An exploration of agency in the stories of dual qualified cross-phase teachers (14-19) at a time of curriculum reform

by

Alison Sandra Cogger

Canterbury Christ Church University

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Abstract

This study explores the concept of teacher agency through the stories of specialist teachers who undertook a unique cross phase initial teacher preparation course equipping them to teach a vocational 14-19 Diploma in 2008-2010. Unlike others, these teachers learned to teach and build professional relationships across boundaried professional spaces of secondary school and further education settings, which each had different structures, cultures and professional characteristics. The development of a conceptual framework to understand how teachers' agency is achieved, combines three ecological models which provide the structure guiding this study. Adopting a pragmatic position, a life history approach is used to explore these teachers' experiences over time and their relationships in three specific domains: the social, connected to teachers, the cognitive connected to the curriculum and the emotional connected to the professional self. This exploration leads to an understanding of what shaped their agency and how they were policy resistant following the change in governments in 2010 and the subsequent change in curriculum strategy. The data demonstrates that early and present-day experiences and relationships with other teachers and the curriculum were important to participants' achievement of agency as teachers and their understanding of themselves as professionals. In particular, relationships which led to teachers being valued, motivated and supported were powerful forces in the shaping of their agency. Additionally, these relationships aided them in navigating their career paths. These findings make an original contribution to the discussion about teacher agency and could have implications for important aspects of initial teacher education and continuing professional development.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to the memory of two student teachers from the first PGCE Society Health and Development cohort in 2008, Rebecca Jones and Stella Pavlou. I had taught Rebecca and Stella as mature students and mothers of young children during their first year as undergraduates in 2004. They were part of the first cohort studying the new single honours degree in Childhood Studies at the Broadstairs campus in Kent. They shared a close bond cemented through their strong links with their church. I was delighted that they had both applied to become teachers. Rebecca participated in this study but died in the late summer of 2019. Rebecca's interview tapes are precious as they captured her story and her voice. I have not felt able to include her life history as part of this study, but I wanted to share and acknowledge her achievements in becoming a Vice Principal and how, drawing on her training, she claimed to have changed the practice in her school. The second teacher, Stella Pavlou, died shortly after Rebecca in the spring of 2020 but did not participate in this study. Stella started the SHD PGCE with Rebecca in 2008 but interrupted to make a visit to children in Africa with her church. She returned to the teaching course in 2010 after the demise of the diploma and the PGCE changed its title to Health and Social Care. Rebecca became her school based subject mentor. Since leaving the PGCE, Stella had been a teacher in the prison education service making a difference to many lives.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson makes the point that all experiences affect a person…

'…all experience is an arch wherethro'

Gleams that untraveled world, whose margin fades

Forever and forever when I move.'

(The Poetry Foundation.org)

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Abbreviations and acronyms

CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DBIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
BIS	Business Innovation and Skills
CTLLS	Certificate to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DES	Department of Education and Science
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DTLLS	Diploma to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector
E-Bacc	English Baccalaureate
EMA	Education Maintenance Allowance
ETF	Education and Training Foundation
FE	Further Education
FEC	Further Education College
FES	Further Education and Skills
FENTO	Further Education National Training Organization
FES	Further Education and Skills
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IfL	Institute for Learning
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
LA	Local Authority
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LLUK	Lifelong Learning UK
LSIS	Learning and Skills Improvement Service
NC	National Curriculum
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NTO	National Training Organisation
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
Ofqual	Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PCE	Post-compulsory education
PCET	Post-compulsory education and training
PGCE	Postgraduate/Professional Graduate Certificate of Education
PTTLS	Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
QTLS	Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
SET	Society for Education and Training
SFC	Sixth Form Colleges
SHD	Society, Health and Development
SSC	Sector Skills Council
SVUK	Standards Verification United Kingdom
TDA	Training and Development Agency for Schools
TTA	Teacher Training Agency
VE	Vocational Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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This study explores teachers' agency using a life history approach to understand more about five 14-19 vocational diploma specialist teachers initially trained to teach across the secondary school and further education contexts. Pre-service initial teacher education is recognised as 'a complex process of becoming' which is 'messy, recursive and emotional' (Steadman, 2021, p. 1). In recent years, there has been growing unease about the teaching profession across all phases with concerns about recruitment, retention and how teachers are treated in both schools and further education (FE) provision (Ovenden-Hope, 2020). Teachers across phases can be understood as professional 'cousins' (Lawy and Tedder, 2009, p. 53) where professional expectations have developed in separate historical, political contexts. Recent studies have highlighted concerns about the training of vocational teachers, for example, in FE where training is largely generic in nature (Thompson, 2014) and in the school phase where there appears to be strong subject pedagogy preparation (Hanley, et al, 2018) but very limited provision for vocational subject specialist training. Other problems relate to a lack of quality continuing professional development (CPD), poor work environments where teachers do not feel valued, motivated, or supported, teachers treated as commodities rather than professionals and a 'failure of education policy-makers' to 'support teaching as a profession' (Ovenden-Hope, 2020, p.135).

