

Rethinking Social Issues in Education for the 21st Century:

*UK Perspectives on
International Concerns*

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Edited by

Wendy Sims-Schouten and Sylvia Horton

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Wendy Sims-Schouten and Sylvia Horton
Portsmouth 2016

PREFACE

This book is based on papers presented at annual symposia organised by the School of Education and Childhood Studies of the University of Portsmouth. The content relates to the programmes taught in the School which range from full time undergraduate degrees in Early Childhood Studies, Childhood and Youth Studies and combined degrees in Childhood and Youth Studies and Early Years Childhood Studies with Psychology; Master's Degrees in Education Leadership and Management, Teaching and Learning and Education Studies; and PGCE courses in Secondary Education. Staffs within the School are research active and these papers reflect some of their work and that of research collaborators.

There are many social issues currently on the political and governmental agendas in the UK and other countries. Some of those issues relate to children and young people and are of concern to those working and researching in education. The boundaries between the academic disciplines of politics, sociology, economics, psychology and education are porous. Multi-disciplinary approaches to social issues reflect that fact. This collection of chapters illustrates how common interests and collaboration can assist in our understanding of complex social issues; the evaluation of current governmental responses; and the promotion of ideas about the way forward into the 21st century.

The book is divided into three parts corresponding to different levels within the education system: PART ONE consists of chapters on Early Years and Primary Schooling; PART TWO relates generally to Secondary Education and youth while PART THREE combines chapters on Tertiary Education.

Chapter 1 addresses issues to do with safeguarding children. The Laming Report of 2003 responded to the circumstances surrounding the death of nine year old Victoria Climbié. It was highly critical of the Child Protection System, pinpointing a dearth of communication between professionals and a lack of commonality across agencies in their approach to child protection. As a result, protecting children in the UK took on a new identity of "Safeguarding", with the concept of integrated practice running through its core. The workforce was tasked with ensuring effective intervention at the earliest possible stage involving all the relevant professions such as early years professionals, health visitors and

teachers. Collaboration amongst the professions of health, social work and police was not a new concept at the time, but there was a lack of consensus as to what collaboration actually means.

The chapter focuses on the practice experience of early intervention in safeguarding. It considers the scope of the intended change within the sector and questions the extent to which the practice reflects the policy intentions of the government. Establishing “universal” practitioners as professionals with the skill set to safeguard children, and a common understanding of levels of need, underpins the ability and willingness of the sector to respond to the call for early intervention. The key roles of health visitors, early years practitioners and school teachers are explored via a case study and barriers to communication, including bureaucracies and organisational cultures, are identified. The chapter concludes on a positive note with the development of Multi Agency Strategic Hubs (MASH) pointing the way.

Chapter 2 examines issues to do with childhood obesity and healthy eating. Childhood obesity has reached epidemic proportions in the UK according to both the government and the media, and calls have been made for strategies to reverse this “unhealthy” trend. Research suggests that this is due to a complex interplay of demographic, social and family variables and to deal with the “obesity crisis” early intervention is necessary. Government “health” policies and practices are becoming radically interventionist, ranging from adaptations to school health and physical education, to the threat of “obese children” being removed from their families and placed into social care.

The chapter explores how talk and discourses around health circulate both relationally and affectively within school contexts. Schools and pre-school settings subject children to an increasing range of surveillance techniques, in an attempt to monitor and regulate diets, healthy eating and children’s weight. This involves controlling children’s lifestyles, inside and outside of school, by influencing their food choices and more directly by collecting information on their bodies with a view to monitoring and addressing the issue of weight. This is fuelled by the construction of obesity as a “moral” crisis. Here, however, mixed messages are sent out, suggesting that “fat” is “bad” while encouraging children to “eat well”, and have a “good appetite” to be healthy.

The chapter shows that the discourses of health, which circulate in schools and pre-school settings, impact significantly on children’s embodied consciousness. The authors highlight the relationship between obesity, the media and other eating disorders and the links between unhealthy eating behaviours and bullying, particularly “body-bullying”, as

weight-related criticism is associated with pre-adolescent children's body self-perceptions and associated conditions such as bulimia and anorexia.

