The Development of Reflective Dialogue and Participation in Young Children Through Engagement with Documented Learning Narratives

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19th August 2016
Submitted to: Centre for Research in Early Childhood

Research in Professional Practice submitted in part fulfilment of the award of MA Education (Early Years) at Birmingham City University

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Abstract

This is a small scale piece of action research working within a praxeological paradigm, seeking to uphold the values of democracy and participation within research and practice. The research places itself in current discourse on Article 12 of the United Nations Rights of the Child, the right for the child to participate and relates this to current assessment practices within an English nursery. The research investigates how young children's active, reflective dialogues and metacognitive thinking can be stimulated through engaging with documented learning narratives, leading to increased participation in the documentation process. It uses participant observations, audio recordings, photographs, examples of children's work and pedagogic journaling to detail the developing reflectivity and metacognition of the participants and the transforming practise of the practitioner researcher, through two case studies. It was found that by engaging with documented learning narratives, in the context of critical reflection of practice and transformational action by the practitioner researcher, reflective and metacognitive thinking was increased amongst the participants, leading to increased participation in the documentation process.

Keywords: *early years; learning narrative; documentation; assessment; participation; children's voice; reflective dialogue.*

Introduction

My intended aim in this research was to seek a greater understanding of my own practice and develop it to support young children to engage with their learning through established documentation strategies, developing their personal reflectivity. Underpinning this research is a desire to move towards a more participatory and democratic approach to documentation, and subsequently assessment, in my practice and thereby influence the practice of others. Engaging in dialogue and listening attentively was the first step towards such an approach.

I posed the initial question, "How might children's documented learning narratives be used to stimulate more active, reflective learning dialogues with children?" (Appendix 1). This was the first within a sequence of evolving questions as I engaged with the literature and progressed through the research, leading to positioning this question within the discourse of the child's right to participate, as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12 (UN, 1989) . Emergent theories and further questions arose from the action taken, the data collected and through reflective dialogue.

What are documented learning narratives?

In the Children's Centre in which I work**,** documented learning narratives have become the foremost tool for assessing children's learning and developmental progress. They are influenced by the work of Carr (2001) and Carr and Lee (2012) in New Zealand and the approaches to documentation in Reggio Emilia, Italy (Edwards et al., 1998; Rinaldi, 2005). This documentation can take many written and visual forms. They are primarily composed

of observations of the child in action, specifically drawing out the links between episodes of learning, action or experience. The underlying concepts or modes of thinking that the child is employing are revealed, bringing their progress and development to the fore in a narrative structure and form. Learning narratives happen over the course of a few minutes, days, weeks or even years. These threads of learning and thinking can be traced throughout the documentation, either within one observation or across a collection of observations. In my setting these individual and grouped observations are placed in an individualised *learning diary* (Appendix 2), which can be seen as a documented learning narrative as a whole as well as its constituent parts.

What is so important about reflective dialogues?

Young children's thinking has always been of interest in the field of early education (Isaacs, 1932; Dewey, 1910; Bruner, 1977). In more recent years there has been a growing interest in metacognition (Flavell, 1979; Larkin, 2010), or thinking about thinking, enabling the thinker to gain insights into their own learning and the processes involved, with exponents listing benefits to all areas of learning throughout life. Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2002: 38) stated in their report that "to be effective, teachers must provide the means by which children may acquire these skills and strategies", finding it was often a feature of the most effective approach to teaching. Larkin (2010) suggests that a primary means of supporting this insight in young children is through dialogue, especially when facilitated by the practitioner. However, Robson (2016b) and Whitebread et al. (2007) found that children were more likely to display metacognitive abilities in the absence of the teacher. Yet it is agreed (Robson, 2010; 2016a; 2016b; Carr, 2011; Carr and Lee, 2012) that dialogue, reflecting upon past learning and activities, is key to lifelong learning and learner dispositions.

Why study the relationship between documentation and children's dialogues now?

Drummond (1995) asserts that when we talk about assessment we are actually talking about the purposes and aspirations of education, and therefore the locus of pedagogy and curriculum. Assessment is intrinsically linked to the assessor's, or collective community of assessors', values. It is a system of judgement that is discerned to be worthwhile or worthless, depending on your values. As Drummond (1995: 187) continues:

> …effective assessment requires educators to make choices, in the interests of children, that are based on a coherent set of principles, which are themselves as expression of each educators values.

In my setting we seek to co-construct knowledge with children, seeking participation and partnership in play. I observed that this did not always extend to our assessment practices. We involve children but our judgement values remain the dominant voice.

As a staff team we had been asking questions with regard to our approaches to documentation. Previous methods of gathering, formatting and presenting documentation of children's learning were developing through exposure to new ideas and reflective professional dialogues. The learning diaries were moving from being presented in curriculum areas to chronological documentation with observations being addressed to the child.

I wanted to look at how we could move towards a more participatory and democratic approach to assessment. I was seeking greater participation from the children and a

movement towards a more equalised power dynamic between them and myself. It became clear that these values also needed to be at the heart of my research if the children were to have an equally active role in influencing change. This is an extensive area to engage with and in order to focus I aligned this with my own personal interest in the documentation of learning using learning narratives and children's metacognition. The study needed to be manageable and so my research question is located within my practice where it would be possible to observe the influence of the resultant action.

This research has the potential to be important and valuable. It adds to the current dialogue in my setting, helping each of us to better articulate our own values and practices, justify our choices and further demonstrate a researchful approach to the development of practice. Additionally, the research will provide culturally meaningful and situated pedagogical documentation, a powerful tool for reflection, challenging discourse and developing democracy within the Centre and elsewhere (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Pascal and Formosinho, 2016).

At the heart of the educational democratic ideal (Dewey, 1916) is the recognition of mutual interests and, I believe, the ability to listen, understand and accept another person's view of a common experience. I began by listening to the children, seeking to understand their experiences as well as my own and accept these as legitimate, authentic and worthy sources of influence.

Review of Relevant Literature

With the backdrop of increasing policy directives towards standardised testing (DfE, 2014b) I began looking into the idea that if the UK has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UN, 1989; UNICEF UK, 2004) are we genuinely addressing the child's right to be heard (UN, 2009) in our assessment procedures?

This chapter will explore current literature that has sought to address the child's right to be heard in the field of education, from the viewpoint of policy, concept analysis and research. It will build an argument for moving from the right to be heard to the right to participate, and discuss what authentic participation may look like when it is applied to assessment in the early years. It will bring together the rights of the child and those of the adult to participate equally in a process of pedagogical transformation within the assessment arena.

The right to a voice, to be heard and respected

Last year the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCRH) (2015) reported on the UK's current compliance with the UNCRC, finding that there was little evidence of monitoring or sustained progress towards meeting these commitments. It found that the government's report from that year (UN, 2015) was optimistic in their own assessment of progress and compliance. Of particular interest to this research is Article 12, point 1, one of the four general principles of the UNCRC:

> States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters

> affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
>
> (UN, 1989)

The Government's (UN, 2015) most recent response to Article 12, stated that schools enable pupils to 'have a say'. The Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE) (2014) reported the need for Article 12 to be integral to the process of policy development that impacts pupils, not merely the daily running of the school. It reiterated that children should be able to express their views in *all* matters affecting them (CREA, 2014). The Department for Education's (DfE, 2014a) brief two page statutory guidance, '*Listening to and involving children and young people'*, re-stated Article 12 and set out two overarching and generalised statements as to why it is important, mentioning "encouraging pupils to become active participants in a democratic society" and that it "contributes to achievement and attainment" (DfE, 2014a: 2). The guidance was woefully inadequate in exploring how this might actually bear out in practice, failing to appropriately acknowledge the potential and possible benefits to children's well-being and learning.

Drawing upon Article 12 there is much discussion of the importance of 'listening' to children and giving them a voice (Sinclair Taylor, 2000; Robinson, 2014; Formosinho and Pascal, 2016). Thomas (2001) discusses the benefits and challenges of listening to children. Drawing from his own interview based research with children and their care givers (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998) he concluded that everything orbits around the central component of respect; respect for the child and their agendas and communication strategies. This principle aligns with the UNCRC values. Thomas (2001) observes that another form of respect is that shown by the response of the adult once 'listening' has occurred, yet it is unclear from the research (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998), if any lasting

actions were implemented as a result of the voices captured, outside the design of the research, challenging the integrity of this statement. He takes this further and equates respect to the rights of the child to make choices. This is not an adequate outcome of listening to children. I ask, “Is listening enough?”. One can listen, but listening does not necessarily require action based upon the content of what is ‘heard’. Lundy (2007) asks the same question in her critique of the views held by proponents such as Thomas (2001). Like CRAE (2014) she points to the disparity between the commitments and practices of the UK government in relation to Article 12 and recognises the importance of addressing these through the workforce’s engagement with Article 12, acknowledging lines of interpretation such as Thomas’ (2001) are a move in this direction. She (Lundy, 2007) purports that some terminology such as ‘pupil voice’ or ‘the right to be heard’ is a misunderstanding of Article 12 and could reduce its effectiveness as it does not completely fulfil its intention. She goes further and criticises these terms for the danger they have in diluting the discourse and creating a culture which refrains from genuinely grappling with the true extent of the meaning inherent in Article 12 and its implications as a legal imperative. When discussing the process of decision making she uses the term ‘involved’ (2007: 931) rather than consulted, indicating a move beyond ‘listening’ towards genuine participation, a view supported by Hart (1992) and Clark et al. (2005).

The right to participate

Lundy’s (2007) critique is helpful in moving towards a rights-respecting view of children and their ability to show competence and definitely places the discourse in the rights of participation rather than just to be heard. Lundy (2007) stops short of elaborating on the place of the adult in this process apart from conceptualising them as either being uninterested in the rights of the child, or being passive, a receptacle for listening, with only

an indication towards action, being an agent of input rather than collaboration. She does not appear to recognise that adults can be equally disenfranchised as children in the process of participatory decision making. Additionally, Lundy (2007) and Thomas (2001) have not fully addressed the potential differences that listening to a child may take in approach and conceptualisation. This criticism (Bae, 2010) has been levelled at the rights based approach, as it may be seen to take an individualistic viewpoint. Mesquita-Pires (2012) frames the rights of the child to participate equally in relation to the rights of the professional in the decision-making process through a socio-constructivist approach. Rather than disempowering the adult in order to empower the child, Mesquita-Pires (2012) moves towards the empowerment of both parties in order to rebalance the scales of power and move towards genuine participation.

