Developing Competence: Early and Mid Career in Community Learning and Development

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1   Introduction

This research has been conducted with practitioners in Community Learning and Development (CLD), many of whom have experienced great changes in the focus of their work over the past decade. The changes are continuing and affect practice in six main ways (see Bamber, 2000; Shaw and Martin, 2000; Henderson and Glen, 2005; Tett, 2006). First, there is a move away from the educational role of the worker towards the facilitation of learning. Second, there is a stronger emphasis on geographical communities rather than communities of interest. Third, there is an increasing focus on regeneration and capacity building. Fourth, there is an imperative to establish new forms of partnership working across a range of agencies. Fifth, workers increasingly are called upon to support community-planning processes. Sixth, they are much more likely to be managing staff than previously. Another major aspect of change is a shift in the conception of 'competence', which is understood in this report not as a repertoire of specific skills but rather as a general disposition and orientation towards professional work and the values and purposes it embodies. 'Developing competence' is therefore about growing into a professional role and cultivating a distinctive professional identity. It is also important to recognise the significance of the new political context in Scotland and to note its relevance to community-based educational work. The creation of the Scottish Parliament and the need to stimulate and sustain public interest and confidence in its work suggest a new agenda for civic education and learning for democracy in Scotland. Community learning and development has a particular contribution to make to this process. What is now required is the opportunity for the profession to think creatively and collectively about how it can make this distinctive contribution to the development of democratic life in Scotland today.

The field of CLD has been redefined by a succession of reports and memoranda emanating from the Scottish Executive over the last ten years starting with the 1998 Scottish Office Report, *Communities: Change Through Learning*, commonly known as the Osler Report after the name of its chairperson. This report effectively led to the dismantling of the Community Education Service created following the Alexander Report (1975), arguing that community education was a process of community learning and development rather than a discrete service. This process, it suggested, could be found in the operations of a range of services such as schools, libraries or housing associations. The thrust of Osler was to encourage and support such agencies in their adoption and use of the process by making the skills of community educators more widely available. The former Community Education Service was to be seen as one part of a wider field constituted by this range of public and voluntary sector agencies to be known as Community Learning and Development (CLD). This new focus was clarified in the 1999 SOEID Circular 4/99 that required all local authorities to develop Community Learning Plans in order to bring the respective strengths and resources of the various agencies together in a more concerted attempt to address problems jointly. This role was further enhanced by the statutory requirements on public agencies to engage with communities contained in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. The focus of CLD was refined in *Working and Learning Together to build Stronger Communities* (WALT). In this document, CLD is defined as:

> Enabling people to make changes in their lives through community action and community based learning. It uses programmes and activities that are developed with participants (WALT, 2004).

As CLD became more central to the national policy agenda through its role in community regeneration, in linking personal development with the building of wider community capacity, and through the national literacies strategy (ALNIS, Scottish Executive, 2001) it

became crucial 'to ensure dynamic, coherent support for learning and action, in and by communities' (Scottish Executive, 2006: 9). This was discussed firstly in the Scottish Executive's response to the Community Education Training Review, '*Empowered to Practice: the Future of Community Learning and Development Training in Scotland*' (Scottish Executive, 2003) and then through the setting up of a Short Life Task Group (SLTG) in 2004, which reported in January 2006 under the title '*Strengthening Standards: improving the quality of community learning and development service delivery*'. The SLTG, chaired by Ted Milburn, suggested that:

> The consistent availability of a workforce with community learning and development skills is now necessary for the delivery of policy objectives. This has resulted in unprecedented demands for staff skilled in CLD approaches and an expansion of the range of settings in which community learning and development skills are needed including, for example, health and partnership work. As a consequence, the need for policy makers, employers and communities to be assured that the appropriate skills are readily available has been highlighted (Scottish Executive, 2006: 11).

The STLG also recognized that these changed demands on the CLD workforce required investment in CPD and it made a number of recommendations regarding the improvement of the quality of CLD service delivery. This led to the establishment, in April 2007, of The Standards Council for CLD in Scotland. It was initially granted an interim year to present a sustainable model to Scottish Ministers outlining the longer-term operations of an established Standards Council.

The purpose of the Standards Council is to establish and maintain high standards of practice in CLD across Scotland. The Council's main functions are:

- To deliver an approvals structure for professional qualifications, courses and training and development opportunities for everyone involved in CLD.

- To consider and establish the registration system available to practitioners delivering and active in CLD practice.

- To develop and establish a model of supported induction, CPD and training opportunities.

This emphasis on improving quality has consequences for the field of CLD and this report concerning the early career development and continuing professional development of CLD practitioners, makes a contribution to the debate. It is informed by the changes experienced by CLD practitioners in the level and direction of their work, by the changing policy context and by the growing awareness that these changes need to be supported by high standards of practice in CLD. It explores the consequences of the changed context for working and learning in terms of the ways that practitioners make sense of who they are, what they do and how they do it.

2   Aims and objectives

The aim of this research was to contribute to, and support, the early career development and continuing professional development of CLD practitioners through an investigation of practice and to contribute to theories of informal/ non-formal learning.

The objectives were as follows:

- To discover what is being learned by those in early and mid career in community learning and development
- To identify how it is being learned
- To identify what factors affect the level and direction of learning effort.
- To assess how prior learning and understanding from higher education and other life experience is applied in employment.
- To outline key lessons for the CLD sector in developing continuing professional development, and support mechanisms
- To identify key issues in the CLD context, and recommendations on how these should be addressed

In order to address these objectives the research team used three different methods.

First, a short *literature review* considered the factors that affect the level and direction of learning in other professions such as teaching. This review also identified how formal and informal learning in the workplace is most effectively encouraged and how a range of contextual factors affect practice. This latter literature was important because a) learning has now become so central to the policy agenda and b) policy influences the parameters of practice at any given time. The review was sent to the commissioners of the research in April 2007 and this, and further literature relating to the policy context, is drawn on throughout this report in order to explain and situate the findings.

Second, a *structured questionnaire* was developed that was completed on-line by a sample of early and mid career staff in order to identify the opportunities and constraints inherent in all community based educational work and to explore how these have contributed to knowledge, understanding and practice.

Third, a sample of early career and mid career practitioners was identified and *individual semi-structured interviews* were conducted that focused more substantively on learning effort, how experience is utilised and the impact of the policy context and the analysis of these interviews were used to identify generative themes. It was hoped that these themes would be discussed with interviewees in a focus group but, due to time and other constraints, only 2 practitioners (one early and one mid-career) were able to attend so it was not feasible to run the focus group.

3   Methodology and Sample

3.1   *Structured questionnaire*

The literature review was used to identify questions that would address the research objectives and these were developed into an on-line questionnaire using software called 'Survey Monkey'. This software allowed respondents to complete the questionnaire on-line by following a link. The questions and the structure of the questionnaire were piloted with 3 early and 3 mid-career practitioners and also commented on by the research commissioners. Following the pilot, the questionnaire was modified and a database was compiled of placement supervisors and community education graduates/post-graduates who had graduated from 2003 onwards with the professional qualification in Community Education from the universities of Dundee, Edinburgh and Strathclyde. There were some difficulties in identifying email contacts for early career staff so people in the CLD National Directory were added to the database. In order to maximise the sample, a snowball technique was used where those contacted were asked to forward the link to others they knew who had graduated before 2005. All these contacts were given a link to the survey in the email/letter that was sent out to them (a copy of this communication is shown in Appendix I). The questions used in the survey are shown in Appendix II. One hundred and twenty-five people responded to the on-line survey. Because the response rate to questions varied, the number answering each question is identified in the text.

In terms of the demographics of the sample, there were more females than males - 63% of the respondents were female and 37% of the respondents were male and only 1 person was registered as disabled. Respondents fell into the following age groups shown in Table 1:

Table 1 - Age of respondents

Age	% respondents
<25	4
25-34	20
35-44	26
45-54	43
55-64	7

Total responses = 124.

Charts 1a) and 1b) show early and mid-career respondents by sector. It can be seen that the majority of respondents are employed in the public sector, but a greater proportion of mid-career males are employed in the public sector compared to mid-career female respondents (number of responses = 107: 39 early career; 68 mid-career). A greater proportion of early career staff are employed in the voluntary sector and this may reflect a trend that will require further investigation.

Chart 1 - Sector: a) early career b) mid-career

a)

b)
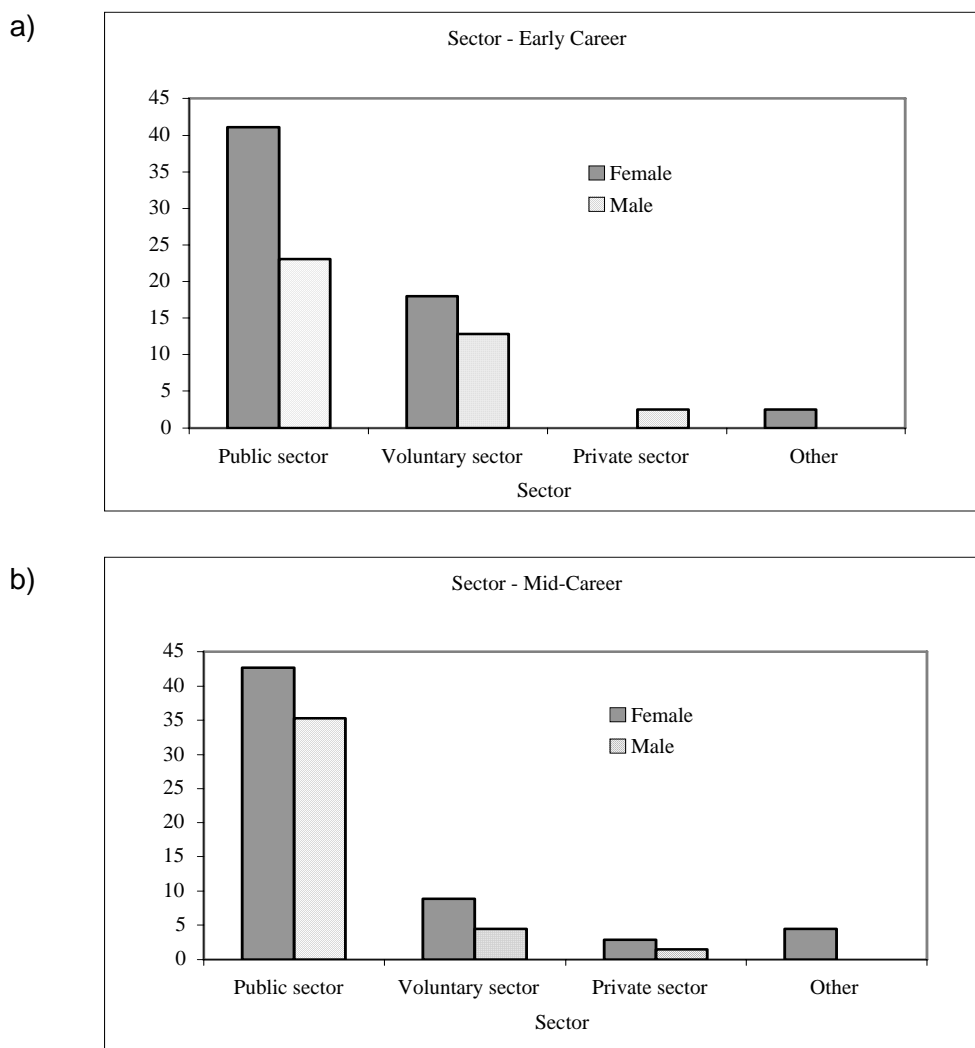
3.2 Individual interviews

In the on-line questionnaire respondents were asked to provide contact details if they were willing to be interviewed and from those a sample of 18 people were chosen to be interviewed in more depth. The criteria for selecting the sample for the follow-up interviews were as follows: the sample needed to be representative of the 3 Universities involved in the study: Dundee, Edinburgh and Strathclyde, and it needed to include 3 early career and 3 mid-career practitioners from each of these graduating institutes. In addition, a representative sample of people satisfied with their division of time at work and people dissatisfied with their division of time at work, needed to be included. Of the 18 people contacted, 14 were available to be interviewed. The interviewee details are shown in appendix III.

Three members of the research team conducted interviews by telephone using a semi-structured questionnaire (shown in Appendix IV). The interviews were designed to clarify and develop responses that had been provided through the on-line survey and provide more detailed information about specific learning contexts. The interviews lasted around 1 hour. Electronic recordings and notes were made of the interviews and they were analysed thematically from the notes, drawing on partial transcriptions for clarification and illustration.

In the following sections data from the survey and the interviews are analysed to show how the respondents perceived their learning at work. Since it is a small sample, it is not necessarily representative of the wider field of practice. For this reason the literature is drawn on to situate these findings in relation to other studies.

4   The CLD professional context

It is important to examine the CLD professional context because, unlike most other professions, CLD practitioners operate in a wide range of settings and with a variety of responsibilities. To illustrate this, respondents were asked to provide their job titles and there was a large diversity with 75 different responses given by the 107 people (27 early career, 52 mid-career) who answered this question. The largest categories of responses was 'Community Learning and Development Worker' - 6 responses, 'Community Education Worker' - 5 responses, 'Community Learning Officer' - 4 responses and 'Senior Community Learning and Development Worker' - 4 responses. Appendix V shows the complete list of job titles.

Another unusual feature of the profession is that the majority of staff are responsible for the management of other staff, with 66% of early career respondents and 62% of mid-career respondents having such responsibilities. The total numbers of staff they are responsible for is shown in Charts 2a) and 2b).