The literature on health education and prevention programmes, demonstrates that dominant approaches and discourses are currently following neo-liberal principles in placing responsibility and accountability for health with the individual and the family. The "blame" for childhood obesity is located within the family. An association is also made between weight and socio-economic status. The chapter traces the development of government policies and practices in the UK with their focus on controlling and regulating children's bodies because they are the most amenable to change. It concludes that government intervention is a blunt instrument but may lead the way to changing people's eating habits as well as reducing the costs on the NHS.

Chapter 3 examines children's underachievement in reading at school with special reference to race and ethnicity. Reading is a foundation skill and remains central to success both in school and the labour market. Literacy also has the potential for empowerment and can open doors to social mobility and success in life. It facilitates learning, the acquisition of knowledge and the ability to influence decisions. There are many children who struggle with reading and as a consequence underachieve in the school curriculum. This has consequences for the schools that have targets to reach, for the children who lose out on learning opportunities, and for society as these children often drop out of school, become unemployed or involved in crime. It is therefore a social issue.

The author examines a brief history of reading policy and the origins of the "poor reader". Before mapping out the debates around race, reading and attainment at school, she exposes the ways in which this is part of wider debates within left wing and neo-liberal discourses and demolishes the claim that race is no longer an issue in education, even though the evidence is that "black boys" and other ethnic minorities feature significantly in under-achievement in reading. A backwards glance at education policy on reading reveals traditional differences between Conservative and Labour governments although a convergence to neo-liberal discourses occurred in the 1990s.

Race did not appear as a feature of "poor readers" until the immigration of large numbers of people from the commonwealth countries of India, Africa and the Caribbean in the 1960s. These immigrants were referred to as "black" and so race became identified with "Blackness". "Poor readers" now appeared to be rooted in race rather than class. Immigrant communities tended to be concentrated in London and other metropolitan areas and Local Education Authorities such as the Inner

London Education Authority (ILEA) produced books and materials reflecting the racial compositions of their communities, and pursued integration policies. The radical education reforms of the 1980s however transformed the system of decentralised administration and teacher control of the curriculum. The introduction of a national curriculum; the creation of local management of schools; and increased centralisation, monitoring and regulation of schools through inspection by OFSTED took their place. Governments set down reading programmes and teaching methods to be used.

Racial discrimination has been dealt with by law since the 1966 Race Relations Act which established the right not to be discriminated against on the grounds of race. Further legislation has extended that right to gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, age and sexual orientation. However, institutional racism is still endemic in schools and other major institutions. Research studies highlight a combination of factors which support racism. These include the low expectations of "black" children, especially "black boys"; the "white" based cultures of schools and the inappropriateness of the metrics which govern testing of reading for "black" and ethnic minority children. This is compounded by the dominance of a neo-liberal ideology which lays responsibility for poor reading on the individual and the family and not the school system.

The chapter ends with a discussion of data collected by the author when researching "pupil" and "teacher" voices. The narratives provide a different lens through which to view the issues of race, reading and achievement pointing the way to revisiting the social issue of "race" in schools.

Chapter 4 addresses the issue of cyberbullying which is a matter of concern to both the public and governments. Over the last 25 years a growing body of research has investigated both bullying and cyberbullying in schools. Much of this research has interpreted bullying based on a definition rooted in a power imbalance behaviour framework and conceptual understanding of language. The author reflects on that research and associated policy interventions placing them alongside his own research findings, which illuminate the socialising practices and language codes of young people in both physical and digital networking sites. The chapter theorises that the students' language codes used on digital networks and other working sites are not in flux and self-referential as others suggest but rather located in a reality constructed outside the digital sites. The language codes and behaviours of young people identified in physical sites are being re-presented and re-constructed on digital sites. These behaviours support the building and maintaining of

young people's narratives but are identified as in juxtaposition to "legitimised" interpretations of behaviour and may result in perceived bullying within schools and on digital social networks.

At a practical level, the chapter discusses the implications of current education policy which favours academic (particularly cognitive) skills development over social and emotional aspects of learning and restricts the students' socialising practices in physical school sites and the classroom. This policy, alongside restrictions on students' opportunities to gather in public spaces, requires them to manage the self-project substantially through digital networking sites. The discussion identifies the recent trend towards networking using media, which have a limited range of characters available to convey language codes and behaviours used in physical socialising sites. This raises concerns that communication between students will become increasingly problematic and will lead to further difficulties in interpreting students' behaviours. The chapter challenges educators to re-think cyber-bullying and digital social-networking issues and urges the need for further research into how social relationships are managed on digital networking sites.

