contributes to a shift in the identity of the individual. In relation to the participants on the WBLP, their identity, when commencing the programme, may be different from that on successful completion of the programme indicating there has been a shift or change.

Definitions of identity

'A sense of identity is never gained nor maintained once and for all. Like any good conscience, it is constantly lost and regained' (Erikson, 1956, p74). This implies that identity is not fixed and changes over time. Erikson's (1968, p57) work discussed approaches to identity as:

'a number of connotations, at one time it will appear to refer to a conscious sense of individual identity, or another to an unconscious striving for a continuity of personal character, at a third time, as a criterion for the silent doings of ego synthesis and finally, as a maintenance of an inner solidarity with a group ideal and identity'.

The implications of the concept of identity not being fixed and changing over time, in relation to WBLP's, implies that changing or developing one's identity can be influenced by participants' experiences. Whilst the definitions of identity above illustrate the changing nature of one's identity, Erikson's work falls short as it does not indicate any contributing factors or elements to these changes. The elements of identity are explained by Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) as people's engagement in forming, repairing, maintaining, and strengthening or revising their identities. To place this within the research context, the design of the research methodology and data collection explores changes participants have experienced in their perceived identity over the period of the WBLP and beyond. This may not necessarily be a linear process and may be constructed and deconstructed over time. In addition, changes in identity may be influenced by external factors outside the scope of the WBLP.

Wiles (2013) research into social worker's construction of professional identity discusses the usage of the term. She considers that professional identity can be thought of as a collection of traits: it can be used as a collective sense to convey the 'identity of a profession' or it can be regarded as a process in which everyone comes to have a sense of themselves within their profession. The later trait has more relevance within this research as the participants are at an early stage in their careers and not situated with a profession, such as social work, pharmacy or law, rather they are potential managers and leaders within their organisation. External factors such as a professional set of standards and/or behaviours may shape an individual's development of their professional identity. This is because they are embedded within the process of attaining professional status e.g. qualified social worker, pharmacist or lawyer.

Further support of the impact of external factors on identity can be found in studies by Falck, Hebllich and Ludemann (2012) and Laakkonen (2012). Although adopting different methodological approaches both highlight the impact of social factors in the creation of identity. These are indicative of a more interactive interpretation of identity in which the learner's engagement with other players influenced by considerations of social desirability and that identities are not created alone (Laakkonen, 2012). Social factors have been considered in this research to capture a more comprehensive range of considerations which work to influence and shape professional identity. Participants on WBLP will be exposed to a diverse range of social interactions. This includes the participant's peers on the WBLP, line managers, university academics, and senior managers within the participant's organisation, a wider business network and individuals within their personal life. It could be argued that these social interactions, facilitated by undertaking WBLP's, could influence the participant's development of professional identity.

Development of professional identity

The development of professional identity is distinct from the development of an individual's sense of identity. Alvesson & Wilmott, (2002 p. 623) claim the 'development of professional identity refers to a general process of identity formation through work and is salient and critical to the employment relationship.'

The formation of professional identity can be framed within the context of social identity. This is a systematic way of evaluating, identifying and organising the perception of self (Erikson, 1968). Professional identity is constructed through discourse between individuals within a profession, and identities are continually being constructed and altered (Bleakley, 2006).

According to Ibarra (2004) in their career development journey, individuals develop a range of beliefs and attitudes about the professions for which they are preparing themselves. They develop an

understanding of the boundaries of their profession, and the ways in which they may interact with others. These sets of beliefs, attitudes and understanding about their roles, within the context of work, generally refer to their 'professional identity' (Adams *et al.*, 2006; Lingard *et al.*, 2003). Professions such as teaching, healthcare and the legal profession have a clear sense of professional identity – that may be encompassed within a professional set of standards and behaviours (The Professional Standards Agency, 2018). Lingard *et al.* (2003) discuss professional membership as part of the inclusion within that professional grouping. Professional membership is regulated and evaluated by reference to an established set of community standards and values. For professions such as medicine and law, professional membership is formalised through professional bodies e.g. British Medical Association and The Law Society. This presents a framework in which the development of professional identity can be developed and nurtured. However, not all professions, in this case future managers and leaders within retail management and the health and beauty sector, necessarily have a set of standards and behaviours to frame the development of their professional identity.

Professional identity concerns group interactions in the workplace and relates to how people compare and differentiate themselves from other professional groups. The development of professional identity consists of exploring the available alternatives and committing to certain choices and goals, (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) Individuals are active participants in the formation of their own professional identity and may face numerous challenges associated with professional identity formation. When confronted by contradictory and ambiguous situations and experiences, individuals engage in self-reflection and questioning of their personal view; identity is reshaped as a result (Niemi, 1997). Put into the context of WBL, this illustrates the dynamic nature of professional identity development that relies on the individual and social interactions in its formation.

Research into identity has examined identity construction using a variety of discourse contexts, for example, conversational identities, virtual identities, self-narrative identities and institutional identities (Benwell and Stokoe 2006). This research uses self-narrative identities to analyse the development of professional identity within the context of a WBLP. Self-narrative discourse is appropriate as the research is based around participants perceptions of their professional identity. It is therefore their stories that form the basis of the analysis. Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010, p.135) discuss self-narrative as the 'stories that make a point about the narrator that help revise and reconstruct identities during work transitions.' They go on to say the self-narrative, is important when undergoing role transition which is facilitated by changes in repertoire to express their new role identity.

Research into teachers' professional identity by Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermunt, (2000) indicated that its development is linked to a distinct aspect of expertise, which appears to be a rather simplistic view compared to the findings of Canrinus, *et al.* (2012).

Canrinus *et al.*, (2012) discussed professional identity as a complex phenomenon and discussed it in terms of

- levels of motivation
- self-efficacy
- occupational commitment
- job satisfaction

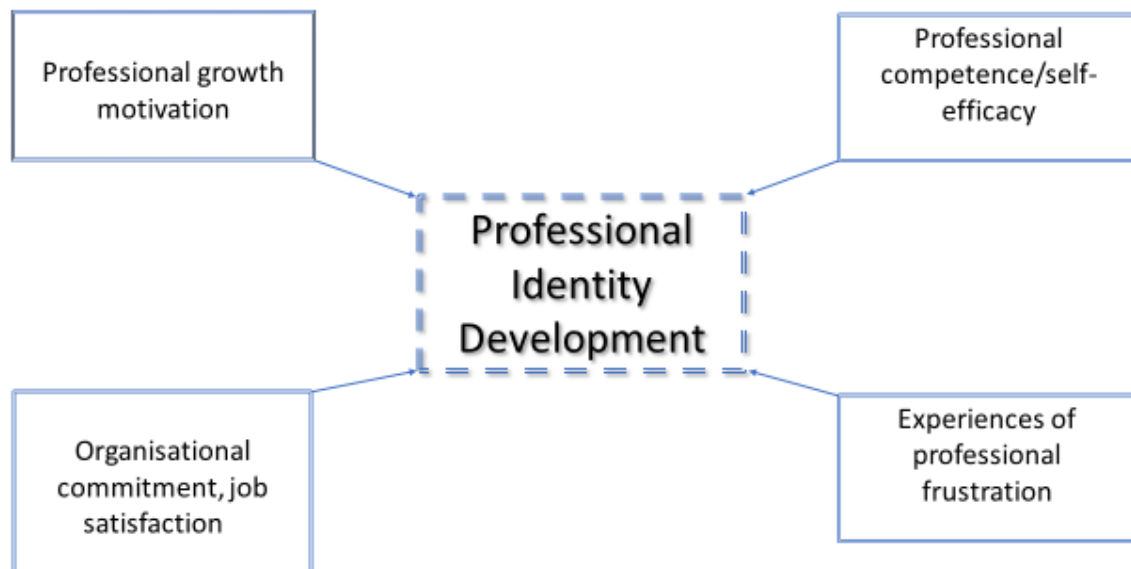
These four elements offer an opportunity to explore the complex concept of professional identity and its development using clearly defined areas for exploration.

Canrinus, *et al.*, (2012) research focused on the indicators of teacher's professional identity and the interrelationship between these indicators. The concept of professional identity has been researched in several fields including teaching, (Canrinus, *et al.* 2012: Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermunt, 2000), medical, healthcare (Lingard, *et al.* 2003), the legal profession (Mather, McEwen and Maiman 2001), social work (Wiles 2013), Higher Education Institutions (Humphreys and Brown 2002). It could be argued that research into the development of professional identity within an organisational setting is of greater relevance to this thesis. Work carried out by Ibarra (1999), Ely, Ibarra and Kolb (2011) Ibarra and Petriglieri, (2010), Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010) and Puurula and Löfströme (2003) all used a business context to situate their research into professional identity. The work of Puurula and Löfströme (2003) into the development of professional identity in small and medium sized enterprises (SME's) clearly resonates within this research. They argue that the influential factors in the development of professional identity are,

- the individual's professional growth motivation,
- professional competence,
- commitment to the organisation
- experiences of professional frustration.

They go on to suggest that individuals move along a professional identity continuum, influenced by both contextual factors and personal characteristics. Their work resonates with that of Canrinus, *et al.* (2012) and includes common features as well as the additional element of professional frustration. These two pieces of research will be drawn on to explore the aspects of professional identity development within the participants on the WBLP's.

The elements of professional identity outlined by Puurula and Löfströme (2003) and Canrinus, *et al.* (2012) have been amalgamated to form a conceptual framework for the research.



Adapted from Puurula and Löfströme (2003) and Canrinus, *et al.* (2012)

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The reasoning behind combining of the concepts of professional competency and self-efficacy and organisational commitment and job satisfaction, link to not only the similarities of these concepts, but also, in accordance with Braun and Clarke (2006), to reduce the amount of overlap with themes for analysis (see analytical framework section) These elements will be explored individually to review the contribution they have to the development of professional identity. In addition, the interaction of these elements will be considered to establish a more holistic approach to an individual's professional development.

Professional growth motivation

The aspects of motivation relevant to this research are situated within the motivation of an individual to learn through work and an individual's personal growth motivation.

The work of Nixon, *et al.* (2006), regarding the typology of motivation for learning, highlights the potential drivers for both the participant and organisation to invest and participate in learning. This simplistic model (see figure 2) highlights four types of motivation for work-based learning. Two of the four proposed types of motivation can be observed within the researched WBLP's: type three is participant-driven and can result in learning that enables the participants to improve personal and professional performance. Type three motivation is therefore linked to professional growth motivation. Type four, which is organisation-driven, can result in improved organisation performance and competitiveness. Type four motivation, whilst beneficial for the organisation, may not have a positive impact on the motivation for the individual to learn, resulting in reduced engagement of the individual in the learning.

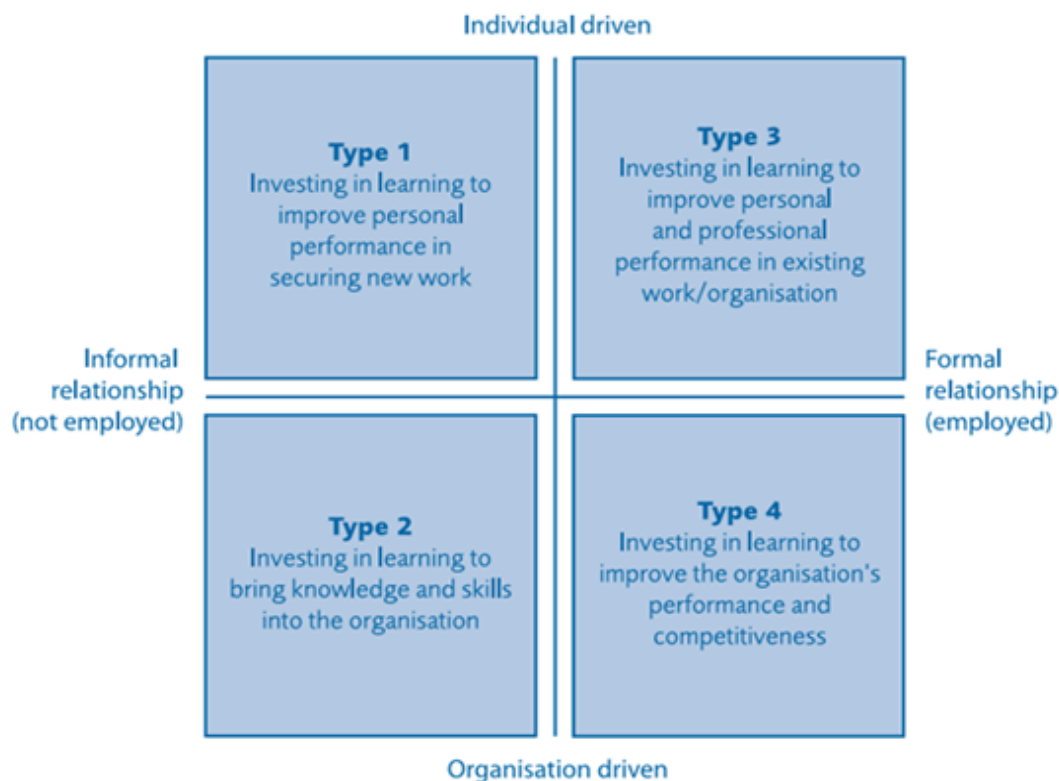


Figure 2: Typology of individual and workplace motivations for work-based learning (Nixon *et al.* 2006)

Type three and four motivations are important consideration when developing WBLPs to balance the motivation of both employers and participants. Penn, Nixon and Shewell (2005) discussed the importance of the interrelationships between the participant, employer and training provider in terms of each party's 'plan'. So, in the case of the participant, what is their individual life plan, in terms of their personal and career aspirations, skills and knowledge? If the WBLP is in line with an individual's life plan, levels of type three motivation will be high. Type four motivation needs to be considered to ensure the proposed WBL fit in with the employer's business plan and will result in improvements in the organisations performance and competitiveness. The Degree apprenticeship agenda (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2015a) may impact on this interrelationship. Organisations that pay the workplace levy and therefore have access to funding for their employees to complete the CMDA, could be seen by the employees as not actually investing in them individually but reclaiming monies they have paid as a tax.

