Competent and Unaware of it:  
The development of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ among adults in unpaid, informal learning situations outside formal employment

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A Thesis Submitted For the Award Of Doctor Of Philosophy

In The Department of Political, International and Policy Studies, Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences, University of Surrey.

August 2008
ABSTRACT

This interpretive study focusses on women's and men's perceptions of their development of 'tacit forms of key competencies', and explores ways in which this learning experience, the development of 'tacit knowledge', takes place. All the research participants had taken, or were taking, time off paid work due to parenthood, caring responsibilities and/or being made redundant.

The research combines biographical, ethnographical and phenomenological elements. Data are presented from in-depth, (socio)biographic interviews with 33 adults (25 women and 8 men), aged between 23 and 57 years, living in south east England.

The research participants speak of the challenges they faced in their roles as managers of families, and as parents, spouses and carers; of their unrecognised 'tacit' learning experiences; of the 'change in personality'; and of the impact of unpaid work and unemployment on their self-esteem, confidence and (dis)satisfaction. Their 'stories' offer a powerful basis for analysis of aspects of their unrecognised 'tacit' learning experiences.

The focus of the study is the inter-relationship between the research participants' degrees of awareness about their acquired 'tacit forms of key competencies' and 'tacit knowledge' on the one hand, and the degree of confidence and 'self-assurance' they draw from the recognition of these 'tacit forms of key competencies' on the other.

The analysis of the research participants' accounts reveals how a person's awareness (or unawareness) of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' influences confidence, self-esteem and self-identity. The interplay of education, class, and the situation of being in or out of paid work, has an effect on how far individuals acknowledge, recognise and value the 'tacit' knowledge and the 'tacit forms of key competencies' they have developed.

Understanding learning from the perspectives of the individual and the various contexts within which 'tacit' and informal learning takes place requires crossing boundaries between the fields of management, economics, education and training, psychology and sociology. This study seeks to advance the discussion on the development of 'tacit knowledge' in terms of what does it mean for the individual, acknowledging their contexts, experiences and biographies as well as their emotions and feelings.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the inspirational instruction of Professor Karen Evans who gave me the initial impetus to study ‘tacit knowledge’. My thanks are extended to Professor John Holford for his expert advice and encouragement.

Both of these supervisors have given me a deep appreciation and love for the power and detail of this subject.

My warm thanks to my longstanding colleagues and friends, Theresa and Sam, I sincerely thank you for believing in me and helping me to ‘stay in there’ at times of despair. A special thank you to my daughter Vivian Mae for keeping her little brother entertained, encouraging me throughout the whole course of my work and showing endless patience.

Special thanks to the thirty-three women and men who were willing to participate in this research and agreed to be interviewed.

Finally, for my dearest mother: Thank you for devoting such great time and energy in your task of ‘baby-sitting’ and providing a peace and quietness so that I could work.

Last but not least, I wish to thank Barbara and David who have always supported me, as well as Caroline and Graham for all helpful conversations.
DEDICATION

To my daughter Vivian Mae, my son Merlin Kiano and my (late) grandmother Dr. Eva Hütter, who encouraged me to study languages and travel the world.
**Chapter 3: Literature Review - part 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.12 Introduction</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.13 From Knowledge to Competence</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.14 The Concept of Competences and Competencies</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.15 The Concept of Skills</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.16 The Concept of Key Skills</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.17 The Prevailing Approach to Competence - a Behaviouristic Stance?!</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.18 The Concept of Key Competencies - a multi-dimensional and holistic approach</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.19 'Tacit Skills'</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.20 Developing an Understanding of 'Tacit forms of Key Competencies'</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.21 The 'Starfish Model': A Generative Approach to Competencies</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.21.1 The five Dimensions of the Starfish Model</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.22 Conclusions</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology - part 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.0 Introduction</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 The Central Research Problem and Research Question</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Justification for Interpretive Paradigm: Philosophy</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Determining the Fit of the Paradigm to the Focus of the Study</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1 The Researcher’s Worldview</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2 The Nature of the Problem: Developing ‘tacit forms of key competencies’</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Justification for a Qualitative Research Methodology</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 The Combination of Biography, Phenomenology and Ethnography</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.1 The Biographical Element</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.2 The Phenomenological Element</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.3 The Ethnographic Element</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Selection of Research Participants</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.1 Study sample</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.2 Non-Probability, Purposive Sampling</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.3 Sampling Criteria</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.4 Snowballing</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Locating Research Participants 'On Course'</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8 Gaining Access to the Colleges and Courses and to the Research Participants</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9 Conclusions</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology - part 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.10 Introduction</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11 Data Collection: Methods and Issues</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12 Biographical Perspective in Interviewing</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.13 In-depth, Semi-structured, (Socio)biographic Interviews: Principles and Application</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.13.1 The (Socio)biographical Dimension in the Interview Guideline</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.13.2 Interview Guideline</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.13.3 The Pilot Interview</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.14 Rationale for Choice of Interview Approach</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.14.1 Rationale for Biographical Interviews</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.15 The Process of Creating the Mind Maps</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.16 The Interview Situation</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.16.1 Researcher - Participant Relationship: Gaining Entry, Building Rapport</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.16.2 Social and Cultural Factors Influencing the Interview Process</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.16.3 Recording Data</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.16.4 Interview Protocol and Field Notes</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.16.5 Deciding When to Stop Interviewing</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.16.6 Ethical Code and Consideration</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.16.7 Establishing Credibility and Trustworthiness</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5: The Framework for Data Analysis

5.0 Introduction
5.1 The Framework for Data Analysis
5.2 The Process of Data Analysis and Data Organization
  5.2.1 The Pragmatic Framework
  5.2.2 Thematic Conceptual Framework for Analysis
5.3 The Analytic Procedure
5.4 The ‘Starfish Model’ as Research Tool
  5.4.1 The Identification of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ in the ‘Starfish Model’
5.5 ‘The Triangle of Conflict and Contradictions’
5.6 Levels of Analysis
5.7 Data Analysis - Interpretation or Making Sense
5.8 The Researcher’s Interpretive Lens
5.9 Reflexive Accounting
5.10 Conclusions

Chapter 6: The Social Structure of the two groups of research participants

6.0 Introduction
6.1 Classification of Research Participants - General Characteristics
6.2 The two Target Groups
  6.2.1 The First Category group ‘on course’
  6.2.2 The Second Category group ‘returned to work’
6.3 Social structure of the Research Participants
  6.3.1 Social Structure of the Participants ‘on course’
    6.3.1.1 Groups of Social Class
    6.3.1.2 Clusters
    6.3.1.3 Financial Situation
    6.3.1.4 Career/ Job Progression
  6.3.2 Social Structure of the Research Participants ‘returned to work’
    6.3.2.1 Groups of Social Class
    6.3.2.2 Clusters
    6.3.2.3 Financial Situation
    6.3.2.4 Career/ Job Progression
6.4 Conclusions

Chapter 7: The Experiences of the Research Participants in the Group ‘On Course’

7.0 Introduction
7.1 Experiences of the group of research participants ‘on course’
7.2 The ‘Tacit Dimension’ - Identification of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’
  7.2.1 Identified ‘tacit’ skills and key competencies - related to the ‘starfish model’
7.3 General overview of the key competencies an skills in (54) groups
  7.3.1 Frequency of the acquired key competencies
    7.3.1.1 Organisational skills
    7.3.1.2 Managing and budgeting
    7.3.1.3 Multi-tasking as well as Patience
    7.3.1.4 Putting others’ needs first
    7.3.1.5 Planning
    7.3.1.6 Cooking
    7.3.1.7 Responsibility as well as time management
  7.4 Reflection on the stated, acquired ‘tacit’ key competencies and skills
7.5 Identifying the degree of (un)awareness of the acquired ‘tacit skills and competencies’
  7.5.1 Differentiation of the ‘awareness of skills’
7.6 Identifying the degree of confidence gained from the acquired 'tacit skills and competencies'
7.7 Other pieces of the puzzle
7.8 'Mini-Biographies' to Illuminate the Statements of the Category 'On Course'
  7.8.1 Andrew, 34, lorry driver, 3 children, duration of break: 1.5 years, 'SkillsPlus' course
  7.8.2 Angelica, 42, married, 3 children, IT-Skills course
  7.8.3 Barbara, 36, secretary, divorced, 2 children, 'Skills Plus' course
  7.8.4 Carla, 34, hairdresser, 1 child, divorced, 'Childcare' course
  7.8.5 Richard, 55, single, no children, PVT-course
    7.8.5.1 A Short Description of His Day
    7.8.5.2 Learned Competencies and Skills
    7.8.5.3 How did He Know What To Do?
    7.8.5.4 How did He Feel while Being at Home?
7.9 'Triangle of conflict and contradiction'. A model for the discussion of the interrelation of skills and confidence and awareness
7.10 Conclusions

Chapter 8: The Experiences of the Research Participants in the Group 'Returned To Work'

8.0 Introduction
8.1 Specific Details of the Group of Participants
8.2 The Nature of the Process and Progress of Returning to Work
8.3 Succeeded in Returning to Work - the Nature of the Transition, and the Process of Returning to Work
  8.3.1 Succeeded in returning to work - Characteristics of the career pathway, the nature of the jobs and feelings about the transition back to work
  8.3.2 Successfully Returned to the Same Field
  8.3.3 Successfully Returned to a New Occupational Field
8.4 Reflections on the Development of 'Tacit Forms of Key Competencies'
8.5 The 'Tacit' Dimensions
  8.5.1 The Tacit Dimensions in the Experiences of the Participants
8.6 Identification of 'Tacit' Skills and Key Competencies
8.7 Overview of Developed Key Competences
8.8 (Un)Awareness about 'tacit forms of key competencies'
8.9 Benefits from Developed (tacit forms of) Key Competencies and Skills
  8.9.1 Usefulness of 'tacit forms of key competencies' and skills
  8.9.2 Usefulness in Relation to Occupational Field
8.10 The Amount of Confidence Gained from the Process of Returning to Work and Progression Made
8.11 Mini-Biography: Stuart, 37-years-old, 1 son (12 years)
8.12 Summary

Chapter 9: Discussion of Findings

9.0 Introduction
9.1 Issues about the Development of 'Tacit Forms of Key Competencies'
9.2 Expanding the Concept of Competence
9.3 General Differences in the Perceptions of the Two Groups of Research Participants
  9.3.1 The Factor of Being 'In or Out of Paid Work' - The Importance of Work in the Life of Individuals
  9.3.2 The Influencing Factor of Caring for Someone on the Development of 'Tacit Skills'
  9.3.3 The influencing Factor of being (Un)aware of One's Own Achievements
9.4 How did They learn to run a Family Household?
9.5 Appreciation of 'tacit forms of key competencies'
9.6 Awareness of Single People related to Personal Problems
Figure 5.6: ‘Triangle of conflict and contradiction’ 109
Figure 5.7: Categories of Analysis 110
Figure 6.1: Social Structure ‘On Course’ 119
Figure 6.2: Social Structure ‘Returned to Work’ 125
Figure 7.1: The developed Starfish Model 130
Figure 7.2: Mind map: Overview of key competencies in category ‘on course’ 131
Figure 7.3: ‘Frequency of Acquired Key Competencies’ 133
Figure 7.4: ‘Triangle of Conflict and Contradiction’ 151
Figure 7.5: Detailed Triangle of Conflict and Contradiction 153
Figure 8.1: Main areas of work 160
Figure 8.2: Mindmap: Overview of key competencies 170
Figure 8.3: Graphic Representation of developed ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ 171

List of Tables

Table 3.1: Distinction between declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge 28
Table 3.2: Contrasting dimensions of knowledge 29
Table 3.3: Different Aspects of Perspectives on Competence and Work 30
Table 3.4: Distinction of ‘know that’ and ‘know how’ 35
Table 3.5: Table of comparison 36
Table 3.6: A Typology of Non-Formal Learning 38
Table 4.1: Quantitative and Qualitative Paradigm Assumptions 60
Table 4.2: Categories of research participants 75
Table 5.1: The multi-dimensional approach 99
Table 5.2: The descriptive, thematic, conceptual matrix 104
Table 6.1: The two Target Groups 116
Table 6.2: Groups of Social Class 118
Table 6.3: Overview of the Social Structure of the Participants ‘On Course’ 120
Table 6.4: Groups of Social Class 123
Table 6.5: Overview of the Social Structure of the Participants ‘Returned to Work’ 124
Table 8.1: Women’s transition to similar jobs 158
Table 8.2: Men’s transition in jobs 158
Table 8.3: Grouping of jobs 159
Table 8.4: Process of job transitions 161
Table 8.5: Degree of happiness in job 162
Table 8.6: Levels of Usefulness 173
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

This study has extended work of the 'TACITKEY' project exploring the development process of 'tacit forms of key competencies' as they manifest themselves in the practice of unpaid, caring work in periods of life which are characterised by unemployment and/or family phases of adults. This period in the lives of the research participants is characterised through implicit learning (Reber, 1993) and non-formal work situations (Garrick, 1997; Coffield, 2000). Everyday, parents, especially mothers, unemployed people, and private carers skilfully accomplish tasks and routines 'without thinking' and not thinking 'much about it'. Tracy, 37 years old, a mother of two, states: "I never thought about it. Things had to be done, and there is no time to think about yourself and how it could be different". For Eunice, (46 years old, 3 children): "It was just one round of washing, cleaning, ironing, cooking, taking the dogs out, shopping. A normal work day".

This study builds on the idea that human beings possess many skills and competencies, which they are not aware of and which they cannot explicitly name, but on which people 'tacitly' rely; embracing the concept of 'tacit knowledge' (Polanyi, 1958, 1966). The concept of 'tacit knowledge' is used mostly "to describe practical know-how" (Wagner, 1987, p.1236). It is acquired informally, through experience (Ravetz, 1971), over time (Leonard-Barton, 1992) and without conscious attempt. It is "action-oriented knowledge, acquired without direct help from others, that allows individuals to achieve goals they personally value" (Sternberg et al., 1995, p.916). The concept of 'tacit knowledge' incorporates aspects of 'practical intelligence' (Wagner and Sternberg, 1987; Schmidt and Hunter, 1993) and is used in this study as a springboard for the exploration.

This research sets out to facilitate the telling of the 'tacit' learning and development process among different groups of adult learners; with the intention to gain a better understanding of how individuals experience the development of 'tacit knowledge' in a period of being 'out of the labour market' due to family commitments (stay-at-home mums or dads) or redundancy. As a result, the research participants speak about the challenges they face in their roles as managers and carers of families, as parents and spouses, the 'change in personality' and of the impact of unpaid work and unemployment on their degree of self-esteem, confidence and (dis)satisfaction. Their 'stories' offer a powerful basis for analysis of aspects of their unrecognised 'tacit' learning experiences - the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

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Alongside the exploration an identification and analysis of the developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' and 'tacit skills' is striven for. And finally, the study considers the inter-relationship of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies', of being aware about this learning process and of confidence building in the individual.

The initiative for this study and investigation lies in my own experience of time spent out of the labour market due to motherhood and child/family caring responsibilities, experiencing a 'change in personality' in terms of acquiring a range of skills and competencies and an awareness of these achievements.

1.1 The Relationship between Knowing, Emotion, 'Tacit' and Key Competencies

The process of developing 'tacit' knowledge and competencies includes embodied skills and thus, embodied experiences (see Davies, 1997) - for my research this means to focus on human beings who develop 'tacit' skills and knowledge and consequently 'know', are the 'knowing subjects'. For Polanyi "knowledge is an activity ... a process of knowing" (1969, p.132) and as such, knowing results from activities, the urge to understand own's own experiences (Polanyi and Prosch, 1975) and therefore resides in people, harnessing their emotions and feelings.

'Tacit forms of key competencies' are highly situated forms of knowledge (Nuthall, 2000) and are closely linked to the situation in which the capacity was developed; this can be understood as 'tacit' knowing - where people know more than they can tell and can perform but not explain how to do so. As such, 'tacit' knowing has a central place in the situational, contextual and procedural knowledge(s) of parents and carers. Unravelling this knowledge is complex and requires careful examination, recognising that there are intimate connections among people and (critical) events.

This study suggests that one way of looking at the 'tacit' dimension of learning and of 'tacit forms of key competencies' development is to examine them through the eyes of the research participants describing their routines, emotions and feelings. Experiences are the basis for knowledge creation and the process of becoming knowledgable is and can be hurtful. Here, emotions and feelings seem to represent the best definition when examining the 'tacit' dimension of this informal learning experience while focussing on the individual; because emotions are inner private events (Parkinson, 1995) and capture the individual dimension of learning.

Generally, feelings or the emotional dimension of teaching and learning have tended to be neglected and the main focus in much of the adult education literature is on the cognitive.
But learning is an emotional experience and the common view of the purpose of education remains dominated by the human capital perspective (see Van der Zee, 1996). Whereas my own experiences as a 'stay at home mum' and 'women returner' showed me that emotions, feelings, degrees of awareness, self-worth and confidence are important dimensions of informal learning and unpaid work at home, the management and educational literature seems to indicate that this has received comparatively scarce attention. The dominant educational trend still concentrates on the cognitive development, whereas the social, moral, emotional and physical dimensions are regarded by western culture as more or less peripheral to education and learning (Van der Zee, 1996).

Findings of this study show that negative emotions about learning mirror the low value afforded to informal learning, unpaid work and when the negative feelings become too strong, they cover the awareness about what one has achieved, the skills and competencies developed. In this study, the research participants do not see themselves as real, competent learners, they feel low in confidence and show a negative self-worth - they think, they are different and outside the normal reality of working people or people in education - and this evokes metaphors of being 'merely a housewife', a 'chief, cook and bottle washer' which illustrates their situation of being disconnected from the 'real' world. And, of not accepting the developed skills and competencies as 'proper skills'.

It was the intensity of low self-worth and low confidence (anxiety) experienced by people/adult learners that brought me to research the feelings or emotions linked with the development of 'tacit knowledge' and 'tacit forms of key competencies' and finally, the process of returning to work for many adults. But, emotion does not seem to be well explored in the literature on teaching and learning. Whilst the traditional separation of cognition and emotion in learning is now seen as artificial, the rational world view seems to prevail. An acceptance of the importance of emotion may help us to understand the creation of 'tacit knowledge'.

1.2 The Research Question
This study seeks to answer the question: How do people experience the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' while being out of paid work?

Especially parents, who stay at home, develop a wide range of (new) skills and competencies (see Fisher, 1999; George, 1999; Spence, 2000), which in many cases are highly similar to those needed in the workplace (Carnevale et al., 1990). Parents report such skills as responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management and integrity. These skills and competencies are generally unrealised, 'tacit' - thus, I speak of 'tacit forms of key
competencies' - undervalued by the individuals themselves and certainly by society and business. Consequently, people, especially mothers, wishing to return to work suffer a lack of confidence (Brown and Harris, 1978; Hirschfeld and Cross, 1982), which then affects their well-being (Andrews and Robinson, 1991) and the ability to be more determined in their lives. Moreover, many employers do not appreciate the competencies and skills which have been gained whilst looking after a family at home (Hammick and Acker, 1998). This instance is illustrated in a working hypothesis which is explained in more detail on page 8.

In this study a specific significant example is the situation of mothers who are (or were) in the process of returning to work. These women represent a significant sample as they are seen by employers as 'unqualified', or 'out of touch with the labour market', and quite often feel themselves the same as "not prepared", "not ready" or qualified to return to work (see Muller et al., 1993). Despite this, in most cases they have organised, managed and administered the unpredictability of a complex everyday life of a family. In general, they do not recognise their developed skills and do not rate them as 'very important' or of benefit for their life course (Oakley, 1974, 1976) and actions in life. It can be stated that unemployed people and mothers, who stay at home, do not hold favourable views of their abilities and skills (Morris, 1990). Although they 'know' what they achieve each day at home, they lack the ability to realise the importance and relevance of it. This unawareness and ignorance of the developed skills results quite often in a bitter feeling and a demonstration of low self-esteem and a lack of confidence. This situation is analysed in the study with the aid of a developed model, the 'triangle of conflict and contradiction'.

In essence, this study's aim is to reach for the meaning which the phenomenon, in this case developing 'tacit forms of key competencies', has for the research participants - how do they experience this 'phase' and learning situation in their lives?

1.3 The Background to the Research Question

Whereas 'tacit knowledge' is well researched and recognised in human resource development (HRD) and knowledge management (KM) (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Lam, 1998) as a potential for and as a source of competitive advantage (Senge, 1990; Cohen, 1998), the 'tacit knowledge' which is acquired in non-formal learning, life and work situations, outside education and training, the formal qualification system and labour market context, is still hardly recognised, even undervalued by employers, trainers and the individual. In most cases, the individual is the 'last' person to realise and recognise his or her developed 'tacit knowledge' and the potential of 'tacit knowledge' in terms of renumeration and value in the labour market.

Thus, this study aims to illuminate the question of 'What does it mean for people to develop 'tacit forms of key competencies' while being 'out of paid work' and out of the labour
market, either by choice, due to becoming a mother, parent or carer or unintentionally due to 'losing a job', by being made redundant? To leave or step out of the 'world of work' is a significant experience in itself. What does this exchange of the 'status world' of the labour market, where competencies and knowledge are recognised, valued and financially rewarded for the 'low status' world of home (Oakely, 1976) mean for the individual? This change to a situation of very emotional experiences where "suddenly everything that is learned is 'nothing worth' anymore" and "you don't get paid for it" creates the interest in 'How do people experience this 'swap' or exchange of worlds?'

The study links the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' to an individuals' degree of awareness, self-perception and confidence in forming the assumption that (tacit) learning, which includes actions, goals, motivation, emotions and feelings of individuals, is influenced by life experience, circumstances and critical or important incidents happening during this time.

Each individual is exposed to multiple contexts and experiences in life, undergoing an interaction between a living being and his or her environment which forms (tacit) knowledge (Dewey, 1929, 1966). These experiences shape the individual and determine his or her path in life. Hence, the individual will develop, mainly unconsciously, a wide range of skills, competencies and 'tacit forms of key competencies' in order to adapt to and cope with new challenges and circumstances. In this study, such a specific experience is to become unemployed or to become a parent.

At the beginning of this research, this situation was mirrored in a study from the USA, which was titled "What Is Mum Worth?" (Edelman, 1999). According to the study, a mother should earn £317,000 a year because the 'job' of a mother encompassed 17 different occupations, including chef, childminder, nurse, teacher, maid, and housekeeper. This interest in mothers' hybrid ways of negotiating through their everyday lives and the recognition of the development of skills and competencies was furthermore expressed in an advert on the noticeboard in my daughter's school which was advertising for jobs at 'COMET', a store for home appliances and electricals, reading: "If you can manage a household - we can use your skills".

These incidents reflect a rising economical interest in skills, competencies and productivity of women returning to work, and they highlight the need or demand of certain skills and competencies, the so called 'skills shortages' (Payne, 1991), in the labour market. Such competencies and skills, which are quite often labelled as 'female skills' (Teichler, 1998; Streblер et al., 1995), are required in part-time jobs in the retail-, caring-, and service sector industries; often have low market value (Steinberg, 1990) and are sought after
especially in the south-east of England. In this respect, skills, competencies and knowledge are more and more regarded as 'human capital' (Farrell et al., 2004; Salamon, 1991) or 'human resource' which can be translated into productivity (Drucker, 1993; Mansell and When, 1998).

Simultaneously, a strong interest in 'tacit knowledge' (re)awoke and became apparent in the field of KM and HRD, as human competences and 'tacit knowledge' were regarded as an advantage and a resource as 'human capital' for companies and industries. Here, the emphasis was mainly on how to assess and 'measure' 'tacit knowledge' in terms of job success and performance in management (e.g. Ambrosini and Bowman, 2001; Sternberg and Wagner, 1986). In the field of education and social science interest in implicit learning, informal learning and lifelong learning was expressed in an increasing number of studies (e.g. Eraut, 1999; Coffield, 2000).

This study now is now concerned with the individual; and the question of 'What does the development of implicit knowledge and a whole range of personal (intransitive) 'tacit forms of key competencies' in informal learning situations mean for the individual - in terms of confidence building, awareness, outlook on life, hopes, fears and emotions ? How do people see themselves and their world ?

1.4 What Knowledge and which Skills ‘count’ in Today’s Society ?

There has been a growing recognition of the importance of a skilled workforce and of different types of knowledge as a basis for (global) economic competitiveness, embracing the idea of ‘The Learning Age’ (DfEE, 1998). Human skills are increasingly seen as a key element in forming and shaping the economy and society. Knowledge is assumed to be the real driving force of our era (Attwell and Brown, 2000). ‘Lifelong learning’, has become a major target and goal for education and training; because people need to develop new knowledge and skills. ‘Skills for all’ is an articulated demand of the National Skills Tasks Force (2000).

In general, the 'observed' transition from an 'industrial society' to an 'information society', a global economic competition, new organisational concepts and strategies for human resource development and the trend towards a 'knowledge society' (Mansell and When, 1998), have led to 'lifelong learning' becoming increasingly important around the world (Geissler, 1996; Wehner et al., 1996). These changes indicate a need for people to understand what is essential for them in order to be able to deal with changes in their lives. People need to learn 'lifelong', to achieve a sense of citizenship and thus to develop wider skills, competencies and knowledge (Evans, 1998). Furthermore, changes in working life, e.g. new product and process technologies, the increasing use of new information and
communication technologies and changing management philosophies, such as lean production (Womack et al., 1990) have put a strong focus and demand on the qualification process of and the occupational competence of the work force (Garrick, 1998). These changes have altered the competencies required in the workplace and in working life. The ongoing debate is on the need for people (in their working lives) to be prepared for changes and continuous change (Kessels and Keursten, 2002), to be flexible and mobile (Kirpal, 2004) and on upgrading occupational skills (Baumgartner, 2001). All of the research participants in this study were or had been enrolled on 'return-to-work' courses, which are described in Appendix A.

1.5 The Importance of Informal Learning and 'Tacit' Knowledge

Mansell and When (1998) state that "the current phase of economic development is one in which knowledge and learning are more important than in any other historical period" (p. 51). And, as a consequence, there has not only been an increased interest in HRD, but also in work-based education and training, work process knowledge and implicit and informal learning (Garrick, 1998). Together with the debate on the delivery of key skills and key competences, a strong academic interest has been awoken and focuses on the transferability of skills, knowledge creation and other -so far neglected- forms of knowledge, such as, work-related knowledge, work process knowledge, implicit knowledge (Boreham, 2002) and 'tacit knowledge'. A rapidly growing body of research has focused on implicit, ‘tacit’, i.e., non-conscious and informal learning within the last years (Eraut, 2000; Coffield, 2000) where different kinds of theoretical and empirical approaches are discussed [e.g. HRD, competence development in firms and companies (Nonaka and Takeuchi, (1995)]. Meanwhile 'tacit knowledge' is claimed to be - in the current 'learning economy' (Lundvall and Johnson, 1994; Lundvall, 2001) - "as important, or even more important, than formal, codified, structured and explicit knowledge" (Mansell and When, 1998, p. 51). The idea that 'tacit knowledge' is valuable suggests that 'tacit knowledge' is an important phenomenon to study, which is waiting to be empirically researched. "There is a need to know much more empirically about the nature of 'tacit knowledge' for it to become a theoretically coherent and convincing ...construct" (Jensen, 1993, p.9).

1.6 Relevance of the Research on 'Tacit Forms of Key Competencies' for Today

The theme of 'tacit knowledge' seemed both topical in these post-modern times and representative of what international, (vocational), educational research 'tapped into'; an area of research which grew more and more and developed since the start of the study. Still, there are no studies which specifically address the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' and 'tacit knowledge' necessary for the success in 'running' a family household and returning to work. Additionally, the single-sided debate on upgrading occupational skill requirements (Marshall and Tucker, 1992) has neglected any 'tacit' forms
of knowing found in actions, learning and other different ways of knowledge or competence acquisition outside formal education. All too often it is forgotten that 'life' itself challenges and 'prepares' people to adapt to changes, to deal with new situations, and to be flexible in dealing with circumstances. The gaining of (life-) experience, the development of life skills and becoming knowledgeable are all attributes which life offers, "to learn from life itself" (Dewey, 1966, p.51), after going through its school. It has almost been forgotten that old people used to be respected because of their wisdom, experience and the sophistication they gained from living their lives. In a time where lifelong learning is being promoted, a greater recognition and value needs to be given to the huge variety of 'tacit', implicit and informal learning that is conducted in informal learning situations, e.g. everyday activities. 'Tacit knowledge', implicit knowledge and informal learning play a crucial role in the creation of skills and competencies and in the personal development of an individual, who is organising the running of the family household during a period of unemployment, or while being out of 'paid work'. In a time, where self-directed learning (Knowles, 1975; Arnold and Pätzold, 2003), social learning (Wenger, 2000), the shaping of life and work environments (Heidegger, 1997) and adaption to change in life and work environments has become more and more important, it is about time for men and women, mothers and fathers, to discover their potential and their knowledge. Especially, because the competencies that parents have developed might embrace flexibility, multi-tasking, selling, and advertising and managing, which are all highly relevant to the world of work and self-development. Furthermore, it is about time for the outside world and the labour market to recognise and acknowledge this potential and knowledge pool that individuals possess. And, in a second step, to support individuals to find ways to retain and transfer their 'tacit knowledge' and competence beyond the horizon of household and family-bound tasks. In this respect, this study aims at encouraging individuals to recognise and to make better use of their knowledge.

1.7 Refining the Overall Research Question

The general purpose of this study is to identify 'tacit forms of key competencies' and 'tacit knowledge' that women, especially mothers, and men develop while being out of paid work, when looking after the family household and children. And, at the same time, to analyse the degree of awareness, recognition and appreciation of these 'tacit forms of key competencies' among the research participants. The aim of the study then becomes two-fold. One aim is to identify and analyse the developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' and the other aim is to understand and describe the 'tacit dimension' of this learning experience (Young, 1998). In short, the study aims at providing a deeper understanding of how individuals experience this phenomenon of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'. The purpose of identifying men's and women's developed 'tacit knowledge' and exploring this experience of the development (as captured in the research question
central to the study) leads to a differentiation into research sub-questions. Such questions as 'What does it mean for the individual to develop 'tacit forms of key competencies' while running the family household and raising children at a particular time in their lives? What is meant by 'tacit knowledge' and 'tacit forms of key competencies'? How do individuals acquire 'tacit forms of key competencies'? To what extent are people, especially mothers, aware of their developed 'tacit forms of key competencies'? How do they 'see', 'rate' and 'value' their capabilities? And finally, 'Which role does social status play in terms of people's awareness? This last aspect of the experience requires a detailed formulation of a working hypothesis which is explained in the next section.

1.8 The Working Hypothesis

The research question embodies a working hypothesis which states that people very often possess 'tacit forms of key competencies' acquired in a non-formal way, which they are not aware of (proposal, TACITKEY project) and is reflected in the study's title: 'Competent and Unaware of it'. This situation influences people's self-assurance and confidence in a negative way because people do not recognise what they have learned and achieved in this period of their lives. A situation often described as 'Catch 22' where "lack of self-confidence is ... an obstacle to letting the knowledge one possesses come to expression" (Molander, 1992, p.22).

On an elaborated and refined level, this working hypothesis widens and comprises that people's degrees of awareness, then depends on the level of education and social class of those concerned (Klerman et al., 1992; Klerman and Leibowitz, 1994; Filipezak, 1994). Where people with low school leaving certificates and lower social status are not as aware of their achievements as people with a 'better' social background, who received a higher level of education are (Behrman and Nevzer, 1997; Turner and Wheaton, 1995; Turner and Lloyd, 1995; Jacobs, 1997). In consequence, people feel 'bad', depressed, insecure and low in confidence (Brown and Harris, 1978; Hirschfeld and Cross, 1982).

To be a part of the workforce and in paid employment is desired by most (Elliot, 1996), an effect which affects those with a lower level of education very strongly, including the research participants of this study. Employment and paid labour are still conceived of as the pre-eminent way towards self-development and social integration (Hirsh et al., 1992; Stroobants and Wildemeersch, 2001). This, then influences people's outlook on and way of life; especially women's, as they quite often express a negative self-worth and image, (measuring themselves against their money earning husbands) and who do not feel 'prepared' and confident enough to go back to work (Coyle, 1984). Still, the same can be said for (male) unemployed people who were in the process of being made redundant.
(Morris, 1990). Thus, a detailed analysis of the social status of the research participants becomes necessary and is included in this study (see chapter 6).

In forming a working hypothesis the field is approached in an exploratory way and in relation to this working hypothesis the detailed objectives of this study are:

- To identify 'tacit skills and forms of key competencies' women and men develop while managing their own lives or the family household and children;
- To conceptualise aspects of the 'tacit dimension' of the experience of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies' while running a family household;
- To assess the degree of awareness, appreciation and recognition of the developed 'tacit forms of key competencies and skills';
- To identify the amount of self-assurance and confidence people draw from them;
- To relate the research participants' awareness to their educational background and social status in life.

The discussion beforehand describes the scope and areas of focus of this study. Once the aim of the study is established it becomes necessary to set specific, manageable boundaries to undertake a successful research project. Identified above are the five objectives which I considered appropriate and realistic to achieve. Still, the scope of this research needs to be discussed, furthermore, in terms of the approach used including the selection of the research participants which seemed likely to provide the most useful data:

1. This study focuses on examining perceptions of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'. It focusses on the part they play in terms of influencing self-esteem, confidence, opinions and values and the process of taking up or choosing a job or career for the individual. In-depth, semi-structured biographical interviews with 25 women and 8 men from diverse backgrounds probing how they thought about their development of 'tacit knowledge' and skills, their achievements, themselves etc. were conducted.

2. All 33 research participants selected for this study came from Surrey and were or had been enrolled on a 'return-to-work course'. Five different return-to-work courses in two different colleges in Surrey were chosen. This was deemed to provide the possibility of a range of different opinions that could be analysed in the data analysis.

3. Two main criteria for the choice of the target groups were set out: a) the inclusion of mothers and b) the inclusion of people who had low or no school certificates and who had not spent a long period of time in the educational system. Consequently, they were key people with significant experience, relating to the working hypothesis and focus of this study.

These choices allow a manageable research project.
1.9 The Structure of the Thesis

The following chapters discuss the key concepts and main focus of this research that issue from the established overview of this chapter. The following is a brief introduction to their content:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 2</th>
<th>The establishment of the research context and the construction of the conceptual framework, including the key concepts, of the study.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>A review of relevant literature related to key concepts of the study, as an exploration of, debate on and definition finding process of the key concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>A detailed discussion of research design and justification for chosen methodology. This chapter also sets out the research method chosen for data collection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>It provides the framework for data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>A detailed analysis and description of the general characteristics of the research participants who participated in the empirical research and a classification into two target groups ('returned to work'/'on course').</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>A comprehensive descriptive account of the main findings from the perspectives of the research participants 'on course'. An analysis of the research participants' understandings and perceptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>A comprehensive descriptive account of the main findings from the perspectives of the research participants 'returned-to-work'. An analysis of the research participants' understandings and perceptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>Discussion and summary of the main emergent key findings presented in the chapters 7 and 8.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>Conclusions, implications, drawing on the research findings including reflections on the research; question and methods used to study the topic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.10 Summary

This chapter represents the introduction to the research topic and a justification for the study. It includes the background to the research question and outlines the overall purpose and objectives of the research. This thesis represents a vehicle to capture an understanding of the development of 'tacit knowledge' and 'tacit forms of key competencies'; and having established the main focus and purpose of the study, this chapter leads to the establishment of the research context and the construction of the conceptual framework of the study in the next chapter (see chapter 2).
CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH CONTEXT AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction
Once the research question and working hypothesis had been identified as discussed in the previous chapter, it seemed helpful to establish the broader and the specific research context of the study, and as such "to set the boundaries" (Sandelowski et al., 1989, p.79) for the research.

This chapter consists of two parts. Firstly, it examines the research context and background in which the study is located, and secondly, it addresses the conceptual framework and key concepts of the study, for 'good' research follows a framework developed from prior theory and research, or from thought and rational deduction which serves to clarify the problem and helps to determine the best approach to its solution (Anderson, 1998). The development of this conceptual framework is part of the process of planning and clarifying the research problem and conducting the analysis; as it sets out the key factors and the presumed relationships among them (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This is illustrated in a Venn diagram, see figure 2.1, on page 14.

In this study, the conceptual framework represents a model which allows the researcher to explore the relationship among the key factors in a logical fashion. It determines questions by formulating constituent sub-questions and defines the overall concept being investigated. The research problem and the adjoining central research questions of 'How do individuals experience the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' and 'What does it mean for the individual to develop 'tacit forms of key competencies' provide the basis of the conceptual framework. They are set in a specific research context which is explained next.

2.1 The Research Context
This study is situated within the macro-level of the 'TACITKEY' project (1998-2001) which provided the broad research context and the basis and springboard for this specific research. This study is set furthermore in the context of vocational education and training (VET), of continuing vocational education and training (CVT), of 'lifelong learning' and 'informal learning' (Garrick, 1998). These dimensions of the research context are explained in more detail in the following sections.

2.1.1 Vocational - and Continuing Vocational Education and Training (VET/CVT)
The study is located within the field of VET, more specifically within the field of CVT and HRD which facilitate and support the vocational learning of adults. This field brings together academic contributions from a wide number of different traditions including
vocational pedagogy, industrial sociology, human resource development, educational theory, psychology of learning and related fields (Attwell et al., 1997). From this context, concepts, arguments and debates on domains of knowledge, competence and skills development are extracted in an attempt to address the issue of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies' and the development of 'tacit knowledge' for the purpose of this study.

With regard to VET, the importance of 'tacit knowledge' has only been valued in a rather superficial way, in the past (Brown and Attwell, 1998). To a great part this is subsumed under the heading of 'skills' which are more connected to sensomotoric skills like drilling, welding and using tools in the work process without being aware of using them (Lammont, 1998). Meanwhile, in the context and discussion of 'work-process-knowledge', this approach has been applied to skilled workers facing rather demanding tasks, e.g. in the maintenance of complex machinery in the production process (Fischer and Röben, 2002). Still, the importance of 'tacit knowledge' in seemingly 'simple' tasks, like running a household or doing a 'good' job as a childminder, has not been acknowledged.

2.2 The Background to the Study
My work on the 'TACITKEY' project initiated the desire for gaining a deeper insight into aspects of and a more holistic exploration of the experiences of the individuals on the micro-level of a thesis. An overarching intention of this study is to build on the work I undertook for the 'TACITKEY' research project.

The focus of the 'TACITKEY' research project was directed at improving employment opportunities for unemployed people by enabling them to make use of 'new', so far unknown, skills in a particular sense. The main assumption was that 'implicit' or 'tacit forms of key competencies' could be beneficial for the successful re-entry into new occupational fields of the labour market, stressing occupational mobility. Another assumption was that reliance on those skills could help to create opportunities for self-employment. Moreover, it was analysed in which way CVT curricula refer to 'tacit' competences and if motivating people to rely on their 'tacit' or implicit skills was considered an important aspect of continuing vocational education and training (CVT). On this background, the 'TACITKEY' project aimed at establishing models of good practice of CVT courses that include awareness about their students' 'tacit knowledge'.

2.3 My Motivation for the Research
While working on the 'TACITKEY' project, I felt that I could relate to the research participants and the research topic because I had been in a similar situation. I had also experienced a time out of the labour market due to raising a child and then becoming the
main carer of the household and family myself. This experience as a single mother contributed to my desire to understand the experiences of other parents in this situation.

Whereas the 'TACITKEY' project concentrated on analysing in what respect raising awareness about (the importance of) 'tacit forms of key competencies' would enhance employment opportunities for unemployed people, in terms of enabling them to find work in areas which so far had been inaccessible to them - I was interested in finding out more about how people felt about the period in their life when they were unemployed, still undertaking hard, unpaid work and developing a range of competencies albeit being unrecognised.

In my view, the issue of What people went through in this period of their life was not thoroughly addressed by the focus of the 'TACITKEY' project because the focus did not sufficiently regard and include the individual. This initiated the desire for gaining a deeper insight in aspects of and more holistic exploration of the experiences of the individuals on the micro-level of a thesis. I aimed at understanding this experience of 'tacit' and 'implicit' learning and knowledge development in day-to-day life situations. What does it mean for an individual to develop 'tacit forms of key competencies'? How did people feel, how was the development and 'change' experienced? And, how did people see and value themselves and feel about their situation? These were questions I wanted to explore. Alongside this concern was the desire to identify and analyse the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

My concern for the individual then drew the research focus from the relevance of 'tacit knowledge' for bettering employment opportunities, to the development process of 'tacit forms of key competencies', as a 'lived experience' of the individual. Thus, the overall aim of my study became to study in-depth, the significance and implication of an individual's situation of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

2.4 The Key Concepts in this Study

A Venn diagram (see figure 2.1) represents the key concepts and the central supposition of this study (as explained in chapter 1). It captures the working hypothesis which states that people possess key competencies and knowledge, developed through informal learning situations and work experiences which they are not aware of and which they cannot explicitly name. This knowledge is referred to as 'tacit knowledge' (Polanyi, 1966), 'tacit' skills and competencies which develop over time (Leonard-Barton, 1992) and are acquired through experience (Ravetz, 1971).
The focus of this study is on the experience of the 'tacit' development of key competencies as the central research concept. From this central research concept three main concepts were extracted, the concept of 'tacit knowledge', incorporating implicit and informal knowledge. The concept of 'key competencies' and 'key qualifications', and finally the concept of the 'individual' or learner in his or her manifold learning situations while running the family household. These three inter-linked and interrelated concepts form the conceptual framework and represent in combination the phenomenon of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' with the 'lived experience' (Van Manen, 1990) at its core; while dealing with complex, meaningful problems in a variety of contexts (Berryman, 1989; Lave and Wenger, 1991).

The Venn diagram shows the interrelation of the concepts and an overlapping of areas. The 'core' area of intersection represents the 'focus' of the study as the human experience of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' and the central research concept being a synthesis of all other concepts. The concepts are explained in more detail in the next sections.

2.4.1 The Concept of 'The Individual'
This study values and focuses on the individual as an active individual, an adult learner, developing 'tacit knowledge' and 'tacit forms of key competencies' in informal learning situations. These learning situations are not recognised and acknowledged by the
The individuals furthermore experience an ‘interrupted occupational biography’ and a ‘learning career’ (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 2002), thus the study draws attention not to education or training, but to learning, which is undertaken by individuals (Field, 2000).

In this study, the individual provides the most appropriate locus of experience and analysis from which the connection between the (experience of the) development of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ and the situation of being ‘out of paid work’ and responsible for the family household can be unravelled. The research participant is an adult learner, who embraces a specific and complex context (Usher et al., 1997). This context relates to the position in society this individual has; age and gender play an important role, and because the participants are most of the time settled in different circumstances, their social status (e.g. education, marital status, economic or financial family situation and number of children) does too. In other words, the experience of developing ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ is inscribed in the biography of the research participants (Miller, 2000). With this understanding, the focus of this study needs to include a biographical element, a perspective and methodological approach which locates the development of ‘tacit knowledge’ into the experience and life course of the individual as reasoned for in chapter 4. It furthermore needs to include a detailed analysis of the demographic details and social status of the sample group (research participants) as undertaken in chapter 6.

2.4.2 The Concept of ‘Tacit Knowledge’

With respect to the term ‘tacit knowledge’, Polanyi’s (1966) definition was utilized. Much of the knowledge the research participants use to manage their lives and family households (as inscribed in the working hypothesis, see chapter 1), is acquired in a ‘tacit’ way, implicitly, without intention to learn or awareness of having learned (Eraut, 2000). Polanyi describes this as “we can know more than we can tell” (p.136) which means that there is a level of knowledge which cannot always be put into words. Thus, when using the phrase ‘tacit knowledge’, I refer to something that cannot be easily articulated, something that exists in people’s minds and hands and manifests itself through their actions. Here, skills, know-how and competences are seen embedded in the individual, because they are able to act coherently in a particular situation in order to achieve and accomplish a certain task without being aware of it. Here, “the aim of a skilful performance is achieved by the observation of a set of rules which are not known as such by the person following them” (Polanyi, 1962, p.49). Much of this knowledge is acquired through watching what other people do and by trial and error. People speak of learning “by doing” or by “trial and error” and of “intuition” or “instinct” in this study. Educationalists, sociologists and psychologists refer to this learning without intention or awareness as ‘implicit learning’ or ‘informal learning’ and refer to the knowledge that results from this learning as ‘tacit knowledge’.
'Tacit knowledge' is personal knowledge (Sternberg, 1994), defined as 'know-how' (Kogut and Zander, 1992) or expertise (Achtenhagen, 1992) and is 'taken for granted' (Nelson and Winter, 1982). Therefore, one important aspect in the attempt to portray the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' in this study is to look at experienced-based, implicit or 'tacit' knowledge in contrast to theoretical, explicit knowledge, often called 'know-that'. This aspect provides the starting point for and is investigated in detail in the literature review. The literature review (see chapter 3) will furthermore show that interest in and discussions of 'tacit knowledge' stem from at least three different contexts and perspectives, such as:

- An epistemological perspective (Polanyi and Ryle),
- Questions related to HRD and KM, and
- Questions related to learning theories, eg. work-based and informal learning.

Within these three dimensions the concept of 'tacit knowledge' is discussed in this study.

2.4.3 The Concept of 'Key Competencies'

The concept of 'key competencies' is also rooted in these dimensions and is based on the concept and term of 'Schlüsselkompetenzen' ('key competences') which was first used by Mertens (1974). 'Key competences' are associated with the need to broaden and deepen the understanding of the concept of skills, competences and qualifications and also the self-understanding of vocational education and training in Germany.

'Key competencies' are considered to be holistic, complex and integrated; a combination of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values which can be acquired formally, informally and (non-)intentionally across many life contexts and situations. This understanding is a main result of the literature review and evoked the development of a five-dimensioned model, the 'starfish-model' (see chapter 3, part 2) as a generic approach on competencies. This model includes the importance for the individual and pays greater attention to practical, experience based and implicit competences than other existing models.

Still, as the literature review reveals, concepts of competence and qualification are often poorly defined in the literature (Ellström, 1997) and a general consensus seems to be lacking concerning the meaning of these concepts. Key competencies, for example, have different meanings. Whereas in the UK competence is seen as the ability to perform a series of pre-defined external tasks to a given standard, in Germany competence is an internal quality of the individual relating to both their knowledge and skills but also to their (occupational) identity (Attwell, 1997).
According to one view, competence is considered as an attribute of the individual, a kind of human capital or human resource that can be translated into productivity. From another perspective, competence is defined in terms of skill requirements of certain work tasks related to a certain job. Ellström (1994) refers to the term competence as capacities and Eraut (1993) and Evans (1998) speak of ‘capabilities’ as they emphasise that individuals have a capacity to act and reflect upon the (work) environment, thereby shaping it (Heidegger, 1997). These concepts and different understandings are analysed in-depth in the literature review in the next chapter.

2.5 Interplay between the Conceptual Framework and the Literature Review

Outlining the conceptual framework in this chapter contributed to clarifying the key concepts and areas of interest which stem from the central research concept of the study. The key concepts were investigated in the literature review and outlining and defining them had an impact on the research process as reviewing the literature opened up further, overlapping aspects which initiated a constant interplay between the conceptual framework and the defined areas of interest. This interplay was very useful as it allowed the research process and myself to progress and evolve. And, most importantly, it provided a ‘safety-net’, where I could return to the original research problem and question, and to the focus of the study.

As such, the interplay strengthened the scope and focus of the literature review. First, it fostered the identification of previous research on ‘tacit knowledge’. Second, it helped to develop a more concise and inclusive working definition, understanding and model of the concept of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ which is explained in the following. Because this study talks about knowledge, competence and skills development in a more holistic and inclusive way, it became apparent that the general field of literature left a gap in this respect. Consequently -for the purpose of the study- a broader and more inclusive model of competencies had to be developed. Merten’s (1974) concept of ‘Schlüsselkompetenzen’ provided the basis for the development of a more inclusive model of competencies, the ‘starfish model’ (as reasoned for in chapter 3, part 2). This model was developed as a basis for heuristic investigation of the research participants’ biographical experiences (Evans, 2001). In an overall attempt to render possible the exploration, description and analysis of people’s experience of developing ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ and as a means to identify the developed ‘tacit forms of key competencies’.

2.6 Previous Research on ‘Tacit Knowledge’

Previous research has predominantly looked at knowledge as an issue, or part of the process of knowledge creation and knowledge management in work organisations (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Davenport and Prusak, 1998) etc. The literature review (see chapter 3)
reveals that the Anglo-American debate about 'tacit knowledge' has focused much attention on the importance of 'tacit knowledge' for sustaining companies' competitiveness (Steward, 1997; Lam, 2000) with regard to 'knowledge management' and 'organisational learning' (Vera and Crossan, 2004; Senker, 1993). There is a significant body of ethnographic research on the development of 'know-how' on the job (Kusterer, 1978; Harper, 1987). Here, 'tacit knowledge' is widely acknowledged to be an important component of technological innovation (Senker, 1995; McLean, 2005). This recent interest of HRD in 'tacit knowledge' is clearly economically driven; and a large part of research concerns ways to unblock the 'hidden potential' or 'tacit knowledge' of individuals in direct relation to HRD and Human Capital Theory (Drucker, 1993; Jones and Macpherson, 2006).

Overall, there are very few attempts to empirically research 'tacit knowledge' and skills (Wagner and Sternberg 1987; Lam, 1998; Nestor-Baker, 1999) which most of the time intend to measure (the increase of) 'tacit knowledge', mainly concerning measurable job performance and management (Schön, 1983; Wagner and Sternberg, 1987; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Sternberg, 1999). Outside the organisational context a more mature body on 'tacit knowledge' for instance, the fields of knowledge acquisition and learning (Lundvall and Borras, 1997), individual cognition and education (see Reber, 1993) was identified which was useful for the analytical work of this study. In the field of education and social science interest in 'tacit knowledge', implicit learning and informal learning was expressed in an increasing number of studies (e.g. Eraut, 1995, 1997; Lam, 2000).

The review of the literature and the interplay with the conceptual framework made clear that such acknowledgement and recognition rarely address the level of the individual and leaves out the personal, emotional and challenging implication for the learner. Questions such as 'Why is 'tacit knowledge' important and significant for the individual?' and 'What does it mean for the individual to acquire 'tacit forms of key competencies' were neither addressed in the field of literature nor addressed in previous research.

2.7 Next Necessary Steps of the Study

The study's next steps included moving from the macro-level of the literature review and analysis to a micro-level of the study which helped to intensify the identification and location of 'tacit knowledge'. The micro-level then unrevelled the 'local' and 'deepened' nature and meaning of 'tacit knowledge' of individuals and their acquired 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

Hence, this study then followed two broad objectives: (1) to break down the theoretical level of the concepts of 'tacit knowledge' to a conspicuous level. This meant to substantiate the meaning of 'tacit knowledge' and, for the purpose of the study, to
create' an operational definition of 'tacit knowledge' and 'tacit forms of key competencies', as undertaken in the next chapter. And (2) to use the conceptual framework as a basis from which to identify 'tacit forms of key competencies' and to analyse how men and women acknowledge, recognise, build, maintain and make use of their 'tacit forms of key competencies' in the continuance of the study.

2.8 The Need to Define Certain Terms for the Purpose of the Study

Consequently, the study of people's experience of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' requires clarification and the formulation of preliminary working definitions of the terms drawn from the conceptual framework (at this point) before embarking on the literature review in the next chapter. This is undertaken next.

The experience of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'. This encompasses the crucial experience of 'staying at home' of the individuals, out of 'paid work', looking after the children and the family household. Their role was to manage day-to-day life in general, with a huge range of responsibilities; ranging from shopping to financial matters, but also to organising family activities like outings, birthdays, silver weddings etc. Here, the experience is analysed in terms of competence development, awareness, confidence, emotions, feelings, values and opinions, accompanying the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

The term 'development' or 'developing' creates a picture representing the interpretations of the individuals. It includes the whole process of the 'implicit' learning situation of the individual. Emotions, hopes, beliefs, perceptions and values expressed and reflected upon by the research participants define this implicit or 'tacit' learning experience.

The term household or family household describes the individual's family situation. The majority of research participants lived as a family with children and partner or spouse, some were single parents and a few were singles with no children. All research participants experienced the same situation as they had to manage and run their 'family life' day after day, with the difference in situation.

The term 'tacit forms of key competencies' describes the 'tacit' dimension of the development of competencies, skills and knowledge of individuals, because people are not aware of their skills and competencies they possess. 'Tacit forms of key competencies' are developed in a variety of situations; individuals work hard and are exposed to a variety of learning situations while raising children, managing the family household and their lives. But, the work and learning they undertake is unrecognised, not paid and has no status at all. The term furthermore indicates the existence of a learning situation of which the
research participants are not aware. In view of this, the competencies, skills and knowledge are defined and termed as 'tacit forms of key competencies' because pure 'tacit knowledge' cannot be articulated and remains inexplicable and intangible (Polanyi, 1966). In consequence, for the purpose of this study a pragmatic understanding of 'tacit knowledge and skills' is adopted, which needs to be specified by the empirical results. The working concept is therefore defined as: 'Tacit forms of key competencies' have been acquired in a (rather) non-formal way, should be understood as hidden personal abilities which individuals are not immediately aware of, and relate to a developed starfish model' (see ‘TACITKEY’ project, first common report, 2000, p.69).

The term competencies is used rather than the term competences, because seeing competence just as knowledge and skills is too limiting. For the purpose of this study a broader and more inclusive model of competencies had to be developed.

2.9 Summary

The aim of this chapter has been to outline the conceptual framework that set the scene for the research and which has been used as a point of departure for the theoretical and empirical analyses of the study's key concepts, the concept of 'tacit forms of key competencies', including 'tacit knowledge' and key competencies. It has outlined the connection between the key concepts and provided the basis for the establishment and alignment of the main focus on the 'tacit' learning experience of the individual and the learner's conception of it.

Outlining the conceptual framework has helped to clarify the focus and research context of this study and to examine and define areas of the key concepts. It furthermore situates the study into the discourses of these concepts, which are discussed in the next chapter, the literature review. This discussion is the next necessary step to undertake because there is considerable conceptual and terminological confusion concerning basic concepts like competence, skills, and 'tacit knowledge' as the literature review highlights. The process of the 'interplay between the conceptual framework and the literature review' (see page 17) led to further development and theorisation of the generated conceptual framework.

Drawing on the conceptual framework, the following questions are addressed and examined through the literature review in the next chapter: What is meant by 'tacit knowledge'? and What is meant by 'key competencies'? and how are these concepts discussed in this field of study?
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW - Part 1

3.0 Introduction

Research into the development of 'tacit knowledge' and 'key competenc(i)es' requires clarification of the key concepts and the terminology used in this study. Having established the research focus, questions and research aims in chapters 1 and 2, a search and assimilation of literature relevant to the questions of what kind of knowledge and what kind of learning are concerned in the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' becomes necessary.

This chapter offers a theoretical review of the literature from various disciplines in relation to the study's two key concepts of a) 'tacit knowledge', and b) 'key competencies'. The literature review highlights that knowledge has both explicit and 'tacit' dimensions (Jensen, 2005; Nightingale, 2003; Polanyi, 1983) and shows that when communication of some of the 'tacit' dimensions is facilitated, then these become explicit and therefore tangible. In doing so, a framework for the identification and analysis of the developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' of adults is provided and a point of departure for research into 'tacit knowledge' is established, which reaches on a continuous basis into the methodology and analysis of the data, the experiences of the research participants.

This chapter is presented in two parts. The first part explores the nature of 'tacit knowledge' by drawing on Polanyi (1958, 1966) and reviews literature relating to the main theories and definitions of 'tacit knowledge' in the fields of philosophy and sociology, management and business, HRD and economics and education and training. An overview of the crossing of boundaries regarding the concept of 'tacit knowledge' and inter-related concepts and theories of knowledge development is provided in a mind map in figure 3.1. The second part consists of the review of the nature of and debate on key skills, skills, key competencies and qualifications within the context of (continuing) vocational education in the UK and Germany. The conducted search of the literature confirmed that pure 'tacit knowledge' is indescribable and cannot be articulated; this necessitated (in this chapter) a) the formulation of a working definition of the developed 'tacit' knowledges, competencies and skills, and b) the creation of a model encompassing an enhanced understanding of key competencies, incorporating the acquired 'tacit forms of key competencies'; because existing concepts were not satisfying enough and did not include people's personal situations, given the study's emphasis on (interrupted occupational) biographies (Evans et al., 2004) and 'learning careers' (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 2002, 1997). These two measures contributed to rendering possible the explication and discussion of the 'tacit' learning experience.
Figure 3.1: Relating the concepts of Tacit Knowledge, Work Process Knowledge, Implicit-, Informal- and Situated Learning
3.1 The Process of Developing 'Tacit Knowledge'

The process of developing 'tacit knowledge' lies at the very heart of this study. It is based on the fulfillment of daily activities and routines (Scott, 2001) and involves an unconscious internalisation of learning (Manwaring and Wood, 1985). The research participants' development of 'tacit knowledge' is so personal and deeply familiar that when they are asked to describe how they know what to do, they often find it difficult to explain it in words (Ambrosini and Bowman, 2001; Eraut, 2000). Not being able to explain the 'tacit' learning experience is described by Polanyi (1962; 1966) as 'knowing more than we can tell' and Leonard and Sensiper (1998) confirm "we can often know more than we realize" (p.114). The title of the study 'Competent and Unaware of It' captures this phenomenon by embracing the difficulty of being aware of and sharing what is familiar; because 'the better you know something, the less you are aware of knowing it' (Barer-Stein, 1989).

A whole range of literature exists that delves into 'tacit knowledge' development where tacit learning and implicit learning are often used in the same contexts. 'Tacit' or implicit learning is seen as the acquisition of knowledge independently of conscious attempts to learn and in the absence of explicit knowledge about what was learned (Reber, 1995). It takes place almost spontaneously in response to recent, current or imminent situations without any time being specifically set aside for it (Eraut, 2000).

A core assumption of these arguments is that 'tacit' learning is a fundamental, 'root' process, which is inextricably interwoven with experiences (Choo, 1998), and situational contexts (Orlikowski, 2002). It is associated with intuition and 'common sense' (Hegarty, 2000) and integrated into routine behaviours and practices (Lazaric and Raybout, 2004). Such knowledge cannot be easily articulated or communicated (Eraut, 2000; Polanyi, 1966). The remainder of this chapter addresses the main definitions of 'tacit knowledge' and the issues inherent in attempting to render this knowledge explicit and tangible.