Chapter 5 examines absence from school. With the introduction of compulsory schooling, the concept of absence from school, or "non-attendance" arose. The extent to which the state intervenes in family life through the provision of a service that must be used, with legal sanctions for not using it, provides the backdrop to the chapter. Compulsory schooling raises broader issues about the role of schools, social control and the resistance of children, young people and some parents to the attempt by the state to exercise control over where children spend their time and who should be held accountable. The chapter draws on comparative research on persistent and serious absence from school in England and the Netherlands.

These two countries illustrate different perspectives on the application of legal sanctions. In England the focus of sanctions is on the parents, but in the Netherlands, it is on the young person. Sanctions include fines and imprisonment (in both countries) and community service in the Netherlands. These contrasting responses to the issue are located within a review of the wider research. Absence from school is a complex phenomenon that takes a number of forms and is referred to by several different terms, which relate both to the degree of control or choice exercised by the child/young person/parent(s)/carer(s), as well as the extent to which absence from school relates to problems at home or in school, and finally to the severity of these problems.

The term ‘truancy’ is generally used to refer to the decision not to attend school being in the control of the child/young person. Children who do not attend school for whole days are called “blanket truants”. “Post-registration truancy” refers to children who do attend school but miss particular lessons. The latter form of truancy is harder to register and monitor and is likely to be under-reported in attendance data. Other concepts including, “school phobia”, “separation anxiety” and “school refusal” are also discussed. “Persistent absence” from school is a more serious problem, because this is likely to be connected to a range of vulnerabilities, and sometimes offending and anti-social behaviour. It also has consequences for the future employment, life style and integration of young people into society and is thus a social issue.

The chapter offers a critical review of the role of the state in relation to enforcing school attendance in the context of the often contradictory responses to home education and exclusion from school. It also provides some wider international data confirming this issue is not confined to the case study countries.

Chapter 6 addresses issues to do with educational standards, teaching methods and the UK’s relatively low position in the world of comparative education. In the 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests, carried out by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and involving students from all 34 OECD member countries and 31 partner countries, the UK came 23rd in Reading and 26th in Maths. This was well below countries in the Far East including Korea, China and Singapore. The PISA testing cycle covers Science, Reading and a particular focus on Mathematics. The results provoked concern in the UK from academics, teachers, their professional associations, the national media and politicians who perceived this as a threat to the nation’s economic future.

This chapter explores ideas about education, teaching, learning and assessment that are currently endorsed by English government ministers responsible for education and their policy advisers. In the PISA test countries the high scores are often attributed to intensive and excessive student workloads, a focus on testing and rote learning. The Chinese education system is acknowledged as “excellent” in preparing outstanding test takers, like other education systems within the Confucian cultural circle: including Singapore, Korea, Japan and Hong Kong. Vietnam, an OECD partner country, also out-performs the UK in Science, Mathematics and Reading. The Vietnamese secondary education system has been influenced by the education models of the former Soviet Union, the French elitist system, as well as Confucian traditions from the Chinese.

But there is now a growing recognition of the need to renovate the existing curriculum and explore new teaching methods to move away from rote learning.

The authors report on a small scale action-orientated study carried out in a selective high school in Vietnam that educates “gifted and talented” young people aged from 16 to 18 years. Although it is a requirement of the Vietnamese national curriculum, the study of literature is not popular amongst gifted and talented science and mathematics students who prefer to study the subjects they specialise and excel in. Parents often share this view. This led to posing the research question: ‘How can we improve the teaching and learning for students who are gifted in the natural sciences and mathematics in the study of literature to develop alternative skills?’

The research project is contextualised, identifying the key characteristics of Vietnamese education, teaching, learning and assessment, explaining the continuing influence of Confucian philosophy. Details of the research site, the sample of students, who are gifted in mathematics, physics and informatics, and a full account of the two stage research process, are provided. Findings are presented with data based on student and staff responses. Tentative conclusions are drawn from the research and issues are identified which may be of interest to teachers and other educational professionals in the UK, given current concerns arising from the PISA outcomes and the most recent government policies.