Chart 2 - Responsibility for other staff: a) early career b) mid-career

a)

Responsibility for other staff - Early Career

b)

Responsibility for other staff - Mid-career
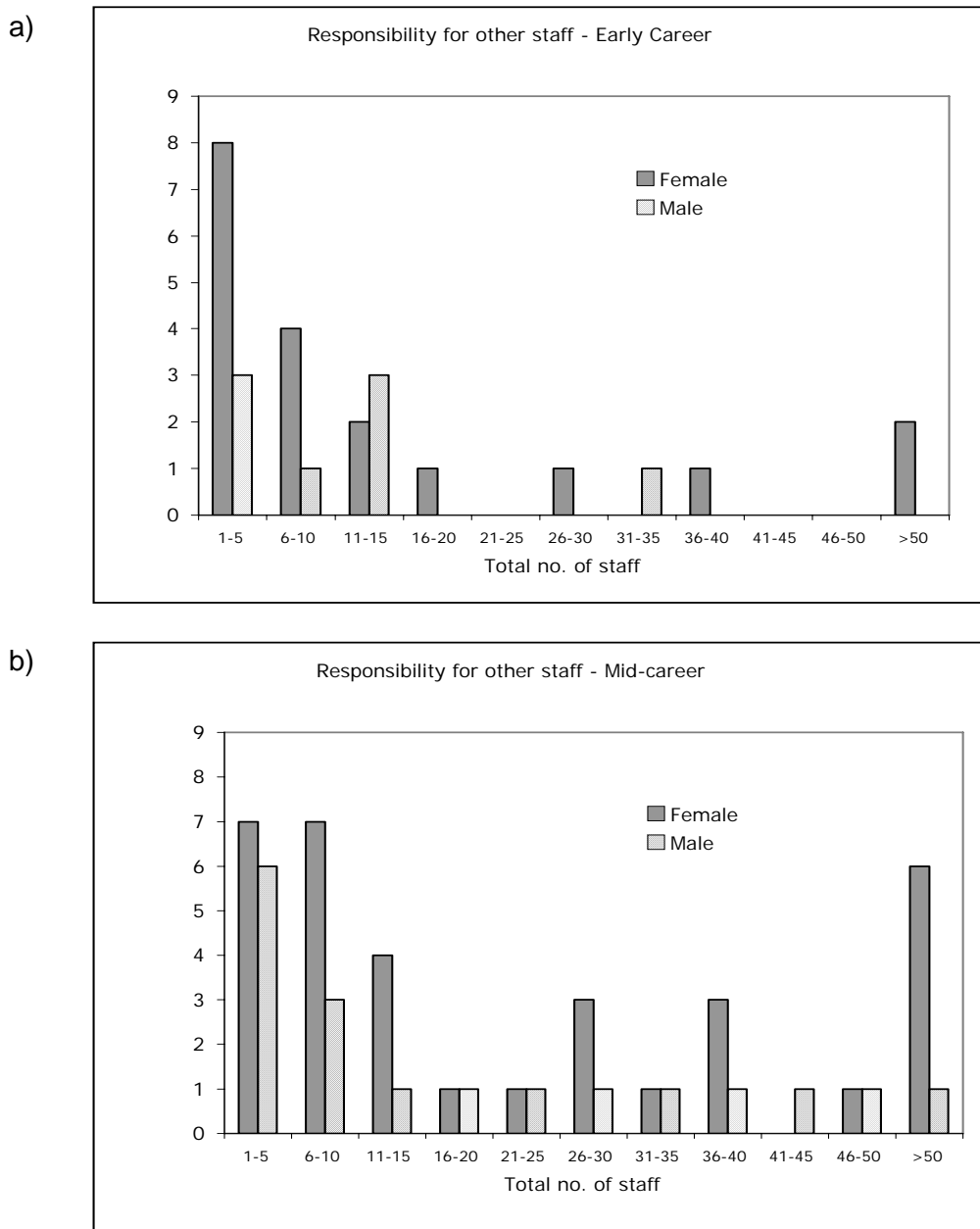
The '*CLD Workforce Survey*' (Learning Connections, 2007) highlighted the inherent complexity in deciding 'who CLD workers are, where they are employed and how they may be classified' (p3) due to the disparate nature of the field. It also showed that the workforce employs many part-time and sessional staff with youth-work, for example, having a 'ratio of 3.3 sessional posts to each full-time equivalent position' (p6). So CLD is a field where professionally qualified staff are highly likely to be supervising unqualified staff and are often working alongside people from a different profession or background, sometimes as the only CLD worker in that organisation. This has particular implications for learning, as will be explored in the next section.

5   What is being learned and how is it being learned by those in early and mid career in CLD?

In this section, the report presents findings about a wide range of factors affecting learning in the workplace. These are: the structure of the work; the impact of taking part in group activities and working with others; the relationship between challenge, support and confidence; and staff development and CPD. In each sub-section, findings from the research literature are presented and then data from the on-line survey and the interviews are drawn on to see how the factors identified in the literature impact in the particular context of CLD work.

5.1   Work structure

Research from Eraut and colleagues (2004) shows that the allocation and structuring of work is central to progress particularly for early career practitioners, because it affects (1) the difficulty or challenge of the work, (2) the extent to which it is individual or collaborative, and (3) the opportunities for meeting, observing and working alongside people who have more or different expertise, and for forming relationships that might provide feedback and support. To see how far the survey sample was satisfied with these aspects of their work, they were asked to describe the balance of their time and, if dissatisfied, how they would prefer to spend their time. The results are given below.

Chart 3 shows the balance of time spent on particular activities by early and mid-career respondents. The largest average proportion of work time for early career staff is spent on face-to-face group work and the largest proportion of work time for mid-career staff is spent on networking. (Total responses 105 people 84%).

Chart 3 - Balance of time for early and mid-career respondents

Balance of Time - Early Career vs. Mid-Career
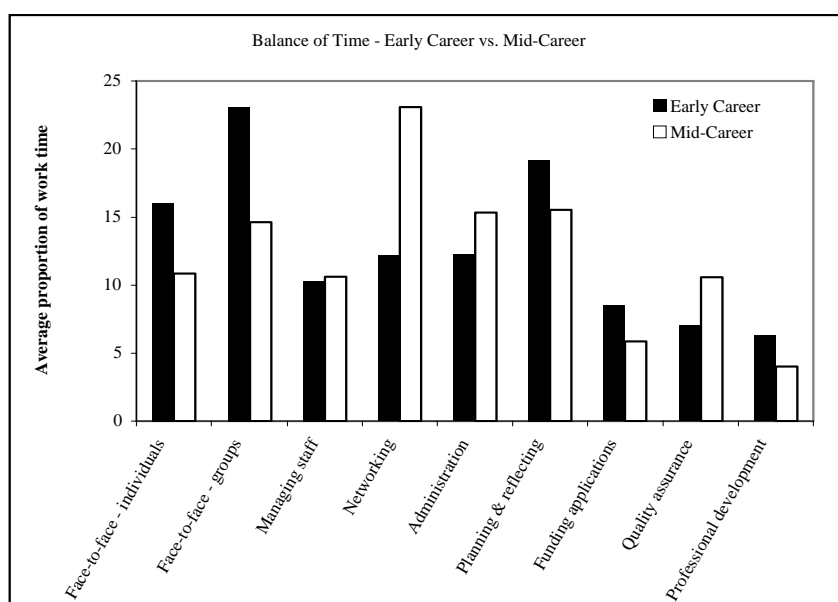
Chart 4 shows the percentage of respondents who were satisfied or not satisfied with the balance of work time. As might be expected given their greater autonomy, slightly more mid-career respondents were satisfied with their balance of work time.

Chart 4 - Satisfaction with balance of work time

Are you satisfied with the balance of your work time? Early Career vs. Mid-Career

■ Early Career
□ Mid-Career
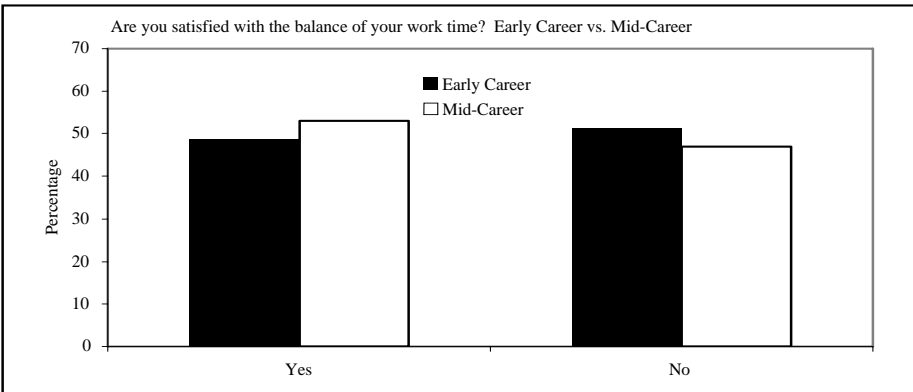
Chart 5 below compares the actual and the preferred balance of time for those unsatified with their balance of time. On average, early career repondents would prefer to have more time doing face-to-face work with groups and less time planning and reflecting and mid-career respondents would prefer to have more face-to-face work with groups, more time to manage staff and less time on networking, administration and planning and reflecting.

Chart 5 - Actual balance of time vs preferred balance of time: a) early career; b) mid-career

a)

Actual balance of time vs preferred balance of time - early career

■ actual balance of time
□ preferred balance of time

b)

Actual vs. preferred balance of time - mid-career

■ actual balance of time
□ preferred balance of time

14
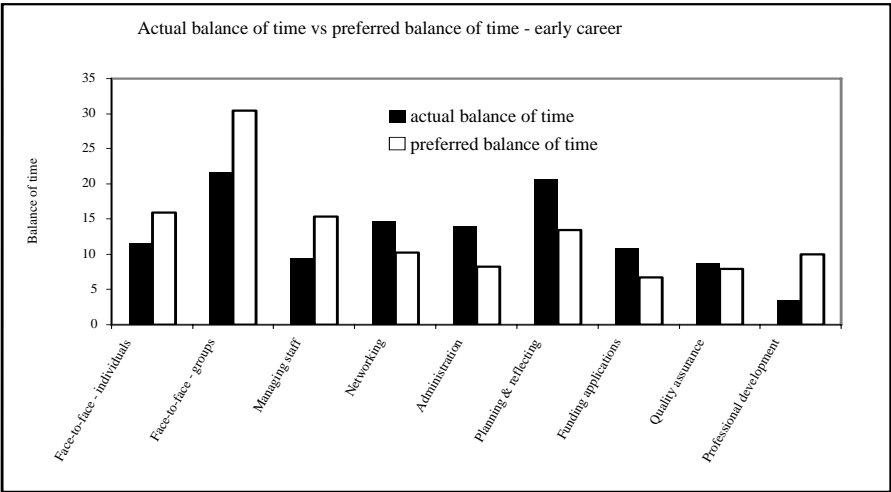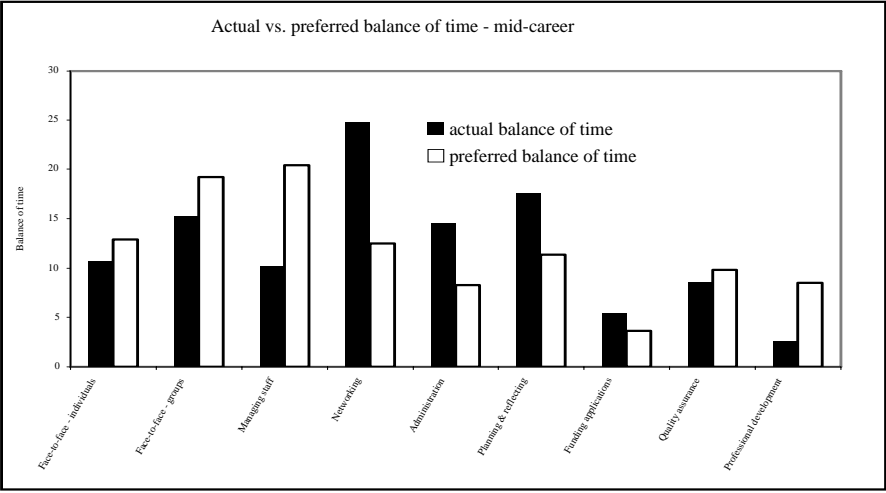
These findings provide interesting insights into the allocation and structuring of work in CLD since it shows that over half the early career workforce were dissatisfied with the balance of their time and this high level of dissatisfaction seems unusual compared with other professions such as teachers (see Boreham and Gray, 2005). In order to explore this issue further respondents were asked in the interviews '*if there was one aspect of work that you would change, what would it be?*' Almost all respondents referred to a desire to have more direct face-to-face contact with community groups. For example:

> I'm not happy just sitting in my office on my computer doing my monitoring and evaluation and my CPDs for staff and all the rest of that kind of thing. I'm actually really wanting to get back into doing some real work with people (mid-career).

> We've been inspected a lot over the last few years which means I spend a lot of time simply gathering evidence rather than working with people (mid-career).

> I think the work is changing so that the competency I think is important may become redundant … there's a changing view of what we thought was the engagement and empowerment of communities (mid-career).

Some respondents made suggestions for improving the balance of time and one stressed the importance of developing 'realistic expectations about our work so that we are clearer about what we are doing on a day-to-day basis' (mid-career). Another pointed out the value of:

> Doing the preliminary work [before you do the face-to-face work] and keeping up to date with policy changes and the new theories and other organisations' work. It is difficult to do that when …you are pushed to get out there and talk to people before you are really prepared (early career).

Overall having a good balance between the competing demands on their time was an important issue for all the respondents and many appeared to be struggling with what they perceived to be the limitations and constraints of the current work context. This is a matter for concern and the extent to which this small sample accurately reflects wider frustration is worthy of further research.

5.2 Learning through work activity

Research from Eraut and colleagues (2004) has found that participation in group-activities and working alongside others regularly gives rise to learning in the range of professions that they studied. The types of group activities that were found to be helpful included team-working towards a common outcome, groups set up for a special purpose such as development or review of policy/practice and groups that were responding to external changes. Working alongside others was found to allow people to observe and listen to others at work and to participate in activities. This enables the learning of new practices and new perspectives, the awareness of different kinds of knowledge and expertise and the gaining of some sense of other people's tacit knowledge.

In order to see how far these sorts of activities aided learning, respondents were asked questions about different aspects of their learning at work.

First, respondents were asked about the various ways in which participation in group-activities took place. Table 2 shows how respondents learn with and through colleagues. Almost all those who answered this question said that 'asking questions of others to improve your understanding, knowledge and skills' and 'sharing ideas through discussion with colleagues and then implementing them' was how they learned (total responses 102 people 82%).

Table 2 - Learning with and through colleagues

Learning with and through colleagues	% of responses
Asking questions of others to improve your understanding, knowledge or skills	97
Sharing ideas through discussion with colleagues and then implementing them	95
Observing and listening to others and participating in activities together	90
Working alongside colleagues to tackle a challenging task	84
Collaborating with more experienced colleagues on a particular task	78
Getting feedback from colleagues on your work	75
Informal alliances with like-minded colleagues	70
Informal mentoring from a more experienced colleague	43
Other	9

The importance of a supportive working environment where staff were working alongside others was illustrated in a number of individual interviews. For example, one said:

> We need to have a working environment where people can be optimistic and cheerful. It's infectious. I mean it sounds naff, but it's vital that we recharge each other's batteries (early-career).