Authentic involvement has been framed within a number of models, one being of genuine participation by Hart (1992; 1997) in the ladder of participation (Appendix 3), a helpful tool, originally developed for community development and environmental care, to assess where one's practices are in relation to true democratic participation, although there are application difficulties when this is transposed into the field of early years education. This has been indirectly addressed by the approach, Pedagogy-in-Participation, developed by the Childhood Association (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2016; Formosinho and Araújo, 2006), upon which Mesquita-Pires (2012) based her research. Pedagogy-in-Participation has been developed keeping in mind the youngest children. Formosinho and Formosinho (2016: 28) define Pedagogy-in-Participation as "the creation of pedagogic environments in which interactions and relationships sustain joint activities and projects" bringing an understanding of the rights of all members of the community to participate in a co-constructive manner.

Discourse often fails to assume competence in young children (Bae, 2010) although rhetoric affords them the same rights. Young children are not afforded the same right to participation as older children in current discourse (Lundy, 2007; Thomas, 2001; Robinson, 2014; Sinclair Taylor, 2000). This rhetoric could justify young children residing on rung 3 or 4 of Hart's ladder of participation (Hart, 1992: 8) and does not meet, in full, the intentions of Article 12 in applying to *all* children. The UN addresses this point directly:

> Research shows that the child is able to form views from the youngest age, even when she or he may be unable to express them verbally. Consequently, full implementation of Article 12 requires recognition of, and respect for, non-verbal forms of communication including play, body language, facial expressions, and drawing and painting, through which very young children demonstrate understanding, choices and preferences.
>
> (UN, 2009:7)

Mesquita-Pires (2012) found that the reconceptualisation of the child was vital for transformation in practice in relation to the child's right to participate and the adult's professional motivation to carry out that change, a view carried forward by Formosinho and Pascal (2016).

Participatory assessment requires transformation of practice

Formosinho and Formosinho (2016) believe that the principles of participation, in a co-constructive and democratic paradigm, should apply to all spheres of educative intervention, including assessment. This appears logical as assessment affects all

spheres of the child's learning and the provisions and encounters they have, as planning and provision are built around their on-going assessment.

The UK government (DfE, 2014c; Early Education, 2012) acknowledge that formative assessment, including observation and subsequent documentation, "is an integral part of learning and development" (DfE, 2014c: 13). The word 'of' here is key as it places assessment within learning. As Basford and Bath (2014: 121) acknowledge there are still tensions within the English early years context in applying this "interpretivist assessment strategy" within a "positivist" framework.

Pascal and Bertram (2016a) extend Formosinho and Formosinho's (2016) work by arguing for an assessment process which meets the complexities in an organic, rather than linear, understanding of children's learning and that is mutually interdependent with pedagogy, ensuring "…the education offered is culturally situated, empowering and transformational for all those involved" (Pascal and Bertram, 2016a: 62). By understanding learning and development as a socio-constructivist process, inherently participatory in nature, the process of assessment requires building on this foundation in order to have any meaning. They go further and require "participatory assessment" to adhere to democratic principles and strong ethical values that encourage all who are involved to be recognised, respected and given an equal voice (2016a: 66). Underlying these principles is an understanding of equally distributed power where practitioners, parents and children are equal stake-holders. However, they conceded the redistribution, or equalisation of power, necessary to move towards more participatory pedagogies and practices, was harder than they had expected (2016a: 61). This is a challenge for this approach, as it requires the participants to adhere to the same set of values in order to successfully progress. This may be problematic as pre-existing power structures may be challenged, being perceived as

confrontational rather than invitational, something that would need to be sensitively handled.

The work of Formosinho and Pascal (2016), Formosinho and Formosinho (2016) and Pascal and Bertram (2016a; 2016b) provides a framework for my theoretical understanding, informing my methodological approach and considerations and setting an agenda that empowers practitioners to affect transformation through action.

However there is very little evidence of research into young children's participation in relation to the documentation of learning, even less through participatory paradigms. Basford and Bath (2014) note the lack of evidence "except where pedagogical approaches eschew notions of predetermined curricula" (2014: 120), such as in the practices of the pre-schools of Reggio Emilia (Rinaldi, 2005; Edwards et al., 1998) or the approaches to assessment outlined in the work of Carr and Lee (2012).

Malta Campos and Aparecida Colasanto (2016), used in the work of Formosinho and Pascal (2016), asked a similar question as myself when building a case study in São Paolo when the focus had to shift to the nature of the practitioner's recognition of children's participation in the daily activities of the classroom. This shift occurred because the researchers did not have prior knowledge of the setting or developed relationships with participants, a flaw in the sampling and ground-work. There was also a disparity between the understandings of the researchers and the participants, deepened when the researchers' expectations were formed by their own academic experiences and did not correlate with the educational achievements of the participants, an imbalance in power structures, but it does give credence to the foundations for transformation outlined by Pascal and Bertram (2016a; 2016b). Carr et al's. (2011a) longitudinal study in nine

settings in New Zealand, saw children engage with and participate in developing pre-existing learning narratives. The foundation for their research was within the Te Whāriki curriculum (Lee et al. 2013), a culturally specific curriculum, making it difficult to apply to my research. Yet it did highlight the importance of practitioners' conversations, and the language they use to develop reflective dialogues, and the power of documentation to create the space for these dialogues to occur. Robson (2016a) undertook a study in the UK investigating children's developing reflectivity when re-visiting learning through video. However, it was not longitudinal so could not demonstrate the long term influence on children's metacognitive abilities. It did, however, demonstrate the power of collaborative and reflective discussion.

What does this mean for this research?

I am aware of the participatory assessment practices, mentioned above (Rinaldi, 2005; Edwards et al., 1998; Carr and Lee, 2012), that have influenced our current practice of documentation in the Centre. However, although powerful, they are culturally situated (Italy and New Zealand) and cannot be authentically transplanted into an English early years setting which has a different cultural context and history. There seems a distinct lack of research and evidence of participatory assessment from within England. It does not mean that we cannot learn from, and adopt, the values and principles of approaches used elsewhere. It does, however, require a different *modus operandi* that is culturally contextual. This places significance on my research trajectory in adding to the knowledge of participatory assessment in this country.

Research Design

This is a small scale piece of action research within an interpretivist praxeological paradigm, with qualitative data being generated through the triangulation of a number of different methods. My enquiry sought to further understand and develop the role documented learning narratives, at the core of my assessment practices, had in stimulating active and reflective learning dialogues amongst a small group of young (3-4 years old) children. Democracy and the right to participation underpinned my approach throughout the research, building on the ethical democratic values outlined in the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) Ethical Code for Early Childhood Researchers (2014: 2-3). I was seeking to contribute to current discourse in my setting with regard to the role and nature of documented learning and to influence the pedagogical and social context of the Centre. This research has value and meaning within the learning community of the setting and transferability (Guba and Lincoln, 1985) to the wider early years community. The outcomes should improve assessment practices and dialogues for staff, children and parents leading to improved dispositions and outcomes for children.

A GANTT chart outlining the sequence of my research can be seen in Appendix 4 and my approved Ethical Proposal in Appendix 5.

Context of study site

The Children's Centre is located in an urban setting categorised as an area of high deprivation. It comprises of a nursery, daycare facility and a family service team. Each child is a member of a key group which has its own designated group area, a place to

gather during the course of the day. Each child has an individual learning diary, maintained by a key person, containing observations and assessments linked to the Development Matters Framework (Early Education, 2012) made by that key person, the child's drawings and paintings and contributions from parents.

Participants and sampling procedures

Purposive sampling was used as it allowed for greater contact with the participants, generating depth of data and, additionally, developing transferability (Guba and Lincoln, 1985: 316). The group of children from which two study children were randomly selected was purposively sampled/formulated based on the following criteria:

- The child had to be in my key group, to ensure access and be supported by well-established trusting relationships between myself, the child and parent.

- The child had to attend the Centre at the beginning of the week (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday mornings) as I was regularly away from the Centre at the end of the week.

- I had to have access to the parents to ensure informed consent and to enable them to participate in the research.

Manageability and richness of data were important factors in choosing to undertake the research with a small number of children, using two children to develop case studies framing the data. The children were known to me enabling me to build upon established trusting relationships creating a positive foundation on which to conduct my research.

I intended to select one boy and one girl, ensuring gender balance, but it became apparent that this was not going to feasible. Only two boys attended during the beginning of the week, each boy failing multiple criteria. Although all avenues and possibilities were pursued gender equality amongst the study children could not be achieved.

Informed consent and voluntary assent

Although two children were selected to frame the research, no child was denied the opportunity to participate in the conversations, with all children's contributions feeding into the general findings, allowing all children to benefit from the research. This was enabled as informed consent or assent was sought and obtained from all potential participants, adults and children (EECERA, 2014: 6) (Appendix 6 and 7). Pre-established relationships afforded benefits in obtaining voluntary informed consent from all participating adults without any perceived objections, as well as consent to conduct the research within the Centre from the Headteacher. The Local Educational Authority was also informed.

The children were asked to voluntarily assent. Robson (2011: 214), Cohen et al. (2011: 79-81) and Fargas-Malet et al. (2010) outline some of the literature and arguments for what age children can be to give consent or assent. I concur with their stance that young children are not able to give fully informed consent, which is why I sought that of their parents. My decision that the children were competent to give assent was based upon the pre-existing culture of enquiry and discussion about learning in the nursery. The children in my group were particularly aware of me being a learner within the context of this research through extended discussions. I felt that these young children had a suitable level of understanding to be able to give assent (which was ongoing) to all dialogues and

activities as well as to the sharing of their stories, work and conversations within a wider learning community.

Participants had the right to withdraw at any time during the research. For children this was made available to them verbally and by means of always having doors open so that they could get up and remove themselves from the situation. I continuously monitored their well-being, according to the Leuven Scales of Well-being (Laevers, 2005), and planned to stop the dialogue if they were not scoring highly on these scales or showing signs of wanting to withdraw, although this scenario did not present itself during the research.

I was aware that long-standing, established relationships may engender a feeling of duty afforded towards myself, from both adults and children. To combat this I clearly emphasised to parents that there was no obligation to consent to their own or their child's involvement, this emphasis being extended to and other participating children and adults. I also respect the right of the child not to participate in the conversations, therefore just observing conversations that were directly initiated by the children.

Approach

In seeking to move towards a more democratic, participatory approach to assessment it was appropriate to place the research within a praxeological paradigm (Pascal and Bertram, 2012). This acknowledged the contextualisation and social construction of knowledge from multiple viewpoints (EECERA, 2014: 3), where the possibility of seeking democracy, inclusion, shared power relationships and participation was enabled through construction of locally situated knowledge. I was striving to undertake the research *with*

the children rather than *to* them, which EECERA (2014: 6) deems essential to an ethical approach. In the researcher-participant relationship my approach was integral to the process of mitigating the power imbalance in the adult-child relationship. I actively sought a negotiated space for discussions based on shared meanings and understandings, allowing for all participant voices to be represented, heard and interpreted thereby giving an intrinsically ethical approach (EECERA, 2014). Additionally, Guba and Lincoln's (1985) criteria of trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability) was applied throughout the research and detailed throughout this chapter.