3.2 The Concept of 'Tacit Knowledge'

The concept of 'Tacit Knowledge' is complex and multifaceted, drawing from various perspectives and disciplines. It is often seen as a type of knowledge that is not easily articulated or transmitted to others, and is closely tied to personal experience and expertise. The concept of 'tacit knowledge' has been the subject of extensive research in various fields, including management, organizational theory, and cognitive science.

The development of 'tacit knowledge' is a dynamic process that involves the integration of new experiences and information into existing knowledge structures. This process is often characterized by a sense of 'flow,' in which individuals are fully immersed in their work and are able to perform tasks with a sense of ease and efficiency.

The concept of 'tacit knowledge' is closely related to the idea of 'expertise,' which refers to the level of proficiency that an individual or group has developed in a particular domain. Expertise is often characterized by a deep understanding of the domain, as well as the ability to apply this knowledge in novel and creative ways.

The development of 'tacit knowledge' is also closely tied to the concept of 'learning,' which refers to the process of acquiring new skills and knowledge. Learning can take place through a variety of methods, including formal education, on-the-job training, and self-directed learning. The development of 'tacit knowledge' is often characterized by a sense of 'unconscious competence,' in which individuals are able to perform tasks automatically and without conscious effort.

The concept of 'tacit knowledge' has implications for a wide range of fields, including education, business, and policy-making. Efforts to develop and share 'tacit knowledge' are important for the advancement of knowledge and innovation, as well as for the development of strong and resilient communities.
order to grasp the nature of 'tacit knowledge', Polanyi's (1966) concept is outlined next and will be related to contemporary concepts and theories of knowledge and learning.

3.2.1 'The Tacit Dimension' (Michael Polanyi, 1966)
Polanyi's (1966) theory is used as springboard for the examination of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'. He refers to 'tacit knowledge' when stating 'we know more than we can tell and we can know nothing without relying upon those things which we may not be able to tell' (Polanyi, 1966, p. 4). He argues that when we acquire skills and competencies, we acquire a corresponding understanding which cannot be articulated - therefore, all our knowledge rests in a 'tacit' dimension. This explains how and why we can 'sense' that 'something is wrong' and why we take things 'for granted'. An example are the intuitive, internalised (Berry, 1987), diagnostic competencies of medical professionals (Patel et al., 1999) which show that 'tacit knowledge' is primarily seen through the actions of an individual rather than through specific explanations of what that individual knows.

The significance of Polanyi's writing The Tacit Dimension (1966) lies in its articulated alternative to the prevailing objectivist epistemology which characterises scientific and philosophical thought (Chia, 2003; Lam, 2000). According to the objectivist view, authentic knowledge is acquired when the 'subjective', emotional, aesthetic, moral and religious elements in knowing are strictly and rigorously eliminated (Fenwick, 2003), because such elements taint or distort knowing and the derivative knowledge by introducing elements of ambiguity and commitment. In contrast to this view, Polanyi argues that there is an inescapable and essential personal element structuring all knowledge, whether the case be natural science or human science. Polanyi calls such knowledge 'personal' because this knowledge rests in a 'tacit' dimension and contains our passionate commitment to it. This highlights my research interest: what type of knowledge is created and how do people acquire this personal knowledge - these 'tacit' skills and competencies? In other words, this study is concerned with what Polanyi calls 'personal knowledge' and as such, with the committed process of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

apprentice. Here, learning takes place by involvement in deep relationships rather than by formal teaching. Such 'tacit' learning is rooted in action, commitment and a specific context (Giunipero et al., 1999), and relies upon absorbing experiences, upon 'learning-by-doing' (Brown and Duguid, 2001), and 'trial and error'.

3.2.2 Approaching and Defining 'Tacit Knowledge'

In defining 'tacit knowledge', Nonaka's (1994) distinction into explicit and 'tacit' knowledge is applied. Explicit knowledge can be encoded, written down, and explained. It is easily codified and conveyed to others; it can "be communicated from its possessor to another person in symbolic form and the recipient of the communication becomes as much 'in the know' as the originator" (Winter, 1987, p. 171). Explicit knowledge is also referred to as 'articulated knowledge' (Hedlund, 1994), 'articulable knowledge' (Winter, 1987), 'verbal knowledge' (Corsini, 1987), 'propositional knowledge' (Kolb, 1984) and 'declarative knowledge' (Kogut and Zander, 1992).

'Tacit knowledge' is knowledge which cannot be articulated and is substantially more difficult to write down, to formalise (Nonaka, 1991), to codify, and to convey, since interpretation, cognition, multiple meanings, as well as trust, politics, and emotions are crucial to its understanding (Bapuji and Crossan, 2005; Inkpen and Tsang, 2005; Orlikowski, 2002; Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow, 2003; Tsoukas, 2005). It is more experiential, subjective and private (Polanyi, 1966) or personal (Boiral, 2002; Sternberg, 1994). It is embedded, embodied, embraced, encoded and encultured knowledge (Lakomski, 2001; Blackler, 1995) and enables us to take actions that are situated in particular social settings (Suchman, 1987).

'Tacit knowledge' derives from an individuals' personal experiences, knowledges, and epistemology (Lynch, Leo and Downing, 2006; Pea, 1987); it is taken for granted, and is deeply imbedded in the individual and interwoven with the individual and his or her actions (Nelson and Winter, 1982). The constructivist approach suggests that, rather than learned, knowledge is constructed through social interaction (Hidde, 2005) in a specific socio-
linked with 'know-how' (Corsini, 1987; Kogut and Zander, 1992) because it encompasses technical skills (Nonaka, 1991) and is typically acquired in work processes (Spender, 1996).

In sum, the concept of 'tacit knowledge' is a multi-faceted one, one that is used in many different contexts, for many different purposes and with different associations. The conceptual framework pays particular attention to three theoretical approaches to 'tacit knowledge' which are outlined next.

3.3 Different Theoretical Approaches to 'Tacit Knowledge'

Three different contexts and perspectives, which account for the scope of the study, are discussed in the following regarding the discussion of 'tacit knowledge' or 'implicit knowledge'. First, an epistemological perspective. This perspective is linked prominently with Polanyi (1966) and Ryle (1949) and concerns the nature of knowledge; e.g. comparing propositional knowledge (know that) to procedural knowledge (know-how).

Second, the context of HRD and KM. Here, 'tacit knowledge' is seen as an important resource for companies (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995), because it is often embedded in organisational processes, practices, and norms (Collis and Winnips, 2002; Davenport and Prusak, 1998).

A third approach is connected with questions of learning (theories); e.g. work-based learning (Fuller and Unwin, 2003). This approach refers to implicit, informal and non-formal learning (Coffield, 2000; Eraut, 2000) in which competencies, skills, routines and practices are acquired informally and unconsciously (Lewicki et al., 1992). It links 'tacit knowledge' to expert knowledge, (Schön, 1983), to developmental knowledge (Ellström, 1997) and 'life-world becoming' (Barnett, 1994); combining explicit and 'tacit' knowledge. This approach encompasses two levels, the individual, who actively creates new knowledge and the social context. Further research has concentrated on the relevance of learning processes and different modes of cognition (Eraut, 2000).
3.3.1 The Epistemological Perspective: Explicit versus 'Tacit' Knowledge

Polanyi (1966) and Ryle (1949) seek to understand the nature of knowledge and learning from a pluralistic epistemological perspective, acknowledging that there are many forms or types of human knowledge (Spender, 1998). The authors distinguish between 'tacit' and explicit (types of) knowledge, expressed as 'knowing that' and 'knowing how', or in German 'Wissen' and 'Können'. While acknowledging that many nuances exist between these two stances, the way of distinguishing between declarative knowledge, e.g. explicit statements, facts, concepts, principles and rules ('knowing that') and procedural knowledge, e.g. practical, experience-based knowledge, procedures and strategies ('knowing how'), (see table 3.1), a separation of 'thinking' from 'doing' (Ryle, 1949), does useful analytic work; since the purpose of this study is to explore and manifest the 'tacit dimension' of knowledge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Declarative knowledge</th>
<th>Procedural knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.e. explicit statements and rules</td>
<td>e.g. practical, experienced-based knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Knowing that'</td>
<td>'Knowing-how'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Non-Personal knowledge</td>
<td>Personal knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.e. competence embodied in technical or social systems. E.g. organisational routines and rituals (Resnick, 1991)</td>
<td>i.e. competence that can only be acquired and possessed by individual persons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Models of teaching and learning</td>
<td>Models of teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on instruction and/ or written material</td>
<td>Emphasises the importance of situated knowing and learning based on models of apprenticeship and participation in social practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Distinction between declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge

'Know-how' refers to procedural knowledge, such as a skill or personal competence (Ryle, 1949), for instance knowing how to swim. One could have such knowledge without being able to explain what it is one knows in such a case. As such, 'know-how' shows a skilful performance, a 'capacity for action' (Senge, 1990), without explicitly reflecting on the rules
This dualistic conception concerning the character of knowledge, its acquisition and use results in a difference in main methods for the development and accumulation of the two knowledge forms (explicit and 'tacit' knowledge). Explicit knowledge can be generated through logical deduction and formal study; here models of learning and teaching are based on instruction and/or written material. 'Tacit knowledge' is based on action and can only be developed through practical experience in the relevant context (Hatch and Mowery, 1998), i.e. 'learning-by-doing' (Wood, 2002). Here, models of teaching and learning emphasise the importance of situated knowing and learning based on participation in social practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

In essence, 'tacit knowledge' underlies skilled or expert performance, e.g. 'knowing how', whereas cognitive competences relate to 'knowing that' and declarative knowledge. Neuweg (1999) has contrasted this distinction as the 'tacit knowing view' and 'cognitive view' in table 3.2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive View</th>
<th>Tacit Knowing View</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'Know-that' as base for cognition</td>
<td>'Know-how' as base for cognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'declarative' and 'procedural' knowledge: definitions, facts, theories, technologies, rules</td>
<td>'skills' and 'connoisseurship'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intelligent action as application of explicit or explicable knowledge, practise follows theory</td>
<td>explicit knowledge as result of reflection on intelligent action, practice precedes theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>static idea of knowledge: 'knowledge' as mental structure</td>
<td>dynamic idea of knowledge: 'knowing' as act of perception, making judgement and action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>base of abilities can be clearly described at least by a third person</td>
<td>can not or not completely or not appropriately be articulated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subject in distance to the contents of it's knowledge</td>
<td>personal, 'incorporation' of knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>idea of enlightened mind</td>
<td>idea of common sense and practical wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abstract, standardised, non-flexible</td>
<td>context-related, situated, highly adaptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing on knowledge through lessons</td>
<td>passing on knowledge by socialisation in the context of expert-culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspect:</td>
<td>Perspective: Cognitive - Rational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Knowledge base</td>
<td>Theoretical/ declarative Explicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Type of tasks/situation</td>
<td>Well-defined/ linear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Information for action</td>
<td>Certain, Emotionally neutral Objective data (quantitative, measurable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Information processing</td>
<td>Analytical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Communication/ social interaction</td>
<td>Instrumental, Impersonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Mode of learning</td>
<td>Formal education and training Instruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3: Different Aspects of Perspectives on Competence and Work (Source: Ellström, 1997)

Outlining these two approaches is useful analytic work in terms of defining the existing split of thinking and acting - the Cartesian dualism of mind and body. This dualism furthermore impacts on the choice of the research methodology (see chapter 4).

### 3.3.2 The Context of Human Resources Development (HRD)

'Tacit knowledge' has received increased attention among human capital theorists and economists (Sternberg and Hedlund, 2002; Horak, 2001). Competences and knowledge are viewed as valuable resources in companies and economies (Thurow, 2000; Drucker, 1993), with 'tacit knowledge' sustaining the knowledge-base (Collis and Winnips, 2002; Lindley...
knowledge' is meanwhile linked to success in management (Dixon, 2000; Wagner and Sternberg, 1988) and knowledge management (Swan, 2003; Davenport and Prusak, 1998).

An important component of organisational knowledge is the 'tacit knowledge' that workers possess - which needs to be made explicit. The conversion of 'tacit' into explicit knowledge is shown in Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) model of 'knowledge conversion' (see figure 3.2). It suggests that 'tacit knowledge' becomes explicit through the process of externalisation which occurs during social interaction. Here, knowledge is created through the dynamic interaction between 'tacit' and explicit knowledge, continuously transforming or converting one into the other.

![Figure 3.2: The cycle of knowledge conversion (adapted from Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995)](image)

The model distinguishes four modes of knowledge conversion: socialisation (from tacit knowledge to tacit knowledge), externalisation (from tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge), combination (from explicit knowledge to explicit knowledge), and internalisation (from explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge). This process resembles a learning cycle, a 'knowledge spiral' (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995), in which the interaction between 'tacit' and explicit knowledge takes place.
In HRD and KM literature learning is ill-defined and unlinked to educational theory (Spender, 1996) and few studies investigate the individuality of learning behind the actual processes that create ‘tacit knowledge’ in organisations (Stacey, 2003). But, for the purpose of this study richer notions of learning need to be included. Such notions can be found in the context of work-based learning, work process knowledge, developmental and informal learning, and in discussions relating to learning theories. These will be discussed next.

### 3.3.3 The Learning Perspective

The observed transition towards a ‘knowledge society’ indicates a need for people to be able to deal with changes in their lives, to learn ‘lifelong’ (Griffin, 2001), and thus to develop wider skills, competencies and knowledge (Rychen et al., 2003). Further changes in working life, new organisational concepts and new product and process technologies have put a strong focus and demand on the qualification process of and the occupational competence of the work force (Garrick, 1998). Theses changes have led to an increased interest in HRD, in work-based education and training, in work process knowledge, and implicit and informal learning (Enos et al., 2003; Eraut, 2000). They involve informal and non-formal forms of learning and participation, and require a broader understanding of and approach to learning and competence development.

Thus, ‘tacit knowledge’ and skills have new importance as attention in VET development and lifelong learning has increasingly been focused on work process knowledge (Ellström, 2005), socially situated learning and on the embedded nature of key competences (Griffin, 2001; Evans, 2000). Consequently, during the last decade, an increasing number of studies have emerged that focus on informal or ‘tacit’ aspects in work-based learning (Chaiklin and Lave, 1993; Engeström and Middleton, 1996). Further, contextual (Järvinen and Poikela, 2001), situational and collective aspects (Boud, 2003; Ellström, 1997) have been emphasized, as well as approaches that underline the need to develop coherent and comprehensive systems encompassing various forms and arenas of learning (Billet, 2001).
3.4 Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning (WBL) has become a decisive factor in companies and is looked at as a source of creativity and innovation (Hyland, 2003). The development of knowledge and skills is important for individual development: It encourages creativity and innovation and helps to build a cohesive society (DfEE, 2000). WBL is seen as the build-up of a substantive knowledge base, or expertise (Achtenhagen, 1992) of people. It pre-supposes a combination of practical and theoretical knowledge (Svensson et al., 2000) and puts the individual and the learning process at the centre. Contemporary research and discourses centre on the interrelation of work, learning and knowledge, as shown in figure 3.3, where the conceptualisation of work-based learning and vocational knowledge includes informal and tacit forms of learning (Rainbird, 2001), because it takes place at both formal and non-formal levels within the workplace (Eraut et al., 1998).

Figure 3.3: Interrelation of work, learning and knowledge

WBL can be distinguished from traditional classroom learning in certain ways (Raelin, 2000). Firstly, work-based learning contains a reflection on work practices; it is not merely an acquisition of a set of technical skills, but a case of reflection and learning from experience (Evans et al., 2003). Secondly, it is based on action and problem solving within a working environment, and thus is concerned with real live projects and challenges to individuals. And, thirdly, WBL sees the creation of knowledge as a shared and collective activity (Wenger, 2004). In sum, WBL is based on dealing with real tasks, identifying and
the role of implicit learning in the acquisition of knowledge, competences and capabilities. Further, to a re-examination of the distinction between ‘know-how’ and ‘know-that’, because both concepts are involved in the development of human capabilities and competencies. This is demonstrated in the next sections.

3.5 Implicit Learning
Implicit learning and ‘tacit’ learning are often used in the same contents. Implicit learning is defined as the acquisition of knowledge that takes place independently of conscious attempts to learn and largely in the absence of explicit knowledge about what was acquired (Berry, 1997; Underwood, 1996). Implicit knowledge or ‘tacit knowing’ can be taken as a synonym for intuitive performance and ‘unconscious knowing how’ (Easterby-Smith and Lyles, 2003). Schön (1987) uses the term ‘knowing-in-action’ to explain that it refers “to the sorts of know-how we reveal in our intelligent action – publicly observable, physical performances like riding a bicycle and private operations like instant analysis of a balance sheet. In both cases, the knowing is in the action. We reveal it by our spontaneous, skilful execution of the performance; and we are characteristically unable to make it verbally explicit” (p.25). Schön links his theory to Polanyi’s (1958) ‘personal knowledge’ where ‘know-how’ displays skilful performance, especially in work processes.

3.6 Work Process Knowledge
Work process knowledge (WPK) is often acquired in and required for successful performance in work processes (Cooke, 2003; Fischer, 2001). Integrally linked are the ideas of lifelong learning and ‘tacit knowledge’ (Boreham and Lammont, 2001) because much WPK is ‘tacit’, due to being embodied in personal experience (Boreham, 2000). The ‘tacit’ dimension of WPK can be found especially in actions and knowledge of how to deal with critical situations and unforeseen events in the workplace.

WPK is related to concepts of competence and qualifications that stress the idea that learning processes not only include cognitive, but also affective, personal and social factors.
The concept of WPK involves an understanding of the work process (Fischer, 2001); it therefore incorporates both concepts of knowledge: *procedural knowledge* and *declarative knowledge*. WPK represents a synthesis of the relationship between explicit and 'tacit knowledge' and bridges the divide between the traditional dualist model of thought-and-action; because competent action entails 'the double operation of considering and executing', which is "a bit of theory and then ... a bit of practice" (Ryle, 1949, p.30).

### 3.7 Knowledge Integration- Combining 'Knowing' and 'Doing'

The prevailing distinction between 'knowing-that'/academic competence, representing formal thought and cognitive interaction and 'knowing-how'/operational competence representing work and action is shown by Barnett (1994) (see table 3.4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Knowing-that</th>
<th>Operational Knowing-how</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thought</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written communication</td>
<td>Oral communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>Physical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-making</td>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge as product</td>
<td>Knowledge as process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value-free</td>
<td>Value-laden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline-based</td>
<td>Issue-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept-based</td>
<td>Task-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pure</td>
<td>Applied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposition-based learning</td>
<td>Experiential learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unitised</td>
<td>Holistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disinterested</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4: Distinction of 'know that' and 'know how' (Barnett, 1994, p. 48/49)

Barnett (1994) argues that both positions need to be interwoven, because both forms do not exist in pure segregated forms. In his view, *thought* and *action* have to be brought together which forms an interwoven new notion of competence, which he terms *life-world*
world) becoming; through experience and the fulfillment of demands in the life-world, learners become themselves. Barnett explains that both conceptions of competence (know that and know how), alone, are impoverished. His alternative conception of competence is represented in the third right-hand column of table 3.5, labelled 'Life-world becoming'. 'Life-world becoming' embraces the total world of the experiences of human beings. It provides a basis for understanding and an epistemology which involves 'reflective knowing'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Operational Competence</th>
<th>Academic Competence</th>
<th>Life-world becoming</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>Know how</td>
<td>Know that</td>
<td>Reflective knowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situations</td>
<td>Defined pragmatically</td>
<td>Defined by</td>
<td>Open definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>intellectual field</td>
<td>(use of multiple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>approaches)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Propositions</td>
<td>Dialogue/ Argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Experiential</td>
<td>Propositional</td>
<td>Meta-learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Disciplinary</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Truthfulness</td>
<td>Consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary</td>
<td>Organisational norms</td>
<td>Norms of</td>
<td>Practicalities of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>intellectual</td>
<td>discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>field</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critique</td>
<td>For better practical</td>
<td>For better cognitive</td>
<td>For better practical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>effectiveness</td>
<td>understanding</td>
<td>understanding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5: Table of comparison (Barnett, 1994, p. 179).

'Life-world becoming' furthermore considers other human concerns such as aesthetic sensitiveness and understanding. It is a powerful concept that combines 'action', 'thought' and 'tacit knowledge' as a way of 'being' and acting in the world. In applying Barnett's view to (tacit) learning, an alternative view to traditional human competence development, including self-construction and -reflection is offered.

3.8 Informal learning
To be able to reflect on one's own experiences in relation to a broader context relates to informal learning and to a wide range of concepts, such as learning from experience.
Informal learning takes place all the time and in all places, in the workplace (Marsick and Watkins, 1990; Dale and Bell, 1999), in the community (McGiveney, 1999) - which is usually unplanned by the learner. Whereas formal learning is seen to take place in educational institutions, informal learning occurs outside and 'beyond the school walls' (Coffield, 2000). It is a “lifelong process by which every individual acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposures to the environment - at home, at work, at play: from example and attitude of friends and families; from travel, reading newspapers and books; or by listening to the radio or viewing films or television” (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974, p.8).

Individuals engage in informal, tacit and implicit learning, and thus develop knowledge and competencies, in a lifelong learning process which takes place independently of and with or without conscious effort. This is especially important for adult learners and people who have left compulsory education, e.g. the individuals involved in this study. Coffield (2000) strongly suggests that "informal learning should no longer be regarded as an inferior form of learning ... it needs to be seen as fundamental, necessary and valuable in its own right, at times directly relevant to employment and at other times not relevant at all" (p.8).

Both quotations are highly relevant to this study as they summarise and point to the quintessence of the discussion in this chapter about 'tacit knowledge' so far. They add a richer understanding to 'tacit' and informal learning and acknowledge all types of learning environments, including the research participants' 'life environment' (McGivney, 1999), in which individuals engage in while developing all their ('tacit') knowledge. These richer and wider definitions of learning and knowledge provide a platform for the learning processes of individuals (in general and) in this study.

Eraut et al. (1998) propose instead non-formal learning; their conception of non-formal learning is explained in more detail in the next sections.
that its colloquial application as a descriptor of learning contexts may have little to do with learning per se” (p. 2). His developed typology of non-formal learning (see table 3.6) introduces a time-related dimension (past, current and future) as a further dimension of non-formal learning. The typology is based on a combination of the dimensions of 'time of stimulus' and 'level of intention/ awareness':

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of Stimulus</th>
<th>Implicit Learning</th>
<th>Reactive Learning</th>
<th>Deliberative Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past Episode(s)</td>
<td>Implicit linkage of past memories with current experience</td>
<td>Brief near spontaneous reflection on past episodes, communications, events, experiences</td>
<td>Review of past actions, communications, events, experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Experience</td>
<td>A selection from experience enters the memory</td>
<td>Incidental noting of facts, opinions, impressions, ideas. Recognition of learning opportunities</td>
<td>Engagement in decision-making, problem-solving, planned informal learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future behaviour of previous experiences</td>
<td>Unconscious effect of previous experiences</td>
<td>Being prepared for emergent learning opportunities</td>
<td>Planned learning goals, planned learning opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.6: A Typology of Non-Formal Learning (Eraut, 2000)

In this concept, “at one extreme there is the now widely recognised phenomenon of implicit learning, at the other there is the ‘deliberative learning’ with time specifically set aside for that purpose” (Eraut, 2000, p.115). The first extreme captures exactly the situation of the research participants. Eraut now adds an additional category to describe situations where learning is explicit but takes place almost spontaneously in response to recent, current or imminent situations without any time being specifically set aside for it. He calls this category ‘reactive learning’. The three dimensions of 'time of stimulus' are interlinked because actions can only be 'explained' in view of the accumulated experience of several episodes and actions which happened in the past. These combine and form a knowledge-base which influences and enables future actions. As such, non-formal learning...
‘Tacit understanding’ is mostly related to people or situations. It means the gathering of knowledge about another person from a series of encounters and quite often, it is an incidental side-effect. Such knowledge is part of one's taken-for-granted understanding of that person. ‘Tacit knowledge in action’ refers to a great deal of experiential learning. It is ‘routinised’, where actors no longer need to think about what they are doing, because they have done it so many times before; like changing gear when driving a car, but also to complex skills like reading” (Eraut, 2000, p. 123).

Here, two apparently opposite processes can be identified: a) experiential learning renders possible the explication of knowledge through reflection on experiences, which might otherwise remain in episodic memory and be used only tacitly. And, b) routinisation whereby explicit procedural knowledge is converted into ‘tacit knowledge’ through repetition. Neither can be found in their pure form. Eraut (2000) summarises that ‘tacit knowledge’ may be acquired, used or inferred in the following situations:

- Knowledge acquired by implicit learning of which the knower is unaware;
- Knowledge constructed from the aggregation of episodes in long-term memory;
- Knowledge which enables rapid, intuitive understanding or response;
- Knowledge inferred as implicit theories in action, personal constructs, schemes etc.
- Knowledge entailed in transferring knowledge from one situation to another; and
- Knowledge embedded in taken-for-granted activities, perceptions and norms.

Eraut’s interest in ‘tacit knowledge’ and non-formal learning is based on an analysis of ‘professional knowledge’ which represents an overarching frame of reference that incorporates a common understanding of ‘tacit knowledge’.

3.10 The Nature of (Professional) Knowledge

Interest in ‘tacit’ and implicit knowledge and in implicit and non-formal learning has evoked analysis of forms of knowledge, embracing expert and professional knowledge and with respect to the ways in which expertise can be acquired (Barnett, 1994). In his attempt to analyse professional knowledge, Eraut (1994) tried to ascertain the personal knowledge
Different types of knowledge and modes of cognition are integrated into professional performance in ways that are difficult to unravel, either conceptually or empirically. The ’Skill Acquisition Model’ of Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) is used to describe and interpret professional action and competence and its acquisition through five stages of skills acquisition on the way from 1) novice, to 2) advanced beginner, 3) competent, 4) proficient and 5) expert, culminating in expertise; bringing together situational understanding, routinised action and decision-making. This model is based on learning from experience and on 'tacit knowledge' and intuition.

‘Tacit knowledge’ appears within this model “in three different forms; as tacit understanding, tacit procedures and tacit rules:
- Situational understanding is being developed through all five stages, based largely on experience and remaining mainly tacit;
- Standard, routinised procedures are developed through to the competence stage for coping with the demands of work without suffering from information overload. Some of them are likely to have begun as explicit procedural knowledge rather than becoming automated and increasingly tacit through repetition, with concomitant increases in speed and productivity;
- Increasingly intuitive decision-making, in which not only pattern recognition but also rapid responses to developing situations are based on tacit knowledge - the tacit application of tacit rules” (Eraut, 2000, p. 127).

These processes cannot be accomplished by using procedural knowledge alone or following a manual. They require a unique combination of propositional knowledge, situational knowledge, professional experience and judgement, because knowledge and skills are acquired in a process that is not added-on but integral (Eraut, 2000; Barnett, 1994), which includes an ‘indwelling’ (Polanyi, 1962), an active interchange and 'engagement’ (Oakeshott, 1962) of the individual. Eraut’s studies highlight “the relationship between different modes of learning, the types of outcome arising from each mode, and the influence of context and conditions upon each mode of learning” (Young and Guile, 1997,
main concepts and understandings and provides a vocabulary that will allow a less ambiguous understanding of the key concept. In this first part of the chapter the concept of 'tacit knowledge' was discussed with respect to three dimensions: 1) with respect to the perspective of human resource development; 2) with respect to work-based learning and learning processes, in particular; and 3) with respect to non-formal and professional knowledge.

The distinction between explicit and 'tacit' knowledge allowed me to investigate the concept of 'tacit knowledge' - but the literature review also made clear that a distinction is not practical (Jensen, 2005). It reinforces separatist ways of looking at academic and operational knowledges; and therefore limits the design for a future-oriented vocational curriculum (Boreham, 2004).

Knowledge has both explicit and 'tacit' dimensions (Nightingale, 2003; Molander, 1992) and the distinction between 'know how' and 'know that' crumbled upon examination, because the interaction between these two modes of knowing is vital for the creation of 'new' knowledge (Wood, 2002; Eraut, 2000). 'Knowing how' involves more than fulfilling procedural operations, and more than merely relying on content states. Knowledge concerning 'how' and 'who' is the type of knowledge that is learned through practice and includes elements of 'tacit knowledge' (Jarvis, 2001). Combining 'know that' and 'know-how' weights the context as an equal part in the development of knowledge (Jarvis, 2001). As such, human knowledge is defined as a synthesis of 'tacit' and explicit knowledge which allows people to make sufficient sense of their contexts and enables them to act within them (Polanyi, 1983). This tacit-explicit dynamic in the learning process (Frade and Borges, 2002) can be seen as a collective, situated and context-specific practice (Brown and Duguid, 2001; Gherardi, 2000).

This has an important impact on the study, because it means that the ineffability of 'tacit knowledge' does not mean that we cannot discuss and explore the 'tacit' learning process and the competent and skilled performance of the research participants. Because 'tacit
In conclusion, this research claims to have extended Polanyi's concept of 'tacit knowledge' and applied it in a much wider context. It developed a developmental, conceptual framework for analysing 'tacit knowledge' and the variety of 'tacit forms of key competencies' developed and acquired in informal work and life situations. It allows for the inclusion of the personal situation of the individual, their hopes, dilemmas, emotions or feelings which have been linked to the development process of 'tacit knowledge' and 'tacit forms of key competences'.

In part 2 of the literature review the key concept of 'key competencies' is discussed and the development of a research tool, the starfish model, which embraces a holistic approach to competence development is outlined.
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW - Part 2

3.12 Introduction
As discussed in the first part of this chapter, developing 'tacit knowledge' in the HRD context has become a crucial issue for achieving a competitive advantage in a global economy (Flanagan et al., 1993). Against this background where (the codification of) 'tacit knowledge' is seen as 'human capital' to gain economic profits, this study looks at people's degree of unawareness about their development of skills, competencies and knowledges. It explores their self-perception - how do they experience and value the development of 'tacit knowledge', 'tacit' skills and competencies.

In order to identify and describe what constitutes 'tacit' human skills, competence and key competencies, the basic understanding of these concepts needs to be investigated. Definitions vary between academics, employers, institutions and individuals and quite often the terms are used interchangeably (McLagan, 1997). Main understandings are discussed in this chapter in relation to thinking and debates on key skills and 'tacit skills' - seeking to clarify their meaning before proposing a comprehensive, holistic approach to key competencies, which provides the basis for the empirical research work, and results in finding a working definition for the developed 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

3.13 From Knowledge to Competence
The Oxford English Dictionary\(^1\) (1973) defines knowledge as the fact of knowing a thing, state, etc. or person. Knowledge can furthermore be categorised into: know-who, know-why, know-how and know-what (Zollo and Winter, 2002). Here 'know-what', 'know-that' refers to factual knowledge or information and 'know-how' to operational knowledge and skills. This classification into 'codified' and 'tacit' knowledge is a common distinction and is analysed in the first part of this chapter.

There is growing recognition in the field of education that the development of competencies rather than teaching factual knowledge has become necessary (Ellström, 1997; Barnett, 1994). Today, people need to develop skills and competencies as the appropriate tools for selecting, processing and applying the knowledge required to cope with changing employment, career and family patterns (Lundvall and Johnson, 1994). Building-up competencies is getting more and more important because it enables individuals to mobilise, apply and integrate acquired knowledge in complex, diverse and unpredictable situations (Perrenoud, 1997). As such, competence should be regarded "as the general capability based on knowledge, experience, values, dispositions which a person

has developed through engagement with educational practices” (Coolahan, 1996, p.26). Still, much of the literature focusses on job-related (functional) skills and competences, as outlined below.

3.14 The Concept of Competences and Competencies

There is much debate about what competenc(i)es are and how they can be best described and defined (Kandola, 1996); including the odd situation that the term is in universal use, with a number of different definitions (Davies and Durkin, 1991). Experts in the fields of sociology, education, philosophy, economics and psychology have tried to define the notion of 'competence' "as a roughly specialised system of abilities, proficiencies, or skills that are necessary or sufficient to reach a specific goal" (Weinert, 2001, p.45). Still, there is even no agreement about the way of using the term or spelling competences or competencies.

Whereas in the USA the term competencies refers to the behaviours an individual needs to demonstrate effective performance in a job (Cooper, 2000; McClelland, 1973) as behavioural repertoires (Aragon and Johnson, 2002; Woodruffe, 1993) - in the UK, the term competence, very similarly, describes the ability of an individual to perform activities within a prescribed standard of an area of occupation; referring to occupational standards (Fletcher, 1991). In this very narrow sense, competence is seen as the ability to use knowledge, understanding, practical and thinking skills to perform effectively to the national standards required in employment (DfEE, 1999). Here, competences are understood as minimum standards of competent (job) performance, inscribed in a competence framework (Jeris and Johnson, 2004). This competence framework is defined as the NVQ² system in the UK and "describes what someone can do. It does not describe the learning process which the individual has undergone" (UDACE, 1989, p.6). In summary, in the English-speaking context, competence and competencies may simply be referred to as the skills, knowledge, experience, attributes and behaviours that an individual needs in order to perform a job effectively (IES report, 1995). Concrete occupational competenc(i)es have been concentrated in a restricted range of 'key skills' and 'skills' (Green, 1998).

3.15 The Concept of Skills

A whole range of literature exists to define the concept of skill, of basic and job related skills (Carnevale et al., 1990) and social scientists have so far no shared definition. Interest in skills is related to changes in the world of work and to ways of acquiring and learning them (Datta, 1982). Traditionally, 'skills' have been associated with the level of training a job requires. Historically jobs - but also workers, (Kusterer, 1978) - have been classified as

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² National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are work-related, competence-based qualifications and certify an individual's ability to meet the skills' standards required at work.
'skilled' or 'unskilled' or 'semi-skilled' (Dahrendorf, 1956). This classification shows the embeddedness of specific tasks and jobs in the labour process (Laur-Ernst, 1989).

In view of this, 'skills' means practical knowledge in combination with ability (Eraut, 1999). For him, 'skill' embodies a craft or an accomplishment where skilled workers are those who are 'properly trained or experienced'. Kusterer (1978) argues that skill is intricately connected with the concept of 'working knowledge' - performing successfully any job, which "involves some degree of skill" (Manwaring and Wood, 1985, p.175). And Leplat (1990), coming from (work) psychological point of view, adds, similar to Wood (1991), that skills must be always referred to "as the capacity (or ability) of an individual to execute a task or a class of tasks. A skill is always skill to .." (p.145).

Barnett (1994) found that the term 'skills' has no substance content - "it is non-specific about its substantive content" (p.56) - it requires circumstances, and describes four criteria for the application of the term skill:
1. A situation of some complexity.
2. A performance that addresses the situation as deliberate and not as a matter of chance.
3. An assessment that the performance has met the demands of the situation.
4. A sense that the performance was commendable.

Skills are therefore a) descriptive and b) evaluative. Expanding on Barnett's third point, Eraut (1999) describes that in formal education and training 'skills' are regarded as components of performance. This performance is broken down into a list of skills and sub-skills and categorised into (hierarchical) levels. Thus, skills are very narrow, task-specific, with little underpinning knowledge (Clarke and Winch, 2006). They are either regarded as 'basic skills' because they provide a foundation in reading, writing, speaking English, using mathematics or 'core skills' as they were seen relevant for school-to-work transition, or 'key skills' because they are essential to adult life and should prepare for the labour market (Brown and Keep, 2003).

3.16 The Concept of Key Skills

The strong interest in and emphasis on key skills is based on the changing structures and contexts of work and society (Brown, 1997), including an increasingly emphasis on learning in working life, e.g. 'lifelong learning' (King, 2000; Darmon et al., 1999); where people need to develop broader, generic and more embracing competences as well as technical, job- or craft-specific skills (Nijhof and Steumer, 1994). These skills are essential because people need to function effectively as members of a flexible, adaptable and competitive workforce (DfEE, 1999). They are also invaluable in helping people to actively take part in
shaping society. Still, there are different ideas about what key skills are wanted for (Whitston, 1998).

Key skills are embedded in the National Curriculum in England with the intention to increase national prosperity through the development of a highly-skilled and well-educated workforce which is able to play a full part in the knowledge-based economy (ELWa, 2001). Key skills are at the centre of occupational competence, required in employment and meant to meet occupational standards demanded by the NVQs. Key Skills specifications in the UK National Standards are inscribed in units at five levels (see QCA, 2003) of increasing difficulty, from level 1: 'routine and predictable' work activities to level 5: a 'wide and often unpredictable variety of work contexts'. The DfEE (1998) and the QCA (1999) report on six key skills: communication, application of number, IT, working with others, improving one's own learning and performance, problem solving - as described in Appendix B.

For Unwin and Wellington (2001) this represents a workplace culture in which many employers retain a narrow concept of key skills which is based on performing a limited range of tasks. For some, such restricted list of key skills addresses the gaps left by early specialisation (King, 2000; Boreham, 2002); for others, key skills are the core elements of all learning, academic and vocational; and, for some, key skills are a way of ensuring that higher education produces the sort of people that employers want (Gangani et al., 2004; Brown, 1999). Green (1998) concludes that the English concentration on a restricted range of key skills provides a much narrower education to a lower standard than is generally found overseas. For him, this 'key skills paradigm' represents an impoverished form of general education, which does not lead to the production of broadly skilled, polyvalent workers (Green, 1998) and rather demonstrates an 'one-way' vocational preparation.

3.17 The Prevailing Approach to Competence - a Behaviouristic Stance ?!

The interest in professional skills, knowledge and expertise and the dominant understanding of 'competence' seems to be situated within a behavioural stance. This behavioural approach to competence is investigated before proposing a holistic approach to competence. The UK governments' approach to competence is criticised for its narrowness and for confusing competence with performance (Woodruffe, 1991; Dooley et al., 2004). This 'narrow' approach to occupational competence shaped much of the debate about post-16 education and training in the 1990s; where competence based training had been implemented in the national training agenda as a crucial part of a reform progress. These reform efforts have been based on a behaviouristic approach to competence (Hyland, 1994), which ignore critical, self-reflexive abilities, 'capabilities', needed and possessed by individuals to act and interact in life and rather fragment learning (Ertl, 2002).
According to this behaviouristic view, the role of education and training is mainly to shape and adapt the skills of the individual to a set of predetermined qualification requirement (Sandberg, 2000), as described before, where employers and other training institutions define the skills that are needed. In consequence, the concept of competence-based education and training is criticised for resting on an inadequate model of human nature and social interaction (Jessup, 1991), within a framework described as "mechanistic, reductionist and (as denying) the importance of human agency in processes of learning" (Bates and Dutson, 1995, p.41). These rationalistic approaches to competence, traditionally used within the area of HRD are criticised for failing to identify and describe human competence and for failing to make essential human aspects of competence development apprehensible (e.g the personal situation of the individual, their hopes, and emotions). This evokes a call for a more 'holistic' approach to competence.

3.18 The Concept of Key Competencies - a multi-dimensional and holistic approach

Key competenc(i)es have gained in importance in all EU member states over the past decade (Evans, 1998). The 'changing divisions of knowledge and labour' (Ainley, 1993) prompted new ways of thinking about learning, including informal and implicit learning, and led to a reconceptualization of 'skills', 'knowledge', and 'competences'. Where key competencies or key qualifications are regarded as providing a broader and multi-dimensional knowledge base (Bjornåvold, 2001). Key skills and competences are criticised for focussing too strongly on the workplace and not enough on their importance for a fulfilled and successful life (Sperber and Dupuy, 2001). In consequence, this study refers to 'key competencies' rather than key skills or competences; an understanding which is based on three main reasons:

1. Skills are difficult to differentiate from competence in languages other than English.
2. The term skills connotes a limited set of basic skills, e.g. reading and writing whereas competency includes enabling people to personal fulfilment, self realisation and continuing learning throughout life.
3. 'Competencies' are considered to be holistic, complex and integrated; a combination of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values which can be acquired formally, informally and (non-)intentionally across many life contexts and situations.

In Germany, the concept of 'key competencies' is based on Mertens' (1974) concept of 'key qualifications' (Schlüsselqualifikationen). 'Key competencies' entail the underlying idea of broad, generic competencies which can be used for different occupations. Van Zolingen et al., (1997) define key qualifications as "the knowledge, insight, skills and attitudes that are..."
part of the durable core of an occupation or a group of related jobs, with the possibility of transfer to other, new jobs within that occupation and of innovations within that occupation, which contribute to the development of a person's occupational competence and facilitate transitions within the career” (p.3). Their specification of key qualifications includes: technical knowledge, general knowledge of languages, inter-disciplinary knowledge, cognitive and meta-cognitive skills (such as identifying and solving problems, abstract thinking, flexibility, learning to learn and 'tacit knowledge'), communication skills, ability to plan and organise work, ability to work with others, personal attributes (such as self-reliance, creativity), and as such acting as a modern citizen (ibid.). Brown (1997) adds: showing a critical attitude to work and one's own interests.

In coming to an understanding, the study integrates these definitions, but for the purpose of this study, the individual and his or her individuality, personality and identity needs to be included. Therefore, 'key competencies' are regarded as “abilities of the kind intended and assumed by the term Bildung; abilities which are acquired, not inherent, which are experienced in and through particular aspects of social reality, and which are suited to shaping this reality. In addition, these are abilities that are capable of being cultivated over a lifetime, enhanced and refined...They are, however, also abilities that enable a process of self-directed learning, since the aim is abilities that are acquired not only in conjunction with tasks and processes, but can be detached from the original situation, meet the challenges of the future and are open to problems of all kinds” (German Expertise, 2004, p.59-60). And "they are indispensable for good life" (Sperber and Dupuy, 2001, p.75), because the essential feature in good life is the capacity for successful, responsible and productive action at home, in the economy and in the political field. These competencies go beyond subject-related knowledge, constitute forms of know-how rather than forms of know-that and touch a 'sense of belonging' (Carr, 2004) and 'life-world becoming' (Barnett, 1994), (see part 1 of this chapter).

This understanding embraces an increased emphasis on critical, analytical and self-aware thinking underpinning an individual’s knowledge-base which is incorporated in the study’s key concept of 'key competencies'. This understanding is pedagogically driven and addresses not only the development of occupational competence and technical skills, but also the development of a personality and 'self-realization'. It is underpinned by a commitment to a lifelong reflexive learning process and acknowledges that "the cognitive abilities and skills possessed by or able to be learned by individuals ... enable them to solve particular problems, as well as the motivational, volitional and social readiness and capacity to use the solutions successfully and responsible in variable situations” (Weinert, 2002, p.27-28). These aspects and dimensions of key competencies lead to the
development of a key competency model, the 'starfish model', see 3.21, representing a vehicle for capturing the developed 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

The main conclusion drawn from the literature review so far in finding a main definition for the concept of key competencies is that there is no universal definition. But, there is agreement, that for a competence to deserve attributes such as 'key' or 'essential', it must be beneficial for the individual and to society as a whole. It must enable the individual to successfully integrate into a number of social networks while remaining independent and personally effective in familiar as well as new and unpredictable settings (see EURYDICE, 2002). Such claim requires the investigation of the tacit dimension of skills, of 'tacit skills'.

3.19 'Tacit Skills'
Work sociology has voiced a strong interest in 'tacit skills' and expertise workers use in their jobs (Kusterer, 1978; Manwaring and Wood, 1985), linking to HRD and work-based learning (see ch.3, part 1). And, in some EU member states, the education and training systems have begun to validate 'tacit skills' (Bjørnåvold, 2000). 'Tacit skills' are defined as being incapable of articulation, because they are based on internalised, patterned movements and involve minimal awareness (Wood, 1990). Wood (1990) distinguishes three forms of 'tacit skills' depending upon the level of awareness:

(1) 'routine activities' involving reduced awareness and the transformation of learning into successful routines, (such as keyboard skills, dance routines) acquiring the necessary skills through practice and experience.

(2) coping with unfamiliar situations which requires different degrees of awareness. An example would be: overtaking while driving a car requires a kind of semi-awareness, whereas overtaking at night and coping with dangerous situations will require much fuller awareness.

(3) co-ordinating activities with others and the increasingly integrated nature of production processes. Stressed here is the need for workers to develop an appreciation and awareness of the relation of their jobs to the overall production process which refers to diagnosing abilities and coping with unforeseen problems in the work process.

This last point is given special attention to in Japanese labour management systems where workers are encouraged to co-operate and develop their skills and awareness (Wood, 1990); linking to Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) model of 'knowledge creation', harnessing 'tacit skills' and 'tacit knowledge' of workers (see ch.3, part 1).

Leplat (1990) furthermore differentiates three forms of 'tacit skills' from a psychological perspective. For him, 'tacit skills' refer to
(1) the amount of skills actually required relative to the skills officially required. This means that much more skills are required than those referred to in the official job specification.

(2) the difference between explicitly defined skills and skills actually used. Meaning that the actual skill is more comprehensive than the supposed skill: while fulfilling the job, workers use competencies that are different to those officially possessed (Le Bas and Mercier, 1983; Leplat, 1990).

(3) the skill acquired through practice rather than through formal training. These are difficult to verbalise and define and sometimes called 'tricks of the trade' and belong to the non-explicit part of competence.

'Tacit skills' in terms of 2) and 3) are very similar because they carry explicitly prescribed skills. These skills depend on the type of work involved, show a procedural character and are connected to the workers' 'know-how' because they stem from practical knowledge and are related to work experience. They result from the day to day accumulation of information in the production areas, assimilating and transforming more formalised knowledge into workers' know-how (Le Bas and Mercier, 1983). As described before, they can be taken as characteristics of human activity in response to a task.

These general approaches to 'tacit skills' and as such to 'tacit knowledge' reveal the importance to everyday life, to work-processes and to learning- and teaching methods. The existence of 'tacit skills', as outlined above, indicates that individual prerequisites are necessary for carrying out work tasks. This idea highlights that aspects of skills and knowledge are not identical with formal technical skills, but accumulated (work) experiences, where knowledge is seen as a result of daily practice, routine and intuitive 'know-how' which is always related to activity and performance. In this respect, 'tacit skills' refer to a kind of knowledge, which embraces one's own knowing about and knowledge of one's own role within production process as a whole. This can be considered as a genuine attempt to draw on and develop existing worker's knowledge as "a recognition of ... the 'tacit skills' workers have" (Wood, 1990, p.180).

'Tacit skills' are truly incapable of articulation. They confer a skilful performance, which "is achieved by the observation of a set of rules which are not known as such by the person following them" (Polanyi, 1962, p.49) and involve reduced awareness (Wood, 1990). Much of what we are doing in everyday life refers to this kind of performance and skills and rests in a 'tacit' dimension of knowing (Polanyi, 1966), in the sense that we really do know more than we are aware of and are able to express. This 'tacit' dimension of knowledge is inherent and captured in the study's concept of 'tacit forms of key competencies' which is explained next.
3.20 Developing an Understanding of 'Tacit forms of Key Competencies'

The study's main research hypothesis describes that people possess 'tacit forms of key competencies' which they are not aware of. In a first approach towards developing a working definition and an understanding of the developed 'tacit' knowledge, skills and competencies, the many meanings and different understanding of concepts of 'tacit knowledge', key skills and key competencies were investigated. Clarification was required in terms of what is meant by key competencies compared to such terms as competence, skills or key skills. Key competencies then are those competencies which go beyond concrete work-related skills, describe more general competences which are needed for different occupational fields. They indicate transferable competencies or 'life skills', which emphasise the contextual aspect and the assumption that competencies are socially constructed (Wood, 1981). They are more complex and holistic and refer to the capacity of an individual to act; comprising generic abilities (Arnold and Pätzold, 2003).

The literature review clarified meanings of concepts and led to the development of a working definition of 'tacit forms of key competencies', which entails a more holistic approach acknowledging "that competence is tacit, informally acquired, culturally embedded and contextually located in practice" (Jones and Moore, 1995, p.88). For the purpose of eliciting the 'tacit' dimension of the development process, 'tacit forms of key competencies' should be understood as hidden personal abilities of which individuals are not immediately aware of and which have been acquired in a rather non-formal way; being "largely based on knowledge, the unity of conception and execution" (Thompson, 1989, p.92). Thus, in a provisional conclusion, the concept 'tacit forms of key competencies' is used - rather than 'tacit skills'. Such developed pragmatic understanding rests in a non-dualistic ontology, is based on an interpretive paradigm and is examined in great detail in chapter 4; (see: nature of the research problem). This conceptualisation furthermore entails the necessity of the concept being specified by the results of the empirical research.

This conceptualisation of 'tacit forms of key competencies' extends the German concept of 'key qualifications' (Schlüsselqualifikationen) (Mertens, 1974), of 'action competence' (Handlungskompetenz) (Laur-Ernst, 1985; Heidegger and Rauner, 1997) and Ellström's (1997) model of competence. These theories influenced the development of a learning model which encapsulates a 'generative' approach towards the development of competencies and facilitates the identification of the 'tacit forms of key competencies'. This learning model assists telling the story of the 'tacit' learning experience and is represented in a 'starfish model'.

3.21 The 'Starfish Model': A Generative Approach to Competencies

The 'starfish model' has been initially developed in the 'TACITKEY' project, used as a basis for heuristic investigation. It developed continuously through the investigation of the stories and learning biographies of the research participants. The model is used as a 'tool' for collecting and analysing data in this study; to capture and describe the acquired 'tacit' competencies which then are specified by the findings of the empirical research. In short, it allows for the identification of 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

The review of the literature highlighted the necessity to develop a broader model of 'key competencies' because existing models and definitions are not satisfying enough and do not explain the deeper dimension and inter-connectedness of the developed competencies. Seeing competence just as key skills and skills is too limited. For the purpose of the study a broader and more inclusive concept and model of competence is required which emphasises "competency as an underlying characteristic of a person in that it may be a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one's self image or social role, or a body of knowledge he or she uses" (Boyatzis, 1992, p.260). Competency here is seen as more generic, more inclusive, underlying performance and action (Evans, 1998). In sum, a generative approach to competencies is considered more fitting to the aim of the study.

The starfish model extends Mertens' (1974) and Ellström's (1997) work and theories: First of all it incorporates the four sets of key qualifications of the 'action competence square' (Mertens, 1974) which embrace broad, basic competencies necessary for work-life:

- Personal competencies
- Social competencies
- Methodological competencies
- Work content related competencies

Second, Ellström's (1997) model of competence which defines essential aspects of human capacities or competence at work is integrated into the model:

- perceptual motor skills (e.g. dexterity);
- cognitive factors (different types of knowledge and intellectual skills);
- affective factors (e.g. attitudes, values, motivations);
- personality traits (e.g. self-confidence);
- social skills (e.g. communicative and co-operative skills).

Still, these models do not sufficiently recognize the non-formal dimensions of learning and the concept of 'tacit forms of key competencies' (which goes far beyond concrete work-related skills) requires a more 'generative' approach towards key competencies, embracing
five dimensions, which are outlined next. In sum, the starfish model captures and helps to explains human competence development.

### 3.21.1 The five Dimensions of the Starfish Model
Having established that key competencies are necessary for individuals to lead independent, purposeful, responsible and successful lives, this model helps to identify individual competencies which underlie successful change and personal growth. Five inter-related key competencies, developed through social interaction, are proposed in a 'starfish model', see Figure 3.4.

![Starfish Model Diagram](image)

**Figure 3.4: The Starfish Model (Tacitkey first work paper, 1999)**

The 'starfish model' encompasses:

1) **Content-related and practical competencies**
This 'element' or category refers to all the practical and content related skills and competencies related to tasks and chores learned and acquired while looking after the (family) household (e.g. subject matter relevant to works tasks, practical aspects of operating in (modern) work environments, handling multiple tasks and demands).

2) **Methodological competencies**
The dimension embraces competencies and skills related to methodological abilities (e.g. abilities to deal with different modes of communication, different people, different aims etc., analysing of situations and decision making, problem-solving, self-organisation, ability to use experience in new situations (learning from the past), ability to interpret situations and respond it appropriately, planning how to use time, time-management).

3) **Social or interpersonal competencies**
Social or interpersonal competencies are important for effective participation in a community. They refer to a person’s capability to maintain relationships. A social competence which gained in importance in recent years is citizenship. Social competencies are valuable in promoting personal competencies, such as self-esteem and motivation. This

---

4 It's shape resembles a starfish.
element or dimension of competencies refers to personal attributes (e.g. - ability to work with others (interpersonal), - ability to co-operate, - self-projection (positive image of yourself), - managing conflicts, - negotiation skills).

4) Competencies related to attitudes and values
Attitudes are the fourth defining characteristic of 'tacit forms of key competencies'. In the educational context attitudes are closely associated with personal competencies, such as motivation, responsibility, honesty, reliability, self-esteem and creativity. This element or dimension contains competencies and skills related to personal attitudes and values (e.g. - acceptance of self-responsibility, - demonstration of commitment, - positive attitude towards change, - ability to foster confidence and trust).

5) Learning competencies
This element or dimension encompasses competencies or skills referring to self-learning abilities.

The starfish model is developed as a model of key competencies which is more future oriented and generative in terms of including people’s personal and professional projects, because it gives room to a wide range of life and work experiences of individuals. This strengthens the study’s focus on experiences of interrupted (occupational) biographies, learner identities (Ball et al., 1999) and 'learning careers' (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 1999, 2002). The model emphasises broad clusters of abilities and competencies which are internally related to the individual. This then allows the individual to be an agent in the construction of his or her own competence, knowledge and understanding. The model is used as a heuristic device or as a basis for heuristic investigation of personal and biographical experiences to capture the 'tacit dimension', in a way to be discussed and developed empirically through the investigation of the learning experience and biographies.

3.22 Conclusions
This chapter laid out the groundwork for understanding how different educational, social and psychological theories define 'tacit knowledge' and 'key competencies'. It has discussed related main concepts and builds an understanding and a vocabulary that will allow a less ambiguous understanding of the study’s key concepts. As such, it integrates the discussed key concepts into the research context and includes definitions of 'tacit knowledge' and 'key competencies' extracted from the vocational education and training context. In doing so, it situates the research in established fields of literature. This was a difficult task because different cultural contexts influence the understanding of competence (Cseh, 2003).
A major work task in the first phase of the study was to investigate and discuss the concepts of 'tacit knowledge' and 'key competencies' in the context of VET, CVT, WBL and HRD. Reviewing the literature sought to integrate existing theories and concepts into the study's conception. From this review, theoretically informed and practically interested understandings and working definitions of the key concepts were developed. These form the basis for the empirical work. Reviewing the concept of 'tacit knowledge' answered the question whether 'tacit knowledge' can be made explicit (Cooke, 2003; Crowley, 2001). Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) model of knowledge conversion showed that - because all knowledge has both explicit and tacit dimensions (Nightingale, 2003; Molander, 1992; Polanyi, 1966) - the 'tacit' dimension becomes explicit through the process of **externalisation** during social interaction.

The challenge here was to develop a framework and working definition that capture the 'tacit' dimension of the learning process in order to talk about and share the experience. A framework which explores the posed questions of **what kind of knowledge, what kind of learning are involved and how is this knowledge created?**

The working definition of 'tacit forms of key competencies' is considered as a synthesis and an overall summarizing concept which allows to empirically research the development process of 'tacit knowledge' and to make explicit the personalised, contextualized and 'tacit' dimension of the developed knowledge and key competencies. The starfish model supports the explication.

The developed working definition and starfish model furthermore serve the study's need for a broader, more holistic understanding of competencies because they extend the depth of analysis to the individual development process with the understanding that 'tacit' key competencies comprise knowledge, insight, skills and attitudes, and have substantial cognitive, meta-cognitive, personality, strategic and socio-communicative dimensions (Van Zolingen et al., 1997) - in order to handle unexpected, new situations (Nijhof and Streumer, 1994) and biographical experiences.

These concepts are based on the notion that (skills and) competencies are socially constructed, on 'activity theories' (Engeström, 1994), on 'cognitive apprenticeship' or 'situated cognition' where the action-reflection-action model is stressed (Berryman and Bailey, 1992; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Resnick and Wirt, 1996), and on the concept of 'lifelong learning', as investigated in (and therefore coming back to) the first part of this chapter.
Moreover, it is useful to distinguish between skills and (key) competencies, determining that the concept of 'key competencies' embraces all abilities of an individual, everything he or she is capable of doing. Other fields of non-formal and experiential learning such as the areas of housework, bringing up children and the engagement in social or political organisations are included in the concept.

While developing 'tacit forms of key competencies' individuals and context form one entity through the lived experience of the life-world (see Sandberg, 2000; Miller, 2000) because people cannot develop competences independent of context (Fischer et al., 1993). Competence is furthermore constituted by the meaning that the fulfillment of tasks and chores has for the individual in their experience (see Stoof et al., 2002; Velde, 1999) - the analysis of biographical experience and life-stories will help to explicate the 'tacit' dimension. The challenge for the research methodology then becomes to facilitate the 'explication' and 'telling' of the experience.

Chapter 4 will therefore discuss research design and methodology adopted to study the research participants perceptions of their 'tacit' learning experience and development process. A further task for the research design and methodology will be to address the dichotomy between the rationalist approaches towards 'tacit knowledge' and competence development that dominate in HRD and VET/CVT and interpretative, constructivist approaches that are becoming more widespread among researchers.

Finally, this literature review has shown a bias towards the role of 'tacit knowledge' when nearly exclusively the importance of 'tacit knowledge' has been discussed in the context of HRD, referring to expert knowledge. For the purpose of analysing dimensions of the 'tacit' learning experience, the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies', three major aspects are emphasized:

- **first, that the individual is at the centre of research;**
- **second, that 'tacit' competencies are socially constructed, situational and**
- **third, that awareness of one's own 'tacit competencies' depends on socio-biographical circumstances (not meant as causal).**

Thus, special attention is given to the social structure of the composition of research participants, including age, personal situation such as marital status, number of children, class, school leaving certificate, post compulsory education, job and career progression. This is achieved in chapter 6: The Social Structure of the two groups of Research Participants.
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY - Part 1

4.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used in the research. The chapter is presented in two parts, this first part explores the philosophical basis of the research design, and offers both a justification for, and a critical appraisal of the chosen methodology, combining biographical, phenomenological and ethnographic elements. It continues to describe the study’s sample, the sampling technique and finally outlines the process of gaining access to colleges, courses and participants. The second part concerns the data collection process, ethical considerations and criteria for establishing credibility and trustworthiness, whereas chapter 5 concerns data analysis procedures. Figure 4.1 outlines the complete research design framework.
My research design followed my concern for adults who developed 'tacit knowledge' in unpaid, informal learning situations, without being aware of their learning processes. As a result, the interpretive paradigm is the most appropriate paradigm for use in this exploratory investigation because it seeks to elicit the 'tacit dimension' and to determine the situation from the respondents' perspective (Silverman, 2000) and of their 'lived experiences' (Mishna, 2004; Smith and Heshusius, 1986).