Some worked in small teams and one respondent said:

> This is a good environment where everyone is alive to improving on practice, sharing ideas and helping each other to learn to stay abreast of current developments. But there are limitations in a small team because the opportunities for sharing between colleagues are not fully exploited within the wider organisation (mid-career).

Membership of a team was seen as very important in supporting colleagues and many referred to this positively. For example, 'colleagues will always take time out to discuss something with you' (early career) and 'our team is organised into reflective practitioner groups and this creates a strong learning culture' (mid-career).

It is worth noting here that some staff do not have easy access to CLD colleagues because they work as, for example, a pupil support worker and thus are part of a school-based group without any other CLD professionals. This professional isolation is clearly an issue when participation in group-activities as part of a team has been shown to be of value in learning at work.

5.3   Opportunities to broaden and extend experience beyond the job

Research by Fuller and Unwin (2005) has shown that some organizations are 'expansive' and others 'restrictive' in the range of opportunities given to employees for learning. A more expansive learning environment correlates with deeper learning.   The key determinants of the difference in their study were located in the institutional traditions and working practices of the organisations studied. The most expansive workplaces focus on all aspects of learning throughout the organisation and there was a pattern of moving people around to widen their experience. This was underpinned by a formal learning plan setting out the learning goals for each section of the organisation.

In the light of this research, the opportunities available to respondents to broaden and extend their experience beyond the job were investigated. Table 3 shows the most important opportunity was 'fact-finding visits to other agencies'. (Total responses 93 people 74%).

Table 3 - Opportunities to broaden and extend experience beyond job

Opportunities to broaden and extend experience beyond job:	%
Fact-finding visits to other agencies	87
Exchange visits with colleagues in similar work	30
Exchange visits with international colleagues in similar work	24
Job swaps	7
Networking	4
Being an Associate Assessor with HMI	2
AGM workshops	1
International thematic short study tours	1
Job shadowing	1
Common purpose course	1
Listening to other care professionals	1
Task groups	1
Stretching comfort zone in response to a community's needs	1
Attending conferences	1

This was explored further in the interviews where a number cited international collaborations and exchanges as one of their most significant learning experiences. As one interviewee said: 'It offers critical distance and the outside eye. You look at other peoples' work but they also enable you to look at yours in a different way' (early-career).

Respondents had also learned from working and collaborating with others from outside their own organisations. For example, a respondent who had become an advisor to a community-based voluntary organisation said: 'This was a great learning experience, partly because [the organisation] ran into serious difficulties' (mid-career). Another person who is quite isolated in her work had gone along to another team who were 'open to sharing their ideas' and learnt from them 'how to give learners ownership of their learning' (early-career). An early career practitioner had found that working across geographical boundaries, so that workers can learn from each other based on the experience of different contexts, had been helpful. Finally a community link worker (mid-career) who collaborates closely with the school nurse to provide health advice for parents reported that she has learnt at lot from this collaborative partnership.

It is clear that opportunities to broaden experience are important and the evidence from this research suggests that this is an area that could be usefully developed further given the limited nature of most respondents' opportunities.

5.4   Learning from working directly with people in communities

Eraut et al's (2004) research shows that working with clients/participants is an important source of learning. This is because practitioners learn 'firstly about the client, secondly from any novel aspects of the client's problem or request and thirdly from any new ideas that arose from their joint consultation' (p250). It was shown earlier that face-to-face work was a highly valued aspect of CLD work and so it was important to find out what the research participants felt they had learnt from working with people in communities.

Respondents were overwhelmingly positive about this aspect of their experience. Replies (92 responses) combined an account of what they had learnt from communities with ideas about the most effective way of working with communities.   Both early and mid-career practitioners made the following points in the on-line survey:

- Listen carefully to what people are really saying, don't pre-judge the issues and take time to listen and respond.
- Learn from the experience of people in communities, because they are the experts.
- Bring together the community, worker and agency knowledge and experience so that issues can be addressed.
- Consult with people and provide feedback so that people are informed and involved.
- Work at the pace of the community and remember that success takes a long time and the needs of communities are always changing.
- Communities are a lot more powerful than they sometimes think they are and can achieve great things when they work together - the community worker's role is to support them and to encourage their self-belief.
- Be honest, don't patronise people and don't promise what can't be delivered
- Go to where people are rather than expecting them to come to you.
- Be organised and keep up to date with your professional development because working with communities is very challenging.
- Never give up but do not be naïve about what can be achieved.

What came through strongly from the interviews was, on the one hand, the respect that CLD workers have for the knowledge and expertise which exists in communities and, on the other, a concern that what communities have to offer may have become marginalized in practice.

> Folk have so much to contribute and we have so much to learn because they're the people using the services and might have better ideas… Community Planning opens the debate again; people need to be more involved in the planning and delivery of services…but it's only certain people that are there and a wider group need to be involved (mid-career).

What also runs through these responses is that engaging with communities requires professional experience and knowledge and highlights a distinctive role for CLD staff as a catalyst for learning and development.

> People [in communities] need to engage with other people – they might do that on their own but many people need facilitation to enable them to think collectively and effectively and to consider alternative ways of thinking about their experience (early-career).

The interaction between communities and CLD practitioners clearly leads to productive learning for both parties but also requires conditions that give sufficient time to enable this learning to happen.

5.5   Factors that help learning in the workplace

Eraut's (2000) research shows that much learning at work occurs through doing things and being proactive in seeking learning opportunities but he emphasises that this requires confidence. Confidence comes from successfully meeting challenges in one's work, while the confidence to take on such challenges depends on the extent to which workers feel supported in that endeavour. Thus there is a triangular relationship between challenge, support and confidence. Professionals' confidence about the support of their working colleagues depends on whether they perceive their more significant working relationships as mutually supportive, generally critical, faction-ridden or even overtly hostile. For early career professionals, the support of colleagues is the more prominent aspect of developing confidence.

The evidence from his research shows that both confidence in one's ability to do the work and commitment to the importance of that work are primary factors that affect individual learning. Confidence depends on the successful completion of challenging work to which one is committed. This in turn may depend on informal support from colleagues, either while doing the job or as back up when working independently. Indeed the willingness to attempt challenging tasks on one's own depends on such confidence. If there is neither challenge nor sufficient support to encourage staff to seek out, or respond to, a challenge, then confidence declines and with it the motivation to learn.

For early career professionals to make good progress, he found that a significant proportion of their work needs to be sufficiently new to challenge them without being so daunting as to reduce their confidence; and their workload needs to be at a level that allows them to reflectively respond to new challenges, rather than develop coping mechanisms that might later prove to be ineffective. This group of staff are more efficient on tasks where they already have enough experience, but also need to be involved in a wider range of tasks in order to extend their experience. Thus managers have to balance the immediate demands of the job against the needs of early career staff as best they can and these two tasks may be in opposition if the pace of change is significantly increased.

Eraut's research generated questions for the on-line survey on the factors that helped people to learn in the workplace and table 4 shows these in rank order firstly for early and then for mid-career practitioners. (Total responses 99 people 79%).

Personal commitment to the work was the most important for both early and mid-career respondents, as was time. Early career respondents found that support and advice from colleagues was important whilst mid-career respondents suggested that workload was more important. Intra-professional relationships were the least important for both groups.

Table 4 - What factors are important in helping you learn in the workplace

a) Important factors that help early career respondents to learn in the workplace

	Important	Somewhat important	Neither important nor unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Unimportant
Personal commitment to the work	29	8	0	0	0
Support and advice from colleagues	28	7	0	0	1
Time	28	7	0	0	1
Atmosphere	28	6	2	0	0
Priorities in the work	24	10	1	0	1
Workload	22	13	1	0	0
Resources	21	13	1	0	0
Using skills and abilities acquired outside work	20	12	3	1	0
Expectations about your performance at work	19	14	2	0	2
Inter-professional relationships	19	12	4	1	0
Level of challenge	17	16	2	0	0
Intra-professional relationships	17	11	5	1	1

b) Important factors that help mid-career respondents to learn in the workplace

	Important	Somewhat important	Neither important nor unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Unimportant
Personal commitment to the work	55	6	0	1	0
Time	43	15	3	1	0
Workload	42	15	3	0	0
Expectations about your performance at work	34	20	6	1	1
Priorities in the work	35	22	4	1	0
Support and advice from colleagues	34	24	3	0	0
Level of challenge	31	28	2	1	0
Resources	28	25	5	3	0
Atmosphere	26	28	7	1	0
Inter-professional relationships	19	26	13	2	0
Using skills and abilities acquired outside work	16	26	14	4	1
Intra-professional relationships	14	29	14	1	0

From the survey and the interviews it is clear that CLD practitioners are in general highly committed to the work and this is a strong motivating factor for them. An early career respondent said: 'I'm learning all the time. For example, one of the participants told me about her schizophrenic history and then I went to find out all about schizophrenia. I want to do right by the people I work with'. Another mid-career practitioner working in a small voluntary sector organisation said: 'We learn from each other's different ideas and from the young people in our network'.

The commitment to the work was, however, sometimes distorted by constraints of time and resources and this had a particular impact in the voluntary sector. As one mid-career interviewee stated:

> We are in a position of change within the voluntary sector where funding now affects our future plans. We are nowadays more funding led as opposed to being young person centred and then searching for the money to do specific pieces of work. We also have to bid for funding against other local projects who have equally great service provision. We have more often nowadays seen many voluntary projects close over funding.

Another suggested: 'Constantly changing policy priorities from the Scottish Executive and the Council means that I have less time to do the work well, but more work to do in short, unrealistic timescales and with little to no financial resource' (mid-career). And an early-career literacies worker said:

> As literacies money is only given for a fixed period of time you never feel particularly stable in your job. There is a feeling that your temporary contract could be taken away at any time as the council could use the money elsewhere. So, although we are talking about life-long learning to our learners, trying to encourage new learners to engage all the time, as a worker you have a feeling of instability.

As can be seen from the above quotes a number of respondents felt that unstable funding was making their commitment to the people they worked with difficult to sustain. Evidence from the previous section on learning from working with communities together with the data presented here show that CLD staff are highly committed and this enables a great deal of learning to take place. The next section considers what forms of support are in place to help this to happen.

5.6 Staff support and development

The literature suggests that there are different ways of conceptualising learning in the workplace. One such is as 'a process in which learners improve their work performance by carrying out daily work activities which entail interacting with people, tools, materials and ways of thinking as appropriate' (Felstead et al., 2005: 362). Teaching and learning is seen as a social and interactive experience where knowledge is not received but constructed through reflection as learners engage with real problems in a given context. The participants form their meanings within a community of practice in which they continually renegotiate tacit understandings, mutual meaning and a shared repertoire of communal resources (Wenger, 1998). Learning takes place in the relationships between people in that meaning-making comes from the sharing of ideas, experiences and reflections on practice (Barab and Plucker, 2002; Ovens, 2002). This way of learning is reflected in previous sections that have focused on the social ways in which CLD practitioners learn. However, in this section the more formal aspects of staff support and development are considered because it is important to know what is currently being provided and how far staff feel they work in a supportive environment.

Respondents were asked what systematic staff development processes were available to them and these are shown in Chart 6. As can be seen there appear to be consistently more opportunities for mid-career respondents than there are for early career respondents although only 92 reported having this opportunity (33 early career and 59 mid-career).

Chart 6 - Systematic staff development processes
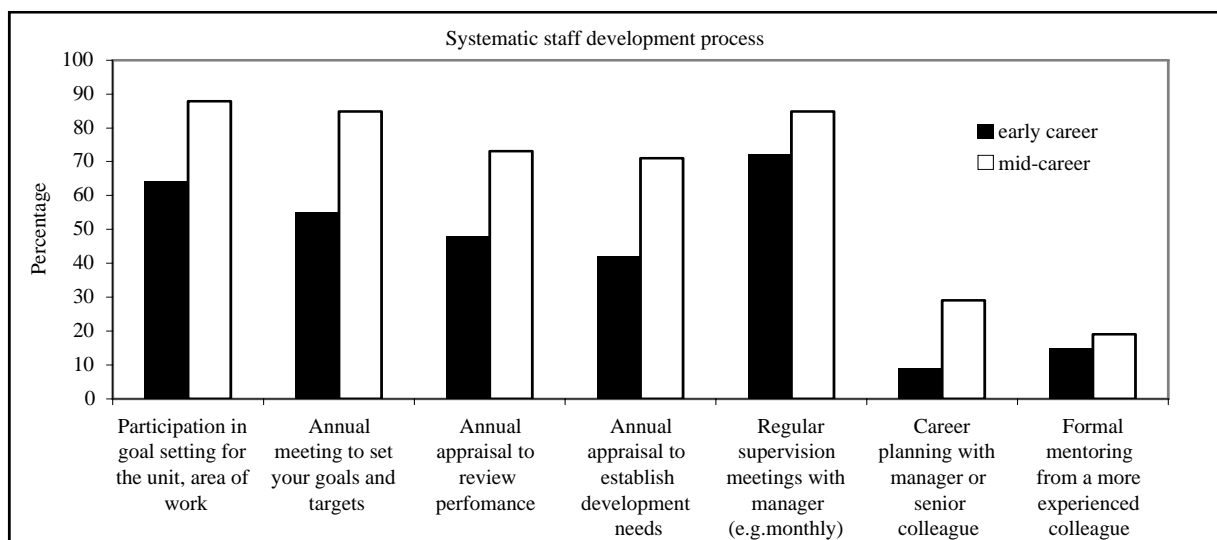
The next question asked what ongoing formal procedures were available to discuss their work and these are shown in Chart 7. Again there seemed to be more opportunities for mid-career respondents compared to early career respondents (total number of respondents = 96: 36 early career and 60 mid-career).

