

**Professional learning: teachers' narratives of experience**  
**It is what you do and the way that you do it...**

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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## Abstract

Professional learning, commonly referred to in policy and practice as continuing professional development, is presented to teachers as both a requirement and an entitlement in current education policy (Gewirtz, 2002; Ball, 2003). This work explores the ways in which professional learning is experienced by three teachers, and the meanings they attribute to those experiences. The study adopts a narrative approach to these accounts (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin and Connelly, 1996; 1998; 2004) and is underpinned by the recognition of the complexity in the interplay between the individual teacher and their social context specifically focusing on “the relationship between the state, the ideologies of professionalism, and lived interiority” (Hey and Bradford, 2004: 693).

The methodology was developed to overcome the problem of policy and aspects of practice that fail to focus on the effective involvement and engagement of teachers in professional learning: the teachers have become “missing persons” (Evans, 1999: i). The research process placed the meaning made by the teachers of their past experiences, and the way they understood them in the present, at the centre of the research (Kelchtermans, 2009; MacLure, 1993). Data were collected as part of a collaborative process with teachers who shared and analysed their narratives of professional learning through a series of research conversations. The teachers gave accounts of the people and incidents that they understood to be significant in influencing their professional learning, in relation to their expectations of themselves and of professionals and people more generally. In doing so they drew on both professional and personal contexts (Makopoulou and Armour, 2011). There were significant challenges in relation to ethics, analysis and representation.

This study illustrates the complexity and contingency of teachers’ professional learning through their understanding of themselves and their

interaction with, and response to, significant people and incidents (Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe, 1994). Their “stories to live by” (Clandinin and Connelly, 1998: 149) illuminate the ways in which teachers explain the complexities and contingencies underpinning their experiences of professional learning. The data illustrate the crucial role that context plays in understanding professional learning (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 27) and the challenges teachers face in balancing their roles as policy subjects and policy actors (Ball, Maguire, Braun and Hoskins, 2011a and b).

This work makes a unique contribution to the field of professional learning by using the detailed individual cases of each teacher to illustrate general concerns for the development of effective policy and practice. It also contributes to the methodological debates around the use of narratives as a means of understanding the “human condition” (Arendt, 1958). The data challenge us to consider the possibilities that narrative accounts and analyses offer for the generation of knowledge in this area with implications for both teachers and other professionals, and policy and practice.

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## List of Abbreviations

afPE	Association for Physical Education
BFES	British Forces Education Service
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DCMS	Department for Culture Media and Sport
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DES	Department for Education and Science
DFE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
GTCE	General Teaching Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HoD	Head of Department
INSET	In-Service Education for Teachers
ISA	Ideological State Apparatus
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
NQT	Newly Qualified Teachers
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PE	Physical Education
PESSCL	Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links
PESSYP	Physical Education and Sport Strategy for Young People
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
SSCo	School Sports Coordinator
TDA	Training and Development Agency for Schools
TPS	Totally Pedagogised Society
TTA	Teacher Training Agency

# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Education in the United Kingdom currently operates within a policy climate of neoliberalism where market forces underpin activity resulting in an “emphasis on measured outputs: on strategic planning, performance indicators, quality assurance measures” (Olssen and Peters, 2005: 313). In this climate teachers are required to take responsibility for themselves and this includes their ‘continuing professional development’ (CPD).

Kelchtermans (2004) defined professional development as:

“...a learning process, resulting from the meaningful interaction between the teacher and their professional context. This interaction eventually leads to changes in a teacher’s professional practice” (2004: 217).

In policy terms CPD is presented to teachers as both a requirement and an entitlement (Gewirtz, 2002; Ball, 2003; Department for Education (DFE), 2010). Over the years there has been much discussion about the most effective approaches to engaging professionals in CPD and improving the quality of it to enhance pupil outcome and school improvement (Attard and Armour, 2006; Keay, 2006; Hargreaves, 2007; General Teaching Council for England (GTCE), 2009; Armour, 2009; Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), 2008a and b; Makopoulou and Armour, 2011). The work so far has predominantly centred around models for effective delivery of CPD.

In 2007, Hargreaves gave a paper at a Teachers’ TV Conference where he suggested that there was a greater value in particular structures which would facilitate more effective CPD than others: he focussed on the movement away from occasional courses, and the expert-to-novice approach in favour of a completely school-based, peer-to-peer approach. One factor that Hargreaves had not taken account of in these

suggestions, given that people learn in different ways, was the critical importance of the individual teacher and their particular needs. This omission was also evident in Government policy and in much of the research. Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe (1994) acknowledged the impact of critical or distinctive incidents and people on teachers' professional practice during their career. If individual needs and the responses of the individual to CPD opportunities are recognised as important (Day, Kington, Stobart, and Sammons, 2006; Dowling-Naess, 2001) then it is vital that a range of different approaches to CPD are available because what works for one may not work for another (Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe, 1994). Although Hargreaves was encouraging that CPD be looked at differently, his suggestions still took a narrow view of CPD in that he viewed some types of organisation and practice as better than others. This proposed the replacement of some types of CPD with others, rather than broadening the potential opportunities that could be available to teachers.

At the time, CPD had become increasingly synonymous with externally organised courses and short school based episodes (Armour, 2011). However, some research in the area was starting to indicate that, in structuring CPD, it was inappropriate to work with a 'one size fits all' approach. Examples of this came in work such as that by Makopoulou (2009) who suggested that greater knowledge of the role of the individual was key in improving our understanding (see also Makopoulou and Armour, 2011).

At the time I started this research, I was concerned with looking at the teachers' individual needs and their engagement (Day *et al.*, 2006; Dowling-Næss, 2001). I understood from my own experiences that the situation was complex.

## 1.2 Background to the Study

The motivation for the study came from my own observations of teachers during four years of my own Initial Teacher Education (ITE), the 11 years I worked in English state school secondary education teaching physical education and science amongst other things, and then the move into my current role as a Teacher Educator (TE). Whilst I was working in school I had been led and managed, as well as undertaken leadership and management roles myself. During my career I had been fascinated by the range of responses from colleagues and student teachers at different stages in their careers to the education policy climate in which we/they were working. Although CPD was a requirement in terms of the expectations placed upon teachers and an entitlement that teachers could expect to be supported with, there was a very narrow view taken of what it actually constituted and what happened in practice. In some cases the translation of the policy requirements resulted in a culture of task completion rather than any genuine learning to support the teacher. However in other cases the opposite was true. Some responses were very positive, some were very negative, and I came to recognise that this multiplicity arose from the complexity in the interplay between the individual teacher and their social context. The circumstances that facilitated the individual response were contingent on the context that each person was in.

My observations indicated that there was a need to consider this in more detail. Other people echoed this such as a head teacher in an 'outstanding' primary school who said "we need to have more strategic conversations in our schools about what works and has the greatest impact". She encouraged the move away from "simply accepting CPD as something that has to be done to questioning its value, purpose and our own learning" (Keeble, 2009: 34).

As I started to develop the idea for this research I was increasingly unhappy with the use of the term CPD as it carried policy and

institutional connotations that were unhelpful. CPD seemed to be understood very narrowly in practice terms as attendance at courses or school based expert led sessions. It was also something that the teacher had to provide evidence for on an annual basis as part of appraisal/performance management processes. The teacher's ongoing effectiveness was recognised in their ability to meet agreed targets and evidence the CPD activities that they had undertaken which supported this. This thesis started from the premise that, rather than being a process that supported meaningful learning, the CPD that teachers were experiencing appeared to be about policy, performativity, audit, and accountability which resulted in the ticking of boxes (Goepel, 2012). On the basis of this, I situated the development of this research in relation to three key themes: policy, professionalism and identity.

In addition to thinking about the teacher's needs and engagement with CPD, I also wanted to understand more about the activities that they found most valuable. In order to shift the emphasis in this research I wanted to find a term that would encompass the broadest possible view of teachers' learning. 'Professional learning' seemed the most appropriate term to use (Timperley, 2011).

I wanted to ensure that this research used the suggestion from both research and my own experience that "professional learning can take place in multiple contexts and situations" and is "personal" (Makopoulou and Armour, 2011: 571). On this basis, the research seeks to explore teachers' professional learning through their narratives of experience.

### **1.3 Aims and Research Questions**

The initial intention of this research was to inform policy and practice. As the research process developed, I recognised the importance of contributing to the professional studies academic discourses which, I suggest, would benefit from a better understanding of the needs and responses of the professional. This piece of work contributes to this in

relation to teachers and the “meaningful interaction” referred to by Kelchtermans (1994). The aim is to understand the ways in which professional learning is experienced by teachers, and the meanings they attribute to those experiences.

Issues of social difference such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, (dis)ability, sexuality or religion are not the starting point for the research. There is also no specific focus on the subject background, role or career stage of the teacher. This is not to suggest that I see social differences as unimportant, indeed I recognise that teachers draw on multiple discourses in their lives and work, and that the position that each takes is mediated by their social circumstances (Bradford and Hey, 2007). However, in this case, I was interested in understanding the meanings made by the individual teacher of their experiences based upon the categories they brought to the analysis. Instead of focussing on aspects of social difference and the complexity of their intersections, the emphasis for this in-depth work with a small number of teachers draws on the statement made by Thomas and Thomas that “if men [sic] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (1928: 572) to enable me to consider the individual experience. In her work with teachers, Nias recognised that:

"since no two people have the same life experiences, we all learn to perceive the world and ourselves as part of it in different ways...No matter how pervasive particular aspects of a shared social or occupational culture may be or how well individuals are socialised into it, the attitudes and actions of each teacher are rooted in their own ways of perceiving the world" (1989: 14).

I was interested in focussing on the way in which ‘each teacher’ perceives the world and deals with the neoliberal climate in education that requires increasing responsibility to be taken by the individual for themselves (Bartlett and Burton, 2007; Davies, 2005). I took as the starting point the suggestion that, in relation to policy, generalisations will not represent the

experiences of all teachers in all schools (Ball, 1994). As the work of Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe (1994) and MacLure (1993) have demonstrated, the individual meanings made by teachers are significant, but what is significant for one may not be for another. I will explore these ideas further in chapters 2 and 3 of the thesis. In undertaking this small scale, in-depth exploratory study, I wanted to focus on how we can use the different meanings made by teachers to illuminate aspects of current practice in professional learning and inform future policy and processes.

MacLure (2006) suggests that educational research satisfies itself with a particular set of methodologies, partly as a result of the audit culture, and it needs to be better at taking approaches that mobilise hidden or taken for granted issues by looking at things differently. She challenges current notions of seeking/finding the 'truth'. This research seeks to approach things 'differently' and, in doing so, also aims to develop a methodology for effectively exploring the meanings made by teachers.

The two research questions which this study seeks to answer are: How do teachers narrate their professional learning? What do they identify as the key influences?

#### **1.4 Contribution to Knowledge**

This research is distinctive because, unlike other research in this area, there is an emphasis on the exploration of the individual's lived experience and the way in which they understand it. The methodology was developed to overcome the problem of policy and practice that fails to focus on the effective involvement and engagement of teachers in CPD where they have become "missing persons" (Evans, 1999: i).

Clandinin and Connelly suggest that "experience is the stories people live by" (2000: xxvi) thus narratives offer a means by which we can understand the experience of another. This work makes a unique contribution to the field of professional learning by using the detailed



individual cases of each teacher to illustrate general concerns for the development of effective policy and practice. It also contributes to the methodological debates around the use of narratives as a means of understanding experiences.

## **1.5 Summary of the Thesis**

This is a study about understanding the experience of teachers and their experiences in relation to professional learning. It takes critical humanism as a starting point and is situated in both sociology and education in relation to policy, professionalism and identity. It is a small scale qualitative project that is very much concerned with the processes of research as much as the outcomes. The process is underpinned by my reflections and those of the teachers. As such it is multi-layered, open to the likelihood of uncertainty, and not seeking to be generalisable or definitive.

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. In this first chapter, I have introduced the background to the study in relation to the broader context for the research and my own experiences. I have also outlined the aims and research questions.

In chapter two, I review the literature in relation to the three key themes that underpin the study: policy, professionalism and teacher identity. I critically explore the policy context and education policy, considering the ways in which these link to the discourses of professionalism. I then explore the impact of this on teachers' lives and identity.

In chapter three, I outline the processes involved in the research design, with direct reference to the context for the research and key issues arising from the literature. Given that I understand policy to position teachers as "missing persons" in that approaches are homogenous (Evans, 1999: i), and that the importance of individual needs is not taken into account, I wanted to ensure that the methods and analysis put the

teacher at the centre of the research. Here I consider the development of the narrative methods I employed to explore the professional learning experiences of three teachers and their understanding of those experiences in relation to the broader social context. The approach brought with it a number of challenges including some significant ethical dilemmas which I explore in the third chapter.

The focus in chapter four is on the analytic approach. I took the slightly unusual step of including this as a discrete chapter given the significance of the issues that arose during the process of analysis and the impact of this on the resulting text. The biggest challenge was in finding a way to re-present the data in a way that supported methodological integrity in the critical role of context in the teachers' lives and relation to their voices. In terms of the methodological contribution of this work, it was important to make this aspect of the research process explicit.

Chapter five focusses on the data in relation to the professional learning experiences and meanings made of these by one of the teachers, Ava. The re-presentation of these data is constructed as an individual case drawing on the notion of a "realist tale" (Sparkes, 2002: 39; also Van Mannen, 2011). This is in order to illustrate the complexities, as "messy realities", for teachers in responding to policy imperatives and navigating their careers (Ball 1990: 9). This re-presentation of Ava's case offers an example of a story to live by (Clandinin and Connelly, 1998).

Chapter six also presents the data by drawing from the cases of each of the three teachers, Ava, Zoe and Nell, to illuminate our understanding of the broader context for professional learning. It uses examples from their unique individual experiences to illustrate more 'general' concerns (Evans, 1999). The narratives demonstrate the way in which current policy 'gets inside' teachers and the active role they play in policy terms, whilst also taking a critical view. This chapter will explore the tension between being both successful in, and critical of, current education policy.

Chapter seven draws together the outcomes of the research in relation to the context, aim and research questions. I will outline the limitations as well as the original contribution the study makes both theoretically and methodologically. There is also an exploration of the implications of this work for policy and practice, and suggestions for future research.

Finally, in chapter eight I will explore critical reflections on this research and the research process. It will draw on my reflections and those of Ava, Zoe and Nell to consider the impact of the research, the process and the outcomes.

The following chapter reviews the literature to establish the broader political background and to set the context for exploring “the relationship between the state, the ideologies of professionalism, and lived interiority” (Hey and Bradford, 2004: 693).

## **Chapter Two: Policy, Professionalism and Identity**

### **2.1 Introduction**

As outlined in the previous chapter, the professional learning experiences of the teacher within the social setting of the profession provide the focus for this study and the basis for the research questions. In order to understand the experiences of the teacher and to appropriately contextualise them, I will situate the research theoretically and politically through the literature and interrogate the underpinning themes. This requires an exploration of “the relationship between the state, the ideologies of professionalism, and lived interiority” (Hey and Bradford, 2004: 693). The literature is organised under the following headings:

- The Policy Context
- Being a ‘Professional’ Teacher
- Teacher Identity

This chapter takes account of some key emerging debates which arise in each area, identifying gaps in the literature to illustrate research possibilities and, as is argued here, to highlight the necessity for illuminating our knowledge and understanding of the experiences of professional learning from different and individual perspectives within the social setting (Durkheim, 1951).

### **2.2 The Policy Context**

Education is constructed to serve the purposes of broader aspects of society in relation to political and economic functioning: its role is to meet “the needs of the industrial system” (Roulstone and Prideaux, 2008: 18). Coffey (2004) defines social policy as a set of policies and practices served with promoting “social welfare and well-being” (2004: 2). She identifies that all Government policy has a social dimension, a discourse, and a theoretical and conceptual framework. As a result it is directly connected to, and constructed and implemented by, the political agenda

of the Government in power at the time (Barber, 1994; Kelly, 2004), alongside the broader ideological and cultural agendas: the “Ideological State Apparatus” (Althusser, 1971: 143). In terms of education policy there are inevitable links with the economy, business, and industry within an era of globalisation, which gives rise to different layers and levels of contested policies and processes (Ball, 2009).

Evans, Rich, Allwood and Davies (2008) make an important distinction between “P/policy”: Policy is that which is legislated from government, whilst policy is formed, interpreted and enacted in institutions (Evans *et al.*, 2008; Ball, 2013a). This will be considered further later. The term ‘policy’ will be used from this point on within the thesis to encompass both Policy and policy, with distinctions made explicit where necessary.

The position that education continues to occupy on the political agenda and the associated politicisation, makes the role of social policy highly significant in the work of schools and teachers, given that education policy is one facet of social policy. Coffey asks us to consider the way in which social policy is, and can be, “(re)presented through discourses, narratives, and empirical and professional projects” (2004: 5). These policies “define not only formal education but increasingly encode other aspects of school life” (Evans *et al.*, 2008: 387): therefore an understanding of policy development in recent times, alongside its implementation and impact, is crucial in setting the context for exploring the professional experiences of the teacher.

It is important to note that the exploration of policy here is restricted to the English education system. Whilst there are interesting issues to explore in other countries, policy is a matter local to the governance of each individual country. Despite the position occupied by England within the United Kingdom, policy developments in the other member countries are underpinned by different ideologies (Tomlinson, 2005; Ball, 2013a).

Given the “sheer volume” and increasingly political nature of education policy (Ball, 2013: 3; 1990), it is beyond the scope and focus of this thesis to consider it all. It is also possible that there is a risk in presenting such a concise overview of education policy that “messy realities” will be lost (Ball, 1990: 9). The timeline in Appendix 1 provides a chronological list of key examples of Government policy to support the context of this particular study. What it demonstrates is the extent of the proliferation of education policy over a number of years and the areas that are the foci for these policy developments.

### **2.2.1 Theorising Policy**

If policy “is about moving from the inadequacies of the present to some future state of perfection where everything works well and works as it should” (Ball, 2013: 9), then idealistically one might suggest that policy development and its local implementation would offer conditions of opportunity. However, the reality is different given that the future development of education is totally dependent on “good policy choices” (Barber, 1994: 348) as well as the complexities of local policy implementation. If Ball’s suggestion that policies are both discourses and “textual interventions into practice” (1994: 18) which create problems for policy subjects to be solved in context (Ball *et al.*, 2011b), then the matter of good choices for policy development becomes crucial in terms of practice.

The complexity and contested nature of policy development arising from the ideologies and structures of the different groups concerned with education over the last three decades is recognised but not explored here as it has been written about extensively elsewhere over time (see Lawton, 1992; Newman 2001; Whitty, 2002; Tomlinson, 2005; Chitty, 2009; Kingdon, 2011; Ball, 2013). Politicians, bureaucrats and professionals have different responsibilities and interests within the shifting power structures, and the question for consideration here is “whose values are validated in policy and whose are not” (Ball, 1990: 3)

and what is the impact? Policy discourses “are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where, and with what authority” (Ball, 1994: 21). This is critical in considering the implications of Government policy choices with the resulting texts and discourses for schools and the role of the teacher. In setting the context for this thesis the concern is to consider what policy has done for and to teachers.

Beck (1992) talks of the “risk society” where market forces hold the power. As the result of this, and global neoliberalist ideology since the late 1970s, education has increasingly been viewed as a commodity rather than a public service (Tomlinson, 2005). There is an increased lack of certainty; individuals have to make constant decisions about how they behave in their lives; and there is a stronger emphasis on individualisation (Bartlett and Burton, 2007).

Current neoliberalist policy demands active professionals as individuals who routinely and relentlessly reform themselves (or are reformed by others): a requirement to meet audit requirements and conform to professional “perfection codes” (Evans *et al.*, 2008: 392). Ball expresses concern that the term neoliberal is “so widely and loosely used that it is in danger of becoming a detached signifier” (2012: 17-18). I draw on Olssen and Peters (2005: 315-316) to explain how I use the term in this study:

“neoliberalism has come to represent a positive conception of the state’s role in creating the appropriate market by providing the conditions, laws and institutions necessary for its operation.... the end goals of freedom, choice, consumer sovereignty, competition and individual initiative, as well as those of compliance and obedience, must be constructions of the state through the development of the techniques of auditing, accounting and management. Markets have become a new technology by which control can be effected and performance enhanced, in the public sector”.

As part of neoliberalism, labour is considered “in terms of a model of human capital” where the individual is “an autonomous entrepreneur

responsible ontologically for their own selves and their own progress and position” (Olssen, 2006: 219).

The nature of globalisation relies on a constant updating of knowledge and knowledge processes by the teacher to keep pace with the rapid changes in society (Bonal and Rambla, 2003). This has resulted in a “Totally Pedagogised Society” (Bernstein, 2001: 365; see also Ball 2008: 203; Evans *et al.*, 2008) demanding “trainability” where an individual teacher has the ability to be “appropriately formed and re-formed according to technological, organisational and market contingencies” (Bernstein, 1996: 59). The “continuous pedagogic re-formations” enable individuals to cope with shifting demands in both life and work. Davies (2005) identifies that neoliberalism demands that “selves are necessarily flexible, multi-skilled, mobile, able to respond to new demands and new situations...both vulnerable and necessarily competitive, competition being necessary for survival” (Davies, 2005: 9). She goes onto to explain that individuals have to be competitive for survival: economic rather than moral survival, which requires them to earn money as well as take responsibility for themselves (see also Bonal and Rambla, 2004; Olssen, 2006). Davies is concerned that “the appropriate(d) self at work is produced because it is too risky to do otherwise”. As a result, “this self must work so hard and has no narrative certainty about itself, it is quite difficult to take care of” (Davies, 2005: 9).

Davies suggests that neoliberalism has resulted in a move:

“from social conscience and responsibility towards an individualism in which the individual is cut loose from the social; from morality to moralistic audit-driven surveillance; and from critique to mindless criticism in terms of rules and regulations combined with individual vulnerability to those new rules and regulations, which in turn press towards conformity to the group” (Davies, 2005: 12).



Olssen (2006) suggests that “the individual participates and contributes to the collective good of society and in the process constitutes their own development” (225), where participation equates to agency. He outlines a “global society of engagement where the learner is engaged in a process of action for change as part of a dialogic encounter rather than as a consequence of individual choice” (225) where “the free action of each is linked to the free action of all” (227). The challenge arises in that teachers are required to be autonomous and responsible for the self, whilst operating within a climate of centralised scrutiny and control (Bonal and Rambla, 2003).

Given the political world, it would be reasonable to assume that a change in Government would result in a substantial shift in policy. However, Ball encourages us to retain a focus on “what stays the same, the continuities of and in policy” (Ball, 2013: 10). One other point worthy of note here is the way in which policy can repeat itself across time, relevant in this context given that neoliberalism and the key role of the market underpins both right and left wing policy: this will be considered in the examples later in this section.

### **2.2.2 Policy Audit, Accountability and Managerialism**

The implementation of various policies relating to pay and conditions, appraisal, performance management, and the connection to professional development has changed the ways in which teachers are ‘expected’ to behave, which will be explored later. Tomlinson suggests that it is “rhetoric that the state has given more freedom to individuals...in reality central control has tightened” (2005: 2). This is evident in the on-going political concern with control, counting and quality assurance which has resulted in reductive accountability and audit (MacLure, 2005), and the reduction of individual human beings to “educational policy categories” (Roulstone and Prideaux, 2008: 20) where one size is expected to fit all (Ozga, 2000: 227).

In reviewing the literature in this area, Hey and Bradford indicate that “Government policy and its agencies are often experienced as coercive resulting in a loss of personal and professional self-esteem” (2004: 695). Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) inspection, which began in 1992 during John Major’s Conservative Government, is one key mechanism for audit and accountability and the impact on teachers’ lives has been documented (Jeffrey and Woods, 1998). Mahony, Menter and Hextall (2004) have explored the emotional impacts of changes to teaching, and Smith and Kovacs (2011) investigated the impact of Standards-based reform and found high levels of teacher dissatisfaction and stress. The contexts for teachers’ work became characterised by fragmentation and discontinuities, tensions and dilemmas, within increasingly intensive external audit policy cultures (Huberman, 1995; Power, 1994). As a result of this, “ontological insecurity has become the new professional norm” (Hey and Bradford, 2004: 699).

Following the Conservative party Governments from 1979 (led by Margaret Thatcher followed by John Major), New Labour (led by Tony Blair) took control in 1997. Critique of New Labour policy suggested that there was little difference between their policies and those of the Conservatives (Tomlinson, 2005; Bartlett and Burton, 2007), which would seem logical given the underlying neoliberalist intentions mentioned earlier. Policy development over the term of the New Labour Government saw further measures for accountability and audit developed: the culture of performativity prevailed and continued to be prolific in spite of ‘policy failure’ in cases such as the National Strategies (Lloyd-Staples, 2010). Indeed this was further perpetuated through the work of the Coalition Conservative Liberal Democratic Government that came to power in 2010. Examples from policy will be considered next.

### **2.2.3 Education Policy**

Kingdon (2011) provides us with a useful setting to briefly consider some specific policy examples which illustrate the points raised earlier in

relation to neoliberalist ideology, managerialism, audit and accountability. He examines the way in which some policies come into being; identifying the significance of agenda setting by the Government and other associated organisations. He recognises the crucial role of power in the policy process through: development; implementation and; accountability processes; with influences such as finance; opposition groups; public interest; and the media which can provide either impetus or constraint. He explores the concept of the “policy window” (Kingdon, 2011: 165) in an attempt to understand why some matters make their way onto the Government agenda, some take a higher priority on the agenda than others, and some of the resulting policies are facilitated more effectively than others. He identifies that the policy window opens when there is the greatest union between policy problems, proposals and politics. That said, policy is not a rational linear process and is always subject to the unexpected.

Following Callaghan’s Ruskin speech in 1976 where he criticised standards in education and inadvertently supported the writers of *The Black Papers*, the 1980s was characterised by the Conservative drive to place Education under the influence of market forces, creating a competitive situation between schools for pupils, and underpinned by a return to “traditional values” (Bartlett and Burton, 2007: 71, 199). The 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) (Department for Education and Science (DES), 1988) made this ideology a reality. Ball (2013) identifies that the ERA had six key foci: the traditional National Curriculum; parental choice of schools for their children; devolved budgets from Local Education Authorities to schools; enhanced roles and responsibilities for Heads and Governors; mechanisms for objective evaluation; and a suspicion of teachers and professionalism that resulted in greater levels of control and accountability. The implementation of the ERA resulted in a range of developments in subsequent years including: Local Management of Schools (LMS) associated with the devolution of school budgets; the creation of Ofsted and school inspection; league tables;

centralised mechanisms for pupil assessment including Standardised Assessment Tests (SATs); and changes in the professional expectations, including pay and conditions, for teachers. The inherent mistrust of teachers became evident in the development of processes of accountability including Ofsted inspection procedures; through the requirements of the National Curriculum and national testing; and the constraints put in place for institutions responsible for ITE via the introduction of national competencies (DfE, 1992) which became the Standards (Teacher Training Agency (TTA), 1998; TTA/Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2002); the Professional Standards for Teachers (TDA, 2007) and, most recently, the Teachers' Standards (DFE, 2011).

These policies had a significant impact on work in schools as they were underpinned by challenges to teacher professionalism (Ball, 1990: 49). The National Curriculum and National Testing underpinned the move to centralise control of teachers' work. Ball (1994) identified that the shifts in power resulted in: the teacher becoming an increasingly "absent presence in the discourses of education policy, an object rather than a subject of discourse" (50); teachers' work becoming increasingly technical; marketing becoming as important as teaching and learning; teachers' work being considered in terms of output measures; "polyvalent and productive" (58) management discourses; and teachers becoming human resources (see also Lawton, 1992; Goodson, 2010).

Following the election of New Labour in 1997, Excellence in Schools (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), 1997) was published which articulated the Government's intention to make education central to Government (Ball, 2013). The 'Third Way' which underpinned policy was a navigation of New Right and the Old Left ideologies seeking to balance the role of the state and social democracy with market capitalism (Clarke, Gewirtz and McLaughlin, 2000; Clarke, 2004; Tomlinson, 2005; Newman 2001) and a clear agenda of modernisation (Ball, 2013). Bartlett and

Burton (2007) identify that the ensuing policy sought partnership between the individual and the state: education for every individual; opportunity for all to succeed; and the duty of everyone to play their part in society. There was an expectation that everyone would be involved in life-long learning (Gewirtz, 2008). Alongside this there was a clear articulation of the need to work in partnership with those committed to raising standards (Ball, 2013). The theme of developing human capital ran through policy with “the reassertion of moral and communitarian values, the blaming of victims when policies fail, and the centrality of utilitarian and market values” (Roulstone and Prideaux, 2008: 23).

Teachers Meeting the Challenge of Change (DfEE, 1998) offered the next clear iteration of the Government’s policy. It proposed: higher status, better prospects; a rewarding career structure; less bureaucracy; more freedom to focus on teaching; a new professionalism; greater individual accountability; more flexibility and higher standards (DfEE, 1998: 9). It stated that developments would have “profound implications for teachers individually and for the profession as a whole” and demanded “a new professionalism” among teachers (DfEE, 1998: 12, 14). The Green Paper went onto ask teachers to “rise to the challenge” and have high expectations; be accepting of accountability; take responsibility for improving their skills and subject knowledge; use evidence as a basis for decision making; work in partnership with staff in schools, parents, business and others; and anticipate change and promote innovation. (DfEE, 1998: 14). There was also a proposal that teachers’ contracts should require them to keep their “skills up-to-date” and an expectation that career long professional development “should be at the heart of teachers’ professionalism” (DfEE, 1998: 44, 48). This was all to be monitored through annual appraisal and performance management processes. New Labour acknowledged that the policy was ambitious but stated their intention to “strengthen teachers’ professionalism” (DfEE, 1998: 66). There was a clear message running through the paper that implied that the Government wanted to offer support but that effective

implementation was only possible as a result of a change within teaching. It has been suggested that this type of policy demonstrates an attempt to de-professionalise (Macdonald, 2011) however, given that professional expectations had changed rather than being removed, I would prefer to consider this a reconfigured professionalism (Fournier, 1999; Gewirtz, Shapiro, Maguire, Mahony and Cribb, 2009).

The current Coalition Government claims “education is everything in the creation of a truly mobile society” and economic concerns are secondary (Clegg, 2010) however the Government focus is on securing the economy, and restructuring public services and the welfare system so that they are sustainable. The “Importance of Teaching” (DFE, 2010) identifies several key features for education policy development:

"This White Paper signals a radical reform of our schools. We have no choice but to be this radical if our ambition is to be world-class. The most successful countries already combine a high status teaching profession; high levels of autonomy for schools; a comprehensive and effective accountability system and a strong sense of aspiration for all children, whatever their background. Tweaking things at the margins is not an option. Reforms on this scale are absolutely essential if our children are to get the education they deserve" (DFE, 2010: 5).

The repetition of the rhetoric and discourses which seek to explain the developing mechanisms for audit and accountability are evident through these policy examples. It is interesting that some key aspects of policy have remained on the policy agenda despite the changes in political leadership and economic circumstances (Kingdon, 2011). Kirk has suggested that we are “unable to learn from our previous experiences...as a consequence we are willing, indeed, enthusiastic consumers of tired old ideas wrapped up in the bright tinsel packaging of...simplistically reductive rhetorics” (Kirk, 1992: 211). It is necessary in this thesis to consider the impact of this on teachers in relation to their experience of professional learning at different points in their careers.

## **2.2.4 Physical Education Policy**

Alongside the broad policy development, there have also been significant shifts in subject specific policy. Physical Education is a site of on-going local, national and international concern in relation to policy (Evans, 1986; Evans, 1988; Kirk and Tinning, 1990; Sparkes, 1992; Penney and Evans, 1999; Evans, Davies and Wright, 2004; Hayes and Stidder, 2003; Houlihan and Green, 2006; Bailey, Armour, Kirk, Jess, Pickup and Sandford, 2009; Kirk, 2009; Kirk, 2011; Capel and Whitehead, 2013; Stidder and Hayes, 2013). Physical education has been subject to a range of key Government policy developments since the implementation of the National Curriculum for the subject in 1992 following the ERA (DES, 1991). The Conservative Government policy “Sport: Raising the Game” (DNH, 1995) sought to revitalise sport at every level. It was a call to put sport back at the heart of school life, provide sporting facilities for all young people, offer extra-curricular activity and develop excellence. The focus was on ‘traditional’ team games and demonstrated confusion between physical education and its defined role in the curriculum in schools, and sport from a broader perspective. After their election to Government, Labour replaced this in 2002 with the “Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links” (PESSCL) (DFES/Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), 2003) strategy to improve participation in sport. This was implemented between 2002 and 2008 with an investment of over £1.5 billion. One of the eight strands of this strategy was CPD, albeit structured in a very particular way to serve the interests of key groups. The government drive for two hours or more of high quality physical education in the curriculum for all 5-16 year olds was a Public Service Agreement target. This was replaced with the “Physical Education and Sport Strategy for Young People” (PESSYP) (DfES/DCMS, 2008), which evolved after the bid to host the Olympic and Paralympic games in London 2012 was successful. This example of a policy window opening (Kingdon, 2011) as a result of the shared interest in sport had significant implications for physical education and school sport, demonstrating the

confusion that exists between the two in spite of very clear differences (Kirk, 1992; Penney and Evans, 1999; Mountakis, 2001; Armour, 2011; Pope, 2011). Sport is concerned with maximising performance in a given physical activity in order to be competitive, whilst physical education is concerned with using physical activity and appropriate pedagogy to develop the individual in relation to the “psychomotor, affective and cognitive” (Mountakis, 2001: 95).

Alongside this, physical education is concerned with the development of the ‘rounded individual’, and to serve broad political functions linking education with other Government departments such as health and culture, media and sport. Physical education is also part of the ethic of trainability (Evans *et al.*, 2008: 388). One area which demonstrates this is that of health and the associated discourse(s) of obesity. The positioning of physical education by the Government, other agencies and the media is one that suggests that it has the capacity to resolve the significant concerns reported about health (Cale and Harris, 2005; 2006). As a result of this, it is also a site for the production of various aspects of “capital” (Bourdieu, 1986; Lingard, Rawolle and Taylor, 2005).

Macdonald summarises for us the position that she feels physical education occupies:

"Physical education carries the stamp of neoliberalism and as a field we are keen, it seems, to accept and accrue more of the vestiges of this ideology as a way of buying into the dominant policy agendas (e.g. accountability, reducing health costs; supporting choice) " (2011: 36).

Physical education defends its position on the curriculum by adopting a number of these aspects of neoliberal policy. In doing so, the experiences of physical education teachers in this study provide us with an interesting opportunity to explore the enactment of policy in relation to both subject specific concerns and those in education more broadly.



### 2.2.5 Policy Enactment

As identified earlier, Government policy provides the text and discourse for practice: the direction, guidelines, constraints or possibilities for policy implementation. Individual policies do not work in isolation and must be looked at more generally, alongside other policy and change that is taking place. We also have to recognise the need not to idealise the past or assume that generalisations will represent the experiences of all teachers in the different types of schools (Ball, 1994). It is important to pay “attention to the specificity of local contexts and times and the locally different effects of policies on different groups of people” (Watson, 2000: 66). The way in which the policy is enacted in a school is a matter for local and individual struggle (Ball, 1994):

"It is one thing to consider the effects of policies upon abstract social collectivities. It is another to capture the complex interplay of identities, and interests, and coalitions, and conflicts within the processes and enactments of policy" (Ball, 1997: 271).

How is policy interpreted, reconfigured and enacted in schools? Ball *et al.* have considered the theory and practice of policy enactment in school as complex and “practical, discursive and moral” (2011a: 622). They have identified a number of key issues including the influence of various contextual factors; the role of policy subjects; the role of policy actors; and the associated discourses which result in a ‘process’ of policy local to the institution (in this case the school). They recognise that teachers occupy two positions “as agents in discourse that are themselves aspects of discourse” (2011a: 612). “Actors are making meaning, being influential, contesting, constructing responses, dealing with contradictions, attempting representations of policy” (Ball, 1994: 21). They are responsible for making meaning and translating that into practice, alongside the other developments and day-to-day work in which they are (dis)engaged. As a result we cannot predict what that enactment may be (Ball, 1994).

Policy is “defined, negotiated and accomplished” (Coffey, 2004: 5), and “socially constructed and mediated” (Bradford and Hey, 2007: 610). Policy is pervasive (Macdonald, 2011) and its discourses permeate the social. Ball suggests that neoliberalism is so powerful and far reaching that it:

“gets into our minds and our souls, into the ways in which we think about what we do, and into our social relations with others. It is about how we relate to our students and our colleagues and our participation in new courses and forms of pedagogy and our ‘knowledge production’, but it is also about our flexibility, malleability, innovation and productivity in relation to these things” (2012: 18).

However, it is critical to note here that within social collectives and networks, individuals take a policy position that is mediated by their social circumstances (Bradford and Hey, 2007; Ball *et al.*, 2011b).

Macdonald (2011) encourages us to take a reflexive position about neoliberalism and its policies and “ask questions of the systems and priorities that seemingly sustain us” (2011: 43). This research intends to understand the experiences of the professional teacher as policy subject and policy actor via “the changing relationships between constraint and agency, and their inter-penetration” (Ball, 1994: 21). In doing so it is necessary to further contextualise the research by considering the literature in relation to being a professional teacher.

### **2.3 Being a ‘Professional’ Teacher**

The previous section offered a summary of the issues associated with education policy and its implementation. The impact of policy and neoliberalist ideology during the last three decades has had significant implications for the role of teachers and the nature of their work.

At the start of this section, it is necessary to provide a brief outline of the sociology of professions and professionalism in order to situate the issues which are of key concern in relation to being a professional teacher. I intend to provide a brief overview of how the concept of the 'profession' is understood, and briefly consider the two key positions in relation to understanding of the role of professions. One position is the functionalist perspective of a complex division of labour resulting in normative social order, whilst the other offers a much more critical position in relation to ideology and power as processes for social control. This necessitates a return to some of the older literature relating to the sociology of professions, alongside references to more up to date material.

Within the context of this work, I will explore professions and the associated aspects of professionalism however, it is important to note that Becker would suggest that the term 'profession' is merely a title used by each profession in order to retain status within society (Esland, 1980: 218). Professions are those occupations associated with a particular knowledge base who have normally undertaken both tertiary and vocational education, and rely on the state for accreditation/licence (Evetts, 2003) which provides access to particular forms of power (Johnson, 1972). Professions are considered to be autonomous and Esland identifies that "professions develop cultures and ideologies that define the nature of the occupation, its societal role and importance, and nature of the work, clients, competitors etc" (1980: 40). However, there is a recognised hierarchy, with the classic professions such as law and medicine historically firmly established and self-regulating, whilst teaching has remained emergent (Esland, 1980; Gale and Densmore, 2003; Evetts, 2003): indeed Etzioni refers to teaching as one of the "semi professions" (1969; Bolton and Muzio, 2008). The historical status differences, political climate, and structural issues, such as gender (high numbers of women) and class (working and aspirant middle class) of those who typically enter teaching, have caused it to face greater challenges in retaining its social position than the classic professions

(Esland, 1980; Goodson, 2003). Individuals typically entering teaching have access to relatively lower levels of cultural capital which cumulatively results in less power for the profession, and a subsequent position of lower status. Additionally, the classic professions achieve a position and maintain high levels of power by virtue of the essential service they provide and by retaining very specific entry qualifications; a highly specialised knowledge base; long periods of training; a technocratic approach and; tightly regulated processes of assessment (Esland, 1980). From a Weberian perspective they affect a form of closure which protects the profession and provides an opportunity for “gatekeeping” (Rummery and Glendinning, 1999: 335). As illustrated in the previous section, the increased control of teaching and erosion of teacher autonomy began in earnest with the ERA (DES, 1988) during the Thatcher Conservative Government. The “state retains considerable control over education goals and processes” (Gale and Densmore, 2003: 83) thus teaching is subject to greater external interference than some of the other professions who are afforded greater autonomy (Lortie, 1975). ‘Teaching’ has to work very hard to meet the challenges imposed by audit and demonstrate competence in order to achieve a balance of power, control and legitimacy (Gale and Densmore, 2003; Fournier, 1999). This poses a further challenge to the maintenance of a strong position within the changing market. The marketisation has resulted in increased bureaucratisation (Johnson, 1972). It is important to acknowledge, although not subject to exploration here, that levels of autonomy are changing across all professions as a result of both social structure, and policy implemented by Government and impacted upon by the market: the increased bureaucratic and managerial gatekeeping (Rummery and Glendinning, 1999; see also Esland, 1980).

Functionalist sociologists recognise order and balance as the normal state<sup>1</sup>, where society is constructed from the sum of its constituent parts,

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<sup>1</sup> It is acknowledged that in offering a very concise account this statement draws on a common over-simplification of Functionalism.

and social order and stability is maintained through consensus (Coffey, 2004: 15). In the “Division of Labour”, Durkheim suggested that “organic solidarity” (Durkheim, 1933: 111) as a source of cohesion results from the division of labour (Hamilton, 1980). He theorised that the outcome of the development of specialised rather than shared occupational roles within society, resulted in a mutual interdependency between individuals and the contribution of groups to social solidarity (Durkheim, 1933: 353). Durkheim acknowledged that there were circumstances when this normality might be disrupted: by “anomie, inequality and inadequate organisation” (Hamilton, 1980: 69) but considered this abnormal, and outlined that the re-organisation of work within organisations offered solutions to the problems. The work of Parsons demonstrated that “modern professions were all interrelated and mutually balancing in the maintenance and stability of a fragile normative social order” (Evetts, 2003: 400; also see Hamilton, 1980).

This functionalist view contrasts with the critical view which recognises professions as a nexus of power arising from conflicting ideologies, structures and divisions. Evetts (2003) identifies that in many cases the notion of the profession is an imposition from above, via leaders/managers and employers, in the form of ideology implemented through clearly defined working practices and expectations. The profession subscribes to these ideas as a result of the perception that it will improve status and rewards.

The critical view is concerned with professions as key sites of power practices within the social world. The Foucauldian concept of “governmentality” is useful here as it enables us to critically consider “government” (Miller and Rose, 1993: 75). Foucault uses the term to explain the way in which the social world is managed and regulated, as well as to consider the way in which individuals manage and regulate themselves. Foucault’s view is that the intended outcome of governing is a process of normalisation which is “the establishment or

institutionalisation of those disciplines, knowledges and technologies that lay the ground for the emergence of the autonomous, self-regulating subject” (Gane and Johnson, 1993: 9). Normalisation and its associated power (Pasquino, 1993; Fillingham, 1994) relies on the existence of ‘norms’: the important considerations are the responses to these norms, how they are defined and by whom, which will be considered later.

Fournier suggests that the notion (norm) of professional practice:

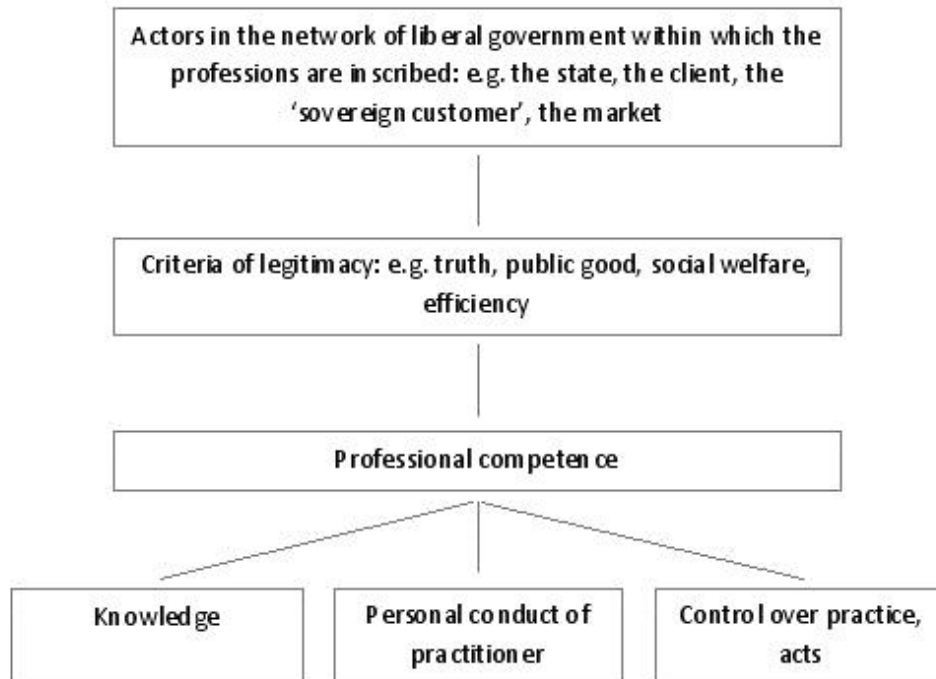
“articulates professional subject positions, or the ways in which professionals should conduct themselves. Professionals are the target of professional rationality, they are both the governor and the governed“ (Fournier, 1999: 285).

She refers to the “appeal to professionalism as a disciplinary mechanism” (Fournier, 1999: 280) where the discourses of professionalism induce work appropriate identities, conduct and practice facilitating “control at a distance” (Evetts, 2003: 408). Fournier proposes the model of “professionalism as disciplinary logic” to demonstrate the way in which the discourses operate. The model is represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 “Professionalism as disciplinary logic” (Fournier, 1999: 289)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Fournier notes the challenge of presenting this information pictorially: “the lines represent the processes through which connections and translations are made rather than implications of cause and effect” (1999: 304)



She demonstrates the way in which professionals experience “inscribed” meaning and “criteria of legitimacy” which impact upon “professional competence”. The discourse of competence then plays out at both institutional and individual levels through the expectations ‘placed upon’ the professional teacher. Policy development, managerialism, and professional expectations, combined with the broader impact of the “Totally Pedagogised Society” (Bernstein, 2001: 365) have resulted in “techniques of power...designed to observe, monitor, shape and control the behaviour of individuals situated within...institutions (Foucault and Gordon, 1980: 3). Through this Foucauldian perspective, the mechanism for control is recognised as disciplinary power (Fillingham, 1994). This power uses punishment and persuasion in order to achieve societal norms which create a ‘disciplined’ society. With this in mind, it is worthy of note that Fournier’s indication that the lines on the model “represent the processes through which connections and translations are made” (1999: 304) provides an opportunity to consider how policy ‘gets inside’ people.

It is this critical view of professions and power which is adopted in this work. The next section seeks to consider professionalism application of “professionalism as disciplinary logic” (Fournier, 1999: 280) in the specific context of teaching.

### **2.3.1 Teacher Professionalism**

Policy development has required schools to become “more business-like and more like business” (Ball, 2009: 156). The increased regulation of teaching has resulted in an attempt to re-socialise teachers and transform professionalism (Gale and Densmore, 2003: 85) within intensive external audit policy cultures (Power, 1994). Hey and Bradford, suggest that this regulation through audit creates “a web of imperatives” delivered by a network of stakeholders (2004: 703). As a result of this, Evetts recognises a need to consider the way in which the “appeal to professionalism is played out” (2003: 396).

Hargreaves suggests that teachers:

“will talk about being professional, in terms of the quality of what they do; and of the conduct, demeanour and standards which guide it. The literature usually refers to this conception as professionalism” (2000: 152).

However, Fournier (1999: 302) suggests that the meaning of professionalism and the type of moral conduct it invokes is not fixed but is highly contestable. As noted earlier, there is a literature which considers the change in teacher professionalism as de-professionalisation in contrast to a reconfigured professionalism (Hargreaves, 2000; Campbell and Kane, 2000; Race 2002; Timmermans and Kolker, 2004; Ballet, Kelchtermans and Loughran, 2006). Stronach, Corbin, McNamara, Stark and Warne explain this contestable nature by suggesting that teachers are caught up in a “nexus between policy, ideology and practice” (2002: 109) which has significant implications. The critical concern here is how



individuals respond to this nexus (Shore and Wright, 2000) and the reconfiguration of professionalism.

Hargreaves suggests that there are two key factors (norms) associated with being a professional: “professionalism (improving quality and standards of practice) and professionalisation (improving status and standing)” (2000: 152). However, he suggests that these two, often presented as “complementary projects” (i.e. improved standards will result in improved status), can be contradictory if a technical approach is taken through policy when considering the required knowledge and skills for teaching that ignores the emotional aspects of teachers’ work (2000: 152).

Policy operates as a mediator within society and, as we have seen from Kingdon’s work, results in some matters becoming important enough to make it onto policy agendas (2011). Depending on the way in which these policies develop and are implemented, these matters may influence what subsequently become the social norms. The policy windows that open have an impact upon the policies which inform the expectations of professionals (Kingdon, 2011).

Hargreaves (2000: 151-152) suggests that teachers’ “work and worth” has been reduced to a checklist of standards or competencies which operate as part of the discourse of managerialism and the dominance of audit (Hey and Bradford, 2004). These competencies are used as “an appropriate mode of conduct...not just about the way one performs one’s job” (Fournier, 1999: 295-296) but also make specific the sort of person a professional teacher must be. Fournier suggests that they translate control into self-development: the drive for improvement for the customer (e.g. young people, parents etc) and individual self-improvement which will lead to fulfilment. They act as a disciplinary mechanism and create a situation where ontological insecurity is “the new professional norm” (Hey

and Bradford, 2004: 699). The processes of self-improvement will be considered later in relation to professional learning.

The key concern here is how we define professionalism and the associated expectations for 'good practice', who defines it, and for whom is it defined? The dominant discourse invites (imposes?) assumptions, producing particular meanings and it is important to consider other discourses: in this case those discourses experienced and the meanings made of them by teachers.

Foucault's ideas about 'governmentality' and 'government' provide a useful context for considering teachers' lives (Foucault, 1991b; Miller and Rose, 1993). The responses of individuals within the 'disciplined' and 'disciplinary' society, are referred to by Foucault as resistance (see Ball and Olmedo, 2013). Foucault deems this an inevitable factor of governmentality otherwise we would only experience mass compliance with social structures, their norms and demands (Fillingham, 1993). This resistance offers us a space in which to consider the place and impact of agency, freedom and choice within the constrained structural circumstances which Foucault, amongst others explored earlier, recognises. In this case it is the circumstances of teaching. Foucault proposed that this agency, alongside discourses of professionalism, might be considered as a 'technology' of the self (1991b; Fournier, 1999), where the individual both constitutes and understands themselves (Pels, 2000).

Archer's (2007) work on reflexivity offers a way of considering those technologies in teachers' lives. She recognises that the self exists within the social and responds to it through a process of internal dialogue<sup>3</sup>. It is this internal dialogue which Archer recognises as "an emergent personal power" (2007: 3) which enables us to "make our way through the world"

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that in this thesis I am not concerned with Archer's theoretical position as a social realist.

(2007: 21). She suggests that there is limited consideration given to the significance of this. I would like to propose that, in this case, using Archer's ideas offers opportunities for a better understanding of teachers if we explore their experiences as professionals through the individual's "internal conversation" (Archer, 2007: 2). Archer's ideas suggest the importance of considering teachers' professional lives from their own perspective and there is literature to suggest that this approach has the capacity to considerably improve our understanding of how teachers make their way in their professional world. Sunley and Locke (2010) suggested that understanding values which go beyond the boundaries of professional compliance is one aspect that is of significance. Along similar lines, Hargreaves (1998; see also Burkitt, 2014) asks us to consider the central place of emotions in the work of teachers whilst Lubansky (2009) emphasises the importance of understanding teachers' well-being. These types of projects provide an insight into the issues that affect the ways in which teachers experience their professional lives within the social structures and policy context of their work. Exploring the reflexivity of teachers may offer one way to deepen those insights.

Foucault and Archer, both provide useful frameworks through which to consider teachers' professional lives. I will return to Archer's work in the next chapter.

Drawing on the ideas explored earlier in this chapter, the contexts in which teachers work in their classrooms and schools are fragmented and complex as a result of the multiple challenges they face, including those relating to the values and ethics inherent in the role and the emotional implications of these (Hargreaves, 1998; Jeffrey and Woods, 1998; Day *et al.*, 2006; Sunley and Locke, 2010; Ehrich, Kimber, Millwater and Cranston, 2011; Burkitt, 2014). Ballet *et al.*, suggest that:

"On the one hand, schools have more autonomy to develop their own ways of tackling the challenges they face. On the other hand, Governments tend to exert pervasive control through increased evaluation measures driven by

accountability demands. Thus teachers appear to be confronted by a situation whereby they experience greater responsibility for their work, but less control over the manner in which their work is conducted, clearly contributing to a growing workload” (2006: 210).

A key idea around these issues is that of the intensification of teachers’ work (Hargreaves, 1992; Hargreaves, 1994; Ballet *et al.* 2006; Ball 1990; Gewirtz, 2002). Ballet *et al.* (2006) suggest that intensification results in: a significant, on-going perception of overwork; a perceived reduction in quality as a result of cutting corners: “only that which is essential and immediately accomplishable is done...isolation from colleagues increases as there is no time for feedback, collaboration or sharing of ideas” (Ballet *et al.*, 2006: 210, my punctuation); and there is an increased reliance on external specialists (see also Ball, 2003). The confusion between physical education and sport has been rehearsed elsewhere (Kirk, 1992; Penney and Evans, 1999; Mountakis, 2001; Armour, 2011; Pope, 2011), but it is important to note here that there are additional challenges faced in teaching a subject that focusses on the body (Alldred and David, 2007). It continues to be perceived as low in academic value thus marginal, as well as being misunderstood and misrepresented in both policy and broader agendas (Sparkes, Templin and Schempp, 1990; 1993; see also Ball *et al.*, 2011a).

Within the wider context of a single institution, the response to policy and subsequent implementation; institutional leadership and values; and structures in line with Foucault’s notion of ‘government’, all contribute to this intensification of work:

“Both the teacher as actor and the school itself in fact mediate the impact of intensification. Teachers are not merely ‘reactive’ subjects, but have a certain degree of freedom to decide how they will cope with policy demands and imposed changes” (Ballet *et al.*, 2006; see also Ball *et al.*, 2011a).