Chapter 7 explores the subject of dyslexia. Despite the raft of approaches to supporting learning needs, and policies of inclusion, which have proliferated since the Warnock Report in 1978, the identification and effective support of those with dyslexia remains a problem. There is evidence that failing to adopt a systematic approach to identifying and remediating the learning challenges experienced by children with dyslexia and other literacy difficulties, has long term social and economic implications. The social impact of dyslexia includes low self-esteem, a sense of failure and frustration, leading to behaviour problems, school exclusion, inability to find jobs, apply for benefits or pass theory driving tests, spiralling sometimes into petty offences, a life of crime, prison and serial re-offending.

The author demonstrates that while dyslexia is a complex and confounding learning difference, more is now known about how it impacts on learning and the role that neurological differences have to play. However, no single cognitive or neurological model seems to fit all of the data and this opens the way for “sitting on the fence”, not identifying dyslexia, and consequently not addressing the learning needs of one in 10 of the population whilst they are in school and when intervention is easier

and most appropriate. Whilst highlighting the many difficulties faced in diagnosing and responding to the needs of children with dyslexia the author highlights that when mixed with the Government's agenda on raising standards in schools, it is clear why addressing the needs of such learners remains so challenging.

The chapter draws on neurological research and the nature of literacy development. Contrary to the belief that the aetiology of dyslexia stems from brain differences, which exist at birth, the author conjectures that these brain differences are created by a "disordered reading experience". Understanding dyslexia is just the first step in appropriate intervention and support but it remains a key piece of the jigsaw. Following an overview of the social and emotional costs of dyslexia and the effect of limited literacy skills in the personal and societal contexts the author cites the disproportionate number of prisoners in the UK who are dyslexic. Research has shown that giving prisoners literacy support can have a significant social impact in reducing recidivism.

The chapter concludes by discussing the findings of the Rose Review on the teaching of children with dyslexia. Its far-reaching recommendations, including the training of 4000 specialist dyslexia teachers, demonstrated a will to recognise and address the waste of human resources created by failing to address the issue but there is still scant evidence that this has made a real difference so far!

Chapter 8 is written by a sports scientist with an interest in mental health. Childhood is a critical time in which physical, social, emotional and cognitive development takes place. A mental health problem that emerges in childhood can be profoundly disruptive and may affect the way that individuals think, feel, be productive, relate to others and function socially. It is perceived that mental health problems amongst children in developed economies are rising and are estimated to affect as many as 20 per cent of the population in some areas. Identifying and treating mental health problems early is therefore essential to avoid impairment of children's cognitive, social and emotional development. This chapter examines a wide range of international research into the effects of mental health interventions in schools to promote mental health literacy, detect mental health problems and address stigmatization.

The author reviews 47 studies selected on the basis of clear criteria. The majority of studies took place in the United States, Canada, Australia and the UK but eight other countries were involved. Most investigations were based in secondary schools and consisted of mainly female participants between the ages of 8 and 18 years old. Many different research methods were used and the interventions were delivered by

teachers, health care professionals and individuals living with mental health problems themselves.

The findings are discussed in three sections. The first relates to mental health knowledge where it is evident that the knowledge of the children was significantly improved about a wide range of mental illnesses including depression, anxiety and bi-polar disorder amongst others. They were able to show awareness of symptoms of different conditions. However, some research revealed that mental health knowledge decreased over time. The second section reports on the attempts to change attitudes towards mental health and stereotyping. Again, the results were positive with improvement in attitudes, understanding and compassion and a willingness to interact with individuals living with mental illness.

The third section of the chapter is focused on health seeking behaviour. Here, the results are more mixed, with some evidence that post intervention individuals were more willing to seek help, but not all research projects found such positive results in spite of improvement in attitudes towards mental illness. These general findings are examined more closely in the seven studies based in the UK where the author examines in detail the research methods used, the numbers of respondents involved and the specific findings

A discussion follows on the value of the heterogeneous interventions identified and what research is currently underway. The latest research is helping to provide evidence to support new curricula, resourcing requirements and delivery of programmes. The author recommends the use of the Medical Health Council (MRC) Framework to conduct a wide scale project in the UK on mental health literacy programmes for children in schools. The chapter concludes with a thought provoking list of what we do know and what we need to know about mental health education in schools.