Chart 7 - Ongoing formal procedures to discuss and evaluate respondents' work
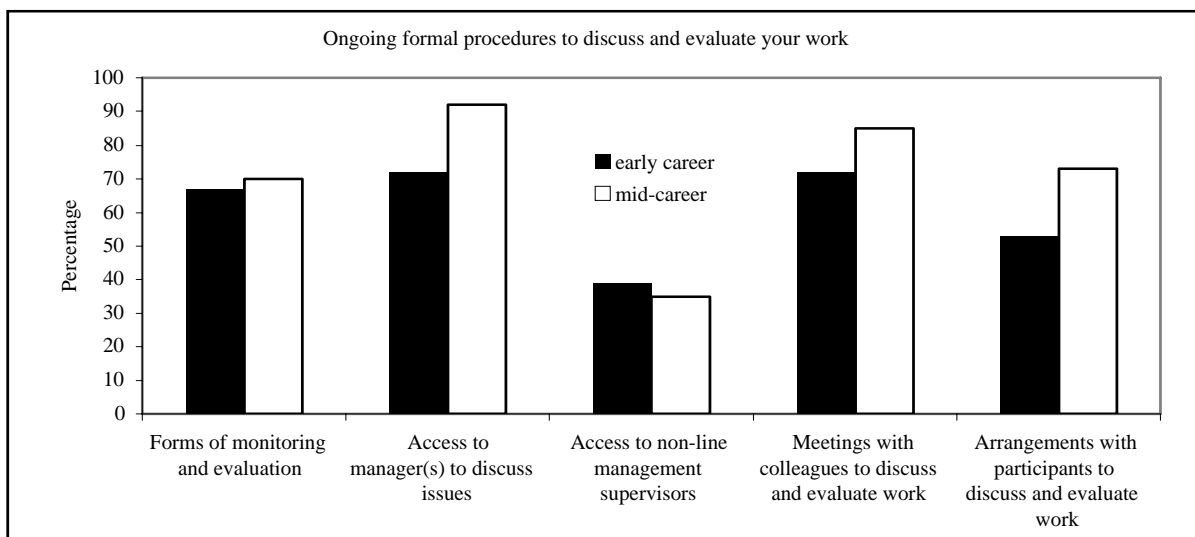
In relation to planned time off for learning and development there were considerably more opportunities for mid-career respondents compared to early career respondents (total number of respondents = 94: 36 early career and 58 mid-career).

Respondents were asked who paid for the training courses and in most cases the employer paid for training courses for both early and mid-career respondents, but there were more self-funded and employer contribution-funded training courses undertaken by mid-career respondents - Chart 8.

Chart 8 - Planned time off for learning and development

Planned time off for learning and development
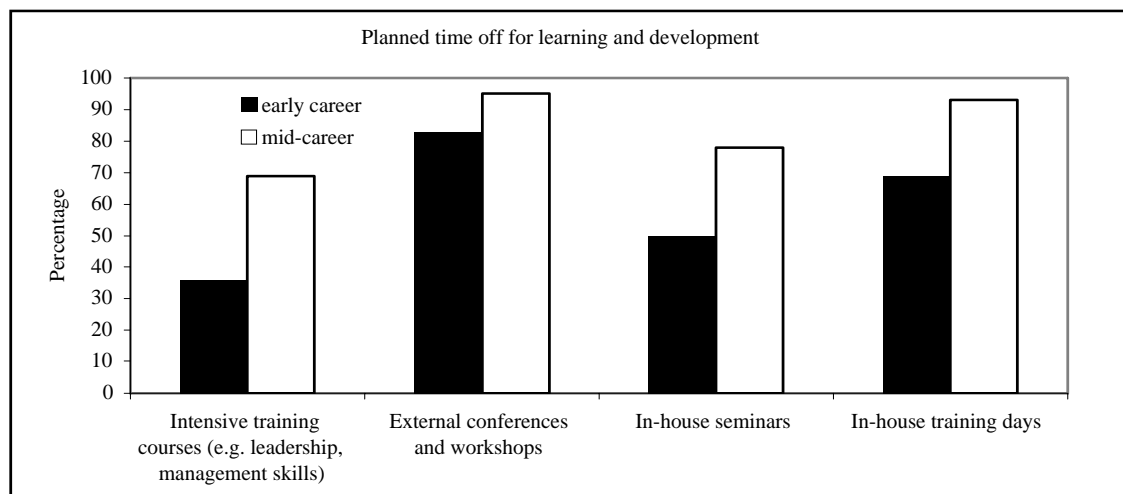
Respondents were asked what opportunities there were to obtain formal qualifications and the results are shown in Chart 9. There appeared to be more specific certified courses and individual courses at masters/postgraduate level available for mid-career respondents compared to early career respondents although only 50 respondents (12 early career and 38 mid-career) reported having this opportunity.

Chart 9 - Opportunities to obtain formal qualifications

Opportunities to obtain formal qualifications
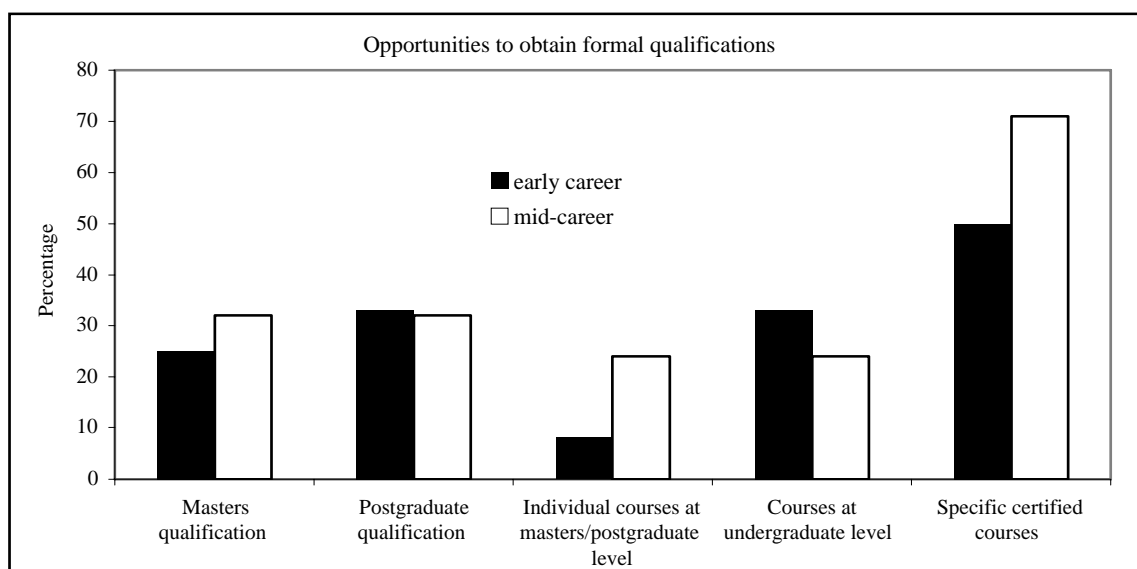
Formal qualifications included organisational psychology and counselling and there was a wide range of work-related training courses such as assertiveness training and computer skills. Employers paid for most of the early and mid-career respondents to take formal qualifications and courses but there were more employer contribution-funded training courses undertaken by mid-career respondents. However, the total number reporting having this opportunity was only 67 (15 early career and 42 mid-career).

Finally, respondents were asked how easy it was to determine their own learning needs and development and the results are shown in Chart 10 and again mid-career

respondents found it easier than early career respondents. (Total responses 98 people 78%)

Chart 10 - How easy is it for you to determine your own learning needs and development?

How easy is it for you to determine your own learning needs and development?
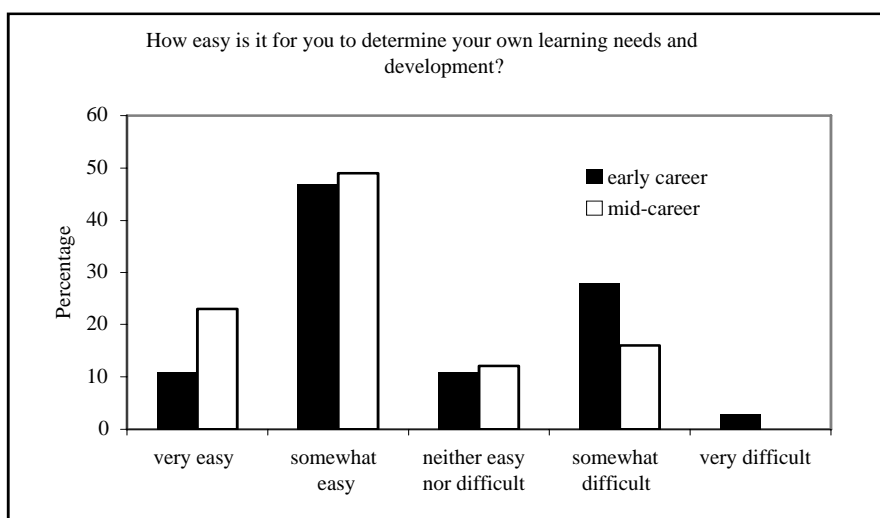
Two points are important here. One is the apparent incongruity of more experienced staff having more opportunities for all forms of staff development and support than early career staff with a small percentage of this latter group finding it very difficult to determine their own learning needs. The other point is the limited availability of most forms of formal CPD for all staff.

The individual interviews provided some insights into the CPD preferences of staff. In several cases particular preference was expressed for the kind of staff development that builds on and enhances collegial relationships and collective identities. Respondents also wanted open, rather than too prescriptive, training opportunities. For example:

> A lot of the training available is a tick-box training to say you've done such and such; the person who fulfils this role must have done training course x. Therefore we provide training course x – and the quality of it is irrelevant. But the tick-boxes say it's been done (early-career).

A distinction was made in the interviews between individually focused and collective forms of staff development and CPD.

> Instead of tick-box training courses, we need time to talk to each other properly (mid-career).

In this respect the self-assessment document '*How Good is Your Community Learning and Development 2?*' in particular was identified by some workers as a useful tool and one early career practitioner had been involved in a small-scale pilot training project which had been using this framework to generate discussion of the work within the staff team.

However, for many the current climate did not encourage staff development because of a lack of suitable opportunities. An early-career worker said: 'The lack of relevant opportunities is a function of being in a department that doesn't really understand community learning and development'.
Time was also a major constraint, as illustrated by these respondents:

> The formal process of support and supervision is valuable in terms of promoting reflective practice and it takes place [in our Local Authority] within a performance development review process. However, this has only been partially implemented because of lack of time (early-career).

> I'm frustrated when I can't do everything and I need more time for helping others with staff development and training (mid-career).

These findings about the lack of availability of CPD and staff development appear to support the view of the SLTG who argued that there was 'an urgent need to redress a historic shortfall in the provision of CPD' (Scottish Executive, 2006: 19).

5.7   Summary

It has long been argued, as is reflected in the Osler and WALT policy documents, that the most distinctive aspect of community learning and development is the educational process by which practitioners engage actively and creatively with people in communities in bringing about positive social change. As grassroots fieldworkers are aware, this creates a kind of virtuous circle because it acts to affirm professional practice and identity, reminding practitioners what they are there for which, in turn, reinvigorates their energy and commitment. Conversely, without that affirmation, fieldworkers can become less confident in their professional identity.

From this review of what is being learned and how it is being learnt it can be seen that a number of factors contribute to an effective learning environment. What appears to be important in building confidence and competence is providing a supportive and collegial workplace environment, opportunities to broaden and extend people's experience beyond the day-to-day demands of their job and opportunities to engage with the communities in which staff work. All of these require time and resources and given the complex nature of the work of CLD and the limited opportunities available for early career staff, these findings have important implications for the development of CPD that will be returned to later.

6   What factors affect the level and direction of learning effort?

Community learning and development, like its predecessors, occupies a distinctive and strategic position at the interface between the formal institutions of the state and informal community groups and organisations. This means that the policy context is a key determinant of the level and direction of learning effort in the workplace.

Henderson and Glen's (2005) study of community development workers in the UK provides some insights into this impact. They found that policy and funding requirements to engage in partnership working had a considerable impact on the focus of their work. A low proportion of paid workers' time was spent on face-to-face work and there was a greater emphasis on networking, capacity building, facilitating and supporting self-help groups and other management activities. Many workers were employed on short-term contracts and many also worked far more than their contracted hours. Whilst their respondents were highly committed to learning nearly half had not attended training courses in the last 12 months. Few had adequate support from their managers and there was an absence of support for post-qualifying professional development. The authors suggest that: 'Both grounded organisational skills learnt in community-based settings and analytical skills that can be fostered through…university-based education are essential components for the development of critically reflective practitioners' (2005: 290).

Work carried out by Shaw and Martin (2000) has highlighted similar issues, arguing that performance measurement and accountability has had a major impact on the possibilities for practice in all settings. Similarly, resource constraints have meant that many practitioners, particularly those in the voluntary sector, have to spend a high proportion of their time on fund-raising. It also has to be recognised that CLD workers always have to balance the tension between the demands of communities and those of policy makers because they are state employees whose function is to empower communities (see Tett, 2006).

The restructuring of the welfare sector in general and of community based education/ development in particular has clearly had a far-reaching impact on the level and direction of practitioners' professionally-related learning. The integration of previously distinct services within new generic structures, such as 'Children and Families' in the City of Edinburgh, has significant implications for the nature of the work undertaken and the kind of learning that is regarded as relevant to it.

According to Rhodes (2000: 345), another policy change in modern public service organisations has been a change to 'more policy 'steering' (governance) and less 'rowing' (government)'. One of the consequences of this move from the providing to the enabling state is that systems of 'quality assurance' and regulation are instantiated in the new arrangements that have involved a regime focused much more on inspection, audit, and consultation. Bamber (2000) has argued in relation to community education in Scotland, that the cumulative effects of 'formalisation' and 'marketisation' have diverted workers from educational to quasi-managerial functions.

In order to investigate these issues arising from the literature further, this research focused on key dimensions of the policy context.