4.1 The Central Research Problem and Research Question

It is essential for researchers to unambiguously define their research problem as an instrumental element in the research activity (Perry, 1998). The central research problem explored in this study is: 'How do people experience the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' while being out of paid work?'

As such, the research focus is on illuminating and understanding the research participants' lived experiences; accordingly, a subsequent question to explore is: 'What does it mean for an individual to develop 'tacit forms of key competencies' while running a family household and raising children at that time in their life?'

Formulating the research question is crucial since it influences the methodology, the research design and the phases of the research process (David and Sutton, 2004). Consequently, a research design was developed to 'resolve' the problem in the sense of accumulating sufficient knowledge which leads to understanding or explanation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985); and which addresses the following issues: How can the 'lived experience' of individuals be explored in a way that enables us to deepen our understanding of the development process of 'tacit forms of key competencies' in a period of unemployment, while managing the family household and raising children or caring for relatives? Additionally, which methodology allows the portrayal of the 'tacit dimension' of the experience and focuses on the individual? Figure 4.2 shows a graphic display of 'bins' (Miles and Huberman, 1994) clarifying the research design and framework, in specifying the intervariable relationships of the key concepts in focus.

![Figure 4.2: The graphic display of 'bins' (Hoffmann, 2000)](image-url)
The exploratory nature of the research problem and research question (Yin, 2003) aimed at an in-depth understanding of the 'tacit' and implicit learning experience of a group of adults within the contexts of their biographies. Consequently, the search for meaning called for the appropriateness of a qualitative methodology in order to capture context, personal interpretation and experience (Mishna, 2004; Smith and Heshusius, 1986) and to gain a rich and comprehensive picture of the experience of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies' (Schwandt, 1994).

The chosen qualitative methodology matched those requirements (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Spencer et al., 2003) by focussing on the active adult learner, and by eliciting 'tacit knowledge' and in identifying 'tacit forms of key competencies'. In view of this, the best way to understand the process of acquiring 'tacit forms of key competencies' and 'tacit knowledge' is from the research participants' points of view (Verma and Mallick, 1999). Adopting a qualitative methodology included a concern for 'Verstehen', for grasping the actor's definition of a situation, and for the life world (Schwandt, 1994) - relating the study's purpose and objectives to the research design. In summary, to get to the core of this experience, this study adopts an interpretive approach (Denzin, 1989) because:

- the focus is on the individual; providing a fundamentally 'people-oriented' nature of qualitative inquiry (Patton, 1990);
- of the 'personal', situational or contextual nature of 'tacit knowledge', which "plays a constitutive role in providing meaning" (Altheide and Johnson, 1994, p. 492);
- the emphasis is on the 'lived experience' of individuals;
- the belief in 'constructivism' - that reality is socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), which refers to 'the reality of everyday life' to indicate the taken-for-granted sense of reality that is shared with others in a society;
- the intention is to create meaning and gain an understanding of human experience;
- the collection of 'biographies' and 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) as method, and
- the importance of understanding from the point of view of those involved.

The established relationship between the problem statement, paradigm, ontology, epistemology and methodology (Guba and Lincoln, 2000), determined the choice for an interpretative paradigm. This is justified in the next section.

4.2 Justification for Interpretive Paradigm: Philosophy

A paradigm is an interpretive framework or a set of beliefs that guide action (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Anderson, 1998). Paradigms are described as worldviews, philosophical approaches, methodologies, or research traditions and represent different ways of organising social research (Bryman, 2001); they shape our (preferred) methodology (Silverman,
2000), and ways of approaching inquiry (Paul and Marfo, 2001). The choice between them should be made in terms of their appropriateness in answering particular research questions. Thus, the researcher has to become aware of the underlying assumptions and implications.

In general, two leading research paradigms are acknowledged within the fields of social, human and educational research: the quantitative (positivist) and the qualitative (interpretive) paradigm (Saunders et al., 2003; Creswell, 1994). Qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings. Quantitative research uses experimental methods and quantitative measures to test hypothetical generalisation (Eisenhart and Howe, 1990). Where quantitative researchers seek causal determination, prediction, and the generalisation of findings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000), in contrast qualitative researchers seek instead illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations (Schwandt, 1994).

All research (whether quantitative or qualitative) is based on underlying assumptions in ontological, epistemological, and methodological issues. Table 4.1 summarises such assumptions in a two-fold classification (Creswell, 1994), but is compared here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
<th>Qualitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontological</td>
<td>What is the nature of reality?</td>
<td>Reality is objective and singular, apart from the researcher</td>
<td>Reality is subjective and multiple as seen by participants in a study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemological</td>
<td>What is the relationship of the researcher to the researched or that researched?</td>
<td>Researcher is independent from that being researched</td>
<td>Researcher interacts with the researched or that being researched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological</td>
<td>What is the process of research?</td>
<td>Deductive process; Cause and effect; Static design-categories isolated before study; Context-free generalisations leading to prediction, explanation, and understanding; Accurate and reliable through validity and reliability</td>
<td>Inductive process; Mutual simultaneous shaping of factors; Emerging design-categories identified during research process; Context-bound patterns, theories developed for understanding; Accurate and reliable through verification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Quantitative and Qualitative Paradigm Assumptions (Source: Creswell, 1994, p.5)

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1 The quantitative paradigm is termed traditional, positivist or empiricist, rooted in writings by Comte, Mill, Durkheim, Newton and Locke (Smith, 1983). The qualitative paradigm is termed interpretative, constructivist or naturalistic. Its origins as a countermovement to the positivist tradition in the late 19th century are seen in authors such as Dilthey, Weber and Kant (Smith, 1983).
Concerning the epistemological issue, the quantitative approach stipulates that the researcher should remain distant and independent of that being researched. Thus, researchers can be 'objective' in undertaking research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Hughes and Tight, 1995). In the qualitative stance, the researcher interacts with the research participants and tries to become close to the research participants and the phenomenon under study (Smith and Heshusius, 1986). Concerning the ontological issue of what is real, the quantitative researcher views reality as 'out there' and 'objective', independent of the researcher (Babbie, 2001; Eisenhart and Howe, 1990). The qualitative researcher views reality as subjective and socially constructed by individuals involved in the research process (Ticehurst and Veal, 2000; Wildemuth, 1993). Therefore multiple realities, the realities of the research participants, of the researcher and of the audience interpreting the study, exist.

Still, the issue here is not one of competing methods or techniques as one of alternative paradigms and ontologies. It should rather be seen that these two paradigms represent alternative ways of understanding the world and what it is to be human (Eisner, 1988, 1991; Howe, 1988, 1995; Martin and Sugarman, 1993). Patton (1990, p. 39) advocates a 'paradigm of choices' that seeks "methodological appropriateness as the primary criterion for judging methodological quality". Furthermore, some research projects claim to have effectively combined both research traditions (Johnson and Christensen, 2004; Creswell, 2003) in integrative or mixed research (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Fielding and Schreier, 2001).

In terms of clarifying my research, its focus and aims of understanding, including my way of approaching research, I found it very useful when defining the qualitative approach to social research, to do so in relation to the quantitative approach. A comparison between the underlying philosophies that drive the two paradigms was very helpful (in an analytical way) in clarifying which research approach to adopt.

In consequence, a quantitative paradigm was not seen to be appropriate because this form of inquiry seeks objective, categorical descriptions of the phenomena, and aims to provide causal explanations in the form of formal laws tested through statistical measures of association among variables (Shrag, 1992; Smith, 1983). This paradigm maintains that social science inquiry should be objective where time- and context-free generalisations are desirable and possible (Nagel, 1986); and where researchers should eliminate their biases, stay distant, remain emotionally detached and uninvolved with the objects of study (Maxwell and Delaney, 2004).
Instead, this study adopts a qualitative paradigm because it enables researchers to understand and explain experiences of human beings more deeply than a positivist approach (Bartunek and Seo, 2002; Gummesson, 2000, 2003); it attends to the social construction of meaning, prefers to describe and illuminate the meaningful social world (Silverman, 2004) and is concerned with the uniqueness of a particular situation (Myers and Avison, 2002). It acknowledges multiple-constructed realities and the fact that research is value-bound. It follows an inductive logic, which gives detailed, 'rich', 'context-bound' data leading to 'thick' (empathic) descriptions (Silverman, 1998), which shed light on a phenomenon. It aims to characterise how people experience the world, the ways they interact together, and the settings in which these interactions take place (Spencer et al., 2003). In this respect, time and context-free generalisations are neither desirable nor possible (Schwandt, 2000).

4.3 Determining the Fit of the Paradigm to the Focus of the Study

The paradigmatic and methodological decisions revolve around the aim of the research, the nature of the research questions (Patton, 1990) and are influenced by the nature of the investigated incident (Ellram, 1996); thus ensuring to obtain the richest, most 'valuable' data possible. The choice of paradigm depended on the following three aspects (see Creswell, 1994):

- The main purpose of the study and research question,
- the researcher's worldview, and
- the nature of the problem

The purpose of the study was to explore: 'How do people experience the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' while being out of paid work'? Accordingly, the interpretive research paradigm was chosen, because it places high regard on the reality of the individual and aims at discovering the meaning that events have for the individual who experience them (Merriam, 2002). Furthermore, the interpretive paradigm tends to frame research problems as open-ended questions that will enable the researcher to gain in-depth information that may be difficult to convey quantitatively, and leads to description or interpretation of a situation (Silverman, 2000; 2004; Merriam, 2002). As such, the research question of 'what does it mean for the individual to develop 'tacit forms of key competencies' while running the family household and raising children/looking after the elderly at that time in their life?', and the main research problem 'how do' are descriptive rather than prescriptive, and require an inductive approach rather than a deductive one. In effect, 'What' questions demonstrate an exploratory research interest and 'How' and 'Why' questions indicate an explanatory kind of investigation (Yin, 2003).
Therefore, the best way to uncover the 'tacit' dimension and understand the learning process is from the individual's point of view (Hassard, 1993) and experience (Smith and Heshusius, 1986). Here, positivist research instruments such as questionnaires and experiments are likely to be inappropriate in enabling research participants to put their 'tacit' experiences - something they 'cannot (readily) articulate' - into words. Thoughts, meanings, beliefs, values and assumptions involved can be best captured through face-to-face interaction (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). Also, the mini-biographies and life stories of the research participants, and complex narratives of personal experience, are flawed and displaced by quantitative methods (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). These concerns require the use of the interpretive paradigm.

4.3.1 The Researcher's Worldview

The clarification of and reflection upon the assumptions of the paradigms has determined the decision, that the paradigm of positivism is not sufficient for the purpose of my study. My philosophical stance is based on the assumption that 'tacit knowledge' and knowledge in general depends on the knower and that knowledge is context-specific. This assumption embraces a social constructivist position (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), in believing that people socially construct the world. This implies that meaning cannot be 'objective' in the positivist sense, rather that meaning is constructed by people based on interaction between human beings and their social contexts (Crotty, 1998). A qualitative approach means to locate inquiry within the process and context of actual human experience (Altheide and Johnson, 1994). This study pictures the personal and subjective way, in which individuals develop situational and contextual 'tacit knowledge', rather than providing objective factors or of predicting the outcomes of the examined phenomenon (Creswell, 1994).

The positivist paradigm, furthermore, reduces the complexity of human nature. It disconnects human beings from the natural world (Barlas, 2001). It separates the acquisition of 'tacit forms of key competencies and development of 'tacit knowledge' from the individual (Jones and Moore, 1995). In consequence, the implicit 'learning process' and development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' is not seen as internally related to the individual. The vast majority of research on 'tacit knowledge' is linked to the theory of human capital (Boud and Garrick, 1999) and HRD; where little information exists regarding learning involving sense, perception, feeling and awareness (Clark, 2001).

Since the positivist stance assumes that knowledge is objective, context and value-free, such processes as intuition, insight and emotion, are not considered (Muchinsky, 2000). Therefore, the positivist stance disregards the 'human side' (Tisdell, 2003) of the development process of 'tacit forms of key competencies'.
Likewise, positivism or 'objective' research undertakes a division of reality into thinking beings and material objects, which is defined as the Cartesian split between the subjective thinker and the objective world (Crotty, 1998). This separates the researcher (the Cartesian knowing subject) from the respondent (the object of the research). Whereas interpretive research puts the researcher/subject into the context of a situation so as to understand it and the object is to become an active participant in the knowing process. A qualitative approach is concerned with understanding learning from the learner’s perspective (Marton and Saljo, 1997). It lends itself well to an exploratory effort and is especially useful for complex subjects or phenomenon because it holds the experiences and views expressed by individuals to be central in the debate (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997).

For myself, the choice to undertake research using an interpretive paradigm rests on the interpretive assumptions (epistemological, ontological and methodological), based on the earlier discussion, and which draws on its 'phenomenological ontology' which rests on a non-dualistic ontology, one that seeks to avoid the dualism of mind and matter, the Cartesian split. This issue is central to the study and is also inherent in the nature of the research problem and phenomenon.

4.3.2 The Nature of the Problem: Developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'

This study is set in the context of VET and CVT and the related fields of adult education and HRD. Within this context, research into the development of 'tacit knowledge' and competencies is heavily informed by the traditional prevalent paradigm, the rationalistic perspective (Ellström, 1994; Attwell, 1997), which is based in 'technological rationality' (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995), derived from the human capital theory (Becker, 1964) and from the mechanistic world picture of Cartesian-Newtonian science (Corbett, et al, 1991). Consequently, this approach to competence is positivist in nature and draws on functionalist social theory and behaviourist psychology (Marshall, 1991; Hodkinson, 1992; Jacobs, 1997). In consequence, human beings are being perceived as information processors whose behaviour can be described according to rules and laws.

This research paradigm, as a 'behaviourist model' (Jones and Moore, 1995), equates competence with performance. It emphasises outcomes and performance-based 'skill inventories' (Gael, 1988; Armstrong, 1991), which are derived via functional analysis (Fine and Wiley, 1971) in a Tayloristic way. More specifically, competence is regarded as an attribute-based phenomenon, described as constituted by a specific set of attributes such as knowledge and skills, which workers use to accomplish their work (Sandberg, 2000). In this view, a list of skills is regarded as directly representing actual practices in everyday life (Jones, 1999), [and in work, as subscribed to in the aims of the NVQ system (Madden and Mitchell, 1993)].
In applying this rather narrow technical-rational perspective on issues of competence and competence development, human competences are seen as externally related to human beings, as a list of attributes and standardised competences or skills related to a list of work activities. Such descriptions of human competence are indirect, not direct. This view originates from a dualist ontology and objectivist epistemology where competence is seen as consisting of two separate entities: a set of attributes possessed by the worker and a separate set of work activities (Sandberg, 2000). And, where the person and the world are externally related to each other. The world, here, refers to an objective, knowable reality (Husserl, 1970/1936; Bernstein, 1983; Schön, 1983; Searle, 1992).

This underlying assumption of a dualistic ontology then implies a division of the phenomena of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' into two separate entities, the individual and the (learning) experience (Clark, 2001). Thus, the process of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' is externally related to the individual. In this 'technique-oriented approach' (Numinen, 1988) knowing is separated from doing and competencies and skills are treated as having some independent reality (Assiter, 1995).

Such a positivist and rationalist approach to 'tacit' competence development not only prevents people from achieving beyond predetermined guidelines and from achieving their full potential (Collins, 1991); it furthermore focuses only on specific and pre-defined skills (Winning, 1993). Accordingly, it fails to capture the 'tacit dimension' of the experience and fails to identify the whole range of 'tacit forms of key competencies' (Corbett et al, 1991; Ellström, 1994; Sandberg, 1994; Heidegger, 1997).

Applying a positivist/rationalist approach to 'tacit knowledge' development and implicit learning processes produces fragmentary and atomistic descriptions of competence and competence development (Chown and Last, 1993), leaving out, first of all, the internal relation of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' in the individual, and secondly, the 'tacit dimension', the focus, level and inclusion of the individual. Here, then, competence is perceived in terms of attributes and narrow technical skills; where an individual's meaningful experience of practice is ignored (Dall'Alba and Sandberg, 1997; Jones and Moore, 1995).

The chosen interpretive paradigm, as a 'holistic model' (Jones, 1999), acknowledges a 'holistic' concept of competence, knowledge, abilities, skills and attributes, and was felt to be more appropriate for capturing the process of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'. It emphasises contextual aspects of competencies and acknowledges individual meaningful experiences of action, practice and work (Crowdes, 2000). Thus, lists
of skills and competences are treated as indices, referring to some broader text of social practice (Jones, 1994). And, as such, they are 'fluent', in flux, and incomplete (see chapter 3, part 2: the starfish model: a generative approach to competencies).

In the chosen paradigm, competence is described as the relationship between the inner (the person) and the outer (the social). Competences, skills, 'tacit knowledge' and 'tacit forms of key competencies' are internally related to the individual through the individual's experience of the development (Jones and Moore, 1995), see Figure 4.3, because "competence is tacit, informally acquired, culturally embedded and contextually located in practice" (Jones and Moore, 1995, p.88).

![Figure 4.3: The inter-relationship of 'tacit knowledge', the individual and experience](image)

The development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' is defined as a development of 'personal', implicit knowledge, based on doing, action and experience of undertakings, which the individual is not aware of (Eraut, 2000). 'Tacit knowledge' is "...deeply rooted in action and in an individual's commitment to a specific context" (Nonaka, 1991, p. 98). It is "typically acquired on the job or in the situation where it is used" (Sternberg, 1994, p.28). 'Tacit knowledge' is furthermore personal knowledge (Polanyi, 1967), and is so embedded in the individual that it seems entirely natural (Ravetz, 1971). And, because 'tacit knowledge' and skills are deeply ingrained in people, well assimilated by people and integrated into routine behaviour (Barer-Stein, 1989), they are implicit and taken for granted (Nelson and Winter, 1982).

In order to understand the process of developing person-bound, situational or contextual 'tacit forms of key competencies' and to reach for the meaning of the subjective experience from the individual's point of view, an interpretive paradigm was adopted, which enabled the research participant and the researcher first of all to grasp the 'tacit' dimension. And, secondly, to make the 'tacit' dimension of the experience 'explicit' and 'tangible', because "'tacit knowledge' has a personal quality, which makes it difficult to formalize and communicate" (Inkepen and Dinur, 1998, p. 456). In view of this, the
interpretive approach aims at acquiring a rich and empathetic understanding of social life aspects and experiences (Smith and Heshusius, 1986).

As such, the methodology is concerned with capturing the 'tacit dimension', the experiences and the meaning that people draw from their experiences. The chosen research methodology facilitates the 'explication' and 'telling' of the experience.

4.4 Justification for a Qualitative Research Methodology

Given the positivist/rationalistic approach, I argue, in order to progress in making the 'tacit dimension' apprehensible and tangible for individuals, I cannot rely on this tradition. All previous discussion on 'tacit knowledge' has shown that human experiences cannot be understood through reductionist measures (Mishler, 1990; Giorgi, 1992).

Instead, a scientific approach is needed, that is not based on a dualistic ontology and objective epistemology, because "...we live today in a globally interconnected world in which biological, psychological, social and environmental phenomena are all interdependent. To describe this world appropriately we need an ecological perspective which the Cartesian world picture does not offer" (Capra, 1982, p. XVIII).

The weaknesses expressed earlier do not make the technique-oriented approach obsolete or 'wrong', they rather explain the approach to be insufficient for the purpose of this study. Preferrably, a human-centred approach is needed, which relates the individual to the natural, social and biographical background (Winograd and Flores, 1986). Enabling the description of the 'tacit dimension' as it manifests itself in the individuals' experience, here the 'tacit' accomplishment of tasks and chores in daily lives.

Hence, qualitative research methodology is an opportunity to generate understanding based on 'subjective' interpretations of people (researcher and research participants). In the sense, of understanding how people 'experience' and 'interpret' their realities (Wildemuth, 1993; Kaplan and Maxwell, 1994). In attempting to uncover a deeper understanding of human behaviour, the researcher has to go beyond description and definition to reach for the meanings people attach to their experiences (Warren, 2002; Boland and Pondy, 1983).

These premises encourage a research methodology, which combines the requirement of maintaining the perspective of the research participants ('seeing through the eyes of') (Kaplan and Maxwell, 1994) with the academic demands of intellectual analysis which entails some abstraction and some movement away from the purely phenomenal (Bryman, 1988). In consequence, this study adopts a qualitative methodology that allows the constructed reality of individuals to be captured (Schütz, 1945, 1953; Berger and
Luckmann, 1966) because "in examining the qualities of experience one arrives at the essence of the experience" (Field and Morse, 1994, p. 27).

The research participant's experience, which is inscribed in the life course or the biography of the research participant embodies a 'learning career' (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 1999, 2002) and an 'interrupted occupational biography' (Evans et al., 2002). To get to the core of this experience, the approach is based on three methodological elements: biography, phenomenology and ethnography are combined to empirically research the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' and to make the 'tacit dimension' explicit.

4.5 The Combination of Biography, Phenomenology and Ethnography

In this section, the premises of a methodology are set out, that allow the exploration of the biographical and 'tacit' experience of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'. (Auto)biographical research, ethnography and phenomenology and are among the wide range of qualitative approaches used to study the phenomena (Anderson, 1998), which are combined in this study.

In this study, the exploration, description and interpretation of the meanings of the research participants' experiences reflect an attempt to understand their experiences in a holistic way (Munhall, 2001), including several aspects of the lived experience, such as emotions, hopes, aspirations and confidence (Yorks and Kasl, 2002). For the purpose of interpreting and understanding experiences the unification of the elements of biography, phenomenology and ethnography seems appropriate. These elements are integral to this study's design.

'Tacit knowledge' development is 'tacit', subjective and 'personal' learning. Investigating the subject matter, the complexity of 'tacit' or 'personal knowledge' in an informal, biographical learning context, calls for a process of inductive, semi-structured research (Silverman, 1993), for observation and inquiry. Verbalising this 'tacit' knowledge, its subjective and context-specific dimensions can only be revealed through an interpretive approach unifying elements of biography (Miller, 2000), ethnography (Van Manen, 1988; Altheide and Johnson, 1994; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) and phenomenology (Eisner, 1991; Moustakas, 1994). The integration of these three elements in this interpretive approach (Denzin, 1989) was considered to best serve the exploration and explication of the 'tacit dimension' and 'tacit knowledge' potential inherent in the life history stories that were to be collected. 'Biography' is used as a category to describe and analyse the impact of complex social processes on the lives of individuals. This category aims at understanding the learning and actions of individuals in relation to their social context. It refers to the construction and reconstruction of personal identity, a 'learning biography'
(Alheit, 1992) and the construction and reconstruction of a life-world related sense which equals social and 'tacit knowledge'. Here, biography is not considered as a chronological sequence of events, but as a continuous process of interpretation of life experiences (Miller, 2000; Vorländer, 1990).

In using this interpretive research approach, the researcher asks the research participant to tell his or her story with respect to the subject of investigation. Elements of ethnography (Denscombe, 1998) seek to describe and analyse part of this ('out of paid work', home-maker, carer, dad/mum at home) culture. Ethnography concentrates on the individual views or shared views and aims to describe the 'cultural' knowledge of the participants, a description of their daily lives and routines (Hammersley, 1992). This study concentrates on the descriptions people give to their daily lives and routines, and allows for a number of views to be examined at the same time with the goal of understanding. By encouraging research participants to describe their cultural world, and by providing them with the opportunity to describe their experiences in their own terms (Sorrell and Redmond, 1995), the researcher can build an overall picture of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

In addition, phenomenology seeks to clarify the nature of the phenomena under study in the 'life world' of the individuals experiencing them (Held, 1996). It provides a focus on the 'lived experience', which aims at uncovering the concealed meaning in the phenomenon and the meaning it holds for the individual (Van Manen, 1990).

Due to the 'tacit' dimension of the experience, the aggregation of the descriptive data would not in itself answer the question of 'how do the individuals' experience the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies?' Although, the ethnographic element might have shed light on the participants' feelings, emotions and opinions, only the addition of a phenomenological element can deal with the question of 'what meaning can be found in the words of the participants which tells us about the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies?' and 'what does it mean for the individual?' The narrative description provides rich, in-depth data and offers a scaffold to the broader picture of the phenomenon of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

In summary, the interpretive paradigm used to explore individuals' 'tacit' experiences is based on and combines elements of biography, ethnography and phenomenology, because the complexity and comprehensiveness of the subject matter require this unifying (pluralistic) interpretive approach. In using a multidimensional approach to research, the researcher may come closer to understand both her/his own personal interpretation of the
research phenomenon and the experiences of the research participants (Schwandt, 1994). The three theoretical perspectives are brought together in the next section.

4.5.1 The Biographical Element
The experience of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies' is inscribed in the biography of the research participants. The biographical perspective locates the development of 'tacit knowledge' into the experience and life course of the individual. In this study, qualitative life history and biographical research offers a valuable window into the development of 'tacit knowledge' and 'tacit forms of key competencies'. Thus, we can see how people do relate to their own 'tacit' competence development as situated in their biographies.

Biographical methods in the study of adult learning give greater prominence to personal and social meanings, as well as the active role of people as moral agents and participants in the creation of learning (Edwards, 1993); as well as social, educational and psychological processes (Miller, 2000). This study embraces a biographical approach, which is well established in European adult education research (Merrill, 1999a, b; Alheit and Dausien, 2001) as "a framework for exploring the subjectivity, complexity and context of human behaviour, enabling respondents to reflect upon, interpret, give meaning to and construct past events and experiences within a social context" (Crossan et al., 2003, p. 58).

With this understanding, the biographical approach of this study determines the focus on the life stories of adults in order to connect past and present lives towards attitudes and awareness of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'. It refers to the self-reflexive (Giddens, 1991), sense-making, organisation of (social) experiences of individuals because people seek to make sense of their daily-lived experiences.

The narrated life story represents the biographer's overall construction of his or her past and anticipated life because individual experiences are always embedded in a coherent, meaningful context, and constitute a biographical construct. In short, this means that 'experience equals knowledge', because knowledge is always 'articulated biographically' (Schütz and Luckmann, 1979). In narrating and reflecting upon past periods and phases in their lives, research participants spoke about how experiences of mother/parenthood, family life, periods of employment and unemployment, impacted upon the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'. Through this plotting of a life story, the integration of successive life events into a meaningful whole (Polkinghorne, 1988) was achieved. Here, biographies are used to reach beyond the mere description of life stages and events to the negotiation of action, learning and knowledge development in everyday life, reaching for
the 'taken-for-granted', routine action, coping and learning strategies - the 'tacit dimension' of knowledge and competency development.

The biographical representation of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' locates the development in interwoven parallel histories (work history, family mile-stone events, personal significant events) of the individual. It clarifies and structures the interlinkage of biographical events and 'tacit knowledge' development. It also enables a temporal ordering of biographical phases and periods in the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'. Thus, by exploring the way people develop 'tacit forms of key competencies' -through the analysis of their biographies-, it is possible to recall and reconstruct actions and learning situations, which have led to the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'. Using people's own stories involves re-conceptualisation, and an exploration of one's past experiences, and how diverse factors have shaped perceptions, values, attitudes and behaviours (Miller, 2000).

In addition, the biographical approach places the voices of participants central to the research process, and enables them to be heard (Reinharz, 1992), as they reflect upon, interpret, give meaning to and construct past events and experiences within a social context. "People live lives with meaning. Biography ...looks at how subjects give subjective meaning to their life experiences" (Denzin, 1989, p.14). The biographical/ life history perspective or element in the research approach combines the intention of taking into account the economic, social and cultural embeddedness of life courses and the intention to understand the individual meanings and decision-making processes that underlie sequences and transitions in life (Heinz and Krüger, 2001). This approach provides a framework for revealing the subjectiveness, complexity and context of human behaviour, because it emphasises the individual social actor, stressing personal experience as the subject matter of the biographical interview and seeks to reveal the content of a participants' mind (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997).

In this methodology and conceptual framework 'learning' is furthermore understood in a broad sense as the social process of making, shaping and transforming social experiences through changing situations over periods of time (Dausien, 1998). This study's methodology draws on the educational, theoretical perspective of 'biographical learning' (Alheit and Dausien, 2002). 'Biographical learning' "is seen as the (trans)formation of experience, knowledge and action structures in the context of people's life histories and life worlds" (Alheit and Dausien, 2002, p.11). This perspective takes as its starting point the life history perspective of the actual learner (Krüger and Marotzki, 1995, 1999) in the sense of a 'phenomenological concept learning' (Schulze, 1993a,b; Alheit and Dausien, 2002).
4.5.2 The Phenomenological Element

As established earlier, the main feature of the interpretive approach is its phenomenological base, which stipulates that person and world are inextricably related through the person’s lived experience of the world (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Gadamer, 1960/1994; Heidegger, 1927/1962; Husserl, 1900-1901/70; Schutz, 1945, 1953). The phenomenological perspective of this study aims at revealing the meaning of the experience of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'; and the development of ‘tacit knowledge’. The underlying assumption of phenomenology is that human experiences can be described in order to learn how we get meaning from our experiences (Eichelberger, 1989).

Phenomenology focuses on the world that the study participants subjectively experience and aims at understanding the meaning of experiences in everyday lives (Anderson, 1998). In an attempt to represent the experiences of the observed accurately (Anderson, 1998) and to gain deeper insights into human nature (and understandings of the nature of human activity), phenomenology asks the question, 'What is this experience like'? or 'What is the meaning of something'? In doing so, it attempts to illuminate and explain phenomena [and the concealed meanings embedded in the words of participant narrative (Maggs-Rapport, 2000)] rather than taxonomize or abstract it (Van Manen, 1990).

Giorgi (1992) describes the phenomenological ideas about human experience as having two different meanings within social science: one loose and generic meaning, such as ideographic, subjective or personal knowledge, and one more strictly defined meaning, such as the study of consciousness. Both have been subject to this study.

In a step towards the understanding and analysis of the experiences, the experiences are then 'reduced' to a central, 'core meaning' or the 'essence' of the experience (Moustakas, 1994), which here include feelings and emotions. The aim of reducing the lived experience, the 'phenomenological reduction' (Giorgi, 1990; 1992), to its basic meaning is to condense the core meanings and to create an essence of the lived experience. Through identifying the basic meaning or the core essence, it is possible to describe essential aspects of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'. This furthermore guides the researcher to use him- or herself as an interpreter in the research process.

4.5.3 The Ethnographic Element

Ethnography literally means a description of people or cultures, where attention is given to the way the people being studied see their world (Denscombe, 1998). Ethnographic research comes from the discipline of social and cultural anthropology where "ethnographers immerse themselves in the lives of people they study" (Lewis, 1985, p. 380) and seek to place the phenomena studied in its social and cultural context.
Ethnography is interested in the descriptions people give to their cultural world, providing them with the opportunity to describe their experiences in their own terms (Sorrell and Redmond, 1995). It is generally concerned with finding out how the members of the group and/or culture being studied understand things, the meanings they attach to happenings, the way they perceive their reality (Dencombe, 1998). In this respect, "'good' ethnographies reflect 'tacit knowledge', the largely unarticulated, contextual understanding" (Altheide and Johnson, 1994, p. 492) as presented in this study.

In recent times, the ethnographic inquiry of routine and normal aspects and facets of social and everyday life is regarded as a research topic. In this context, ethnography refers to the study of cultures and groups - their life-style, understandings and beliefs within 'our own' society (Dencombe, 1998). The investigation of the context and culture of the group of people developing 'tacit forms of key competencies' takes place within 'our own society'. The challenge then, for this qualitative and ethnographic research is to "do the work of understanding and presenting various life worlds and their important participants" (Altheide and Johnson, 1994, p. 498). "Clarifying the nature, context, process, significance, and consequences of the ways, in which human beings define their situations" (Altheide and Johnson, 1994, p. 498) shows that "ethnographies display 'tacit knowledge'" (ibid., p. 492), and as such the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

This kind of research "shifts the focus of research from the perspective of the ethnographer as an outsider to a discovery of the insider's point of view. Ethnography is not merely an objective description of people and their behaviour from the observer's viewpoint. It is a systematic attempt to discover the knowledge that a group of people have learned and are using to organize their behaviour" (Spradley and McCurdy, 1972, p. 9). And specifically, to 'discover' and 'unravel' the 'tacit' dimension and 'tacit knowledge'.

Consequently, this study emphasises the importance of understanding things from the point of view of those involved, as proposed in ethnography, "to grasp the native's point of view, his (her) relation to life, to realize his (her) vision of his world" (Malinowski, 1922, p. 25). Therefore, the ethnographic element of this study is concerned with "recording and interpreting another people's way of life" (Nader, 1993, p. 7).

Including an ethnographic element in this research "is directed towards producing what is referred to as 'theoretical', 'analytical', or 'thick' descriptions (whether of societies, small communities or social worlds). These descriptions must remain close to the concrete reality of particular events but at the same time reveal general features of human social life" (Hammersley, 1990, p. 598), thus showing an interplay of the issues raised before. Ethnographic research should achieve "both rich and intensive description and
generalizability” (Woods, 1979, p. 268) because the main goal of an ethnography is understanding (Altheide and Johnson, 1994). The final account is more than just a description, it is a construction, not a direct ‘reproduction’, a photograph, but rather a crafted construction - including the ethnographer’s own experience (Denscombe, 1998).

The interpretive social sciences then provide the strategies suitable for data collection, recording and analysis (Creswell, 2003), which are discussed in chapter 4 and in chapter 5.

4.6 Selection of Research Participants

4.6.1 Study sample

This study addresses two target groups and focuses on individuals who were either enrolled on a ‘return-to-work’ course or who had already returned to work. Initially, I planned to undertake 40 interviews altogether, 20 interviews with people who were at the time of the study enrolled on a return-to-work course and 20 with people who had already returned to work. Seven people cancelled their participation - which left 33 participants. According to the study rationale, interviewees were divided into two main categories:

1. Category ‘on course’: The first target group contains unemployed people (of both sexes), currently enrolled on courses in CVT, aiming to re-enter the labour market. These are individuals with a rather continuous occupational biography, that is, one without many interruptions. Most of whom had experienced a period of unemployment due to lay-offs and redundancy. Amongst them are women, either holding a VET certificate or not, whose occupational career was interrupted by taking on the task of running a family household. Due to a rather long interruption in their learning experience, studying on CVT courses will be a rather unfamiliar experience for some.

2. Category: ‘returned-to-work’: This target group consists of people who had already returned to the labour market after completing a CVT or ‘return-to-work’ course.

This classification helped to structure and categorise the data. Within these two categories, outlined in table 4.2, the interviews were realised with four subgroups of interviewees. Firstly, male and female participants of CVT courses (who show a rather continuous occupational biography), secondly, female students who are trying to re-enter the labour market after a period of interruption in their occupational career for family reasons (‘women returners’). Thirdly, males and females who returned to work after completing a CVT course and finally, former female participants of CVT courses who successfully returned to work.
Table 4.2: Categories of research participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Women returners</th>
<th>Other (male and female) individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'On course'</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40- 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual participants on a CVT- or 'return-to-work' course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total 18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Returned to work'</td>
<td>40- 9</td>
<td>40- 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants succeeded in returning to work /new occupational fields</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total 15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Altogether, 33 research participants participated. 18 people from five different 'return-to-work' courses and 15 individuals from private school contacts who volunteered to take part in the study. Consistent with the criteria of interpretive research, potential research participants were sampled according to theoretical rather than to statistical criteria (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). They had to be 'experts concerning the subject matter of the research' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), in managing a (family) household, and had to agree or to volunteer for one interview to which they gave informed consent. Since the primary goal of the study was to understand the participants' experience of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies', the sampling method did not seek to obtain a 'representative' sample. This accords with the quest for explanation in qualitative research. Here, the selection of people, the sample, emerges as a sequence of decisions based on the outcomes of earlier stages of the research process (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Chapter 6 provides a detailed description of the 33 respondents taking part in this research.

4.6.2 Non-Probability, Purposive Sampling

The sampling strategy used in this study and the selection of the research participants for the study did not take place at random. A purposive sampling of research participants as a non-probability sampling strategy was necessary for the purpose of the study as the choice of research participants was critical for the research (Denscombe, 1998). The usual procedure for selecting research participants for biographical research is that of 'selective sampling' (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973). Research participants were chosen on a conceptual basis and invited to participate according to their relevance to the topic of investigation and were therefore seen as valuable contributors to the illumination of the research phenomenon and question.

4.6.3 Sampling Criteria

Two target groups of research participants were selected according to the purpose of the study. The first group of research participants represents 18 CVT students, mainly women
who experienced long interruptions in their working careers due to raising their children. The second group consists of 15 former CVT students of both sexes who had returned to paid employment after having experienced a period of unemployment in their lives. The research focus requires two 'target groups', because the group who had already returned to work, is seen as having moved on from being solely responsible for managing the family household and the research participants are able to reflect 'from a distance' on their experiences. Whereas the other group of research participants, who are still enrolled on a return-to-work course, are still in the process of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies' while being 'out of paid work'. They are able to tell, express and explain their 'immediate' situation and experience it first hand, without a difference or lapse in time.

Two main criteria for the choice of the target groups are essential for the research: a) the inclusion of mothers and b) the inclusion of people who had low level or no school certificates and who had not spent a long period of time in the educational system. The target group 'on course' was supposed to include mothers who had spent a long period of time out of the labour market due to raising their children. It was assumed that especially mothers would develop a wide range of 'tacit forms of key competencies' and not see, rate and value their developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' very highly. And second, for those people with no or low level school leaving certificates and those who spent a short period of time in the educational system it is assumed that they do not recognise and value their developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' due to their social and cultural background.

These criteria are integrated in the biographical interviews as they emphasise the socio-cultural background of the research participants. The assumption is that people with low level or no qualifications do not recognize and value their developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' as much as people who have achieved higher levels of qualifications. This assumption is investigated and exemplified in the data analysis, where special emphasis is put on 'the social structure of the research participants' and is derived from chapter 6.

4.6.4 Snowballing

The research participants already 'returned to work' were recruited through a process of reference from one individual to the next. This sampling strategy, the process of 'snowballing' (Denscombe, 1998), started when I invited five mothers in my daughter's school to participate. I had prepared a short explanatory letter beforehand which explained the purpose of the research which I also handed out to other mums. The five mothers agreed to participate and 'spread the word' that I needed people who would like to be interviewed. I also contacted people who were suggested by my former research
participants. The advantage of this process was that all research participants met the needs and characteristics of the purpose of the study as they all had been out of the labour market due to motherhood and family commitments. Finally, I managed to locate nine ‘women returners’ and six other females and males who had gone back to work after completing a ‘return-to-work’ course.

4.7 Locating Research Participants 'On Course'
Locating people in the category 'on course' turned out to be far easier, as all the colleges offered help and assistance in terms of access to their 'return-to-work' courses and I was welcome to ask students to participate. The research participants for the group 'on course' were contacted through two local FE colleges that offered 'return-to-work' courses and research participants from five different courses were approached. The five 'return-to-work' courses were: a) Pre-vocational training (PVT) course, b) Basic Employability course, c) Childcare course, d) Business Administration course and d) IT-training course (a description of the features and characteristics of the 'return-to-work' courses (CVT courses) is provided in Appendix A).

It was assumed that full-time mothers were to be found particularly in the childcare course. And research participants with no or low level school leaving certificates were assumed to be found in the pre-vocational training (PVT) course and Basic Employability course, because these courses specifically targeted people with no or low level school leaving certificates and no or low literacy or numeracy skills. Within this group it was the most difficult to find people willing to take part in the study. Two people withdrew their given consent just before the interviews were to take place. Their decision were accepted and they were assured that it was perfectly reasonable to change their minds. Finally, I located 18 people for the category 'on course' who were willing to take part in the research. The interviews took place in the two colleges, either in the café or an empty classroom, wherever the research participants felt most comfortable.

4.8 Gaining Access to the Colleges and Courses and to the Research Participants
Gaining access to people and places is a crucial part of successful ethnographic research and to gain access should not be seen as taken for granted (Cassell, 1988). Data were collected from mature students on 'return-to-work' courses in two FE colleges. Before the fieldwork or the interviews in the colleges could take place, key people in the colleges had to be identified and asked for assistance. Also, permission for access to the college and courses had to be requested. The first step of gaining access to the research participants on 'return-to-work' courses was to contact the principal or head of the respective colleges, which offered relevant 'return-to-work' courses. I talked informally about the research study and submitted a formal letter of request stating the purpose of the study. After
agreeing and giving permission, the head of department selected possible courses (according to the objectives of the study) which could be approached. The head of the college then introduced me to the relevant tutor; the tutors were informed about my intention and invited to take part. Especially in the cases of the PVT, Basic Employability Training and the Childcare course the tutors showed a great deal of interest in my study and were glad to help me. The tutors 'prepared' their students on the courses and introduced me to them. Being introduced by someone in authority and being 'recommended', helps to strengthen the researcher's position in order to work in the environment (Fetterman, 1989). In an introductory meeting I had the chance to give an overview of my study, its general aims and discuss any further questions. It was emphasised that taking part was totally voluntary. A time schedule was created for people to identify when and where they were free to be interviewed.

Gaining access is a continual process in fieldwork research (Burgess, 1982) because research is a process conducted over a period of time. Gaining access can furthermore be understood as forming the establishment of relationship with the research participants and allows the researcher into the world of people involved (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Being trusted and achieving a relationship with its participant members is a key issue for (ethnographic) qualitative research, because it influences the quality of the study (Fetterman, 1989). I contacted and met people at least five times, at the initial meeting, in the colleges, on the school grounds, on the phone, discussing times, dates and places of the interview, clarifying issues emerging from the interviews and finally for the 'verification' of and 'checking' of my conclusions. During this time, a personal 'feel' came to the situation as people recognised me and it felt like a shared encounter. Thus, 'close' relationships were formed with the research participants. I was impressed that the majority of people showed a genuine interest in my study and asked about how things were progressing which created a good feeling between us.

4.9 Conclusions
This first part of chapter 4 has examined issues relating to the research methodology. In studying the two different paradigms it has been reasoned that the interpretive approach is the most suitable approach for the exploration of people's development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'. It was best suited for the purpose of the study to gain understanding of the perceptions of participants who have a shared experience and to describe these subjective experiences (Berg, 2004; Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2002; Schwandt, 2001).

As such, this chapter charts the 'human process' of methodological choice (May, 1994). For myself, it meant 'engagement' in methodological understanding of the research because the methodology develops from the researcher's ontological and epistemological stance
(Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). In consequence, an adequate conceptualisation and understanding of the canons of the adopted perspective, the philosophical foundation (Baker et al., 1992; Stern, 1994) of the research have been discussed and explained while setting out the premise for a methodology that allows to empirically study and explore the development of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’.

Finally, this chapter details the selection of the research participants and colleges. The second part of the methodology chapter explains the rationale for qualitative research methods in outlining "the skills, assumptions, and practices used by the researcher when moving from a paradigm and a research design to the collection of empirical materials. Strategies of inquiry connect the researcher to specific approaches and methods for collecting and analyzing empirical materials" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 202).
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY - Part 2

4.10 Introduction

Having established the primary research question, the resulting objectives and the research design ethos, part 2 lays out the data collection process, and acknowledges and defends the research methods chosen for this research. It holds the experiences and views expressed by the research participants to be central in the described actual structure of the research.

Whereas the literature review provided the basis for the development of a research framework and research tool for capturing the 'tacit dimension', this part then outlines the data collection activities, such as the biographical, in-depth interviews which were enhanced by the creation of mind maps and mini-biographies. Conversations, peer debriefing and participant feedback ensured an optimum of authenticity, in the sense that the research participants' perspectives have been reported as clearly and accurately as possible (Morse and Field, 1996). Creating mini-biographies furthermore supported the study's concern for 'thick description' and inclusion of affective aspects of the experience. Finally, trustworthiness, authenticity and reflexivity are considered. This research design embraces a conscious self-understanding of the research process (Yin, 2003), where the researcher must confront the preconceptions that guided the original research design with the data that emerge through the research process (Janesick, 2002). Because, "what we call data is really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (Geertz, 1973, p.9).

Consequently, interpretive research with its appropriate data collection activities provides contextual depth, and the fieldwork allowed me to develop a broad picture of the ways individuals define their personal situation. Subsequently, I learned about the myriad experiences that contributed to the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

4.11 Data Collection: Methods and Issues

A research method is "an approach to addressing a research question or problem" (Anderson, 1998, p.85); which is shaped by the methodology (Mason, 1996). Strategies of inquiry, or research methods, comprise skills, assumptions, and practices used by the researcher when moving from a research question to a paradigm or perspective, to a research design and then to the empirical world; to the collection of empirical materials (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Such contextual inquiry requires the use of self as the instrument, the use of the investigator's implicit knowledge, a natural setting, purposive sampling, and inductive
data analysis (Lincoln and Guba, 1985); all inherent in the interpretive approach (Denzin, 1989) and applied to data collection and analysis in this study.

Given the study’s concern for understanding individuals’ meanings and for providing a rich description of people’s experiences, meaning oriented methods were preferred. These methods confer the tenet of qualitative research, which "involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials - case study, personal experience, life story, interview, observational, historical, and visual texts - that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p.2). In order to gain data on and ‘deep’ insights into the experience of developing ‘tacit forms of key competencies’, thus reaching out for the ‘personal’ level of feelings and emotions, two main strategies were applied: in-depth, (socio-)biographical interviewing techniques and the creation of mini-biographies and mind maps (Novak, 1998). Here subjective life-stories obtained by interviews are a way of approaching the complex phenomena of the reality (Egger, 1995) of individuals. The narrated life story represents the research participant’s construction of life experiences and the technique of biographical interviewing facilitates recalling these experiences.

Given the nature of the research problem and focus, direct observation of developing ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ seems very time consuming and not a very rewarding method. In-depth, (socio-) biographical interviews assured that “the verbal formulations of subjects are treated as an appropriate substitute for the observation of actual behaviour” (Heritage, 1984, p.236).

4.12 Biographical Perspective in Interviewing

The biographical perspective adopted in this interview approach draws on feminist perspectives and is based on a ‘narrative approach’ (Miller, 2000). The ‘narrative approach’ is concerned with the ongoing development of the research participant’s viewpoint during the telling of a story, which leads to the unravelling of the ‘tacit dimension’. The approach is concerned with understanding the individual’s perspective as it is shaped by context and it allows one to view an individual in the context of his or her whole life (Bogdan, 1974). Bogdan emphasises that (auto)biography is unique in allowing us to view an individual in the context of his or her whole life. (Socio-) biographic interviews acknowledge that research participants are ‘experts’ of their own situation, which is shaped by social, economic and cultural factors by being embedded in life courses.

This interplay between actor and social structure and the question of ‘how have individuals negotiated their path through a changing societal structure?’, link with the concept of ‘biographical learning’ (Alheit and Dausien, 1999). Developing ‘tacit forms of key competen-
ties' is regarded as 'learning' and 'learning experience' in this study. In consequence, life histories are collected to understand better the various ways in which individuals construct and deal with experience.

The biographical approach is especially useful when the area of interest is either the effects of change across time, or historical events as they have impinged upon the individual (Miller, 2000). Or, when the movement of people along their life course (Miller, 2000) is of interest. Both applies to the 'tacit' learning experience of individuals. As such, biographical and life course approaches are well suited "to understand individual attitudes, interpretations and activities as well as self-concepts connected with life stages, transition and duration of status" (Heinz and Krüger, 2001, p.31).

The biographical perspective and the life history approach cover events of the research participant's life course up to the present. Here, "techniques of biographical interviewing facilitate 'recall' through a process of cross-referencing as the research process moves back and forth in the life history and makes links between different types of events and segments (or periods) of the life of participants" (Miller, 2000, p.74). In eliciting and listening to life stories and biographies of individuals issues and themes relating to the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' were explored. A creative technique of 'mind mapping' aided and facilitated the research participants' process of 'recalling' and memory recollection. This is explained at a later stage in this chapter.

Finally, one has to note, that biographical accounts remain incomplete (Miller, 2000), because the biographic perspective, its time span, expands from the past through the present into the future, and most people will assume in telling their 'life story' that they will live on. This incident was taken into account in the interview guideline, because the research participants will have plans and hopes for the future, and as such participants were asked about their plans, hopes and wishes for the future.

4.13 In-depth, Semi-structured, (Socio)biographic Interviews: Principles and Application

In-depth, semi-structured, (socio)biographical interviews provided the main source of data, in order to "enter, in an empathic way, the lived experience of the person or group being studied" (McLeod, 1994, p.89). Semi-structured interviews allow for open-ended questions and "enable the researcher to understand and capture points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view of other through prior selection of questionnaire categories" (Patton, 1994, p.21). The advantage is that "open-ended responses permit one to understand the world as seen by the respondents" (ibid., p.21), in their own words.
The life history approach/(socio)biographical interviews rendered possible the “telling of experiences in the biographical context in which they occur” (Graham, 1984, p.110). Dexter (1970) describes interviews as a form of a dialogue, a conversation with a purpose as verbal interaction (Fetterman, 1989). This form of verbal interaction is necessary because through rich modes of discourse, including metaphors, stories and analogies, ‘tacit knowledge’ may be revealed (Choo, 1998).

The ‘tacit’ dimension of the experience embraced such questions as: How aware are people about the ‘tacit’ learning experience taking place? Is this experience recognised by the research participants? What values, beliefs, and emotions are inherent in this situation and experience? Conducting tape-recorded, semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face. (socio)biographical interviews aimed at understanding and finding answers to these questions.

4.13.1 The (Socio)biographical Dimension in the Interview Guideline

The individual interviews were based on following considerations. According to the relation of the biographical and personal background to the development of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ the focus of the interviews was on the following topics:

- **Biographical background** containing information about school leaving certificate, age, number and age of children, marital status, duration of interruption of employment, occupation of partner.

- **Occupational career**: first occupation/first initial training, occupational career - especially occupational change and reasons for it. Other work experience and reasons for interruption (occupational change, unemployment, etc.).

- **Family phase**: duration, personal assessment of skills acquired in the course of the family phase, feelings, emotions and self-perception.

- **Further biographical development, horizon & opinions**: the use of acquired skill in the course of the family phase, for new occupation, for future personal and occupational development. And personal perspectives for the near future.

- **Usefulness of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ for personal and/or career development**: assessment of the effects of acquired skills in the course of the family phase for returning to work, a new occupation, future career possibilities.

Interviews were carried out in order to identify the developed ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ and in order to assess the degree of awareness of developing and ‘possessing’ these ‘tacit forms of key competencies and skills’. During the interview the word ‘skills’
was generally used to refer to 'tacit forms of key competencies' and competences for the reason of simplification and comprehension.

While identifying 'tacit forms of key competencies' and looking at a wide range of factors affecting the development process and degree of awareness, the personal situation and biography of the participants was a central theme in the interviews. With the study's working hypothesis of the interrelation of interviewees' personal biographies and social situation to being aware of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' - individual situations and influencing factors are explored in detail in the data analysis; the experiences of the research participants (chapters 7 and 8) and concluded in chapter 9: 'discussion of findings'.

4.13.2 Interview Guideline

An interview guideline was designed beforehand as checklist and memory aid (Lofland and Lofland, 1984; Anderson, 1998) to ensure that information relating to self, family, life history, (including educational and job career pathway, competency and knowledge development), feelings and emotions was obtained from each research participant and relevant issues were explored. There was no predetermined wording or order in the questions asked (Merriam, 1998) and a conversational style was established.

The interview guide maintained focus on the following areas of interest: identification and analysis of the developed 'tacit forms of key competencies'; of the degree of awareness of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies', and of the notion of self-assurance and confidence gained from developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'. And finally, to discover the research participants' opinions, values, beliefs, emotions, aspirations and hopes. The guideline also allowed for direct questioning and for probing and clarifying emerging issues from the research participants' stories. In semi-structured interviews the researcher is free to probe and explore within pre-determined inquiry areas (Creswell, 1998). In keeping within the flexible nature of interpretive research, one advantage is, that interview guides can be modified in due course to focus attention on areas of particular importance, or to exclude questions the researcher has found to be unproductive for the aim of the research (Lofland and Lofland, 1984).

To conclude, the guideline was regarded as a 'jumping off point' used to elicit responses from the research participants, which allowed the research participants to be actively involved in the construction of data about their lives (Graham, 1984), to speak more widely (Denscombe, 1998), and to elaborate on the issues raised.
4.13.3 The Pilot Interview
A pilot interview was undertaken in preparation for the subsequent interviews which enabled practical experience of transcribing and preliminary analysis. By undertaking the pilot interview I was able to check the structure of the interviews and the focus of the interview guide against the requirements of the research purpose. It furthermore provided an opportunity to check the practicability of creating the 'mind maps' and to test logistics and practice my interview techniques (Powney and Watts, 1987).

4.14 Rationale for Choice of Interview Approach
Research is better served by interviews when a more in-depth insight into the topic is sought (Denscombe, 1998). Investigating experiences, emotions and feelings, rather than straightforward factual matters, require in-depth interviewing, because experiences and emotions need to be explored and cannot be "reported in a word or two" (Denscombe, 1998, p.111). Anderson (1990) values interviewing as a "unique opportunity to ask directly, how did it feel, what did it mean?" (p.98).

4.14.1 Rationale for Biographical Interviews
A biographical approach includes a more humanistic and subjective understanding of the complex process of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies' by listening to the voices of the research participants themselves. As such, biographies offer a framework for making explicit the complexity, context, intimacy and subjectivity of human behaviour which quantitative methods cannot (Bourner et al., 1991). In consequence, biographical interviews "offer researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher" (Reinharz, 1992, p.19), through which faceless 'cases' attain an identity (Miller, 2000).

The (socio)biographical interviews encouraged the participants to tell their stories. It is an appropriate method for studying the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' because people frame their experience in stories (Wilkins and Thompson, 1991). And 'stories' encourage people to say more that they would normally because they "permit researchers to examine perceptions that are often filtered, denied or not in the subjects' consciousness during traditional interviews" (Hansen and Kahnweiler, 1993, p.1394). Additionally, biographical data describes a phenomenon more fully, "if you want people to understand better than they otherwise might, provide them information in the form in which they usually experience it" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.120). For "stories,...., connect. They bring us a deepened coherence with the world of others and also within the many levels of the self" (Hirshfield, 1997, p.26).
Biographies, in this study, offer an understanding of the complex interplay of being 'out of the labour market', the fulfilment of tasks and chores at home, and the numerous 'tacit' learning situations, over a significant period of time in the lives of the individuals. The biographical perspective is 'holistic' because it covers significant events in and movement along the life course of the research participant. The holistic aspect of biographies emphasises the individual as a unique entity located in a complex network of social relationships that change and evolve over time (Miller, 2000). The biographical perspective now demonstrates how individuals have negotiated their path through this changing societal structure (Miller, 2000), because "people organize their personal biographies and understand them through the stories they create to explain and justify their life experiences" (Richardson, 1990, p.23), (see also Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 1993).

4.15 The Process of Creating the Mind Maps
The individual interviews were accompanied by the creation of a mind map. A mind map is a representation of an individual's personal knowledge, of an individual's own experience (Weick and Bougon, 1986), and "the process of map construction and the use of the map is intended to facilitate the elaboration and exploration by the client of his own belief and value system in relation to particular issues" (Eden et al., 1981, p.41). In this study, creating mind maps was a useful technique in eliciting 'tacit knowledge' and 'tacit skills'; they were used as "tools for reflective thinking and problem solving" (Eden et al., 1992, p.321). And represented a way of ordering and analysing something that was 'fuzzy' and allowed issues to be studied at a micro-level.

This was necessary, because recalling something that happened some time ago, is taken-for granted, thus 'tacit', or might even be seen as not important by individuals. Thus, employing a technique which helps to remember and aids recall is essential and helpful. The mind map structured the reflection of the research participants' experiences and beliefs. It was a tool to elicit internal representations, (e.g. thoughts, memories, ideas) so that others could view it. Finally, it generated a significant body of empirical data (Osborne, 1996).

The research participants were asked to verbalise their situation, to write down key words and expressions that described their experiences, in relation to three main concepts on the mind map, see Figure 4.4. The first concept captured 'a short biography, and important personal life history events', marking special and critical events. The second, referred to the acquired 'tacit' competencies and skills, the 'tacit forms of key competencies' during this time. And lastly, to 'emotional aspects', how did the interviewees feel at this time while developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'?
The mind map became a representation of the experience - it helped to reveal the 'tacit dimension' and the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies', including emotions and feelings. The mind mapping exercise is based on ethnographic techniques which are complemented by in-depth interviewing, thus enriching the data obtained whilst improving the validity of the findings (Pettigrew, 1973). Consequently, the mind map provided a visual image to facilitate the spoken interaction.

The technique of mind mapping was very useful in several ways. It was a helpful and powerful technique to elicit the 'tacit dimension', to reveal 'tacit forms of key competencies' and feelings, and emotions about the 'tacit' learning process behind this experience. It, furthermore, moved the attention from the interview situation and the researcher's 'eagerness of wanting to know' on to the 'experience' of the research participant. This balanced the situation of who was 'in charge' because a setting was achieved where the focus was on the mind map and on the individual's 'story'. With the aid of the mind map the research participants were encouraged to speak freely about their daily routines, their day-to-day (learning) experiences and the feelings they had with regard to the interview guide. The mind mapping process embraced the following steps:

1. The interview started with general questions about personal details, then moved towards biographical details, encouraging the research participants to talk, in 'a little warming-up phase' with 'easy' questions to get into the interview process.
2. Stating main biographical events/dates, such as school leaving dates, marriage, birth date of children, divorce, time of un/employment as starting points.
3. The mapping process was encouraged with questions such as, what was your day like? How did you organize your day? Note chores and tasks.
4. Moving on to more specific questions, what exactly did you do? What skills and competencies did you learn? - name them.

5. Connection to the learning process behind the acquisition of competencies: How did you know what to do? How did you learn?

6. Linking up with emotions and feelings - how did you feel at that specific time?

7. Finally, reflection and summary: how do you see and value this experience? How is it valued and remunerated by others?

4.16 The Interview Situation

A total of thirty-three in-depth individual interviews were carried out over a period of six months. Two students from the Pre-Vocational Training (PVT) course changed their minds and decided not to participate after they had volunteered to be interviewed at the introductory meeting. All interviews were informal and were held at the most convenient place for the individuals. The time and place, when and where to undertake the interviews was discussed with the research participants at the first meeting and I was prepared to travel myself and to pay for the expenses of the research participants' travel. Being responsive to research participants’ schedules is important in qualitative research as Ely et al. (1991) emphasize. All interviews with people on 'return-to-work' courses took place in quiet locations at the colleges, an empty classroom or the empty cafeteria. Half of the interviews with the research participants who had already 'returned-to-work' took place in a quiet café and the other half took place at the respondent’s homes. In this case, it was made clear in the beginning that there were to be no interruptions (by phone calls, partners or children etc.). Therefore, most interviews took place in the evening, because all the six men wanted to be interviewed in the evening and the five women chose a time when the children were out (clubs, 'Brownies', etc.). The other four interviews took place in the morning when the children were at school.