Methodology

I used an action research methodology involving three action research cycles using a generative transformational evolutionary process of enquiry (McNiff, 2013) (Figure 1). Within the research these cycles have been referred to as phases, conveying the evolutionary nature of the process. Each phase was instigated by one or more questions which were converted into actions. These actions were transferred into practice, generating data. This data was described, analysed and reflected upon, leading to the development of further questions and possible actions. This process marked the beginning and end of each phase, creating a smooth transition from one to the next. This methodology was appropriate for this research as it gave a framework which built upon the values of self-refection and participatory research. It allowed emergent theories to be generated with the space for refinement and reflection.

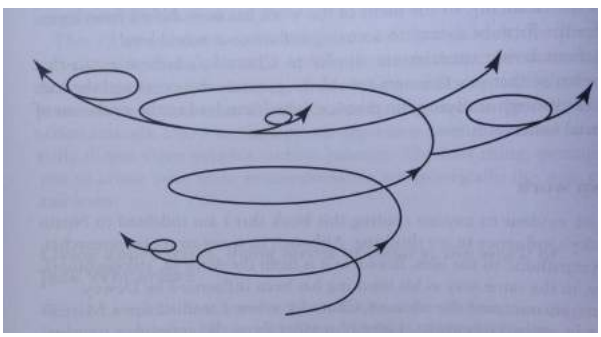

Figure 1.
McNiff's (2013: 66) generative transformational evolutionary process

Action research

Through taking an action research methodology, I was searching for a process to improve my practice, and subsequently others' practice, and our collective understanding of the influences these assessment practices had on children (Robson, 2011: 188; Cohen et al., 2011: 344; EECERA, 2014). Robson (2011: 188) and Cohen et al. (2011: 346) remind us that participation is at the heart of action research. They continue by highlighting its role in bringing democratic principles of research to the fore, which Boog (2003; 2014) builds upon in his theories of its emancipatory history and power. Due to staffing strictures, time constraints and the allocation of practitioners it became evident that it would be difficult to gather a consistent group of people at the end of each cycle of the research, potential pitfalls mentioned by McTaggart (1994: 323). To address this problem I sought discussions with 'critical friends' and created a 'learning circle' (Ravensbergen and Vanderplaat, 2010), where a group of interested colleagues could voluntarily come together to review and discuss the research, with the principles of equality and democracy as foundations for the sharing and creation of knowledge. The learning circle allowed my colleagues and informed others to challenge or affirm my interpretations and emerging theories, identify relevant or irrelevant data that may have been missed, thereby narrowing the possibility of bias and informing the direction of the research and, in so doing, develop credibility and dependability (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). This enabled participation from colleagues and interested parties but, because it did not happen at the end of every stage of the research, I am unable to call it a *participatory* action research methodology (Cohen et al., 2011). The methodological approach I used enabled me to keep the research moving rather than veering off course, a criticism levelled at this form of research (Robson, 2011: 189).

Inherent to action research, McNiff (2013: 24) maintains, is the researcher engaging with their own practice, opening it up and making it public, in order to better understand its process and in so doing develop awareness of their own learning, to better articulate this to others. This adheres to the principles of social contribution (EECERA, 2014: 4-5), but I have found that it also has the potential to make the researcher emotionally, socially and intellectually vulnerable, as their practice is made public and opened to critique. It is therefore advisable that this methodology is conducted within a mutually respectful and supportive environment, keeping not only the participants' well-being in mind, but also the researchers'. I sought to keep mutual respect between all parties involved in the research central at every stage, developing credibility (Guba and Lincoln, 1985).

Data Production

Participant observations

Throughout the action research process I undertook participant observations of the children and myself during spontaneous conversations whilst engaging with their learning diaries and sometimes immediately after engagement. The conversations often involved numbers of children, only sometimes involving myself, as I was undertaking my normal duties while carefully observing the conversations.

Inherent to participant observation is the recognition of the value of participation, establishing a participatory rather than representative democratic approach, upholding the ethical value of respect (EECERA, 2014: 2-3) and equality, enabling immersion in the environment and discussions, giving greater authenticity to my observations. Yet my presence in the environment, and as a participant, had the potential to cause reactivity (Cohen et al., 2011: 465) in the children causing them to change their behaviour, a

weakness with this method. However, I was well known to the children and families and the research did not require any changes to the environment or modes of interaction. The children were accustomed to my presence and ways of observing and interacting ensuring that my presence had little affect in these terms. The research occurred within pre-existing routines, environments and relationships, which was a strength in allowing the children's behaviour to be natural and genuine, generating thick descriptions (Cohen et al., 2011: 466) of the children's conversations and actions developing credibility (Guba and Lincoln, 1985: 316).

By undertaking participant observation I gained a detailed understanding of the data collected. My prior knowledge of the children, their personalities, experiences and home lives enabled me to understand and interpret the data more accurately, especially if further clarity was needed. This gave depth and richness to my interpretation of the data

In undertaking participant observations I had to be constantly aware of the imbalance of power between myself and the participants within the research process (Skånfors, 2009: 7) and sought to address these whenever they occurred, developing the ethical aspect of practice (EECERA, 2014). One measure taken to address this was to use open questioning during conversations rather than leading to a predetermined outcome and to maintain equality of questioning and listening to all children.

Data gathering and documentation

The use of participant observation was triangulated with four other methods including the use of audio recordings, taking photographs and copying samples of children's work and related documentation. Triangulating methods in this way enabled me to counteract the

possibility of inaccuracy or incompleteness in the data obtained through observation, adding greater depth to the data whilst also addressing Guba and Lincoln's (1985) criteria for transferability. This, in turn, reduced potential bias from myself as to what was captured and what was seen as less significant at the time.

Using audio recordings allowed me to be, if invited, part of the dialogues and make special note of the gestures and non-verbal communications that were occurring. These were important to capture and helped to negate the adult filters I may possibly have had that valued the spoken word over the other forms of communication. The audio recordings provided dense data which was rich in nature, when transcribed, but time consuming to process. This would need to be re-addressed in further research.

Using photographs complimented the audio recordings as they created memory triggers for myself, when revisiting the transcriptions, and identifying non-verbal communications, giving greater depth. They were also useful in promoting reflective discussions amongst the learning circle. I was able to address issues of consent (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010: 181-182; Cohen et al. 2011: 533) because the photographs included only those children who were active participants in the research and had given their assent to being photographed (EECERA, 2014).

I also took copies of particular pieces of children's work that had been initiated by, or had developed from, the conversations.

Anonymity, confidentiality and data protection

Confidentiality and anonymity (EECERA, 2014: 6) has been extended to all participants (children, parents and staff) as well as the setting (Flewitt, 2005). Data collection methods could raise ethical issues regarding anonymity. Transcripts have been anonymised and identifying characteristics redacted or amended. Children's marks are very personal, possibly identifying the specific author of the work. Every attempt has been made to remove potentially identifying features in photographs and work samples. Within the writing of this research pseudonyms have been used. As the research was looking at the dialogues stimulated by children's learning and their documentation, some include personal information (such as in home life experiences or the mention of names of family members). These details were respected and used during the dialogues with the children and the wider learning community but during the analysis and writing of the research they were anonymised accordingly. All samples of data used within the writing of this report have been shared with the participants and further consent to use them, with the option of redaction or amendment being made, has been obtained. Finally, all data has been stored securely in password protected files.

Pedagogical journaling

Pedagogical journaling was interwoven throughout the research, enabling me to track the evolution of my thinking, emerging theories and the spirals of action research, which further supports triangulation of data.

Methods of data analysis

When all the observations, photographs, children's work, audio recordings and transcriptions were gathered together they were thematically coded, undertaking constant

comparison analysis, leading to the creation of thematic networks. This was undertaken at the end of each phase of the action research and a comparison across all phases made at the end of the third phase. I created a framework (detailed in Findings) using the work of the Childhood Association (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2016) enabling increased participation to be identified across themes. The data was analysed, being further triangulated through the use of multiple theories to add layers of interpretation (Guba and Lincoln, 1985; Robson, 2011: 158). Two case studies were generated to demonstrate the influence of changing practice, in relation to documentation of learning narratives and participatory dialogues, on participation. This process created an audit trail, which was embedded through all data collection and analysis methods, leading to dependability being established (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). Further dependability was created through using negative case analysis and reflective commentary (Shelton, 2004). Immediate member-checking was done when clarity was needed over pieces of data.

Limitations of research design

Acknowledging that the knowledge generated is specific to the community in which I am based, an issue acknowledged by Cohen et al. (2011: 20), exposed the data to questions of trustworthiness (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Cohen et al., 2011: 20-21). However, it has not set out to comment on other contexts or make generalisations, but to add to local knowledge which creates authentic meaning and genuine insight for those involved, a strength of praxeology (Pascal and Bertram, 2012). Trustworthiness has additionally been established through the use of persistent observation and prolonged engagement with the participants, and in the field, over a number of months giving a depth and richness to the data. Having been established in the setting a level of trust had been built and my awareness of home cultures enabled me to make accurate interpretations of behaviours.

The role of participant researcher, creates deep insight and knowledge of the data but it also has the potential to inadvertently influence the data through adverse affects on the participants, through the imbalance of power, addressed previously, or researcher bias. As a participant researcher my interpretations and critiques are inevitably shaped by my own values, knowledge and previous experiences of documentation and assessment practices, my choices in how I practice and my own political and academic positioning as a postgraduate of educational research. I have tried to be mindful of this throughout and have, therefore, placed a high value on the role of critical friends and the learning circle, making a conscious choice to accept their challenges and critiques.

Finally, this approach to research, the requirements of the paradigm, methodology and data collection methods, requires a considerable amount of time. This creates difficulties in balancing the demands of researching within the demands of full time practice, with no easy solution being found. Facing this challenge further highlighted the value of co-participation of colleagues in the generation of knowledge through research (Pascal and Bertram, 2012; Formosinho and Formosinho, 2016), as the practicalities of the research and the joy of new discoveries are shared.

Findings and analysis

This chapter details and describes the emergent data and reflections following the three phases (Appendix 8, Table 1) of the action research giving a description of overall patterns seen and exemplified through two case studies describing two children's journeys towards developing reflectivity and metacognition and increase participation in contributing to their learning diaries (documented learning narratives), through engaging with the documentation. Limitations in the research will be acknowledged and the data will be analysed drawing upon the literature previously reviewed.