6.1 Policy factors affecting CLD work

In the on-line survey respondents were asked how important the following 5 factors were in affecting their work:

- partnership working
- performance measurement/accountability
- resource constraints
- policy or management priorities
- decentralization

Responses are shown in chart 11 below as a comparison between the importance attached to each area by early and mid-career respondents. (Total responses 88 people 70%)

Chart 11 - Comparisons of the factors that affect work

Comparisons of the factors that affect work for early and mid-career respondents
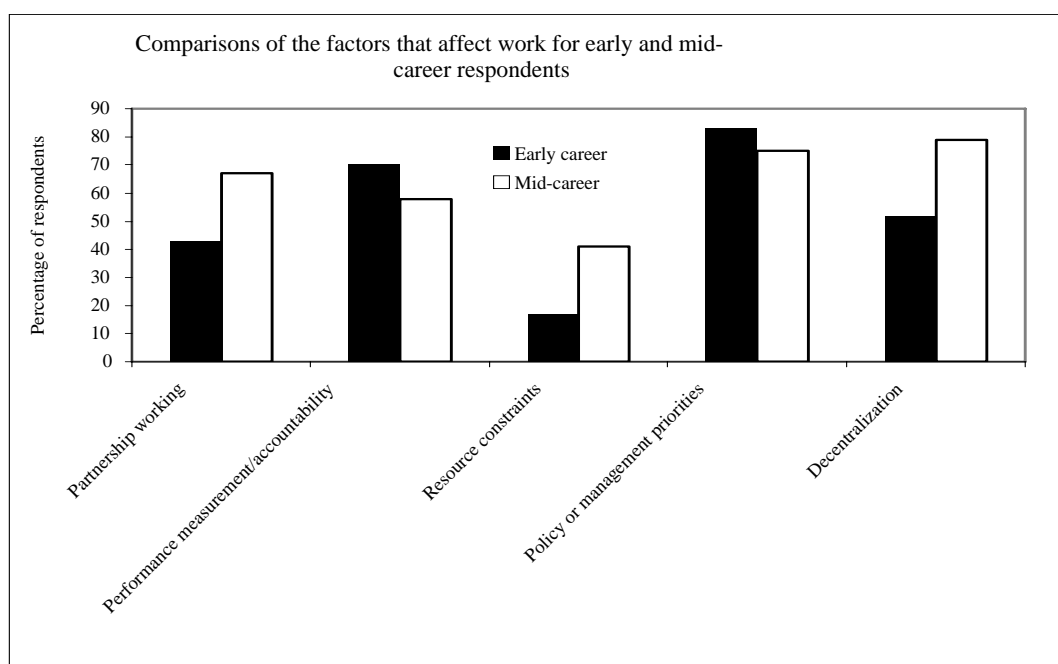
As can be seen mid-career practitioners had been most affected by decentralisation and early career by policy or management priorities. These findings were clarified through an open question where respondents were asked to identify the ways in which the changing policy context had impacted on their work. These responses clustered into 7 areas.

6.1.1 Fewer, but more targeted resources

This issue attracted the most responses with most people finding that this had a negative impact on their work. For example:

> Managing constant change is difficult and unsettling. There is now more focus on families and less on individuals with a bigger area to cover, but with less and less resources (mid-career).

> We now have to try to satisfy more masters i.e. the policy evaluators [with] more paperwork, more discussion and time away from the field. [There is also] less permanency to the jobs we need done i.e. funding goes with new policy not with long-term commitment to working in the community (mid-career).

> There is now more pressure to do 'diversionary' youth work from other agencies e.g. police [and this leads to] lack of focus on the 'core business' of CLD [and a change in my role] from a specialist to a generic worker (mid-career).

One (early-career), however, identified the positive aspects of more targeted funding because it 'provided clarity of direction, linkage with other policies and funding availability'.

6.1.2 Greater emphasis on providing evidence and measuring the impact of practice

This issue attracted both negative comments:

> I have more work in terms of planning and performance leading to less time to manage staff effectively and too many priorities that do not always seem relevant to delivery/practice (mid-career).

> There is more paperwork, more conflict over priorities and changing ways of gathering evidence (mid-career).

There were also some positive comments

> I am more accountable, the work is more structured and organised and my responsibilities are more clearly defined [and this has] improved my practice (mid-career).

> My work is more focussed on measurable outcomes. Community Planning has encouraged me to collaborate more with others to make a difference with shared work priorities. Expectations are now better understood. Supporting communities seems to be higher on the political agenda (early-career).

6.1.3 Changes in the groups and issues that are targeted

This issue attracted some negative comments:

> Targeting of funding on young people and economic sustainability has weakened the Life long Learning Agenda [and given] less opportunity to work with a diverse range of people (mid-career).

> All our funding is from Regeneration money: so can't work with other groups outwith the Regeneration areas. It's about quantity rather than quality. Things have to fit into a specific box (early-career).

> Policy affects my funding streams, so I always feel that those I work with risk losing the continuity of a secure service.

But more targeting could also have positive outcomes:

> A focus on parents returning to work has freed up funding, which I have made good use of, e.g. working for families fund (early-career).

> Has helped highlight the importance of what I do (sexual health) and validate work in this area (early-career).

6.1.4 New policies for adult literacy, numeracy (ALN) and ESOL

One example of targeted funding is ALN and ESOL and there were a number of specific comments about this that were mainly positive:

> Literacy agenda for Scotland now exists with funding for Literacy work available. Increased accountability; improved and relevant monitoring and evaluation; accredited training now available for Volunteers and Tutors (mid-career).

> Given more direction through clearer guidelines for good practice and quality evaluation. Made more robust the approaches and under-pinning philosophies of Adult Literacies work (mid-career).

> Student centred learning has changed our approach. Professionalisation of literacies requires higher standards. Greater access to IT has changed methods (mid-career).

The negative comments mostly centred on the absence of policies:

> ALNIS refresh - still waiting for it. National ESOL strategy - have spent a long time waiting for (mid-career).

> The Councils want the learner numbers but there is a feeling among workers that not enough funding is being provided for us to offer a quality service to the ESOL learners who are literate in their own language, but struggling with day to day English here, for example most Polish learners come in to this category. There are no clear guidelines set down by the Scottish Executive and no extra funding given to cover the literacies learners, ESOL, and the ESOL learners who are literate in their own language (mid-career).

6.1.5 Less autonomy for CLD workers and more direction from above

This issue attracted only negative comments:

> What was important now isn't and makes me cynical about the value of the work. Change seems to be from the top, for reasons that are not obvious from the field and seem to, always, suck more resources into the centre (early-career).

> The work that we do has to have the results required by the funders, this sometimes hampers the benefits that we could really have if there was no hidden objectives (mid-career).

> We are being described as a rung on a ladder but are not expected to be the whole ladder! (Early-career).

> [Policies on] evaluation and consultation has tied up local activists [through] creating too much information and cut down local creativity and initiative (early-career).

6.1.6 Changes in the expectations of CLD from other professions and more partnership working

As was pointed out in the introduction CLD is now seen as an approach and this impacts on the relationship with other professions. More comments were negative than positive:

> The criteria, provision and ideology of some of the agencies I work with are so dissimilar to my work perspective that collaborative working becomes really problematic (early-career).

> Everybody working in a community thinks they are a community education worker - we have no professional identity left. Lack of coherent approach nationally is a huge problem - lets look to the south more for structure and inspiration! (Mid-career).

> More partners are trying to adopt a CLD approach but not always putting staff development in place to enable their staff to implement this effectively (mid-career).

> CLD staff now have to learn how to educate others to undertake community engagement without having any staff development to help them to do this (early-career).

However, the following positive outcomes were identified:

> Closer working with other community planning partners has broadened my knowledge of CLD's contribution to wider policy context (e.g. health, worklessness etc.) (mid-career).

> Policies have encouraged increased working partnerships with local and national agencies and increased consultation and involvement from communities and service users (mid-career).

> Strengthened the commitment to community engagement and the commitment to partnership working. Community Planning legislation has been main driver for work programme (mid-career).

6.1.7 Impact of newer legislation

A number of legislative changes have impacted on the work both positively and negatively:

> The increased profile of a broad equalities agenda has meant a more secure funding climate for equality themed youth and community work. The equality agenda is becoming increasingly important to local policy and practice (mid-career).

> Changes in legislation raise the profile [of our project], and establishes ministerial support for the sexual health strategy (early-career).

> Smoking - it can be tough on hard to reach groups if they can't smoke and we are supposed to act as smoking police (early-career).

> We have a lot more hoops to jump through relating to Disclosure Scotland's policy whose forms and certificates are obsolete as soon as they are produced. Waiting for these documents and the slow process makes our job harder as we depend on volunteers and part-time workers to run our centre (mid-career).

6.2   These findings were further explored through the interviews and these practitioners raised some more issues.

6.2.1 Lack of time

The complaint that there is not enough time to systematically reflect on practice came through very strongly from almost all respondents. For example:

> Administrative work is out of kilter … there is a huge paper work load that comes with project funding. This affects how much group work you do, because groups generate administrative workload… There should be enough time to reflect on practice but there's never enough time until you're on to the next bit (mid-career).

> We're very much about short-term; very short-term. Long term planning just doesn't happen any more … you've got a task and you've got to come up with a response in two weeks or something like that (mid-career).

> There is too much pressure to get bums on seats and not enough time to reflect on what you're actually doing (early-career).

> Although change is good we don't always get time to discuss with colleagues how policy changes impact on our work (mid-career).

6.2.2 A preoccupation with securing funding

Securing funding could detract from the more substantive elements of the work with some newly qualified workers finding this was the main part of their job. As one stated: 'You have to be a bit quick on your feet … you have to be kind of creative [in finding funding]' (early-career). At the same time, there is a danger that the contract culture can become very divisive as groups (and workers) compete for the same small pot of funding:

> It's become this scrabble … funding has become a competitive business, so people are a bit like this: 'I'm not telling you how I got my money'. And once you've got money, they're kind of: 'Hands off, this is ours'. So it divides up partnership work. How can you have proper partnerships, effective partnerships, when people are competitive about funding (early-career)?

> More money is coming forward for us to reduce anti-social behaviour – just to keep young people off the streets. There is much less focus on informal education which is what we see as our work (early-career).

6.2.3 Some distortion of the focus of practice

Whilst there is evidence of a relatively open culture of discussion and decision-making in many settings, this is undermined in some cases by a process of political filtering, as two early career respondents noted:

> I have always worked in environments where, although there is a hierarchy, there is a less hierarchical approach to discussion and feedback about what the organisation should do, where it should develop is open to discussions from all staff and volunteers as well. … Although discussions are had in a very open and honest way within the staff, sometimes there is a decision from the top not to progress with something that we've agreed (early-career.

> I think maybe the very rigid nature of some of the policies around what we do seems to be a little bit against my principles of education. At the moment, I am working on the line between informal education and formal education for young people, and sometimes that formal education and the policies surrounding it can be quite restrictive (early-career).

Practitioners also appear to be learning to operate within a much more competitive environment and entrepreneurial culture. This has various consequences e.g. they may become more strategic at using the language of the market for social and educational objectives, although there is a danger that this may gradually distort the priorities of practice. As one said: *'Process gets lost in the quantitative evidence-gathering'* (mid-career).

6.2.4 Learning from communities

Interviewees reported that they learnt a great deal from working with communities. They learn about:

the distinctiveness of this kind of work:

> My practice has always meant that I stand alongside communities in what they want to express: I'm not just representing a service. That's so old-fashioned now (mid-career).

the importance of supporting collective learning and action:

> People are quite clear about what's happened to them, but without some recourse to finding out they're not on their own for a start, that there might be explanations they've not thought about… when people get together, they find there are other answers and other ways of carrying on (early-career).

what empowerment and capacity building could really mean:

> Community learning and development should be about enabling people to see what's already there, in themselves and their communities…. Realising their hidden capacity, potential and sense of possibility (mid-career).

the danger of becoming distant from the reality of people in communities:

> Passion has become discredited. It's not valued, and that's the part that enables the rest of it to work. If you sanitise it in the way that quantifying things does, then you're in danger of losing the passion. It's a profession that relies on passion (mid-career).

6..2.5 Policy context and learning

There is consistent evidence of many practitioners developing a more reflexive and self-directed type of learning, particularly by comparing what they think they should be doing with what they are actually required to do. It is precisely this kind of reflexive and reflective practitioner that is required to ensure that community learning and development fulfils its promise. CPD should be central in fostering and supporting this kind of critical and engaged practice.

To some extent, the prioritisation in policy of particular target groups also draws workers into new kinds of work-related learning and development. On the one hand, this may lead to a degree of specialisation, e.g. literacies work, family learning, capacity building. On the other hand, having to confront the experience of socially excluded groups has undoubtedly extended and enhanced professional understanding of both community cohesion and social inclusion (Coare and Johnston, 2003).

The changing policy context has created new professional and collegial relationships that have to be negotiated and this has produced a range of more or less formalised types of learning. At the same time, new forms of inter-agency partnership and collaboration have necessitated enhanced knowledge of a variety of related activities: working in multi-service teams; developing inter-disciplinary perspectives; striving to identify the distinctive contribution of community learning and development to these processes. As one mid-career interviewee stated:

> We all used to be community workers … but now people are coming from all over the place. Sometimes that can be constructive because you've got a great diversity of experience but it can also lead to a lot of conflict.

Sometimes the necessity to justify short-term gains can replace a commitment to those long-term developmental processes that are necessary to '[increase] the ability of individuals and groups to influence issues that affect them and their communities' (WALT,

2004). One effect of the mismatch between claims and reality in some contexts is what has been termed 'boosterism', i.e. the temptation to inflate aims and claims in order to secure funding, without any realistic prospect of actually achieving them:

> They kind of tailor it to ensure they get the money, so they say all these things, these miracles that they're going to perform and then there's you, the project worker, parachuted in and suddenly told what it is they're going to do when they've got the money. And you think, 'What? In 8 weeks?' (early career)

This highlights the important difference between strategic objectives (to meet funding requirements), educational objectives and learning objectives. The problem arises when strategic objectives are applied as if they are educational objectives, or to determine what groups might actually want or need to learn.

> The service is being diluted. It's gone from being a profession with particular values to a set of core skills which can be done by anybody. This is dangerous for us in terms of an identifiable service – it's being completely eroded. (mid-career)

For example, 'community engagement' denotes a particular process to which all workers are expected to subscribe, although this may represent a divergence with previous understandings.

> A key moment for me is when a person identifies the need to learn something, that's the key issue …they don't go through a process of saying 'I'm going to a service'…they go through a learning process with the assistance of a service…that's a very different model of engagement (mid-career).

It was shown earlier that learning in the workplace is strongly influenced by commitment to the work and working directly with communities formed an important part of such a commitment for many practitioners. However, the environment in which practitioners were operating sometimes made such commitment difficult.

6.3 Summary

Practitioners are developing a reflexive and self-directed type of learning, particularly by comparing what they think they should be doing with what they are actually required to do and this kind of critical and engaged practice is important in generating confidence and competence. The prioritisation in policy of particular target groups draws workers into new kinds of work-related learning and development and this may lead to a degree of specialisation, e.g. literacies work, family learning, capacity building. Confronting the experience of socially excluded groups has extended and enhanced professional understanding of both community cohesion and social inclusion but respondents were concerned that the pace of policy change sometimes made it difficult for them to keep up to date. Learning in the workplace is strongly influenced by a positive commitment to the work and by being in a supportive environment that makes such commitment possible. Clearly respondents expressed a strong commitment to working with communities and it is important that the factors outlined above do not detract from this commitment.