The interview guide was helpful in initiating the conversation and in keeping the focus of the interviews on the experience of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'. The interview began with a general question, such as 'could you tell me what you have been doing since you left school?' Or, a general overview or timeline was created by the research participant and major events (marriage, birth of children, phases of training and employment), year and occasion were recorded on the mind map. With the intention to describe in detail the typical routine of a 'normal' day and, what tasks and chores were performed; this included their concerns, worries, emotions and awareness about their situation. The research participants were encouraged to talk freely and were not limited to the questions asked (Minichiello et al, 1995). In this situation the interviewer was able to sense when to allow for silence, when to probe more deeply, and when to change the di-
rection of the interview while the research participants reflected on their lived experience of the 'tacit' learning situation.

Creating the mind map had the positive side effect of moving attention away from the 'interview situation' and the research participant was able to talk and focus on the 'story' and mind map. This helped to create a more relaxed situation at the beginning of the interview for the research participants, so that they could concentrate on the process of recalling 'their story', while drawing and writing on the sheet of paper, and holding and 'playing' with a biro in their hand. Throughout the interview situation, the research participants were made aware that their 'story', and their knowledge, experiences and feelings were important. They were encouraged to speak about whatever they felt was important and consequently, the research participants provided rich, contextual information and I learned about their lives. Through this procedure, qualitative 'thick' accounts (Geertz, 1973) were gained from the process and experience of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'. In the interview process respondents had an equal status and I felt grateful that they had allowed me to listen to their stories and to gain a snapshot of their life and experiences.

Recalling and talking about the experience of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' involved another important issues and challenge. Some research participants expressed the view, that they 'saw' their experience as 'trivial' and 'not very important'. They asked themselves, why anyone would be interested in their story of parenting or motherhood and of 'unemployment'. To overcome this, building rapport and establishing an effective 'researcher - research participant's relationship' becomes important - on which the quality of qualitative interviewing depended (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1983). This is outlined in the next section.

4.16.1 Researcher - Participant Relationship: Gaining Entry, Building Rapport

Qualitative, 'subjective' research is based on developing a relationship with the research participants by gaining entry, rapport, empathy and reciprocity (Chatman, 1984). There must be a level of trust between the research participants and the researcher in order for an effective interview to be undertaken. Building rapport stipulates that the research participant feels competent and comfortable enough in the interview situation to 'talk back' (Blumer, 1969); especially, because the interviews touched very sensitive topics (e.g. divorce, debts, illness etc.).

The research participants' perception that their experience 'didn't seem important' to them or anyone else, e.g. the researcher, and that "there wasn't much to tell" was expressed in people's behaviour when they asked me if I 'really' wanted to know about their 'normal' daily lives? And then they asked me why I was interested in their stories?
To resolve this, I needed to create trust and remain genuine in terms of the research focus and purpose. I showed my genuine interest in the stories and daily routines of the people concerned and how the research participants’ ‘felt’ when I relayed some information about my situation and how I came to undertake this study. At the beginning of the interview I asked if they had any questions about me and I revealed some more personal information about myself. For example, why I had come to the U.K., and my involvement and interest in the study. Edwards (1990) refers to this as ‘placing the interviewer’ for the research participant and I found this very helpful in creating a more relaxed situation and in establishing rapport. The revealed fact that I had a child myself created an atmosphere of ‘understanding’ from one parent to the other and in the cases of mothers - from one woman to another. Reinharz (1992) supports the revelation of personal details because it puts researcher and research participants on ‘common ground’ (Cook and Fonow, 1990). Furthermore, a straightforward description of the research purpose was given to the research participants because they were asked to “grant access to their lives, their minds, their emotions” (Lofland and Lofland, 1984, p.25) as a way of sharing the research experience. The use of everyday language, during and after the interviews, helped to create a conversational, friendly atmosphere.

An interview situation which takes place in an atmosphere of trust, is supportive and helps in establishing rapport and the elicitation of rich and meaningful responses. Creating and establishing a close, non-hierarchical friendly interview relationship helps to get a fuller, closer picture of the mainly females’ experiences (Acker, 1983). Empathising with the research participants was not difficult and seemed natural because I had been in a similar situation myself and could relate to many of the issues mentioned by the research participants.

Issues of rapport and power were central to the process of collecting data. Showing ‘respect’ for the research participants, dealing respectfully with the research participants’ ‘subjectivity’ (Stanley and Wise, 1990) and showing a genuine interest in their stories turned out to be the key points in the interviewing process. As Thompson (1988) suggests a researcher must demonstrate “an interest and respect for people as individuals, and flexibility in response to them; an ability to show understanding and sympathy for their point of view; and, above all, a willingness to sit quietly and listen” (p.196) in order to carry out an effective interview. I had to concentrate and listen carefully, as it was very important to follow my research participants’ trains of thought (Creswell, 1998), to understand what they were relaying to me, while overseeing which themes and items had been covered so far in the interview situation. I believe my commitment to and engagement in the study demonstrated a genuine interest. And by being ‘engaged’ in the study, thus responsive,
sensitive and 'attentive', rather than distant, dispassionate and cool, the research participants were aware that my interest was genuine. Because establishing trust and familiarity, showing genuine interest, assuring confidentiality and not being judgmental are some of the important elements of building rapport' (Glassner and Loughlin, 1987).

Undertaking biographical interviews does imply a level of involvement, 'engagement' and interaction whereby the researcher cannot be left outside the research process. Interviewing here means that "the interviewer is prepared to invest her own personal identity in the relationship" (Oakley, 1981, p.41). Stanley and Wise (1993) explain, that a personal distance cannot be kept, because "the researched' will have feelings about us as much as we will about them, and also feelings (and theories) about the research itself" (p. 160). In this respect, interviews are seen as being based on an interaction and relationship between the researcher and researched. In my situation, being engaged in the research meant to be engaged in a 'dialogue' with the research participants, as a person with experiences and feelings, which could be shared with the research participants. From this view, interviews are treated "as a social encounter in which knowledge is constructed... (this) suggests the possibility that the interview is not merely a neutral conduit or source of distortion, but is instead a site of, and occasion for, producing reportable knowledge itself" (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997, p.113-114). I was very much aware that I could not predetermine the views and sympathies of all the research participants in advance and the main aim of my research was to involve the research participants and to enable them to express their views as openly as possible.

The majority of the research participants seemed quite surprised that someone was interested in their 'normal' lives and 'daily routines'. Statements such as "my husband never asks me how my day has been" highlighted this. But, once the research participants understood the purpose of the interview, they were happy to talk to me and felt 'pleased' that someone was interested in what they were doing, because so far nobody had bothered with this level of intensity. While talking to me and reflecting upon what they had mastered and 'learned' at home, the research participants became more and more aware of what they had achieved during this time in their lives. So, at the end of the interviews they seemed keen that their voices were heard by 'others', the readers of the study and the listeners at the seminars and conferences where I was going to talk about my study. Almost all the research participants stated that it was important to talk about "these things", and to "pass findings on", so that the recognition of 'women's work', 'unpaid work' and 'caring work' would be improved.

Feminist writers address the dynamics that occur in interviewing, as "...a power relationship between the researcher and the subject" (Hunter, 1995, p.151) with the researcher having much of the control. Feminist researchers, like Oakley (1981), point out that 'power rela-
relationships' exist in 'normal' interview situations, where the researcher has the power to control the interview situation. Due to their knowledge of the research literature, researchers seem to know more about the topic; they have intimate knowledge of their own research project concerning its goal, purpose etc., than the research participants. The researcher is also likely to be more formally educated and of a higher social status than the respondents (Seidman, 1991). Katz (1994) and Gilbert (1994) furthermore argue that race, class, family status, ethnicity, and other social identities are important sources of differential power that shape relationships between researchers and researched, even if they share similar national or local identities. All this creates a power imbalance and inequality in the research relationship, with the potential for exploitation of the research participant. This issue is analysed next.

Hence, instead of maintaining control over the situation, feminist sociologists regard the interview as a situation in which the researcher should not dominate the agenda, but instead encourage the interviewee to participate as much as possible and to feel comfortable enough to tell their own story as they see it. The situation of 'giving and taking', listening and responding to comments, oriented the interviews towards a sharing, empowering experience for the research participants. Instead of the researcher controlling the research the environment was left to the research participants (Bradley, 1993; Sutton, 1993; Mellon, 1990). The research participants helped to shape the actual research from the beginning, by providing the 'pieces' for the whole picture. The technique of 'snowball' sampling also helped, because the research participants who had been already interviewed helped to make contact with future research participants. This technique assisted me in gaining entry, establishing rapport, and meeting 'potential' research participants.

The inequities in the research relationship were furthermore addressed by conducting the interviews in participants' homes which disrupted power hierarchies between researcher and participants (Oberhauser, 1997; Falconer-Al Hindi, 1997). Another way of addressing the inequalities was by showing awareness of the social and cultural factors influencing the researcher-respondent interview situation.

4.16.2 Social and Cultural Factors Influencing the Interview Process

Researchers need to be aware that certain factors, such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, social class, status and religion influence the interview situation (Hughes, 1990). During the initial stage of the interviews it became clear that the two main influential socio-cultural factors seemed to be status, that of being a mother or parent and being German. I explained at the beginning of the interview that I was originally from Germany, thus my accent and the probability of 'different' wording or 'funny' expressions may occur during the interview. I felt that I had to 'explain' why I was from Germany. But when I told them that
I had a child myself, the research participants seemed more interested in this fact and my situation of having experienced a time 'out of paid work' and of becoming a parent, 'connected' with their lives.

Two interview partners were Bangladeshi, one was Chinese, and one was Polish, nationalities which were emphasised by the interviewees. But, the fact that everyone had something in common, that aspects of the personal situation were shared, 'put' everyone on 'common ground'. But then, I also felt that in the complexity of the interview situation 'the simultaneity of 'race', social class, gender, (assumed) sexuality and age (made) it extremely difficult to tease apart the aspects of the interviewer which might have had an impact on the interviewee or on the power dynamics between interviewer and interviewee” (Phoenix, 1994, p. 56). Still, I found it useful to be aware that these social characteristics might affect the responses from the research participants, and it helped me to reflect on the interview situation and the researcher - research participant relationship. Because obtaining meaningful information is based on the establishment of a trusting relationship and friendly interview situation.

4.16.3 Recording Data
Each research participant was individually interviewed for up to 90 minutes. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. The interviews were tape-recorded which had the advantage of capturing data - the individual’s stories in their own words, while I was able to focus on and concentrate on the research participant and the interview. It enabled me, furthermore, to support the research participants in creating the mind maps. Lofland and Lofland (1984) view tape-recording of interviews as imperative, which facilitates the process of writing down fieldnotes during the interview to supplement the tape recorded interviews (Devault, 1990).

4.16.4 Interview Protocol and Field Notes
For each interview a protocol was created (Creswell, 1994). It included place, time and date; sex, age and 'pseudonym' of the research participant; a heading referring to the key research question; a space for recording my comments; and a space for recording reflective notes after the interview. A short summary of my reflections (thoughts and feelings as well as emerging themes in the stories), impressions about the research participant, the interview and the atmosphere were documented in the protocol. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) refer to this as an opportunity to record personal thoughts “such as speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions” (p. 121) and it can be used as an analytical tool to integrate the interview material with one’s own reflections. Jotted down field notes supplemented the non-narrative, tangential data, e.g., body language, and mode of verbal ex-
pression by the informants served as a memory aid (Lofland and Lofland, 1984) and were found useful for recalling the interview situation at a later stage.

For Patton (1990), field notes are the researcher’s detailed and descriptive record of the research experience. He suggests taking field notes parallel to tape recording as a backup in case the tape recorder proves defective. Taking notes of especially important points provides reminders for later questions and for the analysis. I took notes about the context of the interview, impressions relating to the interview situation and arising hunches or thoughts relating to the phenomenon. Non-verbal behaviour cannot be tape-recorded and body language (such as frowns) can give valuable clues about the research participant’s state of mind. Patton (1990) moreover suggests that notes should be reviewed at the end of the interview, to make sure they make sense, and to reflect on whether the researcher really had found out what he or she intended to find out. This was done as quickly as possible after the conclusion of the interview, because this was also a crucial time for reflection and quality control; a time to ascertain that the data were useful and valid (Miller, 2000). And, it was particularly important for stressing the validity and rigour of the qualitative method (Patton, 1990).

4.16.5 Deciding When to Stop Interviewing
Deciding when to stop meant I had to sense when enough information had been gathered. This is the time for the researcher to disengage from the scenario, and to bring the interview to a close. Ackroyd and Hughes (1983) point out that disengaging from the interview has to be done with care because an ‘interview relationship’ has formed through the interview process. When coming to the end, the research participants were invited to raise any points that they thought still needed to be covered. Then, I thanked the research participants for their time and asked them if they had any questions for me, whether they wanted me to clarify or add anything else. I then switched off the tape recorder; this provided a little 'ritual' that allows closure for the interview (Miller, 2000) because then the closing of the interview is 'visible' and the research participants can relax. I asked permission to contact them at a later stage to confirm any details with them and handed them my card, in case anyone wanted to get in touch with me. Finally, the research participants were asked if they would like to be informed when the transcript or the study was completed.

4.16.6 Ethical Code and Consideration
The study involved human beings and ethical issues relating to the research had to be addressed. An ethical code was identified, which explained the research participants’ rights and my responsibilities. Here, ethics refer to "the standards established within the profession for the conduct of its members" (Homan, 1991, p.1). This research was based on freely given informed consent (I explained what the research was about, and why I was undertak-
ing it), the research participants' had the right to decide what to tell and what not to tell and it was conducted on the premise that research participants were considered equal partners in the study. The code stressed the research participants' entitlement to say 'no' to any question and 'stop' at any time during the interview; and to reject the use of the tape recorder. This right involved the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality. The privacy of the research participants was ensured because they were given pseudonyms to maintain anonymity and confidentiality (Atkinson, 1998).

The interviews were, on most occasions, very personal and intimate, which touched on ethical questions and issues. A collection of life stories and biographies by its very nature concerns a large amount of private information, personal details, and intimate issues and I was aware of the need for sensitivity. Biographical interviewing means an 'invasion of privacy' (Miller, 2000) and one has to be aware that it is an introspective process for the interviewee, which might turn into a negative experience. Research participants telling a life story might find themselves reliving painful episodes in their past (Miller, 2000). It was made clear to the research participants that they were free to stop the interview at any time if unanticipated themes with which they felt uncomfortable came up and the interview situation became stressful. It was furthermore explained to them that it was possible to say 'no' and to deny answering any question with which they felt uncomfortable.

4.16.7 Establishing Credibility and Trustworthiness

This final part of my research design concerns the validity, soundness and integrity of the findings and research process (Patton, 1990). Validity in qualitative research is defined as the extent to which the data and findings are plausible, credible and trustworthy, because interpretive research is concerned with interpretation, generating understanding and illumination (Gadamer, 1994) where findings are idiosyncratic (Stringer, 2004), subjective and not objective. Here, knowledge claims cannot be established with absolute certainty and in form of predictive generalisations (Kvale, 1996) as in the positivist approach.

Therefore, concerns about establishing the authenticity and legitimacy of this research should be linked to 'trustworthiness' (Sandelowski, 1993), whereby the researcher needs to make the practices visible and auditable (Silverman, 2000), so that the reader can follow and 'track' the research process. This study achieves credibility through a clear description, explanation and justification of all the stages of the research (Creswell and Miller, 2000). It includes decisions in the research process, and a self-critical account of how the research was undertaken. In doing so, an 'audit trail' (Creswell, 2003; Guba and Lincoln, 1988) is maintained to substantiate trustworthiness.
In qualitative research, the researcher is part of the research process and thus affects the results (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Inherent in these concerns is the imperative that the researcher develops a critical and reflective attitude toward the research process (Creswell and Miller, 2000). This requires a degree of awareness of the way in which one's own position, a-priori knowledge and assumptions impact upon all aspects of the research: development and design, data collection and interpretations.

I sought intensive dialogue and discussion with a very good friend and colleague of mine, who, on a regular, weekly basis, was informed about the research process and my 'progress'. These discussions helped me to clarify and 'put into words', my ideas and plans, about what I intended to do, what I had done so far and the 'why' and 'how'. These meetings and discussions allowed for a personal, intimate, and 'direct' way of reflection, where negative and positive experiences could be talked about. This 'micro-reflection' on the process of 'doing research' included very 'technical' research-related matters as well as space for tears, anger, irony and laughter. In summary, this time of reflection took care of the necessary critique, support and motivation needed for undertaking the research. I used my weekly letters home to report the progress of the research and the study, in a way similar to an 'reflective journal' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and as a complementary documentary tool (Janesick, 2002). This way of reflecting enabled me to explain my 'research situation' to someone not familiar with research and provided a bird's-eye view on and an audit trail for the research endeavour in the form of written letters.

On several occasions, at seminars, conferences and workshops, I presented details of my study to colleagues and other professionals who were then asked to comment on the research and preliminary findings. These opportunities of 'peer debriefing' (Patton, 1990), in which we spoke about and questioned details of the study, provided valuable feedback for me in terms of the research process and my feelings concerning it.

A further technique for establishing credibility is by 'member checks' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Members of stakeholding groups are invited to review the interpretations and (preliminary) findings and/or conclusions (Leininger, 1994). Consequently, preliminary findings and interpretations of this study were checked by some of the research participants (see chapter 5, 'reflexive accounting').

Interpretive research requires thoughtfulness, and care and responsibility by the researcher, it requires the constant and conscious dispute with the how, why, with whom and for whom the research is undertaken. These thoughts led to the demand that qualitative researchers systematically need to acknowledge and document their biases "rather than
striving to rise above them" (Mellon, 1990, p.26). This meant, to move the focus from eliminating bias to developing relationships with the research participants.

Embracing a concern for the research participants and the research relationship demands thoughtfulness and responsibility by the researcher. In accepting this, the validity of this study is strengthened, because now "objections that humans are subjective, biases, or unreliable are irrelevant, for there is no other option" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p.175).

In this study, trustworthiness is gained by 'authenticity' and 'thick descriptions' (Merriam, 1997), where the researcher has "lived or experienced their material in some fashion" (Collins, 1990, p.232) and has considered the authentic views of the research participants, because "the researcher is not the privileged possessor of expert knowledge" (Lather, 1986, p.72).

Such 'authenticity' and 'thick description' is achieved by 'passionate research' (Du Bois, 1983), where researchers 'live the question' (Mair, 1999), and where the quest itself is embraced, not the rules of method. Through this, deeper levels of understanding can be reached and deeper levels of knowledge emerge (Capra, 1997). 'Passionate research' demands engagement, genuine interest and a responsible researcher. If the research problem is also of interest to the research participants, who are not chosen at random, but from established reasons and with purpose, they will be more likely to invest time and thought (Reinharz, 1983), and thus, the credibility and trustworthiness of the study is strengthened.

I embrace these 'principles' and as such, they are inherent in this study, because they underline the practical value of this research and thus, establish credibility and trustworthiness.

4.17 Summary

This two-part chapter sought to establish the research design and methodology of this study. This part of the chapter has set out the rationale for qualitative research methods. It has provided a discussion of the theoretical perspectives underpinning the most suitable research strategy together with a detailed description of specific characteristics, e.g. the type of biographical interviews. It concluded with establishing the legitimacy of this research. The process of data analysis is covered in chapter 5.
CHAPTER 5: THE FRAMEWORK FOR DATA ANALYSIS

5.0 Introduction

Chapter 5 represents the interface with the data. Here the main issues are how to present the data once gathered, followed by an illustration of the chosen data analysis framework, its analysis and interpretation. The final issue concerns the researcher being the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, requiring reflective thoughts. The analysis was carried out in three stages: in the first stage, data from each interview was individually analysed, and was used to construct a series of mini-biographies or narratives of the students. Miller (2000) favours biography as a methodological approach, referring to it as 'life writing' and 'personal accounts', citing its use across a wide range of disciplines. The mini-biographies provided a stepping off point into more detailed analysis. The second stage involved the establishment of a thematic conceptual specified framework, identification and placing of 'raw' data, emerging themes and issues into meaningful key categories. The last stage consisted of exploring and making sense of the information and communicating this interpretation to others (Wolcott, 1994). All stages contributed to the goal of gaining an understanding of the overall picture of the research participants' experiences of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

A number of key principles emerged from the literature and were applied throughout the process of data analysis:

- qualitative data analysis is dynamic, intuitive and creative (Basit, 2003);
- data collection and analysis occur simultaneously, this allows themes and categories to change and develop as the field experience continues (Strauss and Corbin, 1990);
- it is a step by step process of category creation and linking data and it is essential to move back and forth between the data and emerging categories (Dey, 1993);
- it is a kaleidoscopic process of continuous refinement (Dye et al., 2000);
- it is a 'deeply emotional process' (McLaughlin, 2003);
- it is about staying close to the data and finding the best way to tell the story (Janesick, 2002).

5.1 The Framework for Data Analysis

The framework for analysis in this study is based on the explorative purpose of the study, which seeks to understand what is happening, seeks new insights and to assess phenomena in a new light (Robson, 1993) in terms of the participants' experiences. Consequently, this study seeks to answer the research questions of: 'How do individuals experience the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'? and 'What does developing 'tacit forms of key competencies' mean for the individual'? Alongside this exploration, an identification
and analysis of the acquired 'tacit forms of key competencies' and 'tacit skills' is undertaken. In order to deepen the understanding of the social phenomenon under investigation, this study employed an interpretivist approach to data collection and analysis. This allowed behaviour to be studied within a wider context, for making judgements about the data, to reach for meaning and to illuminate phenomena such as lived experiences (Ellis and Flaherty, 1992). In the data analysis, different aspects of the phenomenon were brought together and by discussing these aspects in relation to one another a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon was concluded (Holloway, 1997).

Table 5.1 below illustrates the selected principles of ethnography, phenomenology, and biography employed in this study, which guided data collection and analysis. The selected data analysis strategy in this study is based on ethnographic analysis, to produce rich and 'thick' descriptions (Tesch, 1990); on narrative analysis that collects and examines life-stories and focuses on how human beings experience the world (Bruner, 1995); and on phenomenological analysis which aims at uncovering the essence of an experienced phenomenon, to record impressions and meanings. In doing so, a multi-dimensional approach for analysing contemporary societies is employed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Biography</th>
<th>Phenomenology</th>
<th>Ethnography</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Exploring the life of an individual</td>
<td>Understanding the essence of experiences about a phenomenon</td>
<td>Describing and interpreting a cultural and social group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>• Stories</td>
<td>• Statements</td>
<td>• Description</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Epiphanies</td>
<td>• Meanings</td>
<td>• Analysis</td>
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<td>• Historical content</td>
<td>• General description of the experience</td>
<td>• Interpretation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data managing</td>
<td>Create and organize files for data</td>
<td>Create and organize files for data</td>
<td>Create and organize files for data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Describing</td>
<td>Describe a set of experiences</td>
<td>Describe the meaning of the experiences for the researcher</td>
<td>Describe the social setting, actors, events; drawing a picture of setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting</td>
<td>Theorize toward developing patterns and meanings</td>
<td>Develop a structural description, 'How' the phenomenon was experienced; Develop an overall description of the experience, the 'essence'</td>
<td>Interpret and make sense of the findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative form</td>
<td>Detailed picture of an individual's life</td>
<td>Description of the 'essence' of the experience</td>
<td>Description of the cultural behaviour of a group or individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation</td>
<td>Present narration focussing on processes, theories, and the unique and general features of life</td>
<td>Present narration of the 'essence' of the experience; use tables or figures of statements and meaning units</td>
<td>Present narrative presentation argumented by tables, figures, and sketches</td>
</tr>
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Table 5.1: The multi-dimensional approach (adapted from Creswell, 1998)
As reasoned for in the first part of chapter 4, theories of scientific, technological rationality and concepts of a one-dimensional society are no longer useful conceptual frameworks for analysing contemporary societies. The interpretive stance acknowledges the social nature of knowledge along with the meaning making at the centre of phenomenological experience (Packer and Addison, 1989; Polkinghorne, 1988). Analysis in this stance emphasizes socially constructed realities, local generalizations, intersubjective, practical reasoning, and stocks of knowledge (Holstein and Gubrium, 1994) which are contextually and historically grounded. Here, interpretations are narrative or storied accounts (Denzin, 1994) where there is no single interpretive truth and understanding. In this context, knowledge derives from 'living the question' (Mair, 1999), or from being involved in a relationship with the 'subject matter' at hand and the research participant (Smith, 1974). Adopting an objective stance representing objectivity, dualism and rationality (see Stanley and Wise, 1983, 1993; Du Bois, 1983; Harding, 1992) does not fit within the framework of analysis in this study.

In applying a multi-dimensional approach to data analysis the interpretive stance acknowledges emotions such as anger, loneliness, or unhappiness, which are aspects of this study and valid sources of data emerging out of lived experiences. Considered irrational by positivism, emotions provide a deep source of insight and add to the whole picture of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'. In order to analyse this, to "capture participants 'in their own terms' one must learn their categories for rendering explicable and coherent the flux of raw reality. That, indeed, is the first principle of qualitative analysis" (Lofland, 1971, p.7, emphasis added). An overview of the analytic framework within the multi-dimensional approach is represented in the following Figure 5.1.

![Figure 5.1: Analytic Framework](image-url)
5.2 The Process of Data Analysis and Data Organization

Analytic frameworks are offered in a variety of ways and the purpose of data analysis in qualitative research is to create some order on the often voluminous data (Polit and Hungler, 1991) where the analysis enables the researcher to 'erkennen' (understand) the essential interpretations from the raw data (Ely et al., 1991). In this study, data sources included tape-recorded, in-depth, semi-structured interviews, created mind maps, field notes and personal experience.

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) define qualitative data analysis quite pragmatic as "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesising it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (p.145). Data analysis is furthermore understood as a continuous activity which constantly evolves, as identified by Moustakas (1990, 1994) in five basic phases: 1) immersion with the experience, 2) incubation, a time of quiet contemplation, 3) illumination, a time of increased awareness, expanded meaning and new clarity, 4) explication, where new connections are made and the researcher prepares to communicate findings; and 5) creative synthesis, where the research findings and experience are intertwined, written and communicated.

This definition was felt to have merits, especially in terms of articulating the subjective and interpretive nature of the data analysis process, which felt intuitive and unsystematic, especially in the initial stage.

Furthermore the pragmatic and flexible approach to data analysis of Miles and Huberman (1984, 1994) which contains three linked cyclical subprocesses (see Figure 5.2): data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification, was considered appropriate.

![Components of Data Analysis](image)

*Figure 5.2: Components of Data Analysis, (Source: Miles and Huberman, 1994)*

*Data reduction* encompasses the systematic reducing of the data from the in-depth-interviews: with clustering, coding, sorting, and finding themes being instances to data condensing (Miles and Huberman, 1994). *Data display* comprises an organised, condensed and reduced set of data as a basis for interpretation and 'meaning making'. In this study,
data display includes structured summaries or synopses of the research participants interviews (Fischer and Wertz, 1975), the application of a thematic, conceptual, descriptive matrix, and the organization of the condensed data and the presentation of the narrative text, supported by 'quotes' and extracts from the data, (Eisenhardt, 1989; Miles and Huberman, 1994) which are furthermore 'translated' into 'mini-biographies'. The phase of conclusion drawing and verification engages the researcher in interpretation where meaning making from the data is achieved through comparison (similarities, commonalities), identification of patterns, themes and relationships, clustering, and checking accounts with research participants (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

5.2.1 The Pragmatic Framework

Rather than following rigid sets of instructions, the broad framework for analysis was based on general principles of the work cited and on a developed pragmatic framework which is shown in Figure 5.3, and a conceptual analysis framework, as outlined in Figure 5.4. Both are explained and discussed in more detail in the following sections. They show my research interest (as outlined in Chapters 1 and 2) which examines the participants' biographical experiences in terms of the perceptions and feelings they undergo during the phase of being the main family carer.

Figure 5.3: The Pragmatic Framework
The study begins with a central research question and a working hypothesis and follows a mostly inductive form of inquiry. The purpose of the study is partly descriptive and partly explanatory as the study aims to describe and explore the situation of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies' while being out of paid work. This purpose not only requires and entails an explanatory structure, but also a careful descriptive account of the lived experiences and phenomenon. To achieve this, the raw data, which refers to essences of people (Berg, 1989), the experience of the individual, was converted into written words, full transcriptions of the interviews. Each account was furthermore summarised in one to two pages. The analysis then sought to find clusters, commonalities, similarities and differences in people's experiences and grouped concepts (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Basic information was summarized in overview sheets, the 'data summary sheets' (Appendix C and D) - for each group of research participants - which allowed for analysis across individual experiences. The analysis applied a developed thematic matrix, summarised in Figure 5.5 with conceptually specified analytic categories (Mishler, 1990), to capture layers and themes of the experience.

The interviews were the first set of data to be analysed in great depth. The research participants' descriptions and explanations of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' were organised in descriptive categories. For example, the statement of "I learned how to organise a family life, you cannot cope without organising the days", created the category 'organisational skills'. These categories were organised in form of a descriptive matrix (see Appendix E), and by the research participants descriptions. The matrix was then reviewed in order to ensure the completeness of the data and whether the categories fitted the descriptions.

Furthermore, a developed competency model (see chapter 3, part 2), the 'starfish model', represented in Figure 5.7, was used to identify the developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' and to explore the interrelationship of an individual's degree of confidence and awareness. It applied the research focus to the condensed and reduced sets of data. As such, the analysis started deductively, from conceptually specified categories and grew, inductively, gradually to more refined themes and sub-categories. Analysis took place throughout the study, capturing emerging themes, issues, relationships and explanations. Alongside, mini-biographies of each research participant were written up. They illuminated statements, details, findings and conclusions of the analysis and integrated different perspectives on the experience and personal situation of the research participants. Five mini-biographies (see chapter 7 and 8) were selected to provide rich narrative accounts illustrating the individuals' perspectives and pathways (Ellis and Flaherty, 1992). Each case and transcription added a piece and layer to the 'whole' and to the 'puzzle' of the phenomenon of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'.
5.2.2 Thematic Conceptual Framework for Analysis

In order to explore and understand the dimensions of the experiences at the micro-level of the analysis, the individual, the focus shifts onto the following issues:

1. Identify themes, patterns, categories and ideas emerging from the data.
2. Identify key competencies, qualifications and skills.
3. Identify 'tacit forms of key competencies'.
4. Identify awareness of research participants of their acquired key competencies, qualifications and skills and identify general awareness of their achievements.
5. Identify the degree of confidence of the research participants.
6. Identify opinions and aspirations/horizons of the research participants.
7. Identify the understanding of 'usefulness' of the acquired key competencies, qualifications and skills for future personal and professional development.
8. For the group of research participants 'returned-to-work', the identification of the nature of the process and their progress in returning to work.

The identification of these dimensions in the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' and of the learning experience is captured in the 'data summary sheets' (Appendix C and D) with the aid of a descriptive, thematic, conceptual matrix as outlined in table 5.2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Confidence</th>
<th>Horizons - Opinions</th>
<th>Usefulness of competencies and skills</th>
<th>Competencies and skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For each research participant 'on course'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For each research participant 'returned-to-work'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2: The descriptive, thematic, conceptual matrix

This framework assists the process of analysis and discussion in terms of identifying clusters, subcategories, patterns, ideas and themes. It is an important step towards the illumination and explication of the data and a starting point for interpretation. It encourages reflection during the identification, discussion and the illumination of the data and findings and of the interpretation as a continuous activity.
5.3 The Analytic Procedure

The analytic procedure that was followed is described in stages to allow for making sense of the data:

1. Full transcriptions of interviews were made.
2. Read and scan of transcripts, highlighted meaningful sentences and sequences and notes on quotes.
3. Summarised accounts of the research participants in the same format (in 1-2 A4 pages).
4. Compared and integrated additional information from mind maps and field notes into summaries and created mini-biographies.
5. Created Overview Data Summary sheets.
6. Condensed accounts and organized in main categories with the use of a thematic, conceptual, descriptive matrix for illustration.
7. Identified key concepts and themes within categories.
8. Searched for patterns, similarities, commonalities and differences.
9. Established and discussed relationships and interconnections.
10. Developed propositions, explanations, theories to reflect findings and check against working hypothesis.
11. Took explanations, conclusions and themes back to ‘field’, checked trustworthiness.
12. Developed/ refined explanations and conclusions for a set of ‘generalizations’ that explained the themes and relationships identified in the data.

First, the tape-recorded interviews were individually transcribed into written word format, listened to and read, to gain an intuitive feel. Then, substantive coding, [naming and categorising of aspects of the phenomena through close examination (Strauss and Corbin, 1990)], was conducted where significant statements, expressions, words and emerging themes were highlighted, and relevant quotes noted from each research participant. Next, all codes were brought together, in one overall analysis, moving from the particular to the general (McCracken, 1998), and thus, creating the overall ‘narrative’.

The interviews were analysed and interpreted first on an individual basis, by grouping the statements under five main conceptual thematic categories (awareness; confidence; horizons/ aspirations and opinions; competencies and skills; usefulness of competencies and skills). Within each of these main categories, emerging themes and issues were captured. In this way, each research participant’s point of view and account was captured, condensed and made explicit. This allowed for identifying similarities, commonalities and differences across research participants’ stories, experiences and statements. It also allowed for identifying nuances and differences, unravelling layers, in the experience and statements within the thematic conceptual categories. The coding process progressed through several levels, which dealt with refining themes into subthemes and of categories into themes as
set out in table A. This added pieces and a richer understanding to the whole picture representing the nuances, similarities or differences in the research participants’ accounts and experiences of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

**Table A: The themes of the experience of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'**

The set of conceptually specified analytic categories (Mishler, 1990) and themes were:

A) **Awareness**
   Degree of awareness: Layers of awareness; e.g. Not aware at all.

B) **Confidence**
   Degree of confidence: Layers of confidence; e.g. feeling low in confidence.

C) **Horizons, aspirations and opinions**
   Expressed expectations: hopes, wishes, dreams; e.g. future work and career.

D) **Competencies and skills**
   Layers and degrees in statements of several competencies.

E) **Usefulness of competencies and skills**
   Layers and degrees of usefulness for personal life and career progression.

Firstly, the degree and layers of awareness about the acquired and developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' and the degree of confidence gained from being either aware or unaware of the development were identified. Furthermore, the participants’ attitudes towards learning and what is seen as learning?; and towards the beneficial effect of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies', were identified. Finally, emotions and feelings underlying this 'tacit' learning situation and expression of wishes, dreams and hopes for the future was given room in the analysis.
In-depth, semi-structured, (socio)biographical interviews & creation of ‘mind maps’

Working hypothesis: people very often possess ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ acquired in a non-formal way, which they are not aware of.

Biographical Experiences

DATA ANALYSIS

elicitate the ‘tacit dimension’

Significant biographical events

Emotions/ feelings

Competencies and skills

18 Research participants ‘on course’
15 Research participants ‘returned-to-work’

Thematic Conceptual Analysis Framework: Biographical experience of developing ‘tacit forms of key competencies’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developing ‘tacit forms of key competencies’</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Confidence</th>
<th>Horizons – Opinions</th>
<th>Usefulness of Competencies and Skills</th>
<th>Competencies and Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research participants ‘on course’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research participants ‘returned-to-work’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Developed ‘Starfish model’

- Work content/ subject matter related competencies
- Learning competencies
- Methodological competencies
- Values and attitudes
- Social competencies

Figure 5.4: Overview Conceptual Analysis Framework
5.4 The 'Starfish Model' as Research Tool

The review of the literature (see Chapter 3, part 2) highlighted the necessity to develop a broader and more inclusive concept and model of 'key competencies' because existing models and definitions were not satisfying enough to explain the deeper dimension and inter-connectedness of key competencies. A generative approach to competencies was considered more fitting to the aim of the study and the concept of 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

The 'starfish model' includes five dimensions of abilities and key competencies that are internally related to the individual; it emphasises cognitive and meta-cognitive abilities (e.g. abstract thinking, learning to learn, 'tacit skills') and competencies, which relate to attitudes, values and insight. These competencies contribute to the development of the 'whole' individual. The 'starfish model's' five broad clusters of abilities are represented in Figure 5.5.

The model was used as a research tool and as a basis for heuristic investigation of personal and biographical experiences to capture the 'tacit dimension', in a way to be discussed and developed empirically through the investigation of the learning experience and biographies.

5.4.1 The Identification of 'tacit forms of key competencies' in the 'Starfish Model'

The 'starfish model', was used as a research tool to identify the developed 'tacit forms of key competencies'. It offered a starting point for the identification of 'tacit forms of key competencies' and enabled the research participants to recollect a wide range of skills and competencies during the interview situation, while reflecting on the questions of "how did you experience a 'normal' day"?; "describe the routine of your day and the chores and duties you fulfilled" and "what skills do you think you acquired, learned and mastered?"

The research participants' expressions, statement, descriptions or mentioned key competence and skill were assigned to the five different dimensions or 'elements' with the
relevant meaning. In the end, one single mind map, for each group of research participants, either being 'on course' (see chapter 7) or 'returned to work' (see chapter 8) was created.

The identified 'tacit forms of key competencies' represented, on a micro level of analysis, the inherent importance to an individual's personal development. The notion of 'tacit' or implicit knowledge seemed to influence the ability of people to manage their lives in changing environments, particularly under conditions when moving from rather stable (being in employment, 'predictable' life course) to turbulent and unpredictable environments and unknown situations (e.g. unemployment, becoming a parent). The situation of either being aware or unaware of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies' influenced the individual's personal situation (see working hypothesis). This interrelation was analysed with the aid of the developed 'triangle of conflict and contradiction'.

5.5 'The Triangle of Conflict and Contradictions'
The developed model, 'triangle of conflict and contradiction' is represented in Figure 5.6. Within this 'triangle' and its elements the interrelation and correlation of the development process of 'tacit forms of key competencies' and the degree of the awareness and the level of confidence of individuals, which emerged during data analysis was discussed.

![Figure 5.6: 'Triangle of conflict and contradiction'](image)

This model was particularly helpful when discussing and analysing the interrelation of the different statements of the interview participants 'on course' in chapter 7.

5.6 Levels of Analysis
Preliminary analysis actually begins during data collection (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992) as ideas, metaphors and analogies spring to mind. In this initial phase of the inquiry, the collected, empirical material had to be assessed, analysed and interpreted (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) and concepts were to be evaluated in terms of narrowing down or opening up the study. At this stage re-ordering and re-presentation of the data as well as excluding irrelevant material took place. Cohen et al. (2000) suggest the following stages in analysis:
the generation of units of meaning; classifying, categorising and ordering these units of meaning; structuring narratives and interpreting data. Miles and Huberman (1994) use coding as a means of reducing the data. I was attracted by Miles and Huberman's work (1994) and the framework for analysis I developed is based on their concept.

My analytical process followed three interlinked levels as outlined in figure 5.7. On the first level, in the descriptive category, data were summarized and individual synopses created. On the second, the pattern category, a more explanatory level, coding categories were tried out, relationships in the data were searched for and linkages to the thematic conceptual framework were made. And on the third, the interpretive category, a matrix analysis of the main themes in the data was carried out. Here, interpretation meant, to create a synthesis in form of data integration into the framework of interpretation and into the explanatory framework of the study, referring to the research problem and question.

![Figure 5.7: Categories of Analysis (Source: Miles and Huberman, 1994)](image)

In other words, this analysis of qualitative data was concerned with 'moulding' data from interviews, mind maps, observations and field notes into findings by identifying patterns and themes within the data (Patton, 2000). Here, 'moulding' meant to draw conclusions, to make inferences, to consider meaning in the phenomenon under study, to illustrate this interplay and reflection and to offer 'explanations' for the 'behaviour' (Creswell, 1998). In valuing the insightful character of qualitative findings (Patton, 1990), the interpretation process is explained in more detail in the next section.

5.7 Data Analysis - Interpretation or Making Sense

Denzin (1994) calls making sense of the data, 'the art of interpretation'. Through interpretation of the individuals' experiences of running a family household, of parenthood and bearing sole responsibility in a period of unemployment, the study seeks better understanding of the reality of those lived experiences. Field and Morse (1994) declare "in examining the qualities of experience one arrives at the essence of the experience" (p.27) as does Geertz (1973) who emphasizes that a good interpretation takes us to the heart of the experience being described. The goal of the description embraces a full but realistic range of topics which include a complete description of what is being studied while
focussing on answering the purpose of the study (Yin, 2003). The descriptive feature also refers to the end product, which is an interpretation, a rich description of the phenomenon under study.

In a qualitative study, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Patton, 1990) through which the topic is revealed. I found that transcribing the data myself, summarising the accounts and creating the mini-biographies was beneficial to my understanding because I developed a sense of the complete data set and got a feeling for the data and the research participants’ stories; in the sense that “interpretation creates the conditions for authentic, or deep, emotional understanding” (Denzin, 1994, p. 506). This was helpful in establishing a baseline in terms of the research participants’ notion of the ‘tacit’ learning process.

Gaining an understanding of the individuals’ experiences, comes through exhaustive description and reflection, rather than through causal explanation (Lynch-Sauer, 1985; Van Manen, 1990) because ‘thick description’ gives context to the experience. It involves recreating a situation and as much of the context as possible, as well as its meanings. Additionally, it offers a portrayal of an accurate profile of particular individuals, events or situations (Robson, 1993). In aiming to provide an ‘illuminative analysis’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and a ‘thick description’ of the experiences, and validate these insights, direct quotes from the research participants were added to support the interpretations. In providing ‘thick descriptions’ and interpretations the researcher has to “emphasize, describe, judge, compare, portray, evoke images, and create for the reader or listener, the sense of having been there” (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, p.149). This means for the researcher to utilise one’s own senses, and other characteristics such as patience, versatility, flexibility, persistence and passion; this is defined as the researcher’s interpretive lens.

5.8 The Researcher’s Interpretive Lens

In this multi-dimensional approach to analysis the researcher as bricoleur (Levi Strauss, 1966) creates meaning and interpretation out of (life) experience because life and method are intertwined (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994). In consequence, ways and methods of making sense of experience are always personal (Denzin, 1994) and connected to the researcher. "At the heart of the qualitative approach is the assumption that a piece of qualitative research is very much influenced by the researcher’s individual attributes and perspectives" (Ward-Schofield, 1993, p. 202).

Because we cannot separate ourselves from what we know, our subjectivity is an integral part of our understanding of ourselves, of others, and of the world around us. Consequently, the researcher’s values are inherent to all phases of the inquiry process...
(Creswell, 1998). This position recognises that the researcher’s characteristics and personal presence will affect the course of the research. "We see the presence of the researcher’s self as central in all research. One’s self can’t be left behind, it can only be omitted from discussions and written accounts of the research process. But it is an omission, a failure to discuss something which has been present within the research itself. The researcher may be unwilling to admit this, or unable to see its importance, but it nevertheless remains so" (Stanley and Wise, 1993, p. 161).

In a qualitative study, the researcher is the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data, and all observations and analyses are filtered through that human being’s worldview, perspectives and values. And, as the underlying assumption of this interpretive approach is that there are multiple interpretations of reality, the researcher brings a construction of reality to the research situation, which includes other people’s constructions or interpretations of the subject being studied. Thus, the researcher should be aware of and try to represent the multiple realities of the research participants. As much as showing an interpretive awareness (Sandberg, 1994), which means to acknowledge subjectivity throughout research.

I am aware that my own subjectivity has affected the outcome of my research, because the accomplishment and presentation of the research is based on my interpretation of the data, involving my theories, understanding, values and beliefs. I respected what the research participants told me while undertaking the analysis. In view of this, my data analysis meant, on the one hand, to honour the diverse points of view I found while, on the other hand, to also seek patterns across the stories, experiences, and perspectives.

I based the analysis on my own sense of what categories best represented what I found in the narrative data as I looked for commonalities and differences and creating as well as abandoning inappropriate categories. I also give an insider’s perspective; my own as I drew deeply on my own experiences to identify, distinguish and elaborate on issues emerging from the narratives of people’s stories. Thus, the final product of the analysis is the emic perspective filtered through my, the researcher’s, perspective. This calls for sensitivity and reflexivity in how my (the researcher’s) biases and subjectivity may affect the study and findings, so the issue of ‘reflexivity’ is addressed in several ways in this chapter.

The researcher needs to demonstrate a sensitivity to the research context and all the cues and nuances in it (Merriam, 1998), including physical settings, the people, overt and hidden agendas, verbal and non-verbal data, as well as personal biases. Strauss and Corbin (1990) propose ‘theoretical sensitivity’ because it indicates an awareness of and refers to the attribute of having an insight, the ability to give meaning to the data, the capacity to
understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which is not relevant. Miles and Huberman (1994) point out that “from the beginning of data collection, the qualitative analyst is beginning to decide what things mean, noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows and propositions. The competent researcher holds these conclusions lightly, maintaining openness and scepticism, but the conclusions are still there, inchoate and vague at first then increasingly explicit and grounded” (p. 207).

In view of the fact that the analysis of qualitative data relies on the researcher’s self in the production and interpretation of qualitative data, a ‘reflexive account’ (Altheide and Johnson, 1994) by the researcher concerning the researcher’s self and its impact on the research needs to be included in the study design. Accordingly, a ‘reflexive account’ is provided in the next section.

5.9 Reflexive Accounting

In terms of ‘reflexive accounting’ (Altheide and Johnson, 1994), my field notes, my weekly meetings with a colleague and the weekly state-of-the-art letter home became an integral part of my data collection and data analysis which I learned to value from the end of the empirical work onwards. At this stage, reflection became an integral part of data collection as interviews were transcribed into text files and integral to the phase of data analysis where ‘putting into words’, explaining what one had done, and what one was planning to do and expressing thoughts, worries and ‘obstacles’ became very rewarding in terms of ‘clearing my head’ and directing the research. In this way accounting for and discussing what I had done and why I had done it, led not only to clarifying my position and interpretation, but also to learning about different points of view on and about different perspectives of the study and its course.

‘Reflexive accounting’ strengthens trustworthiness and refers to the ‘validity’ (Altheide and Johnson, 1994) of a study because the relationship between the researcher, the research process and its findings is acknowledged. Making judgements about and giving meaning to the data poses the problem of researcher bias. The researcher might assign meanings to the text which are different from those that the participants really meant. To reduce such bias, the preliminary findings and interpretations were checked with some research participants (see member checking, chapter 4, part 1).

Here, strategies to satisfy criteria for member checking and verification (Phillips, 1987) included the consultation of several research participants for their views on my conclusions and for verification of the created mini-biographies which were represented and agreed
upon by the research participants, and checked with peers (see peer debriefing, chapter 4, part 1) on several occasions (presentation and discussion at workshops and conferences).

Another part of 'reflexive accounting' was to 'do debriefing' with a colleague of mine (where the debriefer is a non-involved professional peer with whom the inquirer can have a no-holds-barred conversation at periodic intervals). We discussed difficult questions in the research process which would have been otherwise avoided. Additionally, it meant to discuss methodological considerations with someone open to different methodological considerations.

5.10 Conclusions
This chapter has provided the final part of the methodology chapter. It provided a discussion and illustration of the data analysis framework adopted for the study and highlighted decision made about the analytic procedure. The analytic framework and the data analysis procedures followed were found to be adequate and appropriate in addressing the research problem. Considering the research's interpretive stance, the aim was to make sense of the whole situation and the relationship between the research participants and the 'tacit dimension' of their experiences. The underlying philosophy dictated an iterative process of data collection and data analysis (Creswell, 1994; Silverman, 2000). Chapter 7 and 8 provide the analysis of the individuals' experience of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'; where the data from all 33 adult learners were analysed using the thematic conceptual analysis framework. Data from five adults were written up as individual narratives/ mini-biographies and these are presented in chapter 7 and chapter 8, with data relating to the whole group of research participants appearing in Chapter 9.
CHAPTER 6: THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE TWO GROUPS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

6.0 Introduction
My approach to data analysis was set out in chapter 5. This chapter provides a detailed demographic description of the 33 individuals who participated in the empirical research; and describes general characteristics of the 15 participants who were classified as 'returned to work' and of the 18 participants who were clustered in the target group 'on course'. The study's working hypothesis (see chapter 1, p. 8) indicates that people's degree of awareness depends on the level of education and social class (Klerman and Leibowitz, 1994; Filipezak, 1994). This chapter therefore includes a detailed analysis of the social status of the research participants.

6.1 Classification of Research Participants - General Characteristics
The target group embraced 33 male and female workers, who had 'tacitly' developed, during a period of unemployment, a wide range of 'tacit forms of key competencies'. In accordance with the research design, a special research focus was set on women returners, among them women who fully concentrated on bringing up their children and who did not pursue a career. These women sometimes classified themselves as a 'housewife' in order to describe their situation while being at home and looking after the children. Others preferred the term 'mother' to describe themselves. These mothers were regarded as most likely to develop a wide range of competencies and skills while taking care of the household.

The two main criteria for the choice of the target group was a) the inclusion of mothers and b) the inclusion of people who had low or no school certificates and who had not spent a long period of time in the educational system as set out in chapter 1: Introduction to the study. They seemed to be key people with significant experience relating to the working hypothesis and focus of the study. The interviews were carried out in relation to the two categories as outlined below.

6.2 The two Target Groups
The interviews were divided in two categories in order to organise the data into manageable units and in order to render possible a process of interpretation and analysis. Demographic details of the research participants, such as age, gender, family responsibility and educational background etc. are set out in Appendix F and G: Social structure of the participants 'on course'/'returned-to-work'. The first category embraces the group of research participants who were enrolled on a VET course or 'return-to-work course' ["on
course' group], at the time of the interviews. The second category embraces the group of research participants who had already (successfully) re-entered the labour market, ['returned to work' group]. This classification, undertaken in table 6.1, furthermore helped to structure and categorise the data.

6.2.1 The First Category group 'on course'
This category includes interview partners who are mainly women and mothers (16 women/2 men) and who were enrolled on different 'return-to-work' courses. Here the average age was 40,0 years. Their perception of achievement or development of skills is strongly related to the task of bringing up of children, being responsible for the 'running' of a family household and being left to cope on their own. The main reason they stopped working is due to motherhood. Giving up work in order to look after the children and family household is the dominant perspective in this group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Women returner</th>
<th>Other (male and female) workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'on course' actual participants of a VET course</td>
<td>Barbara Carla Carol Carol 1 Diane Eunice Gena Jeanette Mikki Sally</td>
<td>Andrew Angelica Jane 1 Richard Rachel Sam (Samantha) Rina Wendy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: 18 people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Women returner</th>
<th>Other (male and female) workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'returned to work' already succeeded in returning to (new/same) occupational field</td>
<td>Jane Jo (Joan) Kate Mandy Margaret Marian Nuala Thuy Tracy</td>
<td>Amjad David Melvyn Russel Stuart Zainal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: 15 people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1: The two Target Groups

6.2.2 The Second Category group 'returned to work'
This group of interview participants consists of 15 people (9 women and 6 men), who succeeded in returning to work. Here the average age was 37,1 years. For the research participants in this group it is very important to be part of the workforce and in paid
employment, people ‘define’ themselves and feel valued (Elliot, 1996) through earning money; (see chapter 1).

6.3 Social structure of the Research Participants

A classification into groups and clusters has been undertaken, and attempted for all participants. The relegation to different clusters took place in relation to the achieved school leaving certification, the school to work/education transition, the job/career profile and the expressed former and current living situation. The ‘use of language and word’ of the participants was also taken into account, also the feelings I had while the interview lasted. The single/ marital status had been identified as an influencing factor concerning the current living conditions and financial situation. It showed that - in general - married individuals seemed to be financially more secure and ‘better off’.

Three broad groups in terms of social class, a) working class, b) upper working class/ lower middle class and c) middle class can be identified. The group of interview participants can be divided according to these three broad clusters. It is important to note that the concept of class that is used here, does not refer to a stereotyped picture of a simple schema of society, it should not be understood as a way of simplifying complex societal structures and relations. Furthermore, understanding society in terms of social class is not the main aim of the project or this analysis, but it is one facet of the whole picture of the project and analysis. One has to keep in mind that “the post-modern acceptance of the relativism of competing explanations of reality places a question mark over whether one explanation is possible any more (if ever was)” (Ainley, 1993, p.vi). The idea of using the concept of class here is to cluster similarities and commonalities within the data in order to achieve a deeper insight in and understanding of the participant’s expressed thoughts/ experiences and living situation.

The majority of research participants in the category ‘on course’ came from a working class background (44%). The majority of research participants in the category ‘returned to work’, on the other hand came from a middle class background (53%). For each individual research participant in both of the groups, their personal situation was of enormous importance to them and influenced their way of life and their personal perception. This had an impact on the expressed statements. The research participants from a middle class background -in both categories- showed, on a general level, a similar ‘life situation’. All of them lived in a prosperous area of Guildford, Surrey, owned a house or paid a mortgage, possessed two cars and were married to husbands who held ‘well paid’ jobs. Middle class mothers (from both categories) especially expressed their wish to return to work or to return to full-time work as soon as possible.
6.3.1 Social Structure of the Participants 'on course'

Composition
The group consists of 16 women (Angelica, Barbara, Carla, Carol, Carol 1, Diane, Eunice, Gena, Jane 1, Jeanette, Mikki, Rachel, Rina, Sally, Sam and Wendy) and two men (Andrew and Richard). 18 people in total; 17 participants are European and one female, Rina, is Malaysian.

Age
The research participants were between 23 years and 57 years old, which gave an average age of 40.0 years.

Marital status
Andrew, Angelica, Diane, Rachel, Rina, Sally and Jeanette were married. Carol and Richard (without children), Mikki and Gena (with two children) were single. Barbara, Carla, Eunice, Wendy and Jane 1 were divorced. Carol 1 and Sam had re-married.

Children
Almost all the participants had children ranging from one to four children per family (average amount of children is 2.22 children per family in this group). Carol and Richard had no children. Single parents were Barbara, Carla, Gena, Eunice, Jane 1, Mikki and Wendy.

6.3.1.1 Groups of Social Class
The social background of the people is either middle or working class (see table 6.2). The working class people do not possess high earning jobs, and their spouses do not seem to work in highly paid jobs either. People from the middle class are far better off and experience a higher standard of living. The spouses in this class seem to be in higher paid jobs and this factor contributes to and influences the financial situation and resources of the family enormously. However, money is a major concern for all participants, across the social classes. This reflects the worries about the financial situation of the whole group of participants and which is examined in more detail on page 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working class (WC)</th>
<th>Andrew, Carla, Carol, Gena, Jane 1, Mikki, Richard and Sally.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper working class (UWC)/Lower middle class (LMC)</td>
<td>Eunice, Barbara and Wendy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class (MC)</td>
<td>Angelica, Carol 1, Diane, Jeanette, Rachel, Rina, and Sam.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2: Groups of Social Class
The majority of research participants in the category 'on course' came from a working class background (44%) as expressed in the pie-chart below. This circumstance could be caused by the nature of the CVT/ 'return-to-work' courses, because the 'Skills Plus' and the 'Pre-vocational training' course especially targeted people, who had left school early with few and or no qualifications. Very often these participants had difficulties with literacy and numeracy skills and some were diagnosed as being dyslexic.

![Pie chart showing social structure on course]

Figure 6.1: Social Structure 'On Course'

Taking the jobs, career pathways and occupations into account and using them as an indicator for social class, shows that the participants clustered in the middle class pursued jobs as a nurse, teacher, lecturer, well paid secretary, and in a recruitment firm. The participants of the upper working class and lower middle class worked as a proprietor of a coffee shop and nursery supervisor/classroom assistant. And the participants clustered in the working class worked as lorry driver, hairdresser, factory worker, shop assistant, work in catering services, childminder, worker in a zoo, and cleaner.