Adapting and surviving under these conditions where policies have worked to de-professionalise teachers has led to a focus on the agency of teachers. In fact, Priestley et al., (2015, p.2) suggest there is a welcome (re)turn to a consideration of teachers' agency but that this is 'not without problems' as for example, workplaces are subject to changing structures and cultures often dependent on 'politicians and policy makers' including those who regulate such contexts. There is a growing body of research focusing on schoolteachers' agency from a variety of perspectives, but there has been little attention paid to teachers' agency in FE, except for Lawy and Tedder's (2009) research into the agency of FE teacher educators and Priestley et al's., (2012) study focusing on teachers' agency and curriculum making in school and FE. There is also a dearth of research concerning the agentic capacity of teachers who have worked in both phases.

To fully understand teachers' achievement of agency it is important to consider the policy contexts in which teachers' work is located, the environments in which teachers practise, including initial teacher training. It is also important to consider the relationships teachers have over a lifetime with other teachers, the curriculum and the professional self. These dimensions are explored in this thesis.

1.1 The context

In 1997, the Prime Minister of the newly elected Labour Government, Tony Blair, made a commitment to make 'education, education, education' his three main priorities for government (Armitage et al, 2011, p. 285; Ball, 2013). It appeared therefore, that education was now at the centre of economic policy-making for the future and amongst many other initiatives primarily aimed at raising standards, a 14-19 age phase was established. This was clearly an attempt to knit together historical divisions between secondary schools and further education colleges (FEC) where strong roots in vocational education and links to employers existed. Under these policy conditions, schools and colleges were required to work more collaboratively to provide for young people's needs, underpinned by notions of personal choice and aspirations through an entitlement to a broad curriculum offer with the intention to provide new vocational diplomas (DfES 2002a, 2002b, DfES 2003). To support implementation of Labour's 14-19 policies, conceptions of a new type of teacher began to emerge, such as that underpinning the PGCE piloted by Canterbury Christ Church University (Harkin, 2007, p. 45) my participants' PGCE course. Central to these conceptions was the need for teachers to act with professional flexibility and build professional relationships across the phases of secondary and further education provision where requirements for teaching qualifications varied (Senior, 2010). At the same time, it could be argued that Labour's policy reforms undermined these new conceptions because they affected teachers' understanding of themselves as professionals on individual and system levels, as cultures of accountability, the market, managerialism and performativity put mounting pressure on teachers' autonomy and professional judgement which impacted teachers' identity and agency (Day, 2002; Husu and Clandinin, 2019; Imants and Van der Wal, 2020). It is unsurprising then that interest in teachers' agency has grown significantly since these reforms.

Arguably, and at different points in time, teachers in both secondary school and FE phases have become commodities (Ovenden-Hope, 2021) and may find themselves in conditions of uncertainty, particularly in the context of continuous change, and as such may find it difficult to pin down any sense of professional identity or agency (Sachs, 2010). This view, supported by Day, (2002, p.681) identifies prescribed policy interventions as having the potential to enable the conditions which result in a 'diminished sense of agency'. The imposition of professional standards (different for each phase) to regulate teachers in secondary school and the FE phases have conversely also been perceived as attempts to 'professionalize' and the different discourses for each sector can both be seen to have affected perceptions of agency and autonomy through instrumental rational approaches and accountabilities (Day, 2002). Because of this, teachers may find it hard to resist and challenge the dominant ideology of neo-liberal influences on education policy which is also a frustration felt by Goodson (2015).