Part 3 of the book consists of four chapters about issues in higher education. Chapter 9 explores bullying and discrimination in universities. Over the past 25 years, a substantial body of research has investigated bullying (and more recently cyberbullying) among school children on the one hand and among adults in the workplace on the other. However, only a very small number of studies address aspects of bullying in higher education, despite the fact that the National Union of Students (NUS) annual Student Experience Report highlights the problem, with disturbing case study accounts of long-term damage to self-esteem, academic achievement and emotional well-being experienced by some students.

The author describes the literature on bullying/cyberbullying amongst university students, with particular emphasis on gender issues and on

discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity and sexual orientation. She then explores some of the reasons why bullying amongst young people in this age-group (18-30) may have been overlooked by educators and researchers. At a practical level, the chapter discusses implications, which include the role of student unions, the role of the university health and counselling services, and the need for stronger anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies. At a more theoretical level, the chapter explores two explanatory models including the Social Identity model of De-individuation Effects (SIDE) and Participant Role Theory. A discussion follows of social aspects to the under-researching of cyberbullying amongst university students, for example, the extent to which students are considered by the authorities and by themselves as independent adults rather than young people in need of support. The study of cyberbullying amongst university students has the potential to illuminate our understanding of social relationships during the transition from adolescence to adulthood and from higher education to the workplace. Finally, in harmony with the aim of the book to explore current social issues, there is a discussion of equality and inclusion in the context of higher education.

Chapter 10 also addresses the issue of diversity within a higher education context with specific reference to black and minority ethnic students. Using the acronyms BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) and BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) the authors differentiate those people who are of non-white descent but permanently resident in the UK from international students who have come to the UK to study but will return to their own country when their studies are completed.

The chapter explores the respective needs of these two groups and the extent to which higher education institutions acknowledge and accommodate these needs.

Governments have been committed to increasing participation of BME students in higher education and to ensuring that the educational profession itself reflects the wider society. These objectives have been challenging and the record of recruitment, retention and achievement of BME students in higher education and in teacher recruitment falls far short of the government's stated aims. This chapter investigates the reasons for this and provides a case study of how one university sought to increase recruitment, retention and achievement of BME trainee teachers on a PGCE (Post graduate Certificate in Education) programme.

The authors first explore "race" as an ideology and whether that ideology plays any part in outcomes for BEM students. They see race as multi-layered and argue it has evolved into a more subtle form of

prejudice based on ethnicity and the distinction of “insiders” and “outsiders” and “otherness”. The literature review provides evidence of assumptions made about particular ethnic groups and particularly teachers’ prejudgements and lower expectations of such groups. They refer to this as a hidden form of racism along with the statement that people are “colour blind” as this is a denial of their different cultural backgrounds. The same issue arises if domestic and international BME are grouped together ignoring their different backgrounds and identities.

The case study describes how one institution sought to increase recruitment of BME students to a post graduate teacher training programme and developed strategies to meet their needs and overcome the problems they faced. The study involved the use of surveys and interviews over a period of time and included evaluations by OFSTED of the course’s success in promoting equality and diversity. The findings demonstrate that increased recruitment was achieved due to reframing the content of the programme, highlighting cultural diversity and the inclusivity of the institutional setting itself. Advertisements were placed in specialist journals which targeted BME. The course was also promoted in a number of community settings and help was given to potential applicants in preparing application forms and advice on interviewing.

Retention was also a major focus as there is evidence that the placement periods in schools are often bad experiences for BME trainee teachers. A series of interventions including additional English language classes, the training of school mentors in sensitivity to BME students’ needs; the appointment of a BME support tutor, herself with an ethnic minority heritage and English as her second language. The role of this tutor is multifaceted and key to many of the developments which have resulted in the course being found “outstanding” in the last two OFSTED ratings.

The authors conclude that although the UK has moved forward in integrating BME students and increasing diversity there is much still to be done. Prejudice, covert forms of racism, and ignorance of diverse cultural heritages need to be removed as we move forward into the 21st century.