Summary of findings

Analysis of the findings, and subsequent reflection following each phase of the transformational action research process, found that there was an increase in participating children's reflective dialogues, including signs of developing metacognition, influenced through engaging with their individual and collective learning narratives, and the dialogues that surrounded these episodes. A more participatory approach towards the development of learning narratives was seen to develop in my own practice which mirrored an increased participation in the contribution towards documentation by the participating children.

It was found that listening to young children provided rich sources of information which had the potential to change and transform practice. This transformation required the practitioner (myself) to be open to having their practice challenged, to engage in self-reflection and address issues of power imbalance. It was additionally discovered that documentation can feasibly be a shared space.

Signs of progression in the children's participation were found in the process of co-constructing documentation and corresponded with the flow of the research. Each time the data was reflected upon and my practice placed under scrutiny, leading to further action, the children's participation increased. The participating children and myself, influenced by an increased reflective dialogue, moved from a position of sole ownership of the documentation to one of jointly co-constructing the documentation.

Framework for identifying increased participation

When triangulating and reviewing the data collected I was looking for increased participation in the children and developments in my practice (McNiff, 2013; Robson, 2011). It became evident that a framework was required to connect the signs of increased participation being identified through the coded and themed data. Using the work of Formosinho and Formosinho (2016) on Pedagogy-of-Participation a framework was developed showing increased participation with documentation based on the Childhood Association's (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2016: 39) fields of aspiration for transforming pedagogy; the axes (anchors) of Pedagogy-in-Participation (Figure 2) . The framework (Figure 3) details what increased participation might look like for both the child and practitioner in the four learning areas of identity, relationship, language and meaning (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2016) addressing the child holistically.

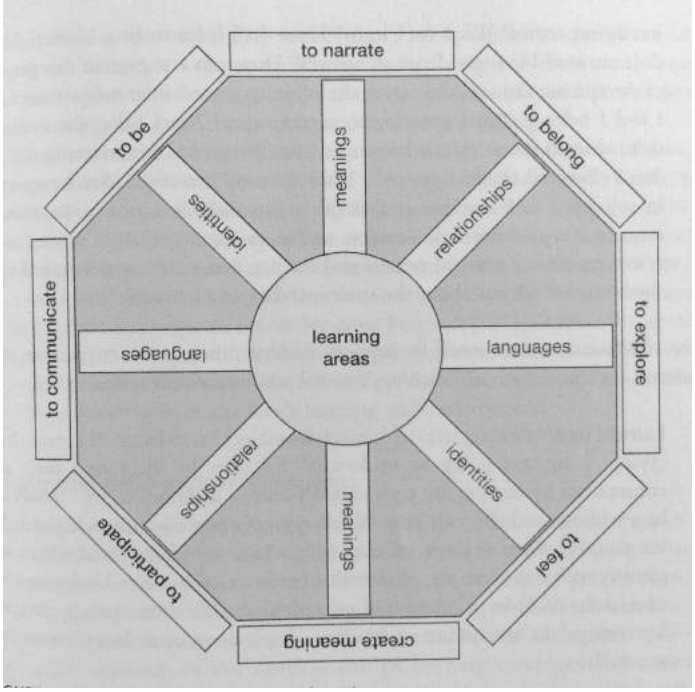

Figure 2.
Formosinho and Formosinho (2016: 39)
Pedagogy-in-Participation: learning areas and axes.

Framework for Increased Participation

	Children	Practitioner
Identity	Increased sense of belonging to the setting and community	Increased respect for the child. Increased engaged responses.
Relationship	Increased interaction with other members of the community	Facilitating opportunities Placing value on time spent engaging with documentation together
	Increased interaction with the documentation	Facilitating discussions and sharing of documentation
Language	Increased collaboration in reflecting upon learning	Refining 'listening' skills and responses
Meaning	Increases in reflective language/ metacognitive language / co-construction of meaning	Modelling language and drawing links Showing genuine interest in child's views
	Increased contribution to documentation	Relinquishing control of documentation Creating pathways that enable contribution.

Figure 3.
Framework for Increased Participation

Description of findings

The findings are detailed and analysed by identifying key pieces of data from each cycle that challenged practice and instigated the next cycle of action. Each cycle is described as a phase of development—emergent, establishing and enhancing—a continuum of reflection-action-reflection, leading to participatory approaches becoming increasingly embedded in daily practice.

Emergent Phase (Cycle 1)

A summary of data categorised within the four learning areas of the framework for increased participation in the emergent phase of the research is detailed in Appendix 9 Table 2.1.

Children demonstrated a sense of ownership over the learning diaries through their use of possessive pronouns ('my', 'mine') when referring to their learning diaries, and the documentation it contained, and the desire to actively engage with the learning diaries (Appendix 9, Table 2.2, Conversation 1). Some diaries were not available at times which was a hindrance to the children's engagement with their documentation resulting in me changing my practice in the next phase, with regard to accessibility of the learning diaries (Appendix 9, Table 2.2, Action 1). The photographs from home environments particularly interested the children, generating conversations between the child and me recalling memories of shared or individual experiences. This was indicative of the majority of conversations centred around memory recall. I noticed my lack in using metacognitive language and lack of reflectivity in the formation of questions, leading to greater emphasis in my regard to my modelling of language (Appendix 9, Table 2.2, Action 2). Even though the children showed ownership of the learning diary they questioned the authorship of the

content and individual observations (“Did I do this?”or “Who did this?”) (Appendix 9, Table 2.2, Conversation 2). When a child had shown an interest in participation, by adding to the content, I had deflected this (“Well, I think your mum is going to take this home, isn’t she? She’s going to put something in it.”). In reviewing this exchange I was challenged to redress this imbalance in the power dynamic which I had not acknowledged previously. This led to conscious vigilance of the equality of power (Appendix 9, Table 2.2, Action 3) and the instigation of the next phase.

Establishing Phase (Cycle 2)

In reviewing data from the establishing phase (Appendix 10, Table 3.1) it was clear that there were greater instances of reflective language being used by the children (“I’m learning about these”) which mirrored the questioning and language I used (“Oh, that was when you were learning …”) (Appendix 10, Table 3.2, Conversation 1). Children’s use of reflective language, demonstrating metacognitive ability, occurred most often in conversations between myself and the child. In this phase, however, I had less direct involvement in conversations. There was a shift to conversations being instigated more equally across documentation (photos of home and nursery). The most reflective and enlightening conversations occurred when talking about the child’s work (drawings, writing, etc.) (Appendix 10, Table 3.2, Conversation 2) leading to inclusion of more of their own work in the documentation (Appendix 10, Table 3.2, Action 1). When these conversations occurred I spontaneously began adding this dialogue to the learning diary, being aware of the need to act upon opportunities presented, resulting in the updating of documentation with the child present (Appendix 10, Table 3.2, Action 2). This immediacy of recording learning narratives with the child into the learning diary, or on my iPad, increased the responsiveness of my contributions enabling the learning diaries to be readily available at

all times. Some children began to spontaneously develop new work inspired by revisiting their previous learning (Appendix 12), asking for this to be placed in their learning diaries. However, on reflection, I realised I was valuing some children's contributions over others'. When I could see the direct link between the previous learning and the new learning, I was happy to put this in the diary but when I could not see any obvious link, believing the child just wanted to add something 'for the sake of it', I suggested alternative ideas. One conversation (Appendix 10, Table 3.2, Conversation 2) provided a moment of enlightenment. Rebekah articulated a link in her own interest and learning that I had not previously understood. For her, her drawing (at the time appearing as scribbles) was linked to her journey in design and production. I had not understood this previously and it caused me to re-evaluate my own agendas, modes of listening and control over the documentation narrative, leading to a re-conceptualisation of the narrative as a shared one (Appendix 11, Table 3.2, Action 3).

Enhancing Phase (Cycle 3)

During this final phase (Appendix 11, Table 4.1) reflective and metacognitive dialogue was seen to become a more regular occurrence (Appendix 11, Table 4.2, Conversation 1). The dialogues developed from conversations between pairs or groups of children with little involvement from myself. The dialogue was more centred on photographs and pieces of work done in the nursery with minimal reference to those from home. This signified a development from the first (emergent) phase and is indicative of a greater sense of belonging developing, having a vested interest in the setting and community. Children began to frequently and autonomously add content to their learning diaries (Appendix 13) showing increased empowerment, participation and equalisation of ownership over the documentation narrative (Appendix 11, Table 4.2, Conversation 2). This required me to re-

evaluate my thinking, putting aside anxieties as to my professional accountability (e.g. senior leadership/government education inspection authority) of the type of content that should be present in the learning diaries, and seek a co-constructed documentation narrative. The learning diary had initially presented as a space for children's marks and collage skills to be recorded but through autonomous refinement developed and culminated in (Figure 4) an example of a child writing about their own learning.

Figure 4.
A child chose to write about her learning.

Case Studies

Throughout the action-reflection-action cycle of the research two children's developing reflectivity and journeys towards participation were tracked, forming two narratives. This

allowed me to understand in depth the influence that changes in my practice in regard to the use of documentation had on these two children.

Rebekah (Appendix 14)

Rebekah came to the nursery soon after her third birthday, having stayed at home until this time. She was eager to to come to nursery, managing a challenging transition, and soon displayed her love of graphics and developed an interest in construction.

Rebekah quickly became attached to her learning diary, and enjoyed sharing it with adults, or just looking through it on her own. She was eager to have me read what I had written or placed in the diary, and used it to recall memories from events at home and nursery. Her language developed and she started to use some narrative language related to her learning.

During the emergent phase Rebekah indicated a desire to add content to the diary which I deflected. In listening to the audio recording of the conversation I was challenged by this, giving me the impetus to start questioning my sense of ownership and accountability over the learning diaries and recognising the inequality in power.

In the establishing phase Rebekah continued to challenge my position of power and the values I placed on a certain type of contribution and participation in the documentation narrative. She progressed in her language, using that of reflection and metacognition. I started to 'listen' and understand how she was connecting her actions and learning, again challenging me to seek a greater co-construction of documentation.

Finally, during the enhancing stage, Rebekah began to actively participate in the co-construction of the documented narrative. Her language was now reflective in its recognition and articulation of her learning ("I put these in…I sticked these on.")

Sarah (Appendix 15)

Sarah was a four year old child when she came to the nursery from a daycare facility. She was confident, articulate and independent from the outset.