1.2 The rationale

Imants and Van der Wal, (2020) suggest there are three reasons for the recent focus on teachers' agency: firstly, raising awareness of teachers as change agents in professional development, school reform and school improvement; secondly, the issue of sustained change in professional and school development and, lastly, the role of teachers' work environment in professional development. Although Imants' and Van der Wal's, (2020) focus is on the agency of schoolteachers, I have also applied the reasons for this focus to further education teachers as little research into their agency exists which would enable a cross phase connectivity. Teachers' work is recognised by Priestley, et al., (2015) as not merely confined to the school setting and consideration of the wider socio-cultural contexts in which education operates is important, particularly so for teachers of vocational curricula where earlier professional relationships can exist and influence practice, as vocational curricula often cross boundaried workspaces.

Defining the concept of agency is not simple and it has been explored extensively from a range of scholarly perspectives over many years drawing on four traditions: sociology, psychology, socio cultural and pragmatist traditions (Leijen, et al., 2020) all taking the basic premise that agency relates to human action and capacity to act in given structural and cultural contexts where reform agendas can affect both teachers' agency and professional vulnerability (Archer,1982, 1988; Bandura, 1989, 2001; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Giddens, 1984, Biesta, et al., 2015; Priestley, et al., 2015; Lasky, 2005). As a succinct definition, teacher agency is seen as something a teacher does, by way of their environment, not just in it and the capacity to act in social settings rather than something a teacher possesses. Components of agency, therefore, involve elements such as intentionality, responsibility, obligation, judgement, autonomy, choice, and sense of purpose but there are differing perspectives.

For example, employing a sociocultural approach, Lasky, (2005) suggested that teacher agency and professional vulnerability are shaped in two ways: through early influences and through reform agendas which ultimately affect how teachers define themselves and their sense of purpose. Conceptually, 'agency' and 'vulnerability' are linked through mediating systems of social and cultural structures alongside the political and social context in which teachers' experiences are located. Vulnerability is a multidimensional emotional experience exposing individuals to possible harm or threat and where supportive relationships with others are important. Therefore, vulnerability, when connected to agency, is about how actors act under conditions of threat such as reform agendas where shared meanings, values and norms exist.
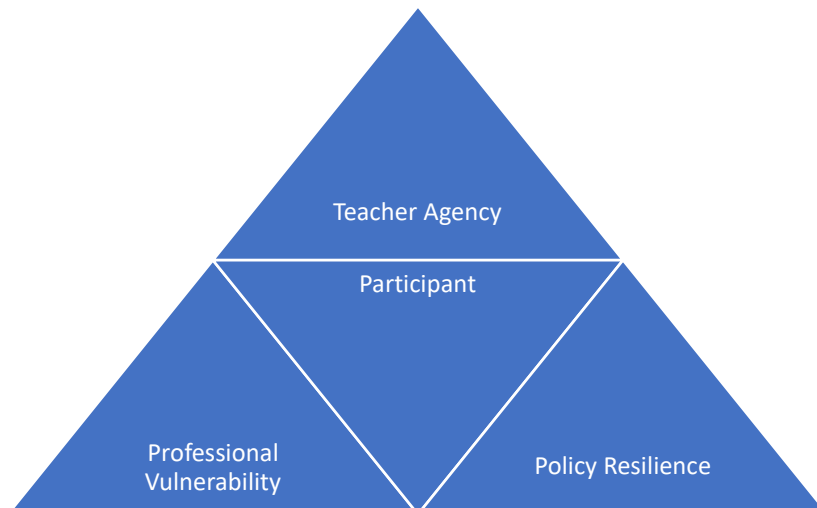
Undeniably, reform agendas affect teachers' working lives over the course of their careers resulting in continuous renegotiation of professional identities (Kauppinen et al., 2020). There is also the suggestion that, for some, Blair's reforms meant 'conflict, inauthenticity and resistance' yet, paradoxically, for others they provided 'an opportunity to make a success of themselves' (Ball, 2003, p.215). Teachers' workspaces therefore can be contradictory in terms of professional expectations as they, as actors, continuously navigate diverse socio-cultural conditions, for example, different management cultures and practices with expectations that teachers collaborate across professional boundaries (Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto, 2015). However, literature exploring teachers' agency tends to lean towards teachers engaged in practice in different phases focusing either on primary, secondary or further education at a variety of points in teachers' careers. Therefore, when roots are located in different histories and where policies enacted in each phase potentially serve different educational purposes, this makes exploring boundaries across institutions challenging.