At the individual level, teachers have a degree of autonomy but can also contribute to the intensification of their work by setting and maintaining their own high expectations of themselves. The discourses of professionalism encourage teachers to take greater responsibility for themselves and solve the problems they encounter. If “professionalism is bound up in the discursive dynamics of professionals attempting to address or redress the dilemmas of the job” (Stronach *et al.*, 2002: 109-110) within “the homogenising grip of a coercive professionalism” (Hey and Bradford, 2004: 708) then there are inevitable implications for the experiences of teachers during their professional lives. Professional lives will be considered next.

### **2.3.2 Teachers’ Professional Lives**

Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe (1994) recognise that the self is connected to the craft of teaching therefore there is an overlap of the self and professional self (see also Kelchtermans, 2009; Hargreaves, 1998). They take the view that the person is crucial in understanding professional life and that there is a need to explore the professional self and its multidimensional aspects: “self-image; self-esteem; job motivation; job satisfaction; task perception and future perspective” (1994: 55) through the experiences of the individual.

Sammons, Day, Kington, Gu, Stobart and Smees (2007) undertook research to attempt to understand the holistic picture in variations in teachers’ lives, work, and effectiveness across macro, meso and micro level contexts, as well as in different biographical and experiential phases. The research sought to describe and analyse influences on teachers’ professional and personal lives, identities and effectiveness, and explore the interconnections between them, along with connections to the social context. They identified the multiple and complex factors which impact upon the variations in lives and careers. These include situated factors (pupils, leadership, colleagues); the teacher’s role and responsibilities; policies and Government initiatives; and personal factors

(health, family support, family demands). In summary they were factors arising from both institutions and personal lives. This work is supported by that of others who have identified the range of personal factors involved: values; emotions, including stress; motivation; resilience; and commitment (Jeffrey and Woods, 1996; Kelchtermans, 1996; Hargreaves, 1998; Jeffrey and Woods, 1998; Hoggett, 2000; Gewirtz, 2002; Roxburgh, 2004; Dowling, 2005; Ballet *et al.*, 2006; Day *et al.*, 2006; Sammons *et al.*, 2007).

Sammons *et al.* (2007) suggest that there are implications in all of this for staff motivation and retention. They divide retention in teaching into two types: a physical continuation and the maintenance of motivation and commitment (quality), which they suggest includes a willingness to learn; believing they can make a difference; huge personal investments in the role; and levels of personal worth attached to professional worth. Those that feel positive and motivated do so because they believe they can make a difference, and consider their role in relation to who they are, what they know, and thus how they teach. Alongside the importance of the individual factors considered by Sammons *et al.* (2007) for teachers generally, O'Bryant, O'Sullivan and Raudensky (2000), Curtner-Smith (2001), and Eldar and Tamor (2006) all note the importance of occupational socialisation in the specific context of physical education in relation to the influences for entering the profession, as well as the teachers' subsequent perceptions and actions within the role. This work notes the significance of the workplace and the transmission of school culture as influences on perspectives and practice. The work of policy discourses in and on both school structures and individuals is significant here. Ball (2003: 215) suggests that the "teacher's soul" is subject to the "terrors of performativity" and this takes place within the context of the school through structure and policy. Curtner-Smith (2001: 98) found in his work that those physical education teachers working in schools where they describe more "favourable conditions" feel better able to get on with the innovative, professional roles they envisioned for themselves.

The ideas above indicate that teachers give meaning to their experiences which has an impact upon their role. Sammons *et al.* (2007) suggest that teachers make and maintain meaning through a strong sense of personal and professional agency and moral purpose which contribute to their commitment and resilience. Kelchtermans (1993, 1996) identified that in giving meaning to experiences there is the development of a personal interpretive framework which is also explored by Ballet *et al.*:

“First, there is a teacher’s conception about her/his self as a teacher: the professional self, referring to beliefs about oneself and one’s professional identity. The second component is the subjective educational theory: the personal system of knowledge and beliefs on teaching. The personal interpretive framework operates as a lens through which all changes, demands and expectations are perceived, interpreted and valued/evaluated. In other words, teachers’ personal beliefs mediate the impact of what happens in their jobs. Whereas some teachers may perceive a particular demand as a real ‘attack’ on their professional self, for others this same demand may be interpreted as a stimulus for professional development. This illustrates the complex and contradictory responses of teachers to demands and expectations” (2006: 213).

This section has considered the way in which teachers are split between external injunctions and personal investments and are required to cope (Hey and Bradford, 2004). Sammons *et al.* (2007) suggested that the complex factors in schools require teachers to balance personal and work pressures and integrate professional knowledge, personal experience, the micro-politics of school, and socio-cultural contexts. In seeking to balance all of this, teachers’ ability to cope was found to relate to life experience and events, strength and conviction of ideals, a sense of efficacy and agency, and the support of leaders and colleagues. Kelchtermans (1993) identified that the ability to cope is connected to self-image; self-esteem; job motivation; task perception; and future perspective. This complexity inevitably impacts upon personal lives (Ballet *et al.*, 2006) but significantly Huberman (1993), Kelchtermans

(1993) and Sammons *et al.* (2007) found that different teachers respond differently. Kelchtermans' (1993) attributes this to the way in which the teachers understand themselves (personal interpretive framework) and their knowledge and beliefs (the subjective educational theory). The subjective educational theory and associated personal interpretive framework arise from individual experiences and the meanings attributed to those, which offer a useful mechanism to think about the different responses from different teachers.

There are three issues arising from the review of literature that require further consideration in this thesis. Firstly, the key role of teacher identity (Campbell and Kane, 2000) has not been subject to any notable exploration in the literature so far and will be explored later in this chapter. Secondly, Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe suggest that the multiple aspects of teachers' lives "can only be understood properly when situated in the broader context of a career and personal life history" (1994: 45; Kelchtermans, 1993). This will be considered in the methodology. Thirdly, teachers "need support for their commitment, energy and skill over their careers if they are to grapple with the immense emotional, intellectual and social demands and as they work towards building the internal and external relationships demanded by on-going Government reforms and social movements" (Day *et al.*, 2006: 614). This support is often identified through the structures for professional learning (referred to commonly as CPD in Government and institutional policies). In addition, Ballet *et al.* suggest that "even in the face of growing external pressures and intensification, many teachers keep imposing high norms of pedagogical perfection and commitment on themselves" (2006: 213). These expectations of the self (personal professional standards), alongside the structures in society: demands of policy; discourses of professionalism; and the functioning of the institution; lead to the drive for on-going or professional learning, another example of a 'technology of the self'. The role of teachers' professional learning will be considered next.



### **2.3.3 Teachers' Professional Learning**

This section explores the concept and processes of professional learning and our understanding of this in relation to both the policy context and the teachers themselves.

The rapid pace and notable volume of policy implementation, identified as a critical factor earlier (Ball, 2013), places an expectation on schools to respond 'effectively'. Schools are regularly inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) to ensure that they are implementing Government policy initiatives and developments, and judgements are made about the school's effectiveness to do so. The outcomes of Ofsted inspections are made public and are available to be used as a basis for judgement about, and competition between, schools in the education 'market'. Individual teachers contribute directly to this process of inspection (Jeffery and Woods, 1998). In addition to this key audit mechanism operational between 1998 and 2012, teachers were required to register with the General Teaching Council for England and comply with the "Code of Conduct" which outlined the expectations for professional teachers registered in England (GTCE, 2009). This code identified the need for teachers to engage in activities which would maintain and develop their practice. Further to this, there is an on-going requirement through Government policy that teachers will participate in an annual appraisal of their work via Performance Management processes (DfEE, 1998). This is all embedded in the on-going rhetoric about raising standards in schools (Callaghan, 1976; DfEE, 1997; DFE, 2010) and is, therefore, connected to the processes of audit and accountability outlined earlier (MacLure, 2005; Hey and Bradford, 2004) and the "appeal to professionalism" (Fournier, 1999). These matters inevitably have an impact on teachers (Gewirtz, 2002).

As we have seen earlier in this chapter, education policy since 1988 has created a context for teachers' work underpinned by relentless, routine, renewal, with a requirement to reform and be reformed (Bernstein, 2001;

Evans *et al.*, 2008; Ball, 2013). Neoliberalist agendas require a greater level of individual accountability which necessarily demands increased personal responsibility (Bonal and Rambla, 2003; Davies, 2005; Olssen, 2006). As suggested earlier, the teacher works within the broader context of a “Totally Pedagogised Society” which insists upon “trainability” (Bernstein, 2001: 365), and society rewards those individuals who succeed in the quest for “continuous pedagogic reformation” (Bernstein, 1996: 59; see also Hey and Bradford 2004). In the context of teaching, and elsewhere, this has become known as “CPD” (Ofsted, 2002; 2006; 2010). This term would seem to offer a concise summary of the requirements which have evolved for professional teachers in relation to the ideas outlined above (Campbell and Kane, 2000). ‘CPD’ is a term that has become synonymous with attendance at different types of courses (Armour, 2011). On that basis, the term ‘professional learning’ will be used here to encompass the breadth of learning which teachers may engage with in relation to their professional role (Timperley, 2011).

In order for teachers to ‘survive’ audit by demonstrating on-going improvement in their performance, there is a need for them to respond to the demands made by policy change and implementation. These demands on teachers include requirements such as knowledge of the breadth of policy development; current subject knowledge; and the broader social responsibilities including inclusion and diversity issues (Hargreaves, 2000). These expectations, as well as being bound up in the code of practice, also form the basis for professional competencies, referred to in current English policy as the “Professional Standards for Teachers” (TDA, 2007). The Standards are statements indicating what teachers must be able to do at different stages in their careers and require the production of an evidence base to demonstrate competence (Macdonald, Mitchell and Mayer, 2006). They place teachers under constant surveillance which operates as a ‘Panopticon’ (Foucault, 1991a) where teachers are visible to leaders and managers, colleagues, parents and pupils. This visibility prompts the teacher to self-discipline in order

both to meet the expectations placed upon them and be seen to meet them.

It is valuable to note here that the “Teacher Training Agency”, responsible for the training of teachers since 1998, became the “Training and Development Agency for Schools” in 2005 to reflect a broader remit and the Government’s intention to improve the development and training of qualified staff as well as those learning to teach (TDA, 2008b). In 2012 it became the Teaching Agency and merged with the National College for School Leadership in 2013 to become the National College for Teaching and Leadership. In 2007 the Standards were extended from statements relating to ‘competence’ at the end of a period of ITE to statements across different stages of the professional career. This has been maintained in the development of the Teachers’ Standards (DFE, 2011). The Teachers’ Standards are interestingly applicable up to the level of senior leadership, which has its own terms and conditions of employment: perhaps organised in this way to create a structure which embeds managerialism.

Ballet identifies that professional learning “goes hand in hand with efforts to ‘buffer’ the threat of intensification” (Ballet *et al.*, 2006: 225). Hargreaves suggests that “conflicting pressures and tendencies are leading teachers...to re-evaluate their professionalism and to make judgements about the kinds of professional learning they need to get better in their job” (2000: 152). In ‘getting better’, and being able to demonstrate involvement in the right mechanisms for doing so, the teacher might feel more secure or ‘normal’ within the audit culture of schools. Teachers are required to undertake activities which will assist them in responding to expectations ‘effectively’; and provide evidence that they are meeting the Teachers’ Standards (DFE, 2011) through targets set through annual performance management and Ofsted inspection criteria. Armour identifies professional learning as “an essential component of effective professional practice” (2011: 231). From a

Foucauldian perspective, the involvement of an individual in the project of professional learning is significant in them becoming normalised within the discourses of professionalism. The expectation that a teacher will be involved in appropriate learning activities is part of the normalising agenda of professionalism: there are inevitable implications for the way teachers are made to feel by this (Gewirtz, 2002; Ball, 2003).

When we talk of professional learning it is important to consider what the term means. Kelchtermans suggests it:

"is conceived of as a learning process, resulting from the meaningful interaction between the teacher and their professional context, both in time and space. This interaction eventually leads to changes in a teacher's professional practice, as well as their thinking about that practice" (2004: 218).

MacLure suggests that it "involves a reflexive search for self-knowledge and self-improvement" (1993: 312). Hodkinson (2009) suggests that teachers' learning may be conceived of as "workplace participation and...learning as personal construction" (2009: 159).

Fournier recognises an alignment of "professional conduct and competence with self and personal development" (1999: 299) which operates as a mechanism for control. As a professional requirement, professional learning fits neatly within the discourses of performativity (Gewirtz, 2002). Olssen suggests that this is a key feature of neoliberal policy where self-regulation is key and "constitutes individuals as autonomous choosers of their own lives" where they are responsible for their own professional learning but also able to respond to the ever-changing climate: "not only must the individual learn, but they must learn to recognise what to learn, and what and when to forget what to learn when circumstances demand it" (2006: 224).

There are many structures and processes proposed to support effective professional learning such as “pervasive; fused with practice; mainly school-based; networks and teams; projects; lateral; peer-to-peer; mentors and coaches; self-organised” (Hargreaves, 2007: 2; see also Armour, 2009; Armour, 2011; Hodkinson, 2009). The idea of professional learning communities is one commonly suggested concept but often concepts such as this are looked at uncritically (Watson, 2014). It is important to look at any one particular model with a critical eye. Hodkinson (2009) adds to this by alerting us to the complexity and relational nature of the factors which influence professional learning. This is particularly important given the nature of the policy contexts in which professional learning is taking place.

Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe (1994) suggest that professional learning occurs both gradually and abruptly, and can be the result of critical or distinctive incidents or people: in other words significant incidents and/or people have the capacity to influence professional learning. The interesting issue is that the incidents or people that may be significant for one may not be for another and so different personal meanings, perceptions and responses clearly have a crucial role to play in professional learning and the career (Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe, 1994). On this basis it is critical to explore individual needs and the responses of the individual to professional learning opportunities (Day *et al.*, 2006; Dowling-Næss, 2001; MacLure, 1993). Hodkinson expresses concern about “hazardous oversimplifications” (2009: 163) and assumptions that what will work for one will work for all (see also Makopoulou, 2011).

Huberman (1993), identifies that as a result of differences and diversity amongst teachers, careers are not “linear, predictable or identical” (1993: 264). Eldar and Talmor (2006) acknowledge the significance of personal characteristics in responses to the socialisation processes in school. Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe (1994) recognise that in attempting to

understand professional learning, the complexity of the self must be explored (see also Hodkinson, 2009). This is central to this PhD research and will be taken up in the next chapter which looks at the methodological approach taken in this research.

Day *et al.* (2006) suggest that the mechanisms for professional learning also have a potentially positive impact upon the way in which teachers feel about their role. Their research with teachers indicates that feeling positive and effective “is important in maintaining motivation, self-esteem or self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and commitment to teaching” (Day *et al.*, 2006: 614). This is particularly significant given the research that has identified that emotions are a significant factor in the teacher’s role, but remain largely ignored in policy and research (Jakhelln, 2011; Hargreaves, 1994; Hargreaves, 2000; Goodson, 2003; Kelchtermans, 1996).

Campbell and Kane (2000), amongst others (Day *et al.*, 2006), suggest that professional learning needs to be dynamic and responsive to the needs of teachers at different points in their careers, recognising the significance of the changing individual and their social contexts. Teachers are required to differentiate learning to meeting learners’ needs and enable them to achieve what they are capable of. Sammons *et al.* (2007) suggest that there is equally a need for this in professional learning for teachers in order that it is relevant and meets individual needs: a personalised learning agenda (Gray, 2005; Makopoulou, 2011).

The “limitations of top down reform” (Day and Smethem, 2009: 148) have consequences for teachers, and policy needs to be constructed to take account of those working in schools that are required to implement it (Goodson, 2003; Campbell and Kane, 2000). Sammons *et al.* (2007) suggest that less policy change and turmoil would also have positive implications in this regard.

Day *et al.* (2006) identify that the teachers involved in their research provide:

"cause for concern and hope – concern because it is clear that there are variations in perceived effectiveness which relate to life events, age, experience, phase of schools and their socio-economic status; concern because of the high levels of professional stress which, for many, are having negative effects on their personal lives; concern also as to whether such levels can be sustained without the loss of some of the best teachers or loss of their energy, commitment and sense of purpose. Yet there is hope too, because of the high levels of commitment and agency, often against the odds, which many teachers' accounts reveal" (614).

There is a need to consider the way in which different teachers orientate to the project of professional learning and the differences in their experiences (Gewirtz, 2002). Makopoulou (2011) calls for the need to understand these complexities in order to support future professional learning initiatives. The context for exploring this is one where there are clear, yet contested, discourses and inscribed meanings of professionalism (Fournier, 1999) within a society that constantly wants teachers to change (Hargreaves, 1994). With this in mind, it is crucial to understand the way in which individual professional experience is understood and navigated (Archer, 2007). It is also important to understand the way in which teachers learn about what they do (Hodkinson, 2009).

Issues around professionalism, professional lives, and professional learning have been considered here. There is a recognition that little is known about how teachers "construct meaning in their work" (Gleeson, Davies and Wheeler, 2005) and Day *et al.* suggest that "critical engagement with individual teachers' cognitive and emotional 'selves' has been relatively rare" (2006: 601). If teacher identity is a process of "constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing" (Day *et al.*, 2006: 608), and personal identity is bound up with professional identity, then it is

crucial to explore teacher identity in order to fully contextualise the place of the teacher within this work. The next section will explore identity.

## **2.4 Teacher Identity**

We have seen earlier in this chapter that policy and being a professional provide part of the context for the experiences of teachers in schools. The third area which underpins this study is the identity of the teacher, which has already been briefly mentioned. The concept of identity is complex and has been discussed and explored by many (Goffman, 1959; Ricoeur, 1988; Giddens, 1991; Kelchtermans, 1993; Bauman, 1996; Hall, 1996; Craib, 1998; Archer, 2000; Day *et al.*, 2006; Burkitt, 2008; Jenkins, 2008; Lawler, 2014). Bauman (1996) suggests that concerns about identity arose as a concern in modernity because of the growing uncertainty in individuals who needed to locate themselves in relation to others. Identity became the “name given to the escape sought from that uncertainty” (1996: 18).

This section will consider some of the relevant identity literature, taking a sociological perspective in order to examine the ideas around identity generally, as well as in relation to the specific context of the teacher and how we might better understand this. There is consideration of the contrasting views of identity as either fixed or unstable. One of the key challenges in thinking about identity is the problem of definition which arises from the array of associated terms and the ways in which these are applied: the terms used include “the self, subjectivity, the subjects, subjectivities, the agent, agency and action” Craib (1998: 1). Terms such as ‘identity’ and ‘self’ are often used synonymously and interchangeably in the literature. Identity is discussed in some literature as tangible; an entity or commodity, particularly in relation to the value of different identities (Craib, 1998; Jenkins, 2008; Lawler: 2014) yet Hall refers to the “necessity and impossibility of identities” (1996: 17). It will not be possible to resolve these difficulties here, instead I will seek to explore key ideas to provide the third part of the context for this study referring to identity



and drawing on the use of the term 'self' as all encompassing (Craib, 1998; Burkitt, 2008).

### **2.4.1 Social Selves**

Plummer (2003: 50) sees identity as having a “sense of who one is and who one is not”. Lawler (2014) links this to the notion of identifications where we recognise similarities between ourselves and others which Hall (1996) suggests are based on shared origins or characteristics. The processes of identification enable us to recognise both our “sameness and uniqueness” (Lawler: 2014: 15).

Burkitt (2008) acknowledges the significance of the individual in relation to identity but situates attempts to understand the self within the context of the social. He identifies that there is “no secret truth of self” (187) but that there is both a “social being and an individual self” (192). Henriques, Hollway, Urwin and Venn (1998) consider identity from a psycho-social perspective and challenge traditional psychology to ask how the individual is made social. They identify the body as more than just a container for the mind: referring to both “the interiority and exteriority of the self” (xvi). They suggest that there is a need to recognise that we are “thinking, feeling, acting, situated, and embodied human beings” (Henriques *et al.*, 1998: xvi), and that body and consciousness intermingle to produce identity. Lawler (2014: 2) recognises that identity is “a social and collective process...something produced through social relations”, which Coffey supports in suggesting that it “is constructed and negotiated through complex social processes” (2001: 53).

Dowling-Næss (2001) suggests that the sense of self changes over time. Coffey notes that “it has become analytically useful to consider selves that are negotiated, constructed and articulated, and in turn to view individuals as actively part of this process - creating selves that are free-floating and multiple, subject to constant flux and change” (2001: 52; see also Hall, 1996). Day *et al.* (2006) suggest that “identities are a shifting

amalgam of personal biography, culture, social influence and institutional values which may change according to role and circumstance” (613).

Plummer (2003) explores the idea that identity is a concept which operates at both micro (individual) and macro (societal) levels resulting in an on-going dialectic between how we view ourselves as individuals, and the negotiation of this in relation to the society around us. If we accept that "our 'selves' are inescapably social" (Nias, 1989: 20) then:

"the authoring of our own identity and the finding of our own voice, the one we are most sure of when we speak, is always achieved by taking from some of these voices around us and combining them in unique ways to create our own sense of self" (Burkitt, 2008: 189).

MacLure offers a critical view by suggesting that language plays a crucial role in the construction and understanding of identity: "qualities such as truth, fact, authenticity, validity and identity are held to be interactional accomplishments - matters to be claimed and defended in discourse rather than properties that reside in people or data" (1993: 321). She refers to identity as an argument: "a set of discursive practices", from which Kelchtermans (1993) suggests that "the self is the product" (448):

"Identity should not be seen as a stable entity – something that people have - but as something they use to justify, explain and make sense of themselves in relation to other people, and to the contexts in which they operate" (MacLure, 1993: 312).

Burkitt (2008) suggests that individuals are "a unique creation of their own biography and background set within particular social and historical times and places: creations in interpersonal, dialogical social life" (193). The "socially produced individual is not merely moulded, labelled, pushed around by external forces; but is formed by a process which treats neither society nor individual as a privileged beginning, but takes interior and exterior as problematic categories" (Henriques *et al.*, 1998: 9). Craib

suggests that “when I think about myself I am divided, experiencing and experienced at the same time” (1998: 5). Day *et al.* (2006) argue that as a result of this, the interactions are not ‘done to’ individuals, but that individuals are able to alter their own context according to their biographical project, and associated capital, competence and capacities, and use it to explain themselves. The nature of the self and the biographical project is such that individuals will engage in this in different ways. These different responses to the complexities of the social world result in different forms of identity some of which Lawler suggests are “mutually constitutive” whilst others are “mutually exclusive” (2014: 11), acknowledging “identity as socially produced, socially embedded and worked out in people’s everyday social lives” (Lawler, 2014: 19). In acknowledging this it is clear that one of the difficulties in attempts to explain identity is the significance of experience and subjectivity, which are often omitted (Craib, 1998).

Burkitt (2008) also recognises that the authoring of the self is constrained by both interpersonal and material constraints, which encourages us to consider the notion of power. Hall outlines the methods of production of the self as an object in the world and notes “the practices of self constitution, recognition and reflection, the relation to the rule, alongside the scrupulous attention to normative regulation” (Hall, 1996: 13). In order to consider the relationship between identity and power, including regulation, we can return to the ideas of Althusser (1971) who situates identity formation within the wider ideological practices and institutions of society: situated in and articulated through the Ideological State Apparatus such as family, culture, media, and education. In terms of the context of education, it is valuable to refer back to Foucault’s ideas around governmentality and the way in which this operates to govern the professional context and its role in relation to the professional self. The ‘technology of power’ and the imposition of identities by the powerful on the less powerful is acknowledged here.

However, alongside this, Foucault (in his later work) acknowledged that within the 'disciplined' and 'disciplinary' society the self has a significant role to play:

"power in its exercise goes much further, passes through much finer channels, and is much more ambiguous, since each individual has at his disposal a certain power, and for that very reason can also act as the vehicle for transmitting a wider power" (Foucault and Gordon, 1980: 72).

Tamboukou supports this: "Foucault has argued that within relations of power, individuals and groups can find space to resist domination, exercise freedom and pursue their interests (2008: 117). This offers us conditions of possibility within the constraints which society imposes and operate as 'technologies of the self'. As Burkitt (2008) suggests "identity is not simply about who we are, but also what we want to be: the image we want to project to others and the way in which that image is supported or betrayed by our dispositions and capacities" (188). In Goffman's work identity is viewed as a performance but not in the sense of an 'act'. The person is not playing a part but adopting different and necessary roles as the social world requires. These roles are repeated in context and cumulatively make us our 'selves'. The sense of self evolves in response to the performance in a social setting and the response of others to it (Goffman, 1959). The capacity to adopt different roles in social settings is helpful here in exploring the professional self, which we will consider next.

Alongside these ideas about identity as performative, Craib suggests that there is a core self with intertwining social selves (1998): "social identities can come and go, but my identity goes on as something which unites all the social identities I have ever had, have or will have" (1998: 4). Nias (1989) provides us with a useful summary of the discussions around the substantial and situational self where the substantial self is like an inner core and relatively resistant to change, whilst the situational self is something that can be mobilised to respond to the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Plummer's view is that there is a need to

recognise an “essential sense of self, even as we change and modify it” (2003: 60). Another way of looking at this is considered by Elliott (2005) who summarises a key idea from the work of Ricoeur, suggesting that “individuals can be conceptualized as having a continuous presence through time without becoming fixed or essentialized...this sense of identity is permanence through time without sameness through time” (2005: 125).

Burkitt (2008) draws on Bauman’s idea that there has to be some degree of consistency in our identity in order that we can recognise ourselves and others can recognise us. As we have seen earlier in this chapter, our social world requires us to balance this consistency with the demand for individuals to be responsive to rapid change; thus flexible, renewable selves (Craib, 1998; Ball, 2003; Ball, 2013).

Plummer argued in a lecture that his perspective on identity and the ‘self’ had changed following a period of serious ill-health. He spoke of understanding himself as a “solid self...against a whole life time of arguing about the mutable, fragmented, homeless self. Deep down for all the little other changing selves, there is a core me” (Plummer, 2011). He was asked by one of the audience to consider whether he considered this a core self or whether this sense arose from a self that had travelled through experience. Tamboukou commented in response that perhaps the self would be more appropriately viewed as “a refrain” (2011a).

Craib (1998) identifies that the self and identity are more than just products of the social, and are more effectively seen as the sole and group freedom areas of individual and collective freedom which are worked on by societal structure and ideology. Archer (2003 and 2007) argues that it is as a result of this that we need to consider reflexivity as significant. She identifies that reflexivity acts as a mediator between the personal and the social, and that the ‘internal conversation’ is that which enables individuals to make sense of their experience and position in the

social world reconciling structure and agency without the creation of a dualism. This makes inherently possible the view of the self as having the capacity for consistency without being fixed. Within post-structuralist thinking about identity where 'selves' are described as multiple, fractured and fragmented, Burkitt (2008) proposes that this provides an opportunity to think about identity in a way that avoids a sense that it is in some permanent state of near disintegration.

This idea of consistency for/in/of the 'self' is taken here and I will now consider this in relation to the experience of teachers.

#### **2.4.2 Professional Selves**

In the previous sections of this chapter we have considered the impact of policy and professionalism on the work and lives of teachers. As Ball (2013) has identified, performativity is the regime that underpins current national and international policy including education policy. He suggests that the "reform" or "policy technologies" (2008: 42) which operate across public service including education:

"are devices for changing the meaning of practice and of social relationships. They provide a new language, a new set of incentives and disciplines and a new set of roles, positions and identities within which what it means to be a teacher, student/learner, parent and so on are all changing. Targets, accountability, competition and choice, leadership, entrepreneurialism, performance-related pay and privatisation articulate new ways of thinking about what we do, what we value and what our purposes are" (2008: 42-43).

Performativity, and the associated 'technologies of regulation', create challenges for teachers, as they complicate the "relationship between the state, ideology of professionalism, and lived interiority" (Hey and Bradford, 2004: 693). Lingard (2009) suggests that the reconfigured professionalism required by current ideology, operates as a form of occupational control which, as Ball (2013) indicates above, makes

demands on the identity of the teacher. Craib (1998) suggests that the demands of capitalism and the market economy require a view of the self as a 'product' requiring on-going improvement. Stronach *et al.* note that in response the teacher activates "a complex set of occasional identifications in response to shifting contexts" (2002: 117).

Sammons *et al.* (2007) suggest, through their work looking at teachers' lives and careers, that professional identity is the way in which teachers define themselves both personally and to others. As noted earlier, Kelchtermans identifies five key aspects which impact upon the professional self: self-image; self-esteem; job motivation; job satisfaction; task perception and future perspective (1993: 55-56). Sammons *et al.* (2007) propose more broadly that identity is linked directly with factors such as professional and personal values; aspirations and changes; and sense of effectiveness. They suggest that teachers have a composite identity which is situated and socially located in both the professional and personal contexts: within the classroom, department, school, and amongst family and friends. This supports the ideas of Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe who suggest that as a result of the self being connected to the craft of teaching, any "distinction between the self and professional self is theoretical-conceptual" (1994: 56). Sammons *et al.* (2007) suggest that particular aspects of professional and personal concerns will dominate at different points and affect the stability or instability of the composite identity, which in turn will affect vulnerability, agency, well-being and perceived effectiveness. In the context of a climate of performativity this is significant.

If we consider this in relation to Goffman's work there is also an issue of the role of the teacher given that they are expected, by virtue of their professional position, to behave in particular ways and not others, thus conforming to social rules or norms (Lawler, 2014) and demonstrating appropriate conduct on a regular basis which becomes part of their professional self (Goffman, 1959: 81). This context of audit culture and

mechanisms for accountability has made the role of the teacher increasingly complex (Strathern, 2000a and b).

Day *et al.* state that the mobilisations of different identities:

“occur in the space between the ‘structure’ (of the relations between power and status) and ‘agency’ (in the influence which we and others can have); and it is the interaction between these which influences how teachers see themselves” (2006: 613).

MacLure found that “features of context, or stratifying factors such as age, subject affiliation, or seniority, took on different meanings for each teacher” (1993: 314). One particularly helpful example she provided was from the research conversations that she conducted where one teacher described herself as too old whilst another described herself as too young in spite of the fact that they were both 27 years old. Day *et al.* suggest that this is a result of the fact that “identities are neither intrinsically stable nor intrinsically fragmented... Rather, teacher identities may be more, or less, stable and more or less fragmented at different times and in different ways according to a number of life, career and situational factors” (2006: 601).

Nias suggests that there is a further consideration here in that:

"since no two people have the same life experiences, we all learn to perceive the world and ourselves as part of it in different ways...No matter how pervasive particular aspects of a shared social or occupational culture may be or how well individuals are socialised into it, the attitudes and actions of each teacher are rooted in their own ways of perceiving the world" (1989: 14).

As explored in the last section, Kelchtermans (1993) suggests that teachers make meaning from their experiences which results in the development of a subjective educational theory and associated personal interpretive framework. Archer’s (2007) notion of reflexivity is again useful



here in thinking about mechanisms for understanding that, alongside the processes through which teachers “struggle to construct and sustain a stable identity” (Day *et al*, 2006: 613) and make their way through the professional world. If we wish to understand the professional self of the teacher which arises from their individual interaction with the world, then understanding the way in which they navigate it is crucial. Drawing on individual personal experiences has the capacity to deepen our understanding of teachers’ selves (Craib, 1998). Archer (2007) would suggest that engaging in understanding reflexivity provides a valuable tool for exploring this. It is critical to this study to consider how to approach an understanding of those ‘selves’, which will be undertaken in the next chapter.

### **2.4.3 Understanding Selves**

The literature considered so far demonstrates the significance of understanding the person in relation to understanding lives, part of which relates to their individual experiences of the social world (Craib, 1998). In their study of teachers, Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe (1994) considered professional learning from a biographical perspective, drawing on a number of key ideas: the self as complex and dynamic; self-narratives as social, current and continually unfolding; career stories as “narrative, retrospective reconstruction” (47); the overlapping of the self and professional self and; the recognition that professional experiences result in a “professional self and a subjective educational theory” (51). They take the view that in order to understand professional life we need to understand the way in which it is experienced and the associated meanings made.

As we have seen, Craib contends that the significance of experience is crucial to our understanding of identity: we have to take into account “the way in which people experience the world” (Craib, 1998: 1). This is supported by Archer (2007) who contends that we need a better understanding of the processes involved in the way in which people

experience their worlds, the conversations they have with themselves, and the resulting decisions and action, in order to inform discussions about lives. These ideas will be considered further in the next chapter.

Sammons *et al.* (2007), Nias (1989) and others suggest that in order to understand teachers' lives, one must get the teacher's story. This is supported by Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe (1994) in their recognition that the professional experience is located in the individual biography (see also Nias, 1989; Jeffery and Woods, 1998; Dowling-Næss, 2001; Archer, 2007; Moon, 2010). Elliott draws on Ricoeur to suggest that narrative:

“provides the practical means by which a person can understand themselves as living through time, a human subject with a past, present and future made whole by the coherence of the narrative plot with a beginning, middle and end. Ricoeur argues that a narrative understanding of identity avoids the choice between continual flux and instability, and the stasis of an absolute identity. An account of narrative identity can therefore avoid the extremes of both essentialist and constructivist views of the self” (2005: 125).

Coffey suggests that identity work can be seen as biographical work as it “allows an analysis of the interactions between individual social actors and particular educational settings” (2001: 67). Kelchtermans notes the relevance of exploring those people and incidents that teachers identify as critical and distinctive in order to understand the meanings that arise from their experiences. The literature would suggest that biographies, through narratives, have the potential to allow us to understand the way in which teacher identities are shaped by their social experiences, and understand the “complexities and contradictions of real life” (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 84). This is particularly important in understanding teachers' selves if we accept Craib's view that identity cannot be fully understood if experience is omitted (1998). Sacks is helpful here:

"We have, each of us, a life story, and inner narrative - whose continuity, whose sense, is our lives. It might be said that each of us constructs and lives, a 'narrative', and that this narrative is us...each of us is a biography, a story. Each of us is a singular narrative, which is constructed, continually, unconsciously, by, through, and in us - through our perceptions, our feelings, our thoughts, our actions; and, not least, our discourse, our spoken narrations. To be ourselves we must have ourselves - possess, if need be re-possess, our life stories. We must 'recollect' ourselves, recollect the inner drama, the narrative, of ourselves. A man needs such a narrative, a continuous inner narrative to maintain his identity, his self" (Sacks, 1985: 105-106).

It is from this position that we can now begin to consider the methodological basis for this work and the associated challenges which will be explored in the next chapter.

## **2.5 Chapter Summary**

In seeking to understand the individual teacher's experiences and the ways in which these are constructed and narrated, it is essential to understand the complexity of the context in which the individual works and lives.

The impact of 'government' through structure; policy; identity; the complex, emotional, and intensive work; and the balance of personal and professional experiences sees different teachers respond in different ways (Sammons *et al.*, 2007; Kelchtermans, 1993). Archer would suggest that this is best explained through the processes involved in reflexivity and the internal conversation (Archer, 2007).

The spaces that the current literature creates, and the valuable questions these spaces raise, challenge us to think about '*professional learning*' differently. The narrow political view that translates into educational policy; the multiple issues that underpin '*being*' a professional; and the complex and shifting individual nature of teachers' identities set the

context for exploring how professional learning is experienced, negotiated and responded to.

The next chapter outlines the processes involved in seeking to answer the research questions, along with the methodological challenges posed and their implications.

## **Chapter Three: Methods for ‘Missing Persons’**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter explored the three key areas of: policy; being a professional teacher; and identity that provide the context for answering the research questions: How do teachers narrate their professional learning? What do they identify as the key influences? The context offers a valuable lens for this research by allowing us to consider the matter by looking at “the relationship between the state, the ideologies of professionalism, and lived interiority” (Hey and Bradford, 2004: 693). In contextualising the matter in this way, significant methodological challenges have arisen which will be explored in this chapter. In summary, a narrative approach has been taken to explore professional learning through the experiences of the individual and their understanding of those experiences, with links to the broader social context. The individual is central to the research and the narratives shared by three teachers provide the data. The work is informed by a critical humanist perspective (Plummer, 2001) and considers the matter in relation to the social; specifically the way in which the social gets inside individuals through discourses, government and normativity (Bradford and Hey, 2007) and their responses to it.

The chapter begins by considering the context for the methodology in relation to the multiple ways in which I am positioned in this research as a person, a teacher with a commitment to professional learning, and a researcher. There is a clear acknowledgement in this thesis of my position as the researcher in relation to both the substantive concern and the methodology (Cotterill and Letherby, 1993; Rogers, 2003).

I consider the theoretical and methodological context for the research process under the headings of ‘Missing Persons’; ‘Ontological (In)Security’; and ‘A Narrative Approach’. Although I make reference to

some work explored in the previous chapter, the emphasis here is on the relevance to the development of the research process.

The methods employed in this study for collecting data through research conversations (Woods, 1985) are considered with the implications that arose during the process, including the key role of a collaborative analysis. Inevitably a complex, respondent-centred methodology such as the one implemented here requires a detailed exploration of research ethics including contacting and recruiting the teachers, as well the ethical dilemmas that arose during the process (Ludhra and Chappell, 2011).

As Maguire, Perryman, Ball and Braun suggest, I also seek to be “somewhat unconventional” (2011: 1) by telling some of the rarely told stories: that is, making explicit some of the often implicit aspects of the research “creation and development” process. I view this as critical to this research, particularly given its methodology (see also Sparkes, 2002; Mauthner and Doucet, 2003).

I have also chosen to situate myself in relation to the work. The process of the doctorate took place over a number of years as a result of part time study alongside a full time post coordinating a professional postgraduate course and teaching on other education and ITE courses at a ‘research intensive’ University<sup>4</sup>. This was during a period of significant change in both ITE and the University at several different levels. I also had two little boys during the process, and whilst their arrival on the planet was the best of luck, organising my professional commitments around their lives has been challenging! These multiple commitments have resulted in a slower journey to completion which, although frustrating at times, has provided space to think deeply about the decisions I have made at each stage. I feel that my learning journey has been profound in both my

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<sup>4</sup> Those involved in professional education courses have heavy teaching and administrative commitments which they are required to prioritise thus there is less benefit from the emphasis on the research intensive culture.

academic and 'real life' contexts (Back, 2002). It is impossible to capture the depth and breadth of that journey here but this chapter seeks to make key relevant aspects of it explicit within the boundaries of doctoral study.

## **3.2 The Research Context**

### **3.2.1 An Autobiographical Preface**

The substantive concern arose from my range of personal and professional experiences, and the associated observations of those of others (Chapman, 2010). The methodological position and approach has been directly but unintentionally informed by my response to these experiences. My own position is relevant given the on-going interest I have had in my career to understand my own approach to professional learning. It is important to note that this project did not begin as a process of seeking to know and understand myself, however the consideration of others' understandings of themselves has inevitably prompted reflections on the self:

“The notion of auto/biography involves the insistence that accounts of other lives influence how we see and understand our own and that our understandings of our own lives will impact upon how we interpret other lives” (Stanley, 1993: i).

This particular aspect of the context for the research may initially appear to some as self-indulgent: an exercise in navel gazing. However, on the basis of my experiences of this process, making my own position clear will offer greater clarity to the development of both the substantive concern and methodological approaches (Cotterill and Letherby, 1993; Letherby, 2002). It is intended that in offering a brief autobiographical account, I will contextualise the study and provide explanation for the decisions made at each stage of the process. As part of the learning journey that I have undertaken, the process has challenged me to make my thinking as transparent as possible to myself in order that I might attempt to explain (at least some of) it here. This process of academic

study and self-study (Koch, 2010) has significantly increased the depth of my learning resulting from the doctoral process, and led to the development of the particular approaches developed (Etherington, 2006).

I came to this study with multiple life and professional experiences. As a child, my father's career took us to many different places across England, Holland and Germany. 'Home' changed regularly as we moved location between every one to three years. Inevitably this exposed me to many different people and it was essential to develop the ability to engage with, understand, and respond to people in order to negotiate successful social experiences and relationships with people with whom I had no prior history. I had not considered this before this project but it may offer one explanation for both my general and research interests in people.

Having successfully completed study at A Level at a British Forces Education Service (BFES) school in Germany and taken a gap year, I undertook a process of ITE via a B.Ed. (Hons) degree in Physical Education and Science between 1989 and 1993 at a Higher Education Institution (HEI) on the south coast of England. During that time I encountered a continuum of people who I would describe as ranging from the least to the most interesting and exciting. I made some great friends; worked with some very capable and supportive peers; and was inspired by professionals both in the HEI and in placement schools, who I considered to be excellent. In this context I use the term 'excellent' to mean committed, hardworking, innovative, supportive, collegial, knowledgeable, compassionate, consistent, fair and more<sup>5</sup>. I also encountered those who might be described as the opposite of this. There were various experiences that I count as defining for my development as a person in the social world and my understanding of what I wanted to be as a teacher, many of which are directly attributable to the particular experiences I had with others.

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<sup>5</sup> It was important to define my meaning of the word 'excellent' here given that the word has been used to mean very specific things in policy terms (DCSF, 2007).



On completion of my degree, I started work in state secondary schools in England and in total worked in five. I undertook a range of roles which included: teaching physical education; teaching science; head of a physical education department; and year leadership (traditionally known as a Head of Year). These roles provided a wide variety of tasks and challenges which varied according to the types of institution, the leadership, colleagues and pupils.

Following this, I moved into a career in ITE in a University in the south of England. In the school context I had acted as a mentor to ITE students and had always had an interest in moving into a role in the field. Indeed, in order to potentially facilitate this, I had completed a self-funded part time Master's degree in 1998. The idealist in me wanted to take on this role in order to have greater influence in creating positive learning experiences for young people in schools through the students and schools that I would work with.

There are a significant number of examples of people and situations which, on reflection, indicate to me the way in which my understanding of practice and the associated professional learning have evolved: this has arisen from practice and broader experiences. I was able to identify and narrate these examples prior to my doctoral study, however as my reading has increased and my understanding developed, I have been able to reflect more deeply and critically on their impact. Although there is not space nor is it relevant to explore these here, I have made the overview explicit in order to acknowledge the foundation for the study and the impact that different colleagues and different approaches have had on my own professional practice.

The period of time that I spent as a Head of Year developing close working relationships with young people, colleagues, parents and other professionals connected with schools had a notable effect on my

(professional) view of the world. I had worked alongside professionals who appeared to embrace their role within the “totally pedagogised society” and the associated pervasive neoliberal expectation that they would keep learning (Bernstein, 1996; 2001: 365). There were also those professionals who appeared to have lost enthusiasm for their role; did not apparently ‘care’ about things at any level of complexity: and failed to meet even the most basic principles of professional practice such as the need to plan effective lessons as learning opportunities and/or mechanisms for interacting appropriately with young people and colleagues (Sammons *et al.*, 2007).

My philosophy of teaching and education became increasingly situated in a concern for individuals and individual development (Kelchtermans, 2009). It was underpinned by a care for the human condition and the situations in which young people and professionals find themselves in by virtue of birth and circumstance: the experiences within the social world, with the inevitable multiplicity of contingencies that occur across aspects of life (Plummer, 2011).

The more time I spent in education, and the greater my responsibility for the leadership and management of people, the more I sought to understand why there were such notable differences in the way people within the same profession do things and how we might understand these individual differences. It was this that formed the basis for the research question with the focus on this as the process of professional learning.

### **3.2.2 The Background**

The most relevant starting point for the research was from the perspective of professional learning, given my knowledge of practice. Aside from CPD continuing to dominate the education agenda in relation to raising standards (Ball, 2003) and discourses of good professional practice (DfES, 1998; GTCE, 2009; DFE, 2010), the exploration of teachers’ experiences seemed best situated in the arena of the

individual's learning in and through their professional practice. In neoliberal terms this would be through CPD, a term that is used so frequently in policy, and laden with managerialist connotations as explored in the previous chapter. I use the term professional learning throughout the thesis as it is philosophically closer to what I believe occurs with/for/by professionals in schools<sup>6</sup> (Timperley, 2011).

Once the substantive concern had been explicated, the important matter at hand became the development of the most appropriate methodological approach to explore it. As explored in the previous chapter, the Foucauldian view is that governmentality pervades professional practice through societal expectations of 'appropriate' professional behaviour. The expectations and behaviour become internalised and acted upon by individuals resulting in it becoming normalised. However, evidence from my practice indicated that this view was problematic. Those who I described earlier as being excellent, whose practice indicated their compliance with the ideals of the Totally Pedagogised Society, self-instigated their personal/professional renewal rather than describing being compelled by any discourse(s) associated with performativity (Skelton, 2012). They appeared to demonstrate some 'resistance': being and performing differently in relation to the dominant policy discourses (Ball and Olmedo, 2013). Boden and Epstein explored aspects of this in relation to the way in which "intra- and inter-psychoic freedom can incite and support defiant imagination even in conditions of extreme structural oppression" (2011: 492). This all posed challenging questions: was it simply a result of the osmosis of policy (Bradford and Hey, 2007) and subsequent policy enactment, or perhaps evidence of agency?

It felt necessary to consider the way in which previous research had been conducted to develop a methodology that was both relevant to the research and had integrity for me. As Etherington clearly notes:

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<sup>6</sup> As well as those working in other types of institutions/organisations.

“Our choice of methodology is based on the personal beliefs and philosophies that inform our world view (ontology) and our ways of relating to and understanding how knowledge is created (epistemology) (2006: 83)”.

In considering other work in relation to my own views and philosophies, a number of valuable challenges arose which informed the process I subsequently undertook. Next I will explore these challenges with explicit reference to key previous research to make my rationale explicit.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the project entitled “Variations in Teachers’ Work, Lives and their Effects on Pupils” (VITAE) (Sammons *et al.*, 2007) sought to explore changes in teacher effectiveness over three years by collecting data on a number of factors including: perceived effectiveness; value-added; well-being; identity; resilience; and commitment. This research adopted a mixed methods approach which included: interviews; pupil and teacher questionnaires; and pupil assessment data. The explanation offered was that this approach would provide greater opportunities for mapping, analysis, and interpretation, and result in a more holistic understanding. However, their mixed-methods approach failed to consider: identity and agency; the link to motivation during different stages of the career; the link with socialisation (broadly and professionally); and the perceived impact of society and policy. The outcome of the analyses based on an extensive data set was that there were ‘variations’ identified in the effectiveness of different teachers, but there were no explanations offered by the authors for this. I was concerned about two key things: the question ‘why’ was left unanswered and; there was an apparent disregard for the complex issues around identity in a paper which suggested that it sought to understand the perceptions of the teacher. There was a sense that the audit culture approach to research had been adopted (MacLure, 2005): significant policy related matters were explored and appropriate boxes were ticked in the process but there was a failure to allow the individuals’ circumstances to be truly reflected. I was concerned by the reductionist

view taken of the individual along with the absence of any recognition of the potential complexity in explaining the outcomes. The authors failed to offer this as an issue worthy of further research.

The work of Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe (1994) offered a different set of considerations. They sought to explore teacher professional development from a biographical perspective focussing on the career through personal narratives, recognising the impact of context and culture (Chapman, 2010). They drew on a number of key ideas: the self as complex and dynamic; self-narratives as social, current and continually unfolding; career stories as narrative, retrospective reconstructions; and the overlapping of the self and professional self. They sought to utilise biographical methods and a process that allowed the teachers to take a central role. Their data indicated that 'professional development' (the term they used) occurred both gradually and abruptly, as a result of critical or distinctive (meaning significant) incidents or people. They made explicit that incidents and/or people that may be critical or distinctive for one person may not be for another, and so they recognised that different personal meanings, perceptions and responses were crucial factors in understanding professional development. This resonated with my own experiences and understanding of practice and, along with aspects of Foucault's concept of governmentality, this offered a useful position (1991b). Their recognition of the complexity of the self, both in attempting to understand professional development and using narrative as a means of collecting data, provided key ideas for me to explore in my own methodology, which I will consider later in this chapter.

Scott (2009) suggests that it is critical to our understanding of the social world to look carefully at the individual and their everyday. Alongside this, Hey and Bradford suggest that:

"What is needed is a theory which considers the relationship between globalizing influences and personal dispositions and the reordered conditions of individual and collective life... Any ensuing explanation would need to

account for relays of power that encompass public, professional, private, personal, and affective realms” (2004: 695-696).

I wanted to build upon this idea by centralising the person as professional (professional as discussed in the previous chapter) within the social (Chapman, 2010). I also wanted to take up the challenge to ask new questions in open and messy ways (Coffey, 2004; MacLure, 2006). It became increasingly obvious that there was a need to exercise my “sociological imagination” (Mills, 1959).

### **3.2.3 Missing Persons**

In developing the methodology, as I have mentioned, I wanted to centralise the teacher in order to explore the individual experience and the relationship of this to the social. In viewing professionals as “missing persons” (Evans 1999), I wanted to ensure that the approach would facilitate the collection of data directly from teachers about their experiences (Rata, 2012: 113; Ballet *et al.* 2006: 222). I was taking up the challenge from Mills (1959) to view professional learning as a public (professional) issue from the perspective of the personal ‘trouble’ by looking at the experiences of individual teachers. I sought to understand the experiences by working ‘with and for’ rather than ‘on or about’ teachers in order to develop a better understanding of professional learning (Woods, 1986).

As identified in the previous section, one of the concerns about some research in this area was the way in which the individual could be omitted from research, given that policy also omits them, as considered in the previous chapter. An example of this is in the work of Dowling-Næss (2001). She explored the life story of Jorunn, a Norwegian physical education teacher, and the problematic nature of individual experience told autobiographically. Dowling-Næss suggested that individuals tell persuasive stories that encourage a rethinking of self and situations: that

autobiography offers the actor's view and that their identity changes over time to capture ambiguity and chaos. She acknowledged a coexistence of multiple social realities and encouraged the reader to initially interpret the autobiography in their own way. She asked whether this might result in the reading of a positive narrative or alternatively a narrative of powerlessness. Dowling-Næss identifies her own position as being part of the "disillusioned within PE" (2001: 46) and suggests that she is driven to understand the challenges she has encountered. She then tells Jorunn's story as Jorunn tells it, exploring the dialectic between the self and social structures. She reflected that the positive narrative told may be as a result of needing ontological security: a cocoon from reality to ensure a secure sense of self. Dowling-Næss suggested that Jorunn may not in a position to recognise the problems that she has encountered during her life, whilst the researcher has the ability to look and see things differently. The intentions of the work were valuable in adding to the debate; suspending rigorous analysis of the text to allow the reader to interpret; and recognising the different ways in which stories can be both told and read.

However, the author's own position as disillusioned is evident in her analysis (perhaps dissection) of Jorunn's story. Her own frustrations are clear but there is no apparent attempt to look at the story from the teller's position. I would suggest that there would be value in the researcher reflecting more carefully on herself and the possible reasons for the subsequent interpretations that she made of Jorunn's life. Dowling-Næss outlines how she and Jorunn disagreed over the interpretations of various aspects of the story which demands consideration of research ethics, interpretation of data and evidence. In this case, the analysis and reflections of another had the potential to impact significantly on the respondent and their sense of ontological security given the different perceptions of the 'truth(s)' evident in the accounts. This position was uncomfortable for me. The general point about the differences of opinion between the researcher and participant over the analysis was well made (Borland, 1991), but the example of this process of research and

analysis, and the response of the teacher challenged me to consider my approach.

It was apparent that there was more to consider about the possibilities for exploring and understanding the individual in the complex world of auto/biography. I wanted to avoid a process where I analysed the story and returned it to the teacher for them to acknowledge it as 'correct' (Curtner-Smith, 2001). The work of Dowling-Næss (2001) and Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe (1994) provoked questions for me about the value of involving the participant more directly in the research process by asking them to reflect on their story themselves after it had been told. I wanted to explore the extent to which it would be possible to create space in the process to provide the opportunity for self-analysis which could more effectively inform our understanding by providing detail about meaning making.

I explored in the previous chapter that, as society has globalised and policy has become more influenced by neoliberalism (Bauman, 2001; Hey, 2002) there is less ontological security thus greater insecurity for the individual (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992; Hey and Bradford, 2004). Hey and Bradford (2004: 696) suggest that audit (Power, 1997; Strathern, 2000a and b) and ontological insecurity (Sennett, 1998) are the cultural logic of late modernity. In recognising the impact of this on teachers, I wanted to ensure that I took account of it in the approach and process.

### **3.2.4 Ontological (In)Security**

In the context of teaching, previous sections of this thesis have outlined the challenges that affect teachers. The pressures of the audit climate along with the associated cultures of managerialism and performativity have resulted in teachers being ontologically insecure. Alongside the specific pressures on teachers, Plummer (2001) suggests that identities have shifted to become more relational and self-reflexive as a



consequence of other changes in society including globalisation and technology which have had an impact on the coherence and cohesiveness of stories. The key focus here is to consider the way in which this affects individuals and their lives, and suitable methods for exploring this.

Chapman (2010) indicates that any personal development arises as a consequence of the individual's experiences, the way in which they interpret society, and the resultant acts. Archer (2007) offers an explanation for this starting with a critique of the work of Beck and Giddens as no longer satisfactory to explain the rapidly changing world in which we live. She indicates that it is too simplistic to consider the individual within the social world as a result of structure versus agency and that we would be better to consider what happens at the mediation point between them. She suggests that we make sense of what we experience in particular ways using socially constructed reference points. As a result, Archer suggests that we engage in reflexivity as internal conversations that enable us to make our way in the world.

In the disciplinary society that teachers inhabit there are clear policy definitions of what a professional is expected to be (GTCE, 2009) but we see evidence of a range of practice. If all teachers were disciplined by this disciplinary logic then we would see a relatively consistent conformity in striving to operate as a 'good professional'. This, however, is not what we see. There is a much greater complexity evident. Archer explains that this is the case because we use our own personal reference points to make sense of our experiences and act accordingly. This enables us to accept that agency is possible. Along with Boden and Epstein's suggestion of freedom associated with the "defiant imagination", we are offered "spaces of hope" for social transformation (2011: 492).