Sarah engaged with her learning diary from the start. She used it as an instigation for interaction with friends and felt a sense of ownership over it. Sarah was disappointed when her diary was not available, and so making her own, in the emergent phase. This challenged me, making me realise that I would have to develop and change my practice in updating the diaries to make them available to children at all times. She was understanding that her learning was being represented in her diary.

In the establishing phase she was showing much more independence in her explanations of entries in her diary to her friends, rather than needing me for reference. Her explanations of her drawings were enlightening for me and she was positioning herself as a capable learner. I found that the commentary needed to be recorded (using me as scribe) simultaneously into the diary as she elucidated upon her drawings. This also showed Sarah that her comments were valued, leading to a developing co-constructive approach with all children.

In the final, enhancing phase it was noticeable that she had moved from describing her work to referencing the process involved, using reflective, metacognitive and dispositional

language to describe herself as a competent learner ("That's my new thing. I'm building a lot of things").

Analysis of findings

It is clear from the findings that documented learning narratives can be used to stimulate more active reflective dialogues with children. The practical methods which enabled this to happen ranged from the inclusion of photographs, from both home and nursery, to pieces of children's work. Having them readily available and sharing them with an engaged adult influenced the development of these dialogues.

These findings are consistent with the findings of other studies, such as those conducted by Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2002). The occurrence of children developing reflective and metacognitive language when interacting with myself (in the context of engaging with documented learning narratives in this research) concurs with Siraj-Blatchford et al's. (2002). It found that 'sustained shared thinking', a process of co-constructing knowledge in a small group (two to three people) to develop understanding, most often happens when interacting with an adult. Robson (2016a) also found that children displayed higher levels of metacognition and abilities to engage in reflective dialogue after direct intervention from practitioners modelling these discursive techniques and language. Aligning these findings to my own data, of increasing instances of reflective, co-constructive dialogue and developing metacognition correlating with my own developing use of reflective language, would indicate that the changes in my practice to modelling reflective language and dialogue, influenced this development in the children. It also supports my choice of being an active participant in the research, as I may not have seen improvement if I had not been inside the research. Whitebread et al. (2007) and Robson's (2016b) research, using

extensive observations of young children, confirmed the supportive function of the adult but found metacognitive behaviour was most prevalent in the absence of an adult, mirroring Sarah's journey (Appendix 15). Although the language and dialogue structure of metacognition was developed through interaction with myself, she applied it most often when conversing with other children. This was not the case with Rebekah (Appendix 14) who displayed higher levels of metacognition when she was with me, and did not often choose to enter into dialogue with other children. It is difficult to state that one method of eliciting and supporting reflective dialogue is better than another. It is clear that my use of reflective dialogue influenced both children's journeys in different ways, leading to similar outcomes but displayed in different relational contexts. This difference serves to highlight the individuality of children and the importance of listening, recognising and responding genuinely to all children.

Pascal and Bertram's (2009) findings that listening in multi-model ways to children can enlighten practitioners to the complexity of the learning and, in so doing, challenge previously held ideas thereby promoting development and raising expectations gives credence to this research. Through the process of listening, reflection and action in response to what I had heard I was challenged to recognise the agency that children held and support the development of this. This highlights the importance of listening to children (Thomas 2001) and respecting their voice (UN, 1989; 2009). However, as Lundy (2007) purported, participation was instigated once what had been 'heard' was acted upon. The process of listening certainly challenged assumptions in my own practice. I believed that I already practiced values of equality, co-construction and democracy but, when confronted with instances that highlighted the imbalance in power, a response was required, leaning towards developing a deeper ethical framework towards participation. I had to make a decision to continue in the dynamic I was already in or take action. As Pascal and Bertram

(2016a) stated, it was a hard process to participate in. It opened my practice and relationships to criticism, creating a sense of vulnerability. I was confronted by the difficulty of aligning the expectations of my professional accountability, in practice, content and style, with my democratic values of participation. When I did act upon these challenges, transformation in my practice began to occur and participation increased. For Pascal and Bertram (2016b; 2012) and Formoshino and Formoshino (2016) this is at the core of their research into the transformational power of professional self-reflection, in relation to praxeological participatory practices, resulting in the equalisation of power structures.

Limitations of data

Collecting data from spontaneous conversations, required me to be present when those conversations occurred and to choose to begin the audio recording. This was not always a consistent process due to the nature of participant observer, I was not only being a researcher but also a practitioner which brought its own demands and time constraints. This opened up the data collection methods to researcher selectivity. It is impossible to know how many conversations and interactions occurred without me being present and therefore have not been captured. However, enough data was collected and triangulated to give a detailed picture of progress giving a depth and richness to the findings.

The findings are culturally specific to my group and the centre I work in meaning it is highly useful for our own internal pedagogic dialogues. The localisation of the data does not diminish its authenticity. It has the ability to add to the current knowledge and discourse on participatory practices in relation to documentation within the UK, but is limited in its application of specific methods of achieving this as it is so specific to myself and the participants.

The sample size of the research was small, concentrating on the journey of two children, giving depth and context. It does not reduce the value in the authenticity of the case studies presented nor impact the trustworthiness (Guba and Lincoln, 1985) of the research. The general development of increased participation and engagement with the documentation and reflectivity in the two selected children was also seen across the larger cohort group from which they were selected.

Summary of analysis

The findings demonstrated that reflecting upon documented learning narratives with children could influence children's reflectivity and their participation levels in identifying and documenting their own learning. This was enabled in part by the availability and accessibility of learning diaries, dedicated time to share documentation, the importance of photographs and children's work in stimulating dialogue and specific reflective vocabulary and questions used during conversations with the participants. It was also enabled through opening my practice to self-reflection, challenge and critique. The process of bringing knowledge and action together, upholding democratic and ethical ideals, leads to transformation in practice and influences the development of increasing participation and reflectivity in the participants.

It can also be seen that, through addressing the issue of reflective dialogue, documentation can be a shared narrative, which equally values and supports required early years developmental learning outcomes (Early Education, 2012), without my professional accountability being diminished. The two functions can co-habit the same space and even compliment each other.

Conclusion

Through the course of this research I found that by engaging with documented learning narratives, in the context of critical reflection of practice and transformational action, reflective and metacognitive thinking was increased amongst the participants.

I found that genuinely listening to young children, recognising the multiplicity of communication strategies, has the power to influence the transformation of practice if it is reflected upon and the practitioner is open to the process of transformation.

Finally, I discovered that when the ideals of democracy and the rights of the child to participate (UN, 1989; 2009; CRAE, 2014) in their own assessment of learning are upheld and ethically grounded (Pascal and Bertram, 2012) it leads to increased equality in the balance of power between the child and practitioner, greater participation and empowerment for the child and the practitioner and transformation in pedagogical practice.

Constraints in the research, however, need to be considered. This research was unable to achieve gender equality, due to limitations of sampling, and although correction was sought I was unable to redress this balance within the parameters of being a participant researcher. The research was unable to achieve representation of different ethnicities and home languages due to the cohort pool from which the sampling was conducted. This creates limiting factors as it cannot engage critically with challenges that working within a more diverse cohort might produce.

The research, additionally, does not address those children who chose not to engage with the conversations or their documentation during the observed and captured dialogues. It therefore has not addressed how *all* children may be supported and encouraged to take a more participatory role, an area for future investigation.

What I learnt about doing research

I have discovered that research is a journey. It was an intellectual journey as I began to position myself within the paradigms of research, articulating my values through the selection of methodologies and methods. It challenged me to align and develop my knowledge and theories underpinning my practice. Opening my practice up to the rigours of research leads to a degree of personal vulnerability which is stressful and an emotional journey.

Yet I have also found that the process of research can lead to exciting new discoveries, transformation in practice and a greater degree of critical reflectivity across all areas of practice and professional encounters.

Application of research

This research will be shared with my colleagues in the Children's Centre. I will highlight the questions I was asking and discuss key practicalities that enabled the data to be generated and facilitated developments. Emphasis will be placed on the importance of self-reflection as a key tool for transforming practice thereby influencing the development of participation and reflectivity in young children within the sphere of assessment, specifically engaging in documented learning narratives. The research has the potential to stimulate further dialogue and create new possibilities for transforming practice amongst

the wider team influencing their perspectives on participatory pedagogy. I will also present these findings to the Local Education Authority (LEA) and use it in my delivery of training to student teachers and other colleagues within the LEA, in the expectation that it will instigate new dialogues and engender reflective thinking, and be a beacon to the benefits of a participatory approach to assessment procedures.

This research is also an invitation to both the local and national government to investigate further what participation in educational processes for young children might look like in response to Article 12 of the UNCRC (UN, 1989; 2009).

This research can act as a springboard for further research into participatory pedagogies, the nature and design of documentation and the development of reflectivity and metacognition in young children.

Implications for practice and further research

This research has highlighted that greater participatory pedagogies in assessment are a journey and not a destination. This means that I will need to continue to engage critically with my practice and listen to children. This has implications for not only my role as teacher but also my role as a colleague, seeking ethically grounded democratic ideals across all areas of practice.

This research could provide a platform from which to develop further research. To address the limitations of this piece of research further research could be conducted taking into account gender, ethnic and linguistic differences in children's participation and metacognitive development.

Additional research could be built upon these findings, using a different cohort of children or addressing other stake-holders' experiences and roles in a participatory assessment practice, such as those of the parents or other colleagues. It could provide a platform for looking at the growth of participatory pedagogies amongst practitioners when engaged in listening to children.

Ultimately, it has highlighted the importance of continuing to engage with, and develop, documented learning narratives through co-constructive dialogue and actions. Assessment is a journey, based upon our values, and my journey has only just begun.

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Appendix 1: Research Proposal

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Appendix 2: Examples of Learning Diary Layouts

Figure 5: Learning Diary Exemplars

Appendix 3: Hart's Ladder of Participation.