1.3 Researcher's interest in agency

My interest in teachers' agency stemmed from a curiosity and concern about the status of teachers across phases as there are differences in training, expectations, and professional contexts and I felt there was something lost when secondary schools and further education provision disconnected as a result of coalition government policy in 2010 and diplomas were subsequently discontinued. As a university-based teacher educator, I became more aware of the ways in which teachers adapt to new circumstances and how, as professionals, teachers are reliant on their ability to be versatile through, for example, forming positive relationships with other professionals, including those in the wider community and reconfiguring professional identities. Since the vocational diploma routes my trainees would be teaching on lasted a mere two years before they became outdated, I became increasingly interested in the

stories of these specialist teachers and how each had adapted to changes imposed on them by policy reforms so early on in their careers. They had, after all, taken a highly demanding training course in good faith, which prepared them to teach a new 14-19 curriculum and contribute to wider-scale 14-19 policy reform. Clearly, education systems consist of different structures and Vangelis MaCrow, (2007, p.436) defines these as 'systematic ways of organising resources and human capital', specifically the teachers. Teachers therefore could be perceived as agents with their roles socially constructed and aligned to institutional practices (Goodson and Numan, 2002). However, Robinson, (2012, p.233) suggests that teachers' work is continually refined and reconstructed leading to 'new kinds of professionalism' where teachers' agency can be constrained as policies act to de-professionalise and then re-professionalise teachers' work. In reassembling agency in a specific environment, Vangelis MaCrow (2007) focused on schoolteachers' ability to 'navigate' in changing global contexts, yet I felt the issues raised could be applicable to different settings in the English education system. Again, I wondered how my participants had adapted and if their experiences in different settings had helped or hindered their professional lives and whether relationships had helped shape agency.

However, I did not discover 'agency' as a central concept in the thesis until much later in the research process and, consequently, there have been significant revisions of the text. Initially, I had thought to address issues of professional identity across the phases where agency was an element rather than a central concept, but it became clear upon analysing the data that teacher agency was fundamental in understanding teachers' professional lives and positioning in a contemporary context. I was however, committed to using life history at the outset as it was the most suitable method for this study, and I had used an ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to develop life histories early on. I had also developed relationship domains adapted using Powell and Tod's, (2004), and Ellis and Tod's, (2009) categories for children's behaviour for learning applying these to participants to manage and code the interview data. Adopting a life history approach brought out the way in which configurations of the past and current experience could be oriented to the future. The central concept of 'agency' therefore, emerged gradually and aligned well with Biesta et al's., (2015) ecological model. Adopting pragmatism (Dewey, 1938) as a theoretical approach provided the final piece of the puzzle and connected well to the emphasis on the experiences of participants, and agency became a significant theme. This strengthened my focus on exploring the experiences of participants as agency was achieved in environments which could encompass the churn of political, cultural, and historical contexts. This also necessitated continual development and refinement of the research questions.

1.4 An Ecological Model and the Research Questions

To understand more about the agency of teachers in this study, agency is conceptualised using a framework which understands agency as an ecological concept where agents control and direct their lives and professional practice (Biesta et al., 2015; Lawy and Tedder, 2009). Agency is explored through three relationship domains informed by Powell and Tod, (2004) and Ellis and Tod, (2009) and through a temporal model and three-dimensional form where there are influences from the past, orientations towards the future and engagement with the present (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). A more detailed explanation for why these frameworks were chosen is given toward the end of Chapter 3. The five participants are now experienced teachers in the UK and evidence provided was collected through interviews focusing on individuals' life stories with each participant being interviewed twice, researcher reflections post interviews and historical personal documents archived since the PGCE adding to the richness of the data. Analysis of the policy documentation contextualises that period prior to and post the diploma implementation which, with supporting literature, provides a rich and detailed consideration of the reforms around vocational education, and professionalism of teachers across both phases.

Agency in the context of this study is not based on any sociological structure-agency debates but based on understandings of what Biesta et al (2015, p.626) call 'an emergent phenomenon of actor-situation transaction' thus rooted in the thinking of pragmatists like Dewey and Mead (Mead, 1932; Dewey, 1938; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Biesta, et al 2015; Bergh and Wahlstrom, 2018). Whilst agency is meaningful in the context of reforms i.e., how agency is achieved during reforms, there is only partial understanding of how teachers' agency changes to adapt to reform changes over time (Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto, 2011). From the participants' position, arguably as major change agents supporting implementation of a new curriculum – a role more related to experienced teachers occupying complex positions (Leander and Osborne, 2008), the specialist teachers in this study were often perceived by experienced teachers, usually their mentors, as experts during their ITE, which placed them somewhat unfairly in prominent positions at a very early stage of their careers. From my position as their tutor during the PGCE, I noticed that this exposed them to incidences of teacher resistance and conflict as, understandably, teachers are not passive receivers of curriculum reforms particularly if there is discordance with the goal(s) of the reform(s) (for example see Fullan, 2003).