The middle class participants left school at a later stage and achieved higher (mostly A-levels) school leaving qualifications. Angelica, Rachel, Rina and Sam achieved a university degree. Jeanette mentioned an unfinished university course and went to work for a building society. The participants clustered in the working class and upper working class/lower middle class mostly left school earlier (between 13 and 16 years of age) and went straight into employment. Three participants (Carol, Mikki and Sally) left school with no qualifications. Carol, Mikki and Richard are dyslexic. A summary of these statements is given in the following table 6.3: Overview of the social structure of the participants 'on course':
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>School cert.</th>
<th>Job after school</th>
<th>Later/recent job or qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrew, m</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>WC</td>
<td>- at 15</td>
<td>Airforce (3 years)</td>
<td>Lorry driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelica, m</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>A-level</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Teacher, counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara, d</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>LMC</td>
<td>- at 16</td>
<td>Office junior</td>
<td>Sales assistant, dinner lady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carla, d</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>WC</td>
<td>- at 16</td>
<td>Hairdresser</td>
<td>Childminder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol, s</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>WC</td>
<td>- at 15</td>
<td>YTS technical</td>
<td>Work in factory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>orientated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol 1, rm</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>- at 15</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane, m</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>- at 16</td>
<td>Typist</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eunice, d</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>UWC</td>
<td>- at 16</td>
<td>Instructor horse</td>
<td>Landlady, coffee shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>riding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gena, s</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>WC</td>
<td>- at 16</td>
<td>Shop assistant</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane 1, d</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>WC</td>
<td>- at 16</td>
<td>Catering services</td>
<td>Pharmacy assistant, childminder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeanette, m</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>A-level</td>
<td>Building society</td>
<td>Work for building society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>at 18</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikki, s</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>WC</td>
<td>None at 15</td>
<td>No memory accident</td>
<td>Work in a zoo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel, m</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>A-level</td>
<td>Recruitment firm</td>
<td>Degree in law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>at 16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard, s</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>WC</td>
<td>- at 19</td>
<td>Work shipping firm</td>
<td>Work in main office of charity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rina, m</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>A-level</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>Masters, lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally, m</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>WC</td>
<td>None at 13</td>
<td>Nanny, cleaner</td>
<td>Supermarket cashier, cleaner, chambermaid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam, rm</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>A-level</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy, d</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>LMC</td>
<td>- at 18</td>
<td>Life insurance company</td>
<td>Nursery supervisor, classroom assistant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KEY**

- WC = working class
- MC = middle class
- LMC = lower middle class
- S = single
- rm = remarried
- d = divorced
- m = married

Table 6.3: Overview of the Social Structure of the Participants ‘On Course’

The above statements can be summarized in four different clusters.
6.3.1.2 Clusters

a) Married and middle class

(Angelica, Carol1, Diane, Jeanette, Rachel, Rina, and Sam): All participants, except Rina, express that they - as a family - have enough money and experience a good life style. They have a mortgage on their house, and have two cars. Most of them state being unhappy while being at home and looking after the children. They missed being at work and with their colleagues. They also would like to return to work in order to have a little more money for spending on extra things. Angelica, Carol1, Rina and Sam have three children each and Rachel has four children. Jeanette and Diane have two children each, but Diane’s children are grown up and are no longer living at home.

b) Married and working class

(Andrew and Sally): Andrew and Sally are both content with their lives, both are warm hearted and open towards other people. They went through the ups and downs in life with the help of their partners. They have worked all their lives so far and take things 'as they come'. Andrew worked most of his life as a lorry driver and likes travelling around Europe in his lorry. Sally raised four children and has one grandchild (being 46 years old). Most of the time she did cleaning jobs. Both acquired a lot life experience and they are quite ‘realistic’ about their lives and future.

c) Divorced and lower middle/ upper working class

(Barbara, Carla, Eunice and Wendy): All women are a little bit bitter and cynical about their situation. Especially Wendy, who cannot understand why her husband left her. Money is a major concern for this group of participants, and they claim that it is hard to bring up children on their own with little money available. They all returned to work when the children got older, but all had to juggle childcare and work, therefore they worked in typical female part-time jobs, such as cashier, dinner lady, hairdresser and classroom assistant. They put their hopes in the ‘return-to-work’ course they were enrolled on, as they hope to find a ‘proper’, better paid job afterwards. They believe ‘new’ qualifications will help them in finding a better paid, higher status job. Barbara, Carla and Wendy stated that their self-confidence was not very high before they came to the course.

d) Single and working class

(Carol, Gena, Mikki and Richard): Richard and Carol do not have children, Mikki has two daughters who live with their grandmother. All the participants live on their own in a one bedroom flat. Gena split up recently with her boyfriend and has two children. Carol and Mikki both left school with no qualifications. Carol, Mikki and Richard are dyslexic and experienced a lot of difficulties at the same time. Richard had to stop working when he looked after his parents and became their carer for several years after they developed
cancer. Mikki’s children were taken away from her, because she could not cope with them. She had an accident after she left school and this incident wiped out a lot of her memories. Carol was proud of her former job in a factory, and she called herself a ‘light engineer’.

6.3.1. Financial Situation
While identifying cluster among the interview participants, the single/marital status had been identified as an influencing factor on the current living conditions and financial situation. The middle class participants of the middle class are all married and in a better financial situation. Most of them live in a house in the Guildford area and pay a mortgage. Their husbands have a well-paid job and they can afford a better lifestyle, e.g. holidays, two cars, etc. The interviews showed that in general married individuals seemed to be financially more secure and ‘better off’. Their situation of returning to work was driven by an urge and need for self-fulfilment; and an urge to earn some ‘extra-money’ for the family expenditure. Among this group of married women there was a strong awareness of ‘being useful’ and pride in contributing to the family income. They saw their time of staying at home and looking after the children and household as a ‘phase’, which would come to an end when the children were older and went school. The same applied for Carol 1 and Sam as they had meanwhile remarried and furthermore given birth to another child from this new relationship. On the contrary, all the divorced women are clustered in the working class and experienced financial difficulties. They all were single parents at the time the interview took place. They described this situation as a struggle to ‘make ends meet’. Their main reason for returning to work or for enrolling on a ‘return-to-work’ course was their financial situation. Either the financial support from the former husband had stopped or lessened and they needed to earn the money to ‘keep the family alive’.

The group of single working class people (without children) were on the same course, a ‘pre-vocational training’ course (PVT), a literacy and numeracy course for dyslexic adult learners. They also experienced financial difficulties due to the fact of not receiving a lot of money while being unemployed or living on state benefits. Mikki and Carol had furthermore managed to get themselves into serious debts.

6.3.1.4 Career/Job Progression
Among the participants, career pathways and job progression mainly fall into three categories. Firstly, a smooth, steady ongoing career progression in the same or related field of work which applies to the majority of participants (Angelica, Andrew, Barbara, Carla, Carol, Carol1, Diane, Gena, Jeanette, Richard, Rina, Sally, and Sam). This means staying up to 12 years in the same job or even company. Secondly, a career pathway filled with changes in jobs (Eunice, Jane 1, Rachel, Wendy) before and after children were born. And thirdly, career progression with interruptions and job changes (Mikki).
6.3.2 Social Structure of the Research Participants ‘returned to work’

All participants are mature people, and in the majority are women; they all seem to be well settled in their personal circumstances, the area where they live, work, friends, social lives etc. Most of the participants are married and have children, the amount of children ranges from one to six children per family.

Composition

The group consists of 15 people, 9 women (Jane, Jo, Kate, Mandy, Margaret, Marian, Nuala, Thuy, Tracy) and 6 men (Amjad, David, Melvyn, Rusel, Stuart, Zainal); 15 people in total. The group includes two young men (Amjad and Zainal) who are Bangladeshi and one young woman (Thuy) from Chinese origin.

Age

The age ranged between 24 years and 54 years, which gives an average age of 37.1 years. This average age is about three years younger than the average age of the other interview group (participants on course); the average is at 40 years of age.

Marital status

Russel and Thuy were single and had not been married so far. Melvyn was engaged. David and Stuart were divorced. Nine people were married: Amjad, Jane, Kate, Mandy, Margaret, Marian, Nuala, Tracy and Zainal. Jo had re-married.

Children

Almost all participants had children, all women had children, ranging from one to six children per family (average amount of children is 1.66 children per family in this group) - except for Amjad, Melvyn, Russel, and Zainal who had no children.

Single parents were David, Stuart, and Thuy.

6.3.2.1 Groups of Social Class

People in this group came either from middle or working class, as summarised in Table 6.4 and Figure 6.2. The working class people did not possess high earning jobs, and also their spouses did not seem to work in highly paid jobs. The majority of research participants in the category ‘returned to work’ came from a middle class background, see Figure 6.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working class (WC)</th>
<th>David, Melvyn, Stuart, and Thuy.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper working class (UWC)/ Lower middle class (LMC)</td>
<td>Jo/ Jane and Tracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class (MC)</td>
<td>Amjad, Kate, Mandy, Margaret, Marian, Nuala, Rusel and Zainal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.4: Groups of Social Class
The (lower) middle class participants in general, were far better off and experienced a higher standard of living. Here both parents were in paid jobs and these factors contributed to and influenced enormously the financial resources of the family. This is explained in more detail on page 126. A summary of the statements is given in table 6.5 Overview of the social structure of the participants 'returned to work'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Job after school</th>
<th>Later/recent job or qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amjad, m</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>A-level at 16</td>
<td>To university</td>
<td>Degree in geology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David, d</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>WC</td>
<td>- at 16</td>
<td>Machinist</td>
<td>Machinist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane, m</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>LMC</td>
<td>- at 17</td>
<td>Clerk/ typist</td>
<td>Word processor operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo, rm</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>UWC</td>
<td>- at 16</td>
<td>Hairdresser (13)</td>
<td>Dinner lady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate, m</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>- at 16</td>
<td>Office work/ clerk</td>
<td>Civil servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandy, m</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>A-level at 18</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Childminder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret, m</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>A-level at 16</td>
<td>Nanny</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marian, m</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>- at 17</td>
<td>Office work/ art college</td>
<td>Bookkeeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melvyn, s</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>WC</td>
<td>G(C)SE at 16</td>
<td>Plumber</td>
<td>Plumber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuala, m</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>- at 18</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russel, s</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>A-level</td>
<td>Cartographer</td>
<td>Cartographer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuart, d</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>WC</td>
<td>None at 16</td>
<td>Electronics city&amp;guild</td>
<td>Sales assistant in pc shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thuy, s</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>WC</td>
<td>None at 17</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>Shop assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy, m</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>UWC</td>
<td>- at 17</td>
<td>Work in sandwich bar</td>
<td>Special needs teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zainal, m</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>A-level at 16</td>
<td>To university</td>
<td>Degree in chemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s = single</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m = married</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d = divorced</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rm = remarried</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.5: Overview of the Social Structure of the Participants 'Returned to Work'
Taking the jobs, career pathways and occupations into account and using them as an indicator for social class, shows that the participants clustered in the middle class pursued jobs as a secretary, civil servant, teacher, and bookkeeper. Amjad and Zainal are categorised as middle class, despite them working in a shop and at a petrol station. Here other factors such as educational background and their personal views and hopes were more decisive. The participants of the upper working class and lower middle class pursued jobs as a special needs teacher and a word processor operator and dinner lady/charity work. Respectively, the participants clustered in the working class pursue jobs as a machinist, plumber, work in computer shop, and shop assistant. The participants in the middle class left school between 16 and 18 years of age and achieved higher (mostly A-levels) school leaving qualifications. Two participants achieved a university degree (Amjad, Zainal). Marian finished art college. The participants clustered in the working class and upper working class/lower middle class mostly left school at 16 years of age and went straight into employment. Two participants (Thuy and Stuart) left school with no qualifications.

The above statements can be summarized in five different clusters.

6.3.2.2 Clusters

a) Married and middle class
Amjad, Kate, Mandy, Margaret, Marian, Nuala and Zainal: All of them say they are happily married, live in ‘nice’ areas and have detached houses and experience no financial worries.

b) Single and middle class
Russell is more than happy to be back in work and remembers the time when he was unemployed as “awful” and “very depressing”.
c) Married and lower middle/ upper working class

Jane, Jo and Tracy: They all are content and happy with their current situation, they enjoy working, having overcome 'bad patches' and 'rough times', financially, health- and family situation-wise.

d) Divorced and working class

David, Stuart: They are both single fathers and 'struggle' financially while 'juggling' work and childcare. They dream about getting better jobs in the future when the children are older and independent.

e) Single and working class

Melvyn and Thuy: Melvyn is content with his situation, "there is always work for plumbers", plans to get married and will buy a house soon. Thuy is dyslexic and dreams of getting a better paid job.

6.3.2.3 Financial Situation

The research participants' perception of themselves, their achievements and the expressed development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' is strongly influenced by the situation of being 'employed' or 'in work' again. Being able to earn money and able to focus on something else rather than 'merely' the household and the children is the axis of life for these participants. The personal situation of being able to 'earn money' is very important to this group, and people define themselves through it. The research participants feel good when contributing financially to the household income and feel very much valued and "worth something" by having paid employment.

6.3.2.4 Career/ Job Progression

Among the participants, career pathways and job progression falls mainly into four categories. Firstly a smooth, steady ongoing career progression in the same or related field of work -before and after the 'return-to-work course' which applies to the majority of participants (David, Jane, Kate, Mandy, Margaret, Marian, Melvyn, Nuala). Secondly, a smooth, steady ongoing career progression in the same or related field of work -before the period of unemployment and which, since then, has not gone so smoothly and thus was filled with disappointment of/in the job (Russell and Thuy). Thirdly, a career pathway filled with changes in jobs, due to the responsibilities of looking after the household and children (Jo and Tracy). Stuarts' career pathway is filled with changes in his job and work field, even before he became a single parent, but it became more difficult for him to find an appropriate job because of childcare issues. And lastly, a career progression that does not meet the wishes of the participants (because they are much higher qualified) and can be described as just jobs taken to earn money (Amjad and Zainal).
6.4 Conclusions
This chapter has laid out the general characteristics and the social structure of the two groups of research participants. It has underlined and demonstrated the study's concern about the single individual and his or her degree of awareness about acquired 'tacit forms of key competencies' and the overall assumption that people's degree of awareness depends on their level of education and social class (Klerman and Leibowitz, 1994; Filipezak, 1994) which is encapsulated in the study's working hypothesis (see chapter 1, p.8). Thus, people with low school leaving certificates and who have lower social status are not as aware of their achievements as people are who have a 'better' social background, and who have received a higher level of education (Turner, 1995; Turner and Lloyd, 1995; Behrman and Nevzer, 1997; Jacobs, 1997).

Chapters seven and eight follow by providing a full descriptive account of the experiences of the research participants, derived from the thematic conceptual framework discussed in chapter 5 and from the developed mind maps, which provided a visual image from which to speak (see chapter 4, part 2) and which were used as a research tool to make tangible and structure the experience of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'.
CHAPTER 7: THE EXPERIENCES OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS IN THE GROUP 'ON COURSE'

7.0 Introduction
This chapter describes the experiences of the 18 research participants who had been classified as 'on course' (see chapter 5); they were enrolled on a CVT course or 'return-to-work course' at the time of the study. The chapter focuses on the research participants reflections upon their experience of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies', in a period of unemployment and 'family phase'. It includes identification of the developed 'tacit' competencies and skills by using the starfish model, together with the notion of how aware are participants of them. Furthermore, the expressed feelings (such as a lack in confidence), thoughts and emotions about this time in the lives of the participants were explored.

The intention here is to present the developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' and the experiences of this specific group of individuals as a basis from which to interrelate the development of 'tacit' competencies, the degree of awareness and amount of confidence people draw from it. An account of the different perspectives was produced in form of an overview data sheet (see Appendix C) which formed the basis as the thematic conceptual framework for the analysis. In addition, five mini-biographies are presented to illuminate this part of the biography and life-story of the research participants. This was felt to be adequate addressing the general research question: How do people experience the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' while being out of paid work? And additionally, to address the sub-questions: How do individuals acquire 'tacit forms of key competencies'? To what extent are people aware of their developed 'tacit forms of key competencies'? How do they 'see', 'rate' and 'value' their capabilities? as outlined in chapter 1.

7.1 Experiences of the group of research participants 'on course'
The aim of the study is to make the 'tacit' dimension of the development of skills and competencies tangible and explicit. In-depth, (socio-)biographic interviews were undertaken to explore and describe which 'tacit' competencies the research participants were thought to have acquired, learned and mastered and 'What this situation was like in this period?' The interviews were accompanied by the creation of a mind map, (see ch. 4) in which the research participants were asked to write down key words and expressions that described their experiences, in relation to three main aspects. The first aspect referred to 'a short biography, and important personal life history events', marking special and critical events. The second referred to 'tacit knowledge and competency development' in this time. And lastly, with respect to 'emotional aspects', how did they feel at this time.
in their lives while developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'? The technique of mind mapping was very useful in several ways. First of all, mind mapping was a powerful technique to make explicit the 'tacit dimension', to reveal 'tacit forms of key competencies' and the feelings, emotions about the 'tacit' learning process behind this experience.

At this point it needs to be mentioned that the difference in the meaning of the concepts 'key competencies', 'competences' and 'skills' was not relevant for the research participants and not important for the identification of the 'tacit' dimension. When asked to describe a normal daily routine and the tasks and chores they had to fulfil, the research participants mentioned their developed competencies in many ways; some research participants state and remembered chores and competencies in a very detailed way.

Rachel, 34, mother of four, explains: "Everything that is related to the children and the household. Washing, cooking, cleaning and clearing away things. Clean the children's shoes etc. All these little things. I also deal with the teachers in school, attend assemblies, write the cheques for the school, read the newsletter, know what is going on in school. I also pay the bills, organise birthday/dinner parties, buy presents for the children, or if they or we are invited to a party. I tend to buy the school uniforms, new shoes for the children, trainers. Check their P.E. bags and library books. All sorts of things."

Eunice, 46, with three children, summarized this period by stating: "It was just one round of washing, cleaning, ironing, cooking, taking the dogs out, shopping. A normal work day”.

7.2 The 'Tacit Dimension'- Identification of 'tacit forms of key competencies'

The 'tacit' dimension of the experience, or the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' became tangible when people talked about the part of their life story, the experience of learning how to run the family household. Tacit dimensions could be identified and made explicit while encouraging the individuals to tell their stories, by listening to them, and by probing and reading 'between the lines' of their statements. Expression such as "It comes natural", "You get a routine" and "You learn by mistakes" were attempts undertaken by the research participants to express the experience of developing 'tacit skills and competencies', to grasp the 'tacitness' of the situation. Carol described this in her words as: "I had this feeling. You trust your instinct; there is like a concept in your head". Eunice's response exemplified this 'tacit' dimension of competency development as "It is similar to car driving, you are doing it without even noticing or paying attention to it". She asserted: "You get the drift of what is going on".
7.2.1 Identified 'tacit' skills and key competencies - related to the 'starfish model'

In a first step towards the identification, the research participants were asked to state and describe which key competencies they thought they had developed. This produced a short list of key competencies; through probing and questioning about the daily routine, other 'tacit forms of key competencies' were recalled and named. Some skills were described in more words than by a concept. Sally expressed her thoughts as: "I was also the one who gave them the disciplinary bit, my husband has more patience". A whole range of skills and competencies were being identified throughout the interview while participants were responding to and thinking about the question of "What skills do you think you achieved/learned/mastered?" The extent of the range of skills and key competencies mentioned is listed on page 132 in the form of a list. The recalled 'tacit forms of key competencies' were then documented, summarized in the data analysis and assigned to five different categories: learning competencies, content related and practical competencies, social competencies, methodological competencies and competencies related to attitudes and values within the developed starfish model (see Figure 7.1). An overview is given in Figure 7.2 the mind map: Overview of key competencies category 'on course'.

Figure 7.1: The developed Starfish Model

A whole range of verbal descriptions, explanations of competencies and skills could be seen within the list created by the research participants. The identified developed or acquired skills are not being judged in terms of importance or value. Each mentioned skill is accorded the same importance. Therefore, each statement, mentioned key competence or skill is assigned to one of the five 'categories' with the relevant meaning. In doing so, the starfish model was used as a pre-defined starting point for the analysis and identification. It helped to locate, structure and cluster the tacitly acquired key competencies and skills that were mentioned. It was employed as a basis for the heuristic investigation of personal and biographical experiences so as to capture the 'tacit dimension' and was empirically discussed and underpinned through the investigation of the learning experience as exemplified in this and the following chapter.
Gardening, Maintenance Decorating Letter writing and applications for the Job Centre

- Typing, dealing with paperwork
- Driving skills
- Safety in the house
- Skills in child development
- Health educator
- Nursing
- Teaching
- Skills related to 'domestic tasks'
- Expert-shopper
- Cooking
- Arts and crafts
- Driving skills

Problem-solving. Analysing of situations
Self-organising
Decision-making
Ability to use experience in new situations
Ability to interpret situations and respond appropriately
Planning time, time management

- Organising
- Managing budget
- Time management
- Meeting deadlines
- Planning (spare-time activities, holidays, babysitter, evenings out, school events)
- Thinking ahead
- Discipline

- 'To deal with whatever comes up'
- 'Juggle with everyday tasks'
- 'To fit jobs in'
- Find solutions
- Multi-tasking
- 'To accept things'
- 'Supervise and manage husband'
- 'Explain things to the children'
- 'Be there' for the children and family
- Allocate tasks
- Develop routine

Content-related and practical competencies

Learning competencies

Methodological competencies

Competencies related to attitudes and values

Social competencies

- 'Being aware of becoming a role model'
- Independence
- Responsibility
- Tolerance
- Understanding
- Less self-centred, selfish
- 'More caring for other people'

Are being identified 'between the lines', in what participants say.

(Demonstration of commitment - element/force of love for family)
(Acceptance of self-responsibility - here more responsibility for everything and all)
(Ability to foster confidence and trust: support husband, comfort children)

Figure 7.2: Mind map: Overview of key competencies in category 'on course'
7.3 General overview of the key competencies and skills in (54) groups

In total, 54 different key competencies and skills were identified. The twenty-four most often mentioned competencies and skills, e.g. organisation and managing, are presented in table 7.3 'frequency of the acquired key competencies'. A representation of the 'tacit' knowledge base of the individuals, the variety of skills acquired and identified by the research participants, which were mentioned once, and not included in the table, but are listed below:

- Domain specific skills,
- Teaching skills,
- Prioritising,
- To adapt to situations,
- Discipline,
- Negotiating,
- Sewing,
- Gardening,
- Maintenance,
- Decorating,
- Driving skills,
- Writing skills (letters and applications),
- Typing skills, and in dealing with the paperwork,
- Telephone skills,
- Memory skills.

- Skills in supporting/encouraging: "At that time my husband was 'climbing the ladder', and he needed support and encouragement from me."
- Interview skills: " as I was interviewing all the babysitters and people who applied for the cleaning/childcare jobs."
- Being aware of what the children are doing.
- Being 'spacially' aware where the children are.
- Role model: "Because we are the "grown-ups" and we have to show them how to do it. You become a role model, and you become aware of it."
- Interest in welfare: "I am more caring about other people now."
- Discipline: "I was also the one who gave them the disciplinary bit, my husband has more patience."
- Time appreciation: "You learn that time is precious."
- Being efficient: "I have learned to manage a house much more effectively in terms of keeping it clean, keeping the inhabitants fed, keeping it tidy enough to work or to play in."
- Recycling: "You learn to 'recycle' things, heat up food, prepare a meal with leftovers etc."
- Give excuses: "I have learned to give excuses to people."
- Parenting: "I am more 'family wise'. It's basically bringing the children up, and being a good parent."
- Basic needs: "Making sure that the children are clean, fed and clothed."
- Explaining: "Giving explanations to the children."
- "Dealing and being in charge of people."

Encouraging the research participants to reflect upon their daily routine enabled the identification and enumeration of competencies that they became aware of having developed.
7.3.1 Frequency of the acquired key competencies

While looking at the stated acquired 'tacit' key competencies and skills (see fig 7.2), it transpired that some key competencies and skills were mentioned more often than others. This section draws out the acquired 'main' key competencies and skills which are then analysed in the following pages. In order to gain an understanding and clearer picture, of which 'tacit' key competencies and skills are common ones, those that a 'larger' group of the participants had acquired, the twenty-four most mentioned competencies thus are summarised and clustered in Figure 7.3: 'Frequency of acquired key competencies'.

![Frequency of acquired competencies](image)

**Figure 7.3: 'Frequency of Acquired Key Competencies'**

**Key to the table 'Frequency of Acquired Key Competencies'**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. organisation,</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. routine,</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. pre-planning,</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. planning,</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. time management,</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. managing and budgeting,</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. multi-tasking,</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. responsibility,</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. life-experience,</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. altruism, putting the need of others' first</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. understanding,</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. patience</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. tolerance,</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. control of emotions,</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. dealing with stress,</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. communication,</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. listening,</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. socialising with other parents,</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. independence,</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. cooking,</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. nursing,</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. shopping,</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. safety and</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. creativity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The twenty-four competencies and skills represented in the table above are: organisation, routine, pre-planning, planning, time management, managing and budgeting, multi-tasking, responsibility, life-experience, altruism, understanding, patience, tolerance, control of emotions, dealing with stress, communication, listening, socialising with other parents, independence, cooking, nursing, shopping, safety and creativity.

In terms of achieving a more condensed and intensified perspective, together with clarification and understanding, only the seven most frequent key competencies and skills were selected to be further analysed in this study. In answering the question “What competencies or skills do you think you have acquired while looking after the (family) household?”, seven key competencies are the most frequent ones mentioned. All competencies and skills that are mentioned fewer than five times are left out of the further analysis and discussion.

The focus and discussion is now on the top seven competencies and skills. These are: Organisational skills, Managing and Budgeting, Multi-tasking as well as Patience, Altruism, Planning, Cooking as well as Time management, and finally, Responsibility.

7.3.1.1 Organisational skills

'Organisational skills' were the most common developed key competencies or skills. The mentioned term 'organising' refers, on the one hand, to 'organising the household' and, on the other hand, to 'organising the family life'. This includes organising spare-time, evenings out, the baby-sitter, parties, holidays etc. The major task is to 'organise the days' and to 'organise the weeks'. Household tasks (doing the shopping, washing etc.) and events related to the children and family activities (birthdays, visits) have to be co-ordinated and combined. 'Organising' is the most essential task especially for mothers at home as the effect of not organising everything and not 'being organised' is not a desirable experience, as Rachel pointed out: "I am far more organised now, if I would leave it for just a day - it would be a nightmare. It is always a nightmare if I am sick or ill, because everything, every routine comes to a halt. And that is chaos".

In essence, 'organising' is the most frequent mentioned key competence. In order to be organised and to stay organised a 'routine' was developed by the research participants. This developed routine was the vehicle to carry out and to support the organisation of the household and family life. Here 'to be organised' means to fulfil the range of tasks that family life requires and 'dictates'. Sam observed: "there has to be food in the fridge" as the children will be hungry, and "the washing of the clothes has to be done as the whole family needs fresh, clean clothes".
Consequently for parents being responsible for the organisation of the household, there is not much choice and freedom, when to do a task. Organising here means 'doing something that is necessary' and can be seen as solving and overcoming a problem or preventing a collapse of the 'micro-cosmos family'. Whereas for a single person, the 'pressure' of household duties is minor compared to that of a parent because there is a far greater element of choice and freedom, for the single person who can choose when to do certain tasks.

7.3.1.2 Managing and budgeting

Managing the household meant most of the time clearly separated tasks for husband and wife, as Barbara described: "My husband did everything outside the house and the major electrical work. I did everything domestic and related to the children". Budgeting the household expenses is an important and necessary task for single people and for parents who are in charge of 'running' the family household. Both parties have only a certain amount of money that they can spend and most of the time it is a limited amount. Mikki said: "I only buy what's on my list" and Carol explained: "I definitely learned to control the spending of my money. What comes first: paying the bills or spending it on something silly?". Angelica confirmed "I learned to manage a small budget, as I also pay the bills - and need to know what's in the account" and Rachel indicated: "Budgeting; not spending everything in one go". The term 'budgeting' reflects the perspective of the majority of the research participants, as it is essential to control the spending of the money and to keep a financial overview. A view Sally commented: "I saw other people getting themselves into debt, so I rather didn't spend money I didn't have. Still, we always managed a good Christmas. The only time when we spent money on presents and sweets and food. I always wanted the children to remember Christmas".

7.3.1.3 Multi-tasking as well as Patience

Whereas multi-tasking seems to be a key competence and skill developed primarily, and more likely, by people who are 'running' a family household and who also have to deal with the needs of (young) children, patience is a key competence and skill developed by parents and single people. Sam stated: "I am able to multi-task to an extent, out of necessity". Multi-tasking refers to an ability or key competence that is described in a lot of different ways. It is often referred to as 'juggling' as Diane explained: "I learned to 'juggle' with everyday tasks and to fit jobs in", flexibility or as Barbara expressed: "to deal with more than one demand at a time". Patience is a key competence that is developed in order to stay calm and level-headed while dealing with difficult situations as Diane pointed out: "You learn very much to be patient - not to shout at the children, even when you are tired".
7.3.1.4 Putting others' needs first
Mothers especially expressed the experience that they -after they had had children- changed and became less self-centred and less selfish. As Jeanette observed: "I am less selfish. You have to drop your interests - they become second". For the research participants it felt as if suddenly the needs and interests of the child/ children came first. Putting the children's needs first meant a huge change to them.

7.3.1.5 Planning
'Planning' is essential for families, in order to organise and plan family life and co-ordinate all the demands of the family members. Rina observed: "A good deal of planning - at least one week in advance", this meant for her "keeping one step ahead". Single people also emphasized 'planning' as they had to organize their situation of being 'unemployed', eg. seeing a careers advisor, making job interview appointments, collecting income support from (post) offices on a certain day etc.

7.3.1.6 Cooking
Single people as well as parents stated that their cooking skills improved a great deal simply due to the fact they were in charge of the cooking once they had left their parents' home. Caron stated respectively: "When I got married I couldn't cook. In school I hated cooking lessons. So, in the beginning, we had raw sausages and lumpy gravy. I didn't know. I would peel peas". And Richard confirmed: "I learned to cook; what to shop and how to prepare the meal. Later cooking became my hobby".

7.3.1.7 Responsibility as well as time management
Becoming responsible indicated a 'massive' change for the individual in their personality, especially if they became a carer for children or elder relatives. Suddenly they 'had to grow up' and face the responsibility not only for themselves but also for somebody else. Janet explained: "I became much more responsible, but I also had much more responsibility". Time management became important in order to make possible the planning and organizing of activities and days. For mothers, school pick-up times, after school clubs etc. dominated the planning of the day. Diane's response was a good example of time management: "The children had to be at school and picked up at a certain time. I used this time to do the dishes, cleaning, ironing, dusting, hoovering shopping and cook the meals- things like this".

7.4 Reflection on the stated, acquired 'tacit' key competencies and skills
It seemed that the debate about key skills in Britain had achieved an awareness of people towards the word 'skill'. The research participants seemed to have no problems to state
one or two skills/competencies after being asked to name some. Stating firstly 'organising' and secondly 'managing' as acquired key competencies and skills, supports this assumption. Also the fact that the interview participants are currently enrolled on a 'return-to-work' course could support the assumption that the term 'skill' is known and used in the daily language. As the development of skills, most of the time, are at the centre of attention on such a course. Still, to receive a fuller, wider and more detailed picture of developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' the recollection process of the research participants was fostered through in-depth, semi-structured, (socio-)biographical interviews, as the primary strategy for data collection. This created an ability to 'tell' and an awareness of the research participants towards their achievements and developed 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

Through probing and with the aid of the mind map, a wide range of developed personal and individual key competencies could be named and recollected that show a deep involvement of the individuals in the process of 'running' the (family) household. This involvement creates a change in the personality of the research participants. People admit to having become far more organised, patient, responsible and less selfish. This change in their personality is important and will be investigated in more detail later on, as it reflects people's awareness about their acquired and developed key competencies and skills and/or the effects of this development.

In essence, three levels of key competencies and skills can be identified within the statements. First, a surface level of developed key competencies and skills where 'obvious' and 'known' key competencies are stated. Organising, managing and planning are key competencies that can be found in the daily, current debate about qualification and skill development. The second level describes the ability to connect these developed skills and terms to personal circumstances. The 'range of use' and the range of situations in which key competencies and skills are being acquired, developed and carried out are very specific to each individual. These developed skills and competencies are closely related to the field of housework and to the fulfilment of household tasks; such as time-management, communication, listening, socialising with other parents, cooking, nursing, shopping, safety and creativity. The third level is that of 'deepest unawareness', (un)recognition. The recognition of the individual of their personal attributes and attitudes and the changes in them. People changed while looking after the (family) household and it was essential to recognise this and to pay attention to it as it helped to unravel the 'tacit dimension'. Examples would be competencies such as: understanding, patience, tolerance, control of emotions, dealing with stress and independence. A second important research aim was to identify whether people were aware of their change and 'tacit' learning experience, if they were aware of the way in which they changed or learned and if they
saw benefits from the change in their personality. This points to the heart of the study and the next section deals with people's awareness about their acquired 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

7.5 Identifying the degree of (un)awareness of the acquired 'tacit skills and competencies'

In order to identify the degree of awareness about their developed and acquired 'tacit' skills and competencies, the research participants had to define their situation and assess their achievements and work in terms of recognition, status, renumeration and importance.

Almost all interview participants seemed to possess a certain degree of awareness, and the analysis showed that the degree of awareness about the development of 'tacit' skills differed very much between each individual. The statements of the research participants offered nuances in the degree of awareness about the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies', as outlined on page 139. For example, a few women were very aware of their development of certain skills and they were able to list at least five skills without hesitation. Managing skills, time management and organisational skills are the most frequent ones mentioned first. These women (Rachel, Sam and Rina) had achieved higher school leaving qualifications and this supported the working hypothesis of the study that people with higher school leaving certificates and a longer time spent in school rated and valued their development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' differently - and more positively - than people with no or low school leaving certificates.

More people needed time to think about this question and needed encouragement to describe in more detail which key competencies they thought they had developed, because they could not think of a lot of competencies. Barbara described: "I don't think I developed a lot of skills; partly because I left school so early. I suppose, my organisational skills improved". In particular, individuals from a working class background valued their achievements and skills of managing the household as minor and not important. Wendy explained: "I was bottom of the list, my husband came top and the family second".

Overall, the majority of women was not aware of the competencies and skills they acquired; they were much more aware of their situation of being lonely, isolated and cut off from normal life. They were much more aware about the hard work they had to do as a wife and mother. And their wish was to return to work. Diane asserted: "I felt not comfortable in having to give up work and felt very lonely. I hated not having time for myself. I missed working very much and felt not being appreciated. You are not taking part in the real world any longer".
7.5.1 Differentiation of the 'awareness of skills'

The identified degree of awareness of the interviewees can be broadly divided into three categories. Firstly, the ones who were (very) aware, and secondly, the ones who were not aware, and thirdly, the ones who were in between these two categories. This way of categorising is a very rough division and includes a lot more levels or degrees of awareness which can be identified and are listed below. People differed very much in the degree of awareness about their developed 'tacit' key competencies and skills. The following statements, extracted from the interviews as a list of nuances, show how manifold the differentiation was:

- They are aware of the most important skills and competencies immediately after the question was asked. They were able to state at least four of them without hesitation. (Rachel, Sam, Rina, Carla).
- They are aware of a whole range of key competencies and skills. (Angelica, Sam, Rachel)
- They are aware of a limited range of key competencies and skills. (Andrew, Richard, Sally, Carol1, Carol)
- They are aware of them at the moment of the interview but needed support and time to reflect on the question. (Gena, Richard, Sally, Mikki, Carol1, Wendy)
- They were aware of them at the time of the interview, but stated not to have been aware of them at the time of looking after the family household, which took place some years ago. They are aware of them because of their age and life-experience now (Angelica, Diane)
- They are aware of them, but do not rate them as very important in general. (Barbara, Carol, Carol1, Eunice, Sally, Richard)
- The development of skills while 'running' the (family) household was argued. Janet noted: "I don't look at them as being skills".
- They are more aware of their personal circumstances and the difficult situation they had to overcome and their achievement in overcoming them. (Carol, Mikki)
- They are more aware of the struggle and hassle at that time than about the developed skills and competencies. (Carla, Carol, Eunice, Mikki, Sam, Richard)

To become aware of the developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' became an issue for the research participants and for them to understand the question and being able to answer, meant waiting and giving them time, as they needed time to reflect upon the question before they were able to answer. The essence drawn from the interviews was that at the time of their 'family phase', the women were more aware of what had to be done, rather than whether it had to be done.
7.6 Identifying the degree of confidence gained from the acquired ‘tacit skills and competencies’

The majority of individuals did not gain confidence from ‘running’ the family household and the process of developing ‘tacit forms of key competencies’. Gena stated: “I lost a lot of confidence while being stuck at home” and Carol recalled “If people were asking me what do you do, I would say: I am a housewife. The man, my husband, went to work and he paid the bills. We each acted our role. Things were paid; and I measured myself against him. I never felt the same level, because there isn’t any reward or wage for this job. He went up the ladder, he didn’t have to stop. A man’s life doesn’t change. I felt very low compared to him. And he felt superior, his attitude demonstrated that. My priorities were to get the children washed and fed. He was worried about the car. It wasn’t clean enough or he had to put petrol in. I never felt, that he understood me and ‘my day’. I had a low self-worth; perhaps if I had felt better, it would have been better. Deep down, I felt that’s what I am worth.”

Sally observed: “I was so lacking in confidence, as I had no qualifications and relied on my husband a lot”. She states succinctly: “Being a housewife ‘classes’ you. If you tell people that you are a housewife, they class you. But it is not a very high status. If you compare being a housewife to being a foster parent, a foster parent is more recognised - that is something people look up at”.

The differentiation in the degree of ‘confidence’ was also very manifold:

- Few research participants were confident in their abilities now, while reflecting on the past and now being on the course, but weren’t at the time of being at home (Angelica, Sam).
- Some seemed to be confident in themselves - content with life (Andrew, Eunice, Jane1, Rachel).
- Carol gained confidence from her former employment/ occupation.
- Some gained confidence from dealing with personal difficulties - ‘sorting out their life’ (Carol, Mikki).
- Some hope to gain confidence from the ‘return-to-work’ course (Barbara, Carla, Carol1, Diane, Gena, Jeanette, Richard, Sally, Wendy).
- A few gained confidence from being ‘aware’ of the their key competencies (Eunice, Rina, Rachel).

In general, the research participants did not gain confidence from ‘running’ the family household and hoped to gain confidence from the return-to-work course. Some gained a small amount of confidence from other activities, such as former employment, overcoming
personal difficulties, children - but still on a day-to-day basis. In reflecting on their daily routines, the research participants became aware of their achievements which led to an increase in their degree of confidence.

7.7 Other pieces of the puzzle
Other perceptions and statements about the experience of developing competencies while 'running the (family) household and looking after the children', which did not fit in the categories beforehand, are listed below.

a) A difference was observed between single people and people with children in their development of key qualifications and skills - because single people do not experience the same 'pressure' to fulfil tasks as parents do and so seem not to develop as much as parents.

b) 'Organising', 'planning', 'managing' and 'budgeting' are the main, most commonly, acquired and developed key qualifications and skills. It is important to note that the organisational tasks also include organising spare-time activities, holidays, nights out, the baby-sitter, parties, birthdays, feeding the pets etc.

c) It is not always clear, which key competencies and skills were developed during the career break or during the period of occupation. The areas of the 'where and when' of the development are too close, in terms of the resemblance of the tasks fulfilled professionally and the tasks that had to be done at home, e.g. nurse, teacher or childminder.

d) Some individuals see the development of skills while 'running' the (family) household not as vital or essential for future professional development. This results from a general dislike of housework (Eunice) and a general indifference towards these competencies, as Barbara and Wendy expressed: "There are more important things to do in life".

e) The development of skills while 'running' the (family) household are not seen as vital or essential for the future professional development but were seen as important for personal development. (Rina).

f) The development of skills while 'running' the (family) household are seen as essential for future personal and professional development. At least for future occupations with the same 'profile', e.g. childminder, nursery nurse, office work. (Diane, Jeanette)

g) The process of transforming experiences and achievements from the 'home' into the labour market cannot be undertaken in most of the cases. And Wendy argued: Everything I achieved for the family is not important. You need IT skills for the job”.

7.8 'Mini-Biographies' to Illuminate the Statements of the Category 'On Course'
Five mini-biographies are presented in the following section to illustrate the experiences of the research participants.
Andrew, 34, lorry driver, 3 children, duration of break: 1.5 years, 'SkillsPlus' course

Andrew worked as a lorry driver for over twenty years before he had to stop working because his wife became ill and he had to take over looking after their three young children (aged: 10, 7, 6) and running the family household for a period of one and a half years. He is currently enrolled on a ten week 'Skills Plus' course which he attends 3 days a week on a full time basis. When he was a lorry driver he travelled through Europe on his own, went to a lot of places and looking back now, he sums up his feelings about this time as "while being on the road, away from home and before my marriage, I learned to look after myself". He believes that he therefore is now "ready to settle down".

Tacit dimensions: Tacit dimensions can be identified in the part of his life story where he talks about his experience of learning to run the family household. "It comes natural!" and "you learn by mistakes" are significant statements Andrew expresses. In a way, it seems that this perspective and experience has shaped his understanding and world view. He seems to be 'realistic' about his way of life and life in general. His view of life is based on "life experience and age" as he states it. He seems to be 'down to earth' and very practical. It might be part of his personality or character but also part of his 'walk in life', "because as a long distance lorry driver you have to stay patient, accept things, and take things as they come". The task for Andrew was to make a journey from 'A' to 'B', to arrive at a certain time, and to obey strict speed limits. For him, it was essential to be patient as there was no point in getting upset about a congestion on the motorway.

But, also in terms of family life, he seems to 'obey' or 'give in' to certain rules or simply to take them for granted. Running a family household includes or embraces a lot of things. Things that cannot be argued and have to be done. Questioning them would mean 'a waste of time' and would be unfruitful. But he does not see this as unusual - it is a part of life. He grew up with four brothers and sisters, and they all had to help at home as it was a "part of life". "It becomes a matter of life" is the central statement of his interview. You therefore have to adjust to whatever happens during life and you have to live with it.

Awareness - opinion and horizon: Andrew is 'realistic' about his job opportunities. He will take what is offered to him. 'Realistic' here is very narrowly defined. It represents Andrew's opinion on how he sees and assesses his chances of returning to the world of work. It means 'to be able to cope', to follow the same route as before and to operate within 'known' borders. It pictures the way Andrew perceives his possibilities. He thinks that being 43 years old is not the best attribute to possess while looking for a job. The statement that "he will take whatever is offered to him" shows that he seems to be very 'passive' about finding or choosing a job. He says he could imagine going back to his old job
- driving trucks again. Neither the experience of taking part in the course or his position of running the family household has opened up his range of ideas, desires or 'possibilities' in trying out something else afterwards. Andrew is 'adjusted' to the way of thinking he always did and all his future possibilities seem to be exactly the same as they were before the course or the experience of running the family household. It does not occur to him to try anything else. He cannot think of a different job, and he cannot 'see' himself in a different job. On the other hand, he seems to be very aware of his present position and his range of choices; a position he partly found for himself and a position that was partly defined by his experience and society. He is careful and cautious about making predictions about his future. He says he "cannot foresee what is going to happen". All he wants "is a decent job" and "in the end he doesn't mind". In general, he expresses a more passive attitude towards decision-making in his life.

'Awareness': In terms of awareness, Andrew seems to be aware of his life situation. He seems very 'practical', 'down to earth' and aware of what he is capable of doing. He 'knows' what he is doing. Although he considers the task of running the family household as very important he does not make any connections from it to the world of work. He considers the virtues and tasks he did while running the family household as of no use for his future work, and future personal or professional development. He believes that "working or doing your job is totally different". But he still thinks that nobody -except his wife- could have done the 'same good job as he did' in looking after the children.

Confidence: Andrew sounds confident in himself and in progressing with his life, and with chances 'life' is going to offer him. He seems to be content with his current situation; he neither complains about his 'unfulfilling' situation or about not having enough money to live on. He also sounds very happy; happy and content. He furthermore considers the possibility of "going for another course".

Skills: In the beginning he says that he developed a whole range of skills, but afterwards narrows it down to 'parenting skills'. In his opinion the main skills he developed while looking after the family household are 'parenting skills'. He puts the emphasis on 'becoming family wise', as he had to take over the responsibility of looking after the children and his wife, whereas before he stated he had "always been involved in helping with the children, but never ever in changing a nappy before". Looking after the family household was a totally new situation for him. And, as he had to 'do' all the tasks now, he had to learn and develop parenting skills.

Learning: His understanding of 'learning' can be seen as a hidden understanding, which comes to the surface between the lines. His learning experience is connected to learning to
'look after himself'. 'Life experience' and 'age' are the synonyms for learning, because he had to learn how to run the family household, but he is not aware of what he achieved. It does not seem to be as important as other learning experiences he went through in his life.

7.8.2 Angelica, 42, married, 3 children, IT-Skills course
Angelica is a woman who is very aware of her developed skills, although she admits that this is due to the fact that she is now looking back - a 'time difference' of almost 14 years - and that she has had time to reflect upon her experience. She did not 'see' her achievements at that time when the children were younger. She experienced all that she did as being "mere routine". Her interview indicates a development of a variety of skills and competencies and at the same time an awareness of her methodological, social, contents related and practical competencies. The most important skills she developed are that she "learned to meet deadlines, became more reliable, and was not so much self-centred anymore". She defines her situation as being a "housewife", "captain on a ship", and "chief, cook and bottlewasher". The skills developed also show a strong distribution of the tasks between husband and wife while looking after the household. She admits to having done "never ever technical jobs", such as putting up shelves or changing fuses. This is the domain of her husband. This has been the case in several family situations. In the listing of her achieved skills a notion of 'nursing, teaching, and counselling' can be identified. As her professional career includes a shift from being a nurse, to teaching and later on to counselling - it can not be distinguished whether these 'skills' were developed in both places, at home and/or in the workplace. They have to be attributed to both domains.

7.8.3 Barbara, 36, secretary, divorced, 2 children, 'Skills Plus' course
Barbara is between two positions, she is aware of some skills she developed, but seems to be not too concerned or 'engaged' in the interview. She lists "good organisational skills, time management" as the first competencies that come to her mind. As she does not seem too engaged or interested in the topic of the interview, it could be possible therefore that her list is not as detailed as the lists of other participants. Her general attitude towards housework is not a favourable one. "I am not so keen on doing housework, there are more important things in life". This might influence her way of thinking about developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' in terms of not making a very long list because it does not seem to be too important to her.

Getting married and becoming a mother changed much in Barbara's life. It was a difficult time for her, only being 23 years of age when she had her first baby. She did not enjoy the situation of not having enough money to 'enjoy life' and 'go out'. She experienced a 'tough time' as she and her husband moved up to the North of England, shortly after they
were married, and as a consequence she had to leave all her friends and family behind. She says that she "had no choice in going back to work" after she had her child, because of the lack of childcare facilities in the area where she had moved to. At that time she missed her work-life and her colleagues. Being in paid work is very important for her well being. She felt lonely and isolated while being at home. Her current situation of looking for a job and returning to work is not easy for her. She feels uneasy about returning to work and her confidence and self-esteem are low. During her phase of running the family household, Barbara states -while reflecting- that during that period she "lost the spark". According to her, she was too caught up in family affairs to think about herself and her situation. "I was not able to do something or change my situation. It was safer to stay at home". She admits experiencing low self-esteem and no self-confidence, which was caused not only by her situation of being out of work for a long period, but also by her separation from her husband and the break up of her marriage. In the end she remarks "I had always put myself down". This suggests that she had always felt insecure and lacking in confidence and self-esteem while running the family household.

When she is asked about the importance of 'doing' tasks, it is rated as very important. The task of running the family household is very important to her, and she furthermore explains that in her culture (she is half-Polish and half-Spanish) the 'position' of a mother is very much acknowledged. But, still this importance does not have enough 'weight' to 'produce' enough self-esteem and confidence in herself to 'face the world'. Here, the issue of importance in doing the work is contradicted by the 'lack of self-esteem' she expresses. This contradiction is being explored in the model 'triangle of conflict and contradiction'. Barbara feels that she could have joined a 'return-to-work' course much earlier, and she always toyed with the thought of enrolling on one, but her low self-esteem forced her to postpone the thought of joining one. In the end, she enrolled on a course in 1999 because she received a letter about the 'New Deal for Lone Parents', where she was informed that costs for childcare facilities would be paid while a course lasted. This gave her the last 'push' needed, towards enrolling for the course.

Barbara sees herself as 'practical', 'down to earth', and 'realistic' (about her life situation). She is very 'realistic' about her job opportunities. She knows that she "can do 'temping' as a secretary" and that she is able to "earn good money" if she "works around holidays". She expresses the view that "women tend to look for jobs that do fit around the children. They are desperate to find jobs that fit around the children. Almost all occupations women are doing, they all in a way relate to the work at home, it is simply a different environment. A bigger environment". It is not clear if she includes herself in this statement or not. Later on, during the interview she indicates that "in the near future I can think of doing another job". What sort of job she is thinking of is not expressed.
instead she puts the emphasis on returning to a "proper job", a full-time, 'nine to five' job afterwards, and wants to "get paid for what you are doing". The way in which she expressed her experience of the family phase has a negative touch to it, and returning to work will get her out of that situation. For Barbara the 'return-to-work' course is a chance to take her back into paid work, to give her confidence a 'boost' and to enable her to make brighter plans for the future. Because she has enrolled on a course, she can see a link between the skills she developed at home and the skills needed at work. She furthermore predicts that employers will recognise this experience and that she has an advantage because she "has learned to deal with more than one task at the time", compared to somebody who enters the labour market straight after school. But she is still feeling low in her confidence and hopes that the course will change this for the better. She is the only one in this group of interviewees who remarks that nowadays a lot more pressure is put on women to return to work than there was 10 years ago.

7.8.4 Carla, 34, hairdresser, 1 child, divorced, 'Childcare' course

Carla is very aware about the main skills she developed while running the family household, like organising, managing and planning. She is furthermore aware of the changes in her personality. She strongly feels that she has become more responsible. She stresses the planning skills as the important skills she developed ("planning the day more", "planning the days to come"). For her, organising skills, knowing about schedules, and 'budgeting' ("planning how to spend the money") are the major skills she developed. Although, she seems to be aware of her skills and the achievements of them, she still does not dare to think too far ahead. She is still a little cautious about the future and she does not seem to 'trust' totally in her skills. She appears to be slightly reserved, and therefore enrolled on the course to become more assured that the path she has chosen is the 'right' one. She states that for her it is about the right time to go "back to regular work" and "to get out of the house". In order to fulfil this urge, she organised her life (organised childcare provisions) which allows her to participate in the course. Carla is determined to return to work and therefore to finish the course. She believes that her child is now old enough to be looked after by someone else and so she can allow herself more freedom and return to work. Carla was originally trained as a hairdresser and she 'knows' that she could return to hairdressing, but through the period of bringing up her child, she experienced joy and a growing interest in the area of childcare, so that she decided to change her profession from hairdressing to childcare. Her plan is to work part-time in a nursery after she has finished her course.

She seems to be very confident in herself and in what she is doing. She enjoys her placement in a nursery, where she works two days a week. The work at the nursery and the course work are satisfying and help to build up her confidence. While she was looking
after her daughter, she missed and longed for the appreciation and accreditation she now receives. All these factors strengthen her confidence and her belief in what she is doing.

In Carla’s situation the awareness of her skills and her achievements of them cannot be separated; they result from the period of time while she was managing the family household or result from her taking part in the course, where these skills were addressed. It could be that the course supports the process of becoming more aware of the skills developed at home and even begins a new process to learn skills or becoming aware of them.

All her statements indicate that she has gained many skills, mainly those of organising and planning, and she appears to be aware of them, but did not gain confidence while she was managing the household and looking after her child. She hopes to gain confidence from the experience of taking part in the course. She has a clear idea of what she wants to do and what she might be able to do. She is looking for a change in her profession, but the choice of what to do is directed as much as through her experience of enjoyment of her work with children, as through ‘convenience’. Being responsible for her daughter has directed her decision to take up a part-time job, in order to fit work around the care of her child. It is worth noticing that her change in career is leading her to the field of ‘childcare’, a field that is familiar to Carla. She can see the connection between her work at home and her future work as a childminder. This might be a very strong reason for her confidence in herself and her skills, because she knows the work and field and because the college still provides a ‘safe’ learning environment where students are encouraged and supported by the tutors, especially in this childcare course (see Appendix A).

7.8.5 Richard, 55, single, no children, PVT course

Richard finished school in 1963 and worked for four years in a shipping firm in London, where he dealt with the paperwork that came with the cargo. From 1968 until 1990 he worked for a charity, in their main office in London, which was responsible for 17 old-people’s homes across the country. Again, it was a clerical/office job and he liked it very much. In 1990, he was made redundant due to an internal re-organisation of the charity.

Richard is dyslexic; and at the beginning of 1990 took part in a government funded ‘Literacy/Numeracy’ course. This ran for a whole year, but Richard had to leave it because he was involved in a car accident. Then, in June 1991 his mother became ill; she was diagnosed with cancer. His father, who was an alcoholic, had already been ill for some time. He had ‘retired’ from his job, because he was unable to work any longer. Thus, Richard lived with his parents and became their carer for the next four years, because it
felt natural to him. He thinks that his parents would have had to pay three times as much money for a professional carer.

Richard’s father died in August 1995, followed by his mother in the November. Richard stayed in his parents’ home until 1997 before he finally moved into a smaller flat. He was unemployed from 1990 until 1999; then he enrolled on the PVT course. He plans to get some computing qualifications, and to “hopefuly get a proper and interesting job”. He hopes that with these new qualifications that he will be able to put together a CV that will improve his job applications. Although working for a charity was not as fulfilling as he had hoped, he still misses having a regular job.

Richard is a quiet and shy person who does not sound confident in himself or in his competencies, skills and achievements, all of which was particularly noticeable during his interview. Furthermore, he does not ‘see’ and rate his achievements as very important for his (future) personal and professional development and still focuses on the condition and situation that his parents were in. Richard understands that his ‘job’ of caring for his parents was very important, because he was helping them. “Both of them really needed help. And, because they were not entitled to receive help 24 hours a day, this seemed to be the best solution”.

7.8.5.1 A Short Description of His Day
When staying at his parents’ home, Richard developed his own routine. He got up at 7am; his main tasks were to prepare the meals for his parents, clean the house and in general make sure that they did not want or need for anything. He was there to look after them. His mother was “not much trouble,” but looking after his father was very hard, because “he started drinking in the morning right through the day”, so Richard always tried stay out of his way, so as “not to upset or annoy him.” Nevertheless, Richard always kept an eye on him just in case he fell over and hurt himself. And, amongst other things, he had to make sure that his father did not leave the house on his own.

Moreover, Richard helped his parents to go up and down the stairs, and to get in and out of the bath. He did the washing and all the handyman jobs in the house. He also looked after and fed the family’s two cats. Usually, after breakfast, and while his father was being looked after, Richard and his mother did the shopping, and then they prepared lunch together - an activity they both enjoyed very much. Richard cooked according to his mother’s instructions.

If his parents wanted to go out in the morning or afternoon Richard drove them around; he took them to the doctor’s etc. Quite often, in the afternoon, his mother decided to go into
the garden where she did her painting (she was an artist). This gave Richard a little free time - on the whole about two hours. After dinner at 7:00 p.m. his father normally went to bed - drunk.

Richard looked after his parents from morning until night-time (his work day would usually end after his mother had gone to bed at 10 p.m.) When they were both in bed Richard would do a bit of clearing up, then watch television and go to bed at 11:00 p.m. However, even during the night he could not really relax properly because he would always be listening, just in case either of his parents would need something and call to him.

7.8.5.2 Learned Competencies and Skills

Richard says that he learned competencies such as improving his communicative skills, becoming an expert at shopping, budgeting, organising, working to routines, developing his patience, as well as being able to hide his emotions. And his memory improved as well as his writing skills. He learned how to cook from his mother, "she was an excellent cook". She told him what to shop for and how to prepare meals. And so cooking became one of his hobbies.

He considers himself an 'expert shopper', he always went to the same shop, and knew exactly where everything was. He learned to look out for special offers, to 'budget' and to manage with the small amount of money they had, and he is still living on now. He, furthermore, learned to arrange and keep appointments. He improved his writing and began to use a diary, because he could not keep track of all the appointments his parents and he had. He believes that his recall skills improved, because writing had always been a problem for him, because he was dyslexic. He thinks that he also acquired quite good telephone skills, because he preferred to arrange things over the phone instead of writing letters.

He had to learn how to organise his day, to develop a routine, like always getting up at 7:00 a.m., "and I still get up at 7:00 a.m., as I am so used to it now". He had to learn to be very patient, especially with his father, who was an alcoholic right until his death. He learned both to control his emotions and to not to show any emotion. "I simply went away when my dad was 'out of his mind' and started shouting and being rude". He learned to put his own interests on hold, because there was no way of having his own plans at this time.

7.8.5.3 How did He Know What To Do?

When his mother was diagnosed with cancer and needed help, he instantly said that he would take care of her. Then, he had to learn a lot of new things, many of which he learned from his mother, when he was looking after them, things that he had not learnt as a child. As a young boy, he and his sister occasionally had to help with the household
chores; but his mother did not enjoy having them help her, mainly because she felt that she would have to do the same task again, "making sure it was properly done". Richard’s mother explained how the chores had to be done, at least in the beginning. He was always able to ask her for advice and they spoke about what had to be done each day. However, Richard also learned a lot of things by trial and error.

7.8.5.4 How did He Feel while Being at Home?

It was not an easy situation for Richard, having to learn by his mistakes. It was also very hard for him to get along with his father. Living with his father was very difficult and sometimes frightening. Richard tried to keep out of his way as much as he could. "I didn’t want to argue, as I know it would make mother feel bad". He hated looking after his father; because "you could never predict what he was up to, in what sort of mood he was. That made it very complicated to deal with him". Richard was always concerned about what was going on in the house. As previously mentioned even at night Richard could not switch off. He listened for the slightest sound. The responsibility of caring for his parents was a weight on his shoulders.

Richard enjoyed being with his mother; and he received many ‘thank yous’ from her, which made him feel satisfied that he had decided to look after them both; and this kept him going. He liked cooking with his mother, but hated the ironing. Richard felt that his parents, especially his mother, put a great value on what he was doing for them. Moreover, his sister was also extremely grateful that he was looking after them because "she and our father didn't get along very well. He had actually 'banned' her from the house".

Richard often felt lonely; he just had a few friends that he saw in the Rotary Club, once a week. But, he could not tell them everything. Most of the time, he talked to his mother. Quite often, he felt very tired and sad. He was very angry with his father. Richard said his relationship with his mother was totally different to that which he had with his father. After his mother died he was devastated and could not think straight. Richard felt lost and did not know how to go on and finally he let his emotions take over.

He still misses his mother and feels low in confidence. He is very humble and is unable to see or value what he has achieved. And when he was asked, at the end of my interview with him, whether anyone else could have done the ‘same good job’ as he did - he answered: “Yes, perhaps somebody who is a real professional could have done a better job”. and then continued, because they would have been trained to have dealt with the situation and would have known what to have done in a much better way that I was able to.
7.9 'Triangle of conflict and contradiction' - A model for the discussion of the inter-relation of skills and confidence and awareness

Based on the exploration and analysis so far, an interrelation and connection between the issues of awareness of the developed skills, the amount of self-assurance and confidence the participants receive or did not receive from their (un)awareness and the feeling of importance of the performance of all the work at home can be pointed out. With a developed model, the 'triangle of conflict and contradiction', see Figure 7.4, a lot of contradictions and conflicts in the 'realities' of the women can be described which directly influence and indicate the women's perception of themselves and their performance.

![Figure 7.4: 'Triangle of conflict and contradiction']

Within this triangle and its elements the interrelation and correlation of the development of key competencies and the degree of awareness and level of confidence can be discussed. It provides space to discuss the identified contradictions.

From the statements of the research participants an interrelation of issues becomes clear. Almost all of the research participants were aware that they 'achieved' something during the day, something that 'made them tick' but they were also aware that this is not recognised by others. Although they 'know' that 'they have done a good job' and that "nobody else would have done the same good job" in managing the (family) household, they did not gain confidence and self-esteem from this situation. On the contrary, the women staying at home express feelings of low self-esteem and low confidence. This contradiction has an enormous influence on an individual's well being and self-esteem. This is explored in the developed model. The 'triangle of conflict and contradiction' is helpful to point out the interrelation and connection between the issues of awareness of the developed skills, the amount of self-assurance and confidence the participants do not receive from this awareness and the feeling of importance gained in the performance of all the work in the home. Within this 'triangle of conflict and contradiction' several contradictions and conflicts in the 'realities' of the individuals and women could be
identified which directly influenced the research participants' and women's perception of themselves and their performance.