7 How is prior learning and understanding from higher education and other life experience applied in employment?

In this section the role of higher education, of life experience and of reflection as a means of learning is explored. However, it is quite difficult to generalise about the implications and impact of higher education and other life experience, because training institutions are variable and life experience necessarily idiosyncratic. Nevertheless, the combination of critical distance and practical application, which should be central to university-based professional education, suggests a distinctive role for HE in developing the profession (as distinct from simply providing professional development). In this sense, theory and practice should be mutually reinforcing. It also means that critical engagement with the purposes and processes of CLD enhances and extends the meaning of professionalism (Shaw and Crowther, 1995; Rosendale, 1996).

7.1 Role of higher education

Transferring knowledge and understanding from one context to another is not straightforward and Eraut (2004) has argued that employers often expect knowledge from higher education to be 'ready to use' and they question its relevance if it is not. Other work that has been undertaken around the professional identity of teachers (Boreham and Gray, 2005) suggests that the core professional identity of teachers cannot be disentangled 'from the wider contexts of life-course, social milieu, individual difference and self-concept' (2005: 1). It appears that education and training that is embedded in concrete work situations rather than separated from practice develops a particular kind of understanding of knowledge and identity. Bamber (2007) has suggested that the key to success in integrating knowledge and understanding lies in helping the learner to make the connections between work experience, programme content and their own professional development and this depends on unlocking the potential in the respective roles and contributions of universities, employers and learners. In short, it is necessary to recognise the interdependence of academia and the workplace in shaping professional competence (Nixon et al., 2006: 52).

Barab and Plucker (2002) argue that the context is important as people perform differently in different settings even when performing comparable work or addressing the same problems. This challenges the very notion of official competence and performance distinctions as a possession of the individual as opposed to an outcome of the person-in-situations. They note (2002: 173) that in work situations there may be little observable teaching, yet large quantities of learning. In such situations it is the practice of the community that creates the potential 'curriculum' in the broadest sense. However, there are considerable limits to what can be learned through addressing problems in the workplace. How would students learn about the history of CLD, for example, or gain access to the work of significant theorists? Learning through personal experience alone does not obviate learning from the accumulated insights of others.

In order to investigate this issue further, respondents were asked in the on-line survey how they kept in touch with the latest developments and what specific documents had impacted on their practice. Table 5 shows the types of resources used by respondents and using the Internet was the most frequent response (total responses = 97 people, 79%).

Table 5 - Keeping in touch with latest developments by reading

Keeping in touch with latest developments by reading	Number of responses
Internet	96
Journals	70
Newspapers	66
Books	44
Manuals	29
Policy documents	6
Other	4

It is not surprising that the Internet is a significant source of information, given the fact that computers have become so prevalent in the professional lives of practitioners. The vast range of material that is immediately accessible is a useful resource, particularly given the constraints of time described earlier in this report. Whilst such a supply of up-to-date information is undoubtedly valuable for some purposes, it is clearly not a substitute for regular engagement with the debates and critiques conducted in relevant journals and books, a view perhaps shared by the substantial number who identified journals and books as important.

Respondents were also asked about reading that had influenced how they thought about work and there was a large diversity of response with 52 different responses given by the 55 people who answered this question. The ranked list of responses is shown in Appendix VI. The most frequent response identified two documents, namely WALT and HGIOCLD2, that have framed recent developments in practice.

Further information was sought from the interviews and here several respondents referred to the value of theoretical frameworks they had been exposed to in their higher education studies. For example 'it has given me the best possible framework to build from [and]…I have felt confident enough to proceed with what had to be done' (early career). Another suggested that 'thinking critically was the number one lesson from my course [and] …I am now constructively critical of my own practice and the way the organisation does things' (early career). An experienced practitioner found that her qualifying course 'introduced me to theory, which I valued and found stimulating. It helped me to form an underpinning for my practice and more than anything it reinforced the value of appropriate planning, monitoring and evaluation'. Finally, an early career practitioner found that 'the course gave me experience of what learning is all about - the freedom of learning, developing knowledge and creativity… and the most resounding insight was about negotiating the tension between possibilities and constraints in the work'.

It is clear that this pre-existing 'intellectual capital', as it were, can play a significant role in enhancing and enriching subsequent learning through developing an orientation to theoretical understandings as a mid-career practitioner pointed out:

> Sometimes you think what you're doing is pointless. It's amazing when you find a good article and you think 'if I hadn't read that'…it inspires you to talk to colleagues about it too…We get bogged down locally and forget about the rest of the world. That's a useful thing, quite inspiring, makes you remember what you're supposed to be doing. We need more time for that kind of thing.

However, most respondents felt that their pre-qualifying course could not do everything. For example, a mid-career practitioner suggested 'nothing prepares you for the realities of practice, but you should be prepared theoretically'. Another found that her course gave her 'a good grounding in the general values and approach of CE but the course was weak on 'practicalities', e.g. partnership working, management, inter-professional

relations' (mid-career). Finally one practitioner thought that 'there should be more on funding and funding applications in the teaching programme' (early career) as these issues took up so much of her working time in a voluntary sector organisation.

It should be emphasised that there is a direct correlation between the field of practice and the learning opportunities available in pre-qualifying degree programmes. In particular, if students are unable to gain experience of educational work with groups in community settings through fieldwork placements, this is a major gap in their learning. Furthermore, this becomes a mutually reinforcing process, because they enter the field of practice deficient in a core dimension of the work of community learning and development. The effect of this is to gradually undermine the nature of what counts as legitimate CLD work, and the meaning of competence that underpins it (McCulloch and Martin, 1997).

> Experienced staff can use their judgement, but new practitioners, if they don't get
> the chance to do it the right way, they'll never do it the right way (mid-career).

Higher education has a crucial role to play in contributing to the development of the profession as well as to professional development particularly in helping practitioners develop the critical distance to think in constructive and creative ways about their work. Conversely the field of practice has a responsibility to offer students the opportunity to develop their professional identity through offering practice placements that enable them to develop their core skills in direct face-to-face work with groups.

7.2   Role of previous experience

Learning from experience is not straightforward since all experience is shaped by concrete social conditions and is influenced by individual histories. David Boud and colleagues have argued that the way in which experience is interpreted is intimately connected with how people view themselves. They suggest that:

> Developing confidence and building self-esteem both flow from, and are
> necessary for, learning from experience. If we do not respect our perceptions
> and have confidence in what we see and feel, then we cannot make use of the
> information that we garner from the world. A belief in our ability to act and learn
> is a prerequisite for learning; without this we are passive participants in the
> constructs of others (1993: 3).

Respondents showed their own understanding of how they learnt from experience. One (early career) suggested 'we are always learning all through life and each new task will always be daunting and so we need a little support to help us move on and progress'. Another said that 'being valued is the greatest motivator for learning and action and as CLD workers we have to build opportunities for this into our early work with individuals and groups' (mid-career). Finally an early career practitioner said:

> You never stop learning of ways to improve your practice and it's important to
> always keep an open mind. Empowering practice with others requires an ability
> to maintain a level of self-empowerment by maintaining optimism and belief in the
> face of adversity.

The other aspect of life experience is using it to develop current work. The CLD profession is unusual in that most practitioners have considerable experience of the field before they gain their professional qualifications. For example, one mid-career practitioner drew on her work in the Middle East to use a particular kind of software to develop their communications in the small voluntary sector project she managed. Another brought her experience of equalities work and used this understanding to gain more specialised knowledge of 'race' equality (mid-career). Many spoke of their previous experiences of networking with other people and how this had enabled them to find support from outside their own agencies. For example, 'no systems work unless you are

proactive' (early career) and 'you have to be aware of what you don't know and use your networks to find out' (early career).

7.3 Reflection as a means of learning

A great deal of research has shown how important structured reflection is for learning. For example, Kolb (1984) argued convincingly that professionals develop through constructive and critical engagement with the realities, issues and problems inherent in practice situations. The notion is that professionals must learn from the results of their actions if they are to continuously improve their practice. This type of learning occurs through systematic reflection on experience. Kolb's idea of a learning cycle in which practitioners take their own emotional responses into account when analysing problems in order to generate solutions that are then tested, has been widely used. Others have incorporated his idea of reflection into understandings of what it means to be a critical practitioner. Boud (1989: 42), for example, explains being critical in terms of:

> Allowing one's ideas to be criticised by others, exploring one's appreciation of the limitations placed on one's consciousness by historical and social circumstances, and being prepared to change one's approach as such awareness creates a new framework within which to act.

In the light of this research respondents were asked if and how they learnt through reflecting on their work. Table 6 shows that the highest proportion of respondents chose 'transforming your existing knowledge, skills and understanding to fit a new situation' as a way they learn through reflection (total responses = 102 people, 82%).

Table 6 - Reflection as a means of learning

Reflection as a means of learning	% of responses
Transforming your existing knowledge, skills and understanding to fit a new situation	91
Solving problems and reflecting on the experience by yourself	88
Reflect on past experiences/incidents & devising ways of making them more effective	87
Identifying new areas of work that would provide learning opportunities	85
Other	3

The interviews illustrated how reflection could be built into everyday work. For example, one practitioner suggested: 'it is necessary to structure the possibilities for reflection into the working day. I would like to have monthly meetings of practitioners like an action learning process but that's difficult to arrange'. Another specifically mentioned the Kolb learning cycle as a way of informing approaches to reflection, which she sees as a personal and group activity. She said that: 'Reflection is inscribed in our training materials and we hold residential events to evaluate and set goals as well as an annual residential with the Young People's Management Group'. However, others found that the pace of work meant that there was no time for reflection as 'people are simply too busy keeping the plates spinning' (early career).

7.4 Summary

Research (e.g. Eraut, 2004; Evans et al, 2006) has shown that prior learning cannot simply be applied to employment but has to be extracted from the previous context, whether higher education or life experience, applied to a new context, transformed to fit the new situation and integrated with other skills and knowledge in order to think and act in the new situation. For these reasons CLD workers need opportunities to reflect on their learning from practice, higher education and previous life experience in order to develop their expertise. This, in turn, requires workplaces where the pace of work is not too

intense and where there are opportunities to learn from supportive others in a relatively safe environment where mistakes can be made and learnt from. The data reported on here show that practitioners had a willingness to engage in learning and a commitment to use the resources that were available to them. However, the theme that has run through all parts of this research of the intensification of the work and the lack of time for reflection demonstrates that this is not an easy task. It is also clear that prior learning and understanding from higher education informs approaches to practice but further CPD is necessary to ensure that understanding of the particular context and setting that people work in is developed.

8 Key lessons for CPD and support in the CLD Sector

The range of research reported on earlier which showed the factors that regularly gave rise to learning and led to an expansive workplace learning environment are used in this section to provide the structure against which to assess the key lessons for CPD and support in the CLD sector. These areas are also contextualised by the complexities that apply to the CLD profession.

8.1 Expansive range of opportunities for learning

The CLD sector is highly diverse and it is very difficult for pre-qualifying training to prepare participants for the huge variety of settings and practices in which they will engage. Whilst prior learning and understanding from higher education inform approaches to practice further CPD is necessary to ensure that understanding of the particular context and setting that people work in is developed. It is therefore particularly important that there is access to appropriate CPD both for early and mid career staff. However, there were few opportunities for staff to take part in formal CPD courses of their own choosing and some had to pay for the academic courses that they did undertake. This contrasts strongly with the provision made for teachers who have a supported probationary year and an entitlement to 35 hours CPD per year with a curriculum that is largely set by the profession although it has to take account of school, local and national priorities. For early career staff there were fewer opportunities for all forms of support than more experienced staff even in relation to regular supervision meetings with a manager which would be expected to be built into all workers' jobs. This appeared to be partly due to the pressure on staff to respond to changing policy directions and, particularly in the voluntary sector, to focus on gaining external funding. Given the much greater variety of the work undertaken by CLD practitioners and the many changes of the focus of the work in recent years it is clear that there is little evidence of an expansive range of opportunities for learning through an entitlement to CPD and appropriate support.

8.2 Opportunities to broaden experience

Research on expertise at work (e.g. Evans et al, 2006; Fuller et al, 2005; Hodkinson, 2005) consistently finds that the distinguishing feature of experts is not how much they know but their ability to use their knowledge. This is because their knowledge has been organised as a result of experience for rapid, efficient and effective use. Therefore opportunities to broaden experience are important so that staff can organise and extend their knowledge more effectively. However, the evidence from this research shows that the only opportunity the majority of respondents had was of undertaking fact finding visits to other agencies and only one had attended a conference. This finding, together with the lack of CPD noted above, does show how limited the learning environment is for CLD practitioners.

8.3 Working alongside others

Working alongside others enables staff to learn from each other, especially new practices and perspectives, and thus to bring fresh insights into their work. As was pointed out earlier some staff do not have easy access to CLD colleagues because they work without any other CLD professionals in their immediate working environment. Others are working in Local Government Departments that have their main focus on formal education in schools or work with children and families and this also can lead to professional isolation. Research on learning at work shows that participation in group-activities as part of a team is important in building confidence to take on challenging work. It is vital that staff development enables CLD practitioners to meet together for mutual support and development. The preference was expressed by a number of respondents for the kind of

staff development that builds on collegial relationships and collective identities and this would enhance the availability of support and advice from colleagues.

8.4 Tackling challenging tasks

CLD work is challenging of its very nature but research shows, particularly for early career staff, that work that is too challenging can lead to loss of confidence and a decline in the motivation to learn. Conversely, where staff are supported, have a reasonable workload and are given good feedback then they are able to respond reflexively to new challenges rather than developing coping mechanisms that might be inappropriate and ineffective. At times this research has shown that practitioners are experiencing a dissonance between what could be described as the educational aims and claims of the work and the managerial imperatives of the job. The data show a perceived shift in emphasis from face-to-face work to various kinds of management, audit and measurement activity. This has happened incrementally, perhaps inadvertently, but nevertheless now represents one of the most significant characteristics of the contemporary field of practice in Scotland and across the UK, as consistently reflected in the literature (Henderson and Glen, 2005; Bamber, 2000; Learning Connections, 2007).