Motivation theory specifically related to satisfaction at work, was put forward by Fredrick Herzberg 1959 (see Cole & Kelly 2011). He discussed factors that give rise to satisfaction, called motivators, and included achievement, recognition and advancement. He also put forward a range of hygiene factors that can lead to dissatisfaction at work, such as salary, working conditions and company policy. When applying this to the motivations of work-based participants, assumptions could be made that the participants will be motivated at work, because of the investment and recognition they have received through the selection and completion of the WBLP. However, this cannot necessarily be assumed as this motivation may be counterbalance by the lack of hygiene factors that could lead to dissatisfaction at work and therefore reduced motivation.

The three contributing factors for motivation in relation to learning and studying were summarised by Brown, Armstrong & Thompson (1998). Extrinsic motivation relates to the influence of external rewards and the pressure of completing the course. Intrinsic motivation reflects the learner's own personal goal and interest in the subject. Finally, achievement motivation which relates to competition and personal challenges and levels of achievement. The three forms of motivation clearly link to the researched WBLPs. The extrinsic motivator may be evident through the participants being rewarded, through promotion or salary increase, on completion of the WBLP. Whilst intrinsic motivation links to Nixon et al., (2006) type 3 motivation, in that it relates to the participants personal and professional drive to succeed on the WBLP and to progress in their careers. The participant's sense of achievement through the completion of a higher-level qualification, whilst working, could prove to be a powerful motivating factor and help drive an individual during difficult times over the period of the WBLP.

The work of Knowles (1977) is pertinent as he examines different motivations and learning preferences, encompassed within his theory of andragogy. Knowles (1977, p.211) proposed a theory of adult learning called andragogy, stating 'that it was the art and science of helping adults learn'. He suggests that adults are more self-directed and active, as they know why they are learning, have a wide variety of experience and have a readiness to learn things that will help them within their own work/life. Knowles contests that there are six assumptions of motivations for learning that makes adults different from children:

1. Need to know: Adults need to know the reason for learning something
2. Foundation: Experience (including error) provides the basis for learning activities.
3. Self-concept: Adults need to be responsible for their own education and be involved with the creation of it

4. Readiness: Adults are most interested in learning those things that have immediate relevance to them
5. Orientation: Adult learning is problem centred rather than content-orientated
6. Motivation: Adults respond better to internal versus external motivators

Knowles (1977, p. 211)

It is important to note that not all these assumptions may apply to participants on a WBLP, as the participants may not immediately see the reason for learning a skill or piece of knowledge. As discussed in the WBL pedagogy section, the type of learning opportunities offered through a WBLP may be a motivating factor for adult learners.

WBL, by its very nature, involves the interaction between conceptual considerations and real-life work experience. Williams (1998) summarised that the experience of practitioners is an important source of knowledge, and the ability to reflect on and share experience is a powerful form of learning. Within the researched WBLP's this factor is taken into consideration through the application of the participants work life experiences to both assessments and reflection.

The complexities of what motivates an individual to learn whilst at work have been highlighted. By the very nature of the uniqueness of individuals, it is impossible to predict what motivates one individual. However, by examining motivation concepts, a clearer picture can emerge as to the contributing factors and individual considerations that combine to reflect an individual's motivation.

Professional competence/ self-efficacy

The concept of professional competency involves the ability to function effectively while performing tasks associated with one's profession (Puurula and Lofströme 2003). This definition can be expanded to include elements within professional competency. These elements are, discipline-specific knowledge, technical skills, professional problem solving, personality traits, motivation, values and beliefs. These combine to give the individual a perception of self as a skilled professional. This clearly links with Bandura's (1977) concept of perceived self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is concerned with people's belief in their ability to influence events that affect their lives. This core belief is the foundation of human motivation, performance accomplishments and emotional well-being. In terms of WBL this concept could be an important factor for the research participants, to enable them to believe that they can further their career aspirations and professional competence as they embarked on the programme.

The importance of career progression post completion of a WBLP is relevant to an individual's sense of agency. Emirbayer and Mische's (1998, p.970) definition of agency explains that 'it should be understood as something that individuals can achieve in a given context.' The importance of agency within the context of WBL is that it implies that someone is the origin of his or her own actions because he or she can make genuine choices. However, if the individual is unable to make genuine career choices on completion of a WBLP, due to organisational constraints, their sense of agency could be affected. This in turn could have a negative impact on self-efficacy and by association their sense of professional identity.

Organisational commitment/ job satisfaction

Concepts of organisational commitment and job satisfaction is an element of professional identity as defined by (Carrinus. *et al.* 2012). Findings from Yang, Sanders and Bumatay's (2012) evidences that employees' perceptions of development programmes are related to their commitment to the organisation. The strength of this commitment is further moderated by employee self-construal. According to Markus

and Kitayama (1991, p.224), 'those with an independent self-construal define themselves in terms of internal attributes such as traits, abilities, values, and preferences. In contrast, those with an interdependent self-construal define themselves in terms of their relationships with others.' This could be a consideration for an organisation to understand the employees' commitment to the work and how they define themselves can influence the different ways in which an individual's professional identity develops.

Organisational change that impacts on an employee links to an individual's commitment to the organisation. Ecclestone, Biesta, and Hughes (ed.) (2010) explore the concept of transition in terms of personal and collective identity transformation at and through work. Their conclusions are twofold. One, the organisation needs to recognise and think carefully about identity work likely to be involved with transitions to new or different work roles and how that might affect employees. Two, the continuing importance of professional identity and the implications, both positive and negative, of job moves which challenge their sense of self.

Organisational change and the impact on an employee links closely to the fourth element of professional identity, that of professional frustration.

Experiences of professional frustration

Within the context of the period in which the data was collected i.e. 2014 – 2018, there has been considerable political and economic changes that have contributed to a period of instability within the United Kingdom (see national context section). This instability has impacted on UK businesses over the last four years, including the two participants' employers. Whilst professional frustration can result from a range of factors within an organisation, including relationships with colleagues, leadership decisions and internal politics (Puurala and Löfströme, 2003). The external environment, including political and economic factors, can result in organisational changes that impact on employee's experience of professional frustration.

Organisational changes can be related to the concept of liminality. This is defined as a state of being 'neither one thing or another: or maybe both: or neither here or there: or maybe nowhere' (Turner 1969 p.465). Ibarra and Obodaru (2016, p.47) state that 'liminality, a state of being betwixt and between social roles and/or identities, is a hallmark of an increasingly precarious and fluctuating landscape'. This indicates liminality as a fluid concept and that modern-day liminality is often less finite or even permanent in nature. Certainly, over the period the participants were studying on both WBLPs there were organisational and personal factors that have impacted on all participants. Examples of these factors included changes in participant's terms and conditions of employment, redundancy and significant personal relationship changes resulting in a change in career focus, all of which may have led to the participants feeling betwixt and between identities.

Linking this to the research the participants at the start of the CRM indicated that they were on a career path within retail management. However, over the period of the WBLP to date, they may have followed an organisational career path or a path unrelated to their original career plan. Both of which has brought about changes in their professional identity.

The interrelationship of the 4 elements within the framework for this research are closely linked. Individuals will experience exhibit overlap between the elements for example an individual's perceived self-efficacy may be influenced because of professional frustration.

Other influences on professional identity

The participants rationale for undertaking the WBLP was to enable them to develop professional and personally. Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010) research on the evolution of identity in role transition is paralleled in terms of a person's evolution of their narrative repertoire. This then results in a new self-understanding using storytelling that results from the transition.

During a period of professional and personal transition, the concepts of communities of practice may be relevant to the participants as it could instil a sense of belonging, Lave and Wenger (1991). When considering this sense of belonging during the time the participants were on the WBLP, the process of learning can be seen as a means of developing that sense of belonging. Lave and Wenger (1991), citing Jordan (1989, p.105) states, "learning to become a legitimate participant in a community involves learning how to talk (and be silent) in the manner of full participants'. It could be argued that becoming a legitimate participant in a community, is also an element of professional identity development. It is through this sense of belonging on the WBLP, the common use of language and understanding of terminology application of new found skills and knowledge that can contribute to the development of a sense of professional identity

The researched WBLP's were targeted at employees who have been identified as having the potential to progress within their organisation to take on leadership roles. Ibarra, Ely and Kolb (2013) discussed the issues faced when becoming a leader. They argue that not only does the transition into leadership involve the acquisition of skills, but also a fundamental shift in identity. They go on to comment that as an individual's leadership capabilities grow and they are given more opportunities to demonstrate them further, organisational endorsements are more likely to occur. In relation to participants who are part of a WBLP, they have been put forward as future leaders and need to be given opportunities within the programme, to develop this leadership identity. This could lead to professional frustration (Puurala and Löffströme, 2003) should development opportunities not be forthcoming for the WBLP participant's post completion.

The identity one presents within a work context develops over time and with experiences. Ibarra and Petringler (2010, p.11) discussed the part that identity plays in role transition or career moves and suggests the notion of 'identity play'. Defined as 'people's engagement in provisional but active trial of possible future selves'. The concept of 'identity play' may be a consideration within this thesis as the participants have opportunities to take on expanded roles or experience different work settings and reflect on learning from these experiences.

Self-reflection also contributes to an individual's identity work. Self-reflection helps develop an internal sense of identity and develop social identity (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003). Mallett and Wapshott (2012) go on to say that social identities can create pressures on individuals to conform and align themselves with fellow group members. The WBLP's used critical reflection as a pedagogical tool throughout the programme to facilitate the participant's personal development. This self-reflection not only focuses on the individual, but also their role within their organisation and the relationships and networks they utilised within their job role both current and potential.

Summary

Within the literature review, the key concepts pertinent to this thesis have been explored. Firstly, the concept of work-based learning, followed by the notion of identity and professional identity, its

construction, constant change and relationship to a professional context. Further components of professional identity including, transitions of identity, leadership and identity and reflection on identity, have been critiqued within a work-based learning context. Finally, a conceptual framework has been presented to structure the research.

4.0 Research design and methodology

Methodology

To explore my methodological approach, it is important to fully understand my epistemological stand point which provides the foundation for the research. To do this an awareness of the implications of different methodological, and philosophical lenses, was crucial to enable me to make an informed decision regarding the structure of the research. Moreover, my identified epistemology will also have an impact on the methods used to collect and analyse the data. As such, it is of value to consider what Pring (2006, p. 44) calls the 'false dualism' in relation to educational research. Pring highlights the dangers of making a distinction between mobilising different enquiry lenses based on epistemology rather than the appropriateness of the task. For Pring:

...understanding human beings, and thus researching into what they do and how they behave call upon many different methods, each making complex assumptions about what it means to explain behaviours and personal and social activities.' Pring (2006, p.57).

Pring raises an interesting point. However, my position as an early career researcher is such that a structured framework in which to undertake my research is one that fits with my level of research experience and confidence.

In choosing a methodological approach, several methodologies were reviewed to enable the 'best fit' to be established in relation to the research question and my philosophical stance. Costley, Elliot and Gibbs (2012) suggest examples of approaches that can be specifically applied to research of work-based learning. These are;

- phenomenology
- hermeneutics
- grounded theory
- action research
- ethnography
- case study
- bricolage

To enable the dominant approach to be identified for this research, I have drawn upon the key considerations outlined by Costley, Elliot and Gibbs (2012), including

- Is the methodological framework coherent with your personal approach?
- Does it fit with the context and purpose of the research project?
- Will the approach be appropriate for the data to be collected?

My worldview is aligned with constructivist assumptions (see Creswell, 2014). When applying a constructivist approach, it is important for individuals to seek understanding of the world in which they live and work and that these meanings are varied and multiple. My role, as the researcher, is to construct meaning from a social phenomenon through the methods chosen to gather data within the context of the participants' situation. How the participants construct meaning from their world, in this case, through their experiences of the WBLP's, has been collated, analysed and interpreted to draw conclusions regarding their experiences.

However, the story does not end there – there is also the thorny problem of constructivism and 'data' shaped by the researchers' own experiences and background (Crotty 2013). As outlined within the prologue, my interests in work-based learning and the affect it can have on participants is based on my own personal background and experiences during my career. As such I needed to be mindful of the personal element to the research when considering the data and any subsequent findings. The findings will be based on participant's experiences and may uncover generalisable themes but, equally, data may simply be a series of experiences that do not indicate general themes.

The research data used within this thesis took the form of questionnaires and oral narratives obtained from semi-structured interviews. This data was analysed and interpreted by me to establish whether there are themes or meanings that emerged from the narratives collected. The data from the participants consisted of their own interpretation of how the course has changed them, or otherwise in relation to several key elements relating to them on a personal and professional level. This desire to uncover how the individual participants perceive and understand the world in which they live and work, outlined by Creswell (2014), reflects my worldview and constructivist stance, which regards reality as being individually and socially derived. This reflects the phenomenon under study as identity is not fixed but socially influenced and continually changing.

Drawing on Creswell's (2014) work, the methodological approach was be qualitative. This enabled the concept of the changes within a learner on a work-based learning course to be explored on a deeper level than a larger scale quantitative study might yield. The analysis involved an interpretation of the way in which the individual participants interpret their world, in this case their experiences on the WBLP course, to construct meaning and themes.

To further underline the rationale for my approach, it is important to emphasize that my study is based on human interaction, which is experienced variously by each participant rather than based on a common objective and knowledgeable reality in the positivist sense (Costley, Elliot and Gibbs 2012). This reality would be very difficult to replicate with experimentation as the interactions, thoughts and feelings of the participants will not be in the same context, if they were researched for the same course at a different time.

To ensure the quality of research, Lincoln and Guba (1986), proposed that qualitative studies should be judged in terms of trustworthiness. They formulated four categories of trustworthiness

- Credibility – including triangulation of data, prolonged engagement with the participants, and in-depth pursuit of salient elements of research.
- Transferability – production of rich accounts that can form the basis for the creation of general statements about the case.
- Dependability – audit trails of data, questionnaires and reflective narrative records
- Confirmability - has the researcher acted in good faith and limited bias?