Chapter 11 fits nicely with the previous chapters in PART 3 as it focuses on higher education and issues of inclusion, gender and equality using the work of the social theorist Pierre Bourdieu. Under-representation of students from less privileged social backgrounds in UK higher education institutions is an enduring problem. While there are examples of productive participation, the pattern of collective trajectories of this group differs sharply from that of traditional entrants. The onus falls largely on individual students to adapt to established practices, which remain

strongly oriented towards traditional white middle-class populations. The chapter draws on research exploring the educational experiences of students from non-traditional academic backgrounds and illustrates the ways in which social provenance influences students' transitions into university; their experiences within it; the successes they achieve; and the resources they accrue as a result.

Following a review of changes in the higher education landscape, especially those associated with the widening participation agenda, readers are introduced to a case study of a university programme related to occupational therapy (OT). The national intake consists of mainly mature women students and both ethnic minorities and men are under-represented. A substantial number of students have prior experience of working in the health and social care sectors but many enter with 'non-traditional' academic backgrounds. Using regression analysis the progression routes of 239 OT students are examined, highlighting that less privileged socio-economic backgrounds were a significant predictor of poorer outcomes. To establish a deeper understanding of some of the challenges underpinning these quantitative findings, the author considers in more detail the findings of the qualitative arm of the research. Bourdieu's work provides the theoretical framework within which the research findings are further examined. Key forms of capital, including academic, linguistic, social and professional, were found to be central to students' development and successful engagement with the logic of practice in the higher education field. The influence of these capitals on the experiences and trajectories of participants are highlighted and their relevance to other disciplines and implications for academic practice and social inclusion in higher education are discussed.

Chapter 12 explores reflective practice in teacher training and education. Firstly, the author introduces Finlay's reflective practice continuum of reflection, critical reflection and reflexivity, and Schon's and Ghaye's types of technical reflection, before examining their role in the training of student teachers. A literature review confirms that reflective practice is a well-established feature of the teaching profession in developing professionalism among graduate teachers and that it is a "process of learning through and from experience towards greater insights of self or practice" (Finlay, 2008, p.1). This 'process of learning' is the basis for all interpretations of the term, but contention amongst researchers and educators occurs when discussing what it is that student should be learning when engaging in that reflective practice.

Based on a case study of six trainee teachers on a university PGCE programme, the author provides further evidence of the practice of each

form of reflection but challenges the view that they are experienced sequentially as Finlay's continuum implies. Using the data and narratives collected from semi-structured interviews and a study of the students' reflective practice sheets, the author demonstrates that critical reflection and reflexivity are often fused and experienced simultaneously by student teachers, and again may be found while students are involved in the more technical forms of reflection. She explains why this is the case and what triggers each form of reflection, while making the point that the student teachers are not just gaining 'greater insights of "self"', they are redeveloping and questioning their identity and their social environment. The students are recreating their own practice almost daily by changing and improving that practice, and their teaching identity is also constantly changing. From her study a more accurate definition of reflective practice in ITE, is posited, as "the questioning of practice, purpose, identity and the social context due to an increase in knowledge and experience".

Finally, the chapter traces the changes currently taking place in teacher education in England with the move towards locating it entirely in schools rather than in universities. This raises concerns about the effects this could have in limiting teacher student's exposure to different school or college environments, their institutional identities, and internal power structures. The conclusion reached is that all forms of reflective practice are important in the development of professionalism amongst teachers. They are also important in empowering teachers to be continually learning and developing but with an awareness of the power structures and ideology within which they function.

We recommend these chapters to you with the hope that they will stir your interest and participation in finding solutions to these and other issues in the field of education in the 21st century.

Sylvia Horton and Wendy Sims-Schouten, August 2016.

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PART 1

CHAPTER ONE

“YOU SHARE COFFEE, YOU SHARE CASES”: THE PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE OF SAFEGUARDING IN UNIVERSAL PRAXIS

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Introduction to the Issue

Public policy in the UK and Channel Islands has established Safeguarding as a matter for professionals, supported by the Children Act 2004 and the Local Safeguarding Children Boards (Webber, McCree and Angeli, 2013). *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2004) sets out a classification of Universal, Targeted and Specialist Support services for children. Of these, Universal Services included those professionals with whom all children are in contact on a regular basis. These are practitioners within schools, nurseries, and primary care, from whom the majority of the 11 million children in the UK will have professional input (Parton, 2011). Sharing information is part and parcel of the work of Universal Services professionals, acting as the primary assessors and, to some extent, gatekeepers to more targeted and specialist services. Given the mandate for safeguarding children across the whole children’s workforce (DfE, 2011; DfE, 2014; Siraj-Blatchford, Clarke and Needham, 2007), it is important to consider the experiences of professionals working at the Universal stage in the Safeguarding agenda. This is especially significant at the early help stage, which is about:

“providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child’s life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. [...] it [is also] provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care” (DfE, 2015, p.12)

Prior to 2014, statutory authorities had a legal position within a family, but the DfE (2014) signposted that the “Early Help” assessment should be undertaken by a “lead professional” (p. 5), which could be anyone from a Teacher, Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO), General Practitioner (GP), Family Worker or a Health Visitor. At this problem point assessment and intervention rest at an informal level dependent on the willingness of both the agencies and families to engage in the consent-based, voluntary nature of the assessment process. It also represents an assumption and expectation that all such professionals will accept responsibility for intervention, rather than referring on to social services at times of apparent risk (DfE, 2011; Ofsted, 2015). The significance of raising the profile of multi-agency responsibility gives rise to questions of status, power, scarcity of resources, values, language and entrenched ways of working, as traditional groups of professionals are challenged to work differently and be accountable to one another in a new way (Powell and Uppal, 2012). Though highlighted more than 10 years ago, in the green paper *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003), this remains a challenging area of practice. Agreement as to what is considered suitable for a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) remains hotly contested (Ofsted, 2015). Furthermore, the onus on Universal Service practitioners to “hold the baton” (McCulloch, 2007, p. 37), rather than leave child protection to social workers, is central to the discourse of safeguarding. Mukherji and Albon (2010) talk about the fact that “truth varies according to perspectives” (p. 10) and with professionals holding the baton in Safeguarding it is important, to find out what they really experience. For teachers, early years professionals and health visitors, amongst others, the shift to safeguarding and the onus on early intervention has represented a significant shift in their role and, as stated above, given rise to issues of status, power, values, language and entrenched ways of working (Powell and Uppal, 2012). Despite some progress, these issues remain difficult to negotiate (Ofsted, 2015).

Our considerations, in this chapter, are informed by our own professional involvement as Health visitor, Early Years Practitioner and an Assessment and Intervention Team Manager (Early Intervention). Using a semi-structured interview approach, we conducted interviews with five practitioners, which focused on:

- i) their understanding of and responsibility in safeguarding;
- ii) the ethical standards they took into consideration;
- iii) the range of their professional experiences, and the adopted praxis in working within the safeguarding agenda;
- iv) their perceived successes and the shortcomings of the system.

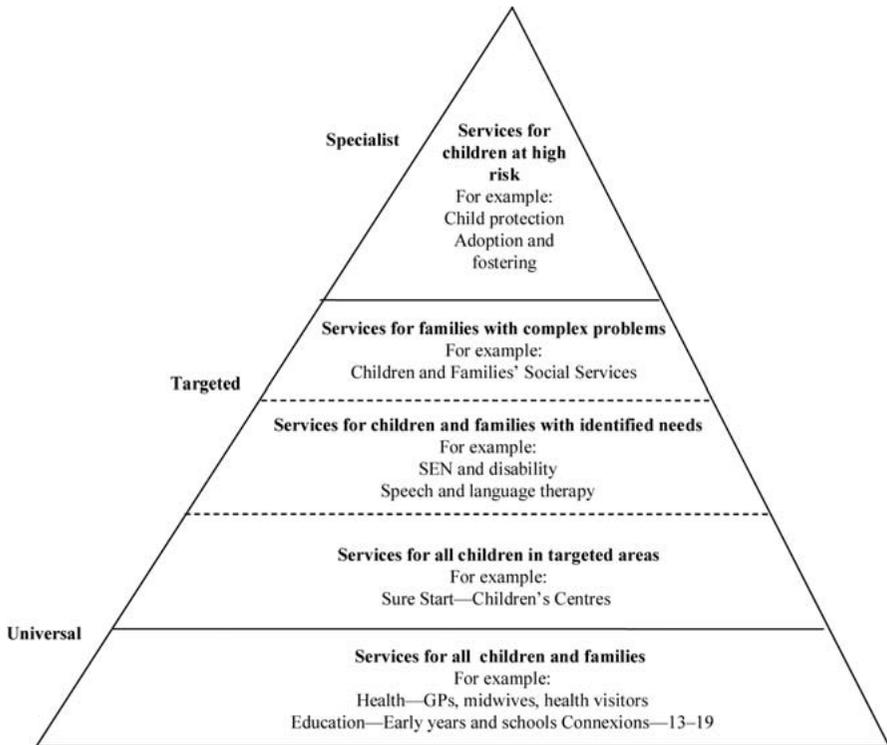
This chapter sets out to investigate the complexities, successes and pitfalls of effective integrated working of those professionals involved in safeguarding children.