What appears to be developing is a division of labour between full-time professional staff, whose work is of a more managerial nature, and part-time staff who undertake face-to-face work with individuals and groups. In this respect, the data consistently demonstrate a growing concern that informal educational work may by default have moved from being a core component to an optional extra. This could well have consequences for the development of competence, since lack of opportunities to practise inevitably results in a loss of confidence and a feeling of becoming deskilled - a mutually reinforcing process.

8.5 Commitment to the work

The data show the importance of the commitment to working with communities that CLD practitioners have and many spoke of their passion for their work. However, development requires the professional experience and knowledge that CLD workers bring and this takes time and a realistic appraisal of the possibilities for engagement. For some, in addition to the issues outlined under 8.3, the commitment to working directly with communities was also diluted by the need to enable other professions to make similar engagements.

It is also increasingly difficult to make meaningful generalisations about what currently constitutes the field of practice as a coherent whole (Learning Connections, 2007). This process of diversification has led to some practitioners' sense of the dilution of their own distinctive professional identity and educational purposes and thus to a lesser commitment to the work as currently constituted. If staff feel that the face-to-face work to which they are committed is not being done effectively then they lose morale. This issue of morale has been identified in a number of HMIE CLD inspection reports as well as in this research.

9   Key issues in the CLD context

From the research a number of key factors can be identified that shape the possibilities and constraints of workplace learning in CLD:

- Professional identity: the balance between professional values and pragmatic requirements;
- The work environment: the degree to which workplace culture can enable or inhibit educational practice;
- Partnership: the benefits and costs of partnership working;
- The policy context: the relationship between the demands of top-down and bottom-up approaches to practice.

Cumulatively, these factors significantly affect the way that practitioners think about who they are and what they do. One way of understanding the issues involved is to conceptualise their experience in terms of a series of tensions:

top-down demands	$\longleftrightarrow$	bottom-up pressures
supportive contexts	$\longleftrightarrow$	undermining contexts
expansive workplaces	$\longleftrightarrow$	restrictive workplaces
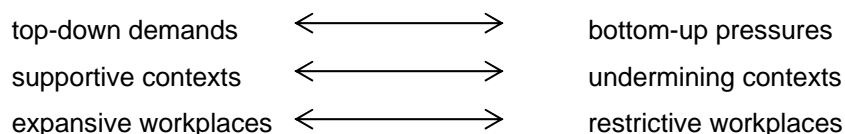
Ultimately, all professional experience is about developing the competence and confidence to manage these fundamental tensions in creative and responsive ways.

9.1   Professional identity

Striking a balance between professional values and the pragmatic requirements of the job is a continuing preoccupation for many workers. We found this particularly to be the case with mid-career personnel. Some of these practitioners have a strong sense that current developments in policy and practice represent a potential threat to what they regard as the core educational values of community learning and development. These are defined by the Scottish Executive as follows:

- Empowerment – increasing the ability of individuals and groups to influence issues that affect them and their communities;
- Participation – supporting people to take part in decision-making;
- Inclusion, equality of opportunity and anti-discrimination – recognising that some people may need additional support to overcome the barriers they face;
- Self-determination – supporting the right of people to make their own choices;
- Partnership – recognising that many agencies can contribute to CLD to ensure resources are used effectively. (WALT, 2004)

The data indicate that one of the differences between early and mid-career practitioners relates to their sense of professional identity. Generally speaking, mid-career practitioners have a fairly sound sense of themselves as informal educators whose primary task is to work in developmental ways with groups and individuals around self-defined interests, aspirations and needs. This is rooted in a strong consciousness of their own culture and history within the former Community Education Service (as distinct from community learning and development), thus providing a different frame of reference (see Tett, 2006). Early-career practitioners, in contrast, tend to see their work primarily in terms of the immediate demands being made upon them and in relation to more narrowly conceived forms of accountability for 'performance' and 'outcomes'.

9.2   The work environment

There is a perceived threat to the sense of professional identity as practitioners become increasingly embedded in the implementation and delivery of broader policy objectives, which are targeted on externally defined priority groups and specific policy initiatives. The combined effect is to reduce the autonomy of practitioners and the range of strategic choices they are able to make about their work. The extent to which they can exercise discretion is contingent upon both the wider context of policy and practice and on the particular culture of the workplace. This means that a great deal depends on the local and distinctive characteristics of specific work contexts, which may be either restrictive or expansive in terms of how practitioners experience the problems and possibilities of their work (Evans et al, 2006; Fuller & Unwin, 2005). Whilst there is evidence of a relatively open culture of discussion and decision-making in many settings, this is undermined in some cases by a process of political filtering.

It is particularly important to emphasise that the factors outlined above have significant implications for practitioners' notions of competence and their sense of the possibilities of practice. In this respect, it could be said that the objective conditions of practitioners' work largely determine how they understand its purpose and potential. In other words, practitioners can all too easily come to inhabit the new identities that are thrust upon them.

> If you don't adhere to some kind of CLD values, you don't know there's a corner to fight…you need to have the competence to ask why…to know there's a question to ask (mid-career).

In addition there is a regime of inspection, audit, and consultation that raises questions for a profession which has historically argued that people come first.

> Consulting to death has created a difficulty for CLD who would have always seen ourselves as a key player in community consultation (mid-career).

It seems clear that this affects patterns of work, motivation and learning, probably driving them in an instrumental direction. More systematic research would be required to explore the effect of this 'instrumental rationality' (Sanderson, 1998), in the complex and developing field of community learning and development.

9.3   Partnership working

Various kinds of partnership arrangements have now become a reality for nearly all CLD practitioners and whilst this has undoubtedly brought opportunities to develop and learn from collaborative and inter-agency arrangements, it may also lead to confusion of purpose and a perceived dilution of professional identity (Mayo, 1997). The legal obligation to consult with communities in such partnership arrangements may well offer new possibilities for effecting change. On the other hand, such partnerships rarely embody equal power relationships and therefore tend to be dominated by particular interests, with particular consequences - a fact that is seldom given adequate recognition. In addition, the circumstances in which they operate may not be conducive to sustained educational work, or supportive of democratic accountability (e.g. Davies, 2007 in relation to research on partnerships in Dundee).

Although there is some value placed on the partnership approach - particularly where there is a shared understanding of its purpose, and where it provides opportunities to engage actively with communities – this must be set against a widely shared perception that a preoccupation with administrative procedures may be driving out educational and democratic processes.

> Communities are confused. On the one hand, they're told they can have their say through community learning and development. Then they're confused when told that what they say is wrong, or isn't taken up … The main problem is that it purports to be bottom-up and ticks boxes for bottom-up, but it's actually top-down (mid-career).

It is very telling that, amongst our respondents, there were few examples of work being undertaken which was not circumscribed in some way by these negative aspects of partnership working. The importance of this issue strongly indicates the need to assess the extent to which the scope of community-based education/development has narrowed, together with a reduction in the autonomy of community groups to pursue their own interests with support from CLD workers.

9.4 The policy context

The data suggests that practitioners experience a persistent tension between what may be termed 'policy', on the one hand, and 'politics' on the other (Shaw and Martin, 2000). By policy we mean the superimposed demands of the state (from above) and by politics, the needs, aspirations and demands of communities (from below). A number of responses suggest that the nature of some funding arrangements for community learning and development appear to make it difficult to address the latter in any systematic way because it mixes up a commitment to long-term objectives with short-term financial support.

> The interpretation of the policies can usually give at least lip service to the fact that it should be needs led. However, sometimes they've decided in advance what that need is (mid-career).

In addition, the logic of specifically-targeted intervention may be to exclude the explicitly stated wishes of community groups, a situation which would be the antithesis of what has been, in the past, called 'an empowering profession' (McConnell, 1996).

> I was working with a group of women – [the project] was about women and work … someone came in and did a whole 'dress for success' thing. But the women reacted totally against it and then brought up other issues that they wanted to address that we couldn't … we had to put a lid on. … I was cringing because we'd done all this thing about encouraging them to think differently and move in different directions and then we had to go back and say 'take a cleaning job'. (early career)

Concern has been expressed that the current funding regime encourages a pragmatic short-termism: in which 'performativity' may be valued more highly than performance and the impression of effectiveness may be regarded as more significant than the reality of achievement.

> People on the ground are working to their own priorities that may or may not fit with national priorities. Then when someone comes in to audit them against national priorities, that puts them on the defensive because they don't know what they are. The constant change of language, the use of alien managerial language (outputs, inputs etc) is a complete nightmare. This is not the way to communicate with people (early-career).

It appears that funding can be used to steer learning towards policy priorities that may not be those of communities, and cuts in funding can reduce the range of options available to practitioners. The current trend towards short-term, targeted funding, moreover, has a direct impact on the capacity and willingness of practitioners to devote sufficient time to developing their own learning. This is exacerbated by the constant threat of reductions in funding which can have the effect of making workers feel ineffective and demoralised (Ecclestone, 2004). In addition, the general atmosphere of competition puts a premium on short-term gains rather than long-term aims. This is not conducive to sustained learning effort on the part of practitioners.

9.5 Summary

Research consistently shows that expansive and supportive workplaces lead to effective learning. This comes about by employers/managers allocating and structuring work at a level that is sufficiently challenging to be undertaken provided that appropriate feedback, support and advice is given and this in turn leads to the strengthening of commitment and confidence on the part of workers. It appears, however, that the current policy context provides too great a challenge for many practitioners because they are unable to exercise their professional autonomy due to time and funding pressures. This suggests that more dedicated time for systematic reflection on the work should be built into employment conditions and that the importance of longer-term educational work in and with communities, with appropriate funding, should be reasserted.

10   Recommendations

In many ways this research is best seen as a precursor to more in-depth studies that would be needed to fully explore the many issues addressed in this report. This is because the data set on which the research is based is limited. It is nevertheless possible to draw some broad lessons from it, especially where the findings clearly resonate with those indicated in the wider research literature. The sections of the report in which the findings and research have been discussed are provided.

1) Given the absence of CPD opportunities that has been identified (Section 5), consideration should be given to establishing a standard for CPD and support that is equivalent in terms of quality and entitlement to that provided in allied professions such as school teaching.

2) Given the importance for learning so clearly associated (in Sections 5 and 8) with opportunities for practitioners to engage in systematic reflection through thinking and talking together, consideration should be given to how CPD and support could systematically enhance collegiality and teamwork.

3) Concern has been expressed about the impact of the increasingly complex environment in CLD including new commitments to planning, partnership working, funding and accountability (see Section 8). This puts considerable pressure on all staff and there are particular responsibilities placed on those in managerial positions to ensure that practitioners are supported in their core educational work. There is a need within this context for a new appreciation of the role of management in CLD in meeting the emerging challenges. Consideration should be given to the development, at an appropriate academic and professional level, of appropriate training for CLD managers in this respect. Possibilities could be usefully explored with the University sector.

4) Given the concern expressed about the changing focus of practice away from face to face work with groups and individuals (Section 5 and 6) CPD should provide continuing opportunities to develop and enhance educational work with groups as a priority. Possibilities could be explored with the University sector.

5) A cluster of findings point to the need to provide opportunities to stimulate debate and share good practice across the field that will promote learning. These include most respondents identifying the opportunity to ask questions and share ideas, to undertake fact-finding visits to other agencies (section 5), and for collegial spaces to develop thinking and the capacity for reflection (Section 7) as important. To support this need, consideration could be given to holding a major CLD conference annually, bringing together academics, practitioners, policy makers, voluntary sector staff and other stakeholders, to encourage a healthy climate of critical reflection and debate.

6) The current trend towards short-term, targeted funding has a direct impact on the capacity and willingness of practitioners to devote sufficient time to developing their own learning. Consideration should be given to commissioning further research into the claim that the CLD sector is losing the capacity, for example through short term funding regimes, to make long-term commitments to responding to the issues raised by communities (Sections 6 and 9). Long-term educational work needs to be supported by a closer working relationship between practitioners and community groups at grassroots level and CPD needs to respond to this.

7) Most respondents cited the Internet as an important source of information and ideas (Section 7). Whilst this should be regarded as only one resource for professional development, it would be valuable to build on the website development currently being undertaken on behalf of the Scottish Community Learning and Development Work-Based and Part-Time Training Consortium.

8) This research was based on a limited sample and so follow up work is needed to see if the findings from this project are more widely generalisable. Therefore two pieces of further research should be undertaken: i) a thorough survey of the CPD and support received by early career practitioners in order to see if the pattern uncovered in this research is widely experienced; ii) a review of the focus of the work of CLD in the current context and what this implies for both pre-service and in-service training.

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Appendixes

Appendix I - Letter/email to CLD colleagues

Dear Colleague,

Developing Competence: Early and Mid-Career in CLD

We are contacting you because you have a professional qualification in Community Education and we have been commissioned by Learning Connections to carry out initial research that aims to contribute to, and support, the early career development and continuing professional development of Community Learning and Development (CLD) practitioners. The research team comprises Lyn Tett (project manager), John Bamber, Vivien Edwards, Ian Martin and Mae Shaw, all from the department of Higher and Community Education at the University of Edinburgh.

The objectives of the research are:
1) To discover what is being learned by staff in early and mid career in community learning and development and identify how it is being learned.
2) To identify what factors affect the level and direction of learning effort.
3) To assess how prior learning and understanding from higher education and other life experience is applied in employment.
4) To outline key lessons for the CLD sector in developing continuing professional development, and support mechanisms.
5) To identify key issues in the CLD context and recommendations on how these should be addressed.

We have devised a structured questionnaire to assess what early and mid-career staff are learning and to identify the opportunities and constraints inherent in all community based educational work. If you gained your professional qualification in or before 2005 we would like you to answer it. It only takes about 30 minutes and is easy to use. You can access it by clicking on the link below and answering the questions. We hope to interview some people in more detail about their learning and might be in touch with you once the questionnaire has been returned.

LINK: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=697713707078

If you know of anyone else who qualified in or before 2005 please send it on to him or her. Responses will be accepted up to 14th May 2007.

If you would like to know more about the project, please contact Viv Edwards on 01316514192: email: Vivien.Edwards@ed.ac.uk

Finally, as we are trying to reach as many people as possible this request might come to you from a variety of sources. Apologies for any cross–posting.