These categories have been applied to this research as follows,

- Credibility - utilisation of more than one data set. Data from two cohorts were gathered from different WBLP's, CRM, and CMDA. Findings from Booth (2017a) were used to inform key aspects of the research for Booth 2017b and the second interview with Sarah (CRM). CMDA interviews were informed by Booth (2017a and 2017b)

- Transferability – the narrative produced through the semi-structured interviews contained detailed rich accounts of the participants experiences. These were used to draw conclusions and establish themes and concepts.

- Dependability - systematic and organised approach to the collation, storage and interpretation of the data. Once transcribed, the original interview recordings were deleted and the transcripts of the interviews were kept on a storage device that was password protected.

- Confirmability – I was aware of the unique issues of a practitioner researcher and reflected on this to limit the risk of bias. This is explored further in the section on practitioner research in relation to reflexivity.

In summary, the research is framed using my worldview as a constructivist researcher. It draws on an inductive thematic analysis of narrative data, generated through semi structured interviews. The narrative data resulting from these interviews is defined by Carr (1997, p.16) as 'narrative (stories) in the human sciences which are discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and this offers insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it.'

Ethical considerations as a Practitioner Researcher

Ethical considerations for this research are embedded within the British Educational Research Associations (BERA) ethical guidelines for educational research, 2011. The underpinning aim of the guidelines is

‘to enable educational researchers to weigh up all aspects of the process of conducting educational research, within any given context, and to reach an ethically acceptable position in which their actions are considered justifiable and sound’ (BERA 2011, p.4).

These guidelines were relevant at the time the research was being undertaken. However, in 2018 BERA updated their guidelines to take into consideration new legislation, social media and globalisation of research (BERA, 2018). I have reviewed the updated ethical guidance to ensure compliance.

The considerations within the BERA guidelines are supplemented through the MU1 University Research Ethics Policy (Hutchinson, 2013) and MU2 Code of Practice for Research (████████████████████, 2016). These two documents informed the ethical approval processes undertaken to gain permission to undertake the research.

The ethical considerations for research are also governed by the UK laws surrounding the use of data. When the research began in 2011 the Data Protection Act (2003) (Great Britain, 2003), was the overarching law for the use and storage of data. During the research period the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (2018) was introduced. This regulation replaced the previous data protection legislation and is designed to harmonise data privacy laws across Europe. The aim of GDPR is to protect and empower all European Union citizens’ data privacy, and to reshape the way organisation approach data privacy, (EUGDPR, 2018). To comply with current legislation, I engaged with the mandatory online learning materials provided by MU2 and applied the relevant principles of the legislation to the data. These included ensuring the data was needed for legitimate interests, consent was gained from participants and data only held for a specific amount of time.

To adhere to the constructivist approach embedded within this research and the ethical considerations outlined, my position within the research needs to be considered. This consideration will reduce possible bias within the research and increase the trustworthiness of the findings.

I feel very passionate about the WBLP’s and have been involved in the development and implementation of both WBLP’s. Therefore, before embarking on the research, I explored my own role as a researcher to establish whether it may influence the research trustworthiness, as noted in the previous section. I was aware of the multiple roles I undertook during both WBLP’s. Drake (2011, p.31) highlights one of the dilemmas in practitioner research, that of the multiple identities the researcher may exhibit. On the one hand, there is the identity that the researcher practitioner has in terms of their role as a HEI member of staff, with all the functions that this may entail. Then there is the identity specifically related to that of practitioner researcher in which the researcher can occupy numerous roles that have different level of power associated with them. Drake states that ‘there is a need for integration of these roles at an early stage of research’. However, this may not be an easy position for the researcher practitioner to find themselves in and could result in distrust amongst colleagues and stakeholders.

Each of the multiple roles within the research I assume carry with it different levels of power within the relationship with the participant and stakeholders that are not present within university-based research. The challenge of these multiple power relationships is summarised by Siebert and Mills (2007, p.313):

'One of the most serious challenges the work-based researcher faces is ensuring reliability of their research by minimising those hierarchies and power relations. This may mean devising tactics and strategies, in other words, displaying resistance, which is precisely what Foucault suggests is necessary, in the process of knowledge creation. The dense defence of managerial practice often conveyed in managerial rhetoric such as 'the right to manage', 'the bottom line' and 'getting the product out of the door' can mean the reliability and objectivity are more difficult to achieve.'

Soobrayan (2003, p.107) makes two claims in relation to ethics in constructivist qualitative research. He concludes that in 'confronting ethics in research it is in effect a confrontation with the self' and 'that there are no single rules or practices that govern the ethics of the research'.

The first claim can be explored using the practice of reflexivity. Jootun, McGhee and Marland (2009, p.42) discusses the importance of reflexivity as an 'invaluable tool to promote understanding of a phenomenon under study and the researcher role'. In this research, the understanding of my position within the research, and any unintentional or intentional influences on the findings, were drawn out through a reflexive approach and were key to ensuring that ethical considerations were at the forefront of my thinking. The second claim regarding the rules around ethics is more contentious, as there may be no single rule, but there are multiple rules, many of which are encompassed within professional codes of conduct (Creswell 2014).

My reflexive approach involved the consideration of each interaction with the participants and a clarity of my role within the interaction. For example, was I acting as a HEI academic or researcher and if so what stance should be taken to ensure the clarity of my role. It was important to keep the boundaries clear, for example, during the data gathering stage I made it clear that the discussion was not related to the assessment of the WBLP, just their experiences of it.

My position within the research of the WBLP's was different for the CRM and the CMDA. When the CRM participants were interviewed they had completed the WBLP, hence my position as insider researcher (Costley, Elliot and Gibbs, 2012) was less influential. In addition, I was no longer employed by the MU1 who developed and delivered the CRM WBLP. I was therefore not in a position of influence for the participants performance on the WBLP.

During the research gathering stages for the participants for the CMDA, I had responsibility for mentoring and teaching the participants. In addition, I was the module lead for the WBLP professional development module, and as such had developed a relationship with the participants over a two-year period. Ethical issues that may arise out of the development of this type of professional relationship are discussed by Costley and Gibbs (2006) in terms of the concept of 'ethics of care'. This concept considers the researcher position and the content of the research question to ensure that a degree of sensitivity is used. Several events occurred during the research with the participants on the CRM WBLP during the research for Booth (2017a, 2017b). Events included, participants' feelings during periods of uncertainty at work, personal issues that affected their employment, coping with rejection following application for promotion and disappointment in their grades whilst on the WBLP. I was mindful of the 'ethics of care' when interacting with the participants, as I could not make assumptions of the impact these critical events may have had on the participants. The generation of knowledge will be situated in the relations with the participants taking part in the research that is situational knowledge (Thomas 2013). Therefore, my position within the research will affect the nature of the interviews and the

interpretation of the data, as they are an active agent in acquiring knowledge within the research context.

McConnell-Henry, *et al.* (2010) discussed issues around interviewing people who are known to you. To allow the depth of the data to be explored using qualitative data, a positive relationship needs to be developed between the interviewer and the interviewee. In this case there have been numerous points of contact between me and the participants, both in formal and informal situations. The ethical considerations within these relationships are therefore around the inevitable bias. This could manifest itself within the interpretation of the data, resulting from a knowledge of the participant that goes beyond the data. Whilst this cannot be fully mitigated against, an awareness of this will contribute to the trustworthiness of the findings.

To ensure the participants on both WBLP were clearly informed of the purpose of the research and how data was to be used, the content of the research was introduced to the participants face-to-face and or via e mail. The details of which were clearly laid out within the research information sheet (Appendix 1). Consent to use the information contained within the participants' questionnaires and semi-structured interviews was obtained at the start of the course through a consent form (Appendix 1).

All participants agreed for their data to be used for the research through signing of the consent form or by acknowledging the form could be signed in absentia. Participants were advised that they are free to leave the study within a set timeframe, as part of the consent form. It was also highlighted on the consent form that they have the right to withdraw their data in retrospect up to an agreed date.

The findings from the research also need to be considered in terms of the impact on the key stakeholders. This may be positive and result in a greater interest and credibility around the WBLP's, as it evidences a beneficial effect for the participants, HEI and the partner organisations. However, the contrary could be established with little or no benefit of these programmes being evidenced to the participant or the organisation.

As the findings are based on the participant's experiences, it has been clearly stated to the participants that their responses will be confidential and that their comments will not be used in a way that would be detrimental to them, or their career. This raises the issues of confidentiality and anonymization of responses. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) points out that anonymity is when the researcher or another person cannot identify the participant or subject from the information given. To ensure this, the content of data collected was referenced using a pseudonym for each participant. In addition, data relating to the WBLP's, HEI and partner organisations have been anonymised and information within the reference list redacted in accordance with the GDPR (2018). What can be guaranteed is that the data gathered, and details of the participant's pseudonyms will remain confidential and stored in password-protected computer folders and paper copies will be locked away. Punch and Oancea (2014, p. 67) state that 'issues of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality cannot be reduced to mere compliance with a predetermined set of legal and technical requirements'. This is reflected in the fact that the interview audio files and transcripts contain the participants' details, but all information collected will be kept in accordance with the GDPR (2018) and will be destroyed once the research has been completed.

It was made clear to the participants, both verbally and through the consent form, that my position as tutor and course leader, was separate from that of researcher and would not impact on their grade. To mitigate against any role confusion the analysis of the data from the CRM WBLP was completed after

the participants' work was marked, moderated and the grades released to the participants. This was not the case with the CMDA cohort as the timing of the data collection coincided with the participant's submission of two assessments. I was mindful of the potential conflict and bias that could occur and endeavoured to reduce the risk of this by transcribing the interviews at a point in time after the assessments had been graded.

Gibbs & Costley (2006, p.240) stated that 'the academic undertaking work-based practitioner-led research must consider multiple communities of practice'. They went on to discuss that each of these communities has their own epistemological and power agenda. As a practitioner researcher, the awareness of these different agendas is an important factor to enable them to maintain a degree of criticality and objectivity. In terms of research, it involved complex relationships between the HEI's, participants and the retailers itself. These stakeholders have their own agendas and requirements throughout the course that were managed in such a way that the integrity and trustworthiness of the research was maintained.

In summary, Pendlebury and Enslin (2001, p.369) claim 'the goal [of research in education] is not to push people into functioning in ways deemed desirable by the researcher or the policy makers or research funders, but to put them in a stronger position to exercise their agency considering their circumstances and professional obligations'. This particularly resonates with work-based learning research where the participants have professional and personal obligations that take priority over the research and researcher needs.

Research methods

Case study has been applied to the design framework for the research. Stake (2005, p.11) states that 'case study is the study of a particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances'. This definition highlights the uniqueness and in-depth nature of the enquiry.

The findings from this research are not intended to make generalisations about the participants and the WBLP's, but to get a rich picture and to gain analytical insights into the participant's experiences on the WBLP (Thomas 2016).

Yin (2014) recommends four stages in the application of case study as follows:

1. Designing the case study
2. Conducting the case study
3. Analysing the case study evidence
4. Developing the conclusions, recommendation and implications

The case study design is based around two cohorts of participants who completed the CRM and CMDA WBLP. Booth (2017a and 2017b) focused on the whole cohort from the CRM, whilst this research concentrates on a sample of participants from both the CRM and CMDA. The data was gathered using questionnaires and semi structured interviews to explore whether the participants experiences of WBLP shaped their professional identity. In the case of the CRM the time period researched was from the start of the WBLP in September 2015 until October 2017. The CMDA was research between September 2016 until July 2018.

The second stage Yin (2014) recommends i.e. conducting the research, will be executed using questionnaires and semi structured interviews. The planned research methods for gathering data are

informed by the methodological approach for the research and reflect the philosophical standpoint that has been laid out. The research methods used in this study are questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires were completed by the CRM participants – the baseline information used within this thesis was gathered from the participants as part of the semi-structured interviews

The format of the research questionnaire (Appendix 2) included closed factual questions relating to the participants baseline information, and open questions that explored more subjective issues around the participant's experiences and expectations (Denscombe 2003). For Gillman (2008), the use of questionnaires can be a relatively quick and cost-effective way of gathering data, when doing small-scale research that needs some structure. Within a constructivist approach, data gathered from questionnaires is a starting point, and when analysed can inform the emergence of themes. Munn and Drever (1990) highlighted that questionnaires are useful tools as they can be completed in the respondents' own time and can be used to gather information from large numbers of people at one point in time. The construction of the questions is crucial to ensure that the information received from the learners is relevant to the aims and objectives of the research project (Thomas 2013). The development of the questionnaire used within the research was an iterative process which I trailed on colleagues before its application. The format of the questions was considered in relation to the target audience, to ensure a clear understanding of the content and how it relates to them. It was not proposed that the structure of the questions was solely to gather information, hence the utilisation of both open and closed questions. The open questions enabled the respondent to add more personal information about their experiences on the course, which are unique to them and could not be explored using closed questions (see Bryman 2014). The questionnaires were self-administered using only language appropriate for those on the course within the retail sector. As the methodology is not one which tests a hypothesis, the themes were to be constructed through the scrutiny of individuals' responses to both closed and open questions.

Semi-structured Interviews

The choice of semi-structured interviews as a research method, as opposed to structured interviews, stems from the fact that there is little known about the participants experiences during the programme and on completion. A structured interview could impose boundaries on the questions, which may result in the narrative data being curtailed (Holt 2010).

Adams (2010) summarises key issues to consider when using semi-structured interviews. The issues include the need for an awareness of the responsibility for the participants' wellbeing, as well as one's own, and the need to develop good listening skills and emotional self-control. The participants of this research experienced a variety of work-based issues including store closures, redundancy, loss of key members of staff and job rejections that required a sensitive approach when these issues arose during the interview. Although these issues may not contribute to the findings of the research directly, they are of concern to the participant so need to be dealt with sensitively.