The perceptions of the individual teacher, therefore, are crucial in understanding their professional identity. As identified earlier from

MacLure's work where the two 27 year old teachers felt differently about themselves in relation to age (one too old and one too young), contexts and stratifying factors have different meanings for different teachers: these perceptions vary as a result of circumstance and current concerns (1993). As Craib (1998) indicates, we have to be concerned with understanding experience in order to fully understand identity. On this basis, I wanted to work with teachers in a way that allowed me to view their experiences as 'legitimate'. I wanted to develop a process that recognised the suggestion of Thomas and Thomas that "if men [sic] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (1928: 572). I also wanted to take account of work that has indicated that incidents and people that are critical or distinctive for one person might not be for another, again connected to the mechanisms for making sense of the world (Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe, 1994; Plummer 2001). Coffey (2001) and Ball *et al.* (2011 a and b) identify the need to consider the impact of social policy processes, interventions and outcomes on individuals and social groups, and the ways in which social (policy) actors make sense of their lived experiences. It further encouraged me to find a way of fully involving the teacher, including in the process of analysis so that they could provide a view on the sense they make of their own professional experiences and the consequences of this on their future.

In the context of this study I wanted to encourage the individual to tell their story as they chose with acknowledgement that the way in which the story is told is a matter of personal concern and based on a number of factors including: experience, memory, the time of the telling, and the view they wish the audience to have of them (Mishler, 2004; Tamboukou, Andrews, and Squire, 2013). The crucial aspect of this work was to gain their analysis of their story; the explanation of their experiences; their interpretation of those experiences; and the questions of themselves that they articulated in order to understand the way they understood their own professional learning. It was this that I was keen to see reflected in my

analysis of the data and the subsequent interpretation I would (re-) present.

### **3.2.5 A Narrative Approach**

Narrative offers an opportunity to look at things differently from other types of research (MacLure, 2005), providing a way of looking at aspects of lives and the different meanings that might be made (Tamboukou *et al.*, 2013). I need to indicate here that I recognise the debates that continue around effectively defining narrative research given that the term is used to encompass a multitude of things by different researchers (Frank 1995, 2010; Stanley, 2010a and b) as well as the challenges of the approach (Atkinson, 2009; Riessman, 2011). What I will seek to do here is offer an explanation of the way in which I have made use of the approach and the reasons for this, in order to demonstrate the position I have taken.

We are storytelling organisms (Plummer, 2011) and existence is an unfolding, developing story. Our lives are a series of on-going experiences thus permanently positioning us in the middle of stories where we revise the plot and the self is not static (Polkinghorne 1988). People, individually and socially, lead these storied lives (see Riessman, 2011). Knowledge and predisposition to act in a particular way is autobiographical in character, which further develops the stories. Narrative research provides an opportunity to explore these stories as a way to interpret and re-present the experienced reality. The idea of re-presentation that I use in this thesis relates to that which is presented on the basis of the analysis of the data. The term is used throughout to be inclusive of the process of analysis since I felt this was so critical to the process.

Narratives facilitate a means by which the individual can understand themselves as living through time, a human subject with a past, present, and future made whole by a narrative plot with a beginning, middle and

end (Elliott, 2005). Elliott (2005) draws on Ricoeur's work around time (the ideas of past, present, future) and a sense of continuity that is retained throughout life. Coffey suggests that social policy can be re-conceptualised as experiential, embodied, temporal, and spatial through which lives are lived, remembered and retold (Coffey, 2001; 2004). On this basis where policy plays a central role in this research a narrative approach is valuable. Narratives offer methods that have the capacity to allow the individual to create an account of their life structured around their experiences (Plummer, 2011).

The narrative account as a "narrative retrospective reconstruction" (Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe, 1994: 47) is constructed from memories. The fact that these are likely to differ from the thoughts at the time of the experience is inconsequential in this context because I have adopted the view discussed earlier that it is those memories of the account that now guide the life (Curtner-Smith, 2001). It was key to take an approach which sought to embrace the mediating influence of the biography where "one's actions in the present are influenced by meaningful experiences in the past and expectations about the future" (Kelchtermans, 2009: 263). The role of the imagination in considering the future provides a foundation for the meaning made in the present (Andrews, 2014).

Sammons *et al.* (2007) suggested that interviews offer a retrospective element and a detailed and methodologically robust rigorous account of teachers' work, lives and effectiveness. I would contend that different types of interviews have the capacity to do different things depending on the research project (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). As Flick has identified, the justification for narrative methodological approaches arises out of the concern about "how far subjective experiences may be tapped in the question-answer scheme of traditional interviews" (2009: 177). In this case, taking account of the development of the research process and with the ontological security of the teacher in mind, I chose to use research

conversations (Woods, 1985; Nias, 1989) which sit toward the least structured on the interview continuum. I wanted to adopt MacLure's approach to the process where through informal open interviews anecdote was encouraged and subsequent data analysis sought to keep the stories in context (1993). In the process of research as a co-construction, the situation is complex because each reader will extract different meanings from texts according to their assumptions, priorities and beliefs (Coffey, 2001).

Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe (1994) interviewed each of their participants three times: the first was to provide a chronology of their career story; the second was to check that the researchers' interpretations of the first interview were perceived to be accurate (a synthesis text) and to seek further relevant information; and the third interview allowed the respondent the opportunity to comment on the text from the previous interviews and their experience of the process (modified synthesis text). I wanted to undertake repeated interviews not to elicit the teachers' affirmation (or respondent validation) of my interpretation but to elicit their interpretation of their own story. As Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe (1994) indicate, in allowing the teachers' voices to be valued and encouraging them to talk openly, there was a need to recognise the complex nature of personal interpretation and feelings which meant that there could only ever be a fragmented reconstruction driven by the teachers' motives. In the case of this research, the process of analysis where the teachers' interpretation of the account was to be made as explicit as is possible through discussion with me, had the potential for a more holistic understanding of their experiences.

In the context of professional learning, a narrative approach can cover the complex interplay of personal experiences, expectations, professional behaviour and the organisational context which Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe (1994) indicated as enabling the exploration of turning

points in teachers' careers. Kelchtermans (2009) talks of the personal interpretive framework offering a lens through which teachers look at their job. This framework arises from "self-understanding" (the professional self and its multi-dimensional aspects) and a "subjective educational theory" (system of knowledge and beliefs that teachers use to do their job) (2009: 261-263).

### **3.3 The Research Process**

MacLure (2005) suggests that the current audit culture sets limits on how the world is viewed by seeking to establish truth, define the kinds of subjects and of what matters subjects can speak, offering a particular way of shaping realities. In this way it closes down some important and difficult questions, as well as privileging others. In the context of this and the broader policy context which I have already outlined, it seemed essential to challenge the current climate by taking a different approach to the work. I acknowledged that through narrative an individual might become "an expert and theoretician of themselves" (Flick, 2009: 178), which philosophically suited this project.

#### **3.3.1 The Feasibility Study**

As the approach evolved it felt somewhat messy and complex (Coffey, 2001, 2004). I was aware of limited work that had used this type of approach (Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe, 1994) and became increasingly concerned about the realities of undertaking the process. In order to gauge the possibilities for such a process, after discussion with a couple of colleagues, I undertook a feasibility study. This was done in collaboration with a teacher (Joel) who had been involved in a range of different projects with the University including mentoring student teachers on placement in his school, and had an interest in further developing his role in ITE, alongside his role as Head of Department. When Joel heard what I was working on, he expressed an interest in it and a willingness to collaborate with me in developing the idea. We worked with a two stage

research conversation process to explore his understanding of his professional learning. In the first conversation he told me his career story, and then in the second conversation we discussed issues that he identified as significant in relation to his professional learning having reflected upon the first conversation. Joel considered his story in relation to the work of Ryan (in Butler, 2005) who suggested a model for the stages that teachers pass through during their career (Fantasy; Euphoria; Survival; Apprenticeship; Rediscovery). We used the ideas of Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe (1994) to underpin Joel's reflections in terms of those people and incidents that were deemed to be significant, specifically in relation to the role ITE has played in his professional learning.

The process generated rich data both in terms of the substantive issue and the process. Joel identified a number of key things that he felt influenced professional learning including:

- The significance of individuals in both positive and negative ways;
- The impact of power dynamics;
- The relevance of the professional context;
- The role of the culture of the school and department including the types of practices;
- Inappropriate 'one size fits all' approaches within institutions;
- Teaching as an emotional endeavour and responses to the way teachers feel;
- Time facilitated or available for reflection, experimentation, creativity;
- A recognition of the potential value of experiences outside of education;
- Tick box approaches that inhibit reflective practice, creativity and experimentation;
- The 'hit and miss' impact of attendance at courses.

Joel was highly reflexive about his involvement in the process. He articulated that the process had facilitated the narration of his career story, as well as a reflection on the self and critical analysis of personal experiences. He felt that it had challenged his thinking, enabled him to articulate his philosophies and, that in acknowledging the important aspects of his individual story he was able to consider professional learning experiences and potential future needs. A key unexpected outcome was that, in reflecting upon the experience of participating in the research process, Joel indicated potential benefits in relation to his personal professional learning, as well as benefits for colleagues working in his department. He articulated that the process of having the conversations with me had instigated discussions with colleagues which led to a number of developments in the department. This made a notable contribution to allaying some of my concerns about the ethics of the process. My reflections on previous research had raised some issues about the approaches taken by researchers that I have considered earlier (Dowling-Næss, 2001; Sammons *et al.*, 2007), as well as the practices of policy implementation and the experiences of teachers. I was concerned about ensuring that researcher power and 'selfishness' had been carefully considered and minimised (Drew, 2006). This concern arose from my own values and views of my professional responsibilities, as well as being an imperative given Joel's role as a teacher working in a school that was in Partnership with the University for ITE. Joel's reflections suggested that the design of the process had accounted appropriately for these ethical concerns.

My reflections indicated that to take the methodology forward for the study, a further stage in the process was required. The two stage process felt inadequate in a number of respects. There was a sense that the story was incomplete: Joel appeared to have more to say than the process facilitated. The conversations had also been focussed specifically around the career journey and the role of ITE in professional learning which had created a framework. This framework felt constraining in that it inevitably



focussed the conversation on a particular set of events in Joel's narration of his career story. In order to ensure that the next iteration of the process provided the most open possible space for individuals to talk and think about their experiences, I needed to design it to take account of these concerns. I wanted to retain a clear focus on the substantive concern whilst limiting the constraints on individuals by keeping any framework to an absolute minimum. I also wanted to ensure that I provided as much time and space as possible for individuals to narrate and explore their experiences without compromising research ethics or the practicalities of the research project.

### **3.3.2 Research Design**

As indicated earlier in the chapter, I was interested in approaches to work with people that demonstrate care, compassion and concern for the individual. I attribute this position in part to my extensive experience of the human condition in both personal and professional contexts, as well as my role as a teacher. My feeling about the process as it evolved resonates with that of Rogers in her doctoral work:

“My position clearly leaned towards the passionate, interested and visible researcher in many ways. My position is personal as well as political but still as a sociologist rather than a biographer”. (2005: 78)

In seeking to hear and understand the teachers' narrated experiences, the key methodological concern was to hear each voice and retain it in context to capture the complexity of professional learning. Rather than eliciting a single narrative, attributing my own meaning and 'missing' that of the teacher, a collaborative multi-stage analysis of three research conversations was developed. The approach involved hearing career stories elicited from my initial request: 'tell me your career story' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2006; Flick, 2009) which resulted in co-constructed narratives developed over three meetings as a result of collaborative

analysis. This collaborative approach allowed the teachers to analyse and reflect in detail upon their own narratives of professional learning in a way that other research has failed to do.

### **3.3.3 Research Ethics and Participation**

At every stage of the process I considered very carefully the ethical implications of what I was proposing: I genuinely worried about working ethically. Obviously I was concerned about taking an ethical approach in my planning of the study to satisfy the University's ethical guidelines (see Appendix 4: University Ethics Committee Approval Letter). In addition, and most importantly, I needed to feel confident that I was approaching the work with integrity, and demonstrating care for those who would choose to become involved as indicated earlier. This was particularly significant given that the group of people that I intended to approach were involved in the University ITE Partnership, like Joel, and I wanted to ensure that no aspect of this research would jeopardise their role or relationship with the University.

As a result of the literature around missing persons and ontological (in)security, the nature of the proposed methodology sought to reduce the impact of 'researcher power' to work *with* and *for* rather than *on* or *about* the teachers (Keddie, 2000; Barker and Weller, 2003; Basit, 2010).

There were a number of key ethical concerns that arose. I recognised from the outset, that providing an opportunity for an individual to talk about their career and then subsequently analyse it, had the potential to be difficult. This would be particularly likely if the narrative resulted in the sharing and/or discussion of difficult, emotional or painful experiences, given the overlap between the professional and personal (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2006; Ludhra and Chappell, 2011). I felt that those professional individuals involved would have the capacity to decide the details they wished to share and would be able to direct the conversation in a way that was most appropriate for them. During the process I

intended to make explicit the importance of pausing the conversation if it was felt necessary and resume if they felt able to continue. I felt confident that my 17 years of experience in professional conversations with colleagues at different stages in their career, along with my role in ITE working with students and school colleagues would be invaluable in ensuring that I managed this appropriately.

The right to withdraw was explicitly detailed in the participant information and consent, with the intention of reiterating this during the research process. Voluntary participation was key to this research given the nature of the question, the context of professional learning, and the complexity of the process. The research process required a significant time commitment, and so I anticipated that those who would volunteer and commit to this would be those with a genuine interest in the topic or the process, or both.

Other standard ethical considerations were accounted for in the planning: confidentiality and the use of pseudonyms to anonymise data, including the omission of any information that may identify individuals, groups or specific locations (Guenther, 2009) and; the retention of data in locked/secure/password protected locations for up to five years that may be used as the basis to plan future research. I also intended to make a summary of findings and recommendations available to the teachers at the end of the PhD process and offer them the opportunity to view the completed study.

Some of this started to pose very particular challenges during the process. My concern went beyond ethics as a planned endeavour as I became very interested in ideas around ethics-in-practice (Liamputtong, 2007), as they arose in my research. I wanted to ensure that I was in a position to conduct every aspect of the work in an ethically sound manner and there were a number of dilemmas which arose during the process which I will consider later in the chapter.

### 3.3.4 The Teachers

The substantive area for the research required the participation of teachers. However, given that the contextual background to the study included policy, I made the decision to boundary the subject area and approach teachers of physical education with teaching experience in the 11-19 age range. Working with teachers who operate in broadly similar policy context(s) as each other and me made a degree of shared understanding likely, particularly when certain things were described or shortcuts in description used. In line with this, I included teachers who had been working in the field within the same time frame as me, but who had been teaching for a few years (those who qualified between 1993 and 2006; i.e. not newly or recently qualified teachers). This provided me with knowledge of the field in which the narratives were situated thus similar discursive contexts, as well as those that I had a greater familiarity with. There were implications of being an 'insider' (Breen, 2007): whilst there was the potential for me to understand a number of things with less explanation than an 'outsider', there was a risk that my understanding would be taken for granted and therefore less explanation might be offered. The idea of being an 'insider' also assumed my knowledge and understanding of things that the teacher might talk about. I preferred, like Breen, to think of myself as "the researcher in the middle" (2007: 163) to avoid the insider/outsider dichotomy and recognise this as more complex. It was valuable to be aware of this prior to the conversations as it made me feel comfortable about the appropriateness of an approach that ensured I could clarify things with the teachers during the conversations if necessary.

I collated a contact list of teachers who were involved in the University Partnership thus making use of the links I already had. This included a list of teachers that I had met and worked with, along with some I had never met. I was mindful of the ethics of approaching teachers that I had links with in a different context, which I addressed earlier in this chapter.

The teachers who work in partnership with the University are involved in mentoring student teachers. This work is unpaid and time-consuming but often described by teachers as rewarding and a process which contributes to their professional learning. On this basis, the teachers I was contacting provided a purposive sample: that is a group that were in a position, by virtue of their role as a teacher at a particular career stage, to provide relevant information to answer the research question (Kumar, 2014). The teachers would ultimately be self-selecting on the basis of their interest in the project and their availability, once they were made aware of the details of it (Gilbert, 2008; Flick, 2009).

As the key methodological considerations related to retaining the narrative in context to enable a more detailed understanding of the individual experience and to protect the ontological security of the teacher, the emphasis was on a detailed exploration of a few critical cases rather than drawing from a broader sample which would result in less depth (Flyvbjerg, 2001). In understanding the individual, it was crucial to engage in deep analysis to allow me to interrogate how they articulate, understand and analyse their experiences. The three cases facilitated a balance of the depth with some breadth to consider the possibilities for more general claims: whether there are similarities and differences narrated and what the implications are for these.

In order to ensure that I avoided the position of having to refuse offers of involvement, I emailed individuals in small groups over a period of days so that I could keep the process manageable (see Appendix 2: Email to Possible Participants) and asked them to indicate their interest in becoming involved rather than committing to volunteering at that stage. I wanted to ensure that no-one felt compelled to take part, as a result of their relationship with us through their partnership role. I had eight replies to my email, four that expressed an interest and four that offered different reasons why they were unable to take part. I had approached the

sampling stage without any focus on the diversity of the sample or how many might respond but, for example, within the group who made contact with me there was a mix of gender. Of the four that committed their initial interest in taking part, three were female and one was male. The male teacher contacted me to ask what the process would entail. Rather than talk it through with him, which I thought had the potential to unintentionally apply pressure, I emailed him the detailed information for his consideration (see Appendix 3: Research Information). He did not come back to me on it. The outcome was that there were three female teachers (known here as Ava, Zoe and Nell) who initially demonstrated an interest and then committed themselves fully to becoming involved.

Flyvbjerg (2001) discusses the “power of example” and challenges the suggestion that the case study “cannot provide reliable information about the broader class” (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 66). The use of one or more individual cases is demonstrated by many others who work within the fields of narrative research (Stanley, 1992; Frank, 1995; Plummer, 2001; Bruner, 2003; Mishler, 2004; Andrews, 2007; Sparkes, 2007; Clandinin and Connelly, 2006; Frank, 2010; Stanley, 2010a and b; Riessman, 2011; Clandinin 2013; Tamboukou, 2013).

### **3.3.5 Collaborative Research Conversations**

In order to ensure that I balanced the demands of the rigorous analysis required for academic purposes with the desire to hear the individual’s voice to support their ontological security, the process of three conversations allowed each to build on the previous one in terms of the substantive interest. I sought to create a “unique conversational space” (Pezalla, Pettigrew and Miller-Day, 2012: 165). As a result of the engagement with literature and the experiences of the feasibility study, the planned process finally took the following form (also see Appendix 3: Research Information):

We had an initial meeting to discuss the research where we considered the details of the substantive concern and the process. The participant information materials made explicit the complexity and extent of their involvement (Appendix 3: Research Information). In these materials I was very open about the background and focus for the research. The process of sharing detailed information enabled the teachers to identify whether they were willing and able to collaborate in the research. Their written consent was secured and we agreed mutually convenient dates and venues for the conversations to take place. The timetable was planned so that there was a period of two weeks between each conversation (three weeks in just one case as a result of where our holidays fell). The process from the initial meeting to the end of the final conversation lasted between seven and eight weeks for each teacher.

The first audio-taped research conversation was based upon a chronological account of the teacher's career story told using a structure of their own choosing in response to the generative narrative question 'tell me your career story' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2006; Flick, 2009). These conversations lasted between 33 and 62 minutes.

The first research conversation was transcribed by an independent person so that we both had access to a written and audio copy of the conversation. We accessed the transcription in a similar timeframe following the conversation given that I had not transcribed them. The two formats provided the opportunity to read; to listen; or to read and listen in preparation for the following conversation: one way to meet individual needs.

The next stage involved us both independently considering the written and audio data from the first conversation and undertaking an analysis. Prompts were provided to support the analysis and discussion to ensure that there was a clear focus on the substantive topic. In order to avoid being too prescriptive, I developed these to ensure that they were as

open ended and flexible as possible. (see Appendix 5: Generic Research Conversation Prompts).

There was an encouragement for participants to use whatever means suited them best to engage with the conversation and they were made aware of numerous possibilities for other methods for recording thoughts and ideas which included annotations, reflective journals, audio memos, email and so on. This facilitated flexibility within the methodology (Ludhra and Chappell, 2011).

We then met to audio-tape the second research conversation centred on a discussion about the outcomes of the first analysis led by the teacher. The second conversations lasted between 96 and 116 minutes. The second research conversation was then transcribed by an independent person. Once again we independently considered the written and recorded data from the second conversation and then met to audio-tape the third research conversation which consisted of synthesis and reflection to explore, clarify and consolidate the ideas from the previous conversations (Appendix 5: Generic Research Conversation Prompts). The third conversations lasted between 87 and 110 minutes. These were also transcribed by an independent person.

A follow up conversation was offered to the teachers. In order to honour my commitment to hearing the experiences narrated using a participant-led approach, it was necessary for the discussions to end by mutual agreement rather than when I decided. Drew (2006) compares the researcher to a seagull who descends into people's lives to undertake their research and then leaves them to tidy up the mess. I did not want the process to feel like that for either of us and, on that basis, we both needed to feel that we had reached the end of the discussion. One indicated an intention to have a follow up meeting but only after she had taken time to review the materials again. Each person agreed that I could approach them again if I needed to seek clarity about anything that had



been said. This felt right in relation to my commitment to represent their story using their words and ensure that I sought to understand their words as they meant them, in so far as is ever possible. This would support me in the challenge to retain their story in context and seek to create an 'authentic' account: authentic in the sense that it took account of the way in which they understood how they lived their lives based on their on-going experiences (Curtner-Smith, 2001; Kelchtermans, 2009).

### **3.3.6 Response of the Teachers**

The teachers who volunteered made explicit that they had a genuine interest in the topic, the process, or both. Those that contacted me to explain that they felt unable to take part offered a number of reasons which included family and work commitments. I was pleased to receive some explicit refusals as it reassured me that my relationships with colleagues in the partnership were such that they had not felt compelled to take part nor apparently uncomfortable in refusing.

The enthusiasm and willing engagement of the teachers took me by surprise. Not only were they interested in giving up their time but they were also keen to get fully involved in the challenges of the project. Indeed there were examples where they involved colleagues, friends and family members by discussing aspects of the work with them and feeding back on this in our research conversations. I was taken aback by their commitment to the substantive concern as well as the process: in both their actions and words there seemed to be a genuine interest in what I was trying to understand as well as the methods for doing so. They were open and critically reflexive as far as I was concerned and each offered powerful and interesting insights into their experiences. I will explore this in more depth later in the thesis.

### 3.4 Re-Presentation

In approaching the analysis of the narratives, I sought to draw directly on the content of the conversations that dealt with the teachers' reflections as these were critical to the methodology.

MacLure (1993) examined the way in which narratives can be used by the story teller as self-account (Shotter, 1985) and constrained to make the story more interesting. They can also be used to set out particular contexts according to the tellers' needs: their response to the contexts in which they find themselves and the impact of the interactions within those contexts:

“Autobiographical accounts knit together the disparate dimensions of teachers' lives...in ways that are always bound up with values and with action (MacLure, 1993: 320)”.

It was inevitable that the teachers would each tell stories that were constructed in particular ways for this specific set of conversations with me given the crucial role of context and audience in narrative accounts (Dowling-Næss, 2001). I accepted these stories as ones they chose to tell that reflected aspects of the way in which they live and make sense of their experiences of professional learning. In light of this, there was a careful balance to be struck between accepting the narratives and analysis as a legitimate account of the self and self-understanding (Koch, 2010), and the need to take a critical view (Riessman, 2011; Plummer, 2011). In order to have an impact on research and practice in the field, the analysis needed to demonstrate rigour within this (alternative) methodology.

The process of analysis in the case of doctoral work such as this inevitably must provide a meta-narrative, drawing together a rigorous, comprehensive, critical and reflexive account of the data. At the outset of the research I had intended to use 'grounded theory' (Charmaz, 2006),

taking an inductive approach to allow the data driven themes to emerge. As the focus for this research was the key influences on professional learning as narrated by the teacher, I did not have any preconceptions about the specific details that each teacher might share. On this basis, in order to support an effective analysis I wanted to allow the themes to emerge from the data thus adopting an inductive approach. However as the process developed, I came to understand that there was inevitably some deduction in the analysis given that I, as the researcher, was collecting and analysing the data in order to respond to a particular focus and question – in this respect I was bringing my own particular view to the project (Etherington, 2006). The result of this was an intertwining of both deduction and induction in the analysis (Gilbert, 2008).

In terms of the re-presentation there were a number of crucial considerations which I needed to take account of with regard to social relations and processes, alongside professional practice in the contexts of society, institution and at the individual level. It was vital in the analysis to be able to look at the data with the research questions foregrounded: How do teachers narrate their professional learning? What do they identify as the key influences?

Although earlier I indicated that the teachers were coming from a similar field, in the analysis I was always mindful of some of the debates about narrative data including the view that that Ball shares which is that:

“words and propositions will change their meaning according to their use and the positions held by those who use them...words and concepts change their meaning and their effects as they are deployed in different discourses (1990: 17-18)”.

It was important to bear in mind that there are always different versions of the same story, told in different ways for different purposes (Mishler, 2004). In the analysis, I needed to be aware of what I would hear and why (Sparkes and Smith, 2011).

I wanted to ensure the rigorous analysis of the data for the benefit of the thesis, but more importantly from a moral commitment to the teachers who assisted me with the data collection by sharing and interpreting their personal professional stories. The process of analysis became much more complex for me once the conversations were completed. In order to explicate this, I will return to analysis in the next chapter.

### **3.5 Ethical Dilemmas**

I worked hard to be reflexive (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009) at every stage in the research process from the outset of the idea through to the completion of the written thesis, and have sought to represent key aspects of that reflexivity in this chapter. I spent a lot of time considering the process in theoretical, practical and ethical terms. As the research process unfolded there were a number of ethical dilemmas and complex, methodological challenges that arose (Cairns, 2009). These needed to be carefully considered and resolved as satisfactorily as possible in the context of the research.

During the process, I became increasingly aware of my own position and the extent to which it was possible to take “middle” position rather than an insider and/or outsider one when talking with the teachers (Breen, 2007). I wanted to ensure that my story did not interfere with theirs, particularly given the nature of a conversational approach, my commitment to retaining their voices in context and to protect their ontological security. In order to ensure as clear delineation as possible, I worked hard to develop the process such that I was able to adopt a listening position and to let them take the lead (Ludhra and Chappell, 2011).

I remained concerned at every stage about the ‘imposition’ of my ideas on their story. There is inevitably an important aspect of my voice in the process as a result of this being my research design and my involvement in the conversations about the substantive concern - it is, after all, a co-

construction. However with this in mind, I sought to ensure that the voice and experience of the participant was placed at the centre of the process in order to understand as fully as possible their view of their experiences of professional learning. It was also challenging to think about the most appropriate way to re-present the teachers' narratives in the text and get an appropriate balance between doing justice to their experiences and understanding, and ensuring a critical and academically rigorous account (Riessman, 2008). I will consider this in more detail in the next chapter.

I indicated earlier the importance of mutual agreement in the end point of the process. As the conversations with each teacher progressed, I became increasingly committed to completing the process at an agreed end point. Alongside this I had concerns about ensuring that the process did not emulate therapy, particularly given the acknowledgement by Sparkes and Smith (2011) that the longer you spend with people the more you will learn. It was important to have a clear end point in mind from the outset i.e. after any follow up meetings, in order to retain this as a piece of research with clear boundaries.

Interestingly all of the teachers raised matters relating to their personal lives in the context of talking about their careers. I was open with the teachers about what I was seeking to do with them and I avoided any direct questions relating to aspects of their personal lives. However, again it is important to make explicit that sometimes, unsurprisingly, they linked professional matters directly to the personal (Day *et al.*, 2006).

There were a number of interesting issues which arose around the use of agreed spaces for the conversations. I wanted to ensure that we talked in an open, effective; comfortable and safe environment (Ludhra and Chappell, 2011). One teacher wished to talk at home, whilst the other two chose to talk at the University. One had wanted to talk at home but was unable to as a result of her childcare arrangements.

The process attempted to reduce researcher power and facilitate greater power within the process for the teachers. It was interesting that this took time to evolve and the teachers needed my support to take the lead as they were worried about 'getting things right' for me. I had made explicit at the outset the detailed background to the work and the development of the methodology, as well as my intentions and anxieties about the experience of the process for them and what it would yield. I was open about my anxieties as I felt it right to share how I felt with people who were going to do the same with me. In spite of this, Zoe described feeling concerned about the open process at the start of the first conversation because she was unsure about what I wanted. There was inevitability about this, since I wanted to find a way to capture narratives around a particular focus with as little prescription as possible: to capture their journey of how they live their professional lives with limited 'direction' from me.

I was surprised that two of the teachers seemed unconcerned about matters of confidentiality. Although Sammons *et al.* (2007) identified their work as ethical through anonymity and confidentiality; I became increasingly uncertain about the possibility of individuals being identifiable in the final thesis.

Finally, in returning to broader issues about writing and representation, I want to draw together some of Coffey's ideas (2001) that challenge us to consider carefully the way in which we construct texts: how ideas are represented; the decisions made about relevance and what is included and what is left out; the positioning of the researcher; recognition of the social and power; and the choices made about how to write the texts of others' lives. She encourages us to critically consider whether we produce texts where the researcher is cast as privileged and shares tales of exploitation, description and classification (see Dowling-Næss, 2001). I have sought to make explicit in this chapter how my approach to the research took this into account at each stage of the research design and

in collecting the data. This was also a concern in the re-presentation which I will address in the next chapter.

During the process I asked the teachers about their motivations for getting involved in the work and also for their comments on the process and their experiences of it. I was keen to ensure that I had facilitated every opportunity to learn with and from the teachers about the methodological process in which we had collaborated. I consider this in relation to the ethical dilemmas again in further detail later in the thesis.

### **3.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has explored the development of the methodology and methods in seeking to understand how people narrate and understand their experiences of their own professional learning, and to consider this within the context of policy, professionalism and identity. I was committed from the outset of the research to find a method to provide the opportunity for those involved to narrate, reflect on, engage with, analyse, and understand those experiences. The intention of the process was to enable us to better understand what it is like to be a professional and how professionals understand and negotiate their needs in order to be effective, feel valuable, develop, and improve. I was committed to “a meaningful and ethical exchange” (Thomas, Tiplady and Wall, 2014: 397)

I sought to represent the actual and contextualised voices of those involved in so far as it is possible, because I want us to begin to understand their ‘truth’, their experiences, their lives, as they live them and make sense of them (Scott, 2009). This is in order to understand how professional environments can work more effectively to support professional learning to inform professional practice and experience. Recent policies have negated the learning needs of the individual teacher in a climate where education policy discourse espouses, promotes and audits the importance of individualised learning for young people. It is unclear why the principles about learning are not readily applied to

teachers (Timperley, 2011). I argue that recent and current policy positions the individual teacher in particular ways which research needs to take account of. In recognising the significance of agency (Davies, 1990), the importance of experience (Craib, 1998) and conditions of possibility (Tamboukou, 2008), I wanted to put the individual teacher at the centre of this work in order that they could occupy the centre of our understanding.

The methodological discussion continues in the next chapter which explores how the initial approach taken to re-present the data resulted in significant challenges and my response to that.



## **Chapter Four: An Analytic Approach**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter picks up from where the last chapter ended as here I will explore the challenges that arose for me in analysing this particular narrative data. The process of analysis proved to be extremely challenging. Although it is unusual to include a discrete chapter on analysis it seemed pertinent given the significance of the analysis and the impact of this on the resulting text. Here, I will outline the approaches that I took to reach a point of academic and ethical rigour, whilst maintaining methodological integrity in the re-presentation.

This chapter addresses a key aspect of the process of responding to the research questions: How do teachers narrate their professional learning? What do they identify as the key influences?

### **4.2 The Challenge of Analysis and Re-Presentation**

As identified in the previous chapter, I felt it both necessary and appropriate to make explicit some of that which Maguire *et al.* (2011:1) describe as “rarely told” about the research process or Sparkes might suggest as “confessional” (Sparkes, 2002: 57; also Van Mannen, 2011). In order to fully contextualise my methodological ideas and the (always imperfect) re-presentation of the data, I will share the steps I took in the process of analysis, indicating some of the difficulties I faced and the decisions I made. It took a long time to reach a resolution that was satisfactory for me in the analysis for the purposes of re-presentation. Whilst never being possible to capture it all, I will outline the reflexivity embedded in the analyses and to demonstrate aspects of my “thinking state of mind” (Doyle, 2013: 253).

The narrative data felt enormous and, as it grew during the conversations, generated an increasing burden of responsibility in doing

academically rigorous, ethical and methodological justice to the detailed accounts of the professional lives that Ava, Zoe and Nell had been so willing and committed to share and discuss. As Andrews (2007: 17) describes, I felt “accountable to them” and a significant “sense of personal responsibility” from the point at which the first contact was made through every subsequent stage. This level of responsibility was compounded by my feelings of amazement at the apparently very open engagement in the process by Ava, Zoe and Nell. They offered narrative explanations that contained great detail and depth about the experiences they had chosen to articulate and the ways in which they understood these (see Appendix 9: Extract of Ava’s Transcript (Conversation 2)). It became evident that they had got involved in the project because they themselves had a particular interest in the issues that I raised around professional learning. The explanations about their involvement were made explicit in the comments they offered on the research process which will be explored later.

I wanted to be able to re-present the experiences narrated by Ava, Zoe and Nell and “let their narratives cover the ground” (Archer, 2007: 100) to enhance our understanding of professional learning by looking at it in a ‘different’ way: taking account of the need to explore the personal that Makopoulou identified as a consideration for further work in this area (2009; see also Makopoulou and Armour, 2011). I sought to re-present<sup>7</sup> the narratives which formed part of the research conversations to enable us to understand how professional learning had been experienced by each of them, allowing their sense of themselves and their understanding to foreground our thinking (Nias, 1989). I wanted to be able to re-present the experiences taking account of Jackson’s idea of each teacher’s “power to live in the ways that her becoming incites her to live” (2010: 584). I am clear that narratives do not and should not be purported to speak for themselves (Andrews, 2007; Atkinson, 2009; Riessman, 2011),

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<sup>7</sup> The analysis is implicit in the use of this term as explained in the previous chapter.

but I wanted to explore the extent to which my re-presentation of the conversations and collaborative analyses could facilitate an academically rigorous account that shared the participants' experiences more directly, comprehensively and transparently with the reader. The work of Martin (2010); Archer (2007); Henderson, Holland, McGrellis, Sharpe and Thomson (2007); and Sparkes (2007) was very useful as their work included significant extracts of narrative data.

In order to participate in the research conversations with Ava, Zoe and Nell, the first stage of the analysis of the narratives took place during and between each conversation. This offered the opportunity for me to discuss with each of them how they understood the experiences they had narrated. Although they added specific details, it was interesting and reassuring that each of them raised virtually the same points about their narratives that I had noted on the prompt sheets I drafted based on their data: I had done this to use them for reference if necessary during each discussion (Appendix 7.1-7.6: Specific Research Conversation Prompts). I note that it was reassuring because of the concerns I outlined in the previous chapter about not wanting to impose 'my story' on theirs: indeed it was a significant fear.

As I outlined in the previous chapter, the subsequent process of analysis that I undertook after all the conversations were complete took the research questions and the three themes explored in the review of literature as the starting point. Within this analysis I was particularly interested in the themes that had arisen in the conversations and in my reading of the transcripts of the co-constructed narratives (Riessman, 1993). I coded and organised these data driven themes in NVIVO under the three broad headings of policy; being a professional teacher; and teacher identity taken from the literature review. I had an overriding sense of the artifice as I set about 'breaking up' the data which experienced colleagues describe but Wynne (1989) identifies as a particularly common concern for early career researchers. The approach lacked

integrity for me in this research: it felt insincere and in direct contrast to the commitment I had made to analysing and retaining the stories in context. I felt like Riessman in not wanting to “sum up” these rich narratives (1993: vi). Wynne (1989: 108-109) explored this during her own doctoral work and engaged with the challenges of a high volume of data:

“The practice of selective quotation is one way of coping with such overabundance; and that selection is usually passed off as a solution to a merely technical problem. Yet what does the practice of selection assume? Firstly and crucially that an extract, a few lines extracted from their original site in the whole talk, can be read independently of that context; and second that they can adequately 'stand for' a set of 'similar instances' in the whole corpus of data. Therefore extracts divorced from the contexts in which they originated and inserted into another - the context of my analysis - would seem to be particularly vulnerable to a radical distortion of their original meaning. But to make this objection is to propose that they have an original meaning which is fixable - even if fleetingly and reflexively-tied-to-context; that there is, potentially, a crucial difference in meaning between the same words in their original context and in another. Taking each quotation from its original site in a person's whole talk and re-placing it together with others in a common context, the context of analyst's topic, facilitates the interpretation that the quotations are, singly and together, about the topic”.

I was left feeling overwhelmed by the challenge to ensure that alongside addressing Wynne's concerns, the approach supported my commitment to recognising that everyone makes sense of different things in different ways resulting in very particular consequences (Thomas and Thomas, 1928; Nias, 1989). My key methodological concern was to accept that “experience happens narratively” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 19) and, given that “context is everything” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 27), to interpret the narratives and retain that context in the re-presentation. This presented me with both the opportunity and challenge to think about the implications for ways of re-presenting the narratives within the study, accepting that the artifice was inevitable.

As in all research, but particularly for rich qualitative accounts, it became clear that it would be impossible to re-present anywhere near the full volume of information offered by the narratives in the thesis. As required by the doctoral process, the data were analysed with a clear focus on answering the research question in relation to the literature, as explained above. In order to accomplish this within the scale of this thesis, aspects of the narratives had to be shared as detailed fragments (Sparkes, 2007). I selected extended extracts of the narratives which I understood from Ava, Zoe and Nell to illustrate significant experiences with people and incidents in relation to policy, professionalism and identity thus attempting to organise the data thematically whilst maintaining the depth and richness of the narratives and the arising themes. I will return to this. However, I became aware that in working through the themes separately there was a risk that the interconnectedness and complexity of the individual experiences would become opaque.

I chose to re-present the narrative fragments in a linear form in order to offer clarity. This thesis is based on one possible set of interpretations of the experiences and explanations which Ava, Zoe and Nell chose to “make present” (Schiff, 2012) in their discussions with me. The selection based on my reading of these narratives was inevitably influenced by my own experiences which I have been “alert to” throughout the process (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 46; Horsdal, 2012; Ludhra and Chappell, 2011). I worked hard to remain focussed on the decision-making involved in identifying that which they foregrounded as significant: I made meaning from my understanding of their meanings. In exploring the co-constructed narratives and the collaborative analysis with the support of the literature which underpins the study, I offer one account to add to our understanding about professional learning rather suggesting that I can explore all the possibilities embedded in the breadth and depth of each set of narrative data (Wertz, Charmaz, McMullen, Josselson, Anderson, and McSpadden, 2011). In the context of this research, each account is

the narrative of (or at) a particular “moment” in the teacher’s life (Tamboukou, 2011b: 5) affected by time, memory and intention (Tamboukou *et al.*, 2013).

The narratives and analyses generated through the research conversations and the subsequent analyses were co-constructions, and the structure of the writing seeks to clearly indicate that. I have drawn on Archer’s (2007) approach to re-presenting the data where she wove the narratives into her own writing rather than putting the teachers’ quotes in clearly marked separate sections. This was to demonstrate the nature of the co-constructions. The other intention, particularly in relation to the larger narrative fragments, was to illustrate the way in which the reflections of Ava, Zoe and Nell facilitated an elaboration of their particular experiences. They were asked to reflect on the experiences that they had chosen to narrate and encouraged to base the next conversation on anything that they wanted to discuss. I provided a broad framework for them for this (Appendix 5: Generic Research Conversation Prompts). In some instances they returned to experiences to explore them in more detail. The main prompts that they described using when reflecting on the research process were: responses to hearing themselves articulate an experience that they had not knowingly considered or considered in a particular way before (Andrews, 2007); because they felt they had been unfair in their representation of something or someone and; where they felt they had omitted key experiences. By way of an example at the start of the second conversation Nell talked in detail about having realised that she had not made any reference to one of her head teachers which she was concerned about. They also returned to issues that they felt had altered in some way or that they had considered in a different way during the period that the three research conversations took place. It was their comments about these examples during the process that supported my decision-making about what to draw on.

There is reference to things that Ava, Zoe and Nell understand to have played key roles in their experiences; people and incidents identified as being significant to them; and their understanding of the associated professional learning in relation to policy and professionalism. In talking about how they understand themselves and their career experiences, all three teachers give rich accounts that shared the meaning they made which embedded issues relating to identity, policy and professionalism. The re-presentation of the data interrogated these embedded ideas about policy and professionalism in relation to both the self and the social. There are some instances of repetition in the text where ideas have been developed or returned to, and indicate meaning being made.

In spite of this, the outcomes of the analysis using the three broad headings to frame the data driven themes was unsatisfactory in isolation. The re-presentation arising from this did not address my key methodological concern to ensure that I did not 'miss people out' in the way that I understand that policy does. In addition to discussing the narratives in relation to the three themes, I wanted to find a way to demonstrate the significance of the narrator's voice; the relational nature of professional learning which had become evident through the analysis; and the complexity and relevance of the context for the individual. In order to foreground these key matters, it seemed most appropriate to re-present one of the teacher's narratives as a "realist tale" (Sparkes, 2002: 39; also Van Mannen, 2011). I drew on Ava's account to re-present my interpretations of the meanings she made of her experiences by sharing her narrative as an individual case (Kelchtermans, 1993; MacLure, 1993; Flyvbjerg, 2001).

Sparkes talks of the absent and "disembodied author" (2002: 55) in presenting the detailed voices of participants in these types of tales. The detailed theorisation through the literature review and methodology provide the framework and offer rigour to the writing. The "realist tale" allowed me to illustrate the richness of the conversation with Ava as an

example and, most significantly, the depth of the meaning she made herself about her professional learning experiences. I, as the author, am not absent in this re-presentation indeed it is critical to acknowledge that the narrative here is one that I constructed about Ava on the basis of the stories she shared with me through the research conversations (Sparkes, 2002): thus a co-construction. The three conversations made one narrative in this research, with recognition of the impact of time and process. Indeed the lapse in time and the analytic process that took place between the conversations are the key features of these narratives: this facilitated the reflection. I used the foundations provided by the research questions alongside the ideas emerging from the literature. The decisions I made about what to include came from the significance that I perceived that Ava attached to the ideas she shared by looking across her narrative. The significance was identified by me as the analyst inductively through the ideas that Ava explored: those she gave most conversation time to; returned to in the conversations for further consideration and/or; explicitly and directly acknowledged as being important.

This was reflected in all three cases but it was impossible, given the scale of this thesis, to present all three in this way. Most crucially it was unnecessary to offer the lengthy cases of Zoe and Nell too: in presenting Ava's case I was able to effectively demonstrate the complexities evident in an individual's professional learning experiences, based on the factors they identified as significant. A summary of the similarities and differences in the significant factors raised by Ava, Zoe and Nell during the conversations is included in Appendix 8 (Significant Influences in the Narratives). In line with the work of Ball, Maguire, Braun, Hoskins and Perryman (2012) on policy enactment, I am not suggesting that all individuals take up similar positions in response to their professional contexts. The use of the case here is to indicate the reflexive processes by which the teachers have come to understand themselves, as well as their ability to reflect. All three narratives illustrated this process and I chose Ava simply on the basis that she was the first of the three research



participants I worked with. In that sense a random choice within the purposive sample.

The case is introduced with a brief biographical note to offer a snapshot of Ava's current circumstances. This is then followed by consideration of how she sees herself followed by examples drawn from her professional learning experiences to understand the meaning she makes of them. It is organised in this way to provide a context for her story (Clandinin and Connelly, 1998): in order to understand the account, the context must be understood (Wynne, 1989). In order to support this I retained the overall chronology of the events she outlined wherever possible.

The importance of the context for the stories arose through discussions around extracts of the data that I have taken to conferences and other forums such as research group writing workshops. In these spaces the interpretations and comments of others have highlighted this as a key consideration in the analysis and re-presentation. One example of this related to Zoe who, as will be explored in a later chapter, raises concern about performance management processes that she felt were not being conducted properly. A colleague in discussions with me indicated that their reading of Zoe was as a 'good' (i.e. disciplined) neoliberal subject, who desired the processes of target setting in spite of her criticisms of it. However, when situated within the broader context of Zoe's narrative and her experiences, a very different explanation can become evident. She is committed to doing things thoroughly whether or not she agrees with them and finds it very difficult when things are not done 'properly'. This supported the rationale for providing a case so that the re-presentation demonstrated the contribution of analysis at several different levels including thinking about the 'whole' individual<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> It is acknowledged here that the information available about the individual can only ever be partial based on the narratives that are shared.

Once I had decided upon the use of the 'case' to resolve the dilemma I experienced with the data, it was possible for me to return to the re-presentation of the second part of the data. This drew from the individual narratives of Ava, Zoe and Nell and sought to consider them in relation to the social, connecting their ideas under the three themes from the literature review.

### **4.3 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has outlined the process of analysis that took place with these narrative data. I took a deductive approach in looking for narrated experiences of professional learning relating to identity, policy and professionalism. I used an inductive approach in exploring the ways in which the teachers contextually made meaning of their experiences and negotiated their professional lives accordingly. I have explored some of the key dilemmas as they arose in the process and the steps I took to address these to ensure methodological integrity and academic rigour, albeit in ways I felt unfamiliar with and uncertain about.

The next chapter explores Ava's case as a "story to live by" (Clandinin and Connelly, 1998: 149).

## Chapter Five: A Story to Live By

This chapter, based on the detailed explanations about methodology and analytic approach in the previous two chapters, considers Ava's case followed by a chapter summary. Here connections will be made between Ava's case and the social context, as outlined in the literature review.

### 5.1 A Story to Live By

The key focus of the rest of this chapter is one of the "teacher stories" (Clandinin and Connelly, 1996: 24): the re-presentation of Ava's narrative as a case (Flyvbjerg, 2001). As outlined in the previous chapter, I worked with the teachers to co-construct individual accounts of their experience (Nias, 1989; Sammons *et al.*, 2007; Craib, 1998) to explore the meaning they made of their professional learning contexts in relation to policy, professionalism and their identity. The narrative understanding of the teacher constructed in this way takes account of the complexity of identity in response to Nias' suggestion that:

"since no two people have the same life experiences, we all learn to perceive the world and ourselves as part of it in different ways...No matter how pervasive particular aspects of a shared social or occupational culture may be or how well individuals are socialised into it, the attitudes and actions of each teacher are rooted in their own ways of perceiving the world" (1989: 14).

There is a need to look at professional learning in a way that facilitates an understanding of the "messy realities" of the policy context (Ball, 1990: 9). I agree with Bradford and Hey (2007) that individuals take a policy position mediated by their social circumstances. On this basis, it is crucial to this project to consider the social circumstances that shape, and are shaped by Ava, Zoe and Nell. The re-presentation of Ava's case seeks to respond to the challenge outlined by Ball (1997: 271):

“It is one thing to consider the effects of policies upon abstract social collectives. It is another to capture the complex interplay of identities, and interests and coalitions and conflicts within the processes and enactments of policy”.

The exploration of aspects of Ava’s experiences offers one account to illustrate the complexity of professional learning as a personal endeavour providing us with an opportunity to better understand it (Makopoulou and Armour, 2011). As explained in chapter four, Ava’s case is presented here as one example of the three narratives shared, to provide an illustration of the way in which significant factors are experienced and explored by individuals in order to make meaning of them. It was notable in analysing the data that there were many similarities and some differences between the significant factors mentioned in the accounts given by Ava, Zoe and Nell which are summarised in Appendix 8: Significant Influences in the Narratives. The critical relationship between the cases of Ava, Zoe and Nell and the broader social context will be considered in the next chapter.

The approach taken here is to demonstrate the way in which professional learning experiences offer teachers “stories to live by” (Clandinin and Connelly, 1998: 149). The exploration of Ava’s story offers an illustration of her perception of her world (context) by drawing on key parts of the narrative she shared, and how Ava interpreted her own narrative to identify the significant experiences that have shaped her professional learning. As explored in the last chapter, there were a number of challenges in offering the most appropriate balance between the analyst and the narrator. As explained before, I have chosen to use many of Ava’s own words alongside my own (Archer, 2007) with some references to the work of others: her words dominate. This is critical to the methodology in seeking to consider the extent to which it is possible to represent teachers understanding and explanations of their own professional learning in the context of neoliberalism where they are

expected to take responsibility for themselves. Ava's detailed narrative demonstrates her ability to analyse experiences, reflect upon them and consider the outcomes for her professional learning: an expert of herself (Flick, 2009). This is at two levels: in her career as an on-going process as well as through the results of her analysis as part of this research.

## **5.2 The Case of Ava**

Ava had been teaching for 9 years at the time of the research conversations. She had recently moved from a secondary school to a Further Education (FE) institution that operated in a way that she described as being at odds with her expectations. This was exacerbated by her experiences at one of her previous schools which she perceived to be outstandingly well organised and fully committed to the success of young people. She had previously undertaken positions of responsibility but at the outset of the research she found herself unclear about her next step, particularly given that her role at the time was teaching sport related study rather than physical education. She identified that it was this set of circumstances that had influenced her decision to get involved in the research.

Ava was very keen to talk about her career and professional learning, and provided an extensive account. It included aspects of her personal and professional life. Alongside her work in a school and FE, she had also undertaken work within a University ITE Partnership. She had been a mentor to student teachers on placement in her previous school and, more recently, had a quality assurance and support role where she visited student teachers and mentors in other Partnership schools on behalf of the University. Ava's story is divided into sections which explore: her view of herself; key aspects of her career journey including those things that she identified as significant; her intentions for the future based on her experiences; and her thoughts about the process of reflection as part of this research process. The written re-presentation here can only simplify a narrative that is full of complexity and I have sought to do this

by drawing heavily on her words to demonstrate both the richness and significance of her experiences.

### **5.2.1 Ava on Ava**

From the outset of our conversations Ava spoke very openly about herself in relation to both work and life. She talked about herself in neoliberal terms in the sense of responsibility for herself and a commitment to working hard. She described herself as someone who believed in hard work which was underpinned by what she recognises as a 'hard work ethic' and wanted to explain the importance of her formative family influences. She attributed this ethic to her Irish cultural heritage and other aspects of her upbringing: 'well from a really young age of thirteen, I've sort of worked, and because I did such sort of jobs that were kind of lowly paid, you know menial jobs when I was thirteen, fourteen, my brother also worked from the age of thirteen in a greengrocers, so we grew up kind of with this sort of hard work ethic'. She returned to the notion of hard work on a number of occasions and stated that 'we're not afraid of hard work' in reference to herself and her siblings. She provided evidence for one aspect of this hard work in practice as 'in growing up I worked in every job you can imagine, I worked at the market, I worked at the supermarket, I worked on a, in a shoe shop, I worked in a sports shop, I worked in a pub'. Ava felt that these experiences were really significant in providing foundations for her work ethic. She linked this to her positive views about the influence of work experience but also to illustrate her own motivations to work rather than a compulsion to do so: 'we weren't forced to work but we were definitely encouraged, and we didn't mind it'. She talked about how her and her siblings had been encouraged to be independent including using public transport by themselves, and contributing to costs from the money they earned.

She explained that working hard is something she recognises as one that she has observed at different times in her family and friends, as well as in the broader Irish community. 'My cousin that I spoke to this weekend, he

gets up at 4.20 every morning and he comes home at 9 o'clock at night in his work at the moment, and that's just how it is normally. And I thought wow, and I complain about some of the hours'. She elaborated on these ideas in a subsequent conversation where she acknowledged that the hard work ethic has 'well probably stemmed from my mum bringing us up on her own, three of us on her own'. She talked very positively about her mother as someone who had worked extremely hard as a single parent. In a later conversation, in response to her reflections, she was more definite about the influence of her mother stating that the 'hard work ethic definitely comes from my mum and watching her work so hard to support the three of us, and make ends meet, put food on the table, and clean the house and do everything'. She identified that 'she would always give us what she could, for example, we didn't miss out on anything, we went on the school trip, that obviously would have been horribly hard for my mum to have to pay, but looking back, she must have killed herself trying to pay for that'. The recognition of her mother's hard work and support for the family was significant for Ava, and this linked to her view of a shared family commitment to helping others which she discusses later. The issue of her early work experience was also significant in relation to her view of herself with her peers: 'getting a job at thirteen, fourteen was actually perceived to be quite a cool thing, it's like I've got a job, and it was good, you know it was well regarded I think by other students'. In the context of later ideas that Ava shared about her confidence and the view she understood society to have about 'broken homes', it becomes clear that these positive responses from others were important to her.

She explained that she felt that nature of some of her early work experiences with her mother may have influenced her ultimate career choice and '...why I went into teaching, I would imagine it's probably because I worked with children from such an early age, my mum worked in a nursery...<sup>9</sup> I used to go and help her out in the summer'. She

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<sup>9</sup> ... denotes an edit in a longer section of a narrative.

describes the relevance of her willingness to help and support others to her career choice and explains how she feels about her professional motivations: 'Yeah, I suppose that's, I mean that's definitely I think in terms of my personality, in terms of job satisfaction, I think it is helping others, without a doubt. I could not see myself wanting to earn money, as in like you know financial analysts or hedge fund managers earning millions of £s, it's like I would love to like to do that, because I'd be a lot richer, but I don't, I couldn't, I don't care, because I don't get any value out of that, in terms of I like helping people, helping students'. She understands this to have resulted from the influence of her mother: 'I think that's probably my, in terms of values, something that I've maybe grown up with in terms of maybe with my family, and that we, you know my brother's a teacher, my sister's a social worker, my mum's a care worker, so maybe in terms of my family upbringing, we've all grown up with this set of values of maybe you know giving back, helping others'. She talks again about the shared work ethic as well as the care for others. 'You know my brother's a special needs teacher and he loves it and he's so good at his job. My sister's really concerned about her cases and in social work, and really likes helping people'. She values the fact that her upbringing has resulted in this shared commitment which she sees very positively reflected in herself, and the attitudes of her brother and sister to their work.

She made reference to her partner, Niall, and his family where she questioned whether their being together was as a result of a similar philosophy within their families. 'I don't know if it means anything, but Niall's family are the exact same, Niall's a teacher, his mum's a teacher, his sister's a teacher, so it could be sort of meeting someone with shared values in terms of value giving back or value helping others over financial status or material status'. Niall works in the same institution as Ava. Their discussions, alongside his approach to work which she described as differing notably from hers, were of interest to Ava in the relation to her current role which came later in the narrative.