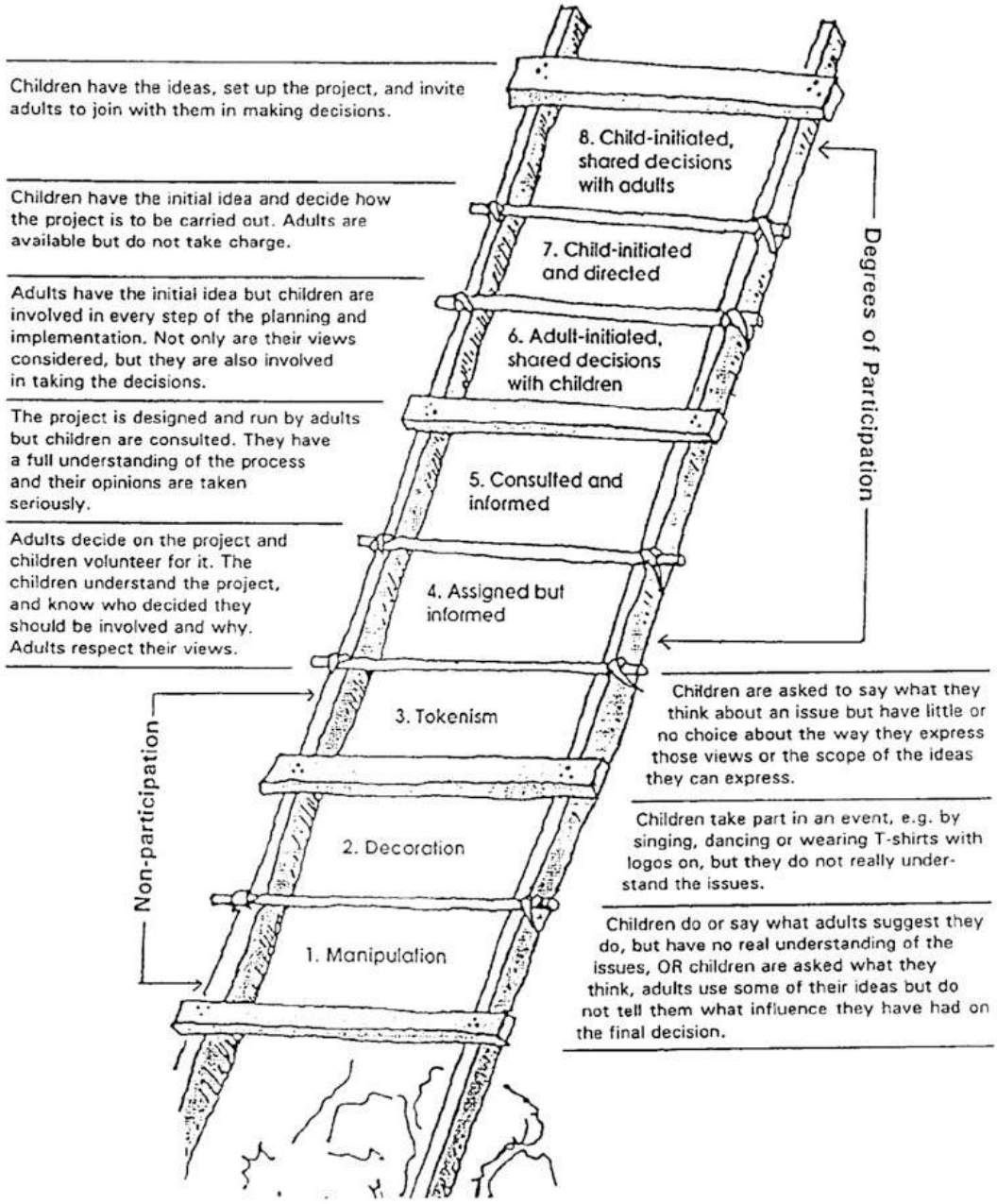

Figure 6: The ladder of participation. Taken from Hart (1997:8)

Appendix 4: GANTT Chart

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Appendix 5: Ethics Proposal

Appendix 6: Parent Ethical Agreement Form

Appendix 7: Staff Ethical Agreement Form

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Appendix 8: Summary of Data Spread

Table 1 : Summery of data spread across phases of research

	Emergent Phase	**Establishing Phase**	**Enhancing Phase**
Date Range	4/1/16 - 17/2/16	1/3/16 - 14/4/16	7/6/16 - 28/6/16
Number of available days for research (days available to be with cohort children)	9	9	7
Number of recorded dialogues	4	3	3
Range of conversation length	3 mins. - 51 mins.	2 mins. - 35 mins.	6 mins. - 44 mins.
Conversation groupings	1:1 (myself and child) 1:2/3 (myself and children) 1:1 (child and child)	1:1 (myself and child) 1:2 (myself and children)	1:1 (myself and child) 5 (children with myself included)

Appendix 9: Emergent Phase Summary

Table 2.1 : Summary of data showing increasing participation from Emergent Phase

	Emergent Phase (Cycle 1)	
	Children	**Practitioner**
Identity	• Starting conversations prompted by photos from home environment - majority • Using posessive pronouns • Demonstrating excitement, pride, self-assurance when talking about experiences from home	• Using questions to elicit more information about home experiences or experiences outside of nursery • Response demonstrating interest in home environment
Relationship	• Most conversations - practitioner/child • Protective over diaries *(why were other children in their diaries?)*	• Acknowledging and responding to children's approaches • Encouraging careful handling of diaries • Talking about pleasure of sharing experiences / memories • Encouraging looking at each other's diaries and noticing similarities and connections between experiences
	• Keen to engage with documentation *(prevented by documentation unavailablity)*	• Available to explore documentation with children • Reading narrative text to children.
Language	• Questions to establish authorship	• Using language indicating children's ownership of dairies
Meaning	• Using language of recall *(describing events)*	• Using questions to instigate memory recall *(majority of questions)* • Using some reflective language when making links between conversations or experiences.
	• Documentation solely produced by adults *(one instance by a parent)*	• Contributions by practitioners/parents *(one instance discouraging child's contributions)* • Making suggestions for action based on events remembered *(lack of follow-through)*

Table 2.2 : Details of data showing increasing participation during Emergent Phase

Conversation 1	Helen (H): Where's my learning diary? Rebekah (R): Now I'm going to read my learning diary Children leaf through their diaries and exclaim at photographs H: And we were trick or treating Teacher (T): Huh! was that Hallowe'en? H: Yeah. R: I went trick or treating too. H: Other children, other children, other children come to our house. R: With James. T: Did you dress up Rebekah? R: Yeah I was a pumpkin. T: Oh, do you know Helen dressed up as a pumpkin as well. She's got a picture of her as a pumpkin in her book, Look. R: Yes, well I didn't wear that costume. I wear a different one. T: Did you. R: And we had, and we had trick or treating and we was spooky. H: That is where we were eating; that is where we had to eat; that is where we were gonna eat. There (pointing). T: Oh is that your living room? Conversation continues H: Can you look after my learning diary?
Conversation 2	List of questions: R: Did I do this? Did I do these? Who did this? Am I drawing some of this?
Conversation 3	R: I need to put more …. T: Well, I think your mum is going to take it home, isn't she? She's going to put some things in.
Action Plan 1	**Ensure availability of Learning Dairies whenever possible.** How can I ensure maximum availability of learning diaries to children? Are there any changes I can make to the way I write my learning stories and observations to minimise the time taken outside contact hours to do this (requiring the removal of learning diary from environment?
Action Plan 2	**Model Reflective Languge** By using reflective language in conversation and questions, would this lead to an increase in reflective thinking in the children?
Action Plan 3	**Be vigilant to inequality in power dynamics** By keeping the imbalance of power in the forefront of my mind will this help me to maximise the opportunities to enable children to take a more participatory role?

Appendix 10: Establishing Phase Summary

Table 3.1 : Summary of data showing increasing participation during Establishing Phase

	Establishing Phase (Cycle 2)	
	Children	**Practitioner**
Identity	• Conversation equally distributed between photos from home and photos from nursery • Making links between experiences at home and experiences at nursery	• Using language indicating children's ownership over learning
	• Looking at the documentation in each other's learning diaries • Conversations about children's shared experiences *(instigated by photographs of groups of children engaged in the same sequence of play)*	• Involvement less than emerging phase • Inclusion in most conversations *(driven less by the practitioner)*
Relationship	• Instigating new sequences of action following documented work • Looking back through learning diaries and repeating a documented conversation, then extending dialogue *(two children)*	• Adding reference material to learning diaries based on children's interests
Language	• Using reflective language during conversations with practitioners	• Questioning basis of majority of conversations
Meaning	• Discussing sequence of learning through narrative form *(with teacher or other children - increasing)* • Using metacognitive language *(beginning to appear e.g. I was interested in …; I'm learning about…")*	• Questioning changed - questions acted as prompts for metacognition *(e.g. asking what a child was learning/interested in, rather than what happened next?)* • Suggesting writing about new instigated conversation alongside previous documentation
	• Acting as knowledgable other to recount documentation from home *(showing new contributions from parents)*	• Allowing some children to freely draw and stick in their learning dairies *(feeling stressed by this activity)*

Table 3.2 : Details of data showing increasing participation during Establishing Phase

Conversation 1	List of questions/comments: Teacher: "What were you learning when you were doing that?" "What were you learning in that photograph?" "You were interested in what?" "Well, you're still interested in doing that aren't you?" "Oh that was when you were learning …." Children: " Umm. I was … I was… I was hammering. I was very interested in that (points to photo on wall of herself hammering)" "Oh, some of about shapes. I'm learning about these." "I learnt how to do that, that, that, that, that, that."
Conversation 2	Child Penny (P): I love those. I always look at this bit because I like my monster book. A monster! Teacher (T): Oh a monster? P: (Nods) T: I didn't realise that's what you made. P: It's got three noses! T: Can I write that on there, because I didn't know that. Can I write a monster with three noses? Let me put that, so …. it's a monster … with three noses (writing alongside child's drawing).
Conversation 3	T: You were interested in what? Rebekah (R): I was interested in making things T: Making things. Well, you're still interested in doing that, aren't you? R: Yeah T: 'Cos you make things, not just with the hammer and nails, but you make things with junk modelling, don't you? With recycled things. And you make things with the blocks. R: And I make things with the messy pens. T: And with messy pens. So you do …. R: It doesn't matter if … I've already been drawing tonight and today. That's why I got more painting. T: So drawing for you is a bit like making? … I think it's a really interesting perspective when if you're drawing, you're also making. It's a way of thinking, isn't it … with you hands.
Action Plan 1	**Add more pieces of children's work to the learning diary.** Will more reflective dialogues be supported by a higher frequency of children's work in the learning diary?
Action Plan 2	**Model adding documentation to the learning diary and the process of reflective writing.** By modelling the process of adding documentation, would this lead to an increase in children engaging in this process themselves, leading to a more equalised power dynamic and greater partcipation?
Action Plan 3	**Re-conceptualise the documented space as a shared space.** Would re-conceptualising the documented space (learning diary) as a shared space support me in moving towards a more equalised power dynamic?