The choice of semi-structured interviews was informed by Gomm (2009, p.270)

- They generate rich data
- Responses are expressed in language participants would normally use
- They do not force participants to respond to questions which may or may not be of great relevance to them
- They are more likely to elicit honest disclosure

This argument is reinforced by research carried out by Strutman and Taggart (2008) into the difference in the results gained from exploring the professional voice of teachers using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews via telephone. The findings indicate that significant differences in responses were observed, which could be attributed to the methods employed. Their study posed the same questions to the teachers using the two different methods, however the fact that the different patterns of response found in the Strutman and Taggart (2008) research may indicate that the use of the interviews to enrich or triangulate the questionnaire data will need to be viewed with a degree of caution.

The degree of structuring of the interview is taken to refer to the extent to which the questions are pre-prepared by the researcher (Wengraf, 2001). The aim is for the dialogue to come close to everyday conversation, whilst having a purpose and involving a specific approach and technique (Kvale and Brinkman 2015).

The idea of interviewing people you have a pre-existing or dual relationship is explored by McConnell-Henry, *et al.* (2010). Their research claims that this duality is a great privilege and one that may enhance the interview experience for both parties. However, they also state that caution is needed by the researcher, who must carefully examine their own philosophical beliefs, including how these may be challenged by what they may learn, and how the researcher might deal with such challenges. This is an issue related to the insider-researcher considerations and, for this research was particularly relevant (see practitioner researcher section).

One needs to be mindful of the potential for a power asymmetry or even the inevitability of it. Kvale and Brinkman (2015) highlight the fact that the research interview is a specific professional conversation with a clear power asymmetry between the researcher and the subject. When considering the key power dynamics and forms of relationships outlined by Kvale (2013) there are several elements that I needed to be mindful of during the interview process. The interview may be a manipulative dialogue relating to any hidden agendas that the interviewer may have, in this case the outcomes of the research may have a direct impact on myself. For example, if the findings conclude that the programme has little or no benefit to the participant, organisation, or Higher Education Institution, the *raison d'être* of the WBLP could be called into question. This was minimised as at the time of the interviews with the CRM participants, the WBLP was no longer part of the MU HEI portfolio. However, the CMDA is an important element in the MU2 portfolio in response to the current political support for Degree Apprenticeships. Degree Apprenticeships are a new addition to MU2 and arguably there may be a 'desire' for a positive outcome from the WBLP research to increase its relevance to the current HEI agenda, as well as generating a source of income for MU2.

My intention when interviewing participants from both the CRM and CMDA was to use the interview as an instrumental dialogue. Kvale (2013, p.15) claims that in a research interview an instrumentalisation of a conversation takes place. He states that 'a good conversation is no longer a goal in itself, but a means for providing the researcher with descriptions, narratives and texts, to interpret and report according to his or her research interests'.

Oakley (1981) proposes that an approach to the interview process would be to develop a non-hierarchical relationship. She attains that this can be achieved by encouraging the researcher to invest personal identity in the relationship and share information. This has proved to be an appropriate tool to use within the interviews. I have built up a relationship with the participants from both WBLP's based on my interest in their organisations and in their career development. This has enabled me to build a rapport. In practice this rapport was easier to develop with the participants on the CMDA as I had more face to face contact with them and carried out the semi-structured interviews.

However, with the CRM the semi-structured interviews were undertaken via telephone. Stephens (2007) outlines several aspects to be considered when undertaking telephone interviews, for example the need to explicitly direct the conversation, because of the absence of non-visual clues.

From a subjective, personal viewpoint when carrying out the interviews, I was able to direct two of the interviews, resulting in an open and naturally flowing conversation. However, the third CRM conversation felt very disjointed and the flow of conversation was awkward. Stephens (2007) also argues that it is important to recognise similarities and differences between participant and researcher in attaining rapport, which as stated previously, was easy with two of the participants, but more difficult with the third.

The interviews were carried out using Skype, although the video function was not used as the participants all used their mobile phones to call the Skype number. The use of Skype enabled the call to be recorded which was crucial in terms of ensuring that the dialogue could be transcribed accurately. However, as stated by Seitz (2016) there are several challenges for interviews of this type including dropped calls, pauses, inaudible segments, inability to read body language and non-verbal cues and loss of intimacy compared to traditional in person interviews. To mitigate against these issues, several actions were taken, including ensuring that the Skype call was initiated from a place with a stable internet connection. The participant's internet access was more difficult to control, as the call took place when they were at home, or in a quiet place at work from their mobile phones. Whilst in three out of the four interviews there was no issue with the clarity of connection, the fourth interview was, at times, difficult to understand and had to be played back on numerous occasions to ensure the content was fully understood.

The introduction for each interview was standardised. It included the introduction of the issues of consent and content – this was done via a script that was also contained on the consent form that had been e mailed to the participants prior to the interview (Appendix 1.)

The interview questions were informed by the findings from Booth, (2017a and 2017b), as well as by elements in the literature review within the overall context of the research question. The questions were categorised as follows: -

1. Introduction to the research and general conversation regarding the participant's current situation.
2. Discussion based on their career to date.
3. Areas of change they may have experienced – not explicitly professional identity but using questions that were framed within the conceptual framework.
4. Future career aspiration.
5. Closing remarks and thanks for taking part.

The semi-structured interviews undertaken with participants on both WBLP's produced a narrative that tells a 'story' of their experiences upon starting the course, to its completion. Barthes and Duisit (1975, p.79) discussed the central role of narrative in social life as follows

'Narratives of the world are numberless and are present at every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind, and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative'.

Whilst this may be true, the use of narrative within research must be mindful of the fact that narrative accounts may be long and to be cautious not to take the positivist science in modes of data reduction, that could dilute the 'whole story', according to Riessman and Quinney (2005, p.398). In order to avoid this, the narratives derived from the semi-structured interviews were transcribed word for word during the initial data analysis (see data transcription section).

One common element of narratives, that distinguishes them from other approaches, is that there is a 'sequence and consequence' (Robson 2016, p. 374). The events within the narrative are selected, organised, connected, and evaluated by the narrator, as meaningful for an audience, Riessman and Quinney (2005). The sequence and structure of the narrative in this case, is guided by the interview questions put to the participants. The justification for the use of the research methods is in line with the constructive approach used within this research.

Data collection

This chapter highlights the process of data collection for the research carried out on the CRM and CMDA WBLP's. Data was collected using the research methods of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The chronology of the data collection will be presented, as well as limitations relating to the methods of collection.

Participants on the WBLP's received identical information regarding their role, the purpose and content of the research and the researcher's role. During both WBLP inductions, participants were informed of the researcher's multiple roles, as an academic and a researcher. Further details were uploaded onto the VLE, in the case of CRM, as well as via email and face-to-face, for both WBLP's.

The names of the participants were anonymised on both the questionnaires and written transcripts of the semi-structured interviews using pseudonyms. Details of the pseudonyms were stored on a password-protected computer file.

CRM data collection

Data was collected from the CRM cohort between 2014 – 2018 by means of a questionnaire, reflective narratives and semi-structured interviews. Data from the reflective narrative was used to inform Booth (2017a, 2017b) and will not be explored within this thesis.

Questionnaire data from the CRM cohort was gathered at the start of the WBLP in September 2014. Of the 28 participants who started the course, 4 left the course and/or their organisation, leaving 24 who, on successful completion, were awarded the CRM. Questionnaires were completed by 21 of the 24 participants.

This questionnaire data was initially used to inform findings in Booth (2017a). The baseline participant information from the questionnaire is also being used within this thesis. The questionnaire data includes information on participants' current job role, job role at the start of the WBLP, level of qualification and age (see appendix 2)

Semi-structured interviews were carried out in 2017, two years post completion of the WBLP. In February 2017, e-mail correspondence was sent to all twenty-four participants who successfully completed CRM, requesting they express an interest in taking part in an interview to discuss the WBLP. There was a time lapse of two years since the participants completed the programme. Initial responses to the e mail were limited, with four out of the 24 participants replying to the email by the deadline indicated. Two of these respondents did not make any further contact, following another e-mail, to organise the interview date and time. This left only two potential interviewees.

A further e mail to the whole cohort, sent in March 2017, requesting expression of interest in the research, resulting in two more participants agreeing to be interviewed.

One can only speculate the reasons for the low response rate but may include,

- out of date e mail addresses (three emails were returned indicating the incorrect address)
- moving job roles and feeling that their contribution to the research is not relevant
- individual time pressures
- time lapse from completion of the programme
- not interested

The final number of CRM participants interviewed was three. It is not unusual for small sample sizes within constructivist research see, Cope Watson and Smith Betts (2010), Lingard *et al.* (2003) and Costley and Abukari, (2015).

I had met all three interviewees previously at their place of work during their time studying on the WBLP. This helped in the process of interviewing as there was some common ground to facilitate the conversations and helped build rapport with the participants, (McConnell-Henry *et al.* 2010). The structure of the interview questions was such that the first questions were devised to help the interviewee relax. The questions consisted of a recap on what had happened to them in terms of their career since completing the WBLP. The core questions were common to all the interviews, informed by the conceptual framework, see appendix 3.

The initial research design idea was to carry out face-to-face interviews with the participants. Several factors contributed to this not being possible. These included, time taken to arrange the interviews, travel limitations and the desire to be consistent and undertake the interviews under the same conditions. Skype was used to execute the calls, as this incurred no cost to the participant (Seitz, 2016). However, the participants did not enable the visual element of the Skype call, so it was equivalent to a telephone interview. Interviews were recorded using the recording function within Skype for Business. All participants were informed that the interviews were being recorded and the recordings would be kept in a password protected file - all verbally agreed to this. The audio files were then downloaded onto a computer and saved in a password-protected computer file. Each saved file was labelled using the interviewee's pseudonym to ensure anonymity. The audio files generated were, overall, of high quality with little or no background noise to affect the quality of the sound.

Following initial analysis of the three interview transcripts, there followed a second interview with one of the participants (Sarah, CRM). The rationale behind this was twofold. Firstly, during the interview transcription, analysis and interpretation phase, there were areas that warranted further exploration to add to the trustworthiness of the findings. Secondly, the participant who was interviewed twice was the only participant who was still employed within the fashion retail sector. Sarah was contacted in September 2017, via e mail, requesting a further interview, to which she agreed. The interview took place in October 2017 under the same conditions of those carried out in July 2017.

CMDA data collection

At the time the request for participation in interviews was sent in February 2018, the participants on the CMDA WBLP were in the third and final year of the CMDA. This enabled easy access to the participants as the WBLP was active and I was in regular contact with the participants.

Of the ten participants on the programme, six were interviewed in March 2018. All the participants agreed to be interviewed however, time restraints meant that only six could be interviewed. The interviews were all undertaken face to face at the participant's place of work. They were recorded using a voice memo computer package. The interviews were conducted in an open area of the organisation. I felt that a positive relationship and rapport had been built with the participants through my role as the module lead on the Professional Development module they had completed. The interviewees therefore appeared to be open and honest in their response to questioning. However, this open area may have impacted on the ability for the interviewees to fully disclose their thoughts regarding their feelings towards their employing organisation. The open area was also a thoroughfare, so there was continuous movement of staff and some noise distraction.

At the beginning of each interview the same base line data was gathered as had been from the CRM participants via questionnaires.

CRM and CMDA interview transcription

Interview data from both the CRM and CMDA WBLP were transcribed using the same method.

As discussed by Kvale (2013, p.15) in terms of the power asymmetry in qualitative research interviews, there is a risk that the interviewer has a monopoly of interpretation. Meaning that I 'maintain an exclusive privilege to interpret and report what the interviewee really meant'. Implying that I could find meaning through interpretation and frame the findings in my own conceptual scheme. Personally, I found this particularly challenging and was conscious that I transcribed the interviews with a 'clear mind' as to its meaning. As a novice researcher, the process of transcribing interviews that have taken place between individuals becomes abstracted and fixed in a written form (Kvale and Brinkman 2015). The fact that I as the researcher, carried out the interviews, and transcribed the data, arguably reduced the potential for discrepancies and added to the consistency in the coding. However, this may also result in an element of data interpretation during the transcription process. The quality and accuracy of the transcription relates to the trustworthiness, and ethical consideration of the research. With this in mind it was vital for me to learn the skills of transcription and apportion enough time to carry out the task.

To transcribe means to transform, to change from one form to another (Kvale, 2013). Kvale, (2013) goes on to discuss transcription as, not merely a clerical task, but an interpretive process where the differences between oral speech and written text give rise to a series of practical and principle issues. This can then become abstracted and fixated into written form using a series of judgements and decisions. It can be argued that the written form of an interview is the second abstraction, first from the lived experience then the transcription where the tone of voice, the intonations and breathing are lost (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015).

The method of transcription for the interviews was to summarise the opening and ending remarks, as the content was not used as part of the analysis, e.g. the introduction to the research and confirmation that consent had been obtained and the closing remarks, thanking the participants for their time and wishing them well for the future. The main body of the interviews were transcribed word for word but did not take note of pauses in speech or the way in which the words were articulated.

Data collection limitations

There were several limitations with the outlined approach to data collection which are summarised below.

There was a considerable time difference in terms of the timing of the interviews and the stage of the WBLP, i.e. CRM participants were interviewed two years post completion of the WBLP, whereas CMDA participants were interviewed during their final year of study. This may have resulted in different recollections of the WBLP and the influence the programme may have had on the participants.

Authenticity of responses - Despite the rapport building with the participants, during the interview with one participant (Mary, CRM), it was difficult to engage in an interaction that had a natural, conversational style. Possible, unsubstantiated explanations for this could be, that her employer was unable to give her career opportunities within retail that she aspired to, and she subsequently had a change in career direction.

At the time of the second interview with Sarah, (CRM) she was at work but had moved to the back of the store where it was quieter. There was also someone covering for her whilst she was on the call. This had several effects on the quality of the interview. The quality of the connection was inconsistent and there were several occasions when the questions had to be repeated to ensure the clarity of understanding of the response. There was also a time pressure on the participant, as she could not be away from the shop floor for an extended period.