She talked about how her mother who, in addition to being hard working and caring 'was also very good academically' but 'never forced us to, she never wanted As or Bs or Cs, she just said if you do your best, that's what I ask for. She never interfered, she just trusted us. So I think that was a huge element in us growing up and why, I suppose I was, I am quite a good independent learner and I'm very good working independently... you know I can get things done on my own very well, I think. But I think that comes from my mum giving me those skills, because she just gave it to me all the time, she goes "I trust you, you'll be great". And so I was. So I think that's definitely a huge influence'. It is interesting here that Ava returns to the notions of a successful neoliberal individual which she links directly to her family background.

Ava's understanding of herself in relation to her mother was clearly central to a number of aspects of her life. She explained other ways in which she felt her influence '...in all areas, like in terms of me, my brother and I and my sister, we're very house proud and we're very, we always make sure everything's cleaned and organised, or if we go to someone's for dinner, we always make sure we do the washing up...'. Ava viewed her mother as well-organised and meticulous, as well as seeing her as a leader in both her professional and social contexts. This is something that had implications for her professional work and her intentions for herself.

At times during the conversations Ava's levels of confidence varied in relation to different parts of her narrative. She talked about not being confident in her levels of academic ability but in contrast feels confident in the social setting. She made reference to being amazed when she received her GCSE and A-Level exam results and then went to University having not believed as a teenager that she would be capable of going. She referred to the importance of the views of others that she valued, and about feeling 'flattered' when these people have valued her. During the conversation she questioned whether being brought up in a single parent

family contributed to her levels of confidence in the professional setting, given her understanding of the associated stereotypes ‘...I think a big factor in my confidence is probably the fact that because I grew up in a single parent family, I suppose I was always mindful of this stereotype that if you’re from a broken home you are not deemed to do so well or be as successful... you know three kids from a broken home, we’re a) not supposed to be successful, b) supposed to be you know a destructive family or whatever’. It would seem reasonable to suggest that her feelings about this may have influenced the way she narrated herself and her family.

Ava described how she came to recognise herself as organised during her Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) to become a teacher: ‘I think I loved the PGCE because what I found, one of my strengths is that I’m very well organised from a paperwork perspective, so I kind of got some sad thrill out of being well organised...in this immense overload of paperwork and information. So that was one area I was very good at.’ In the different roles that Ava has played during her teaching career she is well aware of the relevance and importance of organisation to teaching: it is embedded in the discourses about being an effective teacher and so carries professional value. Professional values and positive professional behaviour are significant for Ava and she talks to these on a number of occasions in a way that suggests they should be “shared” by all teachers (GTCE, 2009: 1).

Later she talked about the way in which she felt her experiences of paid employment as a teenager were useful in the early stages of her teaching career in supporting the development of her practice. ‘I think there was a couple of lessons when I first started teaching, obviously my classroom management wasn’t fantastic, but it developed really quickly, and I think that was a result of my play work and being able to put myself on a level with inner London kids and speak to them on a level and not go in with a power trip approach. So that seemed to work well, which is why that

came up [in the reflection on an earlier conversation]<sup>10</sup> in terms of me enjoying my PGCE'. She could see the impact of the earlier experiences on her learning to be a teacher.

Ava recognised that she poses challenges for herself which speaks directly to neoliberal discourses. '... I do look at things and think how could that be done better? Everything. From, I don't know, personal things like the flat or my dress sense or my speaking or my job or how staff feel, you know, that's quite interesting, trying to improve things all the time. I am aware that I am also one of these that even if I went back to teach physical education in ten years, I know that I'd be good, because I'm that sort of person that would make sure I was good and prepared'. In the descriptions and analyses she offered, she clearly articulates herself as a neoliberal subject with characteristics that position her as successful (Bradford and Hey, 2007). As we will see later, she gave numerous examples of her frustrations with those who do not share her ways of doing things and discussed this in relation to the difficulties she has in understanding why she challenges herself in this way. However, she did make reference to her mother who 'instilled in us [that] hard work pays off' and made comment about herself as a worker. 'I think my threshold for working hard, and I think my threshold for sort of hitting my physical limit and mental limit is quite high'. Ava identified that she thinks a lot about her experiences, and a significant proportion of the conversations related to her consideration of this. She said 'I think I'm constantly reflecting. Niall [her partner] said to me "you don't stop thinking, you're always thinking, you don't stop, relax your mind". So I think yeah I'm always doing that, without a doubt'. She recognised the negative implications of this pressure she places upon herself to keep working harder and better for her work, her life, and the balance between them.

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<sup>10</sup> [ ] indicate the addition of words or explanatory text from me in a quotation.

These ideas around the requirement for hard work and the positive results of working hard are prevalent in recent and current political discourses. There is specific evidence of this in the content of the previously implemented “Code of Conduct” for teachers (GTCE, 2009) and the current Teachers’ Standards (DFE, 2011), underpinned by a number of Government policies over the last two decades. As we saw in an earlier chapter, this is particularly evident in those professions, often public service related, where the requirement is to respond to and absorb ever increasing levels of responsibility and expectation (Ballet *et al*, 2006). In order to survive this intensification of work, teachers have to be responsive subjects that can and will work hard (Evans *et al*, 2008). In Ava’s case this ‘professional’ requirement or “disciplinary logic” (Fournier, 1999: 280) is situated alongside her personal commitment to the importance of helping people.

As well as reflecting upon herself in the conversations, Ava considers her responses to what others do. One example of this is when she contrasted her family experiences of hard work with a friend who she lived with at university who ‘you know, she’ll go and do four hours’ work and she’s got to go and sleep for six hours, and I was just like God she hasn’t got a clue what work is. Or you know she’d be like “oh mate I can’t clean the oven”, and I’d be like “why not”, she’d be like “I just can’t”, I thought “why can’t you clean the oven?”. So I didn’t really understand, whereas she’d never worked, I think her first job was after uni, she’d never had a job’. This comparison with others who have a different work ethic and values, is something we will see that she returned to on a number of occasions in the conversations.

In sharing and offering explanation about these formative experiences, Ava made explicit through different ideas and examples the characteristics that she values including the hard work ethic, being independent, strong organisational skills and a commitment to, and investment in, other people. In reflecting on these things she said ‘I guess

I've recognised why I like those things, could be a result of being a common trait from my mum, and me being like my mum'.

Ava's formative experiences and values provide the context and, as I will illustrate, have implications for her professional learning. These implications are situated in her responses to things that have happened and people that she has encountered: the critical and distinctive incidents and people that she indicates have impacted upon her and her career (Kelchtermans, 1993; Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe, 1994).

### **5.2.2 Ava's Career Journey**

This section will outline Ava's career journey. Her experiences speak to a number of the key conceptual areas of professional work including bureaucratisation (Johnson, 1972); intensification and the emotional aspects of teachers' work (Hargreaves, 2000); discourses of professionalism (Fournier, 1999); and control (Evetts, 2003). They also speak to matters of identity, identification and agency (Stronach *et al.*, 2002; Burkitt, 2008; Ball *et al.*, 2011a and b; Ball, 2013).

Ava described how she came to be involved in physical education as a result of chance. She visited a University and remembered thinking 'wow, this is university, I'm never, I will never get to university, I didn't think academically I was ever going to be good enough to go to university. I think that was probably when I was about thirteen or fourteen'. At school she was 'in the lowest set for maths... but then when I kind of wanted, had an idea that I might want to go to university, it kind of gave me a kick up the backside to make me want to do well, so I asked to be moved into the middle set for maths, and they did, meaning I could get a C. So when I got my GCSE results I was really pleased because I never, I got nine A to Cs, thinking that I would only get about three or four. So then I thought, "ooh actually, I'm actually not as dumb as I thought"!'. This unexpected successful outcome was significant and at A Level, she had a similar experience: 'So I decided to do physical education A Level and it

turned out to be my favourite out of all three A Levels. I was so interested in it, and we had such a great teacher... and his sort of format of teaching was just brilliant, it was all practical based, and he really made you learn in class. And then when the A Level results came out, there were only six in our class, and two of us got Bs, and it was me and someone else, who I thought was like super intelligent, so I couldn't believe that I came out with a B at A level'. It was through these two experiences that Ava started to experience a trajectory of success, one that she had not anticipated. It was evident that she had not anticipated doing well, demonstrating a lack of confidence. However, what is evident here is the role of agency in Ava's telling of the events where she made the decision to 'do well' (Day *et al.*, 2006).

We heard earlier the way in which Ava values others, their support and encouragement and how she connects this to her family and upbringing. In the narrative she made explicit the value of positive feedback to her. One such example was when talking about her experience with a tutor at University and 'a particular event that also pushed me into being more confident in going into teaching, and that was in my third year he asked me to go and lecture in their socio-cultural module. So that, for me was a really huge motivator, because he is considered to be a very, you know he's very well thought of in the University and sports science, and he's a great teacher, a really good tutor. So when he asked me to do that above lots of other people that I would assume he would have asked first... I felt very motivated by that and really flattered'. In terms of her view of herself this was a significant experience in building her confidence, particularly in light of her comments about the chances of being successful given her status as a child from a one parent family. She further valued the tutor and his response to her thanks at graduation: 'I just said "oh thanks so much, you did so much for me", and he said "I didn't do anything", he said "you know you did everything". So I suppose from that point of view he really inspired me and made me feel like I was actually competent if you like'. Her view of his significant help, and his playing down of her thanks,

is relevant to the way she later talks about her approaches to helping others.

Ava indicated earlier how positive she was about her experience of the PGCE, although did encounter one mentor in school who she did not value in terms of the way she behaved: 'I didn't like her to be quite honest, she sort of publicly humiliated me as a teacher trainee in front of some students and in front of staff in the staff room, she just had a bit of a chip on her shoulder'. Ava is unable to identify with this behaviour that is so unlike her own and it offers a direct contrast to that of the tutor and her family. The impact of identification with those people she perceives as displaying characteristics she shares, or those characteristics she aspires to, are critical in her account (Hall, 1996).

The narrative of confidence in response to others is evident again when Ava got her first teaching post: 'I got a job at Northridge School, I went in and had a look and I loved it. .. I knew that having visited Northridge, I really liked the school, I really liked the headmistress, she was really dynamic and young and funny. And I rang up and I said "look I've sent an application in but I haven't heard back", and I spoke to the Head herself, and she just sort of said "oh I can't believe it, we've lost your application", she said "were you the girl with the short hair"? And I had short hair at the time... and she said "oh I can't believe, I said to someone I'd really like her to come and work here" '. Ava describes the start to her first post as very positive because of the way the Head viewed her but also 'in terms of my professional development, because it was my first teaching job, they were brilliant. So Orla, the Head was an ex physical education teacher, the four of the deputy teachers were all ex-PE (Physical Education), so in terms of sort of the physical education support and professional development and things you wanted to get going, they were supportive 100%, anything you asked them for, it was "yes" '.

Ava commented that she 'didn't realise actually until now how spoilt I was as an NQT (Newly Qualified Teacher) because I was given so much scope to do what I wanted, when I wanted. And then Ed, who I also trained with, came and joined the department, and then the Head of Department at the time was also ex-Riverside University. So we had all been trained in the same way and had all this kind of you know initiative, hard work ethic, we really, really developed the department, so I loved working there'. The values and discourses of professionalism that she felt she shared with others are important to her and she returns to this on several occasions.

As well as Ava feeling very positive about the school she also felt that the 'school' remained positive about her over time. This became clear when: 'they obviously didn't want to lose me I guess at the time, so they gave me lots of other responsibilities to keep me there, and money and things'. She talked about the investment made in her through an extensive range of professional learning opportunities including attendance at courses and collaborative activities with colleagues, all of which she valued.

However, things started to change and workload intensified when 'Ed left, and then the Head of Department left, and it was such a busy department and very, very high expectations in the school, so three years in I was kind of burnt out, not massively, I was just kind of like "I don't think I want to take on Head of Department", because it was a 7 am to a 7, 8 o'clock at night job, and I didn't feel I was there yet, I didn't want to have that life, you know, I was getting in at 8 and leaving at about 5 or 6 which suited me, and I didn't want the pressure of Head of Department'.

At that point Ava left the school and went to work abroad for three months. She attributed her decision to her experiences of the staff changes and pressure to take on greater responsibility in the school but 'also because I had a boyfriend at the time, and we split up, so it was kind of like, I didn't want to take on Head of Department, I had just sort of split



up with someone, so I got this job which sounded amazing, but it wasn't'. She explains why the job abroad was problematic in relation to her experiences with a colleague which came later in the narrative.

Ava returned to Northridge School after three months and appreciated that the school were able to offer her another job. However, her role had changed as she 'more or less ran the department with a new NQT guy, Tom, who came in. So Tom as an NQT was actually more or less pushed into a corner to run the department, as an NQT, so in terms of my view on the school, it changed my view because I thought that was completely unfair'. She agreed to help Tom run the department but found the workload challenging and offered an illustration of this: 'so I took on key stage 4 and BTec for key stage 4 and 5. And I think I was teaching sort of nineteen, twenty hours a week, so the workload was absolutely massive. And I think it was also just, because it was a fairly challenging school, inner London, my day, as head of key stage 4, the behaviour management was really tough, but because I was adamant to follow through on everything you know, I finished my day at say 4, after my tutor role, and then I'd usually have a meeting between 4 and 5, or an extra-curricular club. So come 5, half 5, that was when all my paperwork started, so it was like my evening started, and it was it all incident sheets, I had you know a pile of incident sheets on my desk at the end of the day with key stage 4 problems in lessons and, which would mean I'd have to call the student, call their parents, send letters out, discipline, and go through sort of all that stuff'. At this stage Ava had started to experience the significant intensification and increased levels of bureaucracy which are embedded in the workload of teachers. Ava talked about how the levels of pressure had started to have an impact upon her such that she continued in this role for 18 months before deciding to go travelling.

Northridge School had a post available for her again when she returned from travelling but quite soon she 'decided I had enough of behaviour management, I was just sick and tired of dealing with fights and they had

a huge Inclusion Unit, so you know you were, you had kids from Inclusion coming into your physical education lessons as and when... So I think it just became a bit of a cycle by the end of my time there that you were just kind of forced to manage things that you didn't necessarily want to really'. She illustrates here the sort of pressures on teachers through the range of different challenges they face.

She noted that 'you just gain an insight from a political perspective that you don't, you start to not like'. When asked about this, Ava explained that it was: 'politics within the school and the management' related to 'how staff were treated' and the apparent lack of support she felt managers offered. 'I just felt that you know there's teachers really stressed and really run down. I mean I think I went down to about eight stone at one stage, I was so busy, I was run ragged, and I thought they don't give a damn about anyone'. She went on to discuss this in relation to 'the Head, she is fantastic and dynamic, but she relies on this high turnover, so every year she's got about thirty staff leaving, but I think what she relies on is that she needs new, energetic staff that are going to realistically last two to three years, and then get a new influx of energetic people who are willing to do you know the 7 to 7 day'. There is evidence here that Ava is in conflict as she recognises the aspirations of the school and values the high expectations and standards, but positions this against her concerns about the negative impact of the increasing levels of workload, and the lack of care for staff (Bartlett and Burton, 2007). The evidence of the dilemma is played out in her leaving and re-joining the school on two occasions before finally moving on.

She explained her commitment to take responsibility for her professional choices. On finally finding the intensification of work too great at Northridge School (Hargreaves, 2000) she said '...at this stage I just thought I wanted to leave Secondary'. She moved onto a role at a Further Education college which she describes as 'a little bit drastic' particularly given that her view of the move is that it was not particularly positive and she felt she had 'completely limited' herself. She describes the reasons

for feeling limited at New College, which is where she was based at the time of our conversations: 'there's no support, they don't value PE, they don't value sport, I work at three different sites, so my day is spent going from one site to the next and carrying my resources around, and there's no room for development, they don't want to know about development, you know, their idea of development is talking through how to use their website, you know, it's really kind of painful. So in terms of my career professional development, it's completely gone out the window'. In response to feeling that she had 'loved teaching for the first few years until it all got a bit too much', she described that in response to her current experiences and those at Northridge School she was 'currently looking for a job which is stimulating but not to the point where I want to burn out'. The indication here was that she was taking responsibility for the career decisions that she had made and those she would make in the future. There are a number of occasions during Ava's narrative where she talks about taking responsibility for herself in line with the discourses of professionalism described by Bonal and Rambla (2004), Davies (2005) and Olssen (2006). This was done with some resistance arising from her critical view of her experiences at both schools (see Ball and Olmedo, 2013).

In reflecting upon our first conversation, Ava talked extensively about comparisons between Northridge School and New College. She makes detailed reference to the structures and organisation at Northridge School in relation to the school calendar; resources and equipment for lessons; management of behaviour; access to information communication technology that was always fully functional. This was very positive for her as 'I'd go in and just know exactly what to do, know exactly what was going on, I was never in a fluster because I didn't know what to do, it was just already there. She said '...you just knew what was going on from Head to bottom constantly. You, everything just had a system and a structure, anything, you knew how to do everything, because everything was in place, it was organised, it was structured, there were policies in place that made sense, that were straightforward, weren't ridiculous...'.

This was in direct contrast to how she felt about New College where she struggled to come to terms with how things operate: ‘...there’s no induction... no infrastructure... and if you ask anyone a question, they’ll say ask this person, and it’s complete ‘pass the buck’ mentality’. She provided examples of a behaviour system that ‘is actually like a maze that doesn’t make sense, so you end up just doing your own thing, there’s no logic behind it’. She was also frustrated about being given very short notice to attend meetings or complete tasks. This was difficult for her because it is at odds with how she prefers to work and has implications for how well she can complete aspects of her role: ‘...just in terms of me, I like to be good at whatever I’m doing and do it well’. In the context that she describes at New College she was finding it very difficult to feel that she was doing things well, and this was having a negative impact on how she felt about her work and future at the college.

The frustration about work was exacerbated for Ava at the time of our conversations because she was applying for jobs and not being successful. At this time that the job market for physical education was very competitive. The Coalition Government had recently removed the funding for the Physical Education and Sport Strategy for Young People (DfES/DCMS, 2008) and a number of people who had specific roles within the infrastructure were moving into school physical education jobs. This resulted in fewer jobs being advertised and, where they were advertised, many people applying for each post. She had heard back from schools where her applications had been unsuccessful and she explained her understanding of the challenging market: ‘the situation at the moment, is that there’s at least sort of twenty to forty applicants per job, and there’s not as many jobs out there as there were sort of a couple of years ago’. In spite of this knowledge, she explained how she had only been called for one interview from six jobs that she applied for and she had not got the job. Given her desire to move along, with the value that Ava placed on others’ views of her, being unsuccessful in applying for the posts was very difficult. She explained that it had put her ‘on a bit of a

downer' and caused her 'start to question my ability to do the job that I've been applying for, it's made me question whether I'm slightly out of touch, it's made me question what are the factors that have determined my applications to be unsuccessful?... but it's just tough sometimes when you like to know why'. She linked these feelings of doubt to her earlier concern that moving to New College had been limiting and that she had made the wrong choice: another example of her holding herself responsible for her current situation.

Towards the end of our first conversation, Ava explained that she had been asked to apply for a leadership role at New College by someone she valued. She was very uncertain about applying because of her feelings about the College and her perception that she was limited by being there. Having debated over what to do, she eventually decided to apply for it. By the time we met for the third conversation she had been interviewed and just accepted the post. She reflected on the impact of this in 'just the past couple of weeks where I've doubted myself quite a bit, not massively, but just not felt very valuable, is that the right word? Not felt very competent? Whereas now I kind of feel a little bit, OK, well at least they recognise that I'm good at something, or want me to be a leader for some, for a particular reason'. She made the link here between securing the post, the implicit recognition from others about her professional worth and, feeling better about things.

Her narrations demonstrated the way in which she understands her experiences of professionalism *through others* and the associated views and expectations she has of herself. This is all bound up with the emotions and feelings which she identified in response to the relationships she has had with others (Burkitt, 2014). This is particularly valuable in the next section.

### 5.2.3 Significant People and Incidents

As we have already heard, Ava's family are significant for her in terms of who she understands herself to have become (Burkitt, 2008). Her experiences of her career to date, and particularly Northridge School, figure significantly in her account and analysis. Ava's career story was punctuated with examples of people and incidents that she had encountered along the way. Some things were more significant to Ava than others, which was evident in the attention she gave them and the way she used them to explicate her understanding of herself. She made numerous references to the influence that they had on her professional learning.

The first of these is Niall, her partner who works in the same institution. She explained that 'Niall, my boyfriend, has pointed that out to me before, he said "you're really good at helping the staff", so if they're being observed, I'd go out of my way to help them with their observations, with their lesson plans, with their schemes of work'. She uses the comments Niall made to contextualise that she helps others at New College 'because no one else does. And I can't believe it doesn't happen... you know, that's motivating me that I can hopefully help other teachers... he [Niall] said "you're brilliant at helping people", and I said "but isn't that what most people should be doing?" I don't understand why people wouldn't'. However, she is clear that she doesn't want this type of help and support to be misunderstood. 'But yeah, no, I do, I love helping people when it ... well I think it's, I don't think it's in a kind of in a way that I think is like a gloating way... I just like helping people, not for the fact that I feel I know better, as in "oh I've done a better one than that", but it's like "if you haven't got one, I've got one, just let me know, and I'll give it to you". So I do like doing that and helping people out'. This links back to the way in which her tutor responded when she thanked him for his help, as well as making clear her views of the way she expects professionals to behave. The affirmation from Niall about this is also important to her as it

enables her to justify what she does without disrupting her levels of confidence or affecting my view of her during the research.

She offered two examples from her role as a mentor to student teachers at Northridge School which illustrated her understanding of herself in response to what she sees in others. In her first mentoring role she had loved working with the student teacher and had realised through it the extent of her passion for teaching and physical education, as well as the value she placed on good physical education lessons. In the second example she recognised aspects of herself and her practice in a student teacher, specifically in relation to organisation: 'I sort of saw quite a lot myself in her, which I thought was nice... her paperwork was immaculate and you know I thought that was a nice reflection to have'. These examples clearly link to the way in which Ava understands herself to live and work, and her intentions for her own practice.

In the narrative there were several examples of very positive experiences with people whose professional practice she valued. One came through the comments she made earlier about the department at Northridge School where colleagues shared her approach. She drew on two particular influential individuals. 'Yeah, in terms of Ed, I found him quite inspiring in terms of the passion, in terms of physical education teaching, ... I used to always go and observe his football lessons, and really learn that much off him... and likewise he used to come and watch my dance lessons... And I think we had a really good relationship from a professional perspective, and we really enjoyed quality teaching'. In addition to valuing Ed's teaching and his willingness to be collaborative in support professional learning she said 'Ed really did motivate me and inspire me, I think he played a really big role... he was very professional and really balanced in all his views... he did have that much more experience, and so I... Yeah we got on really, really well. So I still see Ed as a big inspiration to be honest'. Ed's work ethic, ability to teach effectively, and his commitment to quality were of importance to Ava

because she these were things she valued. She identifies key aspects from the discourses of professionalism here in relation to quality of teaching, work ethic, support and collaboration. She also valued it because it felt as though this professional relationship was a shared enterprise where Ed valued her: her positive views of him were reflected as positive views of herself in his work with her.

This was also true of another colleague at Northridge School, 'Eleanor was brilliant and when she came to watch my lessons, she always gave me extremely positive feedback and as a result I was kind of like, if you like the swot in the NQTs...'. She went onto explain that she 'found Eleanor quite inspirational because she, in her feedback she was so supportive, so if there was any particular area, for example, I think it was even Gifted and Talented facilitation, and she asked me to go and watch one of her lessons, and... I remember sitting thinking "wow that's great", and I looked at her register and she was just so organised, and recognised every single student, and the systems that she had in place were fantastic. And so I found her really, again inspirational because of her passion for teaching, she always gave me positive feedback, but it was always constructive, with areas for development, be it high level development, whatever it may be, literacy, numeracy, ICT and PE'. As with Ed her rationale for valuing Eleanor is provided in examples of practice that she considers to be positive and relate to her expectations and aspirations for herself.

The Head at Northridge School provided a significant but challenging example for Ava because, in spite of the challenges she faced at the school, she recognised Orla's strengths. Ava was torn between recognising the positive features of hard work and drive to improve (performativity) embodied by Orla and her leadership team, and the negative levels of pressure that she felt and saw experienced by others. 'I mean this was almost bordering on too much in that they were so good that they would try to create initiatives, but... then their decisions to



create initiatives was just additional workload to what was already a huge workload anyway...your head was literally above water, and the next thing, bumff, now you've got to do this, now you've got to do this...'. She felt that the leadership team were creating work to legitimate their roles with no regard for the impact on others. In relation to her view about the care of others, this was problematic.

She also gave a specific example of Orla's behaviour that she found difficult: 'You know there was one stage where Orla came into a middle management meeting, and she was just like "right, the reports aren't good enough, you're getting them all back, we want them re-done". And we all just like, we just hated her for about five minutes... because she had no idea how knackered we all were from everything else that she had going on. It was like "when are we supposed to do them? When? We don't have time"...'. However, in spite of feeling like this Ava recognised that when 'looking back she was right, because that is how those students did turn around, and they are now role models in school...'. She continued to make sense of the positive and negative aspects that she could see in Orla's approach: '...at the same time, as much as from a teacher's perspective it's tough, from her, from the students' perspective, she does well with those sorts of initiatives with the students...' Ava talked about one key development being undertaken by the head which she clearly recognised as positive when she commented 'I mean how many Heads do things like that? So it was good in terms of she does create a community, she does create this kind of loyalty from students, and staff, even though it's ridiculously tough... And I just think you were given the tools to do what you wanted. So in terms of your own development, you were just given complete autonomy really. It was very rare to not get what you wanted... it was dynamic and progressive and so much going on for the students. So that's why it was really great... it was brilliant'. She juxtaposes the positive with the negative. 'Obviously there were lots of downsides with that. I think in terms of, I think it's 90% brilliant, but where she falls down I think is failing to recognise the amount of work that

people put in. So she kind of takes it for granted that there are people that just do everything all the time'. The experiences that Ava is describing of leadership that expects a lot and staff that try to deliver is representative of the ideas explored in chapter two. The policy implementation and enactment at Northridge School as experienced by Ava required effective neoliberal subjects who could respond to expectations and deal with pressure, both in leadership and elsewhere on the staff. Ava found it hard to reconcile this with her commitment to care for and support others: it posed a challenge to her understanding of what it means to be a professional.

Alongside those colleagues who she recognised to be positive, Ava was also very clear about those who she had felt offered negative examples of professional practice. The first of these was when she left Northridge School the first time and spent three months teaching abroad. She mentioned earlier that this did not turn out to be a particularly easy time for her. She explained that this was as a result of practice she experienced in physical education with a colleague called York. '...he was horrific. And as a head of department he made us, there were me, Nick and York in the department, and a typical lesson would be sixty students on a field, three physical education teachers, common sense would be to take twenty students each of, we're talking about five acres of land. But no, we had to, me and Nick had to watch York teach sixty students... it was about 42 degrees heat, and he would make the students do I think it was four to five laps, without a break, without a drink, it was ridiculous, the initial task. Then they had to stand in pairs and throw and catch to their partner and then get into a game. And that was the lesson. So in terms of what I'd come from in terms of physical education and how physical education should be taught, to come and watch what was like a comedy sketch was ridiculous. And he would, we weren't allowed to start the lesson until he was there, and literally say the lesson started at 2 o'clock, sometimes we would stand waiting with all the students outside, and he would pull up in his car about fifteen minutes into the lesson,

“sorry guys, had to go and have my sandwich”, and start teaching the lesson fifteen minutes in’. Although she referred to this as a comedy, it was clear from her description of York as ‘horrific’ at the start of the account and her subsequent concerns about his practice that she was being ironic.

She made reference to other aspects of his practice that she was concerned about. She drew on a very specific example which indicated her alarm about his approach: ‘we had a swimming lesson, and he turned around and made a reference to a twelve year old girl and said something like “look at the backside on that”. So from a child protection point of view it was just gone, it was crazy’. She gave another example of his inappropriate behaviour towards her and her colleague where ‘we did timings one day with a group of girls and boys, and I was timing the girls and I thought Nick was timing the boys, but apparently I should have been timing everyone. So I didn’t get the times of the boys, and in front of all the students he picked up his clipboard and whacked it off the floor, and went “you stupid girl”, to me, in front of all the students and staff... And I was just like “oh my God”, he started shouting at me, and he did it again in the swimming pool’. Having provided the examples she summarised the sort of practice she observed in him: ‘...he believed in the 1933 syllabus<sup>11</sup>, so he’d get people out of the swimming pool and make them do press ups, star jumps, sit ups, and then they’d have to get back into the pool and carry on with their swimming lesson, just because he could.’. She added comment that he was a significant person that ‘I think highlighted how much I, I hated bad physical education teachers and unprofessional... So that was quite a significant part of my physical education teacher training’. One of things that clearly concerned her enormously was when she asked for support from the school management ‘...they didn’t want to know, it was all swept under the

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<sup>11</sup> Board of Education (1949) Syllabus of Physical Training For Schools 1933

carpet, and so that was interesting'. At this stage she was able to compare that practice with the leadership team at Northridge School who, at the time, she had seen as generally very supportive. As will become evident later, the perceptions of support from the leadership teams here and at Northridge School had an influence on Ava's view about her own intended approach to leadership in the role she had secured during the period of our conversations.

Ava provided other examples of negative professional practice where colleagues demonstrated no consideration for others and this was something she found very difficult to reconcile. 'You know like we had a member staff leave last year who took everything off the intranet that he had prepared for a course, so the next person coming in had nothing to work from, and I couldn't believe, I said "why would you do that?" I said "I don't understand that mentality, it's a sharing practice"...'. This was an alien approach for Ava as she has 'schemes [medium term plans for teaching] that are thirty pages long, anyone can have them, because if it helps them, why would you not? ... again I guess it's about shared values'. She also found out that one of her colleagues 'locks away all the resources, pens, plastic folders, markers, staplers, he locks them in a file that only he can access. I don't understand that. Because this is what I mean about the kind of selfish attitude that I find is you know, "well I'm not giving them my stuff", why is that the mentality or the approach? I struggle with that, because anything I have, "there you go, if it helps, there you go", you know'.

As we have seen, she has a very clear idea about what she understands professionalism to mean in relation to aspects of practice such as quality of teaching; attitudes to work; attitudes to others; and organisation. The negative examples demonstrate selfish practice; inappropriate behaviour; and a lack of support for others; which is a key recurring theme in her narrative. Ava's expectations around professionalism appear to be greater for those individuals in leadership particularly when it comes to support for others. She identified that her current 'leader, in terms of a

role model, it's just, I find it fascinating... if someone goes to her with a problem, she's like "oh I don't deal with that". Or there's someone in the Department who's struggling, you know, but she'll just sit there and go, "well it's their fault, their classroom management's rubbish". And it's like "have you, have you even tried to help them, or tried to support them, or...?". She'll come and sort of, there's a new guy in our Department who's a really sweet guy, he's not the most competent, and he's not the brightest, but she does nothing but slag him off to everyone else'. She compared this to reflections from her own practice, drawing on examples from when she jointly managed the department at Northridge School. This type of behaviour concerns her in terms of what leadership should do and she talked about finding it difficult 'to deal with someone who I, in my view is very unprofessional, very selfish, doesn't want to support or help anyone else but themselves. So to be managed by someone like that as well, I find frustrating'.

As part of Education policy during the 1990's, schools have embedded a process of lesson observation as part of their routine practice which is a critical component of the Ofsted inspection process (Ball, 2013). These lesson observations serve multiple purposes: they provide an opportunity to audit the quality of teaching; observers watching can enhance their own practice by drawing on that of others; they can be used as part of a mechanism for support where the observer can offer suggestions to support a teacher's practice in relation to the learning and progress of pupils. There is a published grading system for lessons where 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is a lesson that requires improvement and 4 is deemed inadequate (Ofsted, 2014: 15). The structure of the lesson observation process and implementation are crucial in how this activity is perceived by staff and the culture it generates (Tomlinson, 2005; MacLure, 2005; Roulstone and Prideaux, 2008). Ava had concerns about colleagues' experiences of lesson observation at New College particularly given that the majority of her colleagues had no formal teacher education qualification or background in teaching. They 'come out of industry on a

Friday, and they're in a classroom on the Monday having never taught in their lives...', which she described as 'awful'. She identified seeing 'people coming out of lessons crying... and it's like "who allows that to happen?"'. Given what we know about Ava's attitudes to colleagues it is unsurprising that she was concerned about this, commenting 'I just think it's awful'.

Ava shared a detailed narrative about Eliza, her colleague, to explain the way in which she understood lesson observation processes to operate at New College and her concerns. Eliza had come out of a lesson observation and was very upset. When Ava asked what was wrong Eliza said "oh I've just been observed and I got a three"... she just said "well he [the line manager] completely slated the lesson". Ava asked Eliza about targets and areas for development that had been suggested but Eliza indicated that nothing of this nature had been offered. Ava said 'so "he's completely slagged your lesson off, but at the same time he's not supported you in how to develop as a teacher?"'. Ava's questions to Eliza about this illustrated her understanding of the basic principles that she expected to underpin appropriate processes for lesson observation, and the support for professional learning that should arise from them. Ava felt very strongly about Eliza's experience and went on to describe how colleagues were 'slagged off' but not given any support. She could not understand why there was no suggestion that Eliza 'go and observe other lessons, or observe a teacher who has got good classroom management, or go to another institute to observe lessons?' Ava was not surprised that Eliza 'got observed again two or three months later and got a three again...'. However, Ava clearly values the approach that Eliza took to this, particularly in light of her own understanding about the challenges of teacher education: 'fair play to her, in terms of resilience you know, this year, a couple of weeks ago, we both got observed on a Friday and she got a one, and that was just sheer through her own perseverance and finding out herself, she wasn't supported'. Ava values resilience and it is

a theme that is mirrored elsewhere in the account in relation to her and others.

Ava wanted to help Eliza but found it frustrating as she was concerned about how that would be perceived: 'it's difficult because I knew what a good lesson should consist of, but I didn't want to kind of be gloaty about it, or say "you should or shouldn't do this"'. Ava tried to approach this carefully and 'said, "look Eliza if you need a hand, just come and, you know we'll have a chat, or if you want to go through anything, you know, I'm not saying that I'm perfect or anything but I have done a bit of, I have done teacher training and been supported in teacher training and helped, so if there's anything"...'. This resulted in Ava taking Eliza into Northridge School 'to observe an interactive whiteboard lesson... and she really appreciated that. And I was just sort of like "I'm doing this off my back with poor Eliza"'. This exemplifies Ava's approach to professional practice based on the earlier experiences she had. It also illustrated her view of the professional responsibility that institutions should have for staff, and the things that Ava felt were wrong at North College: 'there's nothing in place to support teachers, their professional development...it's just banging your head against a brick wall...'.

Ava draws on these experiences and her aspirations for herself later in examining her approach to the future.

#### **5.2.4 Dealing with Challenges**

As we have seen there have been a number of situations that have been very challenging for Ava including her recent experiences at New College. She summarises her feelings about what she has seen '...I find myself, I hate saying this, I find myself working amongst people that I just think have a really low level of competence in education, if I'm honest, just some really simple things...'. Ava responded to these circumstances by taking responsibility for herself and seeking out opportunities. She wanted to create positive experiences for herself. '...because I wasn't

finding the job stimulating enough'. At Northridge School, Ava had been a mentor to student teachers placed in the physical education department which was a role she had enjoyed so she hesitantly '... got in contact with the University to sort of say you know I wouldn't mind continuing doing something, but I know that I'm in post sixteen education, so obviously I couldn't [mentor] a full-time student'. This resulted in Ava taking on a quality assurance and support role for the University where she visited student teachers based in physical education departments in other schools. She acknowledges the value of this role that she secured for herself: 'I think if I weren't doing the university [role], or hadn't done the mentoring, I think right now I'd probably be banging my head against a brick wall, it's the only thing that's kind of keeping me going in terms of my professional development, my professional interest in working with people that are on a level in terms of physical education knowledge and physical education enjoyment... I really, really enjoyed it, and I still really enjoy it, and I think that's an area that I'd still want to always pursue'. The issue of feeling as though she was banging her 'head against a brick wall', came up several times.

### **5.2.5 Reflections on Ava**

Ava recognised a change in herself over time during her career in response to different things and in different contexts. She described positive changes in response to her views of the student teachers she works with: 'it's interesting going in doing the school visits, just sort of seeing the students, and they're not going to be amazing, because I know that I am totally different to the way I was when I was training'.

She acknowledges how she understands other formative experiences to have influenced her approach to mentoring and the quality assurance (QA) role as well her broader practice. We heard earlier about the poor mentoring practice that she experienced when she was a student. She said, 'I think the experiences probably made me more aware of how to play a supportive role rather than a critical role, and how, well how



approaching a student in a patronising, condescending way, or power trip approach just doesn't work, it's just ... And I think that's kind of made me more motivated to be the opposite, if anything'.

When I asked her about her confidence in relation to the experiences she had shared, she talked about having different experiences of confidence in different settings. As we have seen she concerned herself with the perceptions of others and did not want to display characteristics that she does not value. She talked about this earlier in relation to the experience of her colleague when not wanting to seem 'gloaty'. She provides another example to illustrate this at Northridge School when she '...applied for Second in Department, but me and Ed went for it, and Ed got it, which I was a bit gutted by because I did work a lot harder, but I think it was simply down to confidence in interview, and Ed gave a way better interview by miles, because he is that much more confident, and I felt intimidated in the interview because everyone that was interviewing me I knew, so I felt completely... I didn't want to give off a conceited impression in the interview'. She explored this further in relation to other interview experiences: 'So that's... in interviews I've kind of yeah ... But it's funny because I've been, when I went to an international interview I was fantastic, I probably gave the best interview I've ever given in my life because it was a room full of just strangers, so I didn't care, and they offered me the job there and then and they weren't supposed to. So in that particular instance I was amazing! And I remember thinking "oh that's the best interview I've ever given in my life". But yeah, and yesterday [the leadership interview] in the observation, the whole way through, my face was just red, the whole way through I was really, really under pressure, I felt so embarrassed. I'm very confident, but I think in work maybe it's a bit different [to personal life], I don't know why'. She sums the issue of confidence up by saying that '...I guess, I think in front of people I know, in terms of coming across as, I don't know over confident is something that I'm quite aware of'.

She describes the significant impact of being at New College. 'I lost energy, enthusiasm and I think ultimately, because I lost the freedom to develop students and develop myself, they were probably the main factors in me not feeling as motivated any more in terms of my career...'. She was clearly concerned about the implications for her in an environment where others feel 'lethargic and unmotivated... and I think being surrounded by that knock on effect has affected my current levels of motivation'. This issue is compounded for her because of the way her partner feels: 'And I notice that I, why do I struggle, I just questioned myself, why do I struggle with badly run places when someone like Niall [boyfriend] actually just doesn't care, he said he's stopped caring now. So he doesn't care about anything, he doesn't want to go to meetings... because he's been stitched up so much. He's been there for four years, so I'd imagine he's at the end of you know a very long anger type thing, because he does get really angry about how he gets stitched up there. So he's completely lost any motivation... And because obviously we're together now, his motivations are so low, and he does slag it off quite often, that can rub off, so I have to be really careful with that'.

Ava reflected on her previous school in light of her current experiences and said of her years at Northridge School ' I value them so much more now, but at the same time I couldn't go back based on the intensity of your day was you know, I used to come home and I couldn't speak to anyone, I was so physically and mentally wrecked, I couldn't actually have a phone call, I would just lie on the couch and actually feel quite down, I mean ... So looking back at that, that's the one good thing about my current job is that when I come home you know, it's not a problem calling people or going out for dinner, or having an evening, because my, what I have to face the next day is not really intense, or it's not, I don't fear it. Whereas I used to fear certain days at school, certain lessons, certain students, whereas now I don't have that. So that's kind of been a good learning curve in terms of where I want to go next, I think I've done

my stint in behaviour management, and it would just be nice to actually teach and progress in the field of PE’.

She also talked about how she had consciously tried to take a different approach when she returned to Northridge School and the staffing in the department had changed. ‘When I went back... I struggled with a less strong team... I was always really fussy about participation levels and kit, and when I came back, we went from I think it was about 60% participation non kit<sup>12</sup>, you know loads of non kitters, to really driving home physical education kits, calling parents every day, students taking part no matter what... we were really, really good on that. And then when I came back and I looked around at most of the lessons you know, there were probably about anything between three to six students sitting out...’. Ava found it ‘really difficult to deal with’ this problem given that for her it was a basic expectation in the work of a physical education department. She was keen to be ‘careful’ in her approach to this as Tom had taken over the running of the department: ‘not much I can do about this, initially, because I couldn’t step on his toes... I’ve struggled with that, I found that really frustrating that it was badly managed’.

These examples demonstrate the way in which she has responded to her experiences and the contribution that she understood them to have made to her practice and her professional learning. In the next section I explore some of the links Ava makes between her experiences and her perceptions of the future, again demonstrating her professional learning.

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<sup>12</sup> There is evidence in this statement of a shared understanding. Ava knows that I understand that the term ‘non kit’ refers to those pupils who do not bring the required clothing and footwear to a physical education lesson.

### 5.2.6 The Future in Response to the Past

The circumstances that Ava described led her to think about her new leadership post. She referred back to various aspects of her experience when considering how she saw the future. She was very concerned about the potential impact that others might have on her, particularly when she described how much she loved being ‘surrounded by people with a shared value’ at Northridge School. In terms of New College ‘I am surrounded by people that don’t share the same values. I have to be careful I think to maybe not stay somewhere where that becomes engrained in me as a professional, because I think it’s really important that what you’re surrounded by is what you become’. She was keen to make the most of the situation at New College but recognised that things might not change. She was committed to remaining reflective in order to resist the ‘negative vibes’ and ‘if for example in a year I’m still fighting and up against brick walls, then I will have to look elsewhere because I can’t, I can’t become that’. She clearly felt that there was a potential additional risk for her career associated with this as it could become more difficult for her to get a job somewhere else if she failed to maintain the ‘passion’.

Ava reflected on her previous experiences and the change she could see in herself over time. ‘So having people-managed a physical education department before, I actually found that quite difficult, and I think I was younger, I was twenty five, twenty six’. She linked this to preparation for the new role and how she felt better equipped as ‘now it’s, I think I’m a bit more mature in terms of how to deal with things... So I’ve found myself a lot more approachable than I think I was before, because I think that comes with age, and that when I did sort of joint head of department at Northridge School, the workload was so immense that if I got disturbed when I was in the middle of doing something, or had a time limit on myself, I found that you know on occasion I probably wasn’t that approachable, I was like “oh I can’t talk right now, can I talk to you later?” Whereas now I’m kind of more approachable because I now, I’ve identified that that’s a very important aspect of being a manager in terms

of listening to people as and when they need to offload or whinge or propose anything'. However, she recognised that there was a workload issue associated with taking a more open approach to colleagues' demands upon her time as 'the problem with that is that my work is being backlogged as a result, but that's fine'. Ava was drawing on her experiences of pressure and management at Northridge School and felt more positive about it than she had at other points in her career because she was intending to be proactive. 'I've done a list of things that I need to talk to my line manager about tomorrow, because what I don't want is this to basically be a stitch up, and for me to be someone's you know servant if you like'.

Alongside this she was also very clear about the contribution she wanted to make in terms of supporting staff and to make things feel more positive, particularly in response to the low levels of motivation that she felt were evident. One of the ways she felt able to do this was by adopting some of what she experienced at Northridge School in terms of organisation and processes such as calendars and an agreed approach to things. She indicated that she had 'thought already about how I would present new tasks or things that I would like people to start doing, nothing different that they haven't already done, because I don't want to introduce more work, I just want to manage it better'. However she was cautious based on her knowledge of the context she is in, her experiences of the pressures at Northridge School, and the views that others might have of her. Her understanding of some of the issues associated with the culture of managerialism was evident in not wanting to behave as if on a 'power trip... or someone acting like they know it all, I find quite painful'. She elaborated further by talking about how she felt that staff were likely to respond negatively if they felt that things were unfair but positively if they could see that workload is being distributed fairly, perhaps drawing here on her own experiences of perceptions of fairness. She also talked about the importance of talking to people on a one-to-one basis to see what she can do 'in terms of changing their mind-set'. She felt that this was having

a positive effect on her as she spent time thinking about the new role: 'you know, that's motivating me that I can hopefully help other teachers'. The reservations are evident and she is unsure but appears optimistic about what she might gain in terms of professional learning: 'hopefully motivate staff a bit more and maybe, maybe I can just sort of take the challenge from a people-management point of view and work on that, from a professional perspective'.

She also identified that she was looking at colleagues' practice and recognising the way in which she wanted to challenge herself through the new role to look at things and do them differently in relation to examples she had seen before: 'I've got sort of Eliza who, this teacher who is being you know bullied, but she also doesn't want to be a teacher any more, and feels very low in confidence, and can't get her work done. But I'm also looking at it from an objective point of view in that she's out having a coffee break and a cigarette break every sort of half an hour, and when she starts a conversation it goes on for ages, you know, and I'm also kind of looking, thinking "well you're not going to get work done if you keep having long conversations all day, that's why your work's piling up"'. The discourse of the individual needing to be responsible for themselves and their circumstance are evident in this analysis of Eliza's difficulties. Ava recognised that she was going to need to take a different view as a result of her leadership role, but also in response to her reflections on the behaviour of her previous head of department. 'I'm also you know having to observe things more objectively when someone has a whinge... in terms of just from a professional-managerial point of view... I think I've been consciously aware of watching what I say and who I say it to now, and trying to be a role model and not whinge and not be bitter to the system or the way things are run. She became very, what I perceive to be quite non-professional, so I would hate that to be the case'.

She met with her line manager soon after securing the role and outlined some of the things she would like to do to help make staff feel more

positive. He was very supportive and encouraged her to take things slowly. She understood that it was important not to promise impossibilities and to understand the policy context that they were in. He spoke positively about her intentions but 'he said "but I'm going to try and protect you here; if you start giving false promises to staff, you're going to find yourself attacked next year". He said "the reality of the situation is that people can't choose what they're going to teach because we could be under hours, and therefore what I'm trying to do is maximise people's timetables in order to keep them employed". So I've had a bit of a reality check in terms of me wanting to go in with all these great ideas, so already I'm learning there and I think that's been good learning'. She explains this example of her learning in direct response to someone else, a leader that she values, particularly in light of his support for her.

She described that she had been working on herself 'as a manager'. 'I do like to be in control of everything, that when things are out of control, what I'm finding that I'm working on myself at the moment is being relaxed about it rather than in a pickle. So for example at the moment I'm finding that if a member of staff comes to me... I'm dealing with it better than I think I would have done four or five years ago, in that I'm listening and I'm going with it rather than "I can't deal with this right now, because I need to make sure that this is done". And because of that obviously my work load is getting more, but I'm dealing with it... not everything is going to get done. And that is teaching, and that is the world of education, you are never going to have everything done... it's easier said than done on certain days and certain times...'. This personal consideration is clearly important to her as she returns to it: 'so I'm trying to be as positive as possible because I can't, I can only control the things I can control'. It is linked to Ava managing her own levels of stress so that she can be effective – a key issue from in her experiences at Northridge School: 'I do need to adapt it for myself in terms of my stress levels, but also for other people in terms of if I'm the manager and I'm constantly stressed, who wants a manager who is always stressed? So it's kind of challenging

myself in terms of being more cool whilst under pressure. So I think I'm trying to learn how to perform better under pressure'.

She identified that one day whilst undertaking a school visit she had thought 'wow, you know, I've still got, as any teacher has, still got a lot to learn, but because I'm not learning, I am learning management wise now, but because in terms of physical education I've stopped learning, I'm still aware that I've still got more to learn, back there as well with physical education as well'. This led to a consideration of possibilities for the future as Ava remained in a dilemma recognising the limitations placed upon her in her current institution: 'I am struggling with the level of, or standard I guess... and I kind of feel that I would like to work somewhere where I feel that the standard is high and efficient and objective'.

One other area that she talked about being keen to pursue was further study, although she recognised that might be a challenge in her current institution. 'I think do I want to do an MA, I do, so I'm thinking about that in the back of my mind, if the opportunity came up to do an MA, I would love to do an MA, in terms of my subject knowledge, I don't know how or money wise or you know how I would approach that, I don't feel I'm in the field to ... I suppose because I feel that I'm not in a good institute that I consider to be very credible, I think I would struggle to study in that institute, whereas I think if I was somewhere else, or in a school that really encouraged you know the development of subject learning, then, or INSET<sup>13</sup> [in-service training] and stuff, I would probably feel more enthused about that. But that's something that came up in terms of me thinking about my next steps and stuff, which is interesting, because I'm always thinking about "what am I going to do in two years, what am I going to do in three years?" So I'm already thinking about where I want to be next'.

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<sup>13</sup> INSET (in-service training) was the previous policy term for CPD.



### 5.2.7 Reflection and the Research Process

What became apparent through the process of the conversations with Ava was that she was questioning herself and she recognised this: 'I think it's been reflective, without a doubt'. The process had enabled her to observe a change in herself: 'I know that I am totally different to the way I was when I was training'. There were things that surprised her as she had not considered them before: listening to and reading her accounts was very powerful: 'it made me look at myself objectively career wise... it's made me think about how I am in different situations in my career, it's also made me look at it objectively and think how I am and how I would like to be'.

There were a few very significant things that Ava noted about herself and responded to in our conversations. She was very conscious in the second conversation about how she had sounded during the first. 'I noticed that when I went through, I thought God how negative did I sound... it's just all negative'. Also, she commented that 'something that came up in my reflection on my career, in that I think I kind of questioned, when things were at a stage that I didn't like, I bailed a lot'. As we have seen earlier, she talks about leaving when things became difficult and hearing this caused her to consider her own levels of resilience and persistence in relation to others: 'when I compared it to Tom who was in the department, who was an NQT and basically came in and forced to run the department... in terms of sort of looking at how he dealt with the situation he was in, whereas if I were in his position, I would quite happily have turned around and said "oh", I'd have left, "bugger them". But he didn't, and it's made me question my resilience to situations'.

There are times where she offered detailed explanation about why she left her first school, particularly given that the school embodied so much of what she values. It was almost as though she need to explain this to herself given the significant contrast between Northridge School and New College. Her feelings about 'bailing' were tempered towards the end of

the conversations when she talked about Tom sharing his thoughts with her about feeling that he needed to leave Northridge School. There was a sense in the telling that she recognised this as some sort of vindication for the way she had felt about leaving. 'I found Tom very inspirational in terms of how well organised he was and meticulous, but I also found his resilience quite influential and that's made me question my resilience over the past couple of weeks... But last time I saw him, I just said "how are you doing", he just said "I need to get out" and I said "I know that feeling too well", and he said "yeah, I've got to get out, it's too much and the management", he said "they're just stitch up merchants". And I said "I know". So he was kind of at that stage that I was, but I had two years on top of him. So it's kind of, not in a gratificational, sort of satisfied way, but it was kind of nice, hopefully I thought, well maybe he's got to a stage that he can kind of semi empathise with my situation as to why I wanted to leave when I did, because you start to see things that were pretty bad...'. Here the significance of the view of others is again clearly illustrated, alongside her feelings about herself. Tom's feelings provide vindication for her own earlier experiences and this is particularly significant because she values Tom and his professional attitude.

The impact of this and her desire not to be negatively influenced by those around her is notable and something she returned to on several occasions. She said: 'I think at the moment I'm really trying to consciously make an effort to change my mind-set to the situation I'm in, because effectively that is what determines how you're feeling. So what I'm going to try and do is really kind of take this role and change my mind-set to it. And I think I'm going to give it a year, and not bail because I'm just trying to make the most of what I think is not a great situation'.

Ava shared examples to demonstrate the way in which reflecting on her experiences has impacted upon her planning for the future. She talked about this specifically in relation to the leadership role she had secured and the feeling that it is necessary to temper her drive to improve things. 'I'm already recognising that I'm looking forward to things that I could

potentially do, but I'm also very conscious of where I work and the frustrations that people go through in trying to implement things and trying to create things and trying to motivate people, motivate students and you just get "no, no, no" and "there's no money". So I'm just being prepared to do what I can in a situation that I think won't be great as it is'.

Alongside her acknowledgement of the role being far from perfect, she planned to take a measured approach in the circumstances, one that is both proactive and positive. She attributed this intention to her reflections on the career journey to date. 'So this could be a positive turning point really, hopefully. Well it's good experience you know, it's, there's not much else out there, so I'm making the most of not the greatest situation, but it's fine if I could just as I say consciously change my mind-set and maybe just apply, or do the best I can in the situation I'm in. So no I'm pleased, yeah...'. The challenge in how she feels about this is evident in her persistence about wanting to be positive.

She talks further about her desire to be positive in relatively negative circumstances, indicating this really matters to her. 'So yeah, I've had a, quite a reflective emotional career thought over the past couple of weeks really. So I've gone from feeling quite down to feeling OK again, because I got this role. But ultimately it's not necessarily where I want to be, but I'm just trying to make the most of the situation'. She mentions this several times and makes specific reference to taking this approach as a direct response to her view that she sounded negative in her account: 'so I'm going to try and, having reflected on that and seen that as a common theme in my mind-set, I'm going to try and change it for a little while, try and make the most of it'. She intended to build on her understanding of how she has been feeling and the feelings of her colleagues to try and make things more positive for herself and others. 'I think the reason that my mind-set is like that is because the surrounding staff that I work with... their mind-set is very similar as well, but I think their mind-set is as a result of non-effective management and them not

feeling valued. So I'm hopefully going to try and implement things that I think will make them feel a bit more motivated as a staff team'. In talking about ineffective leadership, the broader challenges faced by staff in the current education climate were not explored in any detail (Davies, 2005). The key thing that Ava wanted to demonstrate was the crucial role that she wants to play for staff in making their working conditions more positive. Ava was very keen to reflect herself as positive both for her own benefit in the desire to derive greater satisfaction from her role, and perhaps also for me in terms of the way she wanted to be seen (Day *et al.*, 2006; Burkitt, 2008).