The detailed 'triangle of conflict and contradiction' (see Figure 7.5) was used to discuss and analyse the interrelation of the different statements of the interview participants. In particular, the female participants experienced major differences in their awareness and sensations regarding their achievements at home. It was with great difficulty that the research participants recognised the 'usefulness' of their acquired key competencies for future jobs or career options. Although the women on the courses were very aware of their achievements in running the (family) household, and furthermore rated them as being very important for the family and family life as Jeanette points out: "It was very important. Especially for my daughter, to have a loving, caring and stable environment. If she is happy, I am happy". This showed that the experience of 'running' the family household did not build confidence and self-esteem. On the contrary, the interviewed women felt low in self-esteem and showed low self-confidence. Barbara stated: "It all has to do with confidence and self-esteem. I could have done a course much earlier but I didn't dare to join one. I always had to put myself down" and she recalled "I lost the spark - I could have done something to change my situation, but I was not able to do something about it ". Sally clarified this further by stating: "I wasn't able to stand on my own feet. I always wanted to go back to work, but never felt capable... I was scared to go on this course. I had no self-confidence, no self-esteem... I was so lacking in my confidence as I had no qualifications".

These three elements of the participants' perceptions (to be aware of the mastered tasks - and rating them as very important for family life - still expressing low self-esteem and confidence) construct the three corners of the detailed 'triangle of conflict and contradiction' (see Figure 7.5).
Skills achieved, mastered, learned while taking over the tasks of running the family household and looking after the children.

The experience of 'running' the family household did not build confidence + self-esteem.

The experience of being responsible for the 'running' of the family household is seen as very important.

Is not being recognised by society and seen as a major achievement.

Being (very much) aware of them

Contradiction

Personal circumstances (single parent, divorce)

Influence

Strong belief: 'Nobody could have done the same good job'.

Low status

Influence

Figure 7.5: Detailed Triangle of Conflict and Contradiction
7.10 Conclusions

This chapter provides an analysis of the data emerging from 18 in-depth interviews; looking at the data with thematic perspectives, the developed thematic conceptual framework (see ch. 5). It has analysed - as the first of two data analysis chapters - data from the yet to return to work research participants; their perceptions of the experience of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'. A situation one of the interviewees described as "you develop more hands being a mum" while dealing with all the different demands in 'running' the family household.

The discussion in this chapter has indicated that people and parents of all ages and from different walks of life have gained a huge range of skills and competencies during the time when they were looking after the family household and raising their children; subsequently the 'tacit forms of key competencies' were made explicit and were then presented in a mind map as an 'overview of key competencies category 'on course".

The analysis shows that 'tacit forms of key competencies' were developed in different, rich learning environments and authentic contexts, filled with challenges and all the facets of 'life' and 'living', which was furthermore illustrated through five mini-biographies. The four mini-biographies are not intended as a representative sample, but as 'exemplars' chosen to provide an insight into the experiences of the research participants as they fulfilled the role as main family carer. Each final mini-biography was approved by the participant concerned. I extracted a number of general interpretations about the participants' data presented in this chapter, drawing on all 18 research participants' voices; quoting respectively from the data to demonstrate the quality of 'thick description' of the participants' experience.

The findings were then discussed within a developed model, the 'triangle of conflict and contradiction', and its elements those of the interrelation and correlation of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies', the degree of the awareness and the level of confidence, the research participants expressed. While analysing the data a grade of consistency concerning the identification of developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' across the participants' experiences became visible. At this point, I felt that the gathering of data reached a point of saturation and decided that the concern of meaning and illumination (Usher et al, 1997) of this study had been met sufficiently with the data from 18 participants.

This chapter is the first of two data chapters. Findings and experiences of the other group of research participants, the group already 'returned to work', will be discussed in the following chapter 8.
CHAPTER 8: THE EXPERIENCES OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS IN THE GROUP 'RETURNED-TO-WORK'

8.0 Introduction

Having examined the experiences of the individuals enrolled on a CVT course in chapter 7, this chapter explores and describes the experiences of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies' of the group of research participants who had already returned to work. All the participants in this group were previously enrolled on a 'return to work' course and had managed to find a job afterwards. The focus of this chapter will be on the participants' views and understanding of what they might have 'gained' and achieved - in a tacit way - from their situation of being out of work for some time. Included in the focus are the participants' reflections and understandings about their transition back into work and their personal and general development. Their reflections upon their biographical experiences are explored and the acquired 'tacit forms of key competencies' are identified and structured in Figure 8.2: mind map 'overview of key competencies'.

The different cornerstones of this chapter are:

1. The nature of the process of returning to work of the research participants and their progression.
2. The identification of dimensions of tacit forms of key competencies and skills.
3. The amount of confidence participants gained from the transition and progress of returning to work.
4. The identification of the degree of awareness and consciousness about developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' and skills.
5. Benefits of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies' for the return to work and/or new fields of work.
6. A mini-biography to illuminate statements.

With the aid of the developed data sheet (Appendix D) the transition and progression people made when returning to work is described. The focus here was on the process of transition, the characteristics of the career pathway and on the nature of the transition, e.g. the nature of the job and/or work. All the participants in this group were previously enrolled on a 'return to work' course. These courses differed in the way they were set up as well as in length and focus. This analysis will take these aspects into account and refer to 'return to work' courses in general. The content of the different courses is not going to be compared. This chapter will especially focus on the difference in the nature of the transition; it will distinguish between a) the successful return to a new occupational field/work/job and b) the successful return to the same occupational field/work/job. As pointed out in the last point, see above, another focus is the view on the 'usefulness' of the developed tacit
forms of key competencies' for the individual, and is captured in the question: 'Do you think the virtues you possessed and tasks you did, while running the household, are of any use to your future work, your future personal and professional development?'

People answer quite differently as can be seen from the following statements:

"I changed personally. I try to look at things from different angles. I try more to understand the way in which people behave. I don’t think that it had much influence on my professional development" (David, 39).

"Yes, it helped me very much in my job. You can keep your head down in the office when there are 'bad vibes' in the air, and you get on with your work. You can also deal with people, and get on with them without upsetting them" (Jane, 47).

"No, it is not helping me, not at all. You need a certificate, you need proper qualifications. Just doing a bit of this doesn’t mean you can do that as a job. If you have qualifications you get better money" (Stuart, 37).

The last statement in particular, highlights the issue of un/awareness about developed 'tacit forms of key competencies', the rated 'usefulness' of these competencies and understandings behind them and relates to the personal feelings the participants had about this period in their lives. And finally, the amount of confidence drawn from developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'. Therefore this chapter will, especially, focus on the amount of confidence people gained from and during the process of returning to work and the progression made. This chapter will outline explanations and distinguish between the various possibilities of gaining confidence from the transition.

8.1 Specific Details of the Group of Participants

The group consists of 15 people (9 women and 6 men), between the ages of 24 years and 54 years, an average age of 37.08 years. Almost all the participants are mature people, in the majority women, and they all seem to be well settled in their personal circumstances, the area where they live, work, friends, social lives etc. Most of the participants are married and have children; the amount of children ranges from one to six children per family. Almost all participants are employed in part-time jobs and are content in and with the job they do.

The following statements about this group stand in marked contrast to the other group of interviewees (participants 'on course'), because this group states and expresses in general the opposite to the first group. The participants of this group seem to be (very) confident,
both confident in themselves and confident in what they are doing. This is the most obvious
difference to the other group and one of the strongest features of this group. Participants of
this group do not seem to be aware of their ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ and they
do not rate them as very important. The majority of this group does not rate ‘tacit forms of
key competencies’ as being helpful in returning to work and in moving towards new or dif-
ferent fields of occupation and work.

The summarized details, features, views and statements of the other group can be com-
pared against the data summary sheet of this group of interviewees (see Appendix D). The
following explanations result from a first analysis of the interviews in this group and relate
to the data summary sheet.

Reason for break
Eight participants gave up work in order to have a baby (Jane, Jo, Kate, Marian, Margaret,
Mandy, Thuy, Tracy). Three participants had to give up work due to the fact that they were
made redundant (Amjad, Russel, Melvyn). Two participants gave up work in order to look
after their children: David (divorce/ change of custody arrangements) and Stuart (change of
custody arrangement), and two gave up work after they got married (Nuala, Zainal).

Reasons for returning to work
The main reason was to be able to contribute to the family income, to help to financially
support the family. The fact, that the children were now old enough to be in school or old
enough to be looked after by a childminder, contributed to the decision of mainly mothers
to return to work.

Nature of work
Eleven people work part-time (73% of the jobs are part-time jobs), whereas only four peo-
ple (all men: Amjad, Melvyn, Stuart and Zainal) work full-time. And it is important to note
that -except Stuart- no one has children. Stuart is the only one able to work full-time be-
cause his twelve-year-old son is at a boarding school during the week.

8.2 The Nature of the Process and Progress of Returning to Work
This chapter will especially focus on the difference in the nature of the transition; it will
outline the differences and the commonalities in the process of returning to work. It will
furthermore distinguish between a successful return to a new occupational field/ work/ job
and a successful return to the same occupational field/ work/ job. In terms of the nature of
the job, just four jobs are full-time jobs and 11 jobs are part-time. The jobs on a full-time
basis are carried out by men, whereas all the women are employed on a part-time basis.
The situation that all women work part-time, in most cases, is due to the fact that almost
all women have children they have to look after and almost all women are responsible for arranging the childcare. Therefore, they need to find work, which needs arranging and fits around the children and school hours. As all the participants are carrying out 'normal', not very well paid jobs, the issue of childminding is very important. Most of the participants do not have high earning jobs and cannot afford a childminder who would cover the hours of a full-time job would demand - in some cases the mothers of the participants (grandparents) help out with the care of the children, in order to render possible reliable childcare.

Women also tend to work in female dominated areas of work, such as office work, e.g. secretaries/typist, and childcare, nursing and teaching. But it is also the nature of this occupational field that many jobs in this field specifically target women who want/need to work part-time. All the women in this interview group worked in female dominated areas of work (see table 8.1) and continued to do so after their time of running the home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Former job</th>
<th>Job they returned to</th>
<th>Basis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Typist</td>
<td>Word processing operator</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo</td>
<td>Hairdresser</td>
<td>Dinnerlady</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Office clerk</td>
<td>Office clerk</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandy</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marian</td>
<td>Designer</td>
<td>Bookeeper</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marian</td>
<td>Designer</td>
<td>Bookeeper</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuala</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thuy</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>Work in shop</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>Work in shop</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.1: Women’s transition to similar jobs

This example does not only show the implications of transition for women, but furthermore it might be related to their views on the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' and finally on the stated importance of certain competences. This will be analysed at a later stage (see 8.9.1 'Usefulness of 'tacit forms of key competencies' and skills).

The male participants seem to be more equally distributed across different occupational fields (see table 8.2). The area of work includes male dominated areas as well as office work and work in the retail sector.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Former job</th>
<th>Job they returned to</th>
<th>Basis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amjad</td>
<td>Degree in geology</td>
<td>Work in shop</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Machinist</td>
<td>Machinist</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melvyn</td>
<td>Plumber</td>
<td>Plumber</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russel</td>
<td>Cartograph</td>
<td>Work for charity</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuart</td>
<td>Replenisher</td>
<td>Work in shop</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zainal</td>
<td>Degree in chemistry</td>
<td>Work at petrol station</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.2: Men’s transition in jobs
David and Melyyn worked and were trained in male dominated areas of work and have returned to exactly the same field that they used to work before their period of unemployment. Melvyn has returned to a full-time job, and David has returned to working part-time in order to look after his children. Amjad works behind the counter of a ‘cornershop’ and Zainal works behind the counter at a petrol station despite their university degrees. Many Asian young men tend to work in a family ‘cornershop’, it is a common sight in Guildford and for most of these young men a way to earn money. Stuart works full-time in a computer shop, mostly selling computers and not repairing or upgrading them. The last job he had before he became unemployed was a ‘replenishing job’ at Sainsbury’s (a supermarket). Rus sel works part-time in an office for a charity and he did so before. In the UK, compared to Germany, it does not seem to be unusual for males to work behind the counter of a shop; and it does not matter if it is a ‘corner shop’, fish & chip shop, a supermarket or newsagent.

Out of 15 participants 5 (David, Jane, Kate, Melvyn, Nuala) returned to the same field of work, or even to the same job. The other 10 participants returned to new occupational fields or found a different job to the one they were employed in before they stopped working.

8.3 Succeeded in Returning to Work - the Nature of the Transition, and the Process of Returning to Work

In this section the focus will be on the transition back to work. All the participants managed to return to work, although most of the time this meant returning to part-time jobs.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Petrol station</td>
<td>Zainal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work at shop</td>
<td>Amjad, Thuy, Stuart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Office</td>
<td>Jane, Kate, Marian, Nuala, Russel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Margaret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>Jo, Mandy, Tracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Plumber</td>
<td>Melvyn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Machinist</td>
<td>David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.3: Grouping of jobs

In order to identify and group the transitions and show the most dominant areas of occupational fields, in this section, men and women are grouped in one table (see table 8.3). This is important with regard to whether and how return-to-work courses support transition and progression into new and unknown occupational fields. In order to get an overview and understanding of the occupational fields in which the participants returned to, similar areas of work were combined in one cluster and are represented in four columns in Figure 8.1. Work in a shop and work at a petrol station is combined in one area of work. This then leaves four people working in this field of work. The same procedure was undertaken for the areas
of teaching and childcare, which combined results in 4 people being employed in the same field of work. The area of work office represents a single field of work. And finally plumber and machinist are combined in one area of work.

The majority of jobs are in the office area of work, which is followed by the area work in a shop and in the area of teaching and children. These areas are all areas with large potential for part-time work in general and especially for women. The area of work plumber and machinist represent a typically male dominated area of work, and includes two male participants. This area of work is normally not a common area for 'return to work' courses. And it is not targeted by 'standard' 'return to work' courses. Both participants also took part in an IT 'return to work' course, but returned to their former field of employment in the end.

During the undertaking of the interviews the employment situation in Guildford, Surrey was determined by the fact that certain jobs were easier to get than others. In some areas of work, such as IT, a 'skills shortage' was announced and this was dealt with by offering compact IT courses. There were many job opportunities for well-trained office clerks and secretaries. Furthermore, many job opportunities especially for casual work, such as part-time work in a shop, at a petrol station, in a pub or fast food restaurant were easy to find.

At a later stage in this chapter the difference in the participants' own assessment of importance of 'tacit forms of key competencies' (see 8.9.1) is related to the different occupational fields, jobs and work.

8.3.1 Succeeded in returning to work - Characteristics of the career pathway, the nature of the jobs and feelings about the transition back to work

This section will focus especially on the difference in the nature of the transition; it will distinguish between a) the successful return to a new occupational field/ work/ job and b) the successful return to the same occupational field, work and job.

In this context it is interesting to look closer at what it means to 'successfully' return to work for the participants. Here the occupational biographical career pathway is also taken
into account. Table 8.4 shows the process of transition, but also indicate the difference between successfully returning to the same job and successfully returning to a new occupational field.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Former job</th>
<th>Job returned to</th>
<th>Job they would like to do/dream job</th>
<th>Return to work course (RTW)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amjad</td>
<td>Degree in geology</td>
<td>Work in a shop</td>
<td>Work in a travel agency</td>
<td>IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Machinist</td>
<td>Machinist</td>
<td>Go to university, degree in engineering</td>
<td>IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Typist</td>
<td>Word processing operator</td>
<td>More responsibility in her job, full-time</td>
<td>NVQ Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo</td>
<td>Hairdresser</td>
<td>Dinnerlady</td>
<td>Dream: psychiatrist</td>
<td>Basic Employability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Office clerk</td>
<td>Office clerk</td>
<td>Work full-time asap</td>
<td>IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandy</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>Happy in her job</td>
<td>NVQ Childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Happy in her job</td>
<td>Nursing RTW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marian</td>
<td>Designer</td>
<td>Bookeeper</td>
<td>Happy in her job</td>
<td>IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melvyn</td>
<td>Plumber</td>
<td>Plumber</td>
<td>Happy in his job</td>
<td>Gasfitting / IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuala</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Happy in her job</td>
<td>Work full-time asap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russel</td>
<td>Cartograph</td>
<td>Work for a charity</td>
<td>Dream: full-time IT job, not happy</td>
<td>IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuart</td>
<td>Replenisher</td>
<td>Work in a shop</td>
<td>Dream: work at marina, earn more money</td>
<td>IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thuy</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>Work in a shop</td>
<td>Dream: full-time IT job, not happy</td>
<td>PVT course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>Work in shop</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>NVQ Childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zainal</td>
<td>Degree in chemistry</td>
<td>Work at a petrol station</td>
<td>Work in the field of degree, not happy</td>
<td>IT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.4: Process of job transitions

- IT = Information and Technology course; these courses are especially popular among women, and some colleges specifically target women who would like to return to work with either business administration, IT or word processing courses.

- PVT = pre-vocational training course which is offered to people with learning difficulties or who experience difficulties in reading and writing, or who are dyslexic. These are basic skills courses.

People's experiences and the degree of happiness and contentment they gained from their return to work are summarised in table 8.4. Information and Technology (IT) courses are popular among women and men, out of the 15 participants, six men chose to participate in an IT course. Some colleges specifically targeted women by offering 'women-returner-courses' in either business administration, IT or word processing courses.

In conclusion, table 8.5 shows that out of 15 participants, five (David, Jane, Kate, Melvyn, Nuala) returned to the same field of work, or even to the same job. The other 10 partici-
pants returned to new occupational fields or found a different job to the one they were employed in before they stopped work. The statements of these 10 participants have to be differentiated, as they experience different feelings, (e.g. satisfaction, contentment) and different circumstances in their job. Some seem to be content in what they are doing, others seemed to be unhappy and do not like the job they are doing. And others simply do not seem to mind, because the main intention of working for them could be the financial aspect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Happy with job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*David</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Jane</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Kate</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Melvyn</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Nuala</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amjad</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>Indifferent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandy</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marian</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russel</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuart</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>Indifferent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thuy</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zainal</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.5: Degree of happiness in job

Table 8.5 shows that both, participants staying in the same field of work, even the same job (David, Jane, Kate, Melvyn, Nuala), and participants moving to a new occupational field (Mandy, Margaret, Marian and Tracy) are happy and content in the job. For the latter, this satisfaction is also due to the choice they made. The participants who express that they are not happy with their current job (Amjad, Russel, Thuy, Zainal), are the those participants who did not get into the occupational fields they wanted to. They only managed to get jobs in order to earn money (Amjad, Zainal) and/or to no longer be unemployed (Thuy, Russel). Jo and Stuart seem to be content with their jobs, although both seem to have dream jobs, in which they would like to work. A more detailed analysis is given on the next pages.

8.3.2 Successfully Returned to the Same Field

Five participants, whose names are indicated with a * in the table (Melvyn, David, Kate, Jane and Nuala) returned to exactly the same field of work after their break. The three women show similar personal characteristics, as they in general seem very content, stable and well situated in life. They experienced very smooth, in a way 'easy' transitions and seem to lead, in general, a very stable life, where everything is organised and planned in their careers and lives. The two men are in a different situation, for Melvyn it was simply a
matter of time until he could find full-time employment again in his field of work. David states that he was very lucky to get a job in this way. David and Melvyn say that the circumstances of getting a job through 'word of mouth' from friends (as quite often you hear from a friend that his or her company is looking for somebody and is offering a job) is a common one. They have all known each other since they went to school and they all work in the same occupational field. In summary, 33.3 % are staying in the same field of work:

**Melvyn, 35 Plumber -> Plumber**

Melvyn always wanted to become a plumber or work in the building trade. He experienced short periods of unemployment, but carried out enough work ‘for family and friends’ during that time to maintain financial stability. He sees himself as and “will always be a plumber”. He would like to become self-employed and start his own company.

**David, 39 Machinist -> Machinist**

‘Worked all his life’. David has a steady, continuous career pathway as a machinist. Straight after school into machinery. Trainee, assistant, worked for BA aeroplanes. Had to look after children due to divorce and illness of wife. He and the children moved in and lived together with his parents after the divorce. He works as a machinist for a friend now. He would like to go to university and gain a degree in engineering.

**Jane, 47 Typist -> Word processor**

Jane worked in the same field all her life, started as a typist, then became an audio typist, worked at home, at night, to support the family. 'Worked all her life', she says, and has never stopped working, even worked at night while the children were little. She was also helping in her husband’s company. The NVQ course has deepened and refreshed her IT + word processing skills. She would like more responsibility in her job, and a full-time job.

**Nuala, 35 Secretary -> Secretary**

Nuala had a steady, continuous career pathway as a secretary until she left to get married. Then she became a ‘housewife’. After a break of 6 years, she went from secretarial job to secretarial job. She likes her current job, is content with it, and wanted to return to it, after upgrading her IT skills. She would like to change to full-time work as soon as possible.

**Kate, 39 Office clerk -> Office clerk**

Kate has a steady, continuous career pathway as an office clerk. She wanted to return to work in the same field of work as soon as possible. Very short breaks (17months/ 8months). Likes her job, cannot imagine returning to being a full-time mum. Likes to be able to financially support the family. Very conscious decision to have to children 'late'.
8.3.3 Successfully Returned to a New Occupational Field

Four women (Margaret, Marian, Mandy and Tracy) can be grouped together, as they all experienced a transition into a new occupational field which was influenced by the experiences they had while looking after their children and developing their key competences and skills.

- **Margaret, 54**  
  Nanny → Teacher

  Steady ongoing career pathway, moving from being a nanny to nursing and then to teaching. Very steady and a ‘typical’, natural, and ‘common’ change.

- **Marian, 38**  
  Design → Bookkeeper

  Went to art college at 18, gained a BA, worked in different design studios. After having the children she thought about a change, because she experienced a change in interest and did not like the design job that much and so did not see herself as suited to that job anymore. She has always loved numbers and lists and columns, so it was ideal when her husband was setting up a company that she could do the bookkeeping, which she enjoys and feels very at home. Very short breaks, 6 months each. Conscious decision to have children.

- **Mandy, 35**  
  Secretary → Childcare

  Steady, ongoing office job as a secretary. After having her baby, she thought about a change. Her own child promoted her interest in children in general. Started an NVQ Childcare course and enjoyed it. Works in nursery school now. The NVQ course was a retraining course, which enabled her to change her field of work.

- **Tracy, 37**  
  Work in sandwich bar → Childcare

  Worked in a sandwich bar, as a cashier, trainer at check out tills, for a publishing company, clerk typist, worked in a pub, different odd jobs. After having her children, she needed something stable, something she could rely on. Went on a NVQ Childcare course and started work as a special needs teacher and ‘lollypop lady’. Voluntary church work. The NVQ course was a retraining course, which enabled her to change direction.

Russel and Thuy are the two participants who are not happy in their current situations and in their current jobs. It is not the job they expected to get and had hoped to get. Perhaps they are worst of -in a way- as both of them have experienced periods of unemployment in the past as well as difficulties in finding jobs.

- **Russel, 43**  
  Cartograph → Charity work

  After school he started to work as cartograph for a mapping organisation; change of companies, but always the same field, until made redundant. Unemployed for 2 years, completed a full-time IT course, now works for a charity. Not happy in current job. Never understood
why he was made redundant. Dream job would be a full-time IT/computer job. Russel’s period of unemployment was two years, now he works in an office of a charity on a part-time basis and would like to move to full-time work. He was made redundant in his job as a cartograph. It is a very specialised area of work and Russel believes that that is a reason for his long period of unemployment, because the field is too narrow and too specialised. But, after he completed a 10 months full-time IT course, he was grateful to get this job at the charity. It is not his dream job, and he is not too happy about it, but he believes it is far better than being unemployed again.

Thuy, 32  Childcare  →  work in shop

Thuy was brought up in a children’s home, went on a YTS childcare course, worked for a charity, as an au-pair, in a factory, and then in two factories until childbirth. After several years, she went on a literacy and numeracy course and now works in a shop. She is not happy in her current job. Her dream-job would be a job in IT/computers. She wishes to complete a specialist English language course, as she is dyslexic.

Stuart and Jo seem to be undecided and indifferent about their jobs. Although they both have dream jobs, they both, in their current situation, see work as a means of earning money. Stuart can be described as a ‘Lebenskünstler’¹, someone who has developed a great deal of wisdom from 'the university of life'. He has worked all his life and is always busy making money or doing a 'little business'.

Stuart, 37  Replenisher  →  Work at shop

Stuart left school when he was 16 years old, with no qualifications; worked in a plastic coating company, has a certificate in electronics (City & Guilds), worked for the army, on a building site, did handyman jobs, on a building site again, shelf-stacking at a supermarket, different odd jobs, and worked in a computer shop. His dream job is to work at a marina and look after the boats and yachts, and/or to get a decent, well paid job that allows him to have enough time for his son, without night shifts. Stuart had many jobs before he became unemployed again. The title he gave to his last job was a replenisher, and after an IT course, he found a job in a friend’s shop, selling and repairing computers. IT and computers are his hobby and passion. He would like to work on a 'professional' basis in this area of work. In his spare-time, he also assembles and programmes computers.

Jo, 46  Hairdressing  →  Dinnerlady

Jo went to college after school, undertaking a course in hairdressing. When her children were young, she used to work as a hairdresser from home. She has worked in a supermarket,

¹ Someone who pieces together his living from various activities that, collectively, bring in just enough money to live. No office, no suit, no boss, no rules.
on a check-out counter, as a training officer for check-outs, and as an accounts-clerk, until her maternity leave. Now works as a dinner-lady at her daughter’s school and does a lot of voluntary work for homeless people and church work (creche). Her intention was never to work again when she became pregnant with her third child. But she changed her mind when the child became 5 years old. Now she is very active in social and community work. Her dream job is to be a psychiatrist. It was a very conscious decision to have her 3rd child at 39 years of age.

Amjad’s and Zainal’s situation show similarities, as they both left their jobs in order to move together and accompany their wives, but they are not too happy about the nature of the job they are doing.

- **Amjad, 26**  
  *Degree in geology → Work at shop*

  Straight to university in Russia after school, finished geology degree, came to England, stayed with relatives and got later married. Moved with his wife. Had different jobs, worked in shop and after an IT course, now works again in same job. Dream job: a proper job, and a job at a travel agency. But wants and needs to support his wife who is at university, so he does not want to change his location in order to get the right job. He thinks he will not get a job, because employers do not recognise his degree from Russia. He finished his degree in Russia and then came to live with his brother in the UK. Amjad has tried to find a job in his profession, but so far he has not found a suitable job. He blames the system for him not being in proper employment "...as my Russian degree is not recognised and people almost look at me as if I am a 'spy'. There is no point in applying at one of the big companies for exactly that reason. So I still don't know what to do".

- **Zainal, 24**  
  *Degree in Chemistry → Work at petrol station*

  Zainal went straight to university after school and undertook a degree in chemistry. Afterwards he lived and worked with his brother for a while, then got married and moved with his wife. Works at a petrol station at the moment. Supports his wife, very close to family, who also supports the couple. Zainal is in almost the same situation as Amjad. He left his hometown in order to move to Guildford with his wife after they were married. And now he takes every job he can get in order to earn money. Both young men try as hard as they can to support their wives and families.

**8.4 Reflections on the Development of 'Tacit Forms of Key Competencies'**

It is interesting to see that (compared to the group 'participants on course') this group of participants, in general, has a different view on the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' and a different view on the benefits gained from them. This group of participants (in comparison to the other group) lists, first of all, far fewer competencies, that they
think, they acquired and developed during the period of being out of work and/or looking after the family household and children. Consequently, they do not seem to rate these competencies as being very important for their personal future development. More specifically, this group of participants appears to be divided into two groups, the majority of people do not see the benefits and the other -smaller- group which does see the benefits gained from the development of (tacit forms of) key competencies. At this point it has to be emphasised that there is no intention of evaluating and assessing the mentioned 'tacit forms of key competencies' and skills. It is furthermore important to note that the participants are not judged on their ability to 'see' their developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' and furthermore to 'understand' the impact and benefits of such development.

8.5 The 'Tacit' Dimensions

Dimensions of 'tacit forms of key competencies' can be identified among the statements of the participants. As most people are not aware of, but still 'possess' tacit forms of key competencies, they describe in their own words what they experience, feel and 'tacitly know' or believe. Identifying the tacit dimensions here means asking the participants to reflect on their perception on how they developed and acquired their key competencies. The answers highlight and identify the tacit dimension, which makes the tacit dimension become explicit and then touches the issue of what do tacit dimensions embrace?

Some responses are given below, in relation to the question: How did you develop your (tacit forms of) key competencies?:

Tracy: "I never thought about it. Things had to be done, and there is no time to think about yourself and of how it could be different" and furthermore: "A lot of things you simply know and do, I think it is 'instinct'. A lot of the things you did make sense later when you look back. Also by doing it · I found out what had to be done, and what was very important."

Marian reflected: "It's difficult to separate what I've achieved, it seemed to be tied up together. I feel more like working all the time. I still remember me asking how am I to manage with a child? But you cope. I cannot remember how it was before I had the first child." Whereas David exclaimed: "Through 'trial and error'. I tried and found out what worked best."

In relation to the question: What does the development of (tacit forms of) key competencies mean to you? Jane answered: "To be prepared for every eventuality · like a general in the war!" and Mandy states: "Your whole life turns upside down. You have to cope with that". A list of responses the research participants used, follows and is used to express the 'tacitness' and 'tacit dimension' of their experiences.
8.5.1 The Tacit Dimensions in the Experiences of the Participants

1. I think I have changed a lot since I have been looking after my son.
2. You become somebody else, you are no longer yourself. You are no longer the same person.
3. There is suddenly somebody else you have to look after, and your whole life turns upside down. You have to cope with that.
4. I “matured” - I grew up, or became more responsible.
5. I matured and became more selfless.
7. I got a lot of stamina.
8. To be prepared for every eventuality - “like a general in the war”.
9. I learned to “slow down”, and to “take things as they come”.
10. I’ve ‘mellowed’, being able to cope with the unusual.
11. ‘Adapt’, Taking things as they come.
13. I have a greater appreciation of my capabilities and my limits.
15. ‘Juggling things’.
16. Making sure that nothing is left out.
17. I feel more like working all the time.
18. It is mainly ‘life skills’ that you develop.
19. To reflect: I had time and a chance to think of my situation again.
20. Developing a different perspective now.
21. Coping with being on my own, think of the positive side of being alone. Dealing with loneliness is a major thing I still can feel it sometimes now.
22. I understood that I am not ‘tied up’ in my situation. I value the time that I have to myself.
23. Empathy is a big thing, not just sympathy.
24. Being able to state the problem and offering solutions.
25. Getting to the ‘core’, putting myself in other people’s positions.
26. I act as a ‘buffer’ between what is going on and the children.
27. Managing unpleasant decisions, and coping with the results.

Russel points out and sums up the essence and effect of the development of all the above mentioned acquired and developed key competences and their ‘tacit dimension’, in “this ‘feeling’ and experience [that] you aren’t to forget once you start to work again and earn money”. The development of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ is not only of benefit for working life, but also benefits the participant’s life in general, as the described ‘change’ in
personality indicates. This process of change influences the 'being' of the participants and fosters the development of (tacit forms of) key competencies. But still these 'qualities' and benefits from developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' are not recognised by people. The situation seems even 'worse' as they are often 'downplayed' by the participants themselves.

8.6 Identification of 'Tacit' Skills and Key Competencies
The developed 'starfish model', in the form of a mind map (see Figure 8.2) is used as a further tool to structure the identified key competencies and skills. The mind map on page 167 captures and structures the mentioned acquired key competencies and skills, which are summarised and assigned to the different categories of key competencies on the next page (see Fig. 8.2: Mindmap: Overview of key competencies).
Figure 8.2: Mindmap: Overview of Key Competencies

- **Learning competencies**
  - Content-related and practical competencies
    - Organising
    - Managing
    - Budgeting
    - Time management
    - Planning / Pre-planning
    - Discipline
  - Methodological competencies
    - Responsibility
    - Multi-tasking
    - Flexibility
    - 'Take things as they come'
    - 'Juggling things'
    - 'Cope with the unusual'
    - 'Be prepared for every eventuality'
    - Respond to children's needs
    - Develop routine
    - Develop understanding
    - 'Putting myself in other people's position'
    - Being able to state the problem and offering solutions
    - Managing unpleasant decisions, and coping with the result

- **Social competencies**
  - Patience
  - Listening
  - Counselling
  - 'Control emotions'
  - Parenting skills
  - 'Put the child first'
  - 'More caring'
  - Empathy / Sympathy

- **Competencies related to attitudes and values**
  - Responsibility
  - Tolerance
  - Understanding
  - Less self-centred, selfish
  - 'Not to waste time'
  - 'Taking time off for the children'
  - 'Greater appreciation of capabilities and limits'

- **Change in personality**
  - 'Rely on myself'
  - Adapt to different situations
  - Life skills

- **Gardening,**
  - Decorating
  - Dog and pet training
  - Guitar playing skills
  - Driving skills
  - General housekeeping skills
  - Expert-shopper
  - Cooking
  - Skills in childcare
  - Making clothes
  - First aid

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Are being identified 'between the lines', in what participants say.
8.7 Overview of Developed Key Competences

A broad overview of the forementioned developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' is represented in Figure 8.3. Budgeting is the first and most mentioned developed competence. This does not seem to be very surprising, as the situation of being unemployed and/or living on a small budget requires a careful and thoughtful way of spending. It furthermore reflects the financial situation of the whole group of participants. Money is a major concern for these participants, food, clothing, mortgage etc. all needs paying. As mentioned before, this group consists of people who do not possess high earning jobs, and they mostly belong to either the middle or working class, the spouses do not seem to work in high flyer jobs either.

The development of organisational competences and skills is the second most frequent mentioned development, which is followed by a 'change' in personality and character, e.g. becoming more responsible. Responsibility is the third most mentioned 'tacit forms of key competencies' that is developed.

![Key Competences developed](image)

Fig. 8.3: Graphic Representation of developed 'tacit forms of key competencies'

List of competences according to mentioned frequency:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Planning</td>
<td>5. Life-skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Patience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. 'Smart' shopping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.8 (Un)Awareness about 'tacit forms of key competencies'
The data has provided strong examples for both cases; participants who do not 'see' what they have achieved and gained and who furthermore cannot link this with the world of work (Nuala, Jo). And a few examples of participants who 'know' what they have achieved while looking after the (family) household and so do 'see' the benefits in skills they have gained for future jobs. In some cases this process of experiencing looking after the (family) household and the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' has even lead to a change in career pathway or occupational field (Mandy, Marian and Tracy). And the ones who are 'in between', like David. Who 'knows' that 'tacit forms of key competencies' are useful (for himself) but who also 'knows' that they are not recognised in the workplace. According to this short classification, the responses given below, indicate participants' position towards 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

8.9 Benefits from Developed (tacit forms of) Key Competencies and Skills
In response to the following question: Do you think the virtue you possessed and the tasks you did, while running the household, are of any use to your future work, your future personal and professional development? the research participants gave the following statements:

NUALA, 35, secretary, 2 children, said: "Not really, I was organised before and I still am."

JO, 46, dinner-lady, 3 children, stated: "No, it didn't help me for my professional development. I think the organisational skills would have been there anyway... But I suppose it has, it certainly broadened my outlook."

MANDY, 35, teacher at pre-school emphasized: "Yes I think so. Very much. Otherwise I would have gone back to my job as a secretary. I got interested and interested enough to do a course and NVQ in child care when my daughter became old enough to go to school."

MARIAN, 38, bookkeeper, explained: "When I became pregnant, end of 1990, I left the company. After giving birth to my first child (02/91) I was thinking about what to do. I wasn't so keen on going back to my old company. At the same time, my husband started his own company and they were looking for a bookkeeper. When my son was 6 months old I managed to work in my husband's company."

DAVID, 39, machinist, 2 children summed up: "I changed personally. I try to look at things from different angles. I try more to understand the way in which people behave. I don't think that it had much influence on my professional development... For myself, very high. But if I think back to my workplace, they didn't think much of what I did. They couldn't
understand that I had to go home, to be there in time. The company’s interest was in my work and not in my problems at home. They offered no support and that is why in the end I couldn’t cope with the pressure at work and left."

STUART, 37, who works in a shop, 1 child, responded: "No it is not helping me, not at all. You need a certificate, you need proper qualifications ... Just doing a bit of this doesn’t mean you can do that as a job. If you have qualifications you get better money."

8.9.1 Usefulness of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ and skills

The benefits and usefulness of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ can be divided into several levels, outlined in table 8.6. There are some participants, a small number, who think that the developed ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ are very useful, mostly in relation to the job they are doing. Whereas another group believes that the developed ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ are useful in a certain way, e.g. mostly in the way of developing personal attributes, which is described as a change in personality. And finally, the largest group of participants thinks that the developed ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ are of no use at all, with one participant who has no clear idea about the usefulness of them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Areas of work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very useful</td>
<td>Mandy, Margaret, Tracy</td>
<td>Teaching, childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful in a certain way</td>
<td>David, Jane, Zainal</td>
<td>Machinery, office, shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not useful</td>
<td>Amjad, Kate, Jo, Melvyn, Russel, Stuart, Thuy and Nuala</td>
<td>3 Shop, 3 office, dinnerlady, plumber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not know</td>
<td>Marian</td>
<td>office</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.6: Levels of Usefulness

Mandy indicated, when asked what sorts of occupations could be followed from now on: "Almost everything ..., except being a doctor or a nurse, as I think you will need a lot more training. Cleaner, cook, nurse, chauffeur, teacher, speech therapist, nutritionist, manager, buyer, organiser". And Thuy listed: "Childminder, worker in a children’s home, cleaner, cook, factory work, as there is also a routine”.

8.9.2 Usefulness in Relation to Occupational Field

At this stage of the analysis the difference in the participant’s own assessment of importance of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ is related to different occupational fields and jobs/work. The three women (Margaret, Mandy and Tracy) can be grouped together, as they all experienced a transition into a new occupational field which was led by the experiences they had while looking after their children and developing their key competencies and skills. They also rate the skills they developed while looking after the family household as very important. Mandy rates them as useful for her work with the
children, Margaret puts the emphasis on the development of 'flexibility', which she finds essential for her work. There, one can see a very strong link to the occupational field they work in, they all deal with people; nursing, teaching and childcare are areas where these key competencies are regarded as essential.

These statements also correspond to the list of jobs mentioned by the participants. If we compare the list of jobs that are given, in terms of: Do you think that there is/are a similar occupation/jobs (in the labour market) to the work you did at home? Which one/s?

Jane said: "Yes, there is everything that relates to looking after children: childcare, helper in schools, dinner lady. A job in social services, at a hospital as a nurse or doctor. Every job that deals with people, not just children, like carers. Shopkeepers as well as you deal with all sorts of customers." And David included: "Cook, cleaner, teacher, taxi driver, housemaid, director, deliveryman, tailor, nurse, carpenter, painter/decorator, supervisor, mediator, arbitrator, gardener, policeman, mechanic, storyteller."

Three participants (David, Jane, Zainal) rate the competencies as 'useful' in a certain way: David sees them as useful for his self-development, but he 'knows' that they are not recognised at the workplace. Jane regards them as useful to 'survive' in the office; "Yes, it helped me very much in my job. You can keep your head down in the office when there are 'bad vibes' in the air, and you get on with your work. You can also deal with people, and get on with them without upsetting them". Zainal regards them as useful in terms of working out (his) partnership/marriage. As he has to support his partner and play his part in fulfilling the household chores.

But there is more to it than that. Some participants cannot see the connection between their personal development and the effect this personal development has on a broader scale. A broader outlook does affect the way in which a job is done and understood. Jo and Kate state that they do not see the developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' as useful for their (future) work or their future personal and professional development, but Jo believes that the tacit forms of key competencies have "broadened her outlook". Kate states that "she has become more aware of life"; both express a process of change and a (personal) development of particular key competencies. In this situation, even during the interview, the tacit dimension is still tacit for the participants.

This points directly to the heart and core of the study. 'Tacit forms of key competencies' still exist (for most of the participants) in a TACIT form. In general, the development and the 'usefulness' of 'tacit forms of key competencies' is not recognised or valued. 'Tacit forms of key competencies' are furthermore not recognised in the workplace and are not
seen as useful for fulfilling a job. This attitude is reflected in the statements of the participants, who (tacitly) 'know' this. Still, the 'blindness' of the participants towards their acquired 'tacit forms of key competencies' is related to other factors, cultural etc, which need to be investigated further.

In essence, in a very limited way 'tacit forms of key competencies' and skills are simply regarded as useful for certain jobs, most of them jobs related to childcare. And the gap between work 'at home, domestic tasks' and 'work at the workplace' still seems to be two different, opposite positions, where the second one is highly regarded and rewarded and the first one is not. The participants do not understand the relation between informal work experiences prior to the situation of returning to work.

8.10 The Amount of Confidence Gained from the Process of Returning to Work and Progression Made

In general, the participants of this group seem to be confident, confident in themselves and confident in what they are doing. This is the most obvious difference from the other group (on course), where the general level of confidence among the group of people was low and of a major concern. The minority of people in this group state that they gained confidence by attending a 'return to work' course. The majority of people gained confidence from being 'back in work', some people appeared to be strong and confident in themselves 'by nature' and others seemed to be 'indifferent', not affected by the issue of confidence, as confidence did not seem to play a very important role in their well-being. These participants seemed confident enough in themselves without emphasising it. For them, confidence was not regarded as major factor in their well-being as they had 'always coped with life' and in a conscious way. Decisions and their consequences were perfectly clear to them and other aspects in life (family, partner, relationship, social life, friends etc.). (Examples: Jo, Stuart).

Some (Thuy, Russel, Zainal) are not happy in their current situation and in their current job. It is not the job they expected to get and had hoped to get. This has implications for their confidence, as Thuy and Russel are the only two participants who do not seem to be very confident. Perhaps they are worst off -in a way- as both of them have difficulties in finding a job and experienced a far more difficult process in returning to work, compared to the other participants. Others gained confidence through the course: Amjad, David, Mandy, or from work, as did Margaret, Marian, Melvyn and Nuala. Some gained inner confidence by overcoming difficulties and personal problems, for example Jane, Stuart; and David in terms of sorting out his life, making a major decision.
In order to illuminate and underline the statements analysed and described so far, parts of Stuart's biography follows in the format of a mini-biography:

8.11 Mini-Biography: Stuart, 37-years-old, 1 son (12 years)

Stuart is white, in his late thirties and divorced with one son. At the time of the interview he was working part-time in a friend’s computer shop. He left school in 1979 when he was 16 years old with no qualifications. At the same time he moved out from his parents’ home. For the next 6 years he worked for different companies, involved in producing plastic coating for tables and chairs. Then he worked for the army in Alton for two years, “sticking components on boards - they were supposed to go in the fighting jets”. Then, he managed to go to college for 6 months and finished a City and Guilds degree in electronics in 1980, of which he is very proud. From 1985, for the next four years, he claimed to be self-employed and did all sorts of ‘odd jobs’, painting houses, garden clearances and garden design etc. until 1989. From there he went on to work on a building site, doing ‘handyman’s jobs, “doing a bit of everything, like bricklaying, carpeting”. He worked there for two years until 1993.

For the next year he worked for a company that “used to make lights for pubs, lamps, desk lamps etc.” In 1995, he went to work on a building site again and at the same time “doing gardens, handyman jobs etc. I used to work until 3 o’clock in the morning in the summer”. From 1996 until 1998 (1.5 years) he worked for a company that delivered car components, and he worked nights as well. After six months he left due to an argument with his boss and in 1998 he went back to a building site. "But gave up after a few months because of the ‘rip off’ of the agencies. They get too much work for hiring you out and there is nothing left for yourself”. In June 1998, his son Robert moved in with him and Stuart had to rearrange his life. For a couple of weeks he worked part-time at Sainsbury’s in the mornings when his son was at school. But there were problems when his son became sick and Stuart could not go to work. So, he had to give up work. In April 1999, he went on an IT-Skills course because he was interested in computers. After the course he tried to go back into work but it was the same situation with his son, and there was no suitable job for him.

The main reason Stuart stopped working in 1998 was because he had to look after his son. His son was born in 1987, and Stuart split up with his wife in 1989 - after being together for six years. He heard from friends that his ex-wife had a lot of problems with his son and her new partner, and Stuart was not allowed to see his son until May 1994 when Social Services contacted him. Stuart describes that the situation for his son became very difficult and that he knew that his son was not happy at his mother’s and that there were signs that he was being neglected and abused. His son wanted to stay with him and Stuart tried to get custody for him, which became a long process. Finally, in June 1998, his son moved in with him and since June 1999 Stuart has had custody for him.
Stuart tried to go on working at Sainsbury's, but the company wanted him to work at weekends, which he sometimes did, when he could arrange a baby-sitter. But after a while, it did not work out as the childcare was too expensive, and was not financially viable in relation to the money earned. Stuart felt, as if he "only worked for the childcare money". Things started to "get a little bit easier" for him in January 2000, as his son went to boarding school in Dorking during the week. He returns home on a Friday afternoon at 2 o'clock for the weekend and at the moment Stuart works in a computer shop in Cranleigh five days a week. But he toys with the idea of going down to Portsmouth during the week to work at a sailing marina, looking after the sailing boats and equipment. This is his dream.

In terms of managing the household chores and tasks, Stuart claims to be doing most of the household things, the washing, cleaning, hoovering, dusting, clearing away, and shopping. But he also shares tasks with his son. Stuart enjoys cooking and has taught his son to cook. He is very proud that his son does the cooking sometimes, makes cups of tea, and also helps with the hoovering and washing up.

While being asked what skills and competences he thinks he has achieved, learned and mastered, Stuart points out that he has changed a lot since he began looking after his son. Now he "always puts Robert first". While before he did not worry so much about spending money, now he has "to buy extra food, spend more money on clothes, buy cough medicines, etc". He believes that he is 'more wary' with his spending. He thinks about what he wants to buy and what he needs to buy. He also "started looking for the 'bargains', things like 'buy one - get one free'". Stuart is very concerned about money; and managing his budget and finances is a major skill he had to learn and develop. He believes that he is far more responsible now, as he always has to think of his child, even if his son "isn't around" and in school. For him, his fathering skills have developed "a lot!". Although he claims to "have always looked after babies, nieces, nephews, sisters and brothers".

Stuart defines his situation as "not too bad" and says that he does not mind doing the housework. Cooking is his favourite passion, and he likes doing it. He admits that he sometimes 'hates' doing the housework; he 'hates' clearing up the mess of his son, "toys and things". And that it "cheeses him off" when he has to do it. But at the same time he admits that he "cannot blame him". And sometimes he gets lazy and then 'the washing up has to wait'.

When being asked how did he know what to do? and how did he learn to run a family household?, Stuart reasons that he knew this because he comes from a large family. Stuart believes because they were such a big family that "these skills are naturally built into me, I think". His dad "buggered off" when he was five years old and his mum had to bring the
children up on her own. Stuart was nine years old when he had to change nappies; being the eldest and having five brothers and two sisters. Being in a big, ‘close’ family meant that everybody had to help with the gardening, decorating, and shopping. He remembers that when he was 11 or 12 years old, he used to carry 12 carrier bags full of shopping. He always had to help after school. His mum was too tired and “nackered” to do the work all by herself. Stuart adds that she sometimes fell asleep on the sofa and the children had to look after each other. Furthermore, he did all the handyman work in the house.

When being asked how important the task of running the family household on his own was for him, he states that it was very important, and still is. A ‘must’ in his case. Stuart’s main motivator is his son and his well-being. He wants to do everything right and as best as he can. Stuart feels angry and does not understand why his ex-wife did not want to look after their son “she couldn’t wait to ‘palm him off’ to me or the grandparents”, Stuart exclaims and feels that she “can’t be bothered to look after him” and so he is determined to be there for him.

Stuart assesses his work in terms of renumeration and status as very low in the outside world, despite being a parent which means handling two jobs at the same time: “As you have two jobs really: one is you go to work and the other one is looking after the child”. He never had any understanding and assistance from former employers. But his friends are very supportive and even the neighbours, at least the ones who know his situation. “With respect to ‘status’: they all say ‘well done’, you are doing a good job, and that it is very unusual for a man to look after his son on his own”. Stuart thinks, that parents should be paid a decent salary to be able to pay for childminding. When being asked if the virtues developed and tasks he did, while running the household, are of any use to his future work, his future personal and professional development, Stuart expresses that it is of no help to him, “not at all”. He believes that “you need a certificate, you need proper qualifications” in order to find a job and exist in the world of work. “Just doing a bit of this doesn’t mean you can do that as a job” and, “if you have qualifications you get better money”.

8.12 Summary
The experiences and perspectives of the research participants classified as being ‘returned to work’ have been discussed in this chapter. Issues relating to the experience of the development of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ have emerged within the context of the ‘world of work’ - having returned to work- for this group of individuals. These issues provided insights into the development of ‘tacit’ key competencies, the degree of awareness about them, the level of confidence gained from them and the notion of usefulness of the developed ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ for the individual.
All participants in this group have developed a wide range of 'tacit forms of key competencies and skills'. This phenomenon can be read 'between the lines' of the interviews, but is also captured in the analysis of the statements of the interview. In most cases, the participants are not able to 'link' their experiences of looking after the (family) household and all the personal achievements with the value of doing so. The benefits gained from the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' are not recognised and acknowledged, because this period of life is 'done with' and 'over' for them. For this group of research participants, the situation of being in paid employment again, is the main concern. People define themselves through being employed again. Therefore, a detailed analysis of the job transition was included in this chapter.

A discussion of the key aspects of the research participants' experiences, the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' of the two groups, is undertaken in the following chapter 9: Discussion of Findings. It looks at the whole data set of the two data chapters and pulls together understandings and insights gained from the respective thematic data analysis and framework. Key findings will then be drawn together and summarised within the final chapter, chapter 10: Conclusions and Implications.
CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

9.0 Introduction
Whereas the previous chapters 6, 7 and 8 have shown the complex individual situations and personal contexts in the 'tacit' learning process and have explored the research participants' constructs of 'tacit knowledge' and 'tacit forms of key competencies' development - this chapter studies the factors that influenced the shaping of the research participants' perceptions, identities and degree of awareness. It is then revisiting the study's objectives relating to the working hypothesis (see ch. 1) and the research question of: How do people experience the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' while being out of paid work?

In doing this, the chapter provides a discussion of the findings presented in chapters 7 and 8 and pulls together understandings and insights gained from the respective thematic data analysis. It illustrates the relationship between the data and the broad field of study by looking at the identified issues and themes concerning the research participants' development process of 'tacit forms of key competencies'. The (un)awareness about it, the lack of confidence and self-esteem and the personal social situation are important contributing factors in the development of 'tacit knowledge', which have been so far left out and not acknowledged in other studies. In this study, the research participants' stories showed that the creation of knowledge is not simply a compilation of facts but a uniquely human process, combining 'tacit' and explicit aspects, which most individuals undertake 'without thinking', and which includes feelings, emotions and beliefs. This chapter argues for the importance of acknowledging those elements in the process of developing and eliciting 'tacit' knowledge. This kind of understanding is especially important for individuals in becoming aware of their developed 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

As such, this study fosters the recognition of the interrelationship between a person, his or her social context (Loughlin, 1993) and 'tacit knowledge' development; making the interconnectedness of people's developed competencies and personal lives visible. Hence, this study has extended the work on the 'TACITKEY' project¹ and other studies by including life stories and the 'human side' of the development process - emphasising experiences of individuals, their emotions, feelings, degrees of confidence and (un)awareness. This approach reinforces the study's claim to have broadened and deepened the concept of 'tacit knowledge', which is so far defined by narrow HRD and KM-theories, which seem to treat knowledge as an object that can be managed independently of the knower (Goldkuhl and Graf, 2001). The novelty in approaching 'tacit knowledge' in this way, lies in an intensified recognition of a person's experiences of being and acting in informal learning situations.

¹ 'Tacit forms of key competences for changing employment opportunities'. Leonardo- Program. 01.12.98 - 30.11.2000
This chapter builds on the, in the methodology chapter, developed understanding that ‘modern biographies’ are sociopoietic potentials, which provide centres of change within social frameworks (Alheit, 2001). The study’s findings suggest that possible ‘key competencies’ and ‘key qualifications’ for learning societies of the future (Alheit, 2001) lie in the analysis and understanding of these ‘modern biographies’ and identities. These key qualifications include a wide range of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ as explored and extrapolated from the findings in this study.

This chapter is presented in two parts. In part one, issues concerning the ‘tacit knowledge’ development process are summarised, and a claim for expanding the concept of competence is proposed. Part two, discusses, contrasts and reflects upon the interrelation and correlation of key factors and aspects of the development process of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’, such as the immediate personal situation, the ‘tacit’ learning process and the degree of awareness of the individual.

9.1 Issues about the Development of ‘Tacit Forms of Key Competencies’

The findings of this study support the working hypothesis that individuals as immediate learners in an ongoing ‘tacit’ learning process develop ‘tacit knowledge’ and ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ within informal learning settings. Here, ‘tacit knowledge’ can be defined as a wide range of developed ‘tacit forms of key competencies’. The ‘tacit’ skills and competencies were identified, captured and made explicit through reflection and dialogue, aided by a creative technique in the data collection process (the concept mapping of the biographical life course).

This study confirms that most of the individuals were neither aware of their developed ‘tacit knowledge’ and ‘tacit forms of key competencies’, nor rated them as useful or beneficial for their (future) personal and career development. Two main differences in terms of awareness and attitudes can be identified. The group of research participants who had returned to work, rated their ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ as not important whereas the group of individuals still enrolled on the ‘return-to-work’ courses rated them - once they had become aware of them- as very important because the development of these competencies defined their current identity and place in the world. Linking their achievements, while running the family household, to the development of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ was a ‘daring’ and ‘unusual’ experience for this group of people.

The pull and the attraction of the labour market determined the responses of the research participants; being ‘in or out of paid work’ defined the status and identity of all research participants. Being able to earn money and to contribute to the family income were very
important characteristics of the group of participants 'returned to work' and made the process of recalling the situation of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies' in a phase of unemployment seem very low in importance. Because, for these participants, being employed increased levels of confidence and self-respect and created a feeling of being 'worth something'.

Being the main carer and taking sole responsibility for the management of the household and family defined the identity and status of the research participants who were still unemployed and enrolled on 'return-to-work' courses. Their situation and degree of awareness was closely linked to managing the household on their own and keeping the overview. Such 'tacit forms of key competencies' as managing, budgeting and organising were the first ones to be identified. Several times, research participants defined themselves as 'housewives' or 'mothers' in a very limited way, stating: "I am merely a housewife" and often expressed the feeling of being left alone "to deal with everything that comes up" and with the feeling of sole responsibility: "If I won't do it - nobody will".

People 'on course' were very much 'aware' - (they 'felt' this physically) more than they realised of what they had achieved during the day, keeping the family going and functioning (tidying up, cleaning, shopping, dealing with financial matters, child care etc.). But they did not rate this experience as a beneficial learning process or competency development, as the 'tacit dimension' was so prevailing. They furthermore did not rate the development as very important or useful although the general understanding was that, "nobody could have done a better job, than I did". This experience of contradiction, 'struggle' and conflict in people's emotions, awareness and self-perception in this group was conceptualised in the model of a 'triangle of conflict and contradiction' (see ch. 7). The model captures and reflects on the experience of the research participants in the wider context of the general public's view on unpaid and informal work. People at home caring for children and family members are not understood to be 'contributing' to society or properly fulfilling their responsibilities as citizens (Teghtsoonian, 1999) as research on women's 'double shift', the 'balancing act between motherhood, marriage and employment' (Spain and Bianci, 1996) underlines.

In general, people were not as ease with regarding 'tacit forms of key competencies' as something 'important', useful or beneficial compared to 'proper qualifications' gained from 'proper jobs'. A few exceptions were made by those individuals who aimed at working in childcare related fields because they rated 'tacit forms of key competencies' as very useful and beneficial for this type of work.
Almost all research participants expressed feelings of tiredness, guilt, loneliness and phases of depression, from the 'struggle' and the burden of responsibility. It seems as if the development of skills, competencies and 'tacit forms of key competencies' were not too important as an overall topic for some women, because they struggled to 'make ends meet' and were thus more concerned with holding their lives together after a divorce, financial difficulties or personal illnesses or illnesses of their children.

The findings of this research demonstrate mostly 'female' ways of 'tacit knowledge' development, although from different classes and educational backgrounds. The themes that emerged from this study have parallels with other research concerned with women's experience of (early) motherhood. Barclay et al. (1997) noted that becoming a mother was a difficult and multifactorial process and identified categories related to 'loss' (of time, self and independence) and 'working it out' which have similarities with the broad themes of awareness, confidence and re-negotiation. But, it is important to note, that single fathers expressed very similar concerns and experiences.

9.2 Expanding the Concept of Competence

One central aim of this study is to foster the recognition of 'tacit knowledge' developed in unpaid, informal learning situations. It aims at sharing and disseminating the experience of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies' and argues, that many studies have ignored the social character of the development process of competenc(i)es. But, knowledge creation and competency development can never be seen in isolation; they concern the whole person learning and acting in a complex socio-cultural world (Yorks and Kasl, 2002; Barlas, 2001). This means, when discussing competence development, we need to apply a broader understanding.

The findings underline this study's claim for establishing a broader approach to the concept of competence. This approach is variously termed 'integrated' or 'holistic' in the literature. This study's demand for a 'holistic' approach towards 'key competencies' is pedagogically driven and addresses not only the development of occupational competence and technical skills, but also the development of a personality and 'self-realization', which is underpinned by a commitment to a lifelong reflexive learning process. The findings show, that competenc(i)es and 'tacit forms of key competencies' are not externally related to the individual, but internally related through the individual's experience of their development. As such, a more holistic model has been proposed, reasoned for and manifested in the methodology chapter which acknowledges "that competence is tacit, informally acquired, culturally embedded and contextually located in practice" (Jones and More, 1995, p.88). In this respect, this study attempted "to locate competence within contextually located sets of social relations and their cultures of practice" (ibid, p.81).
Therefore, the study’s approach encompasses an integrated view which sees competence as a complex combination of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and values displayed in the context of task performance (Hager and Gonczi, 1996) and ‘life-world becoming’ (Barnett, 1994). The developed ‘starfish model’ (see ch. 3) integrates a) work content-/ subject matter related (practical) competencies, b) methodological competencies, c) social or interpersonal competencies, d) competencies related to attitudes and values and e) learning competencies. It reflects a shift from defining competencies as a bundle of disparate skills to a more holistic, contextualised approach.