During the transcription process there was one factor that had not been considered prior to the interviews. Two of the participants had very strong regional accents and spoke at a rapid speed. This added a considerable amount of time to the transcription process and may have impacted on the accuracy of the transcripts.

Analytical framework

The following analytical framework outlines the approach used to analyse the data from both the questionnaires and the semi-structured interviews. The framework includes the practical steps used to analyse the data as well as an appreciation of how my position within the research may influence and impact on the interpretation of the data.

Data from the closed questions in the CRM questionnaire, was collated and tabulated, to present an overview of the baseline information (see Denscombe, 2003), (Appendix 6). The equivalent data collected from the CMDA participants at the beginning of the semi-structured interviews. This information was presented in the same format (see appendix 7).

The baseline data informed observations regarding the characteristics of the cohorts relating to age, job role and qualifications.

The data collected and transcribed from the semi-structured interviews was analysed in line with a constructivist approach, using inductive thematic analysis. Aronson (1995) describes a pragmatic approach to thematic analysis, involving the identification of data that relates to already classified patterns. The next step, according to Aronson (1995) is to categorise into themes using a valid argument, using literature for the choice of these themes. Whilst this pragmatic approach has merits in its use, I have chosen to use a more structured approach is put forward by Braun and Clarke (2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) indicate that thematic analysis offers an accessible and conceptually flexible approach to analysing qualitative data. They go on to describe the six phases of thematic analysis:

1. Familiarising yourself with your data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report.

The limitations of using these six phases should be noted, as identified by Braun and Clarke (2006); firstly, that the themes are analysed and not just put forward as a collection of extracts, secondly, that

there is not too much overlap between themes and that there is a mismatch between the data and the analytic claims that are made.

The phases of the thematic analysis process were applied to both the CRM and CMDA data as follows;

- The interviews were transcribed by me, then read and re-read, to become familiar with the data.
- Initial themes had emerged through the literature review and the findings from Booth (2017a, 2017b) that informed the interpretation of the data. However, these were not finalised until all data from CRM and CMDA had been fully scrutinised.
- The initial codes were formulated and through an iterative process, the codes were applied to the data highlighting the emerging themes, (see appendix 4).
- Key recurrent words were identified by assessing the frequency of their use under each of the themes. This was to ensure consistency on the selection of quotes that illustrate the findings.

As an interpretive researcher, the method of analysis was through constant comparisons to generate meaning. This was executed by reviewing the data to devise temporary constructs (Thomas 2013) that appear to be recurring and of importance to the participants. Initially this involved reading and re reading the responses and colour-coding the recurrent themes. These were further refined to form second order constructs on further reading, which were finalised into themes. These were informed by the literature review and the subsequent conceptual framework to complete the fifth phase of the thematic analysis.

The final themes were

- professional growth motivation;
- professional competence/ self-efficacy;
- organisation commitment/job satisfaction;
- experiences of professional frustration;

Evidence of the application of these themes is highlighted in the coded interview transcripts in appendix 5. In addition to the thematic analysis of the interview data, key milestones were extracted from the questionnaire and interview data from both WBLP's, such as changes in job role, educational achievement, summarised in appendix 6. To further set the context for each participant, table 3 within appendix 8 highlights the political and organisational changes that were taking place prior to the WBLP and during the participants' time on the programme. In addition, it includes any key personal issues that impacted on their career progression.

The importance of the information within appendix 8 and 9 relates to the approach to narrative analysis put forward by Webster and Mertova (2007), involving the utilisation of critical events. They go on to note that a critical event, as told in a story, can reveal a change in understanding by the storyteller. What makes an event critical can include the following:

- It has an impact in the performance of the story teller
- It may have a traumatic component
- It is almost always a change experience
- Can only be identified afterwards
- Impossible to predict

Adapted from Webster and Mertova (2007).

The appreciation of external influences and personal factors beyond the WBLP is useful to enable a broader understanding, during the data analysis process, of factors that may influence the participants.

The baseline data was compared for both WBLP's to establish the education level of the participants and to ascertain whether there had been any changes in job role during their time on the WBLP. The data gathered relating to the participants age could not be compared directly as the CRM participants were asked to indicate their age through a series of ranges indicated on the questionnaire. Whereas, the CMDA participants were asked their age directly.

The method of generating codes during the analysis phase of the interview transcripts was informed by Saldana (2009, p.8) who states that coding is a method that 'enables you to organise and group similar coded data into categories because they share some characteristics'. He expands this in terms of narrative coding and its appropriateness for research into identity development, critical/feminist studies and documentation-of-life courses. The initial coding of the narrative resulted in several themes emerging, which formed the basis for interpretation. The themes were interpreted, based on my epistemological standpoint and experience as a practitioner and from the knowledge and relationship with the participants.

The next section will present the findings and analytical discussion through the participants' own words using the analytical framework outlined.

5.0 Findings and analytical discussion

This section will discuss findings from the data analysis relating to both WBLP's. The findings will be framed within the conceptual framework presented in the literature review. Namely using the elements that contribute to the development of professional identity outlined within the literature review,

- professional growth motivation,
- professional competence/self-efficacy,
- commitment to the organisation/job satisfaction
- experiences of professional frustration.

Adapted from Canrinus, *et al.* (2012) and Puurala and Lofströme (2003).

It should be noted that whilst analysis of the findings has been delineated using the elements of professional identity, there is some inevitable overlap between the elements. Findings from the analysis of the data from both WBLP's are presented together under each element within the conceptual framework.

To recap, the research was undertaken with participants from 2 WBLP's.

1. Certificate in Retail Management - 3 out of the 24 participants were interviewed.
2. Chartered Management Degree Apprenticeship - 6 out of the 10 participants were interviewed.

Baseline data findings

Analysis of the CRM baseline data (see appendix 6) revealed some pertinent findings in relation to the three interviewees from the CRM.

1. The educational level of the participants was high. Two received their undergraduate degrees during the WBLP, and one completed a postgraduate qualification after completion of the programme.
2. During the time on the WBLP, two of the three participants gained one or more promotions.
3. Two learners left the business after the WBLP for the following reasons.

Samantha met her partner during the WBLP and felt that a career in retail was not conducive with her future plans,

'...when I started the WBLP I definitely wanted to progress through retail into management, I definitely wanted to go down that line, but when I started the WBLP course I met my current partner and my perspective of working evenings and weekends changed dramatically, as it was having an impact on someone else.' (Samantha)

Mary's reason for leaving retail centred on her inability to secure promotion within the retail sector

'... I was applying (for promotion) and getting rejected as I didn't have enough experience, I wasn't even getting offered full time supervisor roles. It's not that it's (a retail career) not for me it's just that I was unable to find any roles - it was just very frustrating as I know you have to have experience and the qualification but I just couldn't get in anywhere.' (Mary)

The baseline information for the CMDA cohort (see appendix 7) indicated the following key areas

1. The participants had the same level of education as each other. This resonates with their career progression to date as they were all recruited to the organisation with A levels, and then undertook NVQ L4 in Business and Administration sponsored by the organisation.
2. During the timeframe of the WBLP, all participants were either promoted or changed role.

The following sections will outline the key findings within each of the four elements that contribute to an individual's professional identity, as per the conceptual framework. The findings are illustrated using quotes from the participants from both WBLPs.

Professional growth motivation

Evidence of professional growth motivation was established through the identification of key words within the interview transcripts that are associated with this concept. The key words were identified through the literature review, as well as by the frequency with which they occurred within the narrative data. The key words associated with the element of professional growth motivation are highlighted below and included the recurring words such as

Improve	Development	Wanted	Deflated
Motivated	Satisfied	Develop	Insights
Achieved	Goal	Progress	Succeed Capable

Figure 3: Professional growth motivation – Key words

The recurrence of these words was common to both sets of data from the WBLP's. The frequency of these key words within all participants' narrative indicates a high level of personal growth motivation exhibited by all participants during the WBLP.

Participants from both WBLP's indicated a high level of motivation to both their organisation/job role and their career development within their organisations. This is illustrated by Samantha's comment below.

'...when I started the WBLP course I definitely wanted to progress through retail into management. I was very motivated at the time and very satisfied with what I was doing and felt that I was getting a lot out of it.'
(Samantha, CRM)

Samantha suggests a high level of motivation to develop her career at the beginning of the WBLP as well as a sense of job satisfaction and personal achievement.

Mary maintained that despite the lack of promotion within the organisation, she appears to have a good level of motivation to undertake the WBLP and to progress in her career

'Yes, I definitely had a retail focus, I knew I wanted to do management, I wanted to get into a role that was more marketing or merchandising or strategy but I wasn't able to succeed in any of my applications for those positions'
(Mary, CRM)

The focus of the response from Sarah was related to personal growth which, in turn, would lead to more opportunities at work.

'...I wanted to keep moving up - my goal was to have a store of my own and a team of my own ... I wanted to develop in different areas, I wanted to know what was holding me back - why wasn't I getting these positions in work, what can I do to improve myself and be capable to show that I am willing to develop myself further because it's all about personal development basically and it (CRM) was a great opportunity' (Sarah, CRM)

When discussing motivation at Sarah's second interview two years post completion of the WBLP, she revealed a reduced level of motivation. To put this in context, Sarah had been unsuccessful in an application to study for a post graduate human resource management course, and a key member of the area management team had been made redundant

'.... I let it knock me back a little, as when I got the news I was like, I am not going to bother and felt deflated like you do.' (Sarah, CRM)

However, when considering a new area manager starting in October 2017, Sarah's motivations appears to be more positive moving forward

'....when she does visit I will have everything prepared and be on top of my game and I will answer any questions and then some. I will be very impressive for sure.' (Sarah, CRM)

Sarah's narrative reflects the fact that her motivations towards personal growth are influenced by external factors and is not constant. Despite Sarah's motivations fluctuating she indicates that she has maintained a high level of motivation to her role and development.

Evidence of the CMDA participants personal motivations for completing the WBLP are illustrated below.

'If I moved to another company a degree would be a basic requirement, so to even get through the first stage of an interview you would need a minimum of a 2:1 degree, so I wondered whether that was going to be a barrier to me developing my career.' (Ali, CMDA)

Ali indicated the importance of gaining a university degree and the personal benefits should she choose to pursue her career at another company. This is reinforced by Louise who commented that internally it would help her have a degree of parity with the graduates coming into the organisation.

'.....and that it would put me on a par with the graduates that are coming in. Then I have got the work experience and I have a degree.' (Louise, CMDA)

In addition to the issues of parity within the organisation Louise expressed her internal motivation to complete the degree

'....I am quite competitive within myself, so I think it has made me more motivated to do well.' (Louise, CMDA)

Kim stated that her motivations were entirely personal and she expressed frustration with the organisation and her perception that an individual's personal development was not their main priority.

'.....the reason I applied was mainly for personal development – I think again being really honest, personal development is not at the for front of the business mind at the moment so if you don't take these opportunities when they come to you I can't then complain that nothing has come my way.' (Kim, CMDA)

More specifically to the CMDA, Kim was positive about the fact that studying whilst working is beneficial to her career and does not incur a large debt on completion.

'So, the fact that I can still have achieved a lot in my career to date and walk away with a degree and not have any student debt and probably again have learnt so much more by doing it this way.' (Kim, CMDA)

Participants personal motivations for embarking on the WBLP varied on both WBLP's. They included both personal development and career progression. The CMDA participant's motivations were clearly linked to their drive to gain a degree. The reasoning for this was based on the fact that they felt that a degree would put the participants on a par with graduates employed within the organisation as well as to enable them to move organisations as a degree would be one of the pre-requisites for external jobs.

The findings resonate with the work of Nixon *et al.* (2006) regarding the typology of motivation for learning. Type three motivation (i.e. participant driven motivation) was evidenced by the researched participants, as their motivation for embarking on the WBLP was to progress both personally and professionally. The indication from the data was that this type of motivation was a key driver for completion of the WBLP. However, when considering the work of Brown, Armstrong and Thompson (1998) the extrinsic motivations factors, in the case of Sarah (CRM), had a, temporary, detrimental effect on her level of motivation.

These observations evidence the complexity of motivation and the contributing factors both external and internal that influence professional growth motivation.

Professional competency /Self-efficacy

Professional competence/self-efficacy was associated with several key words and recurring phrases such as –

Confidence	Learning	Resilience	felt able
	Challenges	Skills	Proud
Sense	Experience	Confident	
Knowledge	Understanding	Stronger	Development

Figure 4: Professional Competency/Self-efficacy – Key words

These key words were common to both WBLP's and resonated throughout the narrative from all interviewed participants. They indicate positive development and experiences through the use of words such as stronger, confident, knowledge and resilience.

The evidence below denotes the positive impact the WBLP had on all researched participants sense of professional competency. The participants interviewed indicated a greater self-confidence and belief in their abilities to carry out their roles.

'I probably felt more assured that I did know what I was doing, especially when we were given different tasks, I felt like I had a really well-rounded knowledge - it gave me confidence to do tasks, rather than waiting to be shown how to do it I could step up to the mark and do it. It made you feel valuable in your role and more confident.' (Samantha, CRM)

The feeling of being more valued in the role and subsequently more confident was a message that was common with the nine interviewees. In addition, the positive internal feelings i.e. increased confidence was apparent throughout the interviews as illustrated below,

'Certainly, after finishing the WBLP I felt like I was equipped to take on a lot of new challenges and I felt that everyone knew that I had completed this body of work and that it showed that I am very capable. It gave me more confidence in myself that I could do something, whereas before I kinda shied away from it 'cos I felt that I couldn't do such a good job as anyone else.' (Sarah, CRM)

Sarah has evidenced a shift in her perceptions of herself that she has attributed to taking part in the WBLP. It appears that through the CRM it has given her a sense that she is more capable of doing her job, taking on more challenges as well as getting the external recognition.