On several occasions she comments that '...it's ironic isn't it when you sort of go into the world of teaching, that everything is so student focused, but not staff, and people forget that'. She goes on to talk about her frustration with herself and offers different perspectives about how she has looked at things: 'I have questioned when listening to the recording of this, that "why do I get so frustrated when someone like Niall doesn't, he doesn't care anymore, he's lost care"... and others seem to be able to switch off, but I don't, I can't, I find it frustrating... Why? Because I care, I don't know, I don't know what it is, I don't know why I react like that, whereas other people don't, which I think is interesting'. The frustration is evident in both what she says and in the way she asks the question. There is evidence of a desire to be more like others, such as Niall but, as we have seen, that would put her at odds with the values and expectations she has shared through the earlier examples. Ava's own perfection codes (Evans *et al.*, 2008) pervade these ideas: 'so I don't know if I'm putting myself under pressure in that way... what I feel at the moment is that I'm not reaching my potential in the right way, and that I am being challenged but it's not in the right way. And I am constantly reflecting on ways in which I could do that, but I don't know if that's just me and how I am, and how I'm going to constantly be for the rest of my life, and always pushing where I'm at, where I want to go, where I want to be'.

The process has left her with questions about herself in the future. 'All that jumped out I think on this is that I need stimulation, and I kind of question whether I'm going to be happy in any role, or fulfilled in any role, or will I, you know is that the reality in that am I kind of aiming for something that's unrealistic?... So I don't know, I think it's definitely made me think about why I need change maybe, I constantly seek change, stimulation, development, and maybe why I have that mind-set, I don't know.' The pressure to take responsibility for the 'self' underpins these aspects of Ava's account, her reflections and her on-going responses to those reflections (Bartlett and Burton, 2007).

### **5.2.8 Summary of Ava**

Ava is someone who values hard work in herself and others, which she attributes to her own formative experiences. Ava's case has enabled us to see what it looks like to take responsibility for the self and the challenges of doing so. She identifies herself as someone who is organised and responds well to effective organisation. She cares about the experiences of others and is keen to help and support where she can. This is something that she is absolutely committed to doing, as we have seen in the examples, but doesn't want that to be seen as behaviour arising from arrogance: she doesn't want it to be misunderstood. Alongside this, she seems to have responded to the demands of the neoliberal climate in the sense of wanting to be valued. This value for her comes in the form of being offered opportunities to take on increasing responsibility (Davies, 2005), but she recognised from her experiences the challenges of intensification (Hargreaves, 2000) and some of the difficulties in policy enactment (Ball, 1994). The different responsibilities experienced to date have brought pressure with them and she reflected on her responses to that. The reflections led her to a detailed consideration of how she has responded to these and what this means for her in the future. Ava implicitly and explicitly talks about high standards and having high expectations of herself and others, and in this

respect she is very confident in her judgement on the positive and negative actions and behaviour of others. She has a clear sense of social justice which we saw particularly in relation to colleagues when she felt they were being treated unreasonably or managers who were behaving unfairly. There are numerous occasions where Ava is agentic in response to particular circumstances, although there is some caution evident in her worries about how she will be viewed by others. Ava wants to feel successful and be seen as successful in the neoliberal climate (Bradford and Hey, 2007). Discourses of neoliberalism and the disciplinary logic permeate sections of Ava's account, particularly in relation to her expectations of herself and others: she talks about them as being at work in her practice and expectations without being able to name them. 'I think from a professional point of view I always put myself under pressure, so this kind of doing better, improving, I, that's just something that I constantly strive to do, and it's never fulfilled but it does seem to be continuous'.

### **5.3 Chapter Summary**

This chapter re-presented the narrated experiences and meanings made of those experiences by Ava in her three research conversations with me in relation to her professional learning. Ava's case of her experiences of professional learning has enabled me to illustrate the complexities, and contingencies evident in the narrative. It was not necessary here to provide another case as Ava's case illustrates a detailed example of a neoliberal subject who is successful in education, disciplining herself through the same ideas that she describes and is also critical of. Ava's case is one underpinned by professional learning where she also understands this as learning about being a professional: an on-going project. The next chapter considers the way in which her case, along with those of Zoe and Nell can be used to illuminate our understanding of the broader context for professional learning: using the particular to illustrate the general (Evans, 1999; Riessman, 1993); recognising the personal as public (Mills, 1959) and the personal as political (Andrews, 2007). It will

draw together the ideas that have arisen in the three cases which illustrate the positions taken by Ava, Zoe and Nell in response to their social circumstances (Bradford and Hey, 2007). It also explores their responses to the research process. This will enable us to consider: the implications of this research for both theory and practice in professional learning; the potential impact more broadly on the sociology of professionalism and; the methodological implications of this work.

## Chapter Six: Using the Particular to Illustrate the General

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the ‘fragments’ of Ava’s extensive narrative provide a rich illustration of what a teacher can do with the opportunity to reflect on their career and professional learning. Indeed both Ava and Nell in their conversations with me talked explicitly about doing this as part of their “everyday life” (Scott, 2009: 1). We have seen the way in which the complexities of Ava’s professional life, knowledge and identity, interwoven with her responses to her experiences, provide her with “stories to live by” (Clandinin and Connelly, 1998: 149). This is all situated in the climate of neoliberalism explored in the literature review where: the free market is the facilitator for the distribution of resources through competition; the role of the state is to optimise the conditions for the free market; and the individual is required to be rational, flexible, self-interested, and to take responsibility for themselves (Olssen and Peters, 2005).

This chapter looks the way in which the cases of Zoe and Nell, alongside that of Ava, can be used to illuminate our understanding of the broader context for professional learning by using examples from their ‘particular’ experiences to illustrate more ‘general’ concerns (Evans, 1999; Riessman, 1993). This draws on the ideas of the personal as political (Andrews, 2007) and the personal as public (Mills, 1959), where the individual experience is understood as an on-going dialogic with the social. The three narratives provide multiple illustrations of the way Ava, Zoe and Nell live and work within current education policy thus disrupting any idea that Ava’s narrative could be considered to represent a typical or generalisable experience. In this chapter, each “unique, highly contextual story” is acknowledged whilst exploring the “cross-narrative themes” (Thomas *et al.*, 2014: 397) arising from the positions taken by Ava, Zoe, and Nell in response to their social circumstances (Bradford and Hey, 2007).



Ball asserts that neoliberalism operates in the market place and the result is that it:

“gets into our minds and our souls, into the ways in which we think about what we do, and into our social relations with others. It is about how we relate to our students and our colleagues and our participation in new courses and forms of pedagogy and our ‘knowledge production’, but it is also about our flexibility, malleability, innovation and productivity in relation to these things” (2012: 18).

Situating these three professionals in the socio-historical and socio-political contexts helps us to understand how this is experienced and the implications for those experiences. The narratives offer the opportunity to demonstrate the way in which current policy ‘gets inside’ teachers and the active role they play in policy terms, whilst also taking a critical view. This chapter will explore the tension that is managed by Ava, Zoe and Nell between being both successful professionals and critical of current education policy.

This chapter also explores their responses to the research process and what can be learned from this about research conversations co-constructed as narratives as part of the continuum of interviews, and the relevance for professional learning. This will enable us to consider the implications of this research for both theory and practice in professional learning, the potential impact more broadly on the sociology of professionalism, as well as the methodological implications of this work.

## **6.1 Understanding the Participants**

In the previous chapter I provided a brief biography of Ava. It is appropriate to do the same here for Zoe and Nell to provide a context for their narratives that will be drawn on in this chapter.

### **6.1.1 Zoe**

Zoe had been teaching for 9 years in the same school since she qualified as a teacher. During that time she had undertaken a number of different roles including one where she had responsibility for particular aspects of teaching and learning including professional learning for staff across the school. Zoe had innate confidence and described being competitive in relation to others, as well as herself. She demonstrated a professional expectation that whatever processes are in place in schools they should be done thoroughly. Zoe gave up the position of responsibility after having two children and took up a part time post in the same school. She talked about being at a crossroads at the time of this research in terms of deciding what to do next. She recognised a shift in herself since having the children in that 'I do think I am slightly less ambitious, but I think it used to be that I wanted to do it now' acknowledging her previous impatience. Whilst recognising that her current role gave her an important work-life balance with her young family, she was not finding the role particularly satisfying and wanted to change that: 'at the moment that sort of professionally I don't overly feel valued in my job at the moment... I think it would be quite easy for me just to stay working part-time and just sort of poodle along, and I just don't think that's right for me'. She recognised that as a result of the appointment of a new Head Teacher there was the potential for change in the school but was not sure that being directly involved in this was what she wanted. She was at the point where she was close to completing her Masters and considering undertaking PhD study.

### **6.1.2 Nell**

Nell had been teaching for thirteen years, ten of which were based in her current institution, where she had been Head of the Physical Education Department for seven years. She had been offered and undertaken a range of other roles in her time at the school. In spite of this, Nell described feeling as though she was 'stuck in a rut' as a result of being at

her school for a long period of time with no apparent opportunity for internal promotion. She talked about herself as having significant issues of personal confidence stating explicitly that ‘confidence is a massive issue with me’ but she talked about this in relation to her personal life and indicated that her professional life had been underpinned by a ‘battle between personal confidence and professional confidence’. She described the dilemma that she was facing in her career ‘of sometimes just wanting a job in [the supermarket]... to have no responsibility and at the same time you know wanting more responsibility’. This dilemma was compounded by feeling that she was in a ‘quandary’ about what to do next in her career given that neither her professional nor her personal lives were going the way she had hoped or anticipated.

### **6.1.3 ‘Successful’ Teachers**

Ava, Zoe and Nell all identify as being “successful” in their specific school contexts (Bradford and Hey, 2007: 595). They did not talk in explicit terms about success but it became evident that they had all been navigating career paths underpinned by effective and valued practice: the evidence was demonstrated through the examples they gave where senior managers had confidence in their abilities and invested in them. In summary, these career stories included promotion into leadership positions and/or designated leadership responsibilities thus illustrative of successful individuals in the context of the current neoliberal climate of education.

The characteristic of a “Totally Pedagogised Society” (Bernstein, 1996: 365) and the associated discourses of professionalism (Fournier, 1999) were evident in all three narratives. These key aspects of neoliberal discourse resonated with Rose’s (1999) ideas of self-governance as they all talked of the high expectations they had of themselves and others, narrating the ways in which they viewed their responsibilities, commitment and interests from both professional and personal perspectives. The professional expectations which various policies

espoused were evident here. They all also narrated experiences of how they undertook different roles at different points in order to stimulate themselves and to feel as though they were doing what they were interested in; to be effective professionals from either their own and/or others' perspectives; as well as the value of being rewarded which may have been about implicit or explicit praise, financial remuneration or being given a higher status role. This was evident in Ava's comment where she explained that in her first school 'I had this challenge that I knew I could do well in... So they were very good at that... because they give you the responsibility of what you want'. The notion of value and reward resonated slightly differently in Zoe's account of an example where her Head of Department who asked for her feedback on something he had written: 'I think for me it's really, not that I need to be praised all the time, at all, I don't, and I can recognise my strengths and areas that I need to improve on... but to me that was a real kind of pat on the back. And I think I responded really well to that, I really, you know, it gave me a real sort of boost'. They all talked about the need for challenge and always striving to do better. Their ability to take responsibility for themselves and to demonstrate an on-going trajectory of improvement as required by policy was evident here (DfEE, 1998; DFE, 2010).

## **6.2 Making Meaning of Policy**

The examples of their experiences of policy each offer a different focus in the current climate permeated by performativity which is operationalised through mechanisms of audit and accountability (MacLure, 2005).

As outlined earlier, one of the key mechanisms used to audit teacher quality is lesson observation. It is unsurprising therefore that, from their different perspectives, they all narrated detailed and significant experiences arising from lesson observations. Whereas Ava shared the concerns about the way in which she saw a colleague being treated during the process of lesson observation, Nell experienced challenges in her role undertaking lesson observation across a range of subjects in her

own school and others. She was very concerned about the ways in which the outcomes of the observations had been used by senior colleagues for unexpected purposes, including those associated with accountability.

Zoe's experience of lesson observation started when, prior to our first meeting, she had been observed and her lesson graded as 'good' (grade 2) by a senior colleague. The reason provided for the grade was because two boys were late to the start of the lesson. Zoe was upset about this on two levels: firstly her track record had been 'outstanding' lessons up that point and; secondly, as she felt the judgement was unfair given that the late arrival of the boys was out of her control. Her feelings about the experience were exacerbated when the senior colleague approached her afterwards and asked her to join a group of colleagues whose lessons had also been graded as good, 'in order to support us to get from good to outstanding. Then the person that I had the meeting with... said "oh well obviously we're not, we don't really need to put them in place because you know what an outstanding lesson looks like, but just so if Ofsted come in, we can say well you know Zoe got a 'good' last time, and we've done all these things and... then this time round she got an outstanding"... And I just found it really patronising...'

The examples illustrated their understanding of the implications of performativity in policy enactment on how it made them feel. They had all seen and experienced neoliberal logics and reductive accountability such as this at work (Alldred and Miller, 2007). Zoe commented that what she had encountered was 'almost playing the system.... And it's made me think that teaching is changing'. The critical position that they all took based on their differing experiences was very powerful.

In the context of the experiences they narrate, there is a clear indication that Ava, Zoe and Nell have all been able to effectively navigate the demands placed upon them by the enactment of neoliberal policies where they work. This is evident in the summary provided earlier about their

measurable career successes. There is concern, as outlined in the literature earlier, that the neoliberal policy climate in schools demands teachers to operate as technicians to improve test scores and who will have their quality as a teacher judged on the basis of their ability to do so (Passy, 2013; Dadds, 2014). 'CPD' is intended to support the improvement of the teacher to facilitate the improvement in outcomes for young people. Ava, Zoe and Nell had come to understand the policy imperatives within which they worked and they all specifically referred to "ticking the boxes" (Goepel, 2012). Zoe said 'I just knew what I had to do' in terms of planning an 'outstanding' lesson. However, they demonstrated that whilst working effectively, they maintained a critical view of the policies and the associated indicators of compliance.

They were also aware of their attempts to navigate these requirements in a manner that benefitted them personally and professionally<sup>14</sup>. Zoe talked about the follow up lesson observation where she was graded 'outstanding' and how she was disappointed with the formulaic nature of the lesson. She described how once the observer had left half way through the lesson, 'I was like "phew", went over, turned the music up and just relaxed a little bit. And the end of the lesson was great'. She felt that her teaching was genuinely outstanding once the observation was over and she shared her feelings about this with her line manager. Ava gave an example of this when, in order to be supportive, she took her colleague, Eliza, into her old school to look at a particular resource to support teaching. They show the way in which they orchestrate their practice to meet the requirements as well as satisfying their own identities, professional expectations and aspirations<sup>15</sup>. Nell acknowledged that the lesson observations she undertook 'fulfils not only the grading role, which is not the nice bit always, but the developing role as well, which I prefer'.

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<sup>14</sup> These are specified separately here but understood as intertwined.

<sup>15</sup> As above.

Their success in achieving this balance is unsurprising given that their ability to cope would be one key factor enabling their involvement in this research. Ava, Zoe and Nell have illuminated the tensions that they experienced as policy subjects (Ball *et al.*, 2011a) and the way in which they sought to make sense of those in order to make their way as successful policy actors (Ball *et al.*, 2011b). The interest for me here was the extent to which they were able to recognise this and the coping strategies, or perhaps strategies for resistance, that they had employed (Ball and Olmedo, 2013).

One key dilemma that they were all seeking to make sense of in the contexts of their different lives and schools was the apparent contradiction evident in policy and practice. The policy rhetoric they referred to suggested that staff would be supported by the structures of institutional organisation and support from leaders and colleagues. However, they were all describing something different in practice where they were seeing and experiencing the requirement for each individual to take responsibility and be accountable for themselves. This intersection between policy, the organisation and the self is experienced by all of them. The contradictions they see in the day-to-day life of the school in relation to their own work and that of others as a result are problematic. The contradictions were most significant for them where processes did not offer the support to teachers that they expected. We saw earlier in the example given by Ava where a lesson was observed, graded poorly and the teacher left to solve the problem of improving her performance on her own. Nell was concerned about the way that reports from lessons she had been asked to observe as part of staff development had subsequently been used as part of a capability process<sup>16</sup>. Zoe talked at length about her experiences of ‘performance management’ processes in

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<sup>16</sup> The capability process is initiated when the “standards expected of teachers are not being met” (DFE, 2012: 10) and involves evidence gathering, formal target setting and review, and results in dismissal if performance does not improve.

her school. She understands the intention of the process to be supportive, but in reality found herself in a position where she 'had about half an hour to do it, fill in targets for myself, no time to think about it, they got photocopied, sent in to the assistant head, and I haven't heard anything since'. Nell was clear about the pressure: 'all the capability issues that I'm having to deal with, just it's a little bit hard and have all sorts of issues with you know people who are trying their best, people, whether people being up to the job or not...'. She expressed her frustrations here about the negative impact of the policy processes on individuals including herself. As with Ava and the colleagues who 'walk in off the street', Nell recognises that there are challenges with people who are 'not up to the job' but she is also quite clear 'teaching's so subjective as to whether what's good, what's not, it would be so much easier if that was right, that was wrong, whereas there's so many shades of grey with what a lesson can look like'. Ava, Zoe and Nell all expressed concern about the impact upon people who are caught up in the processes in relation to their views about the help that they felt should be in place for teachers: this was a principle which they all identified as an important part of their personal and professional selves, as well as their understanding of the fundamental principles of teaching.

It was problematic for them where the dominant discourses emerged as being about other things, which are recognisable here as reductive audit and accountability. Nell's expressed concerns for the emotional impact that her lesson observations had on others, particularly where teachers have 'got to get X number of good observations or satisfactory, we've got to move them on'. Ava looked at this from a broader position in response to her reflections on some of her experiences and asked 'are we just subservient slaves to the system?' She shared her concerns about the place of the teacher and suggested that 'education is so busy and box ticking orientated that it... seems to me like the teachers' importance is redundant after a while, whether that's my experience I don't know'. She recounted a conversation about professional learning that she had



recently had with a friend of hers, also a teacher, that culminated in her asking 'Is it [CPD] just a control mechanism to make people believe that they are being cared about when technically they're not, and it's, you know you have to tick this box... rather than you know do they really care? No, no they don't, they have to meet criteria'. Zoe talked about the school's concerns about outcomes in relation to her experience of lesson observation and said 'outcome for who though, not outcome for me, not outcome for the school, it was outcome to show that Ofsted, "oh look we've got this piece of paper, this is what we do"...'. Both Ava and Zoe demonstrated here the way in which they had thought about a specific experience and their response to it, but most importantly shared their reflections on the logic of audit and accountability. These critical reflections were enabling them to manage their experiences of the policy context and are again illustrative of their resistance.

As we have seen, Ava was able to recognise, through her reflections on her experiences of policy, some valuable learning opportunities. This is also illustrated by Nell reflecting on the value of observation for teachers: 'I think everybody should be doing, not necessarily outreach work like me, but everybody should have exposure to different types of school and different people. People get narrow minded...'. Zoe talked about the impact that the lesson observation experience had on her and the implications for her in the future. She identified that it had stimulated an interest and possible focus for PhD study 'in how lesson observations work... how it makes people feel, what's the reason for doing it'. She imagined the possibility of taking the outcomes of future research into her school and using them to inform change in practice. These provide examples of them making personal resistance active, providing them with a mechanism for coping as policy actors solving problems in context alongside being successful policy subjects (Ball *et al.*, 2011b; Ball, 1994). They recognised the challenges posed for the individual in attempting to make sense of and operate within these requirements (Davies, 2005), whilst keeping up with the demand for relentless renewal (Evans *et al.*,

2008). This is, after all, the requirement of the successful neoliberal professional subject. Their accounts also encourage us to consider whether there are contrasting experiences for those less successful teachers against the policy imperatives.

Ava, Zoe and Nell are successful policy subjects<sup>17</sup> and also understand the requirements placed upon the successful neoliberal professional subject. Nell shrewdly summarised this balance as 'strategic manoeuvres, that's what it's all about'.

### **6.3 Making Meaning of Significant People and Professionalism**

The key role of people was evident in all the accounts from Ava, Zoe and Nell. This is not surprising given that teaching is underpinned by human interaction, and located in contexts where these interactions can become significant. In preparation for the second and third conversations they were specifically asked to consider people they felt were significant in their professional learning (Appendix 5: Generic Research Conversation Prompts). Their narratives outline a number of different people, in different roles, at different times that were indicated as significant such as: themselves; family; friends; pupils; student teachers; ITE university staff; school mentors; colleagues; leaders and managers; celebrities (see Appendix 8: Significant Influences in the Narratives).

They narrated and explained their understanding of the significance and impact of these specific individuals from both their professional and personal contexts (Makopoulou and Armour, 2011). The significance of these individuals was explicated in relation to their expectations of themselves, with links to their broader expectations of professionals and people more generally: clearly embedded in the discourses of good professionalism.

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<sup>17</sup> I would suggest that 'subjects' is simplistic here which I will explore later.

We saw in Ava's case a number of positive and negative experiences with people at different points in her life and career including her mother, a tutor, a student teacher, and colleagues. Nell and Zoe also offered a number of examples that spoke to similar themes. Zoe talked about a line manager who she understood to have 'been quite inspirational to me, the way he teaches, the way he manages people... he's always been really complementary to me about my abilities and you know where my strengths lie and I've always sort of looked up to him I think as someone I'd like to be like, the way that he manages people... he's so professional, you know, I do really value his feedback ... I thought "oh I'd really like to be like Mike!". And the way that he is with the kids and that sort of thing.' This example is underpinned by her values, aspirations and expectations relating directly to the discourses of professionalism in relation to general competence; teaching ability and the ability to work with and support people. When operationalised in response to people this was very complex, evident in two examples shared by Nell, the first of which was a Head Teacher: 'I really liked her and respected her and I think she equally did so... she was very good for me and I worked hard for her'. She recognised that her response to the Head had resulted in greater productivity. However, this paralleled with her taking on extra responsibility in response to the practice of someone she did not value: 'you know when you're seeing somebody do a bad job, you want to just get in and do it yourself'. In both cases when measured in neoliberal terms, Nell's response was very positive as either way she was motivated to work hard and take greater responsibility, with no tangible reward.

Nell noted that from her experience and the process of engaging with her own narrative, that the '...people that end up being influential or mentoring to you, are not the people that are necessarily supposed to be'. This poses an important consideration for schools in that mentors, who may also be managers, are normally allocated to work with individual teachers as part of Induction and/or Appraisal/Performance Management processes (DFE, 2014). Nell's experiences, along with some shared by

Ava and Zoe, suggest that it is not necessarily the people that policy indicates that should be significant who ultimately are.

Ava, Zoe and Nell all share explicitly the expectations they have of themselves, others and institutions in their narratives about being a professional teacher. They describe in others, and demonstrate themselves, the characteristics of the neoliberal subject and the associated disciplined and disciplinary teacher (Fournier, 1999). However, as we have seen in relation to policy, they are able to take a critical view through the examples they offer, making explicit that which is seen to be appropriated in and by the system, often in cases where they don't agree. They talk about their experiences in ways which suggest a recognition of their position in the "nexus between policy, ideology and practice" (Stronach *et al.*, 2002: 109), and the way in which they attempted to navigate them. They also talk about the conditions that they find favourable and unfavourable (Curtner-Smith, 2001). As we heard in Ava's account the effects of the intensification of work were significant for her and prompted a number of different responses. Nell was very concerned about the behaviour of others that she had experienced where '...it all seemed a little bit wrong in lots of ways, both the head of department and second in the department both smoked like chimneys, nobody seemed to give a monkeys about the kids... the whole attitude was all wrong, and I was all young and enthusiastic and like why does nobody care?' Like examples from Ava's case, this posed some challenges for Nell in the lack of shared values she saw.

Nell was concerned about the balance between the negative aspects of the role she was undertaking at the time of our conversations and the extent to which it was 'actually having any impact on anybody' in the positive sense that she was committed to. This mattered since she explained earlier that it was the opportunity for the development of others as part of the role which motivated her to do it. Ava, Zoe and Nell's perceptions that some of the practice was superficial also came out in

their view of others. Nell talked about this in relation to her current Head Teacher: 'I was talking to my head today... and he was going "oh you know I don't want to lose you, you're doing a cracking job", I was thinking but you don't know what I'm doing...'. On this basis, like Zoe in relation to outcomes, Nell felt that her role with its significant challenges simply contributed to the school being able to tick a box to say what types of activities staff were doing with no idea of the impact. This was in contrast to their views about their professional contributions and they were all disappointed about the view of practice that some colleagues took. This raised questions for them about the extent to which there was a shared understanding of professionalism amongst teachers. They take a critical view of that which is seen to be appropriated in and by the system, often in cases where they disagree with what they are seeing or experiencing. Nell talked about this in relation to recognising the reductive nature of grading lessons where 'sticking numbers on people isn't always the nicest thing'. They all talk about being a professional teacher in different ways with a focus on what has been significant for them.

Ava, Zoe and Nell offer us positive and negative examples of significant people and incidents in relation to their experiences to illustrate what they understand being a professional to mean. They talk about what it means to be a professional in slightly different ways through the stories they tell about their experiences. However, common to them all is the description they give of others, and demonstrate themselves, that reflects the characteristics of the neoliberal subject as both governed and governing (Fournier, 1999). There is evidence of the way in which Ava, Zoe and Nell make and maintain meaning through a strong sense of personal and professional agency and moral purpose, which contributes to their commitment and resilience (Sammons *et al.*, 2007). This understanding of professionalism is mediated by the way in which they see themselves and their identity, some of which has been implicitly explored here through their responses to their experiences. As Kelchtermans (1993) suggests the personal interpretive framework is key here in supporting

their understanding of their experiences and the way in which this understanding impacts on their futures. Their view of themselves and their identity underpins this framework.

#### **6.4 Making Meaning of Teacher Identity**

Ava, Zoe and Nell were not asked explicitly to talk about how they understood themselves, nor were they given a definition of identity to frame their responses. In the process of discussing their experiences of significant people and/or incidents they demonstrated an implicit understanding of themselves. MacLure's work (1993) about the individualised meaning making process is particularly relevant here given that Zoe talks positively about her levels of confidence whilst Nell identifies confidence as a significant problem for her. There were multiple examples which illustrated their understanding of themselves, some of which have been explored earlier.

We have seen the significance of the family in Ava's account. Zoe and Nell also provide examples of the role of their families in their professional lives. Zoe talks about the ways in which, as a result of having a young family, her part time work with less responsibility has impacted on her sense of self in that she feels less confident. In Nell's case, she feels uncertain about many aspects of her life as a result of not having a family: 'I honestly don't know... I couldn't be in more of a quandary professionally, I don't know where to live, I haven't got a boyfriend, I haven't got a baby... it's all really not happening, so I don't know'.

They all share examples of feeling pride in the acknowledgement of their achievements by others. Zoe identifies that 'it's nice that someone you look up to you know values your opinion and what you think... I would show him [Matt, the head of department], "oh look I've done this" and he said "that's really good", and I wanted him to think "oh yeah that's really good"'. This recognition by others of their positive professional

characteristics was of great significance to all of them. It offered validation for their views of themselves as 'successful'.

As explored in the previous chapter, Ava talked about her feelings of recognising herself as 'bailing out' and there was a sense that she was disappointed in herself. However, alongside this she had very strong feelings about the genuine challenges faced by teachers, the lack of popular understanding and the widespread critique in the media. On the basis of all of this she felt vindicated when watching Jamie Oliver's 'Dream School' on television during the process of our conversations. She said 'Jamie Oliver's gone in there with this kind of "I'm going to create a cool school because my teachers were useless"... oh it was hilarious!'. She was amused because Jamie's ideas did not go to plan which resulted in him apologising to teachers on the programme: 'I think he just basically apologises for having no idea about how difficult teaching is'. As with her discussions with Tom, this enabled her to stabilise her sense of self, evidence of which we have seen in all three accounts.

They all talked explicitly about themselves when they made comments and posed questions on the basis of their reflections about the way in which they had made meaning of particular aspects of their experiences. In both the implicit and explicit cases they gave relational accounts where they understood themselves in response to the 'complex social processes' of those experiences (Coffey, 2001: 53; see also MacLure, 1993 and Lawler, 2014). Some of the challenges they narrated resulted from the demand to be responsive to a climate of rapid change and demonstrate themselves as flexible and renewable (Craib, 1998; Ball, 2003; Ball, 2013). However, in spite of being challenged by particular things, they were able to recognise themselves and chose to articulate aspects of their identities that they felt positive about, as well as those they felt less sure about (Burkitt, 2008).

The experiences of the relational self Ava, Zoe and Nell shared in our conversations and outlined here, offer an illustration of the impact this has on the way in which they have understood and engaged with their professional lives: how they understand themselves as professionals and their subsequent professional learning. This on-going process of understanding as meaning making has had, and will continue to have, implications for their professional lives. This leads to a consideration of this particular research process.

### **6.5 Making Meaning Through Research Conversations**

This section will explore key points made by Ava, Zoe and Nell about their involvement in the process and the impact of this.

They all indicated reasons for wanting to take part in the research which related to being at a point in their careers where they were interested in the focus as a substantive area as well as needing to take time to reflect for themselves. The opportunity to be involved in the project came at a valuable time for all of them. Nell explained that she got involved in the project because ‘I wanted to look for a way forward, I maybe came into this sub-consciously or consciously thinking I want to work things out and look to the future... it wasn’t totally altruistic anyway’. Zoe echoed this idea in acknowledging that as well as supporting my research ‘with this whole process I’ve got something out of it as well...’.

Ava recognised her connection with the intentions of this research process given her day-to-day reflection: ‘I do look at things and think “how could that be done better?”’. She was able to articulate the value for her in formalising something that she does as a matter of course. However, alongside this they all indicated that through the research process they understood that people had impacted upon their professional learning in ways that they had not previously considered or realised. Through her reflections Zoe identified that ‘there actually has been quite a lot of influential people that I kind of hadn’t realised till I really discussed it with



you, how much of an impact they probably had on me...if we hadn't have had that conversation I wouldn't have thought of those people at all'.

Ava talked about what she understood as one key outcome for herself 'I've become more self-aware through this process...this has definitely made me think of myself'. She went onto comment that '...people ... aren't really self-aware are they?'. This resonated with Nell who felt strongly, perhaps on the basis of her work with so many other teachers, that 'people are not reflective enough'. She made explicit in relation to this process the importance she understood of supporting people so that they can 'look down on what's going on with some breadth and not just a narrowness is yeah, huge I think and it should happen.'

Zoe summarised the reasons that the process had been of value for her: 'it's been really good for me to think about it all and think about the process and the people involved and where I've gone and what I've done.' Nell commented in reflecting after our final conversation that through the process she had a 'realisation that you are a product of all your experiences personal and professional – the good and the not so good... definitely true that exposure to all sorts is what counts and being able to learn and reflect on them.'

The neoliberal discourses are evident again in a number of the comments that were made about the process. Their reflections speak to the ideas of teachers as governed and governing by responding to the expectations embedded in the discourses of self-improvement but foregrounding the lead they take in this.

As the research process evolved and Ava, Zoe and Nell commented on their experiences of being involved, it became clear that it had the potential to offer a possible model for professional learning in both schools and other contexts. They were given the opportunity to understand the things that have most profoundly affected their learning

which can be used to help shape their approaches to learning in the future. This will be explored further in a later chapter.

## **6.6 Chapter Summary**

The data discussed here indicate clearly that professional learning that impacts upon practice and influences the way in which individuals do what they do is relational: the response of individuals to others and incidents in the social settings of schools and lives is the most significant factor (Andrews, 2007). As well as the relational aspects to others, Ava, Zoe and Nell also understand themselves in relation to themselves. They made meaning in and of the present through reflections on the past, and consideration of their imagined futures (Kelchtermans, 2009; Andrews, 2014).

This makes clear the temporal nature of understanding the self and takes me back to the point made earlier in the thesis about these stories reflecting a moment in time. Indeed over six weeks the circumstances changed for each participant: they all narrated particular notable events that happened during that period of time: Ava got a new job; Zoe got an 'outstanding' grade during the lesson observation process which had caused her much frustration and distress; and Nell had experienced emotional difficulties. However, the moment in time reflected in the narratives provides a detailed insight into the way in which these individuals actively engage with the experiences that they constitute as significant to inform their present and future. This demonstrates the way in which the position they take is mediated by their social circumstances (Bradford and Hey, 2007)

This chapter has illustrated the relationship between the individual and the social, in the context of the 'successful' and 'professional' teacher. Earlier in the thesis I discussed notions of re- and de-professionalisation. Ava, Zoe and Nell are active individuals in taking ownership of their circumstances in spite of the requirements and pressures placed upon

them (Goepel, 2012). On this basis their accounts suggest a re-professionalisation rather than de-professionalisation. As we saw in Ava's case earlier, the ownership they have taken has resulted in professional learning which is also about learning to be a professional.

This challenges us to consider the complexity of teachers' professional learning through their interaction with, and response to, their experiences with those others and/or incidents that they identify as being significant. The notion of this process as a foundation for professional learning practice is something that needs to be explored, taking account of Makopoulou and Armour's suggestion that there is a need for approaches to understanding professional learning to consider the "unique blend of personal, contextual and professional factors" thus "getting personal" (2011: 571), which I have sought to do here.

There are implications for the potential re-imagining of professionalism and professional learning offering a way to think about it differently and raising some key questions:

- How can we enhance our understanding of the professional project and professional learning through the detailed accounts of individuals?
- What can we understand about how resistance and compliance operate?
- What do these narratives tell us about the impact of the contingent good, bad and others that are differently significant?
- To what extent is it possible to use this narrative approach to contribute to professional learning?
- How stable are 'successful subjects' such as Ava, Zoe and Nell?
- What are the implications of this for those who are less successful?

Nell neatly summarises the idea of the personal view of professional learning as a process and contextual: 'I think every opportunity that comes your way develops you in a different way or maybe in the same

way, but you're always building on and consolidating the skills that you're looking to develop... I don't just see it as me looking at other people, I'm always reflecting back what other people are doing, on my own practice, in fact it probably drives myself, I drive myself nuts about ooh I could do it like that, or I don't, you know, making it personal... I'm always just so conscious that you know teachers are human and everyone, most people are trying their best and the kids aren't robots, and there's just so many factors going on in a classroom or lesson or what have you, that it's just a sort of crazy mix really isn't it, in terms of what makes it all work?'. Nell articulates the types of complexities that exists when examining the policy context, policy enactment and the experience for teachers (Ball, 1997).

The next chapter will draw together the key ideas and outcomes from the research to offer conclusions and recommendations.

## **Chapter Seven: Summary and Conclusions**

### **7.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I will draw together the key ideas and outcomes of the research. This chapter provides an overview of the research in relation to the context and aim, and a summary of the key outcomes in response to the research questions: How do teachers narrate their professional learning? What do they identify as the key influences? Alongside the achievements of the research, there is a consideration of limitations and original contribution it makes both theoretically and methodologically. There is also an exploration of the implications of this work for policy and practice, and suggestions for future research.

In exploring a 'professional' concern with an approach that foregrounds 'the personal' of the teacher, this work has enhanced our understanding of the impact of the relational experiences of being a teacher on professional learning and professionalism. This was particularly evident in the way in which personal-professional values were positioned by the teachers in relation to significant incidents and people. As I made clear at the outset, this research did not set out to claim to offer a definitive account of teachers' professional learning. It has instead provided one view, situated within a particular set of local contexts. It contributes to a number of key debates in sociology and education around policy, professionalism, policy subjectivity and policy enactment, and identity.

### **7.2 Overview of the Research**

This doctoral research began with focus on understanding the ways in which people learn professionally. Based upon my own experiences as a teacher and a leader in school, the research aimed to explore the ways in which professional learning was experienced by teachers, and the meaning they attributed to those experiences. I was concerned about the

simplification of professional learning in policy and professional rhetoric as CPD.

I wanted to explore how teachers narrated and understood their experiences of professional learning within the context of policy, professionalism and identity, looking at “the relationship between the state, the ideologies of professionalism, and lived interiority” (Hey and Bradford, 2004: 693). The questions generated in reading the literature, alongside my own experiences, challenged me to think about ‘professional learning’ differently. I argued in chapter two that the teacher is positioned and positions themselves in particular ways in relation to a narrow political view that translates into educational policy; the multiple issues that underpin ‘being’ a professional; and the complex and shifting individual nature of identities.

These issues were of particular interest given the on-going suggestions in policy and practice that there are some ways for teachers to learn that are more appropriate or better than others. It is these key concerns that contextualised my work in exploring how professional learning experiences are understood, responded to and navigated by teachers.

In developing the methodology, outlined in chapter three, I foregrounded a number of guiding ideas including: the importance of meaning making by individuals in the social world (Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe, 1993; MacLure, 1993; Plummer, 2001); “missing persons” (Evans, 1993: i), the significant role of experience (Craib, 1998); reflexivity as a mediating point between structure and agency (Archer, 2007); resistance (Ball and Olmedo, 2013) and; conditions of possibility (Tamboukou, 2008).

In recognising the policy impositions and associated complex, emotional and intensive work (Sammons *et al.*, 2007; Hargreaves, 2000), I wanted to work *with* and *for* rather than *on* or *about* the teachers (Keddie, 2000;

Barker and Weller, 2003; Basit, 2010). In order to understand the teacher's experiences of professional learning and the way in which these are constructed and narrated, it was essential to understand the complexity of the context in which the teacher works and lives.

The critical aspect of the analysis was to explore each teacher's interpretation of their experiences and the resulting explanations about the ways in which they understood their professional learning in relation to those experiences. These were analysed both deductively and inductively. The deductive approach was used in looking for narrated experiences of professional learning relating to identity, policy and professionalism. The inductive approach was used in exploring the ways in which the teachers contextually made meaning of their experiences and negotiated their professional lives accordingly.

On the basis of the points above, I took the decision to 're-present' the analysis of data and discussion on the basis of a 'realist' tale in the sense of foregrounding the words of the teacher within the theoretical and methodological contexts and making the author apparently invisible (Sparkes, 2002). I did this in two different ways. In chapter five aspects of Ava's case were re-presented to demonstrate the way in which she made meaning of her experiences and drew on them to enable her to make her way through her professional life (Archer, 2007). In chapter six the cases of Zoe, Nell and Ava and those similar and different experiences they narrated as significant were discussed in relation to the themes of policy, professionalism and identity.

### **7.3 Summary of the Outcomes**

The analysis of the data took the research beyond a focus on professional learning into an understanding of how learning to be a professional and being a professional are experienced. A key aspect of this work was the significance of reflexivity which provided part of the underpinning both theoretically and methodologically (Archer, 2007). I

sought to understand an aspect of teachers' professional practice specifically through the reflexivity of the teachers. Whilst I did not make specific use of Archer's framework for "internal conversations" (2007: 2), I concerned myself in the data collection and analysis with the way in which the mediation between the personal and social enabled Ava, Zoe and Nell to cope within the policies that are imposed upon their practice whilst being successful neoliberal teachers.

On this basis I became concerned with understanding what the teachers recognise that policy does, how it does its work on teachers in relation to their professional learning, and what the implications are. As explored in chapter two, current policy is underpinned by neoliberal ideology and the key aspect of its power is the way in which it encourages as well as disciplines the individual to do what it requires. The dominant ideology suggests that there is value in the teacher but requires each individual to take responsibility for themselves and their professional 'success'. In this research the focus was on the disciplinary logic (Davies, 2005) of professional learning which fails to take account of factors that make for effective learning in the broadest sense and ignores the needs of the teacher. The difficulty is that the market value of the teacher is measured in terms of the ability to "produce measurable and 'improving' outputs and performances, what is important is what works" (Ball and Olmedo, 2013: 91). What I came to want to understand in looking at the data was the meaning the three teachers made within this neoliberal logic and how they used the meanings to configure their "stories to live by".

Ava, Zoe and Nell shared the ways in which they made sense of the policy complexity and uncertainty in a climate which has clear expectations of individuals regardless of their circumstances. They shared examples of the challenges this poses for them in terms of the intensification of their work; the pressures on themselves and others to comply and perform; the contradictions they experienced in policy implementation; the frustrations and uncertainties they felt as a result



and; the ways in which they were trying to make it work for themselves. The most significant thing was the way in which this learning took place as a relational process in response to significant people and incidents: there was a sense that in responding to their experiences there was a process of them coming to know and understand. There was clear evidence of this as being straightforward for them in some situations, for example in relation to the behaviour of others, but very challenging in others such as the implementation of lesson observation processes. They were making sense of their experiences relationally (Andrews, 2007): as an individual in response to socially constructed reference points and drawing on this to inform and guide their practice (Archer, 2007).

There were complexities and contingencies evident in all three accounts and, in a number of cases, these related to their interaction with, and response to, significant others. There were examples of learning positively from those they viewed as good, as well as those they viewed as bad. This demonstrated the way in which the notion of role models is over-simplistic, as learning from others is much more complex than modelling. There was also a sense of struggle when the behaviour of others was at odds with their own views of the way people should behave. The positioning of their personal values was interesting in this respect as they offered accounts and judgement on the behaviour of others in relation to the ways in which they understood themselves. This was sometimes done explicitly by comparing the behaviour of others with their own behaviour or expectations but sometimes implicitly by offering judgement on something that someone had done. The judgements about others were often connected to their perceptions of effective and ineffective mechanisms in place for policy implementation.

The data illustrated that these successful neoliberal subjects, as characterised earlier in the thesis, do not always experience themselves as successful. Their doubts were evident in the accounts and resulted in them facing challenges in making decisions that appear relatively simple

but are bound up in all sorts of personal and policy practices and discourses. They all pass as successful but what has become clear through their narratives is the level of complexity and challenge that sits beneath that: their success is not attained easily nor is it simple.

Similar to that of the young people in residential care in the work of Jansen and Haavind (2011), these data demonstrate the ways in which Ava, Zoe and Nell are experiencing the tension between policy and professional expectations and the lived challenges, and it is in that context that they make sense of themselves. They have explained the way in which the culture of performativity requires them to tick the boxes and they have all articulated their commitment to be and be seen as 'good' professionals. They are 'governed' and produced by the 'disciplinary logic' of professionalism (Fournier, 1999) and the associated expectations of their working practices and behaviours (Evetts, 2003). However, they also recognise what is happening to them and, whilst apparently compliant and 'disciplined', they also appear to be resisting (Ball and Olmedo, 2013). Their resistance comes in the form of recognition, challenge and critique which they articulate by drawing on very specific examples from their practice. As Ball and Olmedo (2013: 88) identify "we are burdened with the responsibility to perform and if we do not we are in danger of being seen as irresponsible". Ava, Zoe and Nell shared examples of the ways in which these pressures make it difficult to cope in the job and require them to be flexible, renewable subjects (Davies, 2005; Ball, 2013) that can conform to perfection codes (Evans *et al.*, 2008) However, their narratives suggest that they are able to meet these expectations whilst simultaneously resisting. This resistance is a mechanism for coping (Hey and Bradford, 2004). Specific examples of resistance included Zoe's responses to the experience of graded lesson observation and superficial performance management processes; Ava's choice to finally leave her first school where she perceived the expectations to be too great; and Nell attempting to use lesson observation processes to support colleagues in the way she thought

appropriate whilst leaders were using it as a tool for accountability. These data indicate the complexity of both professional learning and the professional project more broadly.

The outcomes of this research have informed our understanding of professional learning and the professional project in the following ways:

- The development of the professional project for Ava, Zoe and Nell is an iterative process informed by their responses to their experiences of professional learning: it is an on-going process of learning to be a professional.
- The complexity of professional learning is evident when considered through the experiences of teachers and their reflections. It offers us an enhanced understanding of professional learning that challenges the simplistic policy models in place for CPD.
- The teachers' accounts have provided an illustration of the complexity of teaching in the neoliberal policy climate. Their accounts demonstrate the dialogic nature of being a successful teacher in balancing policy demands with personal values, expectations and aspirations. These teachers use and recognise the complex and effective coping mechanisms that they employ to manage the requirement for compliance with policy imperatives.
- Reflexivity and resistance are critical for these successful teachers in balancing the policy demands with personal values, expectations and aspirations. This contributes to their professional learning.
- These teachers demonstrate that neither conformity nor resistance are simple 'zero-sum' things, which raises some challenges in our

understanding of agency versus structure and the policy actor versus the policy subject, as well as some of the other potential dualisms. For these successful teachers these ideas play out in often complex and contradictory ways.

- Research conversations provide a valuable method for exploring professional learning that can support the individual teacher in reflecting on their professional work; considering that which is significant to them and using this to inform their future professional learning. This method has the potential to provide a valuable space for resistance and contribute to our understanding about the professional project in neoliberal times.

#### **7.4 Limitations**

As with every piece of research, there are limits to what can be accomplished within the scope and scale of the work. In this research some of the limitations which I will outline here emerged during the research process.

One of the identifiable limitations resulted from a conscious decision taken during the research design process. I decided not to focus in this particular research on matters of social difference (age, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality). There was also no focus on role, career stage or subject. I made this decision on the basis of both the focus and scale of the project. I wanted to look at the individual experience in light of the social, but did not want to impose particular social categories to guide the analysis process as I felt it would alter the focus. I wanted to understand the experience and meaning made rather than focus on an explicit analysis of social difference and the range of potential intersections.

One emerging limitation came in the extent to which the words of the teachers could be taken as a legitimate record of their experiences. I became troubled by this on the basis of on-going discussions with colleagues in a theory reading group that I belong to, particularly in relation to the significance of psycho-social. It resulted in a collaborative paper with three other colleagues looking at this issue in relation to the extent of the claims that can be made to 'know' on the basis of the words of others (Chappell, Ernest, Ludhra and Mendick, 2014).

The timescale for completion, the scope and scale of the thesis and the nature of the evolving process of analysis mitigated against the opportunity to consider in more detail the mediation point between structure and agency, which the data indicate is not a dualism but more nuanced and complex. This has implications for the notion of a policy actor and policy subject.

Finally, a strength as well as a limitation, was the volume of data. I have acknowledged already my relative inexperience as a researcher and I totally underestimated how much data would be generated by the research conversations. This resulted in a number of possible valuable lines of enquiry that I was unable to pursue and meant that I could only explore a fraction of the incredibly rich and valuable data collected.

I will return to these considerations later and recommend foci for future research.

## **7.5 Original Contribution**

This work is original and distinctive in that it has centralised the teacher both in terms of the research aims and questions, and the methodological approach. As I explored earlier, there was a deliberate attempt to take an approach that would generate detailed narrative data through co-construction in order to address a key part of the substantive concern, that of teachers missing from policy. The research questions focussed on

the narrative experience of the teacher and the key influences that they identified and reflected on. The research design facilitated the centrality of the teacher in the research conversation process where their analysis of the conversation was the basis for the discussion in the future conversation.

This research contributes to the work on policy, professionalism, policy subjectivity and policy enactment. The analysis provides both support for, and disruption to, discourses of professionalism underpinned by policy processes and implementation. The successful teachers here recognise the shifting and changing expectations in policy imperatives and policy implementation, through the impact on their working lives. Their accounts demonstrate their responses to policy and position them as actor-subjects who not only cope with the demands but resist the dominant discourses that they find difficult to reconcile. Their nuanced and complex responses provide a basis to challenge current policy for teachers, particularly in relation to CPD. The detailed ways in which the teachers were able to account for themselves and explain their professional values indicates strongly that there is a need to reconsider policy and practice in professional learning.

The methodological approach taken in this thesis offers another original contribution in the sense that it foregrounds the voices of the teachers and their analysis of their experiences of professional learning. The way in which I engaged with the teachers and the data generated can add to the dialogue taking place about narrative methodologies across disciplines such as sociology, education and psychology; in areas such as health studies, sport sciences, and engineering; and internationally through various networks and conferences. Examples include the British Sociological Association Auto/Biography Study Group biannual and the 'Narrative Matters' biennial conferences which bring together international scholars from a range of disciplines. The contribution to the development of narrative methodologies made by this work comes in the exploration of

a method for researching the actor-subject that seeks to avoid simplification and a flattening of the data.

## **7.6 Implications for Policy and Practice**

There is a need to reconsider policy associated with professional learning, and for policy implementation to take account of the needs of the teacher. In a school culture where policy focusses upon individual pupil learning needs as the priority concern for class teachers, it should be possible, and indeed appropriate, to do the same for teachers and their learning. Although the teacher is required to be responsible for themselves and the quality of their own professional practice, there are obvious benefits to the neoliberal education market-place of having effective teachers who cope, manage themselves and stay in the profession. Effective professional learning can facilitate that.

In a climate of education where work is intensifying; expectations are increasing; teachers are increasingly viewed as technicians for improvement and; it is viewed that teaching can be learned through experience, there will be increasingly limited time for teachers to reflect upon what they do. Additionally, for those who are joining the profession in the context of the most recent Government policy there is less ITE thus less opportunity for the development of the new teachers' capacity for reflection. As outlined earlier, this research process suggests that the approach taken could provide the basis for a potential framework to support teachers in their professional learning and learning to be a professional. This would require further exploration and development.

The outcomes of this research indicate that there is a need to explore different approaches to facilitate meaningful professional learning. As the research has illustrated, appraisal and performance management processes are currently structured in very particular ways to satisfy national and local policies around improving pupil outcomes by improving teacher performance. However, in meeting these policy imperatives, it

would be possible for schools to make use of a process of professional learning conversations to support teachers in identifying their needs and the types of learning opportunities that they would find genuinely valuable. Mutually agreed pairings for reflective conversations, similar to those used in the methodology, would be possible to organise in the school, and the outcomes of those conversations used to inform practice. Although this study may not directly influence national policy at this stage, it has scope to influence on local policy and practice through the work with student teachers and teachers in the ITE University-School Partnership. Longer-term, broader implications for policy and practice are possible on the basis of undertaking some of the further research suggested in the next section.

### **7.7 Implications for Future Research**

The thesis has raised many questions. Some of these offer new areas for consideration which provide the basis for further research.

This work is about understanding how teachers organise their lives within the various personal and professional tensions in which they operate (Jansen and Haavind, 2012). These teachers demonstrated their ability to cope. I am interested in exploring how teachers experience and mobilise 'agency', and the links to resistance (Ball and Olmedo, 2013). Here the teachers were trying to make sense of the difficulties they were having with aspects of policy and practice. It would be valuable to explore further the extent to which teachers manage and mobilise this resistance and how effective this can be. This work could be undertaken with a larger group of teachers to explore the range of strategies they employ. One specific area would be to look at whether the resistance can be mobilised whilst minimising the risk of 'failing' as a successful neoliberal teacher. This will contribute to the discussions about resistance versus compliance. Linked to this is the idea of exploring those who do not identify themselves as successful and how they 'cope' with their professional learning.



As I indicated earlier during the process of this research, I became increasingly dissatisfied with the terms that created dualisms relating to this work. Further research is required to unpack the complexity of the dualisms, such as that evident in policy actor versus policy subject which arises from the agency versus structure debate.

Another valuable route for future work in this area is in relation to social difference or intersectionality in looking more broadly across the teaching population. It would be valuable to explore whether social differences (such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality) impact upon on the experiences narrated by teachers and the way these experiences are understood. It would also be valuable to work with a broader range of teachers to see the impact of their role, career stage, subject specialism and school.

There is also further work to be done on the extent to which people can think about themselves. As indicated earlier, the process raised some valuable questions about the extent to which the narrator's account can and should be accepted (Chappell *et al.*, 2014). There is much critique of narrative work that concerns itself with issues of individualisation, ignores the place of the individual within the social and challenges the nature of 'truth'. I recognise that a range of approaches should be used and I can see the way in which alternate ways of viewing a story has the capacity to add to our knowledge (Wertz *et al.*, 2011). However in light of Archer's work (2007), I am interested in how people who are making their way through the world make sense of their experiences, and the extent to which that can offer another layer to our understanding of the individual in the social, in this case the teacher.

In relation to Ava, Zoe and Nell, it would be valuable to explore their views on the accounts that they gave: the extent to which they may have given these accounts before to either themselves or others; the ways in

which they have understood them; and why they felt able to think about themselves in the way they did. It would be valuable to ask them to co-analyse their data beyond the role they took in each of the conversations. There is also a potential development of the research in working with them over time. This has the potential to add to our understanding about the extent to which alternative readings of the words of others; i.e. one that contradicts the account given where the focus on the research is to understand experiences, can be used to contribute to broader substantive and methodological discussions both in relation to teachers and other professionals.

## **7.8 Chapter Summary**

This work contributes to the on-going debates taking place in the complex fields of sociology, education, policy and professionalism. As outlined in this chapter, this research has built on previous work by adding to our understanding about the meaning of professionalism, and the processes involved in professional learning and learning to be a professional. It has also contributed to methodological debates about the use of narrative. In recognising that “individual stories shift and change in response to changing events and circumstances” (Clandinin and Connelly, 1998) this work has provided a “portrait of the moment” (Tamboukou, 2011b: 3) for three teachers illuminating the complexities of their professional learning that go far beyond those considered in policy writing or implementation.

As has been carefully argued by Ball *et al.* (2011b), norms are taken up by the policy subject and then reconfigured by the policy actor. Although I remain concerned about the actor/subject dualism, I have argued here that this reconfiguring by the teachers is an on-going process in response to their experiences in context. Through the process, the teachers are “evaluating the present, re-evaluating the past, and anticipating the future” (Cotterill and Letherby, 1993: 74). They use significant experiences and their personal subjective theory (Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe, 1994) to navigate their personal-professional journey

(Archer, 2007). Through my own experiences of the doctoral process, I agree with Letherby (2002: 6.3) that “the project is never complete” and my key contribution is to add to the discussions.

Nell illustrated the complexity that is at play for teachers in their professional learning which this research sought to illuminate:

‘I think every opportunity that comes your way develops you in a different way or maybe in the same way, but you’re always building on and consolidating the skills that you’re looking to develop... I don’t just see it as me looking at other people, I’m always reflecting back what other people are doing, on my own practice, in fact it probably drives myself, I drive myself nuts about ooh I could do it like that, or I don’t, you know, making it personal... I’m always just so conscious that you know teachers are human and everyone, most people are trying their best and the kids aren’t robots, and there’s just so many factors going on in a classroom or lesson or what have you, that it’s just a sort of crazy mix really isn’t it, in terms of what makes it all work?’