This approach recognises levels of novice, experienced, and specialist - rather than a once for all attainment, because interpreted broadly, competence is not trained behaviour but personalised capabilities and a developmental process (Barrie and Pace, 1997; Chappell, 1996) as demonstrated by the research participants. Skills and competencies are regarded as processes (not merely as outcomes) and therefore educationally enrich policies and practices in this area by opening the arena of human action (Giunipero et al., 1999) analogous to Schön’s (1987) ‘reflective practitioners’ who shape their ‘practice worlds’ (p.36). Being able to shape ‘practice worlds’ is necessary due to the transforming of the world into a multicultural society where complex skills and competencies are needed for dealing in the workplace and for taking part in society and culture (Nijhof, 2001). It is essential to help people to prepare for life, employment and lifelong learning. Individuals need to broaden their skills and knowledge in order to handle unexpected, new situations (Nijhof and Streumer, 1994a,b) as well as their biographical experiences. This leads to the inclusion of a ‘broader’ concept of competence and learning; a concept which is based on ‘learning from experience’ (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984), on ‘learning from the context’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Resnick and Wirt, 1996), on ‘activity theories’ (Engeström, 1994), on ‘cognitive apprenticeship’ or ‘situated cognition’ and ‘reflection and critical reflection’ (Mezirow, 1990) - ‘enhancing informal and incidental learning’ (Freire, 1972; Marsick and Watkins, 1990).

9.3 General Differences in the Perceptions of the Two Groups of Research Participants
The analysis of the interview data shows for all individuals, that their immediate personal situation was of enormous importance to them. It influenced the research participants’ outlook on life, their personal perception of development of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ and degree of awareness about the development process. Additionally, the findings clearly show that the immediate personal situation has an impact on the individual’s self-perception, self-worth and confidence. The ‘individual immediate personal situation’ meant either being already ‘returned to work’ or still being unemployed. This situation of being
either 'in or out of the labour market' influenced the participants' perceptions of their own development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'. According to this criterion the research participants justified their 'existence' in two ways by valuing what they were currently doing - either 'being there for the children' or 'earning money and contributing to the family income'.

Additionally, the process of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies' was either seen as important or not important (in relation to being either unemployed or employed) in terms of fostering personal development and bettering choices of career options and pathways. Those participants who were still unemployed rated the developed 'tacit' competencies and skills as much more useful as those who had returned to work; as Stuart declares: "No, they [the skills and competencies] did not help me, not at all".

A further key theme of the study is the degree of being (un)aware of one's own developed 'tacit forms of key competencies', which is considered to be significantly influenced by the personal social situation of the individual. The analysis has highlighted an interrelationship between class and education to the degree of awareness. Whereas the research participants from a middle class background who had a higher degree in education and so valued and knew about their achievements and competence, the research participants from a working class background did not rate their achievements and 'tacit' competency development as very important. They did not 'see' them as 'real skills and competencies'.

The present, personal situation of the research participants did not only have an enormous impact on the outlook on competence development but also on what counts as learning and qualification. Women from a middle class for example were looking more ahead, and assessed and rated their situation at home as a 'phase in life which will pass by'. This meant for them that they could 'move on' in a few years time. These findings provided relevant support for the formulated working research hypothesis (see Ch.1).

Another significant aspect of the research was to determine the influence of the degree of (un)awareness of one's own achievements and acquired 'tacit forms of key competencies' on the degree of confidence drawn from it. The findings supported the working hypothesis that, people who were more aware of their developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' demonstrated a higher degree of confidence than people did with less awareness.

In summary, the research findings set out in this study indicate that the following key aspects permeated the research participants' spectrum of perceptions:
Being either 'employed' or 'out of paid work' determined the view of the individual on the importance of 'tacit forms of key competencies', (earning money creates a feeling of 'worthiness' and status for the individual).

The social situation (class, status, financial and health situation etc.) determined the degree of awareness, and additionally,

Being a parent or carer or not (because it meant a 'bigger' responsibility for the individual, more tasks, duties and workload for parents).

These important influencing factors for the recognition of 'tacit forms of key competencies' are discussed and reflected upon in more detail in the following sections.

9.3.1 The Factor of Being 'In or Out of Paid Work' - The Importance of Work in the Life of Individuals

The major factor identified, which influenced the degree of awareness about the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' was the situation of being either 'in paid work' or 'out of paid work'. Work is a central aspect in the research participant’s lives; it defines an individual's class and social status in society. It is the central social process that links individuals to industrial society and to each other. The fact of earning or receiving money for undertaking and fulfilling tasks, chores and duties created a feeling of 'worthiness' among the research participants and as such a sense of identity (White et al., 1992); and represents not only a central source of social networks, but also of public esteem and individual identity (Peterson and Gonzalez, 2000; Field, 1995; Hall and Young, 1995).

One of the biggest desires people express is to be part of the workforce and in paid employment (Elliot, 1996). It creates feelings of fulfilment - an effect which affects people being out of the labour market very strongly, including the research participants of this study. Employment and paid labour are still conceived of as the pre-eminent way towards self-development and social integration (Stroobants and Wildemeersch, 2000).

As this study and other studies show, work occupies a substantial proportion of most people's lives. It provides challenges and enriching experiences for the individual and helps to develop self and fulfil one's desires and this creates self-esteem (Watson, 1989). Work has furthermore both intrinsic and extrinsic values. Extrinsic value includes monetary reward, therefore it is seen as a symbol of personal value: work provides status, economic reward and a means to realise self-potential or self-actualisation. People work to fulfil esteem needs (Maslow, 1954), meet career ambitions and gain a sense of well-being (Herzberg, 1966).
As confirmed by the research participants, work is perceived to provide an intellectual and social setting, which allows mothers to withdraw from 'nappies and baby talk'. Paid employment furthermore give some relief from the demands of domestic work and childcare and then while at home the strains of work are put aside (Marks, 1977). Being at work counterbalances the situation of work at home, because the opportunity of meeting and socializing with others makes people feel good (Herzberg, 1966). Herzberg's (1966) 'Dual Factor Theory' suggests that people are motivated towards what makes them feel good, (the majority of people state they would like it more and feel more comfortable being at work instead of being at home), and away from what makes them feel bad. Being paid for what one is doing and achieving shows a strong recognition of that which is done and achieved during a days work. For parents, especially mothers, this circumstance was very important because they felt that what they did at home was neither recognised nor rewarded. Their role of being at home with the children was simply expected of them. It is suggested that a sense of worth and equality can be achieved within the partnership if women are in paid work as they will feel that they are participating in the economic environment of the household (Marks, 1977) - an argument the research participants confirmed in the interviews. They furthermore explained that, besides the financial reasons, going back to work also provides mental stimulation and allows them to maintain social contact (Ferry and Smith, 1996) as reasoned above.

The research participants in the category 'returned to work' demonstrated an inability to see the interrelation between the tasks and chores fulfilled at home while looking after the (family) household and their personal development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'. Housework and child rearing skills were perceived as being different from expected work skills, and most of the developed 'housekeeping skills' were rated not to be useful at the workplace, as expressed by Diane: "You need IT skills". Stated exceptions were jobs in occupational areas where work is related to children, e.g. nursery nurse or childminder. Here the housework and childcare skills and competencies are seen as vital and of importance. Again the explanation for this circumstance is the immediate personal situation the participants are in. The research participants were all back in paid work and now lead a 'working life'. This represents a strong context and issue for them, as explained before. This strong statement is underlined in a study of 'high-flyers' (White, Cox and Cooper, 1992) where successful women claimed that work was the priority in their lives, from which they derived their identity.

Almost all participants felt the urge and necessity to return to work; some of the mothers also expressed a wish to return to part-time work as soon as possible. Their next aim and step was to move on to full-time work. For middle class mothers the intention of going back to work was a strong motivation in giving up work to look after the children because they
'knew' and realised that this period of childcare would only be a 'short' phase in their lives. The majority of women in the study expressed the desire to return to work once the children reached school age. This is consistent with previous research findings such as those by Klerman and Leibowitz (1994) who found that older and better-educated mothers were more likely to return to work sooner after childbirth than less-educated mothers were. They also found that women with more children were less likely to be employed. Sally (four children) and Jane (six children) talked about the obstacles they had encountered in finding work due to the number of children they had, which is supported by Youngblut et al. (2000) who reported that having fewer children were significant predictors of employment.

Cotton et al. (1989) suggested that financial reasons are one main cause for women to work as the family needs an extra income. Most of the women worked for financial reasons and needs (Guinn and Sandell, 1997), as Marian, 38, confirms: "as we cannot afford for me not to work at all". Further studies suggested that women’s wages help to keep families out of poverty in Britain (Guinn and Sandell, 1997). The second income is therefore either necessary or good 'pocket money'. The people in the study confirmed both statements.

9.3.2 The Influencing Factor of Caring for Someone on the Development of 'Tacit Skills'

Alongside the difference of being employed or unemployed, the second big dividing factor within the whole group of research participants was the fact of being a parent or carer or not. Research participants who were married with children or who were single parents expressed similar experiences, feelings and perceptions. They stated that they had to perform far more duties, tasks and responsibilities during the day and lots of times even at night compared to people without children. At this point it is important to note that single parents, mothers as well as fathers expressed similar emotions and concerns, about their tasks, duties and competencies. The biggest issue in the lives of participants with children, especially of single parents, was 'making ends meet'. This group included people who were caring for other people, e.g. parents or relatives. The needs and demands of the children, or person that was cared for, followed by the demands of the spouse or partner and the fulfilment of the tasks necessary to keep the household tidy and organized, determined the daily routine for these research participants. It therefore affected the range of competencies acquired and performed. These research participants developed a range of 'tacit' competencies far wider and more manifold than the range of single people who lived on their own. Parents, especially mothers, were also more active outside the home compared to single people. Mothers were involved in community, charity, school and church work and actively looked out for opportunities to earn a little bit aside (e.g. childminding, word processing). 'I never really stopped working' was an expression people used to describe this. Learning on these occasions contributed to the development of 'tacit forms of key
competencies' and it seemed as if some of the research participants (Diana, Jane) never really lost touch with working life.

The concern of single people was mainly focussed on their own well-being and personal situation. Their personal situation was defined by their life situation and context of life, which very much differed from the one in which participants were caring for children or relatives. The context differed in the way that these research participants struggled with difficulties and problems related to the 'self' and own person (such as loneliness, financial problems, unemployment etc.). They did not experience the 'pressure' involved with the awareness of being responsible for the well-being of somebody else. Thus, the experienced and expressed personal difficulties were severe and of the highest importance to the individual research participants concerned and although they might not be comparable to the research participants with children, it is possible to state that there are similarities within the group of single people. Single people, for example, talked about the feelings of boredom: "I watched a lot of television", "there was nothing to do", of anger, loneliness, of being useless, even isolation and depression. Turner and Lloyd's (1995) study revealed that people with a lower education have fewer economic and social resources with which to avoid stressful events and successfully cope with them, - circumstances that the research participants attested.

9.3.3 The influencing Factor of being (Un)aware of One's Own Achievements

Another factor which seems to have influenced the research participants' perception of the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies' was the degree of awareness about them. In terms of being aware of one's own achievements and acquired 'tacit forms of key competencies' research participants in the category 'on course', still being at home, seemed to be more aware of what they achieved every day and had achieved over the period of running the family household than the group of research participants 'returned to work'.

For the majority of research participants 'on course' the interview process was very important as it enabled them to think about, 'see' and value their achievements (in a different and positive light). Especially for this group, probing and questioning was important as it helped to create a sense of gravity and underlined the importance of stating as many skills and competencies as possible and not just some. Increasing the recognition of and becoming aware of the developed key competencies was triggered through asking questions in the interview process by using the developed research focus as intended by the researcher. An interview guideline and a mind map were used as research tools to encourage talk about the experiences at home. These tools were useful because domestic life with its daily routines is often difficult to describe for women because there are few constructs that support
the kind of work women do in the home (Sparks, 2002). Moreover before the interviews took place a lot of the research participants had not thought about this issue and their situations in a positive way. Daily duties were simply expected of them. In the interview, the term 'chores' was replaced by terms such as 'achievements', or the acquirement or competence development, which put a different light on and a positive aspect towards their personal situation.

The finding that the research participants 'on course' were more aware of their developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' than the research participants who had already 'returned to work' could depend on the situation of being enrolled on a course at that time. Motivation-building, upskilling, and confidence building were core components of the CVT courses at the colleges where the research participants were enrolled. Therefore, research participants had heard the term competencies and skills before and could relate and connect them to the research questions and aim. Still, this was not always the case, as people were in general more aware of the personal situation they were in, when they remembered how lonely and isolated they felt, how hard the first years were after having a child or being married and away from their parent's home.

The findings have revealed that the research participants 'on course' could list more developed and performed skills and more detailed duties and tasks, which seems to stem from the immediate personal situation of not being returned to work. Although for them, their situation and status had changed when they enrolled on the course, they felt, that they had not regained the position and status of someone earning money. They still defined themselves through the role they played at home, being a 'full-time mother', looking after the children and the family household. And, as such managing the household routines and chores was constantly on their minds and omnipresent in their daily lives.

The, mainly middle class, research participants who had successfully returned to work, on the other hand, seemed to have 'put this phase behind them' and quickly forgot about the time spend at home, out of 'paid work', as a 'housewife' or a 'homemaker'. Now their position of being back in paid work defined their position and role; a role almost all had longed for while looking after the children and family household and aspired to once the children were old enough to go to school. They often expressed the situation of being at home with the children 'as a phase that would pass by'. They also expressed a certainty that they had always believed that they would find a job once the children were old enough to be left with a childminder or at school. As Jane exclaims, "I knew I could always return to temping". The studies of Klerman and Leibowitz (1994, 1992) suggest that education probably provides a stimulus that encourages women to strive for personal achievement, or in other words, the more educated are likely to be more ambitious in their outlook.
Middle class research participants - in general, in both categories - demonstrated a higher degree of awareness about their achievements and a higher degree in confidence in finding a job again; as those who are more "alert" may be aware of a wider range of possibilities (Wills and Echols, 1992). With education comes more increased levels of knowledge and skills, and an increasingly higher expectation in life (Filipezak, 1994). The research participants who had the advantage of a better education and qualifications showed more awareness of having overcome and dealt with the 'strenuous and challenging' family phase and were aware that they had changed in personality in a positive way: "I have changed a lot and I think I will profit from this development". The research participants from a middle class background had a more positive outlook on their life and future, probably as they experienced, on a general level, a similar 'good' and secure 'life situation'. All of them lived in a prosperous area of Guildford, owned a house or paid a mortgage, possessed two cars and were married to husbands who held 'well paid' jobs. For them, life seemed to be 'easier', without financial worries and with easier job opportunities. They also expressed their wish to return to work or to return to full-time work as soon as possible.

9.4 How did They learn to run a Family Household?
As the aim of this study is to make the 'tacit' dimension of the development process of 'tacit forms of key competencies' explicit - the research participants first needed to become aware of their 'tacit' learning process for the sake of being able to talk about the experience. A possibility to make the experience tangible was to probe them about how they knew what to do, and how they learned to run a family household. When asked, the majority of research participants expressed the view that they had learned 'by trial and error', 'by simply doing it' as 'sink or swim' and through: "absorbing what to do and how to do without knowing". About half of the research participants said that they learned how to run a family household from their mothers, either by helping at home or by imitating and copying their mothers' routines - a situation which Collins, Braun and Newman (1989) describe as learning taking place through observation and imitation of models and imitation of models which leads to the development of 'tacit knowledge'. Learning partially emanates from routine activities; learning-by-doing, learning-by-using and learning-by-interacting (Lundvall, 1992) and builds on existing knowledge and practices. This knowledge is both explicit and 'tacit' (Gee, 1997). In trying to make the 'tacit' experience tangible, the research participants were encouraged to reflect upon their daily routines and experience, in order to get to the core of the experience, the process of developing 'tacit knowledge and competencies'. This process encapsulates learning as it occurs by exploring issues experienced at home, more precise reflective learning (Boyd and Fales, 1983) which involves a cognitive review of a lived experience. This process of reflecting, furthermore uncovered nuances and differences in perspectives that had not been visible before, and which raised
self-awareness and thus served as an impetus for further learning (Sator, 1997; Marsick, 1990). Once explicit and recognised, the skills and knowledge provide a platform for new learning and development and a spiral of learning becomes possible, linking tacit and explicit dimensions and creating expanding horizons for learning (Evans, 2000), which then can be shared. This process illustrates the development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'.

This way of unravelling the 'tacit' experiences is a means to bring to the fore and make explicit the 'sociopoietic potentials' which are hidden in 'modern biographies' as suggested by Alheit (2001), and which then provide centres of change within social frameworks, so that possible 'key qualifications' for learning societies of the future can be utilized. It supports a transformation of the individual, a learning process which involves a process of becoming more aware (Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 1991; Boyd and Myers, 1988). This process of becoming more aware includes the awareness of (a) the forces shaping one's life (political, social, economical etc.), and (b) one's ability to restructure one's attitude, actions, and possibly one's world. In addition, one's belief system about 'self' and society is being restructured (ibid.). This translates the once 'tacit forms of key competencies' into 'key qualifications', which allows the individual to be able to consciously influence their own situation and the situation of others in a democratic society (Bron, 1996). This process refers to Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) learning cycle and model of tacit knowledge and its externalisation in actions (see ch. 3).

9.5 Appreciation of 'tacit forms of key competencies'

Most working class research participants rated their developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' as not important or useful for their personal development nor as knowledge and skills. Stuart's argument was: "Just doing a bit of this and that in the household doesn't mean you can do that as a job". Here, the research participants were reflecting the general attitude in society where the work women perform is classified as 'non-skilled' because it is considered too natural and/or merely dexterous. This, then has no recognition in the form of wages and social value, as this work is not seen as acquiring skills (Jenson, 1992). Wood (1987, p.11) has suggested that women's work does involve "complex competencies but which (are) not designated as skilled". Phillips and Taylor (1980) argue that the work of women is often deemed inferior simply because it is women who do it. They suggest that far from being an objective, economic fact, skill is often an ideological category imposed on certain types of work by virtue of the sex and power of the workers who perform it. Others argue that the failure to recognise women's skilled contributions to paid employment is closely tied to the utilization of skills in paid employment that are derived from those women typically learn through gender socialization. This suggests that definitions of skill are socially constructed, a view, on which this study is built - and that skills are character-
istic of the domestic sphere such as negotiating with people, managing feelings, and 'caring' (Webster, 1996).

Such skills and competencies are often referred to as 'female skills' or 'soft skills'- but are crucial skills in good work routines and attitudes, as well as the ability to work well with others (Billet, 2001). They incorporate 'tacit knowledge' which has to be brought to the fore and made explicit through the process of interviewing, asking and probing. In-depth interviewing is a suitable method because the creative role of social processes is often underestimated when 'tacit skills' are made explicit and articulated. Once the research participants understood the aim of the interview and then had thought about the skills and tasks they performed each day, the majority of them were able to produce a long list of skills and competencies. Some of them said how content and glad they were to talk about their daily lives and the skills needed to complete their daily routines.

Even more important for the research participants was that the fact that there was somebody listening to them, someone who was interested in them and their stories, and who tried to and seemed to understand what they were telling. The research participants felt that their personal (life) situation was being taken very seriously, and informed me that most of the time at home their daily routine and their daily difficulties were never discussed. Instead, it was expected of them to listen to their partners’ daily work routine and the difficulties and constraints in the workplace, once the partner came home from work. With the researcher listening to the stories the research participants were able to experience respectful appreciation which precipitated in the participants new respect for the importance of their work as well as growing self confidence (Smith, 1995; Whitmore, 1994).

9.6 Awareness of Single People related to Personal Problems

There was evidence that single people (e.g. Mikki, Carol) were more aware of their struggle in 'sorting out my life' and of overcoming difficulties and obstacles. People (while looking back) described this; they expressed a degree of pride in how they coped with dealing with debts, illness, illiteracy, divorce, isolation and pain. Critical incidents disturb individual life histories and can lead to unintentional, thus 'tacit' learning. They can influence and stimulate learning according to this account (Schratz 1996). Crises, perhaps in combination, might lead to coping strategies but equally may lead to feelings of resignation (Schratz, 1996). The research participants described this in both ways. In making the 'tacit' experience tangible and explicit the research participants became aware of these coping strategies and of their developed 'tacit forms of key competencies'. They seemed to have become able to look at their situation with a different perspective and with the ability to overcome the feeling of resignation. Such development involves learning which embraces
conscious knowledge gained through certain life experience triggered by conscious reflection (Gee, 1990), reflection in and on practice (Schön, 1983).

Major problems experienced by adults during their lives in Britain are the following: unemployment, organisation of labour, distrust of politics, interpersonal problems, lack of time and stress (Dubelaar and Jarvis, 1995). All single participants remembered well the feeling of helplessness and depression while being unemployed. Studies of unemployed workers have found that the continually unemployed have more symptoms of depression than those who find work and that the effects are mediated by the financial strain of income loss. Most of the time the situation of being unemployed was accompanied by other personal difficulties, such as health or financial problems (e.g. debts). Some research participants (Russel, Mikki, Carol) talked about depression, which often follow events such as unemployment, and which involves loss and disappointment and could have threatening long-term consequences (Brown and Harris, 1978; Hirshfeld and Cross, 1982). Jahoda (1982) suggests that mental health effects are mediated by the loss both of earnings and of social-psychological functions of work such as status, time-structure, and participation in collective purposes. Furthermore, unemployment seems to be more stressful for the less educated who might have the most difficulty in finding other or new work (Turner, 1995). Studies have documented amongst adults with a higher education lower levels of depression (Adler et al., 1994).

The strongest concept and theme which affected the group of single people was that of being made redundant, or becoming and being unemployed. This situation hit people very hard, especially research participants stemming from working class because from one day to the next their personal situation and the way in which they could lead their life from then on had changed. Most of the research participants expressed the feeling that they could not understand the reason why they had been made redundant and sought the answer in their own 'failure'. For many, unemployment meant financial difficulties and the loss of a social life as they felt it closed a door to life. They could not afford to go out and meet their friends anymore and they felt embarrassed to meet friends who still had work. This was a situation which the research participants were clearly aware of.

Because most of the mothers 'chose', or thought it to be natural, to leave work due to expecting a child or getting married, they seemed to be in control of the situation. In contrast, the group of single people did not feel at all in control in a similar situation. This situation of being out of work was so overwhelming for some of them that they could neither recall nor think about their developed skills and knowledges, nor of any 'tacit forms of key competencies' when asked to name some. They, furthermore, did not rate the developed competencies and skills as useful for their personal and career development. "You
need proper qualifications", qualifications which are gained from colleges and schools, was the major opinion of single working class people. The analysis of the mini-biographies (see chapters 7 and 8) clearly points out that people's opinions on learning are that learning takes place in schools and colleges and not at home or in the workplace. Many people feel that once school is over, education is over and that 'real life' is something else (Lowe, 1970). This shows that an individual's attitude to learning, their learning identity is based on their view of the value of learning, which stems from their educational experience, not simply of success or failure, but of an entire educational culture (Fevre et al., 1997).

This finding highlights the necessity of establishing a broader understanding of what counts as learning, including informal and 'tacit' learning as it would contribute to, enhance and widen the awareness of and open up closed attitudes towards learning and qualifications. And, in time it would allow more people with low or no qualifications to benefit from and become aware of any learning experience as learning and then to recognise that learning is predominantly done by adults who are already qualified (Coffield, 1996).

Most adults with low level or no qualifications are aware that vocational and other educational opportunities exist (Hand et al., 1994) but this knowledge only becomes salient if a change in their lives leads them to see education and training as useful and affordable. Additionally, but only if the necessary courage and degree of confidence to enrol on a course and enter a college again exists. Some research participants said that a sudden change in their lives (e.g. divorce) forced them to earn money. This led to a need for training which then resulted in a cost-benefit analysis of training. Carla (34) and Carol (44) reported that a leaflet through the door advertising the government's 'New Deal For Lone Parents' campaign made them overcome their fears and enrol on a return-to-work course. This is a common experience for individuals - Gambetta (1987) describes such events as structural constraints embodying key issues in educational decisions. These are taken into account in formulating the conclusions of this study in the final chapter.

9.7 The Degree of Confidence

Furthermore, the identified factor of being 'in paid work' or 'out of paid work' had an impact on the research participants' degree of confidence. People who worked expressed and demonstrated a higher level of confidence. People who were out of work expressed a low level of self-esteem and confidence. Their biggest concern was not feeling confident enough to apply for a job or register on a college course. Other studies report that after just six months of unemployment confidence in applying for a job is already at a low level and people state that they do not have the courage to return to work. It is within this context that the lack of good formal qualifications affected the levels of self-confidence of these research participants. It was evident from the account of the research participants'
‘tacit’ learning experiences that support and friendship had an impact upon their degree of confidence. Individuals who had support from their spouses, relatives or friends expressed a higher degree of confidence. This description points out the crucial role of good relationships and a supportive environment in the creation of confident inner states (Kohut, 1971).

Almost all of the research participants were aware of the fact that they had ‘achieved’ something during the day, but they were also aware that this was not recognised by others. Although they ‘knew’ that “they had done a good job” and that “nobody else would have done the same good job” in managing the family household, they did not gain confidence and self-esteem from this situation. On the contrary, the women staying at home expressed feelings of low self-esteem and low confidence, a situation represented and captured in the model ‘triangle of conflict and contradiction’ in chapter 7. This model demonstrates the extent to which this contradiction has an influence on the individual’s well being and self-esteem.

9.8 The Nature of the developed ‘Tacit Forms of Key Competencies’

While identifying ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ the expression: “I have changed a lot” is used by the research participants to describe their personal development process in grasping the ‘tacit’ dimension. The dynamics of the process underline the proposed shift in emphasis from an understanding of (key) competencies as a static description of skills to a more developmental focus - in other words, the process by which individuals move from being a novice to an expert and the contextualised acquisition of life-, job- and role-related competences (Darmon et al., 1998).

When asked to list the developed ‘tacit forms of key competencies’, the majority of research participants were not able to immediately to name more than two skills and competencies that they had developed at home. After being aided in the process of reflection and thinking about skills and competencies, as outlined before, the following categories of key competencies were elicited. The research participants ‘on course’ stated seven main categories:

1. Organisational skills
2. Managing and budgeting
3. Multi-tasking and patience
4. Being able to put others’ needs first
5. Planning
6. Cooking and time planning
7. Responsibility

The research participants ‘returned to work’ stated five main categories:
1. Budgeting
2. Organisational skills
3. Responsibility
4. Time management; multitasking; flexibility; planning and 'smart' shopping
5. Managing; cooking; childcare and life-skills

These listed competencies relate to some components of the 'profile of the lifelong learner' as proposed by Candy, Crebert and O'Leary (1994) which include:

- A sense of personal agency including self-organisation skills such as time management, goal setting etc.
- A repertoire of learning skills including knowledge of one's own strengths and weaknesses; a range of strategies for learning in whatever context one finds oneself.
- An inquiring mind including a critical spirit; a sense of curiosity and question asking; comprehension monitoring and self-evaluation.

The examination of the expressions and descriptions of the research has shown that the stated competencies embrace the competencies of a 'lifelong learner'. Four fundamental skills are proposed as important goals of adult education: communication, learning to learn, improving employability and giving meaning to life (Dubelaar and Jarvis, 1995); competencies almost all research participants developed 'tacitly'. These previously 'tacit' forms of key competencies entail new kinds of qualifications or skills (Falk, 1997), such as multi-skilling, customer oriented skills, initiative, creativity, responsibility, teamwork capabilities, worker flexibility, adaptability, and the ability and willingness to continuously to improve competence (CMEC; 1999). They furthermore include metacompetence or metacognitive skills, which describe the intellectual skills involved in competent learning and problem solving. They encompass the skills and competencies required by a knowledge intensive economy and an increasing number of service oriented jobs. Other competencies were seen as in analytic aptitudes and skills as well as in planning skills (e.g. shopping lists, planning meals and family holidays), the capacity to tolerate uncertainty and skills for handling conflicts, co-operative capabilities, and the ability to make judgements (e.g. the prioritising of various tasks when working under pressure). These kinds of personal competencies are not only highly valued by employers, but also underline the power of learning from experience (Kolb, 1984; Boud et.al., 1985) - 'tacit knowledge' is experiential (as discussed in chapter 3), gives particular points of certainty, and can serve as foundations for the whole of empirical knowledge (Blackburn, 1994).

Within this discourse a new status for adult learners is established and confirmed with individuals being seen as autonomous and enterprising learners. Individuals are motivated to learn through life and to take responsibility for their own development (CBI, 1994). This sits
comfortably within the discourse of 'informal learning', 'work-based learning' and 'learning organisations' (presented in chapter 3) in which individual learning is presented as a key strategy for managing rapid and unpredictable changes in a market economy (Dixon, 1994) and for dealing with changes in life.

9.9 Conclusions

This study confirms that the individual's learning takes place without intention or awareness, and the knowledge that results from this learning is labelled 'tacit knowledge'. It also confirms that 'tacit knowledge' acquisition and informal learning are congruent with the theoretical understanding of learning, which means the interaction of an individual with his or her socio-cultural environment provoking durable changes in the individual (Tennant, 1997; Hilgard and Bower, 1966). The study's findings show that learning is intimately related to the world and is affected by it (Jarvis, 1987). Both, the context of adult life and societal context shape what, when, where, and how adults learn (Andersen et al., 1996) often without them being aware. This analysis and discussion has made clear that the research participants, after being made sensitive to the particularities of the informal learning context and being supported in telling their 'stories', in making judgements about the development process and in understanding themselves as agents in the 'tacit' learning process - did become aware. As a result, they 'acknowledged' their contexts and are able to make explicit what is implicit; in a pragmatic sense of turning something they can initially only do into something they can say: codifying 'knowing how' into 'knowing that' (Brandom, 2000). These adult learning experiences are central to an epistemology of practice (Beckett and Hager, 2002) and therefore to the exploration of 'tacit forms of key competencies' development. This fits with the concept of the construction and reconstruction of the 'Self' through the workplace and life-world practices where identities as 'competent' individuals are established (see Lum, 1999).

The analysis of the development process of 'tacit forms of key competencies' shows the ability and potential of the individual to deal with unexpected situations and to think and act flexibly. These are qualities required in workers and are aspects of managing and 'running' a family household. In consequence, this study argues that it is time to recognise that the complex challenges created by an increasingly interdependent world are more effectively met by people or adult learners who can utilise their developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' - while acting within their many worlds of personal learning, such as families and communities. Still, Western education and training policy makers have ignored these rich sources of knowledge (Lam, 1998). I suggest, that rather than writing off these 'knowings' as 'tacit' knowledge while proposing the concept of 'lifelong learning'. we must make them visible and tangible. An analysis of different ways of 'tacit' and informal learning not only transforms our understanding of learning and knowledge development, but also shows
the assets individuals possess; and which are integral in their biography and which they should learn to cherish.

The research process has fostered my search for understanding and meaning in terms of 'what it was like' for the research participants in this context. And, while attempting to grasp the experience of 'hidden', 'unrecognised' learning and 'unrealised' knowledge development, the 'tacit dimension' became explicit. On the other hand, through dialogue and reflection, the research participants became aware of their achievements and recognised their 'tacit' learning experience. They acknowledged the developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' as the 'tacit dimension' unravelled itself and became explicit. Becoming aware requires a focus on knowledge: locating knowledge, decoding knowledge, reflecting on knowledge, using knowledge and creating new knowledge. This process of seeking, moulding and transmitting knowledge for a purpose is learning (Falk, 1997) with the effect that knowledge then becomes power and thus profitable.

This study showed, that lists of competencies and generic skills make no sense unless they show they are grounded in socially reflective practice and (public) articulations (DeVries and Triplett, 2000). A proposed implication of this study is to make this knowledge explicit to individuals because it leads to raised self-awareness, greater confidence and empowerment. This will be discussed and conceptualized in the next chapter.

This chapter has offered a discussion of the key findings based on the data of the study. It has studied the factors that have influenced the research participants' perceptions and opinions about their process of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'. The implications of the findings are explored in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

10.0 Introduction
This chapter concludes the research by providing a final discussion and summary of the main findings and insights gained from the exploration of the experience of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'. It points to which extent the research questions have been answered, provides recommendations and considers possible avenues for future research. The chapter ends with personal reflective comments about the research process.

The experience of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies' is a significant one for those interested in 'tacit', implicit or informal learning and 'tacit knowledge' development. The realisation that many adult learners do not recognise and value their achievements and acquired 'tacit knowledge' while being the main family carer, brought me to research the degree of awareness, confidence and emotions linked with this experience.

Since the start of the study in 1999, more and more research has been done and work published on 'tacit knowledge', which is seen as increasingly valuable in the world of work and is linked to the theory of human capital (Boud and Garrick, 1999). In this context, the literature review has shown a bias towards the role of 'tacit knowledge' when almost exclusively the importance of 'tacit knowledge' has been discussed in the context of expert knowledge and human resource development. Even policy discourses are dominated by the rhetoric of human capital (Kulvisaechana, 2006; Schuller, 2001; McIntyre and Solomon, 2000) disregarding the unique identity of the individual; failing to acknowledge the relationship between learning and identity (Colley et al., 2003).

While 'informal learning' has been explored for some time now in a number of social contexts (Smaller, 2005), unfortunately there has very little research been undertaken in relation to unpaid house- and caring work. Despite the fact, that individuals are now devoting as much time to informal learning related to housework as to paid employment (WALL study, 2004), the average estimated time devoted to informal learning has been found to significantly exceed the time devoted to formal educational activities (Livingstone, 2004), considerations of 'tacit', incidental or unintended learning have been neglected (Livingstone, 2005).

Informal work, unpaid housework, child and elder care is a very substantial proportion of the work that most of us do and it deserves to be recognised, on the one hand, on its own merits with the competence and skills it demands (see Livingstone, 2005) and, on the other hand, for giving rise to 'tacit knowledge' development. While debates over skill requirements of paid work persist, neither the skill complexity of housework and care work (Eichler, 2005),
nor the creation of 'tacit knowledge' and 'tacit forms of key competencies' while performing this informal work, has been hinted at by most prior research. Although this work is not only more complex than normally thought - it often involves challenging learning activities which have much broader relevance, as analysed in this study, just than to housework alone (Livingstone, 2005).

In continuously disregarding and ignoring the 'human side' of the development of 'tacit knowledge' - the experiences and biographies of individuals - firms, organisations and society are still missing out on the special talents and competencies that - especially - women have demonstrated they can bring (Morrison, 1992, Astin and Leland, 1991, Helgesen, 1990, Shakeshaft, 1989).

This study shows that managing a family household or caring for relatives comprises significant sites and sets of practice for the acquisition and development of 'tacit forms of key competencies'. Additionally, there is also reasonable case to suggest that most of these 'tacit forms of key competencies' enhance employability and are highly relevant to the world of work.

10.1 Main Conclusions
The purpose of this study has been to understand participants' experiences of the development process of 'tacit forms of key competencies' in informal learning environments. The study also sought to understand the nature of 'tacit forms of key competencies' as they manifest themselves in the practice of informal, unpaid and caring work in periods of life which are characterized by unemployment and/or family phases of adults. The objective of the interpretive and biographical approach was to look at the less tangible issue of being aware of one's own developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' and the amount of confidence and self-assurance drawn from it. To do this, the initial research question, which guided the data collection, had to be broken down into several component questions. These were:

- What is meant by 'tacit knowledge' and 'tacit forms of key competencies'?
- How do individuals acquire 'tacit forms of key competencies'?
- What does it mean for the individual to develop 'tacit forms of key competencies' while running the family household and raising children?
- To what extent are people, especially mothers, aware of their developed 'tacit forms of key competencies'? How do they 'see', 'rate' and 'value' their capabilities?
- Which role does social status play in terms of people's awareness?
In the following account the answers to these key research questions are reviewed in terms of the outlined theoretical concepts in the literature review and the developed conceptual framework of the study.

10.1.1 Developing 'Tacit Forms of Key Competencies'

There appears to be great variation in the literature on 'tacit knowledge' and 'competenc(i)es' regarding definitional and theoretical issues (Colley et al., 2002; McGivney, 1999). The literature review has provided insights in the debates about definitions and concepts, from which the context-based definition of 'tacit forms of key competencies' was developed. This definition is rooted in Polanyi's (1966/7) concept of 'tacit knowledge', Mertens (1974) "Schlüsselqualifikationen" (key competencies) and Ellström's (1997) 'developmental knowledge'.

Based on the analysis of the two target groups' perceptions, experiences and social contexts, there is little doubt that people develop a wide range of 'tacit forms of key competencies'. Recalled 'tacit' housework learning activities included housekeeping, financial budgeting, planning, organising family schedules and events, dealing with crises, providing emotional support, shopping for goods and services, cooking, cleaning, and child and elder care. The five most mentioned categories of 'tacit forms of key competencies' which were generated through the responses and could be extracted, were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 'on course'</th>
<th>Group 'returned to work'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Organisational skills</td>
<td>1. Budgeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Managing and budgeting</td>
<td>2. Organisational skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Being able to put others' needs first</td>
<td>4. Time management; multitasking; flexibility; planning, and 'smart' shopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Planning</td>
<td>5. Managing; cooking; childcare and life-skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These multi-dimensional competencies, captured in a developed 'starfish model' (see ch. 3, 5, 7 and 8), are aspects of the whole person, and comprise:

- Content-related and practical competencies,
- Competences related to attitudes and values,
- Learning competencies,
- Methodological competencies, and
- Social competencies.
In view of the declining demand for unskilled and semi-skilled labour, these competencies could and should be utilized to satisfy the skill- and labour market demand for people with good generic skills, who are flexible and adaptable to meet new circumstances (IER, 2006). With a reduced need for manual work, the employment market requires intellectually trained workers who possess both specialised skills and the ‘flexibility’ to perform in a way as required by their jobs.

Servicing this shift are empowered, self-directed learners such as the research participants, who developed a sense for negotiating, selling, advertising, and multi-tasking, and who experienced a ‘change in personality’ in terms of becoming more reliable and being able to bear greater responsibility. Such changes in assumptions, perspectives, behaviour and the ‘self’ are reported by Pohland and Bova (2000) and illustrate the fact that individuals who manage a household and a family’s life develop a tremendous amount of ‘tacit forms of competencies’ and ‘tacit knowledge’.

Under this conceptualization, this study concludes that ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ are a part of an individual’s intangible resources (Corso, 2005) and are derived from individual experiences (Matusik and Hill, 1998), which represent a combination of the experience of the development process (Connell, et al., 2003), the biographical learning episode (Alheit and Dausien, 2002), the influence of the immediate personal and social context (Wenger, 2004; Engeström and Middleton, 1996), and the degree of awareness people have about the process and their developed competencies and knowledge (Stein, 2003; Adams et al., 1995). In essence, the ‘tacit’ learning and knowledge development in this study is concerned with social biographies and identities rather than human capital (Ball et al., 2000). Learning, furthermore, refers to self-realisation and meaning-making; but also to struggle, disappointment and hopes for the future, including mental and emotional work, as recalled by the research participants in this study.

10.2 Conclusion 1: Competent - but Unaware: The Influence of Being (Un)aware of one’s own developed ‘Tacit Knowledge’

The findings of this study on ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ support the working hypothesis that people, especially mothers, develop a wide range of competencies in a ‘tacit’ way, unknown to them, on an ongoing basis and with varying emphases and tendencies. This study illustrates that in general people perform housework without being conscious and aware of the fact that they are performing this work (Eichler and Matthews, 2004). Neither are they aware of the full range of activities they engage in at home, nor of their acquired ‘tacit knowledge’ and ‘tacit skills’. Furthermore they do not rate this learning experience as very useful, especially at the time of being the main ‘family carer’.
Compared to the group of individuals who had returned to work, a greater degree of unawareness was demonstrated by the group of women who were still at home and enrolled on a return-to-work course. Whilst being unaware of their achievements, these women experienced the situation of conflict and contradiction, because they 'defined' themselves and built an identity through being a 'good' mother, accomplished a lot, but felt low in self-worth and confidence. Their situation was analysed with the aid of a developed model, the 'triangle of conflict and contradiction' (see ch. 8), which allows discussion and analysis of the inter-relationship of skills development, degree of confidence and awareness of individuals.

Three aspects emerged as the cause of this conflict: 1) Despite the fact that these women achieved "a great deal" over the day, and 2) were aware of managing and mastering jobs in the home, 3) they did not rate the developed competencies as very important and useful. This conflict reflects the still existing underappreciation of housework (Eichler, 2005; Waring, 1988), and the non-recognition and non-remuneration of unpaid informal work. It is presumed to be mundane work that everyone can do without learning (Eichler, 2005). In consequence, these women did not recognise their developed 'tacit forms of key competencies', experienced a low self-esteem, a low self-worth and were lacking in confidence.

Several factors, (as outlined in chapters 6, 7 and 8) interact to shape the nature of women's and men's perceptions of their informal work and development process of 'tacit forms of key competencies', the skills they deploy, and their potential for progression and improved employability. The nature and importance of these factors vary considerably, both across social class and educational background as previously outlined. There is no doubt that social environment plays a key role in what and how an individual learns (Bélanger et al., 2006), but an individual's success in learning is affected by the individual's degree of awareness about the learning process. And while the social environment (in most cases) cannot be changed, the degree of awareness can be enhanced. If it is enhanced, as reasoned in this study, it creates confidence and a recognition of self-worth, both essential requirements of employers (Shepherd and Saxby-Smith, 2001; Bash and Coulby, 1989), and helps to ensure an individual's economic security, initiative or entrepreneurship (Gratton and Groshal, 2003). Such 'emotional capital' (Gratton and Groshal, 2003) can be a driver for overcoming worries about redundancy and feelings of "not being equipped enough" for the world of work.

This study argues that when the 'tacit' learning process is made explicit it helps the individual to recognise and value his or her achievements and consequently to gain a sense of personal identity, of being a member of society with a commitment to 'lifelong learning' (Gray, 2004). When explicit and recognised, skills and knowledge provide a platform for new
learning and development and a spiral of learning becomes possible, linking 'tacit' and explicit dimensions which create expanding horizons for learning (Evans, 2000) that can be shared.

This illustrates the study's emphasis on reflecting upon and making tangible the 'tacit' process of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'. Such abilities to (critically) reflect upon life experiences, to integrate newly acquired knowledge and to act upon resulting insights are salient and distinguishing characteristics of adult learners (Stein, 2003) that can be (and in this study are) employed in the process of making 'tacit knowledge' tangible.

10.3 Affective Aspects of 'Tacit' Learning made explicit

The process of recalling and 'mind mapping' the 'tacit' learning experience was accompanied by one strong concept that continuously emerged throughout the interviews. It occurred that learning was not only about skills and knowledge but also about gaining self-confidence, as outlined above. The accomplishment of 'unrecognised' household tasks and chores encountered by the research participants led to an internalisation of low self-esteem (James, 2003), which made them feel lacking in confidence about their own abilities thus the idea of returning to work seemed very daunting (Priority Group, 2006). The participants' expressed feelings of 'being merely a housewife', 'not doing a proper job' and 'not contributing to the family income' indicated this situation. Very often, women live and work under the assumption that they are incompetent learners; incapable of learning how to operate computers or learning a trade (Lior et al., 2001), especially after taking a career break.

The process of in-depth interviewing gave rise to the research participants' self-awareness which enhanced identification of the developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' and provoked feelings of self-worth, of 'being' or identity. In the sense that when 'tacit' learning is made explicit it "entails both a process and a place. It entails a process of transforming knowledge as well as a context in which to define an identity" (Wenger, 1998, p. 215).

Telling their stories not only helped the research participants to develop an identity as a competent adult learner, but also served to rebuild an amount of confidence (Gray, 2004). When the interviews had finished, many participants saw themselves and their achievements in a different light; they were motivated to think about further learning because they felt enabled to take control of their own lives instead of feeling that they were 'reacting' to situations all the time. This process of overcoming "their powerlessness to determine their own lives... (and the) ... inability to dispose of their own labour power" (Bennholdt-Thomsen, 1987, p. 28) represents the learning process, in which learning becomes
meaningful because individuals were made aware of their experiences and settings. This, furthermore, makes people 'feel good' and creates personal empowerment (Niemie, 2003).

In making their 'tacit' knowledge visible (Griffiths, 2004), people recognise their achievements, skills and competencies and are encouraged to deploy and develop them further (Kersh and Evans, 2006). The first step to effective learning is learning to be self-confident. Individuals need self-confidence, based on self-esteem, courage and resilience, to convert their knowledge into effective action (Gratton and Groshal, 2003). Pedagogy can assist in this kind of breakthrough - helping learners to identify and value their skills and experience; and as such to re-conceive their own understanding of self as a contributor to learning and knowledge development. Today, learning and the acquisition of skills are the most important tools for achieving individual or organisational goals, and people should learn to seize opportunities for their personal well-being and empowerment (Niemie, 2003), for success in the context of paid workplaces (Matthews and Candy, 1999) and for improvement in society.

10.4 Conclusion 2: The Need for an expanded, inclusive and 'holistic' approach to ('Tacit') Learning

This study claims, while building on Polanyi's (1966) definition of 'tacit knowledge', to have expanded the concept and understanding of 'tacit knowledge' in a way that goes beyond Polanyi's definition. The expanded concept encompasses an enhanced understanding which includes a focus on the individual and his or her biography and immediate personal and social context. This understanding and developed frame of reference links with the concept of 'situated cognition' which suggests that learning is inherently social (Engeström, Miettinen and Punamaki, 1999), rooted in the learners' participation in 'communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991), and is based on the interpretation of life experiences (Miller, 2000).

The 'mini-biographies' show that the research participants as adult learners learn in authentic situations with authentic activities. They symbolise current life realities of a learning society as they impact upon an individual's sense of self-efficacy and place (Jarvis et al., 2003; Wain, 2004). Our society experiences transformations regarding the nature and role of knowledge, alternative ways of accessing knowledge and expertise, and the ephemeral and shifting expectations for knowledge competence in the workplace, in the home, and in society as suggested by Rifkin (1995). As such, the participants as adult learners symbolise the hopes and dilemmas of a learning society (Sissel, Hansman and Kasworm, 2001). They reach out to authentic, passionate learning and creative and empowering learning environments; yet they experience societal power structures and policies related to selective forms of knowledge and learning validation (Symes, 2000). of
highly idiosyncratic systems of knowledge learning, which tend to exclude the diversity of experiences of adult learners (Jarvis, 2000). Most research participants were mirroring this public opinion, because they believed that there was only one set of worthwhile knowledge, "you need proper skills, like IT skills", which was viable within all contextual settings; disregarding the specificity of the situation and contexts. Many also placed judgements of value and relevance upon their 'tacit' knowledge and rated it as not important and not useful. Only academic knowledge certified by qualifications was rated valid and important - thus, for most research participants their 'tacit' learning experience meant to disregard and not acknowledge personally relevant and meaningful knowledge (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

If anything, the discussed current societal transformations should teach us that closed systems of thought do not work (Engeström, 1995). Instead an expanded understanding of knowledge and knowledge development which contests the division between declarative and procedural knowledge and formal and informal learning and work is needed. A broadened understanding is needed which locates the learning process within a person-centred approach, which is inclusive and recognises 'tacit' and prior knowledge, life experiences and emotional and mental work. An approach which fosters the process of self-reflection (see Schön, 1983), thus encourages the development of skills about 'learning how to learn' (Gagné, 1975; Knowles, 1980), and of an individual and professional self.

This means making a shift from a traditional educational approach towards the educational process of "life-world becoming" (Barnett, 1994, p.179); where learners firstly, become themselves through experience and the fulfilment of demands in the life-world - seeing the world as offering a seamless web of informal learning activities (Livingstone, 2004); and, secondly, through explication or conscious internalisation of learning (Manwaring and Wood, 1985).

Consequently, individuals take up alternative perspectives and consider a range of values and issues and other human concerns such as sensitivity and understanding. Such a combination of 'action' and 'thought' (see Barnett, 1994) in the development of 'tacit knowledge' represents a way of 'being' and acting in the world - while reflecting on the embedded and taken-for granted nature of the 'tacit' learning experience as demonstrated by the research participants.

The research participants' stories showed that the creation of knowledge is not simply a compilation of facts but a uniquely human process which combines tacit and explicit aspects and includes feelings, emotions and beliefs of which one may or may not be conscious. This study then concludes that "the relationship between different modes of learning, the types
of outcome arising from each mode, and the influence of context and conditions upon each mode of learning” (Young and Guile, 1997, p.14) can be found in the research participants’ experiences of developing ‘tacit forms of key competencies’. The relationship results in the development of knowledge, skills and understanding where the distinction between ‘know-how’ and ‘know-that’ crumbles upon examination. Such constant interaction with our theories and practice (Livingstone, 2003), involves the interaction between two modes of knowing, and is vital for the creation of ‘new’ knowledge and competencies, but necessitates to be made explicit.

The developed starfish model represents a starting point for an expanded, inclusive and ‘holistic’ model for learning, which combines ‘knowing-how’ and ‘knowing-that’. It represents a developmental heuristic device for analysing ‘tacit knowledge’, including the variety of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ developed and acquired in informal work and life situations. It acknowledges a wide range of life and work experiences and underlines this study’s emphasis on ‘learner identities’ (Ball et al., 2000), ‘learner biographies’ (Alheit, 1992), and on experiences of ‘interrupted (occupational) biographies’ (Evans and Kersh, 2004).

10.5 Implications of Research Findings

10.5.1 a) For Adult Education, CVT and VET

Discussions concerning the necessity of lifelong learning have resulted in a vertically and horizontally broadened approach to learning and competence development. Consequently, during the last decade or so, an increasing number of studies have emerged that focus on informal or ‘tacit’ aspects in work-based learning (Engeström and Middleton, 1996; Chaiklin and Lave, 1993; Coy, 1989), such as sustaining learning outcomes in adult learning and work re-entry (Evans et al., 2004). Further, contextual (Järvinen and Poikela, 2001), situational and collective aspects (Billett, 2001; Billett and Boud, 2001; Ellström, 1997) have been emphasised, as well as approaches that underline the need to develop coherent and comprehensive systems encompassing various forms and arenas of learning. In empirical studies, however, the latter tends to be addressed less often (Livingstone, 2001).

The trends identified in this study have implications for the status, role and the content of adult and continuing education. Adult learners with their uniqueness of identity, albeit their unrecognised informally acquired skills, are often ignored by higher education practitioners, adult education researchers and research communities (Freeman, 2003). So far, key literature in CVT and VET on ‘tacit knowledge’ looks to work process knowledge and human resource development to discuss the expectations for knowledge competence in the workplace for economic development (Livingstone, 2005). It appears that CVT and VET do not perceive adult learners as sufficiently equipped. The uniqueness of identity and
contributions these learners bring to the learning process are often ignored (Burns, 2001). Researchers in both higher education and adult education have avoided critical analysis of the extremely varied and complex natures of adult learners (Sissel, Hansman and Kasworm, 2001). It seems as if adult education is still concerned with keeping to traditional forms and structures and system of credentialism. Whilst adults' (self-directed) informal learning and self-taught education/training have been relatively little explored to date (Livingstone, 2005).

This study now suggests that fuller attention in comprehending the nature of adults' 'tacit' learning is warranted, because, in view of the transformations in our society regarding the nature and role of knowledge, alternative ways of acquiring and developing knowledge, skills and expertise, such as in the home, community and the society, must be acknowledged. In addition to making the 'tacit dimension' explicit, other significant factors underlying aspects of competence (development), such as biographical experience, major life changes, social role, emotions, feelings, degree of awareness, self-image - and not only skills and explicit knowledge - need to be included.

Adult education and training is moving to the centre stage of the educational system and even the societal system, as economies are to an increasing extent dependent upon the knowledge and skills of its adult population. In order to match the growing need to update and restore levels of knowledge and skills during a lifetime (Wiering and Attwell, 1999), an important task for adult education and training would be to show adult learners that the enhancement of relevant knowledge and skills throughout an individual's lifetime is important and possible. In doing so, adult education will contribute in making adults understand that they can learn and benefit from 'staying at home' by helping to create or build up 'strong' identities instead of "feeling veggie" or "not useful anymore". Adult education also needs to make people understand that in 'being the main family carer' people have a chance to maximise their potential and it is not "a gap in the C.V.". People need to be sensitized to recognise the usefulness of their own informal learning, the house-, child- and eldercare work they do; and be enabled to value the re-negotiation of these skills and of the effectiveness of 'juggling' of unpaid labour tasks (Livingstone, 2005).

The power of learning from experience accentuates the limitations of the formal vocational training system, at least in its traditional forms (Ecclestone, 2003), in respect of building central 'tacit' knowledge and competencies. NVQ courses whereby participants (mostly women) gain more 'inclusive, discriminatory and integrative understanding(s)' (Mezirow, 1991) and which provide the necessary framework with which to make sense of experience are almost non-existent.
Thus, some of the research findings have implications for the teaching of (critical) awareness and are, therefore, changing the boundaries of VET and CVT. The opportunity to develop socially valid knowledge, which means to develop an understanding of the relationships between different aspects of one's own experiences (and those of others), is usually not available within the VET system and certainly not in competence-based courses (Colley et al., 2003; Tennant, 2000). So far, VET and CVT do not provide or encourage the acquisition of this socially valid knowledge enough, nor that of critical awareness, confidence and self-assurance. Still, it could be gained by and with the initiative of teachers and trainers (Shepherd and Saxby-Smith, 2001).

A second task would be to link the knowledge requirements of adult learners to the knowledge pool that adult learners bring with them to a job or 'course'. While the demand of social and technological changes puts institutions under pressure to deliver skills and knowledge relevant to existing conditions - the skill need of economies at present and in future (Merrill, 2004) - at the same time people develop a whole range of 'tacit forms of key competencies', and possess tacitly relevant skills and knowledge which need to be brought to the 'fore'. Here a degree of co-ordination is required so that developed skills and competencies can be identified and maybe enhanced in a way to prepare individuals to value and 'sell' their skills and knowledge. This would mean for individuals to enhance their employability and to sell their 'intellectual capital' (Gratton and Goshal, 2003). Intellectual material, such as 'tacit knowledge', expertise, experience and intellectual property should be put to use to create wealth (see Steward, 1997); through the explication of experiences which needs to be facilitated by teachers and trainers.

A third task for adult pedagogy would be to foster the confidence of working class and/or long-term unemployed individuals because findings of this study confirm that lower status, occupational positions and social class decreases an individual's perception of personal achievements, 'tacit knowledge' and self-worth. Especially for women who lack or have relatively low formal qualifications and who still do most of their informal work without recognition (Livingstone, 2005).

10.5.2 b) For the Future of the Learning Society
A learning society should, on the one hand serve the advanced and specialised learning needs of adults and, on the other hand, acknowledge all conditions of life and therefore recognise all levels of knowledge. But, the research participants as adult learners in this study (who symbolise an important part of the learning society) show that while their individual vitality is nourished and sustained by lifelong learning (Livingstone, 2005) and recurrent education (Kasworm, 1997) - it is so far not acknowledged. Current work concerning lifelong learning has at its centre a concern with upskilling, re-skilling and labour
market needs (Nickell and Quintini, 2002) and prescribed curricula for VET courses emphasise the acquisition of job-specific and behavioural skills (Colley et al., 2003). Moreover, there is still a tendency for researchers and policy to overemphasise formal learning and to overlook the crucial impact of informal learning (Ecclestone, 2003) as well as social, cultural and emotional domains of learning (Colley et al., 2003). The issues of identity and Bildung are not considered at all (ibid.).

In the light of the findings of this study, the concept of lifelong learning needs to be truly extended beyond solely the acquisition by individuals of formal qualifications, because learning here ties in with a set of other circumstances or learning situations; within families, communities, and informal economic sectors, consisting of vertical and horizontal dimensions (Niemie, 2003). This study highlights the need for a learning society in which all citizens have enhanced opportunities to combine learning with their everyday lives (see Paolo Freire, Clodomir Santos de Morais).

In the last thirty years many proposed the concept of the learning society and lifelong learning as metaphors for all individuals, for all forms of knowledge and knowing, and for all levels of access and participation. However, it is the rare speaker who suggests the inclusion of all possibilities of development and acquisition of knowledge and key competencies as well as the development of skills from informal learning situations. Good examples are researchers such as Livingstone (2005), Hager (2000), Coffield (2000) on informal learning and Edwards and Usher (2000), Eraut (2000) on implicit learning and 'tacit knowledge' (see chapter 3, part 1).

Such perspectives and concepts are needed much more in a future-oriented learning society. We require a learning society that fosters changes in prejudicial attitudes and institutional boundaries of exclusion and as such creates systems and policies to support adult learners (House and Howe, 1990). Because "modern society is so complex and faces so many challenges on so many fronts that no form of learning should be excluded. Space should be made available to all voices, to all perspectives, to all discourses, which carry a mission to learn. Any attempt to close our definitions of learning, our processes of learning, the ways in which we organize for learning should be resisted. We need co-operative learning, learning for life-enhancing ends, private learning and learning oriented towards theoretical frames as much as we need pragmatic skills, problem-solving, and powers of application. In its own interest, the learning society cannot afford to eschew any form of learning. The release of human potentialities requires nothing less" (Barnett, 1994, p.72). In consequence, adult learners in a learning society should be supported to utilise education and learning while acting within their many worlds of personal learning - families, communities, work
environments and global citizenships - and should be enabled to consciously influence their own situation and the situation of others in a democratic society (Bron, 1996).

Another attribute of today's learning society is that still the majority of women, as in this study, is responsible for meeting the basic needs of the family on a daily basis and that working mothers have the burden of combining several responsibilities, working a 'double shift' (Hochschild, 1989), even 'triple shift' (Hughes et al., 1997). Thus, women's life and working experience is conditioned by their experience in families, where they often do most of the child and elder care and family and household maintenance (Rose and Hartmann, 2004). As such, their knowledge is based on this specific personal experience and cultural inheritance (Stenmark, 2001). In consequence, the perception of what it is to be a mother or father is largely immersed in socio-cultural experiences, which in the end shape 'tacit' skills and competence and the degree of (un)awareness about them.

Also, much of the work done by women at home is still not recorded or recognised while the boundaries between work and home blur (Hardill, Green and Dudleston, 1997). Unpaid activities and chores are in general not captured by conventional measure of economic activity, such as the National Statistics. To date, there has been no national survey carried out to determine the distribution of paid and unpaid work in formal and informal sectors by gender (Waring, 1998; Eichler, 2005). The Household Satellite Account (HHSA) (2002) is a first attempt to measure and value the unpaid outputs produced by households in the UK. But, unpaid productive contributions of women are not included in the national statistics and are therefore 'invisible'. This invisible work and learning is not counted towards the country's economic efficiency.