Sarah's self-belief was also apparent during the second interview undertaken three months after the first interview. She had gained a promotion and was managing two stores. The quote below indicates the continued positive impact on her confidence in her abilities, evidenced by her new-found status. It appears that she feels a need to prove herself in her new role but is also very motivated by this challenge. Sarah also felt the promotion had had a positive impact on her motivation levels. This is evidenced through her acknowledgement that recognition from the organisation in her abilities is an important factor to her.

'.....it is a huge responsibility, they must have a lot of faith in me and I really need to prove my capabilities as they had given me two stores to look after. It was probably one of the happiest times in my career because it was all the things that motivate me, so I was seen as a senior manager, I was seen as a person of authority and trust'
(Sarah, CRM - second interview)

CMDA participants reported an increase in their professional competence through their time on the WBLP. However, they did not feel in a position to confirm whether their development was because of the additional work experience they had gained during the WBLP or as a result of the WBLP. Indeed, the likelihood is that both factors contribute to changes individuals experienced in their abilities and professional competency

'..... it is difficult to say that I have changed because of the WBLP or because of the development I am getting in my role?I think I have become a lot more efficient in my role at work and I think I am a lot better at doing my job now and I am making the steps in the right direction for a promotion so yes, I can definitely see the difference - I am more confident in the role that I am doing.' (Jackie, CMDA)

Confidence is mentioned as a contributing factor to Jackie's feelings around her career and being ready for a promotion. This resonated with all of the CMDA participants interviewed. The increase confidence experienced links to participant's professional competence in that they felt more able to express their opinion and question colleagues in positions of authority

'...this can also increase your own confidence because it's almost like fake it till you make it. If you appear confident that in itself is half the battle. What the content of the discussion is irrelevant cos if you said it really shyly and are insecure the respond that you get can be hugely different. That has been a massive learning curve for me.' (Ali, CMDA)

Ali has indicated that through her experiences on the WBLP she has developed a more confident approach to her interactions at work. This manifested itself through the fact that feeling and appearing more confident to others gained different responses from others. This in turn impacted on Ali's behaviours with colleagues in a positive way.

Another impact of increased confidence through achieving good grades on the WBLP was an increased level of criticality in the workplace. Louise indicated that her increased confidence through the WBLP

has enabled her to question senior staff and put forward valid suggestions. This in turn resulted in increased confidence, linked to her sense of agency within her job role.

'.....what I have been coming out with grade wise from the degree I think that has boosted my confidence loads – I think like I must be thinking about things in the right way, being more critical in my job, so I am not just taking things that managers and senior managers are saying as the truth I have been able to think differently about it and put forward suggestions for what they have said. I think it has given me a boost of confidence in my own thoughts – yes, they are valid actually.' (Louise, CMDA)

The increase contribution the participant felt they could make within their working lives is shown below – this links in with the change in thought processes and looking more strategically at the business and their role.

'Having learnt certain content or even being exposed to case studies where I can take learning from, I feel like I do have more to add e.g. in any strategy facilitation session I feel like I do have something valuable to add whereas before I think I wouldn't have had the work experience to do it and academic knowledge so I would have acted purely as a facilitator.' (Ali, CMDA)

An emerging theme in relation to professional competency was a sense from the participants that they had built up their resilience. This was noted by Kay in relation to completing a WBLP whilst working full-time

'.....so, I guess it has made me mentally stronger just to keep going. I think my resilience has got better and somehow, I have got myself through this (WBLP). At the beginning I felt like the best option was just to not do it, but I am not that sort of person.' (Kay, CMDA)

The concept of resilience was expanded by Kay in relation to setbacks during the WBLP. She acknowledges her ability to come back from setbacks to ensure she can continue to succeed on the WBLP. This has impacted positively on her sense of confidence and strength.

I have surprised myself that I have been able to do it so that has improved my own confidence and what I think of myself – how I have managed to cope with it, there have been times I have thought that I really don't want to do this but you have to pick yourself up and get on with it. Some marks give you a setback, but you have to pull yourself back as there is only a month between deadlines, so you have to get on with it. So, I think my resilience was strong anyway, but I think this is an area that I have had to work on and it has become even stronger and has helped improve my confidence. (Kay, CMDA)

Following the departure of the area manager, Sarah has indicated that part of her professional identity was reliant on the recognition of a senior manager. Now that person is no longer with the organisation, in some way, she must build her professional identity up again.

'Yes, but now literally that has all changed like starting from the bottom and working my way up. Now I don't necessarily think that it will be a problem, I think that anyone who is working with me would know that I know what I am doing. Yeah, it's just that I worked for a long time getting all that groundwork there and now I think why do I have to start again?' (Sarah CRM)

To summarise the findings in relation to the participant's professional competency/self-efficacy there is an indication that all participants experienced increased confidence in abilities to do their job or an appearance of increased confident. This has contributed to an acknowledgment that they have a greater contribution to make within their role. These findings have also contributed to an increased sense of resilience, partly driven by the achievement of completing a WBLP whilst in full time work. These findings have evidenced a positive link to the participant's sense of agency as defined by

Emirbayer and Mische (1998), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) and their feelings of increased professional competence through completion of the WBLP.

Organisational commitment/ Job satisfaction.

In general terms, when the participants of both WBLP discussed their feelings of satisfaction and commitment towards their role and organisation it was in a positive manner. The use of the words indicated in figure 5 highlights the optimistic nature of most of the terms used. This included words such as grateful, committed and invest. However, within the participants on the CMDA there was an increased frequency in the use of terms such as sceptic and not altruistic. This has been explored to establish what may contribute to the use of these terms.

Progress	Grateful	Sceptic	Invest	Leaving
Not altruistic	Opportunity	Committed	Benefit	Keen
Promoted	Achievement	Impact	Experience	Profile

Figure 5: Organisational commitment/ job satisfaction– Key words

The following quotes from the interview transcripts illustrate the role the WBLP has had on the participant's job satisfaction and commitment to their role and their organisation.

'I was definitely keener to get more involved in the sort of task that my manager was taking on - I was very keen to offer my help and say I have learnt how to do this and would like to try it out. So, I was keen to progress and show her that I was learning more along the way and that I could do it myself. I was still very positive about my job and really enjoyed it and wanted to do well for the business.' (Samantha, CRM)

Samantha indicates that she was more willing to put herself forward and show what she has learnt from the WBLP. This also shows increased self-efficacy as well as satisfaction and commitment. The fact that she not only was very positive about her role, but felt, she was aware of and keen to help the business appears to be a positive indicator of the impact of the WBLP.

'I do think it helped me feel more committed, I felt a great sense of achievement when I was doing the coursework and I was seen by my peers as being more knowledgeable cause I had done the programme, so I it elevated my profile amongst the staff and amongst other staff within other stores as they were all aware of the programme. We got mentions from our leaders in the UK which is a big deal as you don't ever hear from him usually, so it was a great accolade so because of that I was seen as a go to person.' (Sarah, CRM)

This section of narrative evidences Sarah's internal sense of achievement that is reinforced by the external recognition from peers and the organisation. Sarah's feelings towards the organisation, indicated below, evidences a strong sense of commitment and a desire to stay within the organisation for a considerable length of time. In addition, she indicated that her career progression is situated within the organisation and has a plan of how to reach her goal, within the organisation, as part of her 10-year plan.

'What I would see myself doing is in 5 years I would like to get to the level of market manager in the brand, I was applying for a position of maternity cover, and having that experience I would be in a good position to get the role in the future, that was my game plan and it still is but I just have to bide my time. This is my 5-year plan then the next thing is too possibly move into a more settled HR role so rather than having the day to day running of a store I would literally be just dealing with people and the issues around that. This is the 10-year plan.' (Sarah, CRM).

Sarah is indicating a clear commitment to the business and has a 10-year plan to back this up. By contrast Mary, who was unable to get promoted during the WBLP, indicates her frustration at not being promoted which impacted on her job satisfaction and commitment.

'I am not sure (why I wasn't getting promoted) I was applying and getting rejected as I didn't have enough experience. I wasn't even getting offered full time supervisor. It's not that it's (retail) not for me it's just that I was unable to find any roles it was just very frustrating as I know you have to have experience and the degree as well but I just couldn't get in anywhere.' (Mary, CRM)

The second interview carried out with Sarah shows a change in organisation commitment and job satisfaction, this followed the departure of her regional manager. It should be noted that the regional manager was unexpectedly made redundant after 26 years of service.

'Yes, I do have a good one (CV) and I have kinda looked in recent months to look at different brands and companies. I have kinda like become sort of institutionalised. I am kinda afraid to leave but not afraid all at the same time, like I think when it comes time to leave I will know myself. At the moment when things are so unsteady you just want to stay - better the devil you know.' (Sarah, CRM)

The narrative indicates a degree of uncertainty regarding her future within the organisation following the departure of Sarah's regional manager. However, at the time the interview took place, Sarah indicated she would stay in her current position. The changes in job commitment and satisfaction are clearly evidenced as being transient. The influence of external factors, for example the departure of a colleague appears to influence the participants sense of satisfaction and commitment to the organisation. This resonates with Jackie's sense of satisfaction with the organisation that is evidenced below. Her sense of satisfaction is driven by the investment they have shown towards her in putting her through the CMDA. This sense of satisfaction is reflected in the work of Yang, Sanders and Bumatay (2012) regarding the investment the company has made in her development.

'I feel satisfaction working for the organisation because they are putting me through my degree and they are investing in me - but for my specific job role, I am happy with my job.' (Jackie, CMDA)

Ali makes a very interesting point regarding the perceived investment the organisation has made through the CMDA, funded through the workplace levy. The fact that the organisation is obliged to pay the levy, and therefore fund the apprenticeship, has resonated with Ali. Her completion of the CMDA has not impacted on her in terms of a greater commitment to the organisation, in fact she states that she would not feel committed enough to the organisation to stay after completion.

'I wouldn't say it has any impact on job satisfaction in terms of commitment. It's a difficult one because I am also quite naturally a sceptic but quite a realistic sceptic. I also know that this scheme (CMDA) is through the apprenticeship levy - it is not completely altruistic, out of the kindness of their heart, it's for a business benefit. They are getting something out of it and I'm getting something out of it, but therefore wouldn't feel bad if I left quickly afterwards.' (Ali, CMDA)

For two participants on the CMDA there is a link between the way in which the WBLP is funded and how they feel toward their organisation as evidenced by Ali in the above quote and Louise below. Louise appears to have mixed feelings towards the funding of the CMDA. She clearly feels more valued by the company through their investment in her but is also aware that the organisation must pay the workplace levy funding.

'I feel more valued because I feel like the company has said yes I invest in you and within the company in general you quite often feel like you are not being rewarded for the amount of work you do. Whilst I am grateful for the opportunity at the same time, I feel like they are doing the apprenticeship programme to counteract the levy that have to pay rather than genuinely as a company caring for the people on the programme. So, it's a mixed balance because I really like it on one hand but wish they would up it a bit on the other. (Louise, CMDA)

On further area which has impacted positively on Clare, (CMDA) is that in completing the CMDA she has not incurred a debt. Whilst she acknowledges this makes her value the company in the short term, she also indicated that her positive feelings towards the company may not be long lasting.

So, I am quite grateful for that and obviously it has taken away the pressures of the debt and all that stuff. So yes, it does make me value the company I think – I don't know whether long term it will last to be honest but at the moment it probably does. (Clare, CMDA).

The factors that have contributed to the participant's sense of commitment to their organisation and job satisfaction are diverse. They range from the sense of recognition from the company, investment in the participants development, and gaining a degree with no associated debt. The importance of these factors to the participants may be governed, to some extent, by what motivates an individual to remain committed to their organisation and feel satisfied in their job role.

Experience of professional frustration

The frequent words used by the participants to describe their experiences of professional frustration, all had a negative connotation or were factors that were external to the participant. The participants choice of words and phrases when discussing their experiences of professional frustration also appeared to be emotive in their language e.g. the company can be so cut throat, and I was obviously devastated

Restructure	External	Consultation	Support
Changed	Devastated	Hard	Treated
Exposure	Shocking	Poor	Frustration

Figure 6: Professional frustration – Key words

The participants on both WBLP's expressed their professional frustration as a result of a range of different factors e.g. redundancy, lack of opportunity and inadequate support.

This frustration with the organisation manifested itself in relation to Mary. She completed a retail management degree in addition to the CRM to increase her chance of securing a senior role within retail. However, she was not successful in securing a senior role and subsequently left retail to work in another sector. It is not clear whether there is a link between the feelings of professional frustration

evidenced by Mary (CRM) and the fact that the interview with her was difficult. My interpretation of the challenging interview with Mary (CRM) was that the dialogue was overshadowed by the lack of opportunities she had had within retail resulting in her opinion that both her degree and WBLP were a waste of time

'.....as I feel that my degree wasn't worth it as I didn't get the jobs I hoped I would. Same with the WBLP, I would have liked to stay in retail but they weren't giving me any opportunities and they said that I didn't have enough experience' (Mary, CRM)

Following on from the area manager's redundancy, Sarah clearly expresses a high level of frustration with the organisation and her attitude towards her employer

'.....if after 26 years of service they could treat her like that then where do we all stand, it's kinda left a bitter taste for a lot of us that the company can be so cut throat, that it's all about numbers at the end of the day and that you are just another cog in the wheel really. It has led to a lot of senior managers leaving,' (Sarah, CRM)

This frustration was also apparent when Sarah did not get a promotion she felt she had worked hard for and was ready to take on a further challenge.

'I really felt like I was top of the game and I was getting the results from the sales figures, so at that point I was extremely happy which is why when I applied for the permanent role and didn't get it I was obviously devastated but sure these things happen.' (Sarah, CRM)

Sarah experiences echo the research into liminality of Ibarra and Obodaru (2016). Sarah lack of promotion and departure of a key colleague appears to have made her question her current role and employment within the organisation.

Whilst Samantha (CRM) was studying for a BA (Hons) Business and Philosophy and working for the high street retailer, she experienced frustration in the inflexibility of the organisation to accommodate her need to change her working hours. This led to her ultimately leaving the organisation.