The complexity presents an on-going challenge for research, policy and practice.

The next chapter will outline critical reflections on this research from both my perspective and the perspectives of Ava, Zoe and Nell.

## Chapter Eight: Critical Reflections

### 8.1 Introduction

In chapter six I explored some of the reflections that Ava, Zoe and Nell had shared about their involvement in the research process. In this chapter I will attend to further reflections about the research, drawing on their perspectives with reference to the data and also my own perspective. I will continue with my commitment in the thesis to include examples of things that are 'rarely told' (Maguire *et al.*, 2011).

### 8.2 My Reflections on the Process

I came to this research understanding that the research process would be both challenging and rewarding in equal measure. I had hoped and expected that doctoral level study would generate significant thinking and learning. However, I had not anticipated either the scale or profundity of the experience. There were several factors that have contributed to this which I will now explore including my previous experience as a teacher, my limited experience as a researcher, ethics and the associated responsibility, learning about being a researcher and, professional and personal challenges (Brackenridge, 1999).

Initially, it was difficult to decide upon appropriate terminology for the substantive focus of the research. CPD is the term understood in policy and practice to refer to the on-going learning of teachers (and others) which includes going on courses. It dominates the education agenda in relation to: raising standards and managerialism (Ball, 2003) and; discourses of good professional practice (DfES, 1998; GTCE, 2009; DFE, 2010). It also takes many things for granted in the use of language and the associated assumptions about shared understandings. This is illustrated well by Watson in her interrogation of the understanding about "Effective Professional Learning Communities" (2014: 18). As I sought to

understand this learning beyond the current policy and the associated practices in schools, professional learning seemed like the most appropriate term. In my own experience as a teacher and in my current role as a teacher educator, professional learning is philosophically closer to what I have observed happening with/for/by teachers where they learn in and through their professional practice. As the research evolved and my writing of the thesis developed, I became increasingly dissatisfied with some of the other key terms available to me such as subjectivity and objectivity; insider and outsider; identity and subjectivity; structure and agency; resistance and compliance; and actor and subject. It was difficult to work with these since using any one term resulted in the exclusion of the ideas of another: it created a dualism. This was particularly problematic in relation to actor/subject as neither term adequately captured the complexity demonstrated in the data. As outlined in a previous chapter, this has implications for future research.

There were also a number of challenges from the outset in terms of framing the work effectively through the different fields of literature and array of methodological possibilities. I have outlined in chapters 3 and 4 the particular considerations that I paid heed to in the development of the methodology, the data collection and the process of analysis. One of critical considerations was that of ethics. I was very concerned about honouring “principled practice” (Drew, 2006: 41) throughout the process and ensuring that I behaved responsibly. The ethical dilemmas occupied significant amounts of time and made me hesitant in my approach, in spite of University ethical approval (Appendix 4: University Ethics Committee Approval Letter). What evolved from my concerns was the clear commitment to avoid taking a tick box or audit approach to the ethical considerations (MacLure, 2005) but to adopt an approach that supported ethics-in-practice to ensure that I was alert to any issues that arose (Laimputtong, 2007), particularly in relation to researcher power. Aside from the bureaucratic aspect of research ethics, I recognised that my own professional experience as a teacher in a school prior to joining

the University, played a major part in the significant sense of responsibility I felt about working with the teachers and re-presenting their data. I had a broader view of ethics as a result of professional knowledge and experience. I also recognised that some of my concerns arose as a result of being novice as a researcher with limited knowledge and experience to draw on. My notable experience as a teacher and my lack of experience as a researcher were significant and will be evident in the foci for some of my reflections on the process which I will now share.

In terms of 'recruiting' participants for the project, I was uncertain about the appropriateness of approaching people that knew me through the ITE University-School Partnership: some of those I contacted were ex-students and some were mentors to our current students. I did not want anyone to feel obliged to be involved because of their relationship with me or their involvement in the Partnership. This was compounded by my concern about asking busy teachers to give up a significant amount of time to undertake this research, particularly given that most of them were already giving up a substantial amount of their own time to mentor student teachers. I felt genuinely frightened at this point in the process about getting it wrong. When some of them came back and refused the invitation to participate I felt relieved. Initially I thought this was an odd response but, as I reflected upon it, I understood that the reason for feeling this way was because it indicated that they were secure enough in their professional relationship with me to be able to say no. Indeed there were some very positive conversations which resulted from my contacting colleagues, including those who wanted to participate but for various reasons were unable to.

The teachers' views on confidentiality were interesting. Ava and Zoe explicitly talked about not minding who knew they were involved in the project. I took time to discuss this issue with them in relation to the potential implications and the important role of the researcher in ensuring confidentiality and anonymity in the process. There were some dilemmas

for me in relation to confidentiality as all three of them were (apparently) very open about aspects of their lives such as how they felt about themselves and named others (some of whom I knew), along with very personal matters relating to emotions, mental health, relationships and family life (including marriage and death). One possible interpretation of this, which they alluded to, was that they felt comfortable and secure with me. However, it left me with an even greater sense of responsibility to ensure that I did everything appropriately to fulfil my commitment and professional obligation to maintain confidentiality.

Another issue that arose was the location for the research conversations which raised an interesting issue about undertaking the conversations in a location other than the University such as Ava's home. Ava had asked whether it would be possible to do so as her work place was a significant distance away from the University and travel arrangements were difficult. Although I felt uncomfortable about whether this was ethically (and professionally) appropriate, it was made easier because Ava explained feeling some concern about whether she was making a reasonable request of me to meet at her home. Although initially a little unnerving for me, it turned out to be an appropriate location for both of us, which we discussed, and one which facilitated relaxed but focussed conversation.

My sense of responsibility and what I understand by the practice of ethics extended beyond the matters outlined in the 'how to...' textbooks written for researchers. It extended to all aspects of the process including the research design. I designed an approach to data collection that would enable me to fulfil my commitment to looking at things differently which involved repeated conversations with the teachers. The wish to return for discussion on two occasions was not intended as an exercise in seeking affirmation, verification or validation of the data collected and the accuracy of the transcription in the sense that Silverman (2010) or Basit (2010) might suggest. The key rationale was to create a space for each of them to reflect on the previous conversation(s) and enable them to

elaborate on ideas they had narrated or add ideas that they felt they had omitted. This process was critical in seeking to understand the meanings they made in more detail than a one-off 'interview' would permit.

This led to the need to ensure that I achieved an effective balance between the need for academic rigour and the commitment to putting the teachers at the centre of the work. There was a need to balance the critiques levelled at narrative work as being reductionist in its "inspection of personal, even private, experience in the search for an interior biographical life" (Atkinson, 2009: 1.2) with my own concerns about taking an approach that took such a broad look at the social that it omitted the individual experience (Craib, 1998). One example of this was in the analysis and re-presentation of the findings. An enormous volume of valuable data was generated, which took me by surprise and also presented me with a challenge in how best to work with the data within the scale of the project (Appendix 9: Extract of Ava's Transcript (Conversation 2)). There were several ways that I could have presented and explored the findings, indeed I tried different approaches and this stage in the process was much more complex than anticipated. I wanted to do justice to the teachers' stories, particularly in light of the time they had given to the project. As explored earlier in the thesis, I ultimately selected the approach that I felt was most authentic in light of my initial motivations and intentions for the work, and most appropriate for the methodology that I had subsequently developed.

One of the other important considerations was how best to re-present that data to take account of the similarities and differences in the narratives. Appendix 8: Significant Influences in the Narratives summarises the key significant factors that were discussed by Ava, Zoe and Nell. The content of the table illustrates that Ava, Zoe and Nell talked about many of the same factors as being influential on their experiences. This was unsurprising for a number of reasons: they all had family and friends with whom they had on-going relationships; they worked in education



institutions underpinned by similar national and local policy and processes; they worked with teachers as colleagues and managers/leaders; they had followed similar 'traditional' routes in their own education which had enabled them to undertake a course of ITE to qualify as a teacher (i.e. successful schooling up to A-Level and degree level study) and; they all had a range of experiences outside of the work place. Following the detailed account of Ava's case, in chapter six I explored examples from the individual experiences of Ava, Zoe and Nell to illustrate more 'general' concerns. This was done in relation to the significant factors as they related to policy, people and professionalism, and identity (see Appendix 6: Extract of Ava's Transcript: Coded (Conversation 1) and Appendix 8: Significant Influences in the Narratives). This approach enabled me to discuss the three themes from the literature in relation to similarities and differences in the narrated experiences and meaning making.

I wanted to demonstrate two things: firstly, the complexity of each individual case and the implications of this complexity for the individual teacher and; secondly, the way in which narrative data such as this can offer us a way of thinking differently about the lives and work<sup>18</sup> of teachers, with obvious interweaving of the personal and professional. As I demonstrated through the re-presentation of the data, the teachers' views of their professional learning in relation to their career journey was broad: much more so than I had anticipated.

I was committed to understanding the teachers' work in relation to both the research process and the research focus. Having been a teacher, I had my own understanding of the issues around power and policy both in terms of that which I experienced directly and the experiences of the teachers I worked with: those I had observed, led and managed and, discussed the issue with. As I became more familiar with the field and

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<sup>18</sup> Another artificial divide.

analysed the data, I had growing concerns about the role I played as a 'successful' neoliberal teacher and the impact of this on the research design. I was concerned about the extent to which the project was underpinned by neoliberal discourses in considering the self, reflection and responsibility, and the associated irony of this in relation to the characteristics of neoliberalism outlined here. Throughout the research it had been my intention to:

“work towards a position that recognises both the personhood of the researcher and the complexity of the researcher/respondent relationship and yet allows for useful things to be said” (Letherby, Scott and Williams, 2013: 87).

It was inevitable that in analysing the data, I would have attended to things that provoked a response from me such as those that resonated or contrasted with my experiences. On reflection, I am not suggesting that this was problematic, but acknowledge it here in terms of positioning myself as a researcher 'in the middle' (Breen, 2007) and recognising my subjectivity. This is also critical in reflecting on the influence of the data that is selected and that which is left out.

As I have outlined in chapter three, chapter four and earlier in this chapter, the process of analysis was challenging in many ways. The key concerns that I had related to: my feelings of responsibility for Ava, Zoe and Nell as participants in the research; my commitment to do justice to their accounts and to be academically rigorous in the re-presentation; the volume of data generated and the decisions about what to include and how, as well as what to exclude and; the risk of losing the critical interconnectedness and complexity of the individual experiences. I was also concerned about ensuring that the approach taken to analysis enabled the foregrounding of those people and incidents identified as being significant to Ava, Zoe and Nell (see Appendix 8: Significant Experiences in the Narratives). As explained in chapter 4, this intention was supported during the process of the three research conversations by identifying those things that each of them gave most conversation time to;

those they returned to for further consideration and/or; those explicitly and directly acknowledged as being important. As part of this it was valuable to for me to have some understanding of the experiences and contexts they were discussing and to be able appreciate the emotional responses embedded in the accounts, such as frustration, anger and disappointment, some of which I could relate as I had also experienced those feelings. It was my interpretation of that which they narrated that I drew on in the analysis rather than a direct attempt to confirm which aspects of the conversations Ava, Zoe and Nell agreed were significant. In reading and listening to the research conversations, I coded the transcripts to indicate those ideas that appeared to be significant and/or that generated questions for me. In order to illustrate this I have included an extract of a coded transcript from conversation 1 with Ava in Appendix 6. This approach to coding led to the generation of specific conversation prompts to support conversations 2 and 3 with Ava, Zoe and Nell which I have included in Appendices 7.1-7.6: Specific Research Conversation Prompts (see also Appendix 6: Extract of Ava's Transcript: Coded (Conversation 1)). This was used to support each subsequent conversation and, at the end of the process, the organisation of the data in relation to the three themes of policy, professionalism and identity.

As their comments in chapter 6 indicate, Ava, Zoe and Nell were very clear about the research being 'mine', recognising their role within the process and identifying other outcomes for them. This is important for me in reflecting on the research as, in deciding upon the aims, the research question and the process, I wanted to ensure that they had a role in setting the agenda and a clear voice in order to enable me to answer the research question whilst retaining the role and responsibility as the researcher: it is my research.

The process of re-presentation was aided in undertaking the analysis and write up over three years and trying different approaches. This period

enabled me to take successive 'steps' away from the data over time to support the process of rigorous analysis.

I acknowledge that this was not a project concerned with social difference, nor did it subsequently seem relevant to explore the teachers' accounts with this in mind even with three female participants (as discussed in chapter one). This is not to suggest that social difference is unimportant, indeed I feel very strongly to the contrary however, it was not the focus here. Another obvious point of scrutiny was the subject background of the three teachers who, like me, were all involved in physical education. The reason for the shared background was the connection through the work they do in ITE which gave me access to the contact details for these particular teachers. The common subject background was an interesting matter in that it resulted in some evidence of shared understanding about elements of practice. I acknowledge here that there is a risk associated with the assumption of shared understanding between those involved in research but I have not interrogated this as this was not a project based upon interpretations of shared understanding. What is important to note is that there were examples provided by the teachers that were instantly familiar and meaningful for me on the basis of this shared understanding, as I illustrated with the 'non kit' example earlier. I was able to use this to assist me in my understanding of what they felt to be significant. Other examples of this included Zoe's references to being competitive; Nell's explanation about the debates that took place in her department about whether colleagues felt that they teach 'sport' or pupils; and Ava's reference to the '1933 syllabus' (Board of Education, 1949). The layers of shared meaning embedded in some of these examples provided valuable contexts for me to think about and understand their experiences.

This research started because I was interested in the experiences of teachers like those I had worked with in school, as well as myself. It has had notable impact on my role in ITE: as the research process developed

it has informed a number of aspects of my practice. As well as providing material for taught sessions, it has also made me reflect on the way in which we work with student teachers and qualified teachers who are at various stages of their teaching career. We have developed documentation which supports their learning, with self-reflection as a key part of the process. It has also impacted on particular aspects of the work we do with mentors including how we support them in their activities with the students: in one case this involved a mentor working with us on a conference paper which he presented about his professional learning through being a mentor.

One of the most significant challenges for me has been working on this research on a part-time basis with very limited time. I have had two children since the onset of this project and also have primary responsibility for childcare on week days. My role in ITE during a time of great policy change both within and beyond the University has made for difficult working conditions, including very long days. The most significant implication of this is that there has been a lack of continuity in the ideas I have developed. Each time I have 'returned' to the writing I have done so following a period of other work which is both employment and domestic in nature. It has made the development of coherent ideas, fluency in writing, and the progress towards completion incredibly difficult mainly because it is always necessary to re-engage with a particular train of interrupted thought. It has made very clear to me the significant challenges associated with part-time study. The on-going challenge I had in balancing personal and professional commitments supported my insight into the experiences of the teachers here. They all shared examples of balance in their own lives: Zoe talked about getting the balance right between her work and family; Nell described the way in which she was 'in a quandary' because there was no family life to set against her busy working life, and Ava was frustrated at her first school because she would get home after a very long day feeling too tired to socialise. In my case, the challenges of work-life-PhD balance have

resulted most significantly in a frustratingly slowly evolving thesis, however, there have also been a number of institutional pressures.

Another significant challenge is being confident about the quality of work to ensure that it is 'good enough' for doctoral level. I have been in the position (an increasingly unusual one) of working as an 'academic' whilst completing a PhD. My immersion in 'academic' life has given me opportunities to network with some brilliant colleagues; attend conferences and present my work; write papers with colleagues; learn about and undertake the writing of research grant proposals; and other collaborative research activities such as meeting in a regular theory reading group and attending departmental seminars. I have been fortunate in seeking and taking opportunities to build my confidence in these aspects of the role. However, alongside this I have found the challenge of judging the quality of my own work increasingly problematic. This has been compounded by the on-going development of research and literature in this field over time: it has been a challenge to keep up with developments. I have taken the reassurances from my supervisors and the experiences of others to recognise that this is all embedded in the challenge for originality in the journey of doctoral study (Back, 2002).

### **8.3 Participants' Reflections**

I was interested in the views that Ava, Zoe and Nell had of the research including the process from the outset. As we heard in the previous chapter, they made explicit comments about their learning as part of the process. Methodologically, I felt that if the research was genuinely going to value the experiences they narrated and explore their professional learning then their views of the research process itself were highly significant. It was also important for me to hear their views because, as indicated earlier, I felt such a significant sense of responsibility for the research and the impact of their involvement. One aspect of the research that surprised me was their willingness to get involved as wholeheartedly as they did, including making comments about the process. I was

obviously pleased about this, given my concerns, and it provided me with the opportunity to ask them explicitly about their experiences of the process. I wanted their reflections on the process to form part of our final conversation and so asked them to consider why they were initially interested and agreed to take part; what it had been like to take part including the practicalities of the process and; whether they felt there were any particular outcomes from their involvement? (Appendix 5: Generic Research Conversation Prompts).

In our first meetings where we organised the research process, the teachers all provided reasons for their interest and involvement in the research. Ava indicated that she always questioned herself and thought that the project might offer an interesting way of doing that. Zoe said she thought it might encourage her to think about things that she had not thought of before. Nell thought the project sounded interesting and would like to help, but additionally felt she was 'stuck in a rut' so it might provide a valuable opportunity to think about herself. As we heard earlier, she explained the reasons for her involvement in wanting 'to look for a way forward' for herself. Whether conscious or sub-conscious, which she specifically mentioned, she recognised that her circumstances had motivated her to become involved in a process where she would think about herself.

As indicated earlier, Ava, Zoe and Nell were known to me and I to them as a result of their involvement in the University-School ITE partnership, although I had only met two of them prior to the research. They all made comment about the importance of who the researcher was. Ava identified that she would not undertake a process such as this with someone that she did not know or feel comfortable with. She said that she would worry about what she said, and how it might be perceived. On this Zoe wondered how open she would feel able to be with someone she did not know and thought that she would have to 'suss them out a little bit first and get myself really comfortable with them'. She related this to the

conversations with me and the importance for the conversation of being comfortable 'I suppose because I feel quite comfortable sat talking to you, I don't have to really think about what I'm going to say before I say it'. Nell commented on the potential impact of a different researcher: 'it might have been different if you were of a different gender, different age... you might give a different account of yourself to somebody or... I don't know, maybe I wouldn't have mentioned the word 'hormone' quite so much to somebody else who is not a woman! I might have done, but I don't know'. Their comments also raise the important, but impossible to answer, question about what might have been shared with a different researcher (Pezalla *et al.*, 2012).

They commented on the location of the conversations: different locations were used. Ava chose her home (explored previously); Nell chose the university; and Zoe a combination of the university and another off-site setting. Nell's choice was based on avoiding any connection between the research and her place of work although she did not elaborate with any explanations about the reasons for this. They all commented on being comfortable with the locations, and the nature of the open conversations we had would support this. Zoe did indicate afterwards that her preference would have been to have done it at home but she felt unable to as her domestic arrangements would have made it complicated.

Zoe and Nell both appeared uncertain in the first conversation which they subsequently discussed, identifying that this was because they were not sure about what I was 'looking for' as the researcher. The nature of effective teaching is such that good communication is key: teachers are usually in control of what they plan to say and how it relates to the intentions for learning. Nell was visibly nervous and said that she felt 'the parameters were really wide with this, and to kind of pick things out I thought was really quite difficult'. She made jokes on several occasions about 'boring me', indicating her perception of my experience as the listener. Zoe said that in the first meeting that she 'felt a bit awkward



thinking... does Anne want to know this, is this what she wants to know, am I doing the right thing, am I not saying the right thing?'. We discussed this in the final conversation and she talked about how her view had shifted: 'and obviously now I know you just want to hear what I think about it and what I've done... so I'd say the second two [conversations] have been a lot easier, because I suppose I've been more comfortable'. Ava felt comfortable with the process but wondered whether it would work with someone who was less extrovert and 'chatty' than her. The need to reflect on the effectiveness of their communication skills and strategies are part of the day-to-day work of a teacher. For these three teachers it is even more significant in that they regularly work with student teachers and support them in developing their own self-awareness through reflection thus potentially were even more alert to themselves in this process.

They offered their views on their engagement with the written transcript and audio recording which I provided them with to enable them to choose to reflect in a way that suited them. They all felt there was value in listening to it as well as reading it but had taken slightly different approaches depending on their circumstances. They all that they had listened, but Nell and Ava said that they had combined this with reading. Zoe had only listened because she did it in the car when she was by herself. Ava considered the effectiveness for her of listening and reading and commented that she had felt she could be more reflective by listening as it enabled her to take 'more of an analytical point of view'. Nell talked about the practicalities saying: 'I only listened to it once, because obviously it's quicker to read than it is to sit and listen to the whole thing'. She indicated that she liked 'paper and reading and being able to scribble on things and doodle and highlight'.

They all made comment about things they noticed when they listened to the conversations. Nell was very critical of her use of language and sentence construction and identified that this had dominated her

immediate thoughts about the first conversation: on reflection later she did not think it was as bad to listen to as she had anticipated. Zoe noticed that she had a lisp, which she had not been aware of before. As we heard earlier, Ava was concerned about how negative she thought she sounded. Nell had a similar response in that she thought she sounded like 'an arrogant prat'. However, Ava and Nell both commented on being able to remember clearly the things we had talked about in the conversation before listening to or reading it back. They both described replaying things they had said before receiving the transcript and recording; Nell to herself and Ava through conversations with her partner. As a result they were not surprised by any of the ideas that they heard or read. Nell thought that one important consideration in a process such as this is that 'you can have a different perspective on the same thing, or a different interpretation of the same thing on different days'. This very much reflected how she personally felt about herself and her daily experiences as she commented on how differently she could feel at different times depending on the mood she was in.

It was important for me to understand their views of the impact of the research. Nell said 'as I'm quite reflective anyway, it wasn't a revelatory process... most things are things I'd kind of thought about before'. She went onto say 'anything that you can remember, particularly when you're dredging back through the past is probably [significant] because otherwise you wouldn't have remembered it in the first place'. Ava's case in chapter four provided us with a clear illustration of the way in which she felt that her engagement in the process had made her think about different aspects of her professional life and the possible impact of this. As she said 'I think it's made me just think about where I've been, my reactions to certain situations, how, if I'm not happy with something I want out. So I'm going to try and, having reflected on that, change it' She identified that this had resulted from the opportunity to 'think how I am and how I would like to be'. She makes the specific point in terms of her imagined future (Andrews, 2014) that the process has made her more

self-aware and 'has made me approach my new role objectively in terms of my self-awareness and how I respond to certain situations'. Zoe offered a number of comments on the outcomes of the process, some of which were explored earlier. She felt very positive about the outcomes in that 'it was quite rewarding actually, thinking about "oh I've actually done quite a lot of things"... it made me think about what I'd done... why I'd done things, and reminded me of things that I'd forgotten about that probably are quite important in my career'. She commented on feeling 'pleased' and 'surprised' because you don't often think about "oh I've done this, I've done that". Zoe also felt that it had had an impact upon her view of the future as it had benefitted her 'to think about all those things and kind of help me made a decision about where I want to go next'. She identified that it had given her more 'confidence' to make a change in her professional role and acknowledged the importance of this outcome for her because she recognised that 'I'm the only one that can change that'.

In response to their experience and reflections on the research process, they all felt that this type of approach had potential in the practice setting to support professional learning. They were clear that it would need to be organised and managed carefully to prevent it becoming another tool for managerialism and performativity: more box ticking. They all made reference to needing to choose carefully who they had the conversations with to ensure that the process was meaningful. As an example, Nell commented on not feeling that she could undertake this with colleagues in her current department. Zoe felt that if choices were not made carefully it might descend into 'a bit of a moan, and really nothing constructive coming out of it'.

As I indicated earlier in relation to ethical practice, I was worried about asking busy people to give up their time for a project that required a significant time commitment. This was alleviated by comments such as one from Zoe saying: '...with this whole process I've got something out of it as well...'. Nell wrote to me ten days after the final conversation

sharing a number of thoughts she had about the experience, particularly in relation to how she had felt. She had experienced some stress and anxiety during the process but stressed that 'it was just thinking that kept me up all night, no, I'm quite capable of distressing myself, I don't need a bit of paper or a CD to do it!'. As we heard in the last chapter she was clear that through the process she had a realisation of the impact of her experiences on her life. Ava sent me a text the morning after our final conversation saying 'really have learned a lot about myself. Am consciously not worrying about others' perceptions of me at work... mentally feel less pressure as a result. Which is a good thing, I think. Thanks Anne 😊'.

I understood some of the impact of the process and the significance of the research when Nell and Ava contacted me. However my levels of understanding were markedly increased as the process of analysis developed once all the conversations were completed. I was confident about the process on the basis of the data I had collected combined with my reflections and those of Ava, Zoe and Nell.

#### **8.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has explored the key reflections on the research journey. The research and associated methods had invited, by virtue of the design, reflexive teachers to participate. In the research encounter their reflections had also provided significant opportunity to think about the process of using three consecutive research conversations interspersed by individual analysis, and the impact of the research more broadly.

The process had felt more positive and constructive than I had anticipated which was due to the willing engagement of Ava, Zoe and Nell, as well as the design itself. It was valuable to hear their comments about their experiences of the process, particularly where they felt positive, which allayed the worries I had at the outset and during the research journey along the way, in relation to my sense of responsibility.

The reflections here enabled me to evaluate the process that I had designed and consider the implications, particularly in relation to this process as something that could be used in the practice of schools. It also enabled me to think about the value of this research process in terms of the knowledge generated and research which I could pursue in the future.

### **8.5 Concluding Remarks**

This research has taken a long time to complete and write up. The process has been challenging in many practical ways as a result, but the length of time it has taken has also facilitated extended time for thinking. In the process of writing a thesis about professional learning and learning to be a professional I have learned an extraordinary amount about research but also about my own learning. As explained in chapter three, I have been critically reflexive at every stage of the process and attempted to make that explicit throughout the thesis. This reflexivity was necessary, in part because this level of study requires it but, most significantly to fulfil my methodological commitment to this particular research, its focus and design. As the PhD process draws to a close, my overall reflections on this work are very positive, notwithstanding the limitations identified in the previous chapter and the areas that this research did not address. This research makes a number of suggestions for policy, practice and future research, as well as offering several original contributions to knowledge in relation to: the development of a methodological approach which placed participants at the centre of the process; what teachers do and how; a critique of current models of CPD and; the complexity of the actor/subject and compliance/resistance dualisms.

The data for the thesis was collected at an early stage in the term of the current Coalition Government when Ava, Zoe and Nell had worked most of their career under New Labour policy. The thesis reaches completion as this term draws to a close and the next General Election approaches. During the term of this Coalition Government some policies have been

maintained and neoliberalism has continued to underpin policy development. There have also been some relevant changes in policy such as: amendments to the Standards that teachers are required to meet from their entry to the profession as part of ITE and onwards in their careers, including an increased emphasis on matters relating to professionalism; a withdrawal from moving to teaching as a 'Masters' Level' profession and; a significant restructuring in the models of ITE such that processes encourage training rather than education. These shifts have inevitable implications for the types of professional learning that teachers will need and/or want given the diversity of ITE experiences and the impact of this on their preparedness for the profession. It also affects the opportunities for professional learning that will be offered and available to teachers. This provides an interesting context, whatever the outcome of the Election, for the implementation of the recommendations made from this work for policy, practice and future research.

On the basis of this political context and the outcomes from this research, it is critical that we continue to find ways to enhance the development of our knowledge and understanding about professional learning, and learning to be a professional, such that we can improve the experience for teachers regardless, or even in spite, of policy.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Chronology of Key Education Policy

#### Acts, Reports and Events

1976	Ruskin College speech James Callaghan, Yellow Book and 'Great Debate'
1977	Taylor Report: A New Partnership for Our Schools (Department for Education and Science: DES)
1977	Green Paper: Education in Schools (DES)
1977	Fifth Black Paper: Attacks comprehensive education and 'Marxist infiltration' (Cox and Boyson)
1978	Warnock Report: Special Educational Needs
1979	Labour Education Bill
1979	Conservatives Elected and Labour Education Bill fails
1980	Education Act
1980	A Framework for the School Curriculum (DES)
1983	Conservatives re-elected (second term)
1983	School Curriculum and Development Committee; Schools Examination Council
1983	White Paper: Teaching Quality (DES)
1984	Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE)
1984	Green Paper: Parental Influence at School (DES)
1985	Swann Report: Education for All (DES)
1985	White Paper: Better Schools (DES)
1986	Education Acts 1 and 2
1986	National Council for Vocational Qualifications
1986	White Paper: Education and Training: Working Together (DES)
1986	General Certificate of Secondary Education replaced O Levels and CSE.
1987	Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act
1987	Task Group on Assessment and Testing
1987	Conservatives re-elected (third term)
1987	Consultation on Education Reform Bill
1988	Local Government Act (section 28)
1988	Education Reform Act
1988	National Curriculum Council (NCC) and School Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC)
1989	Children Act
1989	Elton Report: Discipline in Schools
1990	Training and Enterprise Councils
1991	Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act
1991	Parents' Charter: You and Your Child's Education (DES)
1991	General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) introduced
1991	White Paper: Education and Training for 21 <sup>st</sup> Century (DES/Department of Employment: DoE)

1992	Transfer of Functions Orders: DES to become Department for Education (DfE)
1992	Conservatives re-elected (fourth term)
1992	White Paper: Choice and Diversity (DfE)
1992	Education (Schools) Act
1992	Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)
1992	First publication of GCSE Results in the press
1993	Education Act
1993	School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) replaced NCC and SEAC
1993	Dearing Report: The National Curriculum and its Assessment
1993	National Commission on Education Report: Learning to Succeed
1994	Updated Parents' Charter: Our Children's Education (DfE)
1994	Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs
1994	Education Act
1994	Teacher Training Agency (TTA)
1995	Diversity and Excellence: A New Partnership for School (Labour Party)
1995	Performance in City Schools (House of Commons Education Committee)
1995	Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) created by the merger of DfE with Department of Employment
1995	Excellence for Everyone: Labour's Crusade to Raise Standards (Labour Party)
1995	National targets for education and training revised
1996	Education and Training for 14-19 Year Olds (House of Commons Education and Employment Committee)
1996	Dearing Report: Review of Qualifications for 16-19 Year Olds
1996	Ofsted Report: The Implementation of the Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs
1996	Aiming Higher: Labour's Proposals for the Reforms of the 14-19 Curriculum (Labour Party)
1996	Nursery and Grant-Maintained Schools Act
1996	Early Excellence: A Headstart for Every Child (Labour Party)
1996	Education (Schools) Act (consolidating Act)
1996	Education (Schools Inspection) Act (consolidating Act)
1996	Learning to Compete: Education and Training for 14-19 Year Olds (DfEE)
1996	White Paper: Self Government for Schools (DfEE)
1996	Education Bill
1996	National Literacy Project proposals
1997	Education Act
1997	Labour Government elected
1997	Standards and Effectiveness Unit (DfEE)
1997	Summer literacy schools initiative
1997	Education Act
1997	White Paper: Excellence in Schools (DfEE); National Literacy Strategy announced

1997	Green Paper: Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Education Needs (DfEE)
1997	School Standards and Framework Bill
1997	Social Exclusion Unit
1998	Standards Fund
1998	Fifth Report: Disaffected Children (House of Commons Education and Employment Committee)
1998	National Childcare Strategy
1998	Education Action Zones; Guidance on school admissions (DfEE)
1998	School Standards and Framework Act
1998	Teaching and Higher Education Act
1998	New Opportunities Fund (National Lottery)
1998	Expansion of Specialist Schools; Beacon Schools
1998	National Grid for Learning
1998	Guidance on national childcare strategy, early years development and childcare partnerships
1998	Literacy hour advised; Numeracy Task Force set up
1998	National Year of Reading launched
1998	Crick Report: Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in School
1998	DfEE publish homework guidelines; Extending Opportunity: A National Framework for Study Support (DfEE)
1998	Meeting Special Educational Needs: A Programme for Action (DfEE); consultation on a revised Code of Practice for SEN
1998	Green Paper: Teachers: Meeting the Challenge of Change (DfEE)
1999	Action plan for inner city education; expansion of specialist and beacon schools; new approach for gifted children (Blair and Blunkett)
1999	Excellence in Cities
1999	Consultation on revised National Curriculum
1999	Robinson Report: All Our Futures on creative and cultural education
1999	White Paper: Learning to Succeed (DfEE) Learning and Skills Councils
1999	Numeracy Strategy proposed
1999	National Curriculum published
1999	Learning and Skills Bill
2000	City Academies announced
2000	Comprehensive Spending Review (£5 billion committed to Education over three years)
2000	Statutory code of admissions for all maintained schools
2001	Green Paper: Schools: Building on Success: Raising Standards and Promoting Diversity (DfEE); 'Mission' to transform secondary schools; revised Code of Practice on LEA/school relationships
2001	Labour re-elected (second term)
2001	DfEE becomes Department for Education and Skills (DfES)
2001	Marking and timetable problems with new A/S Levels
2001	White Paper: Schools: Achieving Success (DfES); goal of a

	diverse secondary sector set out
2001	Special Educational Needs and Disability Act
2001	Special Educational Needs: Code of Practice (DfES)
2001	Educational Bill
2001	National College for School Leadership
2002	Education Act
2002	A Level marking problems
2002	Citizenship courses mandatory in National Curriculum
2002	Lord Laming Report: The Victoria Climbié Inquiry (DoH/Home Office)
2003	Code of Practice on School Admissions
2003	Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and Private Finance Initiative (PFI)
2003	Smith Report: Making Mathematics Count (DfES)
2003	Transforming London Secondary Schools (DfES)
2003	White Paper: Every Child Matters (HM Treasury)
2004	Children Bill
2004	Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (DfES) including staff development and the proposals for Foundation Schools
2004	Secondary Education: School Admissions (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee)
2004	White Paper: Choosing Health (DoH) integration with ECM
2004	Education Bill (Queen's Speech)
2004	Building Schools for the Future second wave(DfES)
2004	Children Act
2004	Ofsted Report: Special Educational Needs and Disability: Towards Inclusive Schools
2005	A Choice for Parents: The Best Start for Children (DfES) A Ten-Year Strategy for children's services
2005	Education Act
2005	Higher Standards, Better Schools for All
2006	Education and Inspections Act
2006	Workforce Reform/Remodelling
2006	Children and Adoption Act
2007	Further Education and Training Act
2007	Excellent Teachers
2008	Education and Skills Act
2008	Employment Act
2008	Children and Young Persons Act
2008	Special Educational Needs (Information) Act
2009	Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act
2010	Conservative Liberal Democrat Coalition take office
2010	Academies Act
2010	Children, Schools and Families Act
2010	The Importance of Teaching
2010	Positive for Youth: Cross-government policy for Young People Aged 13 to 19.
2010	Towards a Strong Careers Profession

2010	Progression 2010 to 2011: Advice on Improvin data to Raise Attainment and Maximise the Progress of Learners with Special Educational Needs
2011	Education Act
2011	Teachers' Standards
2011	Special Educational Needs Information Act: An Analysis
2011	Post-legislative Assessments of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, Childcare Act 2006 and Children and Adoption Act 2006
2012	Support and Aspiration: A New Approach to Special Educational Needs and Disability: Progress and Next Steps
2012	Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England
2012	16 to 19 Funding Formula Review: Funding Full Participation and Study Programmes for Young People
2012	Improving Alternative Provision
2012	The SEN Support Scholarship
2012	Securing Independent Careers Guidance: A Practical Guide for Schools
2012	Framework of Outcomes for Young People
2012	Residential Special School: national Minimum Standards
2013	The Young Person's Gide to the Children and Families Bill
2013	Changes to the System of School Organisation
2013	Early Years Teachers Standards
2013	Supporting Internships for Young People with Learning Difficulties
2014	Improving Behaviour and Attendance in Schools
2014	Children and Families Act
2014	Behaviour and Discipline in Schools

Sources:

- Tomlinson (2005: 15; 30-31; 50; 73; 92-93; 119-120);
- legislation.gov.uk (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga>) accessed 4Mar10;
- gov.uk Publications (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?departments%5B%5D=department-for-education>) accessed 29Apr14

## Appendix 2: Email to Potential Participants

Dear Colleague

As you are aware I am a full time member of academic staff in Education at The University and running the PGCert Secondary Physical Education with Qualified Teacher Status course. I am currently engaged in doctoral research (PhD) on a part time basis which focuses on developing an understanding about the individual teacher's engagement in professional learning. The working title of the research is: 'Professional learning: narratives of experience'.

The research seeks to explore the individual career stories and associated aspects of life stories of physical educators in order that we might better understand the factors that enable/facilitate effective professional learning. The term you will be familiar with in relation to this is Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

My aim is that this is a collaborative research process which is seeking to do research into this area differently: I am keen to undertake this research *with* people rather than *about* them. As a result of the approach being taken, it is more complex and time consuming than other research you may have previously been involved in. The process which will take place during this term, will involve an initial introductory conversation followed by 3 meetings and some preparatory work between each meeting. A mutually convenient timescale for the process will be agreed at the first meeting for those who wish to be involved.

I am looking for a small number of teachers with a background in physical education who qualified between 1993 and 2006, and are currently involved in physical education with the secondary age range.



If this is something you are interested in and would like to find out more about then do let me know by email: [anne.chappell@XXXX.ac.uk](mailto:anne.chappell@XXXX.ac.uk) as soon as possible so that we can discuss the aims and processes involved.

Thank you

Best wishes

Anne

### **Appendix 3: Research Information**

**Lead Researcher:** Anne Chappell

**Working Title:** Professional learning: narratives of experience.

**Purpose of study:** PhD Doctoral Research

**Place of work:** Department, The University

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### **Introduction**

I am a full time member of academic staff in Education at The University. I run the PGCert Secondary Physical Education with Qualified Teacher Status course as well as teaching on other Education programmes. I am currently engaged in doctoral research (PhD) on a part time basis which focuses on developing our understanding about the individual teacher's engagement in professional learning.

Thank you for expressing your interest in my research and agreeing to discuss your potential involvement. The purpose of our conversation today is for me to outline both the research topic and research process, as well as answering any questions you may have. As I talk through the information, feel free to ask me any questions and stop me if you do not understand anything.

## **The Research**

The research seeks to explore your career story and related aspects of your life story told in a manner of your choosing in order that we might better understand the factors that enable/facilitate effective professional learning from your perspective, based on your experiences. The term you will be familiar with in relation to this is Continuing Professional Development (CPD). There is background about the research outlined in the attached 'Additional Information'.

## **Why have you been approached?**

You are a teacher of physical education and involved in educational professional practice where the requirement to undertake CPD is inherent in the role's expectations.

## **Do I have to take part?**

Participation in this project is entirely voluntary, and the decision to take part is yours. The research process requires a significant time commitment, and so I anticipate that those who volunteer will have a genuine interest in the topic or the process, or both. There is no obligation for you to participate.

## **The research process and your potential involvement**

This is a collaborative research process which is seeking to do research into this area differently. As a result of the approach being taken it is more complex and time consuming than other research you may have previously been involved in. You will be invited to meet with me between four and five occasions in total, including today. The guide to your involvement at each stage is outlined in the table below.

I have called the meetings 'research conversations' rather than 'interviews' as I will not be asking pre-planned structured questions for you to answer. As I explained earlier, the intention is to engage with you in a research conversation that allows you to share career and relevant

life experiences in a way that suits you. This means that you will probably do most of the talking. Since involvement in professional learning is such a personal process, I feel that it is very important that these conversations accurately reflect, in so far as is possible, the way in which you view and have experienced your professional journey. I am keen to undertake this research *with* you rather than *about* you. Research to date in this area has not taken this approach. I may at times ask for clarification or additional detail during the conversation to help me understand the points that you are making. The times allocated are approximate and the actual process will be guided by your telling of your 'story'. You are welcome to communicate with me via University e-mail should you have any questions or comments during the process.

**Your involvement at each stage:**

<p><b>Initial Meeting/Discussion</b> (up to 1 hour)</p>	<p>Discuss the research: consider the information sheet; secure written consent (providing you are willing to be involved); and agree the timescale and location for the process.</p>
<p><b>Research Conversation 1</b> (approximately 2 hours)</p>	<p>Conduct an audio-recorded 'research conversation' between us (research collaborators). This conversation will be structured around an account of your career story and related aspects of your life story (this may or may not be chronological). An open ended question will start our research conversation: 'Tell me your career story.'</p> <p>At the end of this, we will set convenient dates for the analysis and conversation 2.</p>
<p><b>Post Conversation Analysis and Preparation for Conversation 2</b> (approximately 2 hours)</p>	<p>The first conversation will be transcribed and you will receive an audio, as well as written, copy of the transcription. We will independently reflect upon the conversation and consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>critical/distinctive incidents/people that emerge through the telling of your story;</li> <li>any questions that the conversation prompts;</li> <li>interesting points that might require further</li> </ul>

	<p>conversation.</p> <p>You may choose to keep notes, reflections or a research diary, and may also wish to use these during the next two conversations.</p>
<p><b>Research Conversation 2</b> (approximately 2 hours)</p>	<p>Conduct an audio-recorded second ‘research conversation’. This will be a developmental discussion about the outcomes of the first conversation and the reflections which we have on this, based on the bullet points above. You will also have the opportunity to expand on your ideas from the first conversation and further explain things.</p> <p>I will request copies of any notes, reflections, and/or diary entries that you are willing to share so that they can be copied/typed up (originals will be returned). You are requested to keep any written documentation until the end of the process.</p> <p>At the end of this, we will set convenient dates for the next stage of the analysis and conversation 3.</p>
<p><b>Post Conversation Analysis and Preparation for Conversation 3</b> (approximately 2 hours)</p>	<p>The second conversation will be transcribed and, as before, you will receive an audio, as well as written, copy of the transcription. We will independently reflect upon the conversation and consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>any questions that it prompts;</li> <li>ideas that would benefit from exploration, clarification and consolidation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Research Conversation 3- the final meeting</b> (approximately 2 hours)</p>	<p>Conduct an audio-recorded third ‘research conversation’. This will be a ‘synthesis and reflection’ discussion to explore, clarify and consolidate the ideas from the previous conversations.</p> <p>Additionally at the end of this conversation you will be asked to evaluate your experiences of the research process.</p> <p>As before, I will request copies of any notes, reflections, and/or diary entries that you are willing to share so that they can be copied/typed up (originals will be returned). You are requested to keep any written</p>

	documentation until the end of the process.
<b>Final Meeting (1 hour)</b>	There is the opportunity of a final follow up conversation if you feel it would be appropriate for you or useful to the research.

### **Location of meetings**

The location of the meeting needs to be one which will enable you to feel comfortable in talking openly about your career and professional learning. This might be somewhere in your workplace; a private office which I can organise at The University, or another suitable alternative venue which you might prefer.

### **Recording the interview**

I would like to digitally record each conversation in order that:

- I am enabled to listen attentively, without the distraction of making notes during our conversations. This will allow us to converse more freely;
- Accurate and precise transcriptions can be made.

### **How will the research data be used?**

The findings of this research will be published in my PhD thesis; and may also be used in publications (including journals and books); national and international conferences; research seminars and symposia; policy development; teaching; media coverage (if relevant).

A summary of findings and recommendations will be sent to you at the end of the PhD process and you will also be offered the opportunity to view the completed study.

### **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

Confidentiality will be assured. Pseudonyms will be adopted and you will remain anonymous in data presentation. Any data that may identify other individuals, groups or specific locations will be omitted. A longer term aim

for this study is the potential collaborative dissemination of the findings at conferences, which you may wish to be involved in.

Data will be retained confidentially in a locked/secure/password protected location for up to five years after the study is complete and may be used as the basis to plan future research, in line with University policy.

### **Your right to withdraw from the study**

If you agree to take part in the study, you are totally free to withdraw at any stage without giving a reason. This will be your choice. Voluntary participation is key, given the nature of the question and the complexity of the process. You can also decide whether or not you want me to use any data that we have collated up to that point.

### **What do I do if I have any complaints about this research?**

You can contact:

Chair of Research Ethics Committee, The University.

### **How do I know that this study has been carefully reviewed?**

The University Research Ethics Committee has reviewed this study to ensure that it complies with University guidelines in terms of things like confidentiality, data protection, potential harm to participants etc. All this is part of our standard procedure and ensures that research is conducted ethically.

I also have two supervisors at The University and I am required to report my progress to them on a regular basis.

### **Questions**

- How do you feel about taking part based on the information you have heard so far?
- Do you have further questions or concerns about the study or your potential involvement?

- Do you have any questions that you would like to ask?

**If I agree to be involved, what happens next?**

In order to formally record your agreement to be involved in the research, I require you to sign the attached consent form. This will demonstrate that you have been fully briefed about the research process; read the information provided; and had any questions answered. Please return this to me at your earliest convenience (ideally within a week). Do e-mail me with any further questions after the meeting.

Thank you.



## Consent Form

**Working Title:** Professional learning: narratives of experience.

*Please tick (✓) all boxes below as appropriate, and date and sign as indicated.*

A.	I have listened to the meeting overview explaining the study and read and understood the participant information sheet above. I feel clear about what is involved and expected of me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
B.	I understand that my participation is totally voluntary. I also understand that I am free to withdraw at any time and am not obliged to provide any explanation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
C.	If I do wish to withdraw, I understand that I can choose to withdraw some, or all, of the data collected up that point.	<input type="checkbox"/>
D.	I understand that any data collected from my conversations will be treated confidentially and that pseudonyms will be used for any reference to individuals, groups or specific locations.	<input type="checkbox"/>
E.	I confirm that I have been given plenty of opportunities to ask questions, and where questions have been asked they have been answered to my full satisfaction.	<input type="checkbox"/>
F.	I give my informed consent for recording and transcribing of the research conversations and understand that the data will be stored at The University under Data Protection regulations for up to 5 years after the study is completed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
G.	I understand that the findings of this research will be published in a PhD thesis; and may also used in publications (including journals and books); national and international conferences; research seminars and symposia; policy development; teaching; media coverage (if relevant).	<input type="checkbox"/>
H.	I agree to take part in this study.	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Participant's full name (PRINT)	Date	Signature
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Lead researcher's name (PRINT)	Date	Signature
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## **Additional Information**

### **PhD Research Outline**

#### **Title: Professional learning: narratives of experience**

#### **Background**

Professional development is learning arising from the 'meaningful interaction' of the teacher with their professional context, leading to change (Kelchtermans, 2004: 217). This research seeks to understand what enables this 'meaningful interaction'. There has been much discussion about the most effective approaches to improving professional learning and practice, and engaging professionals in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) (Attard and Armour, 2006; Keay, 2006). The work so far has predominantly centred on effective delivery and the associated organisation of CPD. Hargreaves (2007) focussed on the movement away from occasional courses, and the expert-to-novice approach; in favour of a completely school-based, peer-to-peer approach and suggested a greater value to particular structures for CPD above others.

If individual needs and the responses of the individual to professional learning opportunities (Day *et al.*, 2006; Dowling-Naess, 2001) are taken into account, then it is vital that a range of different approaches to CPD are available because what works for one may not work for another (Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe, 1994). The impact of critical or distinctive incidents and people on teachers' professional practice during the career has been acknowledged (Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe, 1994), but it is more recently that we are beginning to consider the effect on practice. The critical and distinctive may include: the individual's motivation; the impact of their socialisation; and other political, social and cultural factors which must be explored to better match CPD to their needs. Initial research in this area indicates that, in structuring CPD, it is inappropriate to work with a 'one size fits all' approach. Greater knowledge of the role of the individual is key in improving our understanding of this.

## **Objectives**

This research seeks to understand what enables 'meaningful interaction' (Kelchtermans, 2004: 217) and in doing so to:

- Explore the nature of individuals, professionals and professional development to encourage greater reflection and creativity to support opportunity for ongoing meaningful professional development.
- Consider terms (e.g. individual; professional; professional practice and professionalism) and consider their constructions as social processes (policy, language, discourse) that are both unstable and problematic which impact upon the lives of professionals.
- Examine the place of the researcher and their story in the research processes.
- Investigate 'the links between the professional and personal dimensions of teachers' lives' (MacLure, 1993: 1) to help understand the 'meaningful interaction' (Kelchtermans, 2004: 444).
- Represent lived personal and professional experiences so voices are heard and dominant discourses can be disrupted, whilst maintaining the ontological security of the story teller.
- Develop the 'co-researcher research conversation' model with collaborative discursive analyses to allow us to understand whether the individual is the key factor in effective CPD.

## **Research methodology**

The professional studies academic discourse demands a better understanding of the needs and responses of the professional educator, and the intention here is to explore a collaborative telling and analysis of individual career/life stories through 'research conversations' (Woods, 1985) which can be used to illustrate the broader professional context (Evans, 1999).

- It will focus on working *with* rather than researching *about* professional educators (construed as research collaborators) to explore how they experience the multiple aspects of their professional lives; the impact of their identities (Stronach *et al.*, 2002) on these experiences; and the

- way in which these factors facilitate (or not) a 'moving forward' professionally and what this means to them;
- It will enable us to start to better understand how professional development and CPD processes and structures may be constructed to be more effective for the 'needs' of individual professionals;
  - It seeks to represent the lived professional and associated personal experiences so that individual voices can be heard and dominant discourses can be disrupted: using the particular to illustrate the general (Evans, 1999);
  - It intends to develop the 'co-researcher research conversation' model with discursive analyses, retaining the experiences in context whilst maintaining the ontological security of the story teller.

The proposed research process is as follows:

- Discussion of the research with teachers: consider the information sheet; secure written consent and agree dates for the process.
- Conduct an audio-recorded interview/'research conversation' (account of career story) between participant and lead researcher (research collaborators).
- Transcription of first research conversation.
- Research collaborators to independently undertake stage 1 of the analysis (using both written and recorded data) before meeting to discuss and audio-record the second 'research conversation' (developmental discussion and reflections about the outcomes of the first conversation).
- Transcription of second research conversation.
- Research collaborators to independently undertake stage 2 of the analysis (using both written and recorded data) before meeting to discuss and audio-record the third 'research conversation' (synthesis and reflection discussion to explore, clarify and consolidate the ideas from the previous conversations).
- Transcription of third research conversation.

- Code data from transcripts and analysis into themes (using NVIVO). Data analysis will be undertaken using a ‘grounded theory’ approach (Charmaz, 2006) or similar to allow the themes to emerge. These themes, along with any questions will support the development of the co-constructed analyses through each of the research conversations.
- A follow up conversation will be offered to teachers or requested by the lead researcher as required.

### **Contribution and Justification**

This research is distinctive because, unlike other research in this area, there is an emphasis on the illumination of the individual’s lived experience through a narrative methodology which employs a collaborative research model to analyse the research conversations, discuss the analysis, and consider possible interpretations via further research conversations (Woods, 1985). This will attempt to explore the individual experience as a mechanism for illustrating more general issues (Evans, 1993), thus the bigger professional/social issue will be explored through the personal troubles (Mills, 1959). The way in which the individual will tell and analyse their life story may provide a better understanding of the impact of identity/biographical project and professional engagement on professional learning, contributing to the agenda of social change in education. The literature, as well as current professional and political agendas, identifies this area as worthy of research.

The research has the potential to:

- Contribute to the emergent research agendas and shift in academic discourse about identity, professional identity and professional development of educators;
- Contribute to the current national focus on CPD and associated agendas around professionalism (GTCE, 2009; TDA, 2008a; DFE, 2010);
- Contribute to the new thinking and debates about life story and narrative research;
- Contribute to the call for educational research to provide a more rigorous

- evidence base by asking new questions in more complex ways (Coffey, 2001) which seek and view the truth differently (MacLure, 2006);
- Contribute to local, national; and international debate about teacher identity and professional development;
  - Support the research informed process of teaching in my role in Initial Teacher Education with both student teachers and in Partnership work;
  - Knowledge transfer (sharing) with professional colleagues who engage in this project for their own personal benefit as well as their institutions;
  - Contribute to The University's and School's research profiles and further those profiles through publication and presentation at conferences;
  - Offer the potential to develop consultancy work (e.g. in The University Partnership schools; through professional association such as the Association for Physical Education);
  - Offer opportunities to bid for grant money for further research in the area, developing collaborations with both established and developing researchers in the field of study.
  - The work could contribute to The University's support for staff development and CPD.

## Appendix 4: University Ethics Committee Approval Letter

30<sup>th</sup> July 2010

Dear Anne

### **RE40-09 – Professional Learning: Narratives of Moving Forward**

I am writing to confirm the Research Ethics Committee received your application connected to the above mentioned research study. Your application has been independently reviewed to ensure it complies with the University/School Research Ethics requirements and guidelines.

The Chair, acting under delegated authority, is satisfied with the decision reached by the independent reviewers and is pleased to confirm there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study.

Any changes to the protocol contained within your application and any unforeseen ethical issues which arise during the conduct of your study must be notified to the Research Ethics Committee for further consideration.

On behalf of the Research Ethics Committee, I wish you every success with your study.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G. E. L.', written over a faint, illegible printed name.



## **Appendix 5: Generic Research Conversation Prompts**

### **1. Prompt for the First Conversation**

- Tell me your career story.

### **2. Prompts for the Second Conversation**

#### **Process Questions:**

- How have you found the process?
- Have there been any challenges?
- Has this project had any impact upon you?
- Do you have any additional comments/thoughts/questions?

#### **Focus for the Conversation:**

- Anything that you would like to add or elaborate on;
- Critical/distinctive (significant) incidents/people that emerge through the telling of your story;
- Questions that the conversation prompts;
- Interesting points that might require further conversation.
- Notes, reflections, research diary?

### **3. Prompts for the Third Conversation**

- How have you found the preparation for this conversation?
- Is there anything that you would like to add or amend;
- Are there any questions that it prompts;
- Are there any points or ideas that you feel would benefit from clarification, further exploration and/or consolidation;
- Notes, reflections, research diary?