Social policies, academic and public debates and discourses contribute to the social construction of the work of caring and homemaking as non-work. In consequence, it is still the case that women classified as 'housewives', homemakers or mothers are considered economically inactive. This inactivity is seen by the government as voluntary. Such a system surely fails to use human talent productively and the question that Rose and Hartmann (2004) pose: 'How much total output is lost to society because the skills of women are not further developed and put to work in the most productive way?' is legitimate.

As this study aims to enhance the value of unpaid work and informal learning, it suggests that policy programs of a future-oriented learning society should consider women's unpaid work and people's informal learning. National and local policy makers should begin and continue to focus on promoting informal work and learning and on diminishing gender-based economic inequities.
In addition, this study points out an existing (social) divide in the learning society, which needs to be erased. The extent of correspondence between awareness or recognition of 'tacit' knowledge development and unpaid work/informal learning differs by social position. This class division is reflected in the experience of developing 'tacit forms of key competencies'. A clear example is the assessment of the women's perceptions of their experience in the 'tacit knowledge' development while being the main family carer. This study suggests that it is mainly middle class individuals who have already gained a sense of achievement in everything they do - are able to build their personality and contribute to their knowledge pool and education, and who rely on their 'tacit knowledge'. Whereas working class individuals with a low educational background show no recognition of their developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' and need to be made aware.

10.6 Recommendations

As a result of this study, I propose a model of learning and education based on the integration of human beings, their contexts, experiences and biographies; including the 'tacit' dimension of the learning process. Central to this model are the concepts of 'communities of practice', 'social learning' also 'whole-person learning'. Here individuals engage their cognitive, affective, somatic and intuitive self in the learning process ('whole-person learning'), including their 'tacit knowledge', experiences and memories of the past and hopes for the future. Whilst attempting to make meaning for themselves in the present (Wilson, 1993).

In consequence, the learning infrastructure will require further attention to help ensure a learning model sensitive to 'tacit' and informal adult learning, to development across the life-span, to social, cultural and emotional aspects and in respect of gender. A further recognition of informal and prior learning and accreditation of learning outside formal institutions would provide an opportunity for giving space and reward for an individual's diverse knowledges, experiences and skills. We need a model, which represents a more broadly based, negotiated and person-centred approach, with the aim of promoting individual personal development, because "the idea of lifelong learning draws attention not to education or training ... but to learning, which is undertaken by individuals" (Field, 1998, p.1). This then would help to overcome prescribed curricula and training-based development policies towards new policies fostering learning in different ways (acknowledging 'tacit' knowledge and competencies development, informal learning in unpaid work situations, supporting learning in communities of practice, etc.) (Lieberman, 2000).

But, not only the vocational education and training system needs to develop new values around different knowledges, experiences and identities of individuals. Also industry competency standards and the certification of learning outcomes need to open up for a
discussion of the contested status of knowing and knowledge. Additionally learning needs to be valued for its own sake and not for enhanced productivity.

This section of the study concludes with suggestions for the reconceptualization of learning and work to include implicit, incidental and informal learning incorporating 'tacit knowledge'; as well as forms of unpaid work, such as family or community work. This would open up the boundaries between units of work and units of learning. Secondly, informal, unpaid work, and housework in particular should be appreciated as an essential source for 'tacit knowledge' and for lifelong learning - a first step should be to create awareness for and to acknowledge people's unrecognised and undervalued 'tacit' and informal knowledge.

10.7 Directions for Further Research
Adults meet learning goals without the use of formal institutions or methods (Candy, 1991). They build up 'tacit' and informal knowledge, which is highly relevant for personal development, and when made explicit, relevant for new ways of understanding, interpreting and organising knowledge. Still, there "has been very little grounded research on less formal aspects of learning... (regarding) ... most aspects of unpaid work, to say nothing of the imbalances between our different forms and levels of knowledge and our capacities to use them in our paid and unpaid work" (Livingstone, 2005, p.12).

Future research should address the nature of knowledge constructs and structures for adults who live in many life worlds and who make meaning across many different knowledge worlds (Kasworm, 1997). Adults experience and operate in many forms of knowledge: knowledge of life, knowledge of work, knowledge of relationships. The future of research will impact and possibly change the role, function and belief system of (vocational) education and training and the recognition and permeability of prior and implicit learning outside of higher education (Davies, 1995). As a means to achieve this, future research and policy studies need to target adult-oriented and adult supportive education and training systems to create further vertical and horizontal diversity in the institutional support; incorporating contexts and perspective frames instead of focusing only on the concrete and the known.

In summary, future research should bring together the worlds of CVT, of adult higher education, of work, including informal and voluntary work, of family and of community for adult learners - to bridge the divide of academic, declarative knowledge and operational or procedural knowledge and competencies, as proposed by this study. It should bring together 'tacit' and explicit forms of knowledge and continue to challenge the separation and the hegemonic belief that learning can only occur within formal boundaries.
Despite the increasing literature base on the topic of ‘tacit knowledge’, one can conclude that the research literature does not adequately address the question of ‘how aware are individuals about their developed ‘tacit forms of key competencies’, or exactly what are the processes, experiences and motivations behind this ‘tacit’ learning process. That is another area to explore in the future. Further, more research and theoretical development is needed on the development of identities in and through experiences of unpaid, caring and household work.

Moreover, further analysis is required to determine the dialectical interaction between oneself and self-assurance drawn from the (explication of the) development of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’. The next step could be to perform a fuller event history analysis to clarify the respective roles of major life changes (Eichler, 2005) or life events such as unemployment, moving house, having a child, or losing a partner in the creation and development of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ - also to further establish the reliability of this study’s findings.

10.8 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Thesis with special references to my Own Learning

I consider the fact that I myself have conducted the research as the biggest strength but also the biggest weakness in the research; because the whole study not only follows my logic and depends on my way of data collection and interpretation, but is also based on my way of doing ‘passionate’ research, of ‘living the question’, ensuring engagement, commitment and a ‘feeling’ for the research participants’ stories. And, it is also through my lens that the practices are examined - but I believe that this is the fabric of qualitative research.

The study furthermore ‘lives’ upon my ‘up’s and down’s’ - my highlights and my failures, my advancements, self-doubts and confidence. In view of this, I developed a research design that is both transparent and incorporates reflexivity which takes account of and helps to identify sources of bias. This is what Miles and Huberman (1998) refer to as ‘a reflexive stance to the conduct of the study’, which provides a full account of the researcher’s views, thinking and conduct (Olesen, 1998) and acknowledges the subjectivity (Janesick, 1998).

In the process of the research I became aware of the influence of my own history and biography and my own agenda which include a long term commitment to the objectives of acknowledging informal, unpaid (house)work, the struggle to understand and try to remove the barriers to recognising unpaid, informal (tacit) housework, an overwhelming desire to
take these things forward as an educational project and, finally, against all odds, to 'finish it up'.

I believe that another great strength is that I managed to develop and undertake my own study (based on my own ideas) where I had the freedom to work in a way I wanted to, because I had no stakeholders to satisfy and no pre-defined project objectives and outcomes to work to or fulfill. In consequence, I could address different questions, follow up emerging issues and themes and answer them in different ways. And, because I was a newcomer with no experience, in a way 'naive' and eager to learn I could try out different routes - I was freed from the dilemma to seek consensus, permission and discussion with other partners. Whereas the Tacitkey project partners' decisions were based on a process of consensual negotiation and discussion where each project partner was trained and specialized in a certain research methodology and favoured certain methods - my research interest, focus and route formed while working on the Tacitkey project.

In doing so I had to learn a lot of new vocabulary, new words, concepts and theories; I had to consider in-depth my intention, purposes, beliefs and goals, that drove and sustained my thinking and acting. I had to come to terms with the inherent ambiguity of much of qualitative methodology; and with the sheer number of methodological choices which is not made any easier due to the looseness of terminology often applied in this area. This was an on-going and multi-dimensional learning process which was not addressed and supported in the Tacitkey project because to question which research methodology and methods were to adopt was not an option. Still, the findings of both projects had to be credible, plausible, convincing, in a way unambiguous and characterized by quality.

While working on the Tacitkey project, I found that the participants' responses were so rich and descriptive that I felt obliged to analyze them in more depth and with a stronger focus on the individual situation, the affective dimensions, including emotions and feelings and in the end to tell some of their stories. This study therefore, focuses on the understanding (Verstehen) of the meanings attached to 'tacit knowledge' development and self-esteem rather than the explanation (Erklärung) thereof, relating to the hermeneutic tradition.

With the intensive reading I undertook, I realized that a qualitative approach is very consistent with how I view the world. I think, I understood what qualitative research was really about; it appealed to me and was consistent with my personality and so with my views as a mother, vocational teacher, ship's engineer and researcher. Conceptualizing qualitative research helped me not only continue to discover who I am and what I believe in but also strengthened me in outliving my way of teaching and upbringing my children.
I very much learned that qualitative research is not as straightforward as it seems; whereas the Tacitkey project often followed a strict timetable and several steps and objectives in a pre-defined way, I was struggling to stick to my time-frame and plan (in the meantime I had a baby and achieved a second masters in education). Still, my passion, strong motivation and intensive engagement with my study helped to anchor me as a person in this research. I realized that the research made fun and I gained pleasure from undertaking - that is if I got the time and space to work on it undisturbed. My conclusion is that research is conducted to answer a question (Bryman, 2001) but opens up several new questions.

10.9 Alternative Methodologies

First of all, while looking back, I need to mention, that I would have liked to do the research in a team or with a partner, to talk through, plan and undertake the research process; to share the intense moments during data collection and analysis, e.g. when I felt that I was overwelmed by the participants’ stories.

In defining my research strategy I was influenced by Denzin and Lincoln (1998), Creswell (1998; 2003) and Alheit and Dausien (1999; 2001). But, there is a range of alternatives. Denzin and Lincoln distinguish phenomenology, ethnography, case study, grounded theory, biographical method, historical method, action research as some of the major strategies.

In terms of this study, (auto)biography (keeping a diary and/or undertaking a fuller event history analysis, focussing on critical incidents), ethnography (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), feminist research (Fine, 1994; Usher, 1996), and case study would offer a complete ‘fit’ in terms of their definition as an in-depth exploration of the experience. All of them provide depth, context, ‘thick description’ and meaning to the phenomenon under investigation. They furthermore offer a window to learn about a people’s actual experiences of receiving emotional blows and highlights while managing the (family) household and developing ‘tacit knowledge’, because they allow for a more meaningful and rounded analysis of the situation. Ethnography, (which means ideally to live with the research participants for some time - perhaps to undertake a mini-ethnography as investigatory method(ology); with observations of the site and repeated interviews), case study, feminist and (auto)biographical methods allow us to uncover stories from women and men who may not otherwise talk about their (positive and negative) experiences, feelings, thoughts and interpretations of the situations and their pains and sorrows as freely and openly. All mentioned methodologies are powerful tools to address the real life complexities and for connecting and empathizing with the research participants, learning about their personal contexts and circumstances; their lived experience. These approaches ensure to collect fuller detailed life histories and case studies in order to develop individual
stories or portrayals (Goodson and Sykes, 2001) in terms of revealing issues about ‘tacit knowledge’ development.

Furthermore, undertaking a longitudinal study of mature, informal adult learners is helpful, because becoming a parent and carer and developing parenting competencies and knowledge is a lengthy transitional process. This would help to create narratives based on minimally structured interviews to build biographical accounts of a people staying at home, looking after children and relatives while developing ‘tacit knowledge’. From these accounts one can construct narratives.

I believe, that these approaches are an excellent research methodology for addressing: (a) depth, context, and meaning in research; (b) people’s, (especially women’s) experiences and voices; and (c) a socio-economical and -political analysis of marginalized people (see relation of unawareness and educational background or social class). And, that employing these methodologies and methods will continue to question, highlight, challenge and change the constructions of gender, forms of knowledge privileged, power imbalances; including race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, and ability levels (see Dankoski, 2000).

10.10 The Positivist/Non-Positivist Dilemma of my Work

While looking back I realize that I was stunned by the centrality of theoretical knowledge - the primacy of theory over empiricism (Bell, 1999) and of what counts as knowledge. The majority of research projects, literature, methodologies and methods employ positivist approaches and practices; especially in context of research on ‘tacit knowledge’. Knowledge is treated as a strategic, measurable resource where “knowledge, skills, competences and other attributes embodied in individuals that are relevant to economic activity” (OECD, 1998, p.9). And, I found that understanding knowledge as insight, understanding, reflection, wisdom and critique is neglected in favour of skills, competence outcome, information, technique, transferability and flexibility (Usher, 2000).

In view of this, the Tacitkey project has analysed empirically forms of tacit competences people have without being aware of them. The project has dealt with the question which role those competences have with respect to re-entering the labour market. Moreover, it has been analysed in which way CVT curricula refer to tacit competences and if employers appreciate them appropriately. It has turned out that these often ‘tacit’ competencies have indeed a crucial relevance for individuals labour market success. A preliminary conclusion of the project is, that CVT curricula have to be developed in a new way and have to refer much more to the personal prerequisites of the individuals and their equipment with
competences (biat, project abstract, 2002). These conclusions are 'factual' material, valid measures or straightforward manifestations which can be collected by direct questioning.

In view of this I felt, that the Tacitkey project had a tendency for individual learning to disappear in leaving out the particular site and context where the learning took place; thus bracketing off the complexity of the individual learner and ignoring the emotional side of learning experiences. Some identified short-comings of the Tacitkey project are that it does not deal adequately with the individual learner in terms of centring the learner's experiences of the tacit learning process at the centre of investigation and omits the emotional dimension of the learning process; putting not enough emphasis on the subjective process of 'tacit knowledge' development.

The 'Tacitkey' project does not theorize, argue enough and thoroughly pursue the appraisal for a holistic research approach in order to integrate a) the discussed dualism of mind and body and b) the division of the individual and the social in the way I would have liked it to be. This is an essential step in my project - to involve the individual in the research, to ask them to 'participate' and engage; to talk about what they did and how they felt. This then raised such issues as gender, age, social class, status and ethnicity which became important and an issue in research which required a more nuanced and subtle approach. And, furthermore suggested to adopt a life history approach, where people are enabled to reflect upon their own narrative accounts of their lives and as such to unravell the 'tacit' dimension.

Due to my involvement in and work on the Tacitkey project it became apparent that its approach and research questions or problems were partially inadequate as a means of understanding the 'tacit' learning process of the research participants in its full complexity. My approach is more concerned with 'seeing through the eyes of' the research participants and listening to their stories while trying to understand their hopes, fears, dilemmas and 'tacit' learning process. And, to look in more detail into their circumstances, the particular site where the 'tacit' and informal learning took place, the social setting or context they inhabited.

My study is concerned with understanding learning as 'becoming', which refers to how people change over a life-time and generate identity. This view was influenced by Alheit and Dausien's (2002) 'biographical learning', Barnett's (1994) idea on 'life world becoming' (1994) and Ellström's (1997) concept of developmental competence. This differs to the dominant view of seeing learning as acquisition, where people acquire skills and competences needed for a successful working life. More recently Hodkinson with others has started to think about learning as becoming. To understand learning as becoming allows to
focus on the individual and the significance of the context and/or the biographies. People learn lifelong and constantly undergo a process of personal development; and the life history approach turned out to be very effective in terms of bringing out the emotional dimension of the 'tacit' learning experience.

My concern to undertake 'good research' touched such terms as reliability, validity, objectivity, generalizability, and 'statistically significant'. But, as Bassey notes, "the concepts of reliability and validity are vital concepts in surveys and experiments - but not in case study research" (Bassey, 1999: 74). Generalisability, he argues, remains important, in qualitative research, but requires a different formulation, being concerned with what may be or what could be rather than what is.

In view of this, the greatest challenge in doing 'good research' was to understand the methodology options, the interdependable use of the term 'methodology', to define one's own paradigm, and to create a proposal quite at an early state in the PhD seminar, because using and specifying these concepts was new to me. Thus, I started to focus on the positivist and non-positivist dichotomy (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) and studied the contrasting perspectives in epistemology, ontology, and methodology, in particular, according to Denzin and Lincoln (1998). The framework of basic research traditions provided by Creswell's (1998) made the qualitative approach comprehensible and gave me a clearer sense of procedures for actually doing qualitative research. Creswell (1998) identified five traditions: ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, case study, and biography from which I considered the broader issues and the applications of these perspectives in qualitative studies. I concluded that there is no right way to classify and undertake qualitative methodologies and methods and that approaches are necessarily merging and mixing. Thus, I decided to employ a multi-dimensional approach.

My intention to research how people felt while developing 'tacit knowledge' grew while working on the Tacitkey project because I thought (while collecting the empirical data) that the personal and emotional dimension of this learning experience was so far left out. This realization furthermore encouraged the inclusion of personal experiences which seemed enriching to the project and valuable to research. It was also consistent with my beliefs and the fact that my research questions were of real personal interest. Realizing this was a joyful process where developing and outliving my own ideas has given me a great deal of confidence.

Still, sometimes I thought that quantitative research must be 'easier' - less time consuming, less worrying, less complicated - because the researcher has a plan, a pre-determined procedure where one step follows the other; without thinking twice, considering choices,
and without flexibility in the data analysis and drawbacks. It seemed similar to engineering, the field I also enjoy.

But exactly this feeling made me rediscover what it means to be in an academic environment, in paid work and enjoying the freedom of research and discussion and thinking aloud. Whereas other people do not even have the right to say what they think and want and are prosecuted because of their (political) opinion.

10.11 Critical Incidents

One of my conclusions in undertaking research is that (auto)biography is unique in allowing us to view an individual in the context of his or her (whole) life (Bogdan, 1974) and can lead to a fuller understanding of different stages and critical periods in a person's life. It permits us to 'share' an individual's successes as well as failures, wins and losses, hopes, wishes as well as fears in relation to personal circumstances and contexts.

When we look at a person's life-history and learning career, or parts of it - we look at their personal development which can be seen as a dynamic process of change and identity formation. Such personal development is shaped by events; critical or unforgettable (positive and negative) events which impinge upon an individual's own unique walk of life. They are not always smooth trajectories and often involve the reconstruction of social identities over time. In consequence, biography covers important, critical events in the participant's life course; hence, a biographical approach is helpful in understanding how people cope with these incidents and in illuminating these events which have impinged upon the individual and its effects.

My data show that there are significant events marking the life courses of individuals; these are quite often stressful or hurtful (such as becoming a parent, unemployed etc.) and even shocking for the individual (such as loss of partner, divorce etc.). Still, overcoming and coping with these critical incidents and events enhances the development of 'tacit knowledge'.

One can say that critical events contribute significantly to learning and the degree of awareness people have about it. The analyzed and interpreted data indicated the significant influence of the immediate personal situation, (stemming from critical events, such as divorce, unemployment, illness, financial failure, loss of relatives, loss of custody), which crystallized as one core factor in terms influencing people's degree of (un)awareness about one's own 'tacit' knowledge and competency development.
As such, the individual’s mini-biographies embrace subjective experiences and critical events; an impressive example is Richard’s story, where he names and describes the critical event of his parents’ life-threatening illnesses and his involvement in it.

10.12 Conclusions

My research attempted to address three related issues in order to understand more clearly how individuals experience the development of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ in informal unpaid learning situations. The first problem was the issue of how to explicate and evaluate the development of ‘tacit knowledge’ and the other two questions concerned whether there was any evidence of awareness among the research participants about their developed ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ and what effect the degree of awareness had on the degree of confidence.

The research participants’ stories and mini-biographies in this study have constituted meaningful examples for ‘tacit’ and informal learning. The telling of life-stories has helped to enrich, broaden and confirm the developed framework for identifying ‘tacit forms of key competencies’ and to make the ‘tacit’ dimension of the experience explicit and tangible.

This mapping of ‘tacit knowledge’ does not explain everything that goes on in a ‘tacit’ learning process and I do not claim to have uncovered the ‘absolute truth’, but I do claim to have widened the debate surrounding the issue of developing ‘tacit knowledge’ and ‘tacit forms of key competencies’. As a result, I am challenging aspects of previous work in the area of competency development and the area of knowledge management, which is concerned with the definition of knowledge, particularly the distinction between ‘tacit’ and explicit knowledge. Attempts to codify knowledge sometimes seems misplaced because the human side is left out of it. The general idea, that it is the duty of schools, colleges, universities to ‘prepare’ students for the changes in work life, neglects the fact that ‘life’ itself challenges and ‘prepares’ people to adapt to changes and to deal with new situations; to be flexible in dealing with circumstances. The gaining of experience, life-experience, the development of life skills and becoming sophisticated are all attributes, which life offers after going through it’s school.

As a result, this study advocates an approach to ‘tacit knowledge’ development and learning, which relates peoples' lives to the broader context of the role ‘tacit’ and informal learning play in modern lives, connecting the two different spheres of family life and work place including a focus on the individual. In this respect, knowledge(s) are understood as personal, intangible resources which are developed in complex, ‘authentic’ learning processes, including ‘tacit’ and explicit dimensions. If we are to think about the process of lifelong learning, people need to be encouraged to be open to the learning opportunities
that life provides every day and to be enabled to build meaning through becoming aware of their achievements in order to create more emotionally satisfying lives.

The so far neglected biography of the adult learner includes emotional as well as cognitive experiences, which must be valued in the learning process of developing 'tacit knowledge' and 'tacit' skills and competencies. CVT and adult education must overcome the lack of attention to the 'tacit' dimension of learning and knowledge development, including emotions and feelings of adult learners. A major task for CVT and adult education is to provide suitable support for adult learners in becoming aware of their developed 'tacit forms of key competencies' and in building confidence.

This suggests, that it would be useful to focus attention on creating a much more sophisticated understanding of the complexity of informal, unpaid (caring) work. Applying these concerns would open up some new and interesting questions.
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Evans, K., (2000). British Discourses on Key Competences. DGFE Conference Education in Transforming Societies, Georg-August University, Göttingen, Germany, September.


Nightingale, P. (2003). If Nelson and Winter are only half right about tacit knowledge, which half? A Searlean critique of 'codification'. Industrial and Corporate Change, 12, 2, pp.149-183.


Appendix A: Features and Characteristics of the ‘Return-to-Work’ Courses (CVT courses)

A) "Skills Plus" (Basic Employability Training) - Work Based Learning for Adults

A 20 week course 'Skills Plus' was offered to help long term unemployed people find jobs through training. The programme was designed to assist the individual to improve in such areas as communicating, interpersonal skills, motivation and confidence. Training depended on individual needs, but could include: Literacy - Numeracy - Induction to IT - Personal Presentation and Assertiveness Training. Whilst the programme could not and did not offer a guarantee of employment, it aimed at providing training which better equipped people for (re)entering the labour market. Entry requirements were to be 25 years of age or over and having experienced six months of unemployment. If the individual was in need of Literacy or Numeracy skills, then they could enter the course immediately.

B) “Pre-Vocational Training” (PVT course)

A 20 week/ 21 hour course was designed for people who felt 'not ready' to return to full-time employment. The aim of the course was to give people direction and purpose and to enable them to seek employment. Before the course started an interview took place at the college in order to assess suitability and to discuss the programme and any special needs i.e. numeracy/ literacy classes. People on this course received a weekly allowance of £10 extra per week plus travel expenses over the first £4 spent. The course covered such topics as a) personal development, (which included career counselling, further education, psychometric testing/ aptitude testing, updating skills - retraining, computers. b) Job search (including personal profiles - diary - self assessment, interview skills, CV preparation, employers perspective, weekly reviews). c) Assertiveness (including values - ethics, body language, non-verbal communication, personal presentation, attitudes - judgmental - non judgmental behaviour, self awareness, boundaries, goal setting) and d) Job tasters for the period of a month.

C) "Business Administration Course"

This 7 week Information Technology training programme was especially devised for individuals who were having difficulties in finding employment without current IT skills. The course was based on Microsoft Office 97 Professional and included: Word 97 for Windows - an introduction to word processing (topics covered: creating & editing a document, saving & printing, margin & tabulation settings, moving/ copying/ deletion, enhancing text, spell check & thesaurus, file maintenance). Furthermore, an introduction to Access (creating and using simple databases), topics included: introduction to Access & creating a new database, entering and editing text, numbers & formulae, using toolbars, functions, borders and lines, creating & customising simple reports, selecting records & printing. And finally an
introduction to Excell (creating a spreadsheet): entering and editing texts, numbers & simple calculations, using toolbars, using Excell functions, borders & lines, creating and customising simple charts, selecting ranges & printing.

D) "Early Years Care and Education" course (NVQ Level 2)
This 1 year course was open to participants over 25 years of age who had been unemployed for 6 months or more and was led on to an NVQ Level 2. This was a subsidised course for retraining, skills updating and improving employment opportunities. It included 3 hours tutorial support (per week), 10-12 hours of work placement, approximately 2 - 4 hours of self-study, and a preparation for returning to work. The registration fees plus certification costs were £ 80 per course, there were no tuition fees.

E) "Business Administration" course (NVQ Level 2)
This 1 year course was open to participants over 25 years of age who had been unemployed for 6 months or more and led to an NVQ Level 2. This was a subsidised course for retraining, skills updating and improving employment opportunities. It included 6 hours tutorial support (per week), 10-12 hours of work placement, approximately 4 - 6 hours of self-study, and a preparation for returning to work. The registration fees plus certification costs were £ 48.50 per course, but there were no tuition fees.
## Appendix B: Example for Key Skills in Britain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Application of Number</th>
<th>Information Technology</th>
<th>Personal Skills - Working with Others</th>
<th>Personal Skills - Improving own Learning and Performance</th>
<th>Problem Solving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting language</td>
<td>Collect and record data</td>
<td>Prepare information</td>
<td>working to collective goals and responsibilities</td>
<td>proposing and agreeing targets for activities that will improve learning and performance</td>
<td>clarifying the nature of problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using language to present information and ideas</td>
<td>Tackle problems</td>
<td>process information</td>
<td>using given or agreed working methods to fulfil responsibilities</td>
<td>seeking and making use of feedback</td>
<td>identifying appropriate solutions to those problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Interpret and present data</td>
<td>Present information</td>
<td>personal competence</td>
<td>selecting and following activities which will improve their learning and performance</td>
<td>selecting and using established procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>Evaluate the use of information technology</td>
<td>progress of work</td>
<td>identify strengths and weaknesses and agreeing targets</td>
<td>selecting solutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td>features of the working situation</td>
<td>using feedback and following given activities to learn and improve own performance</td>
<td></td>
<td>identifying alternative solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Evans and Hoffmann, 2001)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Confidence</th>
<th>Horizon/Opinion</th>
<th>Usefulness of Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>Wide range, 'family wise'</td>
<td>Seems aware of himself, his position in life</td>
<td>Confident in himself</td>
<td>Seems content, cannot foresee what is going to happen in the future</td>
<td>Skills won't help him. Working and doing a job is totally different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Decent job, doesn't mind in the end</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelica</td>
<td>Managing time, support, organising, budgeting, thinking ahead</td>
<td>Was not aware at that time, nowadays very aware.</td>
<td>Did not build up confidence</td>
<td>&quot;to earn money for the job&quot;</td>
<td>She became more dependable, reliable and less self-centred. Change in personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Good organisational skills, time management, patience</td>
<td>No use of brain while doing the cleaning and washing, doesn't rate them as too important; other things in life, more pressure now for women to return to work than 10 years ago.</td>
<td>Did not gain confidence, &quot;lost the spark&quot;, was not able to change the situation. Believes course and doing 'tempting' will raise confidence.</td>
<td>Can do 'tempting' as secretary, in near future other job. Money issue - you get paid for what you are doing.</td>
<td>Yes! Need of those skills at work, employers recognise this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>Planning, cooking, organising, responsibility, managing, budgeting, multi-tasking</td>
<td>Not to aware of skills, more aware of situation and the wish to return to work. It was hard work</td>
<td>Wish for more emotionally + financially support. Being at home was 'alright' for a period. Not too confident.</td>
<td>Job in nursery (part-time) or go back to hairdressing. Needs the money as well.</td>
<td>Very important for work with children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>Not a lot, because she left school early. Organising, do more than one thing at a time.</td>
<td>'Housewife', more aware of her 'gaining' the skills, remembers how she struggled with being married + mother. Getting used to fulfilling tasks as mum.</td>
<td>Never felt same level, as husband, felt low, low self-worth, wants to gain confidence through course. Was scared to go back to work.</td>
<td>Missed work felt sorry when she left. Wants to go back to work as secretary. Back to 'tempting'. At home no positive feedback, no acknowledgement. Job = money = acknowledgement</td>
<td>Never thought about it. In a way, yes. In office it is useful. When you can do more than one thing at the time.</td>
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Appendix C: Data Summary Sheet 'Research Participants On Course'
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Skills</th>
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<th>Horizon/Opinion</th>
<th>Usefulness of Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carol,</td>
<td>Control over spending of money, B.C., patience, hold back emotions, to</td>
<td>Cannot define situation, but is very aware of personal circumstances.</td>
<td>Proud of and confident in her former job, she called 'light engineer'. Lost</td>
<td>Can work in factory, assembling parts. Wants a decent job, would accept any job.</td>
<td>Important to her to overcome her difficulties. Her understanding of skills = mastering her difficult situation (debts, unemployed, dyslexic, no friends) helped her in sticking to her goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>say 'no' to temptations</td>
<td>doesn't consider housework as 'proper' work.</td>
<td>confidence, did not want to leave flat, loss of socialising. 'Sorted out' life, found confidence in it to go to course.</td>
<td>Wish to work for Ferrari, F1. Become more independent + earn money.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane,</td>
<td>O family life, discipline, 'juggling', 'to fit jobs in', TM,</td>
<td>Aware of 'negative feelings' being at home felt uncomfortable, lonely,</td>
<td>Felt not appreciated, missed work, course in order to (re)gain confidence, get over pc-illiteracy and fear to return to work.</td>
<td>Main aim is to go back to work. 'Would try a lot of things'</td>
<td>'Discipline' is good for office work; also organisational skills helped her and will help in future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>flexibility.</td>
<td>'became vegetable'.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Eunice,</td>
<td>Got her routine = car driving, 'you are doing it without even noticing</td>
<td>Aware of 'struggle and hassle'. (Aware of her capabilities). She 'knows' she will cope with life.</td>
<td>Confident in herself. (Landlady in a pub). Says what she thinks, 'realistic', little bit bitter and aggressive.</td>
<td>Hasn't really thought about her possibilities. She has got her coffee shop. Can 'easily spend all day doing nothing'. Would like to be prime minister and change a lot of things. Women will always be the one who bears the children, therefore their responsibility. Natural thing.</td>
<td>Are in no way of use. It is far more important to get IT skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>or even paying attention to it. Proper cooking. Has the 'sense' to 'know' what the children are doing without watching them. Organisational skills got worse.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gena,</td>
<td>Responsibility, TM, independence, &quot;Don't know really&quot;, patience, more organised, nursing. socialising with other mums.</td>
<td>Aware of her future, what to do later in life. Situation is alright for the moment. Being mother and housewife is achievement. Satisfaction if house is tidy and clean.</td>
<td>Misses emotional support, sounds 'happy', states to be happy. Lost confidence while being stuck at home. Course helps her building up confidence.</td>
<td>Thinks about her future life, what to do. First step finishing the course, afterwards? Childminder, nursery or … Interest in social work.</td>
<td>Yes, for work with children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23, WC.</td>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jane1, 40</td>
<td>C, O, organising of household, responsibility, B, patience, tolerance, understanding.</td>
<td>&quot;I don't look at them as being skills.&quot; Being mother and housewife is a very respective job.</td>
<td>Sounds confident in herself. Combines course + 2 days working (childminding).</td>
<td>Hasn't decided yet what to do after course. &quot;Wait what comes up.&quot; After finishing course she &quot;can do everything that has to do with children.&quot;</td>
<td>Yes, helped her in being a childminder. Will help after course to go in this direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeanette, 40</td>
<td>Creative skills, arts, crafts with the child, tolerance, patience, flexibility, less self-centred, more caring for other people, socialising</td>
<td>Tried to combine household + child. Aware always missing something after stopping working. Household doesn't seem to be enough. (not proper work). Does therefore more in the house in order to compensate that feeling.</td>
<td>Sounds happy, content, enjoys life. Missed being recognised for achievements. Feels better now doing the course, believes she has more status now than being solely mum.</td>
<td>Would like to be Vet, (not the right A-levels). Plans to go down teaching route, but hasn't the right qualifications for teaching. Trains to be nursery teacher.</td>
<td>Yes, everything she learned from being a mum is of any use for future job as nursery teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikki, 30, WC</td>
<td>B, TM, teaching, deal with stress, flexibility, house safety, world-wise, hide emotions.</td>
<td>&quot;I was not a housewife&quot; - hates expression. &quot;I am a mother.&quot; Aware of her problems and situation. Wants to 'prove' that 'she is normal' and 'worthy'. 'There is no reward for being a mother.&quot;</td>
<td>She has a plan. (Wants her children back.) She seems to be confident in her future, once she's got a job and finished the course. Disappointed from life + system, wants to fight back.</td>
<td>Wants a proper job, earn enough money. Would like to lead different life style now. Reason for course: to get education + job. Wants her children back. 'Prove' that she can look after them.</td>
<td>Not with regard to her future job. But with regard to personality (yes)!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel, 34</td>
<td>O, &quot;keeping one step ahead&quot;, communication, B, patience, C, negotiating, &quot;sense' how the children are&quot;, hide emotions.</td>
<td>Aware of her skills + circumstances, aware of this being a period, &quot;Catch22&quot;, aware of all the things she does. Running the family = running your own company. She: &quot;I am a lawyer, not a housewife.&quot;</td>
<td>Confident in herself. It has to become easier when the children are older.</td>
<td>Course helps to get prepared to go back to work, &quot;enter the real world again.&quot; &quot;There has to be a point in the future when you take your life back into your hands.&quot; Go back to law (studies), barrister. Solicitor first.</td>
<td>O skills. Yes, of course.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix C: Data Summary Sheet 'Research Participants On Course'
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richard, 55</td>
<td>C, shopping expert, B.O, routine, patience, hide emotions, memory skills, writing</td>
<td>Developed a routine. Does not 'see' his achievements, is more aware of the condition of his parents. Important what he did for his parents. No awareness. &quot;A professional could have done a better job.&quot;</td>
<td>Does not sound confident in his skills and achievements during interview.</td>
<td>Aim to get some pc qualifications, hopefully get a job. Get a proper job (regular, interesting)</td>
<td>Some of them - probably. &quot;No - I cannot really tell.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rina, 40</td>
<td>MT, P, patience, listening, supervising + managing of husband, communication, domain specific, 'false' generic skills.</td>
<td>Yes, but still feeling guilty. And 'no' &quot;always chasing something and not reaching it.&quot; &quot;No time to reflect.&quot;</td>
<td>Religion (Muslim) is a great help. Confident on a day to day basis. Yes/No. Self doubts about what she achieves. Gains confidence from marriage.</td>
<td>Would like to go back to teaching. Waits and sees what comes up.</td>
<td>Yes, because of change in personality since being mother and wife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally, 46, WC</td>
<td>C, sewing, &quot;a bit of a nurse, really&quot;.</td>
<td>&quot;I wasn't thinking of myself&quot; &quot;I wasn't thinking of the outside world.&quot; Not aware. Housewife</td>
<td>&quot;I wasn't able to stand on my own feet.&quot; Never felt capable of going back to work. No self-confidence, no self-esteem. Was scared to go on course. &quot;I was so lacking in my confidence as I had no qualifications...&quot;</td>
<td>On course to build up IT skills, would like to start her own business.</td>
<td>Yes, perhaps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam, 36</td>
<td>M, delegating tasks, cope with stress, rely on herself, TM, become ergonomic, MT, IT skills, routine.</td>
<td>Aware of struggle to become housewife or housemom. Aware of this situation being temporary. Aware of faults in her 'behaviour towards kids'.</td>
<td>Not so confident as single parent, now more aware and confident.</td>
<td>Course in order to get a better job once rejoins workforce. Teacher/ part-time teacher.</td>
<td>She argues that the time at home is a benefit for job. Yes, MT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy, 41</td>
<td>O.P, working towards schedules, 'being there', TM</td>
<td>Aware of what she did, carried out housework, children and work for extra money.</td>
<td>Yes/no. Self-confidence down after divorce.</td>
<td>&quot;I have to find a job!&quot; Go back to full-time employment because of divorce. Doesn't know which direction. &quot;Never had a true vocational dream.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Everything I achieved for the family is not important.&quot; You need IT skills for the job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Horizon/Opinion</td>
<td>Usefulness of Skills</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amjad</td>
<td>Smart-Shopping, Indian food, Learned while studying in Russia</td>
<td>Of being unemployed, not happy in current situation. Everybody has to do these things/ tasks, learning them was hard.</td>
<td>(Re)gained through course. Felt out of touch with other people, lost communication, socialising skills.</td>
<td>Dream job is to work in a travel agency. Currently not happy.</td>
<td>Skills are not useful for &quot;going for a job&quot;, applying for a job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David, 39</td>
<td>Social + practical skills Instinct to learn, trial &amp; error</td>
<td>Ware of his situation, aware of his change, divorce, taking care/ responsibility for the children. Aware of what he wants to do. Doesn't want to fail the children. Aware of his change</td>
<td>Ups and downs, better now, since he made the decision to split up, get in charge. Slowly rebuilding his life.</td>
<td>His responsibility, he had to work all his life. Would like to move out of parent’s house, get own place. Wants to go to uni, degree in engineering.</td>
<td>Knows that skills are not recognised at work. What he achieved at home was not recognised at work, in the end left work to sort out kids + life. Experience, (less skills) was useful for his personality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane, 47</td>
<td>Be prepared for every eventuality, like a general in the war! Intuition, instinct, learn from mistakes. Looked after 6 kids.</td>
<td>Aware of what she is doing, backbone of the family. &quot;Always worked&quot;, supported family financially.</td>
<td>Knew she could do typing, always did, found job during course. Confident in general, great strength in personality.</td>
<td>Dream job: more responsibility in her job, and on full time basis.</td>
<td>Skills help you to keep your head down in the office when there are bad vibes in the air, to get on with your work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo, 46</td>
<td>Less single-minded now, Self taught 'sink or swim'</td>
<td>Aware of her situation, made a clear decision to have another child and stop working then. Draws a line between work at home/mother and at work, not compatible. Different worlds.</td>
<td>Confident and happy in herself. 2nd marriage, child was conscious decision at 39.</td>
<td>Never wanted to get back to work, changed mind when child was 5. Saw herself as housewife and mother. Dream job: psychiatrist.</td>
<td>Not useful at all. Broadened her outlook. Was always organised, active in a lot of voluntary community / church work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix D: Data Summary Sheet ‘Research Participants Returned to Work’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Confidence</th>
<th>Horizon/Opinion</th>
<th>Usefulness of skills</th>
<th>Jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kate,</td>
<td>Flexibility, multitasking, Take things as they come</td>
<td>Leads a 'different' life now, Would never return to being full time mum again. Was always organised.</td>
<td>Confident and conscious decision to have children, at 34 1st child. To financially support the family feels good.</td>
<td>Return to work asap!</td>
<td>Not useful, Became more aware of life.</td>
<td>Office clerk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Office clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandy</td>
<td>You become somebody else, Different person instinct</td>
<td>Not very important, seemed natural, Skills, interest made her change her job/ career.</td>
<td>Because of course feeling very confident and happy. Enjoyed the course.</td>
<td>Change from being a secretary to Childminding, because of discovery of skills and interest.</td>
<td>Yes, For working in this field and as it changed her ambition to working with children.</td>
<td>Secretary ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>Being able top cope with the unusual, being more assertive, learned it in aid.</td>
<td>Support of husband who was climbing the ladder, fulfilled her role as housewife and mother.</td>
<td>Remembers loneliness. Good and bad days, moved on in jobs, proud of what she achieved. Gained confidence from work.</td>
<td>Family came always first. Children out of the house, freedom again. Enjoys life, loves teaching.</td>
<td>Yes, Flexibility was very useful for jobs. Family is 'university of life'.</td>
<td>Nanny ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marian</td>
<td>Became organised, skills seem to be tied together, not possible to separate them, single them out. 'Life skills'.</td>
<td>Complete change of / in life, learned skills while at college, on her own. Values being out of the house, even for 1 day.</td>
<td>Change in job build up confidence, change in work situation after children were born, lucky, as husband set up own company. Help of own mum.</td>
<td>Felt like 'older' mum: 30. No full time employment, letting the kids down, happy about change in job and lucky circumstances. Loves bookkeeping + figures.</td>
<td>Don't really know, She is an unorganised person at home, but not in bookkeeping. Took the chance to think about and manage change in career after having the kids.</td>
<td>Design ... Bookkeeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Horizon/Opinion</td>
<td>Usefulness of skills</td>
<td>Jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melvy</td>
<td>Very much job related, thicker skin, stand up for yourself,</td>
<td>Learned on the job, 'belongs' to the trade, defines himself in that way, 'matured' with the job.</td>
<td>Very confident, even while unemployed, learned 'everything there is in the trade, '.</td>
<td>Satisfaction from the job. Will stay in the same job forever, would like to become self-employed, own company.</td>
<td>No, not at all.</td>
<td>Plumber ... Plumber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuala 35</td>
<td>General housekeeping skills, by practising them. She describes herself as a very organised and tidy person,</td>
<td>Aware of what there is to do in the house + social fam. Life Happy and content; after 2nd child wish to return to work</td>
<td>Confident in herself. Her decision to stay at home and become housewife after the marriage.</td>
<td>Same job, but full time employment asap. Limited period being at home. Help from her mum.</td>
<td>Not really</td>
<td>Secretary ... Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russel 43</td>
<td>Loves his former field of work, used time to find out more about himself, guitar skills improved, wrote a 'novel'.</td>
<td>Aware of his age and job opportunities, still struggles to understand why he was made redundant. Remembers loneliness</td>
<td>Not too confident, feels too old, too specialised, but the course helped in building up confidence.</td>
<td>Course reminded him how it is to meet other people, and to get in touch with outside world. Would like a IT full time job, enough money to live on.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Carthrop ... Charity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuart 37</td>
<td>Are naturally build into him, big family, 7 siblings, always had to help.</td>
<td>Angry with his 'ex', he knows what he can do, streetwise, realistic, always something to do, some 'business', odd jobs, to make a bit of money</td>
<td>Very confident,</td>
<td>Dreams about a job at a marina, looking after the boats and yachts. Would like a proper full time job, decent money, no hassle,</td>
<td>No, not helping you. You need proper qualifications and certificates</td>
<td>Replenishe ... Electronics ... Work in shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thuy 32</td>
<td>More responsible, Skills from being in children's home, becoming independent</td>
<td>Knows about her factory jobs, and liked them, can still do the assembling of parts by hand. Aware of situation, dyslexic</td>
<td>Not too confident, hates being unemployed and useless so to speak...</td>
<td>Would like proper IT job, interested in computers, would like to go on English course</td>
<td>Doesn't know No, doesn't think so. Doesn't help you to get a job, the job you want.</td>
<td>Childcare ... Work in shop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix D: Data Summary Sheet 'Research Participants Returned to Work'
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Confidence</th>
<th>Horizon/Opinion</th>
<th>Usefulness of skills</th>
<th>Jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tracy, 37</td>
<td>Instinct, a lot of things you simply know and do. By doing it.</td>
<td>Things had to be done, no time to think about it. Aware of her situation, fighting depression, kids hyperactive</td>
<td>Ups and downs, depending on the day...</td>
<td>Needs her routine, so do children, a stable, well paid job.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Good for her work, and the course exam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zainal, 24</td>
<td>Learned because of being married, before his mum did everything.</td>
<td>Doesn’t see them as very important, as he shares with wife the tasks and some of them are fun together.</td>
<td>Confident in himself, struggles sometimes because his job is not a very good one, and he is being bossed around.</td>
<td>Wants to get a proper job, more money, hates having not enough money to take his wife out.</td>
<td>Not too important, Important for relationship to work out.</td>
<td>Degree chemistry ... work at petrol station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ø 37,08 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow = Here is a good example for a successful change into a new occupational field, always accompanied with a serious re-training course.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 = not useful, 5 = useful, 1 = don’t really know, 1 = not too important, 1 = not useful for getting a job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: The descriptive categories: the research participants’ development of ‘tacit forms of key competencies’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisational</td>
<td>A lot of organising, making sure that things are going to be done, knowing that you have to be somewhere. Organising days and weeks. I learned how to organise a family life, you cannot cope without organising the days. Organising my household, general organising skills, I am far more organised now, if I left it just for a day - it would be a nightmare. It is always a nightmare if I am sick or ill, because everything, every routine comes to a halt. And it is chaos. I had to learn how to organise my day, develop a routine, like always getting up at 7:00 am, and I still get up at 7:00 am, I am so used to it now. I make sure that enough and the right food is in, the whole range of daily life I am organising. I organised our spare-time, the holidays, the evenings out, the babysitter etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine</td>
<td>I have to have more of a routine for the children. I got my routine, it is similar to car driving, you are doing it without even noticing or paying attention to it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-planning</td>
<td>Now I am pre-planning. I think it is also keeping one step ahead, keeping ahead of it is the key to organising things. Things like “Mufti-day” and “dress-up day”, you have to keep in mind and prepare for the children. Thinking ahead. I had to plan what the family might need for the week/weekend, I had therefore to plan what to shop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Planning the day more now. Knowing about schedules and to plan for the days to come. I learned to do things at a certain time (you have to feed the babies, otherwise it’s a disaster). Planning for meals, things I need to buy, at least one week in advance. Plan activities and parties. Working towards schedules, You learn to write ‘101 lists’ with all the things on it that needs to be done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Management</td>
<td>Time management, the children have to be at the school at a certain time and things like this. Keeping to time patterns, meeting deadlines. Time and effort skills are greatly improved, e.g. ergonomics. When I am pressed for time, I tend to find the quickest and most effective way route to achieve goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgeting</td>
<td>I am planning how to spend the money more. I have definitely learned to save up money and to control the spending of my money. What comes first: paying the bills or spending it on something silly. I learned how to live economically. Budgeting, not spending everything in one go. But also to have a financial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
overview, like when to pay the bills etc, knowing what is in the account. The money issue is huge; it is very hard to budget when you have just a little amount.
You learn to shop economically, buy cheap things.
I learned to manage with a small amount of money, 'budgeting'.
I was responsible for the household accounts I had to pay the bills.

Managing

I have learned to manage a house much more effectively in terms of keeping it clean, keeping the inhabitants fed, keeping it tidy enough to work or to play in.
I am delegating and allocating tasks now; especially for my husband now. He still needs a shopping list otherwise he wouldn't know what to shop.

Understanding

You need to understand the child's needs. Think more in the way a child would think, try to understand... I learned to understand the steps in the child's development

Responsibility

I know that I will do the things I have to do.
I became much more responsible, but I also had many more responsibilities.
I learned to stick to appointments and to make appointments.
Being “spacially” aware where the children are. You sort of “feel” where they are - it is a tiny alarm bell, the same that goes off when one of them is getting sick - you realise that something is different or wrong.

Life-experience

Learn to be ‘world wise’.
You gain real life experience
It makes you more aware of life, more than anything else.
I am more ‘family wise’. It’s basically bringing the children up, and being a good parent.

Unselfishness/
Altruistic

I am less selfish, you have to drop your interests; they become second.
I learned to put my interests behind, as there was no way of thinking of myself. To do things for myself.
To accept that the children’s development and growth/well-being comes first
You always had to “take a backward seat.
You automatically learn to put the children first, in a way you sacrifice yourself.
And you don’t worry about the way you look, bad hair do etc. Previously important things become irrelevant or unimportant.
Simply ‘being there’ for the children and for the family, always available.

Multi-tasking

Multi-tasking, especially in the morning.
I think women learn to do more than one thing at a time.
I learned to “juggle” with everyday task and how to “fit jobs in”, like doing the ironing when there seemed to be a little spare time.
You develop more hands being a mum.
Managing with more than one demand at a time.
I am far more flexible; you can start something and suddenly something happens so that you have to change your plans, or simply what you are doing.
I learned to do 10 things at the same time. Especially when I was cooking.
I can mow watch television while the children are fighting; I ignore them; but I get the drift of what’s going on across the room. You develop
this skill, as you are never alone.

**Patience**
You learn to be patient,
I had to learn to become very patient, especially with my father, as he was an alcoholic, right until his death.

**Hide emotions**
To hold back my emotions.
I learned not to show any emotions and I learned to control them. I simply went away when my father was 'out of his mind' and started shouting and being rude.
I learned to "put a face on". To show a happy face for the children, hiding my emotions.
You learn to control emotions, something like 'anger management'.

**Deal with stress**
I have learned to cope with stress reasonably well, if I am not tired. Organising "time out" for myself.

**Communication**
Talking skills and communication skills I developed a lot with the children and with friends or with other parents at the school.

I have learned to give excuses to people.
You learn the art of communication (with my husband; cool down if I feel like shouting, and still get the same message across).

My daughter was very difficult and I tried to get around arguments, I had to get round it, and you always found a way of doing so. It was like trying a different way, to be flexible and always finding a solution.

**Listening**
Listening - do you - don't you?
I became a good listener.
You learn to comfort and listen

**Independence**
I learned to rely only on myself, not to rely on anybody else.
I am used to fending for the children and myself and not to relying on others for help. This is a major achievement for me, as I grew up with three domestic helpers to do all the housework, and when I was teaching in Hong Kong, I had a domestic helper to do the housework and care for my babies whilst I worked. I couldn’t lift an iron before, and now I am very good at ironing. My domestic helper would be very proud of me.

**Discipline**
I learned discipline; you have to get things done, this helped me in my office job very much.
I learned to say "NO" to temptations
I learned to negotiate - with the children and with my partner.

**Cooking**
Cooking, before it was mainly 'take aways'.
I learned to cook "cheap" meals.
Cook simple, cheap meals.
I did lots and lots of proper cooking....
I learned the cooking from my mum, she was an excellent cook. My mum told me what to shop for and how to prepare a meal and she also showed me how to do it. And so cooking became one of my hobbies.
I improved my cooking.

**Others:**

Skills in supporting/encouraging. At that time my husband was "climbing the ladder", and he needed support and encouragement from me. Interview skills, as I was interviewing all the baby sitters and people who applied for the cleaning/childcare jobs.

I improved my memory skills, as writing was always a problem with me, being dyslexic.

Dealing and being in charge of people,

I am more caring about other people now.

Prioritising

You learn that time is precious

Making sure that the children are clean, fed and clothed.

Giving explanations to the children.

I was also the one who gave them the disciplinary bit, my husband has more patience.

Not to listen, but to pretend to listen and simply nod at the right key

You learn to 'recycle' things, heat up food/ prepare a meal with leftovers etc.

Domain specific skills, not generic ones, the underlying skills seem generic, but they are not. Knowledge of this subject area is important.

Adaptability, to adapt to situation; you learn to adapt.

Tolerance

Sewing

Maintenance

Gardening

Decorating

Driving skills

I also acquired quiet good telephone skills, as I preferred to arrange things over the phone instead of writing a letter

I learned to write letters and applications for the Job Centre with the help of my neighbour.

I learned to write in and use a diary, as I couldn't keep all the appointments of my parents and myself in my mind.

Typing, and in dealing with the paperwork, as I had to make sure that everything was paid. I wrote letters whenever it was necessary, e.g. to certain (insurance) companies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>School leaving age</th>
<th>School Certif.</th>
<th>Initial qualification</th>
<th>Job after school</th>
<th>Job/ that was trained for</th>
<th>Later/ recent job or qualification</th>
<th>Duration of break</th>
<th>Reason for break</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrew WC</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Skills Plus</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Air force (3 yrs)</td>
<td>Transport ever since</td>
<td>Lorry driver</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>Wife became ill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelica MC</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>IT Skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>A-levels</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Staff nurse</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching, counselling</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Looking after children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara LMC</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Skills Plus</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Office junior - climbed ofice ladder from office junior to secretary</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Sales assistant, cashier, dinner lady)</td>
<td>'86-'89</td>
<td>Looking after children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hairdresser apprentice</td>
<td>Hairdresser for 13 yrs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'92-'94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>'08/99-'</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carla WC</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Child care</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Hairdresser for 13 yrs</td>
<td>Hairdresser</td>
<td>NVQ2 childcare</td>
<td>94-'99</td>
<td>Looking after children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol WC</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>PVT</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
<td>YTS technical orientated</td>
<td>Work in factory for 10 yr, 4 on benefits</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>95-'99</td>
<td>Made redundant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol 1 MC</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>IT-Skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Work in insurance company + 'temping'</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>(secretary)</td>
<td>78-'84</td>
<td>Look after children, house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'91-'99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane MC</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>IT-Skills</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Typist Feels too young to retire</td>
<td></td>
<td>(charity, secretary)</td>
<td>66-'78</td>
<td>Looking after children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix F: Social Structure of the Participants in the Group 'On Course'
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>School leaving age</th>
<th>School Certif.</th>
<th>Initial qualification</th>
<th>Job after school</th>
<th>Job/ that was trained for</th>
<th>Later/ recent job or qualification</th>
<th>Duration of break</th>
<th>Reason for break</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eunice UWC</td>
<td>46 divorced</td>
<td>Busin. Admin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ass. instructor horse riding</td>
<td>Ass. instructor in horse riding</td>
<td>Ass. instructor in horse riding</td>
<td>Landlady, back to horses, coffee shop</td>
<td>'72-'78</td>
<td>Looking after children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gena WC</td>
<td>23 single</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>From school to work</td>
<td>Shop assistant</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(pharmacy assist., childminder)</td>
<td>'93-'99</td>
<td>Looking after children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane 1 WC</td>
<td>40 divorced</td>
<td>Child care</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>From school to work</td>
<td>Catering services</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(pharmacy assist., childminder)</td>
<td>'86-'90</td>
<td>Looking after children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeanette MC</td>
<td>39 married</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>A-level</td>
<td>Unfinished university degree</td>
<td>Building society (for 14 years)</td>
<td>(Work for building society)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>'94-'99</td>
<td>Looking after child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikki WC</td>
<td>30 single</td>
<td>PVT</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No memory of previous work (accident)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Work in zoo</td>
<td>'90-'99</td>
<td>Looking after children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel MC</td>
<td>34 married</td>
<td>IT-Skills</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>A-level</td>
<td>Business school</td>
<td>Recruitment firm translation, more jobs</td>
<td>Degree in law</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>'95-'99</td>
<td>Looking after children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard WC</td>
<td>55 single</td>
<td>PVT</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Work in shipping firm 12 yrs charity, clerical</td>
<td>(work in main office of charity)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>'90-'99</td>
<td>Carer of his parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rina MC, Malay.</td>
<td>40 married</td>
<td>IT-Skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>A-level</td>
<td>Degree in civil engineering</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Masters, lecturer</td>
<td>'87-'89</td>
<td>Looking after children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Children</th>
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<th>Later/recent job or qualification</th>
<th>Duration of break</th>
<th>Reason for break</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Nanny</td>
<td>Nanny</td>
<td>(nanny, mostly cleaning jobs afterwards)</td>
<td>Nanny</td>
<td>1974-1995</td>
<td>Looking after children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Plus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(cashier, cleaner, chambermaid)</td>
<td></td>
<td>21 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>IT -</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>A-level</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>Looking after children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Busin.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>Life insurance company</td>
<td>(nursery supervisor, classroom assistant)</td>
<td>1985-1989</td>
<td>Looking after children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Admin.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix F: Social Structure of the Participants in the Group 'On Course'
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Current job</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>School leaving age</th>
<th>School leaving Certificate</th>
<th>Duration Break</th>
<th>Reason for break</th>
<th>Job after school</th>
<th>Job that was trained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amjad</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Shop assistant IT course</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>A-levels</td>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>Made redundant</td>
<td>Straight to university</td>
<td>Degree in Geology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banglad., m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Machinist IT course</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>1998-1999 (1)</td>
<td>Divorce, child care</td>
<td>Machinist</td>
<td>TOPS course machining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WC d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Word processor operator NVQ Busi</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>1986-1999 (13)</td>
<td>Family, work from home</td>
<td>Clerk/ Typist</td>
<td>NVQ2 Business administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMC m</td>
<td></td>
<td>Admin.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Dinner Lady Basic employability</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>1976-1982 1992</td>
<td>Family reasons Childcare</td>
<td>Hairdressing</td>
<td>Hairdressing (College 2 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMC rm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Civil Servant Word processing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>1994-1995 1998</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>Office work Clerk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandy</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Childcare NVQ Childcare</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>A-levels</td>
<td>1993-1998 (5)</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Secretarial course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Teacher Nursing course</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>A-levels</td>
<td>1971-1981 (10)</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>Nanny</td>
<td>Nurse (3 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marian</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Bookkeeper IT course</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Sixth form</td>
<td>1991-1991, 6m</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>Office work</td>
<td>Art college (BA 3 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1995-1995</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix G: Social Structure of the Participants in the Group 'Returned-to-Work'
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Current job</th>
<th>Age left School</th>
<th>School leaving Certificate</th>
<th>Duration Break</th>
<th>Reasons for break</th>
<th>Job after school</th>
<th>Job that was trained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melvin WC s</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Plumber FT Refresher course gasfitting, IT course</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>CSE GCSE</td>
<td>04/99 - 02/00</td>
<td>Redundancy</td>
<td>Painter and decorator Plumber</td>
<td>Plumber (1 year CITB course)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuala MC m</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Secretary PT IT course</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>A-levels</td>
<td>1987-1993 (6)</td>
<td>Marriage, child care</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Secretarial college (1 year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russel MC s</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Work for a charity PT IT course FT</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>A-levels</td>
<td>1992-1994 1997-1999</td>
<td>Redundancy</td>
<td>work as a cartographer</td>
<td>Cartographer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuart WC d</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>FT Work in computer shop IT course</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1998-1999 (1)</td>
<td>Change of custody Childcare</td>
<td>Factory, plastic coating</td>
<td>Electronics (City &amp; Guild)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thuy WC Chinese s</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Work in shop PT PVT course</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1994-1999 (5)</td>
<td>Pregnant, single parent</td>
<td>Childcare (YTS)</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy UWC m</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Special needs teacher PT NVQ Childcare</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1992-1997</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>Work in sandwich bar</td>
<td>NVQ level 2 Childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zainal MC Banglad., m</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Work at petrol station FT IT course</td>
<td>A-levels</td>
<td>08/99-02/00</td>
<td>Marriage Moving town</td>
<td>Straight to university</td>
<td>Degree in chemistry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix G: Social Structure of the Participants in the Group 'Returned-to-Work'