'..I had wanted originally to reduce my hours, as I still enjoyed the job and working with the team and using things that I had learnt on the WBLP, but it wasn't feasible at the time I had to unfortunately had to hand in my notice' (Samantha, CRM)

Through all the CMDA semi-structured interviews professional frustration was a common theme, although the source of the frustration varied. Jackie, Louise and Kim felt frustrated because of the organisations recent round of redundancies or the lack of promotion opportunities within specific area of the business.

'I have been through a bit of a restructure since so my job has changed.' (Jackie, CMDA)

'I want to move up into a management role within L & D but there is not much movement in the company, so I might have to look external to the company.' (Louise, CMDA)

'...then I was in consultation again and there was a restructure in that area of the business so that job no longer existed.' (Kim, CMDA)

Whereas, the contributing factor for Ali's (CMDA) professional frustration was the lack of support given by the organisation. This was articulated through a comparison to the attitude of the company towards graduates within the organisation.

'..... but we don't even talk about the programme here we don't get a huge amount of support. I always think there is a comparison between what we are doing and for the graduates and the type of support that they

(graduates) are given. The exposure is still very different so we very much feel like the poor cousin. I think that comparison makes it quite hard whereas if we didn't have the graduates we wouldn't see that as so much of an issue but they are a very easy way to compare.' (Ali, CMDA)

The concept of organisational support is further expressed by Louise (CMDA) who commented on the attitude towards the participants as apprentices

.....there is a lot of stigma around apprentices, I mean there are a lot of us on the programme. This hasn't changed who we are as people or how much energy we put into work, I think that sits funny as we have always said that graduates within the business are seen as completely different from apprentices and now we are seen more equally as we are doing a degree. (Louise, CMDA)

Despite the variation in the source of the professional frustration, the impact it has on the participant's sense of identity appears to have a major effect on their future plans. This is shown through the departure of two of the interviewed participants from the CRM and one from the CMDA.

The data generated offers a rich insight into the experiences of the participants' despite the research limitations. The limitations of the research are an important factor to consider and communicate (Kumar 2014) to present a realistic viewpoint. The narrative approach used to research identity has inherent limitations in that it can be difficult to generalise identity principles beyond the level of individual description (Kroger 2007). This is reinforced by the fact that the participants who were interviewed were all self-selecting and as such may not be a representative sample of the cohort. They also all had achieved a high level of education see appendix 6, which may not be indicative of participants on other WBLP including degree apprenticeships. From a research design perspective, the use of telephone interviews, as opposed to face to face interviews, may have acted as a barrier to communication. This could have resulted in the misunderstanding or, because of the poor quality of the connection, the inaccurate interpretation of the meaning of the narrative.

The next section offers a discussion into the key themes from the research and its relationship with the literature and highlights the contribution to knowledge gained from the research findings.

6.0 Concluding discussion

To discuss the findings of the research it is important to revisit the research question.

An exploration of factors that contribute to participants' professional identity development through their experiences on a work-based learning programme

The findings drawn from this constructivist research, based on interviews with nine participants across two WBLP's, indicate that participant's experience of WBLP does shape their professional identity. However, the elements of professional identity that contribute to its development, play a part to varying degrees depending on a range of factors. Whilst it is important to note that changes within a participants' professional identity will not be solely as a result of the WBLP, the evidence indicates it has been a major contributing factor in its development. The key themes to emerge are related to the transient state of professional identity and the interactions of factors that contribute to its changing state.

The variable contribution of the elements researched within professional identity development are illustrated as follows. During the CRM WBLP, and for the next two years, the impact of the WBLP on Samantha and Sarah's sense of professional identity manifested itself in a positive way, resulting in career progression. However, for Mary, although feeling motivated and ready to take the next career step, she indicated a lack of job satisfaction and professional frustration in terms of the ability to gain promotion. This appears to have had a negative effect on her professional identity, which arguably, resulted in her leaving retail and entering a different sector.

Sarah highlighted the elements of professional identity that have affected her in a negative way e.g. professional frustration and job satisfaction, however these elements did not necessarily impact on her feeling of self-efficacy and her professional competency. This can be related to one's evolution of identity in role transitions as discussed by Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010). This was evidenced by the change in Sarah's personal narrative over the period of the two interviews post completion of the WBLP.

Participants on the CMDA expressed the importance of the qualification in terms of parity within the job market and with graduates employed by their organisation. This impacted positively on their sense of professional identity as it contributed to their increased sense of self-efficacy. Linked to this was the increased recognition from managers and the participants' greater confidence to have a voice within the workplace. Both factors increased their sense of agency (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998) through the attainment of a qualification.

The commitment level of the CMDA participants varied, although all had a positive sense of job satisfaction. One contributing factor to the levels of commitment appear to be linked to the funding of the CMDA. As their employer had to pay the workplace levy due to the size of their payroll expenditure, the value of the WBLP in terms of the participants organisational commitment, was interpreted as less than that of the CRM participants whose employer had paid for the programme. These findings relate to Hertzberg's (see Cole and Kelly 2011) theory relating to motivation at work and the key motivators of achievement, recognition and advancement. For example, for the CRM participants job satisfaction and commitment as well as motivation were all high during the WBLP. Yet, following completion of the WBLP, this was not necessarily sustained in the case of the CRM participants. Despite participants positive perception of the WBLP, and the fact that all the participants were fully committed to their organisation, circumstances outside of the WBLP, i.e. a new partner and need for less unsociable

hours and being unable to secure a promotion within the company, led to two interviewed CRM participants leaving the organisation. This can be linked to the professional frustration experienced by participants on both WBLP's. Puurula and Löffströme (2003) highlighted this element as being important to the development of professional identity within SME's. In this research it appears to have a disproportional effect on the participant's sense of professional identity. Professional frustration was most obvious for Sarah, (CRM) following the departure of the regional manager, when she questions the organisations motives and indicated that they did not align with her own personal motivations. One might argue that this is closely linked to Bandura's (1977) concept of perceived self-efficacy, concerning an individual's ability to influence events that affect their lives.

Within the context of the participants on the CRM WBLP, external factors occurred that impacted on participants' sense of professional identity. Professional frustration, organisational commitment and job satisfaction may have been influenced by the demerger that took place in 2013 which brought with it new management team and organisational structures. This resulted in job losses and reduced hours for staff (Felsted, 2013). During the time the health and beauty retail participants were studying for the CMDA, the organisation underwent a restructure following a company buy out (Tresidder, 2017). The period of transition, following the restructure, which in accordance with Ecclestone, Biesta, and Hughes (ed.) (2010) could have impacted on the participant's sense of identity. These organisational changes would contribute to the participants experiencing a state of liminality in relation to their career development. As evidenced, participants responded to this betwixt and between state in different ways. These contributing factors to participants' professional identity illustrate the complex nature of the interactions between the researched elements of professional identity and the external environment. There are also, equally complex factors that may be drawn from the participant's personal life, both past and present, which are beyond the boundaries of this research.

The findings within this thesis, when applied to the conceptual framework laid out within the literature review, can be illustrated through a revision of the conceptual framework that reflects the relative importance of the elements (see figure 7 below)

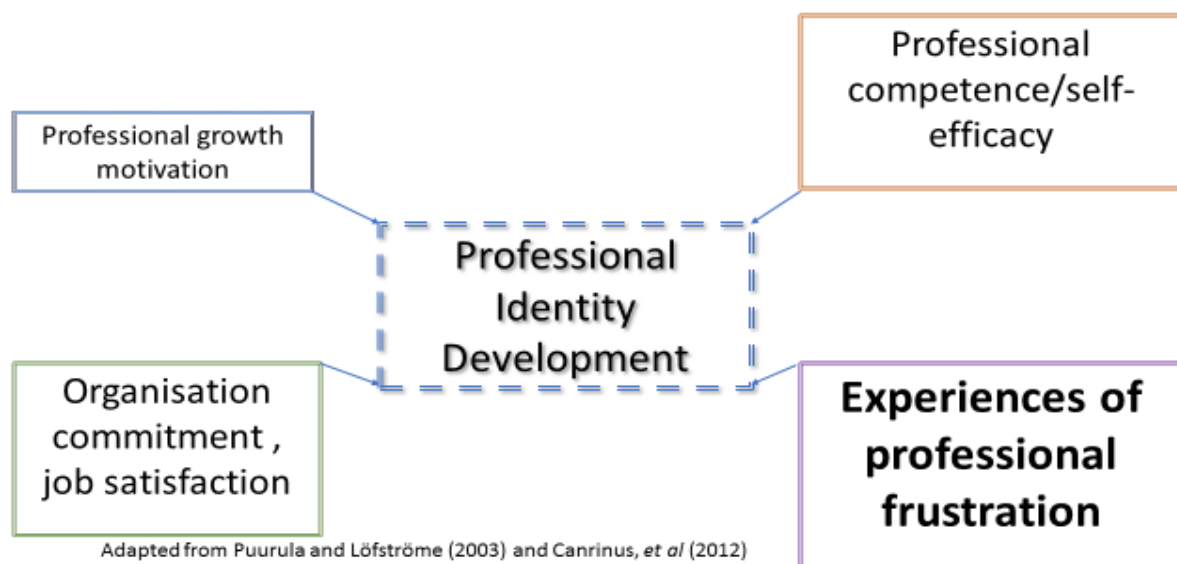


Figure 7: Revision 1 of conceptual framework

The different sizes of the text boxes illustrate the relative contribution of the elements to participants' development of professional identity. This relative contribution has been surmised through analysis of the interviews and the perceived impact the participants have indicated that these factors have had on their professional development.

In order of impact, these are,

1. experiences of professional frustration,
2. professional competence/self-efficacy,
3. commitment to the organisation, job satisfaction
4. professional growth motivation.

The box size was determined by the impact each of the elements had on the participant based on the finding from the research. The findings indicated a disproportionate affect experienced by the participants of for example professional frustration and the impact this had on their feelings of professional identity, this is represented by a larger text box.

The research indicates that experiences of professional frustration has a greater impact than the professional growth motivations of an individual to their development of professional identity. This links with the job satisfaction and commitment to the organisation, as experience of professional frustration can contribute to negative feelings towards the organisation. Professional competence/self-efficacy are in turn impacted by professional frustration. It has been shown that a reduced sense of agency (a contributing factor to self-efficacy) is detrimental to a participant's professional identity.

A further revision of the conceptual framework is proposed, that includes, external factors that influence an individual's development of professional identity in both a positive and negative manner, see figure 8



Figure 8: Revision 2 of conceptual framework to include the external factors that impact on the development of professional identity

The external organisational factors and the national context are outside the influence of an individual's control and as such can impact on one's sense of agency. Professional identity development is closely aligned to the issues of agency (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998) as indicated by the findings. Autonomy over one's professional life was very important to the participants in relation to positive development of professional identity. Work-based learning programmes can be a contributor, in a positive way, to a sense of agency over career development. However, when professional frustration is experienced, through circumstances beyond the participants' control, this can have a detrimental effect. Within the fluctuating political and economic climate discussed within the introduction, the need for resilience is a key feature of an individual's professional development, and one which, arguably could be embedded within WBLP to highlight its importance.

The findings illustrate that professional identity changes over time. As highlighted by Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003), it is a process whereby people engage in forming, repairing, maintaining, and strengthening or revising their identities. This is further explored by Puurala and Löfströme (2003) who argue that professional identity is a continuum that is influenced by both contextual factors and personal characteristics. These concepts have been illustrated through the experiences of the participants on both WBLP's. The impact of changes in professional identity have been manifested in both positive and negative experiences for the participants. However, by the very transient nature of professional identity these changes have not remained static.

In summary, the investment of an organisation into work-based learning can help develop an individual's sense of professional identity. However, if the organisations commitment to the individual is not played out in real terms, such as through promotion or more responsibility, an individual's agency and sense of professional identity can be affected detrimentally. The importance of external factors outside the WBLP are important considerations for employers, participants and HEI to ensure the expectations of all three parties are managed realistically.

With limited evidence within the literature regarding the impact of WBL on participants' professional identity within the current apprenticeship agenda, there has been a reliance on research from traditional professions such as education and health, to inform this research. This research will contribute to a gap in knowledge pertinent to the current WBL agenda. It has been evidenced that employers play a key role to enhance the WBL experience. Therefore, it is important for employers to invest both time and money to ensure WBL and degree apprenticeships produce maximum benefits for employers and participants.

In relation to the current degree apprenticeship agenda, the implication is, that in addition to the investment in the employee through the WBLP, wherever possible, their needs to be a clear career path or long-term benefit for the apprentice. It is important to ensure that degree apprenticeships have currency within organisations and are not devalued because of a lack of opportunity for employees to develop their career.

The originality of this work lies in the relevance to the field of work-based learning, in particular degree apprenticeships and the importance of the role played by stakeholders such as policy makers, employer, HEI's and participants. Linked to the contribution to knowledge from the research, there is also a significant contribution to practice. The importance of the model (Figure 8) is in its use by practitioners as a tool to illustrate the importance and significance of the different roles played by stakeholders in the success of degree apprenticeships.

Policy makers, within the degree apprenticeship arena, need to be mindful that despite the workplace levy being a tax that large organisations have to pay, it is unadvisable for these organisations to encourage their employees to undertake degree apprenticeships without adequate support and alignment with career development.

As outlined by the CIPD (2018) degree apprenticeships have the following benefits for employers

- Maintaining or improving future skills in the business
- Provided improvements in the goods and services they offer
- Contribute to staff morale

For these benefits to be realised, the contribution of the factors within the model (Figure 8) needs to be communicated to ensure the employers do not experience the opposite of the benefits outline by the CIPD (2018). Due to the complexities of offering a degree apprenticeship for its employees, employers need to get buy in from decision makers in the organisation, learning and development departments as well as the participants line managers. The dissemination of the findings from this research is important for all of the stakeholders within organisations to ensure there is not a disparity between those in an organisation that make the decisions regarding degree apprenticeships at a strategic level and those who function at an operational level. Finally, participants on degree apprenticeships, whilst they may be supported by their employing organisation, need to aware that there are business needs that may indeed create professional frustration but cannot be avoided for a business to survive.