**Appendix 6: Extract of Ava's Transcript: Coded (Conversation 1)**

Transcript (in paragraphs)	Conversation Prompts: Significant Factors	Code
<p>Well in terms of why I went into teaching, I would imagine it's probably because I worked with children from such an early age, my mum worked in a nursery, and I think sort of from, well from a really young age of thirteen, I've sort of worked, and because I did such sort of jobs that were kind of lowly paid, you know menial jobs when I was thirteen, fourteen, my brother also worked from the age of thirteen in a greengrocers, so we grew up kind of with this sort of hard work ethic, I think, so coming from an Irish background I was, you're going out to work (Irish accent) and sort of thing. So mum worked in a nursery, so I used to go and help her out in the summer, just sort of do a bit of voluntary work with her friend who owned the nursery.</p>	<p>Why would that have influenced you?</p> <p>Significant? Impact</p>	<p>Identity</p> <p>Policy Professionalism Identity</p>
<p>And then I think through school, I think we went on a trip to a University, or I drove around it with someone, and I remember thinking wow, this is university, I'm never, I will never get to university, I didn't think academically I was ever going to be good enough to go to university. I think that was probably when I was about thirteen or fourteen.</p>	<p>Significant?</p> <p>Why not? Self-confidence?</p>	<p>Identity</p> <p>Identity</p>
<p>And then I, at school I was kind in the middle, I hated maths, so I was kind of in the lowest set for maths, and, but then when I kind of wanted, had an idea that I might want to go to university, it kind of gave me a kick up the backside to make me want to do well, so I asked to be moved into the middle set for maths, and they did, meaning I could get a C. So when I got my GCSE results I was really pleased because I never, I got nine A to Cs, thinking that I would only get about three or four. So then I thought,</p>	<p>Issue of motivation? Evidence of taking responsibility for the self?</p> <p>Impact of this? Self-confidence?</p>	<p>Policy Identity</p> <p>Identity</p>

<p>ooh actually, I'm actually not as dumb as I thought.</p>		
<p>And then I went on to do A Levels. And then what happened, by total accident is I was supposed to be doing media studies with drama and, or theatre studies, and it didn't work out timetable wise, so I had to choose another A Level, and someone just said well why don't you do PE A Level, because you've always played sports, and I was always captain of netball, and always in the rounder's team. So I decided to do PE A Level and it turned out to be my favourite out of all three A Levels, I was so interested in it, and we had such a great teacher, who had clearly sort of coached, and his sort of format of teaching was just brilliant, it was all practical based, and he really made you learn in class. And then when the A Level results came out, there were only six in our class, and two of us got Bs, and it was me and someone else, who I thought was like super intelligent, so I couldn't believe that I came out with a B at A level.</p>	<p>Significant? Who was that? Why?</p> <p>Significant?</p> <p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>Self-confidence?</p>	<p>Identity</p> <p>Identity</p> <p>Professionalism</p> <p>Identity</p>
<p>And then that's why, I deferred a year, I was going to start university a year later, I wanted to take a gap year, but then me and my friend went down to the University for the open day, and we ended up going to the pub in the afternoon and having such a great day, and ended up staying down there with her sister, that I changed my deferred entry and ended up going the same year as her. So I studied Sports Science, and then really, really loved it, and I did RE as well, but I didn't really enjoy it, and I think I loved the sort of social interaction aspect of Sports Science, and the Gaelic Football Team, and sort of the whole social aspect.</p>	<p>Significant?</p>	<p>Identity</p>
<p>And then I signed up to do the PGCE, but I have to be honest, I was a bit unsure about doing a PGCE, I kind of didn't know what I wanted to do. So I</p>	<p>If unsure, why choose to do it?</p>	<p>Identity</p>

<p>signed up for it at the University... they didn't get, I think the go ahead to run it. So although I'd applied and that's what I thought I was doing, they basically said you know we're not going to run it now, and that's when they got in touch with Yvette and said that I could have an interview for the following year, but I couldn't get on that year, so I had to take a gap year, I was forced to take a gap year as a result.</p>	<p>Significant? Impact?</p>	<p>Identity</p>
<p><b>Oh OK.</b></p>		
<p>And I was kind of under the impression that my place at Riverside was kind of guaranteed because I'd gone through the interview process at the University and it was all fine, but it wasn't, so when I went to interview at Riverside, I went through all the stages and I was really nervous thinking well I don't know if I'm going to get on here. And I did get on, and I did the PGCE and absolutely loved it, and that's kind of more or less where my teaching background started.</p>	<p>Self-confidence? Impact?</p>	<p>Identity</p>
<p>After coming out I did, I did my first teaching practise at a girls school and my mentor was, I didn't like her to be quite honest, she sort of publicly humiliated me as a teacher trainee in front of some students and in front of staff in the staff room, she just had a bit of a chip on her shoulder, and I communicated that with Yvette, because I thought well I'm going to be honest, because I was so close to leaving my PGCE.</p>	<p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>Why?</p>	<p>Professionalism Identity</p> <p>Identity</p>
<p>And my second placement I really enjoyed. But it's interesting going in doing the link tutor visits, just sort of seeing the students, and they're not going to be amazing, because I know that I am totally different to the way I was when I was training.</p>	<p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>In what way different and what impact does that have on the way you do what you do?</p>	<p>Professionalism Identity</p>
<p>And then I got a job at Northridge School, I went in and had a look and I loved it. And I think what happened was I also went for an interview,</p>	<p>Significant?</p>	<p>Identity</p>

<p>wanted to go for an interview at another school, but I knew that having visited Northridge, I really liked the school, I really like the headmistress, she was really dynamic and young and funny. And I rang up and I said look I've sent an application in but I haven't heard back, and I spoke to Orla, the Head herself, and she just sort of said oh I can't believe it, we've lost your application, she said were you the girl with the short hair? And I had short hair at the time, and I was like yeah. And she said oh I can't believe, she said, I said to someone I'd really like her to come and work here, and, because we're both in the same area, and she was Head of PE years ago. And so I went to Northridge, I got the job there, which I was really pleased about.</p>	<p>Significant?</p> <p>Impact? Self-confidence?</p> <p>Impact?</p>	<p>Professionalism Identity</p> <p>Identity</p> <p>Identity</p>
<p>And in terms of my professional development, because it was my first teaching job, they were brilliant. So Orla, the Headmistress was an ex PE teacher the four of the deputy teachers were all ex PE, so in terms of sort of the PE support and professional development and things you wanted to get going, they were supportive 100%, anything you asked them for, it was yes. And I didn't realise actually until now how spoilt I was as an NQT because I was given so much scope to do what I wanted, when I wanted. And then Ed, who I also trained with, came and joined the department, and then the Head of Department at the time was also ex Riverside. So we had all been trained in the same way and had all this kind of you know initiative, hard work ethic, we really, really developed the department, so I loved working there. And you know the amount of courses that I did, I was dance, I was dance coordinator, so they gave me extra money for that. Then I became the Sixth Form Enrichment Coordinator, and they gave me money for that.</p>	<p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>Why do you think this was?</p> <p>Was this important?</p> <p>What do you mean by this? What impact did it have? Impact?</p>	<p>Policy Professionalism</p> <p>Policy Professionalism</p> <p>Policy Professionalism Identity</p> <p>Policy Professionalism Identity</p> <p>Policy Professionalism Identity Policy Professionalism Identity</p>

<p>And then I think I applied for Head of Depart, Second in Department, but me and Ed went for it, and Ed got it, which I was a bit gutted by because I did work a lot harder, but I think it was simply down to confidence in interview, and Ed gave a way better interview by miles, because he is that much more confident, and I felt intimidated in the interview because everyone that was interviewing me I knew, so I felt completely, I didn't want to give off a conceited impression in the interview.</p>	<p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>Self-confidence?</p> <p>Self-confidence? Significance of the perception of others?</p>	<p>Identity</p> <p>Identity</p> <p>Identity</p>
<p>And then so they obviously didn't want to lose me I guess at the time, so they gave me lots of other responsibilities to keep me there, and money and things. But having looked at my CV now, over five years, I have about fifteen to twenty courses listed that I did for my professional development, which I loved, I did so much, BTec moderation, BTec assessment, GCSE courses, dance courses, basketball course, FA level 1, Parkour classes, all of those things. And then it got to the point where Ed left, and then the Head of Department left, and it was such a busy department and very, very high expectations in the school, so three years in I was kind of burnt out, not massively, I was just kind of like, I don't think I want to take on Head of Department, because it was a 7 am to a 7, 8 o'clock at night job, and I didn't feel I was there yet, I didn't want to have that life, you know, I was getting in at 8 and leaving at about 5 or 6 which suited me, and I didn't want the pressure of Head of Department.</p>	<p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>Significance? Impact? View of professional development?</p> <p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>Significant? How did that feel? Significant?</p> <p>Significant?</p>	<p>Policy Professionalism Identity</p> <p>Policy Professionalism Identity</p> <p>Identity</p> <p>Policy Professionalism Identity</p> <p>Policy Professionalism Identity</p> <p>Professionalism Identity</p>
<p>So I decided to leave, and I went and got a job abroad for three months, which was, and it was also because I had a boyfriend at the time, and we split up, so it was kind of like, I didn't want to take on Head of Department, I had just sort of split up with someone, so I got this job abroad which sounded amazing, but it wasn't, it was a lot</p>	<p>Significant?</p> <p>Reasons?</p> <p>Disappointing? Significant? Impact?</p>	<p>Identity</p> <p>Professionalism Identity</p> <p>Identity</p>

<p>more difficult than people think.</p>		
<p>So I only lasted three months there and Northridge had me back, so they were really pleased to have me back, and that's one great thing about them, they were really like oh we'll have you back whenever. So I went back in and I more or less ran the department with a new NQT guy, Tom, who came in. So Tom as an NQT was actually more or less pushed into a corner to run the department, as an NQT, so in terms of my view on the school, it changed my view because I thought that was completely unfair. And then when I came back they said oh will you run the department with him? So I was like fine, fair enough, so I took on key stage 4 and BTec for key stage 4 and 5. And I think I was teaching sort of nineteen, twenty hours a week, so the workload was absolutely massive. And I think it was also just, because it was a fairly challenging school, my day, as Head of key stage 4, the behaviour management was really tough, but because I was adamant to follow through on everything you know, I finished my day at say 4, after my tutor role, and then I'd usually have a meeting between 4 and 5, or an extra-curricular club. So come 5, half 5, that was when all my paperwork started, so it was like my evening started, and it was it all incident sheets, I had you know a pile of incident sheets on my desk at the end of the day with key stage 4 problems in lessons and, which would mean I'd have to call the student, call their parents, send letters out, discipline, and go through sort of all that stuff.</p>	<p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>Significant? Impact? Why the need to follow through on things?</p>	<p>Identity</p> <p>Policy Identity</p> <p>Policy</p> <p>Policy Identity Policy</p> <p>Professionalism Identity Policy Professionalism</p> <p>Policy Professionalism Identity</p>
<p>So after about a year and a half, I decided that I'd had enough, and then Tom was, Tom wanted to stay, and I said look I'm thinking I might, I'm going to look elsewhere. And at this stage my friend sort of said look, do you fancy travelling?</p>	<p>Of what? How were you feeling? Significant? Impact?</p>	<p>Professionalism Identity</p>

<p>So I went travelling and came back to Northridge again, and then was when I really decided I had enough of behaviour management, I was just sick and tired of dealing with fights and they had a huge Inclusion Unit, so you know you were, you had kids from Inclusion coming into your PE lessons as and when you liked it. So I think it just became a bit of a cycle by the end of my time there that you were just kind of forced to manage things that you didn't necessarily want to really, you know you just gain an insight from a political perspective that you don't, you start to not like. And ...</p>	<p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>Where did the pressure come from?</p> <p>Impact? What were the politics? Was it policy?</p>	<p>Policy Professionalism Identity</p> <p>Policy Professionalism</p> <p>Policy Professionalism Identity</p>
<p><b>You mean the politics within the school?</b></p>		
<p>Politics within the school and the management, and it was, I just saw how staff were treated from a non-supportive role, and I just felt that you know there's teachers really stressed and really run down. I mean I think I went down to about eight stone at one stage, I was so busy, I was run ragged, and I thought they don't give a damn about anyone sort of thing.</p>	<p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>How did that feel?</p>	<p>Policy Policy Professionalism Identity</p> <p>Policy Professionalism Identity</p>
<p>But then it is that sort of school where the Head, she is fantastic and dynamic, but she relies on this high turnover, so every year she's got about thirty staff leaving, but I think what she relies on is that she needs new, energetic staff that are going to realistically last two to three years, and then get a new influx of energetic people who are willing to do you know the 7 to 7 day.</p>	<p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>Dilemma in the view of the head?</p>	<p>Policy Professionalism Identity</p>
<p>So that's when I decided to go, there was a BTec job going at New College, and at this stage I just thought I wanted to leave Secondary. So I went into Further Education which looking back was probably a little bit drastic, and I, I don't regret it, but at the same time I think I wish I'd made a better option, because now I've completely limited myself because Further Education, the logistical set up, there's</p>	<p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>Significant? Impact?</p>	<p>Professionalism Identity</p> <p>Policy</p>



<p>no support, they don't value PE, they don't value sport, you, I work at three different sites, so my day is spent going from one site to the next and carrying my resources around, and there's no room for development, they don't want to know about development, you know, their idea of development is talking through how to use their website, you know, it's really kind of painful. So in terms of my career professional development, it's completely gone out the window, and I'm currently looking for a job which is stimulating but not to the point where I want to burn out.</p>	<p>Why do you feel that way? Significant? Impact?</p> <p>What kind of job? Why? How have previous experiences impacted upon this?</p>	<p>Professionalism Identity</p> <p>Policy Professionalism Identity</p> <p>Professionalism Identity</p>
<p>So that's kind of like my history of professional development, which is why I'm currently looking for something that's a bit more stimulating and you know ... It made me realise actually my years at Northridge were so, I value them so much more now, but at the same time I couldn't go back based on the intensity of your day was you know, I used to come home and I couldn't speak to anyone, I was so physically and mentally wrecked, I couldn't actually have a phone call, I would just lie on the couch and actually feel quite down, I mean ... So looking back at that, that's the one good thing about my current job is that when I come home you know, it's not a problem calling people or going out for dinner, or having an evening, because my, what I have to face the next day is not really intense, or it's not, I don't fear it. Whereas I used to fear certain days at school, certain lessons, certain students, whereas now I don't have that. So that's kind of been a good learning curve in terms of where I want to go next, I think I've done my stint in behaviour management, and it would just be nice to actually teach and progress in the field of PE.</p>	<p>Motivation?</p> <p>Dilemma: balance between work and life?</p> <p>Significant? Impact?</p> <p>What was the fear?</p> <p>What does that look like in an ideal world?</p>	<p>Professionalism Identity</p> <p>Policy Professionalism Identity</p> <p>Policy Professionalism Identity</p> <p>Professionalism Identity</p> <p>Policy Professionalism Identity</p>

## **Appendix 7: Specific Research Conversation Prompts**

These are the specific conversation prompts that I identified based on listening to and reading conversations 1 and 2 with Ava, Zoe and Nell. I noted the things that they emphasised. In the end I made very little reference to any of my notes, as they raised virtually everything I had noted.

### **Appendix 7.1: Ava Notes for Conversation 2**

#### **Generic**

##### **Process Questions:**

- How have you found the process?
- Have there been any challenges?
- Has this project had any impact upon you?
- Do you have any additional comments/thoughts/questions?

##### **Focus for the Conversation:**

- anything that you would like to add or elaborate on;
- critical/distinctive (significant) incidents/people that emerge through the telling of your story;
- questions that the conversation prompts;
- interesting points that might require further conversation.
- Notes, reflections, research diary?

#### **Ava Specific**

##### **Critical/Distinctive:**

- Family (hard work ethic)
- Choosing PE by chance (suggested by someone (?); love of sport)
- A Level PE teacher (great teacher)
- PGCert PE course (I loved it)

- Mentor and public humiliation in first placement - linked this to self-perception and own work with student teachers
- Northridge School: Head's encouragement into the first post
- Northridge School: Head's professional characteristics (dynamic, young, funny)
- Northridge School: School organisation: processes and structures
- Northridge School: department colleagues and shared values (trained in the same way; hard work ethic; really developed the department)
- Northridge School: Attendance at courses
- Northridge School: Departmental CPD
- Northridge School: Student Teacher Mentoring
- Northridge School: Policy expectations/politics within the school v lack of care for staff
- Northridge School: Pupil behaviour on the role (burn out)
- The University Quality Assurance role
- New College: Lack of subject knowledge and broader knowledge
- New College: Lack of facilities, timetable, money and support
- New College: Lack of shared values (unprofessional behaviour)
- New College: Lack of support for professional development (link tutoring; support for colleagues)
- New College: Impact on colleagues – attempts to support colleagues
- Being managed badly

**Questions:**

- How do you view your levels of personal confidence?
- What is the impact of you feeling frustrated?
- Why do you look for these 'other things' (doing things off your own back (course for FE students), stimulation (Quality Assurance Role), Masters, shared values with colleagues/others)?
- How do you view professional development?

## **Appendix 7.2: Ava Notes for Conversation 3**

### **Generic**

#### **Focus for the Conversation:**

- How have you found the preparation for this conversation?
- Is there anything that you would like to add or amend;
- Are there any questions that it prompts;
- Are there any points or ideas that you feel would benefit from clarification, further exploration and/or consolidation;
- Notes, reflections, research diary?

### **Ava Specific**

#### **Clarification/Further Exploration/Consolidation/Questions:**

- How objective do you think you can be/are about yourself?
- Do you have high expectations of yourself? of others?
- Why were you concerned about your perception of yourself as 'bailing'?
- Why did you compare yourself to Tom?
- Why are you worried about being 'out of touch'?
- Why is it so important for you to 'make the most' of the situation you are in?
- Why do you think you work hard to be positive and proactive for yourself and others (e.g. new role: organisation, motivation of others)?
- Why do you put yourself 'under pressure' about the job applications?
- Why do you think you feel more confident/'more mature' now?
- Are you excited about the new role?
- How do you feel about the challenges (e.g. staff morale, facilities etc)?
- Why does equity/parity matter to you (social justice)?
- What is the impact of self-doubt and not feeling valuable?
- Does the view of others matter to you (support and encouragement from mum/professional support and learning from Ed/flattered by tutor/made to feel competent/not valuable etc)?

- Why do you think you care about others (sensitive to Tom/supportive of Eliza)?
- Why do you care about practice (e.g. get frustrated) and want to improve it?
- How significant are your family in your life?
- Are your levels of personal confidence the same as your levels of professional confidence? Has this changed over time?
- What is your view of professional learning?
- What has been most significant/critical/distinctive in your professional learning?
- What is the impact of others on your professional learning (Ed, Eliza, York, Lee, Claire, Gary, Eleanor, Niall)?
- What is the impact of situations/incidents on your professional learning (e.g. first mentor made you aware of being supportive, incompetent HOD at Northridge, the experience abroad, Deb's change of attitude, cancellation of army day, blame culture)?
- What are your expectations of yourself and your future career?

**Generic Follow Up Questions:**

- Did you train in England? When?
- How would you describe your experiences of being involved in this process?
- How have you found the process?
- Have there been any challenges?
- Has this project had any impact upon you or implications for you?
- Do you have any additional comments/thoughts/questions?
- Any points arising from the process e.g. issues of being comfortable? Location of the interviews?
- How do you feel about issues of confidentiality and anonymity?
- Do you have any suggestions to improve the process or ways things might have been done differently?

- Can you see any aspect this being workable for individual teachers in school as part of CPD processes?
- Why do you think that listening and reading was useful for you (more analytical)?
- Would you like a follow up meeting?
- Would you be willing to talk to me about this work again in the future?

## **Appendix 7.3: Zoe Notes for Conversation 2**

### **Generic**

#### **Process Questions:**

- How have you found the process?
- Have there been any challenges?
- Has this project had any impact upon you?
- Do you have any additional comments/thoughts/questions?

#### **Focus for the Conversation:**

- Anything that you would like to add or elaborate on;
- Critical/distinctive (significant) incidents/people that emerge through the telling of your story;
- Questions that the conversation prompts;
- Interesting points that might require further conversation.
- Notes, reflections, research diary?

### **Zoe Specific**

#### **Critical/Distinctive:**

- Impact of Liam in terms of the placement and in terms of the job.
- Why did Treetops feel like a 'good place to be' (Specialist Status?)
- How did you feel about taking on extra responsibility as an NQT?
- Impact of feeling Treetops 'starting to turn around'?
- Why did you take the SS Co (School Sport Coordinator) role if you weren't 'keen on it'?
- Was there any impact for you in not enjoying the SS Co role?
- Why did you want to return to Treetops?
- How did you feel about the Head's offer of support via a sabbatical?
- Did the trip have any impact upon you professionally?
- Why were you so keen to get back to work?
- How did you feel about getting the T&L role and the initiatives you put in place?

- Why the extra study?
- Did the extra money make any difference to your feelings about the extra work?
- How do you feel about your PSHE work being used as a model?
- Why did you worry about not getting reappointed to the T&L role?
- Why were you excited about the diploma? Why was it going to be good for you?
- How did you feel when the Head stopped it?
- How do you feel about the local network task? Why do you enjoy being taken out of your 'comfort zone'?
- You talk about learning from other schools – is learning important? Why?
- Why did you 'jump at the chance' of mentoring?
- Is the continued involvement with The University important to you? Why?
- Why did the move when you were young do you good?
- Why was being good at sport your 'saving grace' at school?
- Why was Ernie an inspiration?
- Impact of living with a PE teacher?
- Why did you give up time to coach basketball?
- Impact of a year out before starting at The University?
- Why was teaching a shock to the system? Why were peers 'nice' initially?
- What was good about Lewis?
- Why was Field School so good?
- What was the impact of Redfern School and the 'horrendous year'?
- What made you carry on after meeting with Rob?

**Questions:**

- Source of reflexivity (SSCo/HOY roles not right for you etc)?
- Source of your confidence (knowing that you wanted to tech PE/taking on roles etc)?



- Why do you take on other things (SSCo, T&L role, mentoring, University Quality Assurance, Masters)?
- How do you view professional development?
- Why do you think you felt nervous about the first conversation?
- What was your concern about 'not covering enough'?

## **Appendix 7.4: Zoe Notes for Conversation 3**

### **Generic**

#### **Focus for the Conversation:**

- How have you found the preparation for this conversation?
- Is there anything that you would like to add or amend;
- Are there any questions that it prompts;
- Are there any points or ideas that you feel would benefit from clarification, further exploration and/or consolidation;
- How do you feel this time about 'getting it right' for me?
- Notes, reflections, research diary?

### **Zoe Specific**

#### **Clarification/Further Exploration/Consolidation/Questions:**

- How objective do you think you can be/are about yourself?
- Do you have high expectations of yourself? of others?
- Why were you surprised and pleased by how much you had done?
- What reflections did you have on your feelings about the observation process?
- How did the follow up observation go? Impact?
- How does feeling undervalued (e.g. part time role, no responsibility; brick wall) impact upon you?
- How important is autonomy and a sense of achievement to you?
- Why do you need 'more' than teaching, which you 'love'?
- Why do you care about practice and want to improve it?
- How important is your CV? Why?
- Why are people so significant? (e.g. peers on the course, staff at Treetops)?
- What do you value in people (e.g. Matt, Lewis, Rob and Yvette)
- Why does the view of others matter to you (e.g. Ernie and the basketball coaching; Lewis and sharing practice; Matt and wanting to let him down

and his request for a view on his work; colleague undergoing lesson observation)?

- Is this linked to the competitive trait and how does it relate to bettering the self?
- Do you still make use of your vision of what a good PE teacher and department looks like?
- If so, how? (e.g. the department getting stronger 'was brilliant').
- How significant are your family in your professional life (e.g. Will; brother)?
- How do you reconcile the balance between your positive family life and the feeling of regression in your professional life (e.g. feeling less ambitious)?
- Do you make most decisions by yourself or do you tend to discuss them?
- How do you feel now about the PhD? Progress towards a place at The University?
- Have you had any more thoughts about the topic for your PhD?
- Reflections on your thoughts about CPD (e.g. school processes; personal approach taken)?
- What is your view of professional learning?
- What has been most significant/critical/distinctive in your professional learning?
- What is the impact of others on your professional learning (Lewis, Liam, Nat, Matt, Will)?
- What is the impact of situations/incidents on your professional learning (e.g. early promotion; roles such as SSCo, T&L role; etc)?
- How does your view of the way in which teaching might change impact upon how you feel about it?
- What are your expectations of yourself and your future career?

**Generic Follow Up Questions:**

- Did you train in England? When?

- How would you describe your experiences of being involved in this process?
- How have you found the process?
- Have there been any challenges?
- Has this project had any impact upon you or implications for you?
- Do you have any additional comments/thoughts/questions?
- Any points arising from the process e.g. issues of being comfortable?  
Location of the interviews?
- How do you feel about issues of confidentiality and anonymity?
- Do you have any suggestions to improve the process or ways things might have been done differently?
- Can you see any aspect this being workable for individual teachers in school as part of CPD processes?
- Why do you think that listening and reading was useful for you (more analytical)?
- Would you like a follow up meeting?
- Would you be willing to talk to me about this work again in the future?

## **Appendix 7.5: Nell Notes for Conversation 2**

### **Generic**

#### **Process Questions:**

- How have you found the process?
- Have there been any challenges?
- Has this project had any impact upon you?
- Do you have any additional comments/thoughts/questions?

#### **Focus for the Conversation:**

- Anything that you would like to add or elaborate on;
- Critical/distinctive (significant) incidents/people that emerge through the telling of your story;
- Questions that the conversation prompts;
- Interesting points that might require further conversation.
- Notes, reflections, research diary?

### **Nell Specific**

#### **Critical/Distinctive:**

- What is the impact of teachers that you liked and aspired to be like?
- What is the impact of wanting to teach but not being sure she was right for it?
- What is the impact of your university experience?
- What is the impact of inferiority: 'not feeling good' compared to others?
- What is the impact of family resistance to career choice?
- What is the impact of not feeling like the 'strongest teacher' post-University?
- What is the impact of feeling like there is more to learn?
- What is the impact of feeling 'crap'?
- What is the impact of Eden in relation to dance?
- What is the impact of Eden in relation to HOY role?
- What is the impact of the travelling/working abroad experiences?

- What is the impact of supply?
- What is the impact of getting the Yardley job?
- What is the impact of the 'best year of teaching'?
- What is the impact of watching poor departmental management?
- What is the impact of the HOD role?
- What is the impact of the head?
- What is the impact of the issue of own children?
- What is the impact of MA?
- What is the impact of work with The University?
- What is the impact of support for school based ITE experience?
- What is the impact of the Leadership course (e.g. link to SMT)?
- What is the impact of the Professional Tutor role?
- What is the impact of the difficult aspects of the role (e.g. observation grading; capability processes)?
- What is the impact of 'feeling different' to other department colleagues?
- What is the impact of 'making mistakes'?
- What is the impact of Natalie and Anita?
- What is the impact of being a governor (e.g. appointing the head)?
- What is the impact of 'strategic manoeuvres' and positioning yourself for the future (e.g. AHT)?
- What is the impact of the complexity of the roles?
- What is the impact of feeling superfluous?
- What is the impact of recognising how much you have done?

**Questions:**

- Why do you say 'yes' and take on other things/opportunities (e.g. the support role)?
- How do tough professional things 'make you stronger'?
- Have there been any other critical or distinctive people (e.g. Helen and Tina)?
- What is the impact of your levels of personal confidence?
- Why do you perceive yourself as a fraud?

- How do you manage your feelings about 'being good enough'?
- How do you view professional development?

## **Appendix 7.6: Nell Notes for Conversation 3**

### **Generic**

#### **Focus for the Conversation:**

- How have you found the preparation for this conversation?
- Is there anything that you would like to add or amend;
- Are there any questions that it prompts;
- Are there any points or ideas that you feel would benefit from clarification, further exploration and/or consolidation;
- Notes, reflections, research diary?

### **Nell Specific**

#### **Clarification/Further Exploration/Consolidation/Questions:**

- How objective do you think you can be/are about yourself?
- Why were you so critical of yourself in the first listening of the first conversation?
- Do you have high expectations of yourself? of others? How does that 'play out'? (motivation; personality; Knowing who you are; what you expect of yourself)
- Does that result in stress 'capable of distressing myself'?
- Has the bullying and the issue of 'being boring' affected you ('stayed with me')?
- Does the view of others matter to you ('people pleasing'; e.g. colleagues)?
- Did the 'wrongness' at Eden impact upon you?
- Impact of the Head of Year role at Eden?
- Impact of not being able to affect change with/for Yul and Karl?
- Impact of the life/work balance and spending 'more time with colleagues' (job in a supermarket)?
- Impact of on-going health issue and not having moved onto another a school as quickly?



- Impact of the parental complaint ('the first time anyone has ever complained and will complain about me')?
- Impact of watching poor lessons?
- Impact of the relationships and responsibilities with staff in other schools (e.g. competence)?
- Are your levels of personal confidence the same as your levels of professional confidence? Has this changed over time?
- Why do you think you feel more confident now?
- What is the impact of always feeling as though there is more to learn?
- How do you feel about what you have accomplished?
- What is your view of professional learning?
- What has been most significant/critical/distinctive in your professional learning?
- What is the impact of others on your professional learning (teachers at school; Eden staff; Yul/Karl; Paul; Natalie/Anita; Adele)?
- What is the impact of situations/incidents on your professional learning (e.g. Eden; watching the department being run 'badly'; not being given the AHT role; travelling)?
- What are your expectations of yourself and your future career?

**Generic Follow Up Questions:**

- Did you train in England? When?
- How would you describe your experiences of being involved in this process?
- How have you found the process?
- Have there been any challenges?
- Has this project had any impact upon you or implications for you?
- Has it done what you hoped?
- Do you have any additional comments/thoughts/questions?
- Any points arising from the process e.g. issues of being comfortable?  
Location of the interviews?
- How do you feel about issues of confidentiality and anonymity?

- Do you have any suggestions to improve the process or ways things might have been done differently?
- Can you see any aspect this being workable for individual teachers in school as part of CPD processes?
- Why do you think that listening and reading was useful for you?
- Would you like a follow up meeting?
- Would you be willing to talk to me about this work again in the future?

## Appendix 8: Significant Influences in the Narratives

This table provides an overview of the references to significant influences made by Ava, Zoe and Nell. It provides a summary to indicate the key similarities and differences in the significant influences evident in the narratives. The '√' symbol indicates where a factor was referred to by the participants during the process of the research conversations.

Significant Factors	Ava	Zoe	Nell
Family: extended	√		
Family: parents	√	√	√
Family: siblings	√	√	√
Friends	√	√	√
Hard-work ethic	√	√	√
High expectations: others	√	√	√
High expectations: self	√	√	√
Lesson observation: others	√	√	√
Lesson observation: self	√	√	√
Previous posts: non-school	√		√
School: applying for/securing posts	√	√	√
School: colleagues	√	√	√
School: 'continuing professional development'	√	√	√
School: current post	√	√	√
School: facilities and resources	√	√	√
School: performance management	√	√	√
School: previous posts	√	√	√
School: processes and organisation	√	√	√
School: promotion	√	√	√
School: pupils	√	√	√
School: senior leaders	√	√	√
School: ticking boxes	√	√	√
Self: academic study	√	√	√

Self: competitive		√	√
Self: confidence	√	√	√
Self: emotional well-being	√		√
Self: hard work	√	√	√
Self: independent	√	√	√
Self: successful	√	√	√
Self: seeking challenge	√	√	√
Self: support by teacher colleagues	√	√	√
Self: support for teacher colleagues	√	√	√
Self: travelling	√	√	√
Self: uncertainty	√	√	√
Self: feeling valued/praise	√	√	√
University/ITE: ITE course	√	√	√
University/ITE: link tutoring	√	√	√
University/ITE: mentors	√	√	
University/ITE: mentoring	√	√	√
University/ITE: schools	√	√	
University/ITE: tutors	√	√	

## Appendix 9: Extract of Ava's Transcript (Conversation 2)

**Project:** Professional Learning: narratives of experience

**Code:** Ava 2

**Interviewer:** Anne Chappell

**Transcriber:** JP

**Interview Length:** 1 hour and 56 minutes

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(talking about listening to their voices on recording)

**So what I just wanted to just start by asking you, I haven't even checked whether you're happy to have it recorded because I assume that you are ...**

That's fine.

**... is how you found the process of the conversation last time, and any thoughts about that, and then the process of kind of going through the document and listening to it, or however you chose to do it, and how that worked and how you found it.**

I found it, when, what I did was I read it first, so I did it on if you like my train journeys, because I was in Ireland this weekend, and then I had the interview yesterday ...

**Of course, of course.**

... so I've been trying to sort of do it, I haven't really had a sort of set time to do it all in one block. So I read it on the train and then whenever I read it I just sort of made some notes as I went along. Then when I listened, I just found when I listened to it, it allowed me to be a bit more thoughtful and reflective, as opposed to just going through a document and reading words, I found it, I couldn't ref, how can I say it, I couldn't, I wasn't as emotionally responsive, does that make sense?

**Mm mm.**

Whereas when I was, with listening to myself I, it allowed me to kind of reflect in a more thoughtful process than it did on paper.

**Mm OK.**

That's what I found personally. And it kind of also reinforced some of my thoughts, listening to it reinforced some thoughts that I didn't have when doing it on paper, because I suppose on paper it's more of a task isn't it,

like a marking type task, whereas when listening to it, having read it first, it actually allowed me to sort, sort of reflect and think about things from more of an analytical point of view. So there's things that have come up even in the past couple of weeks at work, so a couple of things like I heard back from two other applications I had gone for, and that my applications were not successful. And then I was put in the position, as I said before, to go for a leadership job at work. So having listened to it before I knew I'd got this job today, because I only found out today, I can't, I was, I was on a bit of a downer really because you know when you, I think it was, I think I got two or three, so all my applications, I think I've put in about six or maybe seven, two of which I've had interviews for – one I didn't get, one was not for me and he clearly identified that, and then the other four I got, my applications weren't successful. So then that made me over the past couple of weeks start to question my ability to do the job that I've been applying for, it's made me question whether I'm slightly out of touch, it's made me question what are the factors that have determined my applications to be unsuccessful? Is it the fact that I'm now in further education? Is it the fact that I'm doing BTec and I'm non contact with PE lessons? I don't know. And you know a couple of people were really sweet in their response, because I think one head said we really appreciate the amount of effort that went into your application, because we're aware of how, you know, how time consuming the process is, so I thought that was really sweet, but it's just tough sometimes when you like to know why. So I have kind of had a bit of a doubtful couple of weeks, and so getting the leadership job today, I went for the interview yesterday, which was a really bizarre interview, I, well any interview you just assume is going to be a formal discussions, but there were four tasks set, one was timetabling, one was a list of events that happen in the space of fifteen minutes in the morning and how you would prioritise them, and then one was handwriting a development plan for self-assessment on a course. And the fourth one was actually me sitting me at a table giving a, doing role play, giving feedback to a member of staff who had received an inadequate lesson feedback observation sheet, with four deputies literally sitting next to me, watching me. So, and then there was no formal discussion, it was just those tasks, and they just did it on a point basis. So eleven people went for it and three got interviews. So I felt a bit better, and I, you know I've already been thinking about things that I could do, but I can also foresee the brick walls that I'm going to be up against in the institute I'm in, which are enormous.

So yeah, I've had a, quite a reflective emotional career thought over the past couple of weeks really. So I've gone from feeling quite down to feeling OK again, because I got this role. But ultimately it's not necessarily where I want to be, but I'm just trying to make the most of the situation that I'm in at the moment. And that also is something that came up in my reflection on my career, in that I think I kind of questioned, when things were at a stage that I didn't like, I baled a lot, and that's what I've noticed in terms of when I got sick of Northridge School for example, and I didn't want to be head of department, I went to abroad. Lucky they had me back. And then when you know I hit a wall again, I just applied for

another job in further education, and now that things haven't been going well, I want out again. So I don't know, I don't know how, that's kind of made me think about things, and when I compared it to Tom who was in the department, who was an NQT and basically came in and forced to run the department ...

**That's the guy you worked with isn't it, and supported?**

Worked with, and in terms of sort of looking at how he dealt with the situation he was in, whereas if I were in his position, I would quite happily have turned around and said oh, I'd have left, bugger them. But he didn't, and it's made me question my resilience to situations in that sometimes, I think at the moment I'm really trying to consciously make an effort to change my mind-set to the situation I'm in, because effectively that is what determines how you're feeling. So what I'm going to try and do is really kind of take this role and change my mind-set to it. And I think I'm going to give it a year, and not bale because I'm just trying to make the most of what I think is not a great situation, but I'm in it and why not just try and do well in the situation I'm in.

**So has this been sort of negatively emotional do you think?**

Ehm ...

**Has this come at the wrong time, is this ...?**

No, not at all, I think it's made me just think about where I've been, my reactions to certain situations, how, if I'm not happy with something I want to, well I guess I want out. I mean I don't think it's as bad as some people are, you know, I did stay there for four to five years, but you know my whole mind-set in my current job has been just constantly looking at other options. So I'm going to try and, having reflected on that and seen that as a common theme in my mind-set, I'm going to try and change it for a little while, try and make the most of it. So I think the, it's also, I think the reason that my mind-set is like that is because the surrounding staff that I work with is als, their mind-set is very similar as well, but I think their mind-set is as a result of non effective management and them not feeling valued. So I'm hopefully going to try and implement things that I think will make them feel a bit more motivated as a staff team ...

**You won't be bringing in DVDs of Lost then?**

No.

**Sort of sit and watch you watching them in the summer!**

No, not at all, but just things that should be in place in terms of you know calendars, a calendar at the start of the year, we're not going to have a meeting every eight weeks, we're going to have a meeting every four weeks, because there's lots that could be done, but it's not getting done,

but it's not getting done because there's no uniform approach, so it's very, you know, everyone's singing from a different book. So hopefully, I don't know how it's going to be received, but I'm hoping that if I can sort of see, hopefully motivate staff a bit more and maybe, maybe I can just sort of take the challenge from a people management point of view and work on that, from a professional perspective. So having people managed a PE department before, I actually found that quite difficult, and I think I was younger, I was twenty five, twenty six, so managing friends was quite difficult. Whereas now it's, I think I'm a bit more mature in terms of how to deal with things, I also think the Riverside work in terms of lesson observation feedback, I think there's a lot of value in that that I can carry over. So I'm going to approach it, well you know I'm going to try and hit it on the head and change my mind-set to it. So no I don't, I don't think it's been negative, I think it's been reflective, without a doubt. I think the negative has come from job application knock backs and me questioning my ability, and then as a result of that, looking at this and thinking well I have done a lot, but clearly when someone's looked at my application there's something that's not there. But again I don't know if I'm putting myself under pressure, because that is the situation at the moment, is that there's at least sort of twenty to forty applicants per job, and there's not as many jobs out there as there were sort of a couple of years ago. So I don't know if I'm putting myself under pressure in that way. Because people have said oh my God I've applied for about fifty jobs and not got one reply, so ...

**Yeah, I mean we had a lot of students in the summer who normally would have got jobs that didn't, and it was because there weren't enough jobs out there in the market. I think the other thing is you never know what they're looking for, and they look at Northridge School, that might be it ...**

Absolutely, yeah.

**... because they might have all kinds of lovely girls who play lacrosse from, you know I don't wish to stereotype, but they might be looking for a lacrosse player who happens to have either come from or worked in you know said fluffy private girls school in Godalming or, do you know what I mean?**

Completely.

**And I think you can never know, which is what I always say to the students, and inevitably if you've been knocked back for it then actually ultimately you should be grateful, not in any ridiculous way, but it will not have been the right thing, because there's something there that doesn't match.**

Oh absolutely.



**And you'd have probably wasted all the emotional energy going down there for an interview, and decided it wasn't what you wanted anyway.**

Probably.

**Potentially. So, but it's good isn't it that you've got this new one?**

Yes, no I am, I'm pleased. It's, already I'm, you know even things, like I've done a list of things that I need to talk to my line manager about tomorrow. Because the problem with the role, and a common thing where I work is nothing is definitive, so therefore what is put on you is put on you and you don't have a choice. So that's, I want to sit down with my line manager tomorrow, because what I don't want is this to basically be a stitch up, and for me to be someone's you know servant if you like. Because the idea is that my line manager has got too much on, and he needs somebody to do the lesson observations, to do the ...

**The day to day stuff.**

... support the self-assessment writing, to, what was the other thing, I have to, I'm now going to head the internal verification process. But the problem is is that I'm now not just managing sports science, I'm managing forensics, but in sports science and forensics not only do you have BTEC level 2 and level 3 courses, you also have foundation degrees that will be run in conjunction with external universities. And then we've also got a foundation degree with a football club, that has been up and running. So there's also lots of problems with those. So apparently I'm, I have to sort of be involved in that as well, so I've got no experience of foundation degree, I've got no experience of liaising with other universities, so that will be all learning for me. But the positive is I really get on with all the staff I work with and you know their forensics have said to me, God we hope you get it, which I think is a really good thing. So I don't know, I'm just hoping that I can implement, you know if someone said to me, oh I'm just going to say no if people ask me to do things, if they new leader asks me to do things, and I said well most people only say no when something's unfair, so I said I say no to things if I feel that I've been hard done by, because somebody else has got less to do than me. That's when I say no. Whereas you know if things, as far as I'm concerned, we set up from the start on an equal field, and you all have the same responsibility, and everyone has an equal amount of paperwork, and an equal amount of lessons in one building to the other building, then I would imagine, if the load is shared equally, then you might not say no. And it's just doing what's already being done, but from my perspective, organising it better. So that's my ...

**Sorry I'm just, yes it is recording.**

So that's, yeah, so I mean I'm already recognising that I'm looking forward to things that I could potentially do, but I'm also very conscious of

where I work and the frustrations that people go through in trying to implement things and trying to create things and trying to motivate people, motivate students and you just get no, no, no and there's no money. So I'm just being prepared to do what I can in a situation that I think won't be great as it is. I mean we've already found that we don't have a location for our gym next year, and we don't have a sports hall. So our sports hall is closing down, and the gym, they can't afford the rent any more, and where we were going to move to, that's not come through. So you know the logistics of sorting out the timetables and sorting out staff modules, I can't do any of that until we know where we're going, and knowing where I work, that will be very last minute, so I'm prepared for a little work over the summer holidays.

**If you do foundation degrees with other places, is there any way that you can set up some sort of reciprocal agreement with them where you can use some of their facilities for example?**

I think that could be a possibility, but again, because I don't know anything at the moment, I don't know, I don't, if that is the case and that hasn't been done or explored already, then I will literally put my head through a window, you know. There's probably a common sense comeback on that but again it's ...

**You never know, because universities have got their own strange kind of thoughts and all the rest of it. So the only other thing about the process so far, and in terms of the conversation last time and what's happened in between, is there anything else that you wanted to sort of say about that? Is there any other sort of comment or thought or questions that you had of me about the process? We'll get on to talking about the detail, but I just wondered if there was anything, because obviously I want you to feel confident that you understand what I'm doing.**

No I don't think so, I mean it's pretty straightforward just to read it and listen to it. I found that reading it first and then listening to it was a good way to do it rather than the other way round.

**And when you listened to it, did you make notes after you'd listened to it?**

No, I made the notes on the paper. Listening to it I just thought, it made me think, because I kind of semi knew what was on there having read it.

**Of course.**

It just allowed me to reflect without being conscious of reading and making notes on a piece of paper.

**Just out of interest, slightly off the point, but you just said about remembering, because you read it first, did you have a fairly good**

**recollection of what you'd said? So before you came to read it, could you kind of remember what you'd said or ...?**

No, not at all.

**That's interesting, I ask you that because of what I said before we started recording, which is, no I said it at the start, the reason I started recording was because I couldn't always remember what I'd said, and I knew I was saying things that I could write down, but I was forgetting what they were.**

Absolutely.

**So it's quite interesting to you know record yourself.**

No definitely, even, my boyfriend asked me what did we talk about, and I was like oh we touched on that and we touched on that, but nothing, like you say, yeah, absolutely, interesting.

**So in terms of today then, there were four things which were anything you wanted to add or elaborate on, critical and distinctive/significant incidents or people, so people that have had an impact, situations that have had an impact, things that you feel have had an impact on how you do, feel, engage with, have experienced your sort of professional work, any conversations that came up from it and any interesting points that you think we should talk about. So you've already mentioned about you know something that you'd picked up was that you think you bale, which sounded to me like a negative.**

Mm.

**That's interesting because baling would mean you would never have gone back to Northridge School and yet you did go back twice.**

Yeah I suppose so, yeah, I guess so.

**So I mean just to kind of level that in terms of having heard you say it, that you said it as if it was almost a criticism of yourself and that you need to change your mind-set, but actually my reaction was that you went back to Northridge School, so yeah, OK, you went off abroad but who knows that that wasn't, I mean you know was it more to do with the fact that you'd just broken up with somebody and that was the final straw on top of working very hard, and do you know what I'm up for a change? Or was it that you actually bailed out on the school? If it had been, would you have gone back?**

That's true, yeah, that's true. I suppose from my professional perspective I did bail on the school. Yeah. But I did go when I wasn't happy, so yeah. I don't know really.

**But then that's not unusual either is it, I mean many people, I've packed up jobs when I've kind of had enough, need to do something else, this is too frustrating, this is too difficult, or actually do you know what I want to do something different here, this is not right.**

Absolutely, I think, I think had I not got the job at work today, I think I would have 100% be gone by September, even if it meant taking a, you know a non managerial role, it would have just been, I think that would have been a bit of a nail in the coffin. And just the past couple of weeks where I've doubted myself quite a bit, not massively, but just not felt very valuable, is that the right word? Not felt very competent? Whereas now I kind of feel a little bit, OK, well at least they recognise that I'm good at something, or want me to be a leader for some, for a particular reason. So it's ...

**So it's been really I mean interesting, it's quite a critical and distinctive moment for you in the place you're in at the moment isn't it?**

Mm, yes, definitely, well it was a make or break. Had I not gone for it, because I really wasn't going to go for it ...

**I know you said that!**

... which is interesting. So I don't know. So this could be a positive turning point really, hopefully. Well it's good experience you know, it's, there's not much else out there, so I'm making the most of not the greatest situation, but it's fine if I could just as I say consciously change my mind-set and maybe just apply, or do the best I can in the situation I'm in. So no I'm pleased, yeah. And already, like I say, it's not often that I sit on the train and think about things about work, I often sit on the train and think about other things, everything else but work, whereas today I'm actually coming up with ideas, innovations, things that I think sh, could be changed, thinking about you know, speaking to staff on a one to one basis, and seeing how I go with some things that I think could work in terms of changing their mind-set. I mean it's not, nothing's going to

happen that quickly, I know that, but just simple things, you know. And maybe bringing back to the deputy principal that generally the staff in the department I would say are, there's about 30% of them feel motivated to teach here, and you know, and ways that I think we might be able to change that and keep a loyal staff team. Because you know the system which is allowing people to just come in off industry and teach off the street, they're just overloaded. And a lot of them that are very, very good in their field are not being allowed to improve in their field, they're being given modules that they don't, that's not their field to teach. So who wants to teach something that's not in their field and they're not motivated and interested? I'm teaching physiology at the moment because I was forced to, and I hate it, I've got to go in early tomorrow to prepare a lesson or read up on something I have no idea about, but I've got to make sure that I'm teaching at 2 o'clock, and I've got to pretend I know what I'm talking about. And that doesn't motivate me. Whereas if I'm teaching on, if I were teaching for example coaching or good ways to structure a PE lesson, I would be way more motivated. So that's, if I'm feeling like that, then the whole staff team are feeling like that. So I think those sorts of issues have to be addressed. So already I'm thinking about, I suppose it's helping staff, I quite like that idea. And Niall, my boyfriend, has pointed that out to me before, he said you're really good at helping the staff, so if they're being observed, I'd go out of my way to help them with their observations, with their lesson plans, with their schemes of work, because no one else does. And I can't believe it doesn't happen. So hopefully, you know, that's motivating me that I can hopefully help other teachers. So I don't know. And you know word on the street is that 'a famous politician' might be coming soon at some point (whispers). That's confidential as well, I don't think anyone's supposed to know that!

**...don't repeat it! LAUGHS OK cool. So tell me what was critical and distinctive? What jumped out? What, you know, what sorts of things did you pick up that ...?**

There's not loads but I picked up on a couple of things. In terms of people that were significant I think that I didn't really think about when speaking, was my third year tutor at University. And there was a particular event that also pushed me into being more confident in going into teaching, and that was in my third year he asked me to go and lecture in their socio-cultural module. And I can't remember why I couldn't, I think I might have been working, so I, and financially I couldn't do it. So that, for me was a really huge motivator, because he is considered to be a very, you know he's very well thought of in sports science, and he's a great teacher, a really good tutor and I absolutely adored, you know he gave me feedback whenever I needed it, and I was a good student in terms of I always went to him prior to you know, I'd go and get my work pre-marked. So when he asked me to do that above lots of other people that I would assumed he would have asked first, especially people from the cricket club, because he was a cricketer, and also a friend of mine, confidential, who's actually a very good friend of mine now, was the head of the student union, and I know that when she

found that out, she was really jealous, because she expected to have been asked before me. So the fact that she hadn't, I felt very motivated by that and really flattered. So he really, he was quite significant in me feeling very motivated in my final year. And when I received my graduation certificate, he, I just said oh thanks so much, you did so much for me, and he said I didn't do anything, he said you know you did everything. So I suppose from that point of view he really inspired me and made me feel like I was actually competent if you like.

**Was that the point at which you were still umming and aahing about the PGCert or PGCE sorry as it was?**

I think it might have been. No I think I would have applied for it anyway, because that would have been around the time of my dissertation, so I think I naturally would have gone through the interview process, so I did, I'm assuming it may have linked ...

**Because you said, when we were talking before, that you weren't sure about doing your PGCE but you did it and I just wondered what, if there was anything that had made that decision for you. Because obviously you talked about, the fact that you did PE and got into PE in the first place was by accident, but then happened to have a really good teacher at A Level.**

Yeah.

**So I guess you know, I just wondered really what that chain was like and whether that ...?**

In terms of at University or ...?

**Well the connection between it all really, I should let you talk first and then react to this stuff, I'm sorry.**

No, I know, in terms of inspirational people, yeah, at A Level it would have been my teacher, he was fantastic, and again, because I did well, and I suppose I got, I received positive feedback from doing well, it motivated me to go in to do sports science. And then my University tutor reinforced in that I did well and asking me to teach. And I think there is, I don't know how it linked, but another tutor who was involved with the PGCE, I think really wanted me on the PGCE, hence, so I ... I think what had happened is that I wasn't sure whether I wanted to do it or not, but then I think all these things started to happen that made me feel like I wanted to do it more, and then that was when I found out that I wasn't able to do it that year because they didn't run the course.

**Yeah, yeah.**

So, and then that in conjunction with having the worst job in the world in a carpet company, I thought I was going to slit my wrists at that job, so ...

**Sounds like my check out job that I had!**

Oh wow! So I was like oh my God. Check out I don't mind, well no I do mind, but yeah, because I worked in a supermarket, and I can't do anything monotonous, whereas in the supermarket I had the choice between check out or just putting things on the shelves, and I was like oh I'll put things on the shelves, because I could just determine my own ...

**I had to put things in the fridges, so your hands were sore all day.**

Oh my God.

**So I got really excited when I got promoted and my friend called me check out chick, because I got promoted to check out, and the reason that she didn't was because she was going off to do a summer camp, and that was the whole standing joke was that I got promoted and I was really important because I'd been taken off the fridges! We used to have to go between the two. Anyway, it was the point at which they ...**

Supermarket politics!

**It was the point at which they trained us, she and I had never met before, and we started on the same day and we were just Christmas staff, and we had to sit in the training session where they trained us how to stack stuff on the fridges. And in summary we spent two days learning that the stuff with the oldest date came to the front, and the stuff with the new date went at the back, and we basically spent two days on that. And when we kind of both looked at each other to work out how this was going, and kind of realised that we had an affinity that this was utterly ridiculous, we kind of got along famously ever after that. But my mum said to me, if I have to hear you say one more day that you don't want to go to work, I'm going to have to kill you! She wouldn't have said kill, but equivalent. And it was the same thing, just that ...**

Absolutely.

**I couldn't do it.**

No.

**And the further I got into my training, and the more I was spending time in the school during term time, the harder it was to go home and do that job.**

Oh my God, I think it was more because it was sedentary for me, sitting at a desk in front of a computer is not for me. I enjoyed working in the pub a lot more, because I was moving, I was serving, I was socially

interacting, and it killed me. So that was when, I suppose that was the final realisation that I cannot wait to go and do this PGCE. Yeah that was awful.

**Sorry I interrupted you.**

Oh God don't be silly.

**No, but my intention is to try and make you go through the things that were significant for you before I ...**

No but that was, because that's what I put down in here, I put down working in a carpet company highlighted I hated office work and missed studying. So me and my friend Elle, because we didn't want to leave university, we decided to co rent a flat on our credit cards, as you do, and I was working in a carpet company on a very low wage, and she was working in care work home, but trying to crack radio at the same time. And we both realised very quickly how wrong we were to have moved into a flat and pay rent on our credit cards, and both found ourselves in jobs ... We would come home every night, and it was actually quite comical, it was like what did you do today? Oh I learnt the difference between plain carpet loop pile and non plain carpet loop pile. I learnt how carpet was made. And my boss actually thinks that I cared. And she spoke at me, it was, I was saying you know the office, Ricky Gervais, that's exactly what it was like. So, and then Elle basically worked with adults with special needs all day, which was fine, obviously I'm not saying that that's a bad job, but in terms of a career perspective, it wasn't what she wanted to do, you know, she'd come home and say people had dribbled on her all day and it just wasn't her thing.

**No absolutely.**

And you're sold, well not sold, but you come out with this idea out of university, as all students do, that right I have a degree, so therefore I should be entitled to a great job. And then about four months later you're like that hasn't happened yet. And then a year later you're like it still hasn't happened yet. So this big kind of realisation, that all students have coming out of university, soon hit home. Then, what was that about? Yeah, in terms of me loving my PGCE, I think I loved the PGCE because what I found, one of my strengths is that I'm very well organised from a paperwork perspective, so I kind of got some sad thrill out of being well organised ...