Appendix 11 : Enhancing Phase Summary

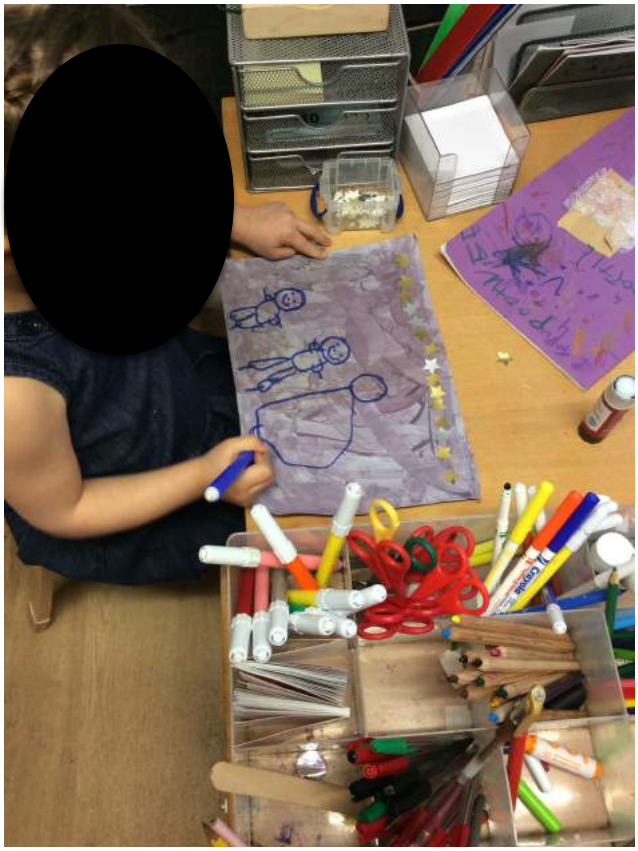
Table 4.1 : Summary of data showing increasing participation during Enhancing Phase

	Enhancing Phase(Cycle 3)	
	Children	**Practitioner**
Identity	• Conversations instigated by pieces of children's work • Developing learning dispositions evident in language	• Increasing children's work added to diaries • Enabling children to add content to diaries independently, through agreement and changes in environment
	• Increasing use of collective pronouns • Conversations happening in a group between children • Questioning between children regarding others' learning diaries • Reading other children's learning diaries • Reading learning diaries together • Discussing collaborative learning stories /sequences	• Decreasing involvement in conversations • Equalising of roles in conversation, accepted as part of the group
Relationship		• Decreasing involvement in reading narrative text to children • Increasing co-construction of narrative of represented learning sequences
	• Engaging in looking at documentation and participating in conversations • Incorporating learning diaries into play • Using learning diaries as reference source	• Decreasing role in supporting learning diaries
Language	• Talking with each other about collective learning sequences • Asking other children about the photographs or learning that was documented • 'Reading' the text in their diaries	• Decreasing in questions asked • Increasing role in refining children's thinking as they volunteered information and insight
	• Conversing with each other about learning diaries - decreasing use of questioning • Using metacognitive and dispositional language • Revisiting learning and detailing thinking and ideas new to the practitioner • Demonstrating excitement and pride whilst revisiting learning	• Increasing role in encouraging children to explain about new pieces of work they were contributing
Meaning	• Adding pieces of work to learning diaries • Dictating information about pieces of work • Showing and narrating their motivations to the practitioner for their new	• Scribing children's explanations • Allowing children to stick, draw and write in their learning diaries, and sharing the space *(with the children)*

Table 4.2 : Details of data showing increasing participation during Enhancing Phase

Conversation 1	Lorna: And then I been trying to try and keep try and try and try to do fours didn't I? (referring to number '4's' written in paper) **Looking at a new piece of documentation** I been building a lot of things. I been building a lot of things that … Sarah: And I been building. Lorna: That's my new thing. I'm building a lot of things that … Sarah: … and I been doing this … I can know that we done it.
Conversation 2	Rebekah: Teacher, I put these in. Teacher, Look! … I sticked these on. You have to be very careful of these so you don't peel them off. Teacher: Ahh. Rebekah: I sticked it down and I'm going to stick some more in.

Appendix 12: Sample Observation of Child Spontaneously Developing New Work



Today, Penny was very excited to show me her learning diary, in which she had added some documentation from home about her colour run. It included her friend Karla and Becca and their parents.

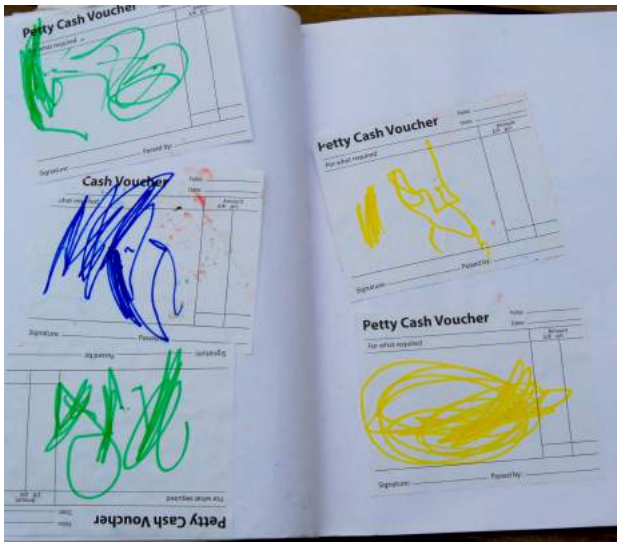
Yesterday she had made a painting and had wanted to add stars to it, we agreed to let it dry and for her to complete it today.

She retrieved her painting and stuck her stars on. Then she said - "I'm going to draw Karla and Becca and their mums ... it's night, the sky is greyie black ... I'm going to put the moon on, it's big like when the sun is gone."

Learning diaries encourage children to revisit their learning and significant events in their life. How does revisiting an event, a significant event from their life, reshape that memory? Learning is memories laid down - what does this reimagining, revisiting, reframing do to that memory? Strengthening of synaptic connections? Creating more links across the brain?

Figure 7: Example of child's developing work

Appendix 13 : Examples of Children's Spontaneous Contributions to Learning Diaries



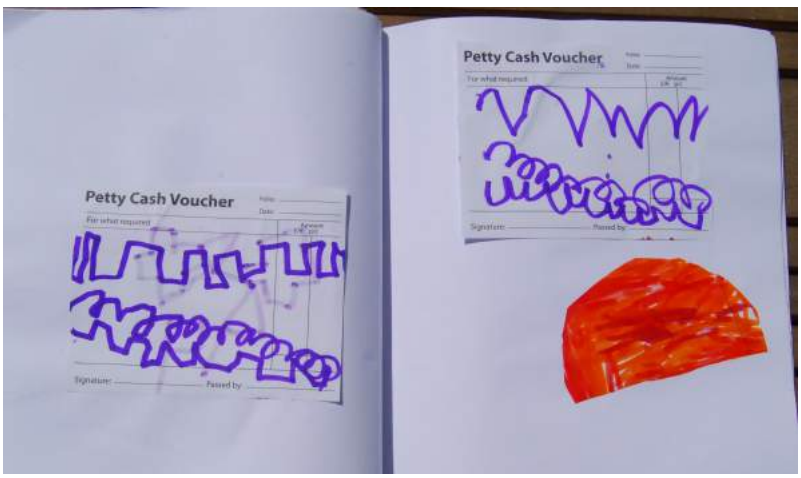


Figure 8: Examples of children's contributions to Learning Diaries

Appendix 14: Rebekah's Case Study

Rebekah joined nursery at the beginning of the academic year, having always been with her mother, a childminder. She was the youngest in the group, having turned three in the July, but was keen to enjoy nursery. She particularly enjoyed adult company and loved to talk with them especially about her home and family. It was apparent how much she loved her family, her mum, dad and older brother, from the warmth of her explanations about life at home and had obvious strong attachments, evident as she transitioned through a challenging settling in process. Rebekah loved to write and draw and developed a special interest in construction, displaying developed spatial awareness and forward planning.

Rebekah became very attached to her learning diary, "I really like my learning diary", and asked to see it every day. A request she still makes at home, now that she has left the nursery. She especially enjoyed sharing it with an adult but, when that was not possible, chose to sit and leaf through it herself. This sense of joy and excitement over her learning diary was evident throughout the research. Initially her participation came through conversing with me, asking me to read passages and recalling memories both from nursery and from home and she quickly began to use language related to learning.

Emergent Phase

Rebekah:	I was on the swing.
Teacher:	What were you doing here?
Rebekah:	I was on the rope swing here.
Teacher:	Rope swing. You've got more confidence in using that, haven't you, since being here?
Rebekah:	That's because I learn at the park?
Teacher:	Do you learn at the park? So do you have rope swings at the park or is it different kind of swing?
Rebekah:	No. We have _____. We have a better one at the park. And a baby one.
Teacher:	So you get to practice at the park.

A desire to contribute to the documentation space also became evident during the first phase of research.

Emergent Phase

Teacher:	It's the end.
Rebekah:	I need to put more….
Teacher:	Well, I think your mummy's going to take it home, isn't she? She's going to put some things in.
Rebekah:	Yeah.

However, I failed to 'hear' this request and instead denied her the opportunity to follow this through. This exchange, when identified in the data, challenged me and was the impetus

for a journey of self-examination as to my own sense of ownership over the documentation.

As the research progressed Rebekah began to increasingly use the language of reflection and metacognition. In one exchange, during the establishing phase, she again challenged me in regard to the values I placed on the contributions children wanted to make to their diaries.

Establishing Phase

Teacher:	What were you learning in that photograph?
Rebekah:	Ummm. I was….I was…..I was hammering. I was very interested in that **(points to wall display).**
Teacher:	You were interested in what?
Rebekah:	I was interested in making things.
Teacher:	Making things. Well, you're still interested in doing that, aren't you?
Rebekah:	Yeah.
Teacher:	'Cos you make things, not just with the hammer and nails, but you make things with junk modelling, don't you? With the recycled things. And you make things with the blocks.
Rebekah:	And I make things with the messy pens.

Teacher:	And with messy pens. So you do……
Rebekah:	It doesn't matter if…….. I've already been drawing tonight and today. That's why I got more painting.
Teacher:	So drawing for you is a bit like making, is it?
Rebekah:	Hang on a minute. My drawings fallen out. Got it. **(Drawing fell on the floor as she placed LD on table.)**
Teacher:	I think it's a really interesting perspective when if you're drawing, you're also making. It's a way of thinking, isn't it? … with your hands

Through 'listening' to her and being willing to challenge my own practice I was enabled to understand better how she connected her actions and learning. It changed my perception of her desire to contribute to her diary. Fortunately Rebekah was not disconcerted by my slow progress towards change, but took matters into her own hands and started adding her drawings to the diary independently.