Literature Review and Context to Safeguarding

In order to give context to our discussion we draw on two models which explain the structures of the Children's Workforce (Figure 1.1), and indicate levels of intervention (Figure 1.2). These models have permeated the sector and have remained central concepts for the system throughout policy changes of the intervening years.

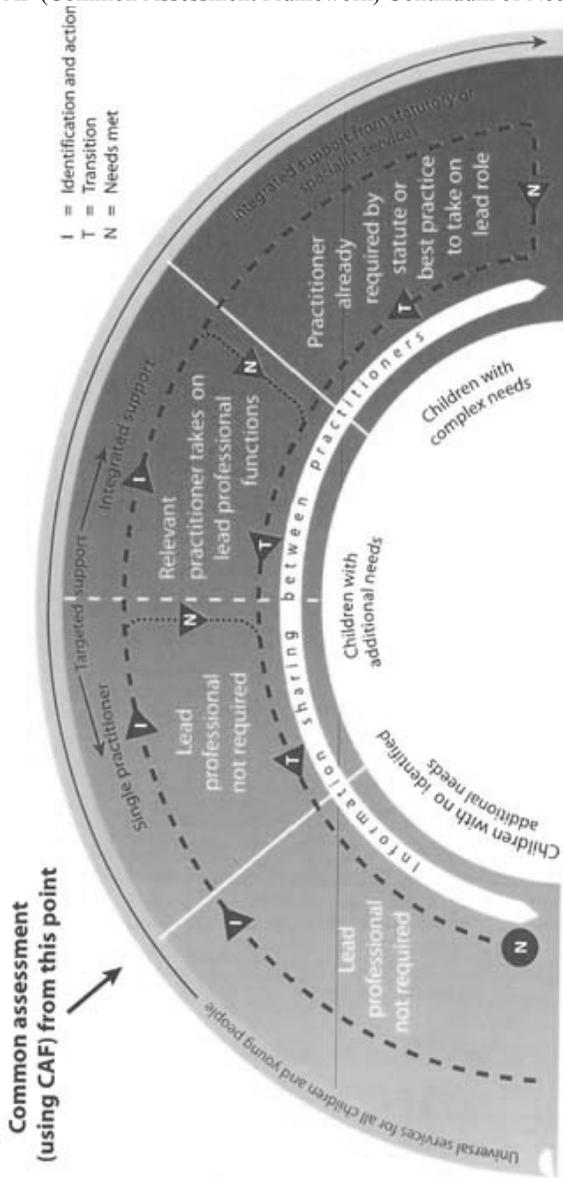
Establishing ownership of safeguarding amongst the Children's Workforce is viewed as critical to the effective availability of early help to families (DfE, 2011). High profile "Serious Case Reviews", such as that of Victoria Climbié and Baby Peter Connelly (Akister, 2011), have given rise to widespread criticism of practice in the UK, questioning what makes multi-agency collaboration effective. Horwarth (2009) identifies a lack of consensus amongst the children's workforce as to what safeguarding actually means, pinpointing the variability in activity and outcome. The shared vision and purpose of a true team approach is something quite different to a linear sharing of information that is complicated by different employers and priorities. This is debated by Stafford, Smith and Vincent (2011) who consider the child protection system at different levels (macro, meso and micro). Figures 1.1 and 1.2 illustrate the children's workforce and are a means of identifying levels of intervention (Figure 1.1), and positioning children on a spectrum of need (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.1 The Categorisation of the Children’s Workforce.



Source: *Every Child Matters*, DfES, 2003, p. 21.

Figure 1.2 CAF (Common Assessment Framework) Continuum of Need



Source: CWDC, 2009, p. 31.

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