**LAUGHS**

... in this immense overload of paperwork and information. So that was one area I was very good at, but in conjunction with my classroom management. I think when I did the PGCE, that was one thing that I didn't really have to fight against, I think there was a couple of lessons when I first teaching, obviously my classroom management wasn't



fantastic, but it developed really quickly, and I think that was a result of my play work and being able to put myself on a level with inner London kids and speak to them on a level and not go in with a power trip approach. So that seemed to work well, which is why that came up in terms of me enjoying my PGCE. And I've also put down here in terms of a reflective way, is that I think in terms of being organised and a good leader, that's very similar traits to my mum. So my mum is meticulously organised, she's meticulously clean, she's meticulous about the order of the cupboards, about any work she has. And in terms of being a leader, she's always been a leader in terms of her work and how she is with her friends. So I guess I've recognised why I like those things, could be a result of being a common trait from my mum, and me being like my mum. So I thought that was quite interesting, I think.

### **Mm ... LAUGHS**

And then a little bit along, talking about my second placement, oh that was it, the link tutor visits. Ed came up, in that I think Ed played quite a significant in me getting motivated later on, because I kind of lost the passion if you like for a little while, after travelling, and I felt a bit lost.

### **Was that when you went back to Northridge School and you didn't kind of know what to do?**

Yes, and I used to ring Ed up for advice, and I used to say you know this and this has happened, and he'd be like, Ava you just need to get out, get out of Northridge School, stop going back there, you're not going to develop as a teacher. Which is also another reflection I have at the moment in terms of my development as a PE teacher has been, has stopped since Northridge School, and that's also one factor that I need to reflect on at the moment is that I'm taking a managerial role, meaning that my PE teaching effectively is going to stop over the next sort of course but this is where it's taking me off I guess. What did I put later on? Passion for quality ... Yeah, in terms of Ed, I found him quite inspiring in terms of the passion, in terms of PE teaching, when working with Ed, I found him really inspirational in terms of the quality of his PE teaching and coaching. So in terms of we always used to have coaching INSETs, so I used to always go and observe his football lessons, and really learn that much off him, like he was so inspirational, he'd say right I've done this with this, if you do this with basketball, and likewise he used to come and watch my dance lessons. And I think we had a really good relationship from a professional perspective, and we really enjoyed quality teaching and we really, you know we never went in with an attitude, well we did, I lie, we went in with an attitude of let's just get them to play football today, if we were hungover and we'd been out on a staff night, which was a bit naughty. But it was rare that that ever happened. Whereas I know PE departments where that's pretty much the thing of most days, just get them doing that, just get them kicking the ball, just get them playing, which is fine you know, especially if you've got an awful behaviour issue with a year 11 group. Totally. If the only thing to keep

them engaged is to kick a ball and play eleven –v- eleven, then fine, because it is, if you, there's no point in trying to teach a lesson to those students. But majoritively, Ed and myself, I, Ed really did motivate me and inspire me, I think he played a really big role. And even now, if I, when I had an interview at school about two months ago, Ed was just teaching here in Harrow, and I went up to him one afternoon, and he went through loads with me, he called a friend, and I just still see him as a bit of an adviser in the world of my teaching. So I think Ed's been very significant in that.

### **Does he do the same with you in reverse?**

Probably, no, no, I, I think because Ed had so much more experience than me in terms of coaching before doing the PGCE. An example at Northridge School was, I don't know if I covered this, I don't think I did, we were put in a position, when we started Northridge School together, well I started Northridge School and there was a job going, and I noticed he didn't have a job, and he asked if there's one going, come and join us. And we didn't really get on during, not get on, but we weren't the greatest of friends on the PGCE itself, we only developed a friendship when working together. And Deb in the department, myself and Ed were all Riverside trained, but we had a head of department, who they wanted to get rid of because he was, due to incompetence. So our deputy tried to pull myself and Ed in to witness, or to statement incompetencies of the head of department at the time. Ed pulled me aside and said listen here, because obviously I hadn't been in this position before, so I would have just written you know, you just follow orders don't you? And Ed pulled me aside and he said you don't write anything, he said go and speak your NUT rep, he said they have got no right to ask you to write a statement, if they want to fire him based on incompetence, then let them do it based on fact, based on the evidence that they have, you do not need to be involved in it, I do not need to be involved in it, so if I were you, he said I know what I'm going to do, he said just a suggestion, because he said he could be sitting on an interview panel in ten years' time, and the world of PE, you know, it's not that big, so don't stitch yourself up in your training year. So you know things like that, I found Ed's experience always, he was very professional and really balanced in all his views and I'd say oh what do think of that, and he'd say oh don't touch it, I'll go why, and he'll just say because, you know, and I just, I always listen to him, he did have that much more experience, and so I ... Yeah we got on really, really well. So I still see Ed as a big inspiration to be honest. So ... I texted him and told him I had a managerial job! And he was like, in what? And I said sports science and forensics ...

### **LAUGHS**

I didn't get a reply, but I was thinking, I know what he's thinking!

**LAUGHS** Yeah but he can't give you a job where he is, so ...!

Exactly, so go and be head of department, I'll come and work for you!

### **Absolutely!**

Another person that jumped out was when I was at Northridge School in my first year, another motivator was a lady called Eleanor who's the senior tutor. She was brilliant and when she came to watch my lessons, she always gave me extremely positive feedback and as a result I was kind of like, if you like the swot in the NQTs in that I, they used to all lunch together in the staff room, I was always running a club or ...

### **I was going to say, which PE can never do of course.**

No, and, but as a result of that I was a little bit ostracised from the old NQT gang, and so was Ed, because Ed never turned up to any of the meetings, so he used to really annoy Eleanor, she didn't like Ed because he just didn't do what he was supposed to do at all. So I found Eleanor quite inspirational because she, in her feedback she was so supportive, so if there was any particular area, for example, I think it was even G&T facilitation, and she asked me to go and watch one of her lessons in history, and she had this ladders type, I can't even remember what it was about, but I remember sitting thinking wow that's great, and I looked at her register and she was just so organised, and recognised every single student, and the systems that she had in place were fantastic. And so I found her really, again inspirational because of her passion for teaching, she always gave me positive feedback, but it was always constructive, with areas for development, be it high level development, whatever it may be, literacy, numeracy, ICT and PE. So I found Eleanor quite good in terms of that. What have I got here?

Oh there was a significant person in the school abroad, I didn't really go into it much, did I? I didn't go on about the head of department, a guy called York who was, which was probably the main reason why I left, he was horrific. And as a head of department he made us, there were me, Ned and York in the department, and a typical lesson would be sixty students on a field, three PE teachers, common sense would be to take twenty students each of, we're talking about five acres of land. But no, we had to, me and Ned had to watch York teach sixty students. So the sort of beginning of a lesson would, it was about 42 degrees heat, and he would make the students do I think it was four to five laps, without a break, without a drink, it was ridiculous, the initial task. Then they had to stand in pairs and throw and catch to their partner and then get into a game. And that was the lesson. So in terms of what I'd come from in terms of PE and how PE should be taught, to come and watch what was like a comedy sketch was ridiculous. And he would, we weren't allowed to start the lesson until he was there, and literally say the lesson started at 2 o'clock, sometimes we would stand waiting with all the students outside, and he would pull up in his car about fifteen minutes into the lesson, sorry guys, had to go and have my sandwich, and start teaching the lesson fifteen minutes in. Another thing that was quite significant was

in the swimming, we had a swimming lesson, and he turned around and made a reference to a twelve year old girl and said something like look at the backside on that. So from a child protection point of view it was just gone, it was crazy. He, there were, we did timings one day with a group of girls and boys, and I was timing the girls and I thought Ned was timing the boys, but apparently I should have been timing everyone. So I didn't get the times of the boys, and in front of all the students he picked up his clipboard and whacked it off the floor, and went you stupid girl, to me, in front of all the students and staff. And I was just like oh my God, he started shouting at me, and he did it again in the swimming pool, but I can't remember what that was about, but I remember at that stage, I think it was about two months in, I remember thinking, I don't care in the slightest, whereas initially I got upset about it, and obviously, I would go home crying quite often, and yeah, in the Bleaches where the swimming pool was, he got his clipboard and chucked it into the pool and started shouting at me, shouting at Ned. And he believed in the 1933 syllabus, so he'd get people out of the swimming pool and make them do press ups, star jumps, sit ups, and then they'd have to get back into the pool and carry on with their swimming lesson, just because he could. So that was another significant person that I think highlighted how much I, I hated bad PE teachers and unprofessional ... So that was quite a significant part of my PE teacher training. And when I went to the management, they didn't want to know, it was all swept under the carpet, and so that was interesting.

### **Fascinating.**

Yeah, that was crazy. And then, oh that was another issue, not issue, part was when I went back to Northridge School I think in the January, I was quite nervous about going back, and because all the staff and management showed a really positive response and a really welcoming response, that motivated me to want to stay there for another time, and they really wanted me to help Tom out because apparently he wasn't coping very well, which I could see because he'd aged about ten years in very little time. So that was another motivator at Northridge School. Yeah, so they, that was when I took on the key stage 4 BTec, because it wasn't being run well, so that was a nice challenge that I had. So immediately when I went back, I had this challenge that I knew I could do well in. So I think, I think they were really good at that, I think Northridge School were just all of a sudden, what do you want to manage and you can manage it. So they were very good at that, having, I think that's why staff are so stimulated there, because they give you the responsibility of what you want, and they give you the money to match it, so who wouldn't want that? So I think they're very good at identifying that.

When I went back, I've put in here I struggled with a less strong team, I found that quite difficult, because when I came back I noticed, I was always really fussy about participation levels and kit, and when I came back, we were going to have something like, we went from I think it was about 60% participation non kit, you know loads of non kitters, to really

driving home PE kits, calling parents every day, taking part no matter what. And you know the most you'd ever see out of a lesson in one kit would be one to two students when myself, Ed and Deb ran the department, because we were really, really good on that. And then when I came back and I looked around at most of the lessons you know, there were probably about anything between three to six students sitting out, not participating, not in kit, or kids participating that weren't in kit, but I mean I didn't mind that so much, if they were moving that was fine. But I found that really difficult to deal with. And I suppose from a, what was quite difficult for me then going back was because I had quite a lot of control being in the department, and now Tom had taken over, I had to be really careful, because he was heading it now, and I thought right, OK, not much I can do about this, initially, because I couldn't step on his toes. But that really, I've struggled with that, I found that really frustrating that it was badly managed. But obviously you know they can't do everything.

And so, in terms of, from a reflective point of view, like I question why I care so much, like who goes in, you know some people just don't care, but again that's, I don't know if that's a control thing in terms of me and my personality, in that I do like to be in control of things and know that I'm doing them well. And having looked at what was being done, I thought I know I can do it better. So that's, I thought that was quite interesting just in terms of self reflection.

Another lady at Northridge School who was very significant was Ann, who interviewed me when I was a PE, when I first starting working there, and she used to be in charge of the PE department, and I got on really, really well with her, and she helped me out a lot in PE in terms of student management, behaviour management. She was in the Inclusion department, she would always give me really, you know really positive feedback and always say how conscientious I was and things. So she played quite a significant role in terms of like a mentor at Northridge School, but I used to kind of let off steam to her because I knew it wouldn't go any further.

### **Someone you could trust as well as being supportive?**

Yeah, absolutely. What else have I got on here? I put, in terms of PGCE, I've put about Yvette being very, I really found Yvette as a PGCE lecturer very influential, I really, really respected her, I thought she was excellent. So I thought she really stood out to me. And another person, sorry back at Northridge School was Daniel, and Daniel was a football coach, but was very passionate about football coaching, football theory and how to coach. So he used to come to our PE lessons sometimes and help us out, with football. And he ran a session with us in the playground with all the staff, and we actually had a guy there at the time, Mick, who was a professional footballer, we had one of our students who plays for Tottenham, and the professional footballer who was there, Mick, you know he would say his manager at the time, their training would involve just dribbling in and around cones. And Tom who was in the

department used to play for the team, and his manager was, I can't remember, another famous coach, and he was like yeah my coaching was quite similar. So Daniel was really influential in looking at, you know look at the coaching from what you guys have received in the professional football world, to this practise that we've done today. And he just did a session, and we were just all by the end of it, wow, that's brilliant. And it was just all you know high with all the questioning, it was all about the students leading the lesson, just facilitating what they wanted to do, and it was completely game orientated, we did not stop moving. So he was excellent in terms of his coaching, and that was one great thing about PE is that you're surrounded by people who are passionate about the subject in terms of coaching. So Daniel was in there.

Who else have I got? Yeah I've just highlighted, reflected on the job at New College in terms of when I got knocked back from all these things I wanted to set up when I first started there, I think that completely, they were the main factors that affected my motivation, I lost energy, enthusiasm and I think ultimately, because I lost the freedom to develop students and develop myself, they were probably the main factors in me not feeling as motivated any more in terms of my career.

Yeah, this relates to what I was talking about earlier in terms of the job, because I did these notes obviously when I did get the new job, so I've put things down like funding not released, in terms of higher education, no delegation or motivation by surrounding staff to be innovative and show initiative. No one wants to develop. There's a lack of facilities, lack of a centralised organised facility. Lack of motivation. So I've got, I think as a result of all these factors I've lost my enthusiasm to teach. No induction in mentoring essentially. Lethargic and unmotivated staff team. And I think being surrounded by that knock on effect has affected my current levels of motivation, although they have been put up today, having got that interview, because hopefully those are the sorts of things that if I can recognise that and I can change that, then that would be great, but we'll see. And I notice that I, why do I struggle, I just questioned myself, why do I struggle with badly run places when someone like Niall, my boyfriend, actually just doesn't care, he said he's stopped caring now. So he doesn't care about anything, he doesn't want to go to meetings, he doesn't want to go to PDG days, because he's been stitched up so much, he's been there for four years, I've only been there for two, so I'd imagine he's at the end of you know a very long anger type thing, because he does get really angry about how he gets stitched up there. So he's completely lost any motivation.

**Is he in the same department as you?**

Yes, but he's at another building. So he, that's also, that's something that I can struggle with, without him knowing, because he's been there a lot longer, and like you, I think if you find you've been anywhere a lot longer, you're more aware of things politically, you hold probably a longer grudge

from being stitched up a couple of years before that, because he was massively. And because obviously we're together now, his motivations are so low, and he does slag it off quite often, that can rub off, so I have to be really careful with that. And I think when you're surrounded by people with sort of negative vibes, that's what you natural adopt. But from a reflective point of view, I have questioned when listening to the recording of this, that why do I get so frustrated when someone like Niall doesn't, he doesn't care any more, he's lost care, he doesn't want to teach long-term anyway, he's always doing his Masters in strength and conditioning. And others seem to be able to switch off, but I don't, I can't, I find it frustrating, I will argue about you know the new director who came in and said that we were going to be charged from our salaries if we went over our photocopying limit, in an e-mail, to the whole of staff. And I, you know, I spoke to him straight away, I said I'm so sorry, I said at what point legally are you allowed to do that? Why? Because I care, I don't know, I don't know what it is, I don't know why I react like that, whereas other people don't, which I think is interesting.

What other notes have I got? Yeah, just the interview yesterday, and obviously I got the job today. So yeah. My line manager really likes me as well, and I've grown to like him, I didn't like him last year but I think in hindsight he was very stressed in his new role, he managed a department, the coordinator, Eleanor, didn't like Ed, fought him, whereas I don't do that, and I think when they had to allocate roles in the three positions that were available, I think he asked for me, because I think he finds me workable, whereas Eleanor I don't think he does. So that's kind of put me in good stead in terms of you know don't burn your bridges and be professional, you know, watch what you say and who you say it to.

### **I think that's the pay off for being like that.**

Mm absolutely. So I think that's mainly, what's ... OK I've just put yesterday, started to doubt my ability with other applications, trying to change my mind-set, which I've spoken about ... Sorry I've got in there I continually compare, yeah, I compare yeah, but I think that's, I compare how things are weighed up at work probably and that. I think there should be, it's, some people are given more than others depending on how long they've been there. So the longer you've been there, the easier ride you have, and I don't think that's fair or right. So yeah, I think that's mainly it. People management. Oh I've put people management is an area that I think I could improve on. The significant thing about Northridge School in terms of less respect for management, a loss of respect for management there because their focus became so specific to the student support and not the teacher, I struggled with that, because there it was all about the student voice and what the students said about your lesson and it's like right, you're telling me what a twelve year old has said about my lesson, they're twelve. And there was a huge emphasis on, I think that's why I lost motiva, not motivation, but respect for the management at Northridge School because there was a lack of staff support, it was all student support.

**I'm assuming from what you've said and from what you said last time, that that's because you would expect it to be more balanced.**

Mm.

**It's not that you don't, because I, my sense is that you would value student voice, that's why you care about your man abroad making inappropriate comments and setting up lessons that aren't lessons and giving students a raw deal.**

Yeah.

**I mean I might be putting words in your mouth, but it just would kind of strike me that it isn't an issue of you've put the student voice as a priority, it's that you've put the student voice as a priority and you've forgotten about, you know that there isn't a balance there.**

Yeah absolutely, and it's ironic isn't it when you sort of go into the world of teaching, that everything is so student focused, but not staff, and people forget that. And I think, did you watch the Jamie Oliver school thing last week?

**I didn't.**

Oh it was fab. But there was at one point, I think it was Dr, what's his name, science guy?

**Brian Cox? No he's not in there is he?**

The moustache ...

**The one who does the birth to ...?**

The Child of Our Time.

**Yeah Child of Our Time, yeah ...**

He said ...

**Robert somebody?**

Winston, well if you stop learning as a teacher, you stop, what did he say, well if you stop learning, you stop being effective, correct? And I think what he was saying is that as a teacher, if you are not learning as a teacher, how can you be a teacher? Because if you stop learning, how on earth could you be effective? And I thought that was a really interesting point from a teaching perspective, because he really ...

**Mm**



Yeah.

**Is it, I've recorded it, so it's worth watching?**

Yes definitely ..

**OK, because I was very sceptical about it.**

Tomorrow night ... No, and what I like, well what I like about it is that Jamie Oliver's gone in there with this kind of I'm going to create a cool school because my teachers were useless and ...

**Which is always alarming when people start saying stuff like that!**

Oh it was hilarious! And by the end of the programme, and I think on this week's or next week's programme he apologises to all the teachers. He apologises to, I think he just basically apologises for having no idea about how difficult teaching is. They had lessons with Starkey, historian, how had £millions worth of things in the history lesson for students to look at, they didn't look twice, they didn't give a hoot, he called a student fat, the kid had done nothing. He went in, oh it was so funny, because watching them teach, none of them could teach, and it was just brilliant how they brought in you know these PhD non teacher intellectuals who are supposed to be very inspirational, these kids did not give a hoot, they were like what? And there's a clip that I've seen for this week, Alistair Campbell goes in and teaches a politics lesson, and I think the clip of the student is edited, I think it's his lesson, a girl gets up and walks out and goes whatever you f-ing prick ...

**Oh yeah, yeah, yes, I have seen that.**

I can't wait to see that. Because I think that's bloody great, you know, that's what we're up against, and you know the set up is that they've got one small group of failing level 2 students, and it's like imagine facing that all day, every day, that's what we face. So I love the fact that Jamie's gone in there thinking he can sort of create something great, and you can see how he's completely struggling, he's nervous talking to the kids, because he's like you're texting, it's alright, I don't mind, but it is a bit disrespectful isn't it? And it's like you will mind after teaching all day, every day and after a few years.

**But it's interesting because you would have thought he'd have got that because he did Fifteen, did you see Fifteen when he was training the, you know when he took all the young people that had failed in schools?**

Yeah, that's right, yeah.

**One of whom was a girl from the school I was at. And he struggled with them enormously, because his expectations were that somebody would give them a break and that they could just buy into that, which is what happened to him, he was given a break and clearly because of the family structure he comes from, and the support and the ethic and expectation, he could buy into it. But there's a lack of understanding. And did you watch the Panorama about the Army, the Army being, the Army coming in?**

No I didn't.

**You should watch that on iPlayer if you can.**

Oh I'll watch that tonight.

**Because you know going, you just need to watch it, but it is this whole thing that troops are going to be able to go in and sort it out, because the problem is all about behaviour, all about discipline, and the reason that there's a discipline is because we can't do it which ...**

The system doesn't allow us to do anything.

**Partly that, and also that we'll never resolve issues that are societal!**

And never solve issues that, well I don't know, I don't know the answer, but the system is not working, it's working for some but not all, and not the majority, it's working for, I think he said it's working for about 50%. Because he said that last week, he said something like you guys are, I don't know statistically you're 50% of you know if you like failing GCSEs, but you know because you're 50%, clearly you're not in the minority, because a lot of you are failing.

**I think, I know that we've got data that we were given a couple of years ago, that there's 30%, Margaret Talbot refers to it as mind the gap, you know getting at Tubes, mind the gap, that there is a 30% gap, there are 30% of young people who for all kinds of social difference and social justice issues are missing out on achieving what ...**

That's a lot, but I think what will be interesting, by the end of the Jamie programme is that David Cameron goes in, and I just saw a clip at the end where some, a student said something along the lines of that the current system is not working, and he said oh I disagree. And that's all I know, but that's why I'm really interested to see how it folds out. Because I know that you've got Alistair Campbell in there, Starkey the historian, Winston the scientist ...

**Cherie Blair's ...**

Cherie Blair, yeah, haven't seen her yet, so that will be this week. You've got the Shakespearian guy, who was in Shakespeare in Love.

**Yeah, I know who you mean but I don't know the name.**

But you see them all get really frustrated and lose it, and swear and tell them to shut up, and it's just ... In fairness, watching the Starkey incident last week where he called the student fat, the student I thought did bloody well.

**LAUGHS**

Because I thought that sort of student normally, I reckon if the camera weren't there, he would have got a table in the head, without a doubt. It was unbelievable how offensive he was. Yeah, it was pretty bad. I mean obviously the student came back with lip, but in fairness you don't call someone fat.

**There's lip and there's lip isn't there?**

Yeah.

**I'll have to watch that, interesting, mm. So, anything else from ...?**

No I don't think so. Just about the brick walls at work ...

**So ...**

Sorry, just the brick walls that I've been up against. Northridge School, significant staff, I think I spoke about that before, some specific names, M, S and Y were all great in their fields and I learnt off them in terms of IT and teaching. Culturally, sorry Y was a deputy, but she was EAL support, so I learnt a lot off her with students with English as a second language, and she used to always interpret at disciplinary meetings. So I found that a really good set up. I found Tom very inspirational in terms of how well organised he was and meticulous, but I also found his resilience quite influential and that's made me question my resilience over the past couple of weeks.

**What because his resilience was good you mean?**

Yeah, because I, I, you know when they said you can be head of department, I was oh I don't want to take it on, and I was in a better position than Tom to take it on, through my experience and knowledge of the school, yeah he came as an NQT and took on the head of department, which is probably one of the most difficult schools to take on head of department in London. And he did it, and he was, you know he was a mess. I mean all the local heads of PE pulled me aside and said thank God you're back, you really do need to help him out, we're really worried about him. And that's how bad he was, he'd lost weight, he

looked old, he had a beard, he had grey hair, it was like what's happened to Tom, this good looking guy who started about four months ago?! So that was something that, you know looking back at Tom, I found him and his resilience very influential.

**Did he stay? Has he stayed?**

He did, he left in September just gone, so he left last summer, he's now at a school in the Midlands, because his family moved. But last time I saw him, I just said how are you doing, he just said I need to get out and I said oh, I said I know that feeling too well, and he said yeah, I've got to get out, it's too much. So I said oh yeah. And he said, and the management, he said they're just stitch up merchants. And I said I know. So he was kind of at that stage that I was, but I had two years on top of him. So it's kind of, not in a gratificational, sort of satisfied way, but it was kind of nice, hopefully I thought, well maybe he's got to a stage that he can kind of semi empathise with my situation as to why I wanted to leave when I did, because you start to see things that were pretty bad ...

**And Ed obviously told you to get out and he'd already got out?**

Yeah.

**So he'd felt that sooner, or was it just that the other job came up and, I mean obviously he was walking into a particular structure with a person that he knew wasn't he, so ...?**

I think Ed left as a result of an inter, interdepartmental politics sort of issue.

**Right, right.**

Didn't get on with the head of department and it got worse, she got worse, I couldn't even get on with her after a while. An incident happened actually with her, and since the incident she became very difficult to work with.

**And was that the person that took over from the original HOD?**

Yes.

**Was that Deb that was already in the department with you?**

Yes, yeah, she basically had a basketball incident where she got hit by a, not a parent but a cousin of one of the players attacked her, not hit, but kind of banged her up, like put her up against the van over the game or something, and she found it very difficult to deal with, she wanted a lot of counselling and all this, and then the school didn't support that, so she felt resentment towards the school, she was very angry, that spilt over into the department, she became very difficult to work with, the way that

she spoke to people you know ... And I think that's when they just said oh can't be bothered with this sort of thing, and he left.

**OK, well the other things that I'd kind of, the other things that I'd picked up, they were similar things to you really I think. The one thing, you talked about your mum, and you talked about how organised she is and all those sorts of things, but one of the things that came up three or four times was this thing about hard work ethic, and even when you don't use that word, you do talk about you know sort of your almost admiration for the head at Northridge School because she worked as hard as she did and she was dynamic and driven and all those sorts of things. But I just wondered because you, almost at the start you talked about your brother and you both working, and about your mum's sort of, I don't know ...**

Yeah.

**I mean maybe you could just talk a bit about ...**

Well I think that's probably come from the fact that, well probably stemmed from my mum bringing us up on her own, three of us on her own. So as a result from an early age we were taught to be very independent, so we travelled to school by bus and train, so from the age of thirteen, fourteen, mum was like if we can find you some work now and you can start contributing towards your fare to school. So from a very early age, we weren't forced to work but we were definitely encouraged, and we didn't mind it, because getting a job at thirteen, fourteen was actually perceived to be quite a cool thing, it's like I've got a job, it's like oh really, you know and it was good, you know it was well regarded I think by other students. So when, my brother worked in a greengrocer and I think we, we just developed this ethos growing up that we earned our own money and we didn't really ask mum for any money. I mean we didn't, I tell you why we didn't ask for it, because she didn't have it, and so she would always give us what she could, for example, we didn't miss out on anything, we both went on the school trip, that obviously would have been horribly hard for my mum to have to pay, but looking back, she must have killed herself trying to pay for that. So although we were a single parent family with not a lot of money, we had to work from a very young age, and as a result, I think because we watched our mum work really hard to support the three of us, that's spilled into us. And in all areas, like in terms of me, my brother and I and my sister, we're very house proud and we're very, we always make sure everything's cleaned and organised, or if we go to someone's for dinner, we always make sure we do the washing up or ... We're not afraid of hard work. And in growing up I worked in every job you can imagine, I worked at the Market, I worked at the supermarket, I worked on a, in a shoe shop, I worked in a sports shop, I worked in a pub. So at A Level time I worked in a pub Friday, Saturday, Sunday night and worked in the supermarket in the day time, which was pretty critical because I was so tired I actually almost

dropped the A Levels, so that was good that I didn't. So I've, and I didn't see the problem with it, I didn't see the problem with working that much and studying full-time, I just thought it was normal. So I think my threshold for working hard, and I think my threshold for sort of hitting my physical limit and mental limit is quite high, so I, you know having lived with someone at university, my friend Elle, you know, she'll go and do four hours' work and she's got to go and sleep for six hours, and I was just like God she hasn't got a clue what work is. Or you know she'd be like oh mate I can't clean the oven, and I'd be like why not, she'd be like I just can't, I thought why can't you clean the oven? So I didn't really understand, whereas she'd never worked, I think her first job was after uni, she'd never had a job. So I kind of had all these skills and I didn't care about working hard, I wasn't afraid of working hard, so I think that's something that I've definitely grown up with and witnessed from my mum, well you know she's just instilled in us hard work pays off. And she's also, she was also very good academically, but she never forced us to, she never wanted As or Bs or Cs, she just said if you do your best, that's what I ask for. She never interfered, she just trusted us. So I think that was a huge element in us growing up and why, I suppose I was, I am quite a good independent learner and I'm very good working independently, I don't, you know I can get things done on my own very well, I think. But I think that comes from my mum giving me those skills, because she just gave it me all the time, she goes I trust you, you'll be great. And so I was. So I think that's definitely a huge influence. But I also think it's probably part of the Irish culture influence in there, because all my friends, for example around Harrow, my close friends, we've all worked from a very young age, and we've all got Irish, I don't know if it just Irish, but we've all got an Irish background which are all, I suppose back in the 50s when the Irish came to England, they all worked really hard, and it's still the way, the Irish do work very hard. And my cousin that I spoke to this weekend, he gets up at 20 past 4 every morning and he comes home at 9 o'clock at night in his work at the moment, and that's just how it is normally. And I thought wow, and I complain about some of the hours or you know. So I think that hard work ethic definitely comes from my mum and watching her work so hard to support the three of us, and make ends meet, put food on the table, and clean the house and do everything. I mean I see how my brother and his wife struggle with one baby at the moment, and it's so hard work, and she's just like I've got no idea what I'd do if he wasn't here, or he said vice versa, you need two people for a baby, how did mum do it with three of us? So yeah, no definitely, hugely significant I think.

**Mm, do you want to stop for a minute or are you alright to carry on?**

No I'm fine.

**So then the other things that I picked up were the, you know the first mentor that you had your placement school, and you talked about being publicly humiliated, and then straight from that you talked immediately about sort of link tutor visits, and there was almost, it**

**literally was within the same sentence, that almost that experience had had an impact, because you then talked about being a link tutor, and that you recognised how much you changed between your training and your ... And I just wondered if there was anything in there that, if there was anything there. There might not be, just whether, how significant that experience was with her.**

I think the experiences probably made me more aware of how to play a supportive role rather than a critical role, and how, well how approaching a student in a patronising, condescending way, or power trip approach just doesn't work, it's just ... And I think that's kind of made me more motivated to be the opposite, if anything. I mean obviously, I think I'm still quite firm, but even in the feedback that I did in my interview, my observation yesterday, I came out and they said I was quite harsh, but in a good way. And I was like oh OK, well that's good, because then I thought is that a bad thing? Because I didn't know what they were looking for. So I was still quite factual in my feedback, but in a supportive way, it's like OK, well you know where I work, if you're a bad, if someone's not managing a class it's like well it's their own fault, and it's like well no they clearly need support, they need help on how to manage that class, in terms of right, this is how you eradicate low level behaviour. And you know and there are always, I don't think anyone's intentionally bad at anything, I think they just don't know how, they don't know it as well as you, so ... Yeah I think that's really important, because my mum's friend that I was with this weekend, her daughter's just on, off her first PGCE placement in a primary school. And she spoke to me about it, and she just said oh she's got a mentor that she doesn't like. And I said listen, I said if, because she told me a few incidents, and I said well the best thing for her to do is to just do everything professionally, and tell her to speak to her link tutor and just say this is how I feel, and then hopefully the link tutor will monitor the situation, and if it seems to be a common thing with students, then hopefully that mentor won't be used in the future, because if she's having a negative impact then why, why bother using that person, because they're not developing the student, they're putting them off teaching you know. I mean obviously it is, I don't know, it could well be her daughter, I've got no idea, but if that's how she's feeling then I just said just follow the policy and just keep it professional.

**OK, I picked up your sort of comments about the head's professional characteristics at Northridge School and the fact that she encouraged you into your first post and that that seemed, you know, for you to be quite significant. And that was, you valued the fact that she'd remembered who you were, you know are you the girl with the short hair, that that was quite significant for you. And the other thing, there were a couple of things about Northridge School, there was the stuff about the colleagues which you've talked about today, and when the three of you worked really positively together, and that, it was almost as if, you talked about being trained in the same way and having the same hard work ethic, that it was almost like an issue of shared values, you know that ...**

Mm absolutely.

**... shared values. And then earlier on tonight when you were talking about the Head of Department in the school abroad, how he was the total antithesis of your values ...**

Mm absolutely.

**... but they become significant to you because he's everything you didn't want to be. And that environment at Northridge School at the time was absolutely the environment to be in for you.**

Yeah, and I think that's also a, that's a big factor at the moment in my contemplation of where I'm at, because I am surrounded by people that don't share the same values, currently. I have to be careful I think to maybe not stay somewhere where that becomes engrained in me as a professional, because I think it's really important that what you're surrounded by is what you become, and I need to sort of be reflective on me developing in this role in that if for example in a year I'm still fighting and up against brick walls, then I will have to look elsewhere because I can't, I can't become that. And then the longer I allow myself in an environment without shared values, I feel I suppose the more I'm likely to not get a job where, you know, like in terms of my value as a teacher is going to start to dwindle I think, in terms of ... Whereas I've still got that passion or confidence. I mean teaching a good PE lesson now, I would have to really prepare for it because I haven't done it in quite a while. But I mean it's great that I'm watching through link tutoring, but just in terms of me, I like to be good at whatever I'm doing and do it well. So I think that's definitely an issue that I have to keep reminding myself about over the next however long this post goes on for, because that is my problem in that I was surrounded by people with a shared value which I loved, and now I'm not, which I think has got a lot to do with why I don't love it. So I think you know I'm just making the most of the situation I'm in at the moment, I don't know if I'll ever love it, I think there's too much going on to change that institutionally, but hopefully I would like to be surrounded by that at some point. Hence why you know the role that sounded excellent for me, I really loved the thought of that because it sounded like you would be surrounded by you know a very professional team. Or my friend who's doing the lifestyle advising, and she's just constantly, you know, well she's not ringing me up, but she's just texting doing my Masters, it's all about mindfulness and sport and elite performance athletes and ... And it's, you know, she's just got that love because she's surrounded by it where she is based. So that's something that I have to be conscious of and I think if I, if it doesn't come my way in the next year or two, I'm definitely going to have to keep thinking elsewhere ...

**Because it seems to really matter to you ...**

Mm.



**It really matters to you that you don't fall into that, it's almost like a trap you're describing that if it becomes demotivational, that you'll become more demotivated and you know you'll be mindful of that and want to find structures and strategies for getting out of that.**

Yeah.

**And the other thing is when you talked earlier on about Niall, and being careful that his feelings don't rub off on you, that you know you really, you seem to be working very, very hard to make sure that this stuff doesn't rub off on you, that it doesn't impact on you. Is that about your expectations of yourself?**

Yes, but also I've been, I guess the book I've read sort of recently, it's Stop Thinking, Start Living, and it's all about just interpretation of events, and how you can look at a situation one way, but you can look at it another way, and it's very easy to look at it in a negative view because of history. But what I'm trying to do is turn my mind-set around, because obviously all this sort of in the past six months I've been going at, well I mean I had a job abroad again last year, so I was convinced I was leaving, and then I didn't, so then I had to face the fact that OK, well I'm at New College but I'll definitely be out within a year. And now that's not becoming a reality, so as a result of that I'm having to try and change it so I'm motivated in what I'm doing, and hopefully not being affected by the negativity of it, because otherwise, if you feel like it's negative you just won't bother or care or ... So yeah.

**OK, you talked a bit about mentoring at Riverside when you were at Northridge School and you know working that into the process and getting that under way and that that was positive. And you also talked about being able to attend courses that you valued at Northridge School and the departmental CPD that you did between you, where you, and you talked about it earlier on, and that those things were quite important. The other thing that you talked a lot about was the sort of policy expectations and the politics at Northridge School versus this lack of care for staff which we've, you've talked about tonight, you know, this became so, I think you said it became so student centred that they forgot about the staff and that that's where you kind of lost heart. So actually if you see where I'm coming from, I'm smiling because you've actually picked up on pretty much, you know and that's, for what I'm trying to do, because it's a novel way of doing this, it's really interesting that we have picked up on those same things, is that because we've got a similar mind-set? You know I need to kind of unravel that a little bit.**

That's interesting isn't it?

**But it's interesting that we've picked up the same things, and that what you've done as well is compare Northridge School and the**

**positives at Northridge School with the sort of difficulties at the current place, and that you know, we can't help but do it as human beings, I think it's inevitable that you compare you know this did this and that did that.**

Yeah, absolutely.

**And that you know I thought was really good.**

And I noticed that when I went through, I thought God how negative did I sound about New College, it's just all negative. Because, I don't know if that's because that's my interpretation of it, because of where I was before, if I hadn't been at Northridge School and I'd gone straight into New College, I wouldn't know any better, so ...

**No, but I don't think, I mean for what my view is worth, I don't think you sounded negative, I thought you sounded factual, you know, this was really good and this is really difficult. And it wasn't oh and it's difficult and it's awful and I hate it, it was it's difficult and these are the reasons why it's difficult, and this is the stuff I can't get my head round and I can't understand. And I don't think it came across as, it didn't come across as a moan and a groan, it came across as your sort of lived experiences which is really what I'm interested in. But what's, what is interesting about New College is that you've continued to attempt to support colleagues, and you've continued to attempt to have an impact where you felt that you could. So Eliza that you talked about, you know she had this awful lesson, you were mortified she got no feedback, no targets, no this, no that, and so you almost mentored her, unofficially.**

I did, yeah, absolutely.

**But you've mentored her and you took her into Northridge School.**

Mm, and I told her not to tell anyone about it.

**Yeah.**

Because yeah absolutely. But that's, because Niall, as I said before, has said that about me, he said you're brilliant at helping people, and I said but isn't that what most people should be doing? I said I don't understand why people wouldn't. You know like we had a member staff leave last year who took everything off the intranet that he had prepared for a course, so the next person coming in had nothing to work from, and I couldn't believe, I said why would you do that? I said I don't understand that mentality, it's a sharing practice, said well he put in all the hard work, and I said I know but I said I've got schemes that are thirty pages long, anyone can have them, because if it helps them, why would you not? I don't, I don't, again I guess it's about shared values and this, that mentality or, where ... One of the guys in the department, down at the

gym, locks away all the resources, pens, plastic folders, markers, staplers, he locks them in a file that only he can access. And I'm like they're college, that's college resources, therefore it should be for all the teachers, not just him, he hasn't bought them out of his personal money. Why would he lock pens, Pritt Sticks, Post-It notes, in a ... We're all like thirty plus, I'm not, I don't understand that. Because this is what I mean about the kind of selfish attitude that I find is you know, well I'm not giving them my stuff, why is that the mentality or the approach? I struggle with that, because anything I have, there you go, if it helps, there you go, you know, I've got resources in the whole department that I think the coordinator should have done, and I kind of sent her an e-mail, I said did you want to get these resources or do you want me to order them? And I got no reply. So I thought right, I'll order them then. I don't know because it's, you know I just don't, and I think that's why hopefully I'd like to do well at this role in terms of more for staff development, raising staff morale and making them feel a bit valued. Whether it will happen, I don't know, whether I'm given that leeway will be very interesting, because any, anything I've asked for as a teacher has got a no, so anything I ask for as a manager, I'll be interested to see if I get the same response, because if I do, then what more can I do? I've tried both, so that will be really interesting. But yeah, no, I do, I love helping people when it ... Well I think it's, I don't think it's in a kind of in a way that I think is like a gloating way, because I don't want people to know, I just like helping people, not for the fact that I feel I know better, as in oh I've done a better one than that, but it's like if you haven't got one, I've got one, just let me know, and I'll give it to you. So I do like doing that and helping people out.

**And does that play out in life as well as at work?**

I think so yes, yes, yeah.

**OK, so the other things that I had picked up on, picked up, that sounds awful doesn't it, I need to write about using the words 'picked up', because that is awful language from me(!), was what the impact has been of you feeling frustrated. You talked earlier on about motivation, you know I'm not, you didn't say I'm not feeling as motivated but the implication was there. How does that play out in practice? Do you still carry on doing the best that you can do?**

No.

**OK.**

My teaching is, well it's basic.

**Right.**

That does carry over into my lessons.

**Right OK.**

Awful. Yeah, hugely. And I think most teachers do, which is also interesting. There is an attitude of get it done, finish early, because I suppose there is no teaching strategy development, teacher strategy shared practice or how do to a good lesson, there is no focus on that. So I do what I need to do, and you know that's it. I mean like, whereas before, you know I teach a GCSE lesson, the best GCSE lesson, I won't do this, do this, I used a Powerpoint quiz thing, you know, I used to love doing that. And now you know there's my Powerpoint from last year, here's the activities we're going to do, OK, make sure you do this and put it in your assignment. Yeah definitely, lost enthusiasm in my teaching by miles, 100%.

**So you've looked for the other things then while you've been at the college. And I've written down like doing things off your own back, like the CSLA, you used that word, you know doing things off my own back, CSLA, setting up the Army to come in and having that sort of stuff knocked back. You talked about needing stimulation and that coming from things like Riverside link tutoring, and if you could afford to do a Masters at the moment, and this issue of shared colleagues, and I was just interested about why you looked for those other things, and whether that related to that feeling of you know frustration in relation to the school or the college and you know what wasn't happening there.**

Absolutely, so in terms of seeking like what Riverside work and ...?

**Mm.**

Yeah, because that's, I suppose it keeps me feeling, oh I don't know what's the right word, feeling stimulated in my career, whereas I don't at the moment, I don't feel stimulated. When it comes to Riverside work or observations or paperwork, I feel stimulated, I like doing it, I don't know why, I do. And I also like the fact that I'm working for you know a well established university that is regarded highly in the world of PE and you know even my managers should know about Riverside and they're like whatever, what's it like at Riverside? God! But so yeah, I keep it completely on the quiet at work about that. Or that's the only way I can sort of get it done. My line manager's pretty good with things like that, he, I think he, the impression I get is just that well I don't know, so if you need to do it when you're not teaching do it, sort of thing. But no that's exactly why I need to seek stimulation, 100%.

**OK, and then when you talked about professional development, you talked about courses, but if I asked you to sort of define professional development, what do you think it is?**

I think professional development for me is moving with the times in your teaching. I think it's, developing teaching and learning strategies. So I

like, if I can, you know if you've got an ideal lesson, you want a classroom with an IT suite that's got interactive systems on there that you can, that stimulate the students because where I'm at people just stand and talk at students from a Powerpoint, and that's from a lecturing point of view, but when you've got sort of fifteen, sixteen year old students, it doesn't work. But that's all they know because they haven't been taught any different. So I think developing my teaching and learning strategies is my professional development, because I haven't done that in quite a while, my teaching has suffered because I don't care about my lessons any more. I also think, in terms of my knowledge, my knowledge in my professional development has not really been inspired in any way. Their idea of a professional development day is someone telling us how to tell our students how to complete a UCAS form, that's not professional development as far as I'm concerned, it's more an admin task. Professional development in terms of OK I've got a high, I've got a very low retention rate at the moment, let's look at factors to increase retention and increase success rates, and what's, you know, just kind of developing initiatives to improve what you're working in. I did a spinning course a couple of years ago with the college and I enjoyed that. Yeah but I think just a course in which I'm interested in learning.

**OK, alright, OK. It's just really interesting because up until mentioning the spinning, at no point in either the last conversation or this one have you talked in any way about courses, and yet the majority of the agenda out there about professional development is it's all about courses and yet everything that you've talked about has been about people's situations there have been no sort of learning, sort of significant learning experiences if you like and really what you've done has been nothing to do with going on courses. You mentioned it, that's not true, you did mention that you'd been, that you had courses on your CV, but beyond that you haven't, there's been description at all at any point about a course being significant. You enjoyed the spinning one but that's the only course that you've done since you've been at the college!**

I did sign up, I managed to get funding, they gave me I think £500 to submit to a nutrition course on line, which I've done, and I've got those booklets in the office at work, and it's just like doing GCSE PE for myself, and then four questions at the end. So even that hasn't motivated me in any way, because it's just not credible, it's not a credible course so I don't want to do it. It's not going to take me anywhere, it's not a nationally recognised qualification, it's a certificate of well done, and yeah, just yeah, interesting. But I mean maybe in terms of management, I might, you know, it's just weird I don't know how to describe it, but professional development at Northridge School, I always, I was constantly learning as a teacher, learning too much if anything, but here, I don't learn anything. So you know ... I keep saying to my line manager, I do I keep, he's like did you go to that meeting? I said no. He's like you were supposed to be there. I said I don't care, I said, I'd rather get, I'd rather you tell me off ... Like there's been, there was a lesson a couple of weeks ago on a teacher

afternoon, now bear in mind I teach at another building until 3, and at 3 until 4 they wanted me to go to a meeting about as a tutor how to challenge homophobia. I know how to do that. If someone in my class calls someone gay, I know how to challenge that, it's very simple, I don't need an hour discussion on it you know. And then you know another meeting, oh we've got another meeting on how to complete your self-assessment. I've completed a self-assessment twice now, you're telling me I have to go to an hour meeting for someone to say in this box you put down the strengths, and in this box you put down the improvements, and then down here is your development plan of which your areas for improvement carry over to your development plan. I'm like are you serious about having a meeting about this? What kind of people work for you that can't do this? But this is what the meetings are. I feel like ...

**And it's not differentiated according to what people's skills are?**

No, not at all, but it's not pitched anywhere near the level. I mean to be quite honest and harsh there are older teachers there who are not, who would probably need that, I'm talking older people who have been out of teaching for years, who might need that guidance ...

**Because they haven't been involved in improvement planning recently?**

But give it as an option, like you attend, that's what I said, I said don't, I said I will not be going to these meetings, I said tell me off, I said put me on disciplinary, I'm not, I can't do it, I said I would rather ... The Staff Development day last week, last Monday was a workshop on how to use the college website, e-learning on the college website. I went and did all my IV marking at Starbucks. They have no idea that I didn't go to the workshop, I don't care, I would probably have come out more angry ... This is what I, I get angry, and that's really interesting, I actually get really angry, and Niall sits there sometimes and puts his hands, he says calm down, and I'm like I can't, I actually start giggling, because I'm like I can't believe this, I want to film this, is this actually happening? This is just ridiculous. And I just find it really funny after a while, because it is that bad. So yeah the perception of Staff Development where I'm at now, or CPD is ...

**Oh right OK, so they just do it like that?**

Yeah.

**OK, and the only other thing that came up was your levels of personal confidence in terms of the some of the stuff you said earlier on, and if you don't want to talk about that, that's absolutely fine, I totally understand because it's kind of personal, but the, you know, you weren't sure that you were good enough to do teaching in the first place you said.**

Mm.

**And then when you went for the interview at Northridge School, not the interview at Northridge School, when you went for the head of department at the same time as Ed did, knowing that he was more confident than you and you didn't want to sound conceited and, you know, there's almost an element of, I don't mean that you've got an issue with your personal levels of confidence at all, but there's almost an issue there of you know not, you don't kind of push yourself forward.**

No.

**So you help Eliza at college, but you don't really want anybody to know about it.**

Yeah absolutely, yeah definitely.

**So I just, that was just, and it's a personal thing, so you might not want to talk about it, and I hope you didn't mind me raising it, but it was just something that kind of came out in some of the things that you said the last time and you've obviously said tonight, you know, it's not in a gloaty, you know not ...**

Yeah, I mean even, even thinking about my new role, I've even thought already about how I would present new tasks or things that I would like people to start doing, nothing different that they haven't already done, because I don't want to introduce more work, I just want to manage it better, of what's being done. And I've already thought about ways that I can do that without coming across as hi, I'm a new manager, you know, that kind of, I've already thought about ways that I can do that, because that, that whole persona of someone being on a power trip or someone, I don't know, acting like they know it all or whatever, I find quite painful. So that's ... In interviews I've kind of yeah ... But it's funny because I've been, when I went to the Hong Kong interview I was fantastic, I probably gave the best interview I've ever given in my life because it was a room full of just strangers, so I didn't care, and they offered me the job there and then and then and they weren't supposed to. So in that particular instance I was amazing! And I remember thinking oh that's the best interview I've ever given in my life. But yeah, and yesterday in the observation, the whole way through, my face was just red, the whole way through I was really, really under pressure, I felt so embarrassed, and you know even one of the managers said, he said someone was a little bit flushed yesterday, and I was like I know, I came out and I was so red! And yet, yeah, it's ...

**And yet you've got loads of confidence in lots of respects.**

Yeah, I would say overall I'm very confident, overall I would be an extrovert. But I guess, I think in front of people I know, in terms of coming

across as, I don't know over confident is something that I'm quite aware of. Yeah.

**Is that because of dealings with over confident people?**

I don't ...

**Right, these aren't necessarily questions that you can answer or I can answer or do you know what I mean?**

I don't know, because I think it's funny, I wonder if it's just in a professional environment, because socially I'm very, very confident, I'm a huge extrovert, I will chat to anyone, I'm always conscious of including people in a conversation, I think that's through working in a pub and ... And also off the subject, this weekend, when Niall came to Ireland, my sister's boyfriend came, and they're both complete you know English English backgrounds, and Niall said we've both commented on how confident everyone in this room is, there was like twenty seven friends of my mum's family. I don't know if it's an Irish thing, but we're so confident, socially and having conversations, whereas Niall and my sister's boyfriend felt quite intimidated by the confidence of people and they said that we felt that we, you know we just sort of were a bit quiet, we felt that we were over quiet but we just couldn't, we're not as confident as everyone else. So in that respect I'm very confident, but I think in work maybe it's a bit different, I don't know why.

**Well it's not that you don't come across as confident in terms of anything that you've said or, there was just some moments where it was you know I wasn't really sure, and then I got a B at A Level and I couldn't believe there were only two of us that got a B at A level and I didn't think I was good eno, you know that.**

Mm.

**And then the guy at University that you mentioned, you know, you were really chuffed that he recognised that you were kind of you know good at ...**

I think, oh that's a thing I haven't through about, in terms of, I think in terms of my upbringing, I think a big factor in my confidence is probably the fact that because I grew up in a single parent family, I suppose I was always mindful of this stereotype that if you're from a broken home you are not deemed to do so well or be as successful.

**OK.**

So I think that's also got a huge factor to do with me maybe not feeling that I should be as successful as I have been. So you know the odds of someone, and my brother even said it at his wedding, you know three kids from a broken, we're a) not supposed to be successful, b) supposed



to be complete you know destructive family or whatever, and he said but because our mum was so great that you know it's not as, it was like having two parents anyway. So I wonder if that's something that I've, that may have affected my whole self belief growing up in that we, we're not supposed to have been successful, I think that might have ...

**It's interesting though isn't it?**

Yeah.

**Because who says that?!**

A lot of people say it ...

**I know they do, but who and what have they got to base that on? Because I remember being a head of year and I remember having conversations with, you know with families, and they could be two parent families and their children could be a total nightmare, and actually that two parent family could be more dysfunctional than some of the single parent ...**

Oh absolutely.

**... I you know that, and I've always become quite upset about those stereotypes around that stuff, because I think it's a real problem.**

Yes, and I felt it growing up ...

**Isn't that interesting?**

... I felt that when comparing to my friends, because everyone had two parents, and I think, I was aware of it and I felt intimidated by it, yeah definitely. So I do wonder if that could have something to do with it.

**Yeah, I mean it, I'm sorry because this stuff, I worry about picking up on personal things that you haven't necessarily picked up yourself, and I know you'd say if you were uncomfortable, I know that, but I worry about that, because it's not about interrogating, this is not about interrogating who you are, do you know what I mean?**

Yeah, yeah.

**But it's just that because it came up a few times in relation to those professional experiences, that was the reason for just asking you about it, because I thought, it's not necessarily that that in itself is particularly significant, but there are some, some of your responses potentially to things that you've encountered and people that you've met are impacted upon potentially by those levels of confidence.**

Yes.

And it's interesting because we've talked already about sort of shared experiences, and indeed I can hear my own sorts of responses to things in some of those responses that you've identified, because I do, you know I don't need someone else to tell me that I've done really well to feel pleased with what I've done. So like you said, you go to the Hong Kong interview, you know you've had a stormer ...

Yeah.

I have enough confidence myself to do that. But there are also times when I have real doubt and self doubts, not in some destructive kind of way, I don't think, I think in a measured way, and not wanting to appear arrogant and not wanting to appear ...

Yes, yes.

And having worked with people who are, and being very uncomfortable with that overbearing kind of behaviour. So that was another reason for asking you really was because, as I said to you, it's not about using your story to understand my own, but inevitably this PhD project has got a strand of my experiences sitting directly alongside each of the three stories.

Yeah.

And it's being careful not to, it's being careful not to impede on your story with my story, because my story isn't important in relation to yours. But I know you said the last time that that kind of two way dialogue felt a bit odd, because that wasn't what we had the first time you know.

Yeah.

And those, ethically, the abstract that I've put in for a conference in the summer is *Whose Story?* And it's about this. Because it is about whose story, it's not about my story, you know my story will illustrate some things, your story will illustrate some things, some maybe be similar, some may be completely different, and that, you know that kind of crossover there. So yeah, so I hope that was OK to ask about that because that would be quite interesting.

Oh of course.

**Anything else for today?**

No, I don't think so. No I don't think so.

**OK, are you happy for me to have a photocopy of your annotations, is that alright?**

Yeah of course.

**Because I mean I've said to you, I'll return them of course, I'll just take a photocopy, or would you rather photocopy them and give them back to me, which would you rather do?**

No you take it honestly, that's fine, yeah.

**Is that alright? And then what I'll do is copy them and drop them through when I drop the second ... So what we'll do then is exactly as we did before, and indeed if there is anything critical and distinctive that's come out of this one, you can pick it up, but I'll do exactly what I did before, which is give you the disc, give you the transcription and give you those sort of prompt points, not because they need to constrain you, you can talk about whatever you want ...**

No, they were great actually because that really gave me some things to go on.

**Did it, it was helpful?**

Oh 100%, I think I would have, I wouldn't have known what to, you know, to have gone for.

**Yeah OK, because again it's hard, because I have, my biggest agenda item for this whole piece of work is it's not my story, this is not some exercise in making massive claims and massive generalisations, this is taking it to the point of your story.**

Yeah.

**And I'm very, everything I've done in the process so far I've thought about so carefully! So any feedback like that is really helpful to me because it is about ...**

Oh no that's brilliant, I much prefer that because then I just had something to go by, in terms of when I sort of went through an area and I thought well anything significant come out of that that I didn't sort of elaborate on, so some people like Ed and Tom and people like that.

**Mm, yeah no that's great. So I mean it will be the same format as that for next time. And we've talked for two hours, so that's pretty good going isn't it? Thank you.**

No problem! (END OF RECORDING)