Using an ecological model with life history approaches to investigate participants' achievement of agency through exploring their relationships with other teachers, the curriculum and perceptions of self, have helped in shaping the two main research questions, which ask:

1. What understanding of teachers' agency can be generated through using life history to explore cross phase vocational teachers' experience?

2. What can we learn about the importance of relationships in shaping the agency of cross phase vocational teachers?

To guide this study the questions are designed to help understand what it means to be a dually trained vocational teacher, how each participant's relationship with teachers over time influences what they do (or do not do) in their professional lives. In shaping agency, the research questions focus on how relationships function as a resource for engagement in the concrete situations where action occurs. Using an ecological model to conceptualise and analyse the achievement of teachers' agency provided the tools with which to explore this complex phenomenon. An ecological model is useful because it presents a way of looking at how teachers operate in their environments and how they interact with the social and material elements available to them through their relationships. Relationships develop through interactions and transactions which are rooted in individuals' past experiences (the temporal) and, drawing on Emirbayer and Miche's (1998) study, Priestley et al, (2015) suggest, these are then oriented to the future and located in the present. In order to develop professional life histories and examine participants' achievement of agency, these locations are further explored through domains of (a) relationship with teachers over time, (b) relationships with the curriculum over time and (c) the relationship with the self over time as adapted from Powell and Tod's (2004) social, cognitive and emotional areas in the field of children's behaviour for learning.

Using a life history approach to explore participants' experiences has potential (Edwards, 2015) particularly as little research into teachers' agency has been undertaken using this approach. Environments are socially constructed, so exploring participants' relationships helps to delve deeper into these sites of harmony and conflict where, since the late 1970s, neo-liberal government policies have further determined the context. This research does not aim to present the ideal way to develop as a teacher. However, through exploring teachers' lives, their past personal experiences including their unconventional and unique dual training, these participants can offer insights into understanding what achieving agency looks like for them in a given environment (Toom et al., 2015).

1.5 The structure of the thesis

This introductory chapter sets out the policy context, the research questions, the researcher's position, rationale, the structure of the thesis and contribution to knowledge. Chapter 2

explores the policy context, the development of the 14-19 PGCE course, historical developments related to teachers' professionalism in secondary schools and further education, the 14-19 Diploma and its pedagogy. Chapter 3 discusses concepts of agency and teachers' agency and their slippery nature (Priestley et al, 2015; Frost, 2006; Leander and Osborne, 2008; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto, 2011; Biesta et al, 2015; Insulander et al, 2019; Hadar and Benish-Weisman, 2019) and concludes with a conceptual framework through which to explore and understand more about how teachers' agency is shaped and its connectivity to relationships. In Chapter 4, there is a consideration of methodology using a life history approach and its philosophical underpinning in pragmatism (Tierney and Landford, 2019; Caine, Estefan and Clandinin, 2013; Dewey, 1938). Rooted in the narrative, this study utilises life history methods to understand more about the professional lives of teachers, an approach initially established through the work of Goodson and Ball in the 1980s (see Goodson and Ball 1985; Polkinghorne, 1995) and illuminates how agency can be achieved. The research design and rationale for the study are then presented before narrative approaches and life history are considered. The role of the researcher is explained, and ethical considerations and procedures are outlined. The rationale for participant selection is explained as well as the procedures for recruitment and participation. Data collection and setting as well as data analysis are described before a consideration of how to establish trustworthiness in qualitative research. Chapter 5 presents five professional life histories, each starting with a short pen portrait of each participant. In Chapter 6, I draw together the themes of the study through revisiting the two research questions and discuss the achievement of teacher agency. Finally, I present conclusions and recommendations.