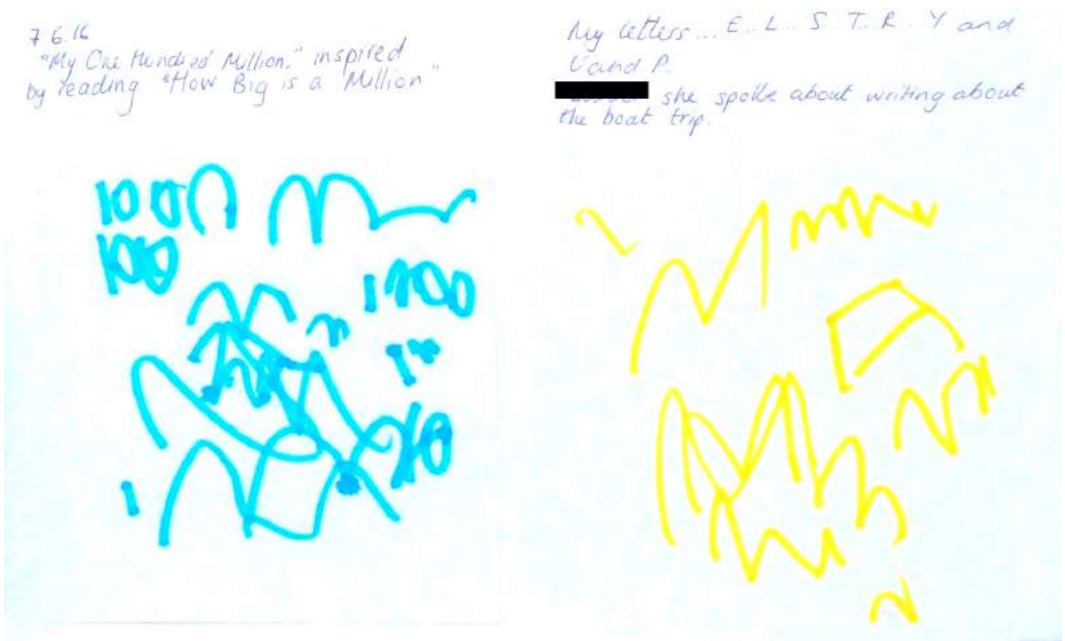
Establishing Phase

Teacher:	Oh, how did you put that in there?
Rebekah:	I just sticked it with some glue.
Teacher:	Did you do it just now?
Rebekah:	No.
Teacher:	No, a while ago.
Rebekah:	Yeah.

This desire to contribute grew as she been able to add more and more. Acceptance of these possibilities brought new opportunities to co-construct meaning, as new dialogues emerged between Rebekah and myself, dialogues based on thinking and action (metacognition).

Enhancing Phase

Rebekah	**(sticking drawing in learning diary)** Stick it in. Now flatten it down. I'm banging on it because I'm flattening it down ..... There we go! **(sticking paper in learning diary)** There!
Teacher:	There, right…so….now you've stuck it in we need to write about it, don't we. So shall I write? Are you going to tell me what we're writing?
Rebekah	Ummm. September?
Teacher:	So… Well, what's the date today? It is…. the 7th of June. (**Teacher turns Learning Diary around and begins to write next to the first piece of paper.)**
Rebekah	Yeah.
Teacher:	So I'll put 7th… OK. But we need to write about your drawing. So what, what was this one?
Rebekah	My one hundred million.
Teacher:	So, my one hundred million. **(Dictating as she writes.)** Now, why were you drawing one hundred million?
Rebekah	Because I wanted to.



This process of increased participation and co-construction paralleled an increase in motivation to continue to engage with and develop her skills and interests, particularly in writing and drawing.

Enhancing Phase

Rebekah	Five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, sixteen… Hmm.
	There's my name! I do my name. **reference to picture opposite.**
Teacher:	You were, weren't you? This is what you wrote.
Rebekah	Maybe I could do my name again today

Right from the beginning Rebekah felt pride, ownership and enjoyment over her documentation. Her mother noted this from the time Rebekah started at Nursery: "She had shared experiences with me every day until she started Nursery. The learning diary was a means by which she could continue to share her experiences with me. It was a way of sharing what was happening in her life with us, as we had done before". She started from a place of engagement, wanting to immerse herself in her memories and discuss what she had been doing. She showed signs of wanting to equalise the power and become an authentic participant and co-constructor from the start. Her growing confidence challenged me to meet her in this desire and, through my changing of practice and pursuit of equality in sharing the documented space, she refined and developed her skills in recognising and articulating her learning.

Appendix 15: Sarah's Case Study

Sarah moved into the nursery from the Centre's daycare facilities five months after her fourth birthday. She had already attended the Centre for 4 months and was familiar with the space, resources and practitioners in the Nursery. Sarah was confident, articulate and independent from the outset. She immediately sought out other children, being a natural leader and instigator of play, preferring to spend most of her time engaged in imaginative role play, often based around families. She lived with her mother and had an active social life away from the nursery, often talking about her friends and wider family.

It was clear from the outset that Sarah wanted to engage with her learning diary. When this wasn't possible, as I had taken her diary at home to update it, she took matters into her own hands and set to work making herself a replacement diary. She obviously felt a sense of ownership over the diary but it was also acting as a tool for social engagement. Although she did not often seek out my company directly she loved to be part of a group and involved in conversations, which she missed out on when her diary was unavailable. This episode challenged my practice and led to a transformation in the way I recorded observations and added content to the diaries, moving towards a more immediate, organic process to ensure availability.

Emergent Phase

Sarah:	(**approaches saying)** I want my learning diary
Teacher:	I think your's is at home Sarah.
	Sarah moves to the paper and pens and starts to draw, cut and stick.
NIah:	Teacher, Teacher, I cut this out.
Teacher:	Oh, you've done a good job of cutting that out … What are you going to use that for now?
Sarah:	Gluing it,
Teacher:	OK
Teacher:	Now what are you going to glue it to? _____, why are you doing that? That's an interesting idea.
Sarah:	I need this bit so I can make a learning diary.
Teacher:	Oh, you're going to make a learning diary!
Sarah:	Out of this.
Teacher:	Oh, what a fabulous idea!
Sarah:	_____
Teacher:	And do you think you could write about what you do today in your learning diary?
Sarah:	Yeah

Sarah's enthusiasm for talking about, and sharing, her learning diary grew and in most observations she was engaged in conversations with her friends rather than myself. However, there were a few instances where pieces of work instigated further discussion. One piece of work in particular drew her attention, a drawing that she started to explain what she had depicted.

Establishing Phase

Sarah: Teacher.
Teacher: Yeah.
Sarah: **(pointing)**
Teacher: Oh, that's some interesting drawing you were doing.
Sarah: I made a crown.
Teacher: Oh, is that a crown? Can I write that in there?
Sarah: Yeah.
Teacher: Do you want to tell me anything else?
Sarah: About this one…ummm….this is the two pipes and this is the sewer.
Teacher: The sewer.
Sarah: Yeah.
Teacher: That's interesting….
Sarah: I'm going to play
Teacher: I didn't realise you'd drawn a sewer. Why have you drawn a sewer?
Sarah: For the toilet.
Teacher: Is the toilet here as well?
Sarah: The toilet's there.
Teacher: And gets may be Yes, 'cos when we flush the toilet it all goes down the sewer, doesn't it? flushed away. But…. but, I'm wondering where the sewer goes. That quite interesting to find that out.

Her explanation was new and entailed me making additions to the documented knowledge. The immediacy of the situation led me to write her comments directly into her learning diary. Other children were present at the time and watched me undertaking this process. After this instance, the practice become more common and increasingly requested, leading to a developing co-construction of knowledge regarding children's work.

Throughout the year Sarah was highly sociable. She enjoyed engaging in short conversations about her diary, often picking out the images of her friends, showing delight

and excitement when sharing these discoveries with these friends. Initially her involvement in the conversations were only a few minutes long but by the end of the research she talked with friends and explored her learning with them for nearly forty-five minutes. She evidently enjoyed this process.

Alongside these extensive conversations she began to develop her metacognitive language. She moved from describing her work to discussing the process involved. I was particularly interested in a few phrases she used, such as "I been doing this too good", and "I been doing this so hardly [hard work]", language associated with dispositions towards learning.

Enhancing Phase

Sarah's pointing to writing and 'reading' as she traces the lines of the text

Sarah	…looking at colours … when they go… colour … the biggest colour I ever seen before today of my whole life. **Pointing to writing above observation.**
Teacher:	OK. So it's talking about colours, is it? OK.
Sarah	It says…. I was bing dong like numbers. A**gain tracing words above observation** And put jewels in the water in the _ And I can_____ circles are round like this and can draw them for thirty hundred … thirty hundred…. thirty hundred years.
Teacher:	OK! That's long time.
Sarah	And we've been doing so badly that we have been … I can't believe I do this now. I am …. I am so good at doing this. I could do anyone's ____ if they want me to. If they ask or say yes. If they say "No" then I'll… I will be sad…. I will be sitting somewhere where no one can't see me and we were doing it like…. like this but we have to …. **reading report again**
Sarah	…and I been doing this… I can know that we done it. **report**
Sarah	And I been making it, like all our names. **turning to page of drawn faces from home**
Sarah	And I been doing it so badly hardly… Um. I been putting some stars on my picture… I picked some ……
Sarah	When… when I been putting it on there **sand pic ob.** …I could say…. I said no one's allowed to do or sit on there when it's not even dry. **pulling down piece of folded up writing** And I been doing all these 'N's, like that scribble there and different kinds of 'N's. And I know what to do.
Sarah	And I…. and I done a big 'N' and ….
Lucia S	Oh, my god! You could do 'N's.
Sarah	And I could do my name…. that's N, I, because I done little spot there I don't know that's a little chicken pox or a big spider something. **opp. pg. to boat obs.**
Sarah	And I been doing this…. I been doing this so good that I've dragged a lot of circles around and around and around. **back to white board drawing opp. Xmas**
Sarah	And I've been doing this so hardly I can't believe I've been doing it. I have my first time doing this crown… So good… and I been doing it really…
Lucia S	Where's your crown?
Sarah	**(POINTING)**

In this episode of dialogue it is clear to see her demonstrating her reflectivity and positioning herself as a learner. It was fascinating to watch her trace the text, redefining what had been written, putting it into her own context and taking back the control—writing and reading often being the domain of the adult.

Sarah followed her independent trajectory from the beginning, taking ownership over the content of the diary. She built upon her desire to articulate her thinking and through this challenged the current power structures in the process. Finally she displayed a sense of empowerment as she started to add her own content to the learning diary, even getting her mum involved. What appeared to me initially as being 'just drawings' in fact showed schematic developments, demonstrating the power of authentic participation to develop knowledge.