The model is an invaluable tool for stakeholders to highlight the complex range of issues that contribute to the successful implementation of a degree apprenticeship programme.

8.0 Further research

This research has consisted of a small-scale study situated in a rapidly changing political and economic external context. It is an important area given the investment in WBL within apprenticeships. Further studies would be beneficial in a range of organisations and HEI's. This would build on the findings from this research to further explore the development of professional identity through WBLP. Another factor that could be investigated is the importance or otherwise of a professional development framework and/or affiliation with a professional body to an individual's professional identity development.

Finally, future research may involve the examination of the development of professional identity in terms of gender, informed by the work of Ely, Ibarra and Kolb (2011). This may highlight potential considerations in the future development of specific WBLP's.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Participants information form/Consent form

Nottingham Trent University - [REDACTED] Course

Participant's information

I am currently undertaking the Doctor of Education degree (EdD) at Nottingham Trent University. I am researching the [REDACTED] and if it has had an influence on you, the student, in terms of your career and personal development. This will include trying to find out if you feel more able to do your job, apply for promotion and have new skills that you didn't have before the course started. The research will be carried out through semi-structured interviews and will take no more than 1 hour.

Many thanks

Joanna Booth

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Consent sheet

I understand that, while the information gained during the study may be used for research purposes, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential. I am satisfied that anonymity and confidentiality will therefore be assured at all times.

I understand that I may withdraw from the research project before 31st August 2017.

I understand that data will be stored in a secure place, both paper and computer based data, and destroyed once the research has been completed.

I understand that I may contact the researcher if I require further information about the research.

I understand that the work is being carried out in line with the BERA ethical research guidelines (BERA, 2011) and in accordance with Nottingham Trent University Research Ethics Policy 2015.

The nature and purpose of the research has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.

Signed (Research participant)

Print nameDate

Appendix 2- CRM Questionnaire

Code:

(official use only)

Initial Research Questionnaire

Part 1 – About you

1. **Are you:** Male Female

2. **Age range:** 16-18

18-25

26-35

36-45

46-55

56+

3. **Please tick the highest level of your educational qualification:**

None

GCSE (Grades D-G)

GCSE (Grade C and above)

Scottish Highers

Republic of Ireland Leaving Certificate

A level or equivalent

NVQ (please state what level) _____

First degree 1

Other _____

4. **What was your job role at the start of the WBLP**

5. **What is your current job role?**

6. **What are your professional goals?**

8. How comfortable/confident are you about the following?
(Scale 1 -5 with 1 being least confident & 5 being most confident)

1 2 3 4 5

Work situations with your colleagues?

Work situations with customers?

Work situations with your line manager?

Work situations with area managers and above?

Any comments?

Part 2 – WBLP

9. What were your reasons for applying for the course? (tick all that apply)

To gain a university qualification

To learn new skills in relation to your current and future role

To progress in your career

Increased exposure within the company

To meet new people

To gain more confidence in your role

Other (please state)

Part 3

Expectations

10. What expectations do you have, if any, about how the course may affect your day to day professional life? (tick all that apply)

Understanding of technical issues such as finance and marketing

Change in your relationship with colleagues

Change in your relationship with your manager

Change in your understanding of my brand

Change in your understanding of job-related issues (please specify)

Other please state

11. What expectations do you have, if any, about how the course may affect your long-term professional life?

A career progression/change

Your peers treat you differently viewed (in what way?)

Your family & friends treat you differently (in what way?)

Other please state

12. What expectations do you have of how the course may affect you personally?

Change in your confidence when working with your colleagues

Change in your confidence working with your managers

Changes to your communication skills

Other please state

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Appendix 3 - Interview questions

Interview questions

In 2015 you completed the [REDACTED], during this interview I would like to ask you a series of questions about the course and your career since completing it.

Recap on the course – overview and elements they completed.

1.0 Retrospective questions

- 1.1 Tell me about your career to date? Including the time during the course and until today.
- 1.2 What were your career aspirations before you applied for [REDACTED]?
- 1.3 Do you remember why you applied for the [REDACTED]?
- 1.4 What are your memories of the course?
- 1.5 Do you use any of the course content in your working life? If so can you explain?

2.0 Change element

- 2.1 Can you talk about your feelings towards current job role? In terms of
 - Job satisfaction?
 - Occupational commitment?
 - Self- efficacy? (definition ...
 - Levels of motivation?
 - Level of expertise?
- 2.2 Do you feel that the course has given you recognition from the company? If so how
- 2.3 Was there anything about the course that you feel contributed to your current position?
- 2.4 Has the course made a personal contribution to you? If so how
- 2.5 Were there any particular individuals or networks that have been particularly important during your career development?

3.0 Career aspirations

- 3.1 What are your career aspirations?

2nd interview CRM - Interview questions 3rd October 2017

Elements of professional identity
Cannius et al.
Self-efficacy
Job satisfaction
Motivation
Job commitment

Professional identity and
role transition

Identity work and play
Liminality

1.0 Introduction as to professional identity

Self-efficacy

2.0 On completion of [REDACTED] did you have a greater belief that you could achieve your career goals?

Job satisfaction and commitment

3.0 Did you feel at any point that your feelings towards your job and your career were influenced by taking part on the [REDACTED]

4.0 You appear very commitment to XXXX– what has had an impact on this?

Level of motivation

5.0 Looking at your change of roles how has this had an impact on your levels of motivation?

Professional identity and role transition

6.0 During [REDACTED] you took on a different role i.e. taking over a store for 3 days how did that make you feel about your abilities to do a role at a higher level or using different skill sets

7.0 Did this help you feel more able to apply for promotions and if so why?

8.0 When you moved roles for example dual site manager how did you express yourself in terms of the role/promotion

9.0 Did you feel you had a new sense of identity at work?

10.0 Can you remember how you felt when your roles changes between roles – currently do you feel

Your identity as a manager in retail?

How did you feel about your role during the time of the closure of the store?

Ongoing managerial identity – has it been a struggle to develop your identity at work?

Do you feel your identity has changed over the last 2 years since completing the course?

repairing, maintaining, and strengthening or revising their identities

Appendix 4 -Data Analysis Codes

First Constructs

Professional Identity	
- Job satisfaction	PI-JS
- Occupational commitment	PI-OC
- Motivation	PI-M
- Self-efficacy	PI-SE
- Organisational Frustration	PI-OF
Identity Play	IP
Liminality	PI-L
Role Transition	RT

Second constructs

Professional Identity	
- Job satisfaction /occupational commitment	PI-JSOC
- Professional Growth Motivation	PI-PGM
- Professional competency/ Self-efficacy	PI-PCSE
- Experiences of Professional Frustration	PI-PF

Appendix 5 – Examples of coded interview transcripts

Interview date: 25th July 2017

Date transcribed: 21st August 2017

Introduction by JB - Included the details of the research, recording and consent, confidentiality, withdraw up to the end of August, kept secure.

JB: Could you recap of what happened whilst on the WBLP course and what has happened to date in terms of your career?

Participant 1: I obviously finished the course and continued to work for [REDACTED] as a supervisor and I was also finishing my undergraduate degree as well in my final year in Nov 2015.

JB: What was your degree subject?

Participant 1: Business and philosophy joint honours, so I was finishing that at the time as well and graduated at the end of 2015 whilst working in [REDACTED]. At that point before I finished and graduated from the WBLP course I had applied to do my post graduate degree in primary school teaching, so I then found out I got onto the course and then I did that after having graduating from my degree and the WBLP course. I started that in August 2016, and at that point I stopped working for [REDACTED] as it was unmanageable with the hours that I was doing to try and continue with my studies as on the course I was sent out on school placements. So, I left [REDACTED]. I had wanted originally to reduce my hours as I still enjoyed the job and working with the team and using things that I had learnt on the WBLP but it wasn't feasible at the time I had to unfortunately had to hand in my notice, but during the summer of 2017 June, July August I have been in a different [REDACTED] store.

JB: Who is line manager?

Participant 1: It was [REDACTED] but it's now [REDACTED] – she has taken me under her wing for the summer.

JB: Have you finished your primary post graduate course?

Participant 1: Yes, I graduated a couple of weeks ago actually and I am going on to do my probationary year so I will have my own class in August and I will be fully qualified and registered by this time next year if all goes well.

JB: Is that what you wanted to do when you started the WBLP course?

Participant 1: No when I started the WBLP course I definitely wanted to progress through retail into management, I definitely wanted to go down that line but when I started the [REDACTED] I meet my current partner and we were planning on moving in together and it was just my perspective of working evenings and weekends changed dramatically as it was having an impact on someone else.

JB: Retail can be quite harsh in that respect.

Participant 1: Yes, especially as he had quite reasonable hours, finished at 4 and only worked during the week so it did change, I still enjoyed the job and still enjoyed what I was doing but it was the impact on what lifestyle you had to have surrounding it.

JB: Can you remember why you applied for the WBLP course?

Participant 1: It was definitely because while I was still in a supervisor role it was really my line manager [REDACTED] that suggested it to me and said I would be a good idea to do that to get further training and to know more about the role and to give me a wider look into the business and how everything works as I would say that I was as a supervisor I was relied upon quite heavily when people were on holiday, so it was definitely useful for both me and the rest of the store as well. (6.26 mins) and also a personal challenge as well. I thought at the time I was being a bit silly still doing my degree at the same time but actually there were a lot of links so it was beneficial to both aspects.

JB: What are your overarching memories of course?

Participant 1: Definitely that I made a lot of links with different colleagues that worked in different stores which was really useful. There was a lot to do with visual merchandising was in it and commercial training which I did then implement to my work

JB: Do you remember any more specifics on course content in relation to retail and also what you are doing and now?

Participant 1: The thing that actually stuck in my mind is a video that we had to watch and the vm and how to lay out the shop floor. I found that really useful and I referred to it because you see it unfold in front of you and apply it to whatever you needed within your store. That the thing I remember most.

JB: Its real and you can implement it straight away

Participant 1: Yes, it is.

JB: You finished WBLP in 2015, when did you start your masters

Participant 1: In Sept 2015 I was doing my final year of my degree and graduated in 2016 and then applied for primary teaching in Sept 2016

JB: What role did you have during course?

Participant 1: Part time supervisor and at one point I was asked to be supervisor at [REDACTED] for a while as well a month to 5 weeks so it was definitely as an intermediate team leader as a link between the assistant manager and team manager.

JB: Can you remember any whilst you were on the WBLP how you felt towards your role as at that time you still wanted a job in retail, how did it make you feel in terms of your job satisfaction and how committed you were to it?

Participant 1: I was definitely more keen to get more involved and/in sort of task that my manager was taking on I was very keen to offer my help, and say I have learnt how to do this and would like to try it out so I was keen to progress and show her that I was learning more along the way and that I could do it myself and in the store so I was still very positive about my job really enjoyed it and wanted to do well for the business.

JB: You were quite motivated at the time?

Participant 1: Yes, I was very motivated at the time and very satisfied with what I was doing and felt that I was getting a lot out of it.

JB: In terms of how you felt about yourself as the course went on did the change in terms of ability to do the job and how you felt in general?

Participant 1: I probably felt more assured that I did know what I was doing, especially when we were given different tasks, like the different commercial challenges and different modules through the course I then felt like oh I have done this before or my manager has spoken about this or asked me to do bits and pieces and to actually have a really well rounded knowledge of it gave me confidence to rather than waiting for her to show me how to do it or ask me have you done this before I could step up to the mark and do it made you feel valuable in your role and more confident.

JB: Do you think the company gave you recognition, more recognition because you were doing the course?

Participant 1: I would say so, probably more on a personal level rather than a professional level, if that makes sense like obviously there weren't any extra promotions or other professional perks, if that is the right way to put it. But definitely a sense of I felt more of at the same level as the rest of the management, so I definitely got more recognition from my area manager Shona, so from that perspective I felt like more part of the management, deciding how the business is actually run rather than just being a sales assistant with a set of keys.

Appendix 6

Table 1: Summary of Interviewed Participants - Certificate in Retail Management

Participant	Age at start of programme (2015)	Role at start of programme (2015)	Current role (July 2017)	Education Level (July 2015)	Current Education Level (July 2017)
Samantha	18-25	Supervisor 16-24 hour	PT supervisor Oasis From August 2017 - Newly Qualified Teacher	Scottish Highers	BA (Hons) Business and Philosophy. From August 2017 - Postgraduate Diploma in Primary Education
Mary	18-25	Supervisor 8-16 hours	Allied Irish Bank – customer service advisor	Higher Certificate in Retail Management	BA (Hons) Retail Management
Sarah	26-35	Assistant full time	Branch Concession Manager	BA (Hons) English and History	BA (Hons) English and History

Appendix 7

Table 2: Summary of Interviewed Participants - Chartered Management Degree Apprenticeship

Participant	Age at start of programme (2016)	Role at start of programme (2016)	Current role (July 2018)	Education Level (July 2016)	Current Education Level (July 2018)
Louise	23	Learning & Development Designer for retail in UJ	Global Learning & Development Designer	NVQ L4 Business and Administration	CMDA BA(Hons) Management & Leadership
Jackie	22	Assistant Brand Manager	Assistant Product Manager	NVQ L4 Business and Administration	CMDA BA(Hons) Management & Leadership
Ali	23	Programme Manager	Planning Manager Global Brands	NVQ L4 Business and Administration	CMDA BA(Hons) Management & Leadership
Kim	25	Assistant Brand Planning & Advocate Manager	Assistant Learning & Development Manager	NVQ L4 Business and Administration	CMDA BA(Hons) Management & Leadership
Kay	22	Lead Assistant Supply Manager EB	Supply Manager – Project	NVQ L4 Business and Administration	CMDA BA(Hons) Management & Leadership
Clare	22	Assistant Supply Manager	Lead Assistant Supply Manager	NVQ L4 Business and Administration	CMDA BA(Hons) Management & Leadership