Thank you for taking part in this important project.
Best wishes,
Lyn Tett (on behalf of the team)

Appendix II - Survey questionnaire

On-line Questionnaire:
Developing Competence: Early and Mid-Career in CLD

PERSONAL DETAILS
1.   Please state your age in years:
2.   Please select your gender:
3.   Are you registered disabled?
4.   Please state the year you gained your professional qualification?
5.   Please select the name of your professional qualification:
6.   Please select the awarding institution for your qualification:

JOB INFORMATION
7.   Please state your job title:
8.   Please state the name of your (main) employer:
9.   What kind of contract do you have with your employer?
10.   Please state the sector in which you work:
11.   Please state your annual salary:
12.   Please state your position grade:
13.   Please state the number of employers you work for if more than one:
14.   Please state which groups you mainly work with:
15.   Please state your responsibility for other staff/workers:
        Part-time =
        Full-time =
        Sessional =
        Voluntary =
16.   Please state roughly the percentage of time your spend on the following:
    - Face to face CLD work with individuals
    - Face to face CLD work with groups
    - Planning and reflecting on your work
    - Management and development of other staff
    - Networking with other professions/agencies
    - Administrative work
    - Making funding applications
    - Quality assurance and performance measurement
    - Your own continuing professional development
    - Other (please state what)
17.   Is this a satisfactory balance of your time?
18.   If no, please state roughly how you would prefer to split your work time:
    - Face to face CLD work with individuals
    - Face to face CLD work with groups
    - Planning and reflecting on your work
    - Management and development of other staff
    - Networking with other professions/agencies
    - Administrative work
    - Making funding applications
    - Quality assurance and performance measurement
    - Your own continuing professional development
    - Other (please state what)

LEARNING AT WORK

Since qualifying, please indicate whether you have undertaken any of the following learning activities:

19.   Learning with and through colleagues:
- *Asking questions of others to improve your understanding, knowledge or skills*
- *Sharing ideas through discussion with colleagues and then implementing them*
- *Working alongside colleagues to tackle a challenging task*
- *Collaborating with more experienced colleagues on a particular task*
- *Getting feedback from colleagues on your work*
- *Informal mentoring from a more experienced colleague*
- *Informal alliances with like-minded colleagues*
- *Observing and listening to others and participating in activities together*
- *Not applicable*
- *Other*

20.   Reflection as a means of learning:
- *Reflecting on past experiences and incidents and devising ways of making them more effective*
- *Solving problems and reflecting on the experience by yourself*
- *Identifying new areas of work that would provide learning opportunities*
- *Transforming your existing knowledge, skills and understanding to fit a new situation*
- *Not applicable*
- *Other*

21.   Keeping in touch with latest developments by reading:
- *Books*
- *Journals*
- *Manuals*
- *Newspapers*
- *Internet*
- *Not applicable*
- *Other*

22.   Is there anything you have read since graduating that has particularly influenced the way you think about work, e.g. a specific book, article, policy document?

23.   Opportunities to broaden and extend experience beyond job:
- *Fact-finding visits to other agencies*
- *Exchange visits with colleagues in similar work*
- *Exchange visits with international colleagues in similar work*
- *Job swaps*
- *Not applicable*
- *Other (please specify)*

24.   What do you consider the most important thing that you have learned from working directly with people in communities?

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES

Since qualifying, please indicate whether you have had any of the following opportunities for professional development and training.

25.   Systematic staff development process:
- *Participation in goal setting for the unit, area of work*
- *Annual meeting set to your goals and targets*
- *Annual appraisal to review performance*
- *Annual appraisal to establish development needs*
- *Regular supervision meetings with manager (e.g. monthly)*
- *Career planning with manager or senior colleague*
- *Formal mentoring from a more experienced colleague*
- *Not applicable*
- *Other (please specify)*

26.   Ongoing formal procedures to discuss and evaluate your work:
- *Forms of monitoring and evaluation*
- *Access to manager(s) to discuss issues*
- *Access to non-line management supervisors*
- *Meetings with colleagues to discuss and evaluate work*
- *Arrangements with participants to discuss and evaluate work*
- *Not applicable*
- *Other (please specify)*

27.   Planned time for learning and development:
- *Intensive training courses (e.g. leadership, management skills)*
- *External conferences and workshops*
- *In-house seminars*
- *In-house training days*
- *Not applicable*
- *Other (please specify)*

28.   Opportunities to undertake courses paid for by:
- *Employer*
- *Self*
- *Contribution from employer and self*
- *Not applicable*
- *Other (please specify)*

29.   Opportunities to obtain formal qualifications:
- *Masters qualification*
- *Postgraduate qualification*
- *Individual courses at masters/postgraduate level*
- *Courses at undergraduate level*
- *Specific certified courses*
- *Not applicable*
- *Other (please specify)*

30.   Were these formal courses paid for by:
- *Employer*
- *Self*
- *Contribution from employer and self*
- *Not applicable*
- *Other (please specify)*

31.   Opportunities to undertake research and development activities:
- *Formal research activities (e.g. patterns of employment)*
- *Using internet resources such as digital depositories*
- *Not applicable*
- *Other (please specify)*

32.   How important are these factors in helping you learn in the workplace? (important, somewhat important, neither important nor unimportant, somewhat unimportant, unimportant)
- *Expectations about your performance at work*
- *Support and advice from colleagues*
- *Personal commitment to the work*
- *Time*
- *Resources*
- *Atmosphere*
- *Workload*
- *Level of challenge*
- *Priorities in the work*
- *Inter-professional relationships*
- *Intra-professional relationships*
- *Using skills and abilities acquired outside work*

33.   How easy is it for you to determine your own learning needs and development?
- *easy*
- *somewhat easy*
- *neither easy nor difficult*
- *somewhat difficult*
- *difficult*

POLICY CONTEXT

34.   In what ways has the changing policy context affected your work - up to 5 bullet   points?

35.   What two national policy documents have had most impact on your work over the past year

36.   What two local strategies have had most impact on your work over the past year?

37.   How important are policy or management priorities in affecting your work?
- *important*
- *somewhat important*
- *neither important nor unimportant*
- *somewhat unimportant*
- *unimportant*

38.   How important are resource constraints in affecting your work?
- *important*
- *somewhat important*
- *neither important nor unimportant*
- *somewhat unimportant*
- *unimportant*

39.   How important is decentralization in affecting your work?
- *important*
- *somewhat important*
- *neither important nor unimportant*
- *somewhat unimportant*
- *unimportant*

40. How important is partnership working in affecting your work?
- *important*
- *somewhat important*
- *neither important nor unimportant*
- *somewhat unimportant*
- *unimportant*

41. How important is performance measurement/accountability in affecting your work?
- *important*
- *somewhat important*
- *neither important nor unimportant*
- *somewhat unimportant*
- *unimportant*

Appendix III - Interviewee details

Graduation institute	Year Graduated	Gender	Job Title	Location
Dundee	2005	M	Lecturer	Glasgow
Dundee	2005	F	Pupil Support Worker	Dundee
Dundee	1996	F	Senior CL Worker - Adult Literacies	Perth
Dundee	1991	F	Senior CLD Worker	Angus
Dundee	1992	F	National Co-ordinator	Angus
*Dundee	2004	F	Pupil Support Worker	Dundee
Edinburgh	2005	F	Sessional Literacies Tutor	Edinburgh
Edinburgh	2004	M	Information and Communication Officer	Edinburgh
Edinburgh	1989	F	CLD Worker	Midlothian
Edinburgh	1988	F	Senior Community Worker	Stirling
*Edinburgh	2005	M	Community Education Worker	Fife
*Edinburgh	1988	F	Community Worker	Stirling
Strathclyde	2004	M	Adult Learning Worker	Inverclyde
Strathclyde	2002	F	Community Link Worker	East Ayrshire
Strathclyde	2005	M	Community Learning Officer	Renfrewshire
Strathclyde	1995	F	Home School Partnership Officer	N. Lanarkshire
Strathclyde	1994	M	Policy Development Officer	Glasgow
*Strathclyde	1987	M	Adult and Family Learning Manager	E. Renfrew

* Unavailable to be interviewed

Appendix IV - Interview Schedule for Developing Competence

1   What is the purpose and nature of your work with groups and to what extent do you feel equipped to carry it out satisfactorily? (relates to Survey Monkey Q14)

2   Please could you say more about how your time is distributed and does this give you sufficient time and space to achieve all that you need to? (relates to Survey Monkey Q16-18)

3   What aspects of the job do you feel least equipped for? Why is this? (relates to Survey Monkey Q16-18)

4   Please could you tell us more about learning with colleagues. Please can you give me an example? (relates to Survey   Monkey Q19)

5   In what ways, if any, would you describe yourself as a reflective practitioner? (relates to Survey Monkey Q20)

6   Please can you give me some examples of what you have read which is relevant to your work? (relates to Survey Monkey Q21)

7   In what ways has this influenced your thinking about your work? (relates to Survey Monkey Q22)

8   Please can you give some examples of opportunities you have had to broaden and extend your experience beyond your job? (relates to Survey Monkey Q23)

9   Please can you elaborate on what you said was the most important thing you have learned from working directly with people in communities? (relates to Survey Monkey Q24)

10   What kind of staff development do you find most useful, and why? (relates to Survey Monkey Q25-30)

11   What are the factors that would make your workplace a richer and more stimulating learning environment? (relates to Survey Monkey Q32)

12   What gets in the way of the workplace being a stimulating learning environment? (relates to Survey Monkey Q32)

13   Can you give an example of anything you have done to meet your own learning needs? (relates to Survey Monkey Q33)

14   Please can you tell us more about how the changing political context is affecting your work?   (Interviewer - please get some examples) (relates to Survey Monkey Q34)

15   Can you give some examples of having to learn new things as a result of self-generated or imposed changes in your job? (relates to Survey Monkey Q34)

16   Looking back on your initial training, has this prepared you for the work you do? (Interviewer probes: thinking critically; the realities of practice; responding to the policy context; reflection etc)

17   In what ways are you actively learning at work? Please give examples.

18   If there was one aspect of work that you would change, what would it be? Could
you   bring about this change if you wanted to? If no, what is stopping you?

19   Would you be able to participate in a focus group on Friday 22nd June 1:30-3:00 at Moray House? We will provide lunch at 12:30 and reimburse your travel expenses.

Appendix V - Job Titles

Job Title	Nos.
Adult and Family Learning Manager	1
Adult Learning Manager	1
Adult Learning Worker	2
Adult Literacies Co-ordinator	1
Adult Literacies Manager	1
Adult Literacy & Numeracy Development Worker	2
Adult Literacy & Numeracy Support Worker	1
Adult Literacy and Numeracy Worker	2
Adult Literacy Strategy Co-ordinator	1
Area Manager	1
Assistant Manager	1
Assistant Manager Youth Issues	1
Chief Executive Officer	1
Community Development Area Manager	1
Community Development Co-ordinator	1
Community Development Worker	1
Community Economic Development Worker	1
Community Education Worker	5
Community Learning and Development Worker	6
Community Learning Development Officer	1
Community Learning Manager	1
Community Learning Officer	4
Community Learning Worker	2
Community Link Worker	1
Community Planning and Development Manager	1
Community Planning and Partnership Manager	1
Community Worker	3
Development Manager	1
Dialogue Youth Project Co-ordinator	1
Director	1
Drug and Alcohol Project Worker	1
Education Manager Workers' Educational Association North East Scotland	1
Family Learning Worker	1
Home School Partnership Officer	1
ICS AND CLD MANAGER	1
Information and Communications Officer	1
Lecturer	1
Manager	2
National Co-ordinator	1
Operations Manager-CLD Service	1

Job Title	Nos.
Policy development officer	2
Primary Teacher (Probationer)	1
Principal Officer	2
Programme Leader - Education	1
Project Co-ordination	1
Project Coordinator Angus Gold 50plus project but Substantive post Senior CLD worker	1
Project Worker	1
Projects Manager	1
Pupil Support Worker	3
Senior Community Development Worker	1
Senior Community Education Worker	1
Senior Community Education Worker (Adult Learning)	1
Senior Community Learning and Development Officer	1
Senior Community Learning and Development Worker	4
Senior Community Learning and Development Worker (Youth and Children's Work)	1
Senior Community Learning Officer	1
Senior Community Learning Worker	1
Senior Community Learning Worker (Adult Literacies)	1
Senior Community Learning and Development worker SW Youth and Children's team	1
Senior Community Worker	3
Senior Health Promotion Specialist	1
Senior Project Worker	1
Senior Youth Worker	1
Service Manager, Communities	1
Sessional Literacy Tutor	1
Strategist- City	1
Sustainability Officer	1
Teacher	1
Team Leader	2
Training and Development Worker	1
Volunteer Community Worker and Adult Literacy Tutor	1
Young Carers Support Worker	1
Youth Strategy Officer	1
Youth Worker	3

Appendix VI - Is there anything you have read since graduating that has particularly influenced the way you think about work, e.g. a specific book, article, policy document?

Reading that has had influence	No. of reponses
WALT	8
HGIOCLD	4
Various articles	3
Delivering Change	2
LEAP	2
Concept	2
RAPAL - adult learning magazine	1
Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Language	1
ABCD	1
Better Communities in Scotland	1
Closing the Gap	1
John Stewart books on public authorities as learning organisations	1
'Catching Confidence' tool	1
Circular 4/99, Literacies	1
Community Development - A critical approach by Margaret Ledwith	1
Counselling books	1
Disconnected by Nick Barham	1
Developing Youth Work by Mark Smith	1
Infed Website	1
Doing BA in Professional Development at Dundee University	1
HMIE	1
HMIE Inspection	1
Human Inquiry/Action Research	1
Updating reading by supervising students	1
Informal Education by Jeff and Smith	1
Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Freire	1
Trinity and Society by Leonardo Boff	1
Hidden Harm Report by Joy Barlow	1
Discomforting research: colliding moralities by M.A. Barnard	1
Looking for Àòtruth,Äô in a study of parental drug problems	1
Liberation theory and the links to Freire	1
Chomsky	1
Local Government Scotland Act, 1003	1
Developing Critical Thinkers	1
My contract	1
University articles	1
One Minute Manager Books	1
Other people's theses	1
Public Health and Health Promotion Theory	1
Scottish Executive Strategies/policies	1
EU Policy Directives	1
Local Authority Strategies	1
Funding stream details	1
Single Status Policy	1
Workshops on Philosophical Enquiry Process	1
Support for Learning Documents	1
The History of Human Rights	1
Internet articles on team building and leadership	1
National Standards on Community Engagement	1
Firm Foundations Spending Wisely NYA	1
Social Accounting	1
Social Enterprise Information	1