1.6 The study's contribution to knowledge

The contribution this study makes is twofold. Firstly, through the conceptual framework there is the contribution to the consideration of teachers' agency per se, which is developing momentum as an area for research, and which reflects its growing importance in understanding the professional lives of teachers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Powell and Tod, 2004; Ellis and Tod, 2009; Biesta, et al, 2015). The stories of five teachers are valuable in aiding understandings of the achievement of agency through exploring how relationships can influence what teachers do in concrete situations such as major curriculum policy changes and beyond and could provide transferable insights into teachers' policy resilience. Secondly, the study describes the ways in which a unique ITE course provided an opportunity for participants to exercise agency through accessing a wider sphere of professional training which enabled them to have additional choice and occupational flexibility in their career paths as teachers necessitating a reconfiguration of professional identities. The insights gained about how they have navigated these career paths maintaining their work as teachers could

be more widely helpful to teacher educators and policy makers (Edwards, 2015). In perceiving agency as something to be achieved, the extent to which these teachers themselves have managed to continue to develop as professionals was explored in the context of socio-political conditions where one's ability to act is connected to agency (Bauman, 2012).

1.7 Reflexive summary

I was interested in the agency of participants in this study almost a decade on from their teacher preparation course (the PGCE) and in what context this had been achieved or not. Initially, I was curious about participants' professional identity and why they had chosen this unusual route to becoming a teacher. Their professional experiences were so different from other phased based teachers and my initial concerns included how each had managed to survive the policy contexts and reinvent themselves professionally. Relationships and connections are important in developing as a professional (Edwards, 2005) and studying professional lives is important in contributing to debates and issues that continue to emerge in specific contexts. Narrative inquiry involves many approaches but what connects them is the is the study of experience (Clandinin, 2006). Employing a life history approach to 'capture the process of change' (Ojermark, 2007, p.3) presented an opportunity to deepen understandings of teachers' agency and teachers' relationships when wide-scale reform is introduced and then abandoned (Goodson, 2001). Schools and colleges are living systems which are more organic than mechanical, and each teacher has a unique position which is complex and contextual, and their activities are numerous, which will be explored through interrogating their individual narratives. Taking an ecological approach to participants' achievement of agency gave me the tools to explore their temporal relationships more deeply for analytical purposes (Archer, 1988; Emirbayer and Mische 1998) so that meaning making could occur.

Chapter 2 Policy, PGCE, Diplomas and the Professionalisation of Teachers

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the relevant policy context for post 14 education spanning the years 1997-2018, starting with New Labour's focus on education and a culture of collaboration across institutional boundaries and ending at the point where data for this study were collected. To set the context, the development of the 14-19 PGCE course in 2003 is explained and this is followed by an account of the establishment of a Diploma teacher specialism route the ITE participants in this study undertook. The next section explains the Diploma and its pedagogy in order to set the context for participants' distinctive initial teacher education (ITE) experiences. The unique cross-phase training model necessitates an overview of wider historical developments related to the professionalisation of teachers in secondary schools and further education so that these can be better understood. Because this involves two phases, there are many abbreviations and acronyms in this chapter and there is a glossary on page 5.

Labour's education policy, driven by global competition, promoted a strong ethos of working with others, crossing institutional boundaries and developing inter-professional relationships between teachers across institutions to enable learners to benefit from the widest possible professional expertise linked to broad vocational areas. For participants in the study, this offered a platform for establishing a broader arena to develop their practice which could increase agentic capacity and ability. As Diploma teachers, post qualifying, this professional identity and agentic capacity could continue to develop giving some flexibility professionally (Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto, 2011). Yet for other teachers, including their mentors during participants' training, acculturated in single phased-based teaching environments, their practice informed by related professional standards, cross phase diploma teaching was more problematic.

Drawing on new forms of practice, suggests Edwards, (2005, p.168, 2011) provides an enhanced form of what she calls 'relational agency' which has implications for professional practice including boundary crossing but this work relates to wider professional contexts such as health and social work. However, these ideas can be applied to this study as different professional standards exist for each phase, therefore, when relational agency is experienced through the training period, navigating spaces and understanding the wider context of workplaces ought to be perceived as beneficial. Understanding social structures and perceiving teachers across phases as 'interprofessional' (Edwards, 2011, p.33), each with specialist expertise, collaborating across workplaces and phases to support the Diplomas, therefore seemed essential to understanding how relationships could have shaped

participants' agency. Even so, crossing so-called professional boundaries, in education particularly, can be problematic as policies and histories and our own experiences often reinforce existing workplace cultures in the following ways:

- relationships and interactions with teachers occur for most people during their own schooling which could limit their understanding of FE teachers' roles. There are also limited transactions between teachers in each phase
- furthermore, with regard to people's understanding of the curriculum and how this is taught, Hanley et al, (2018) draw distinctions between the school curriculum, which consists of a small number of single academic disciplines and the FE curriculum which will comprise a much broader range of usually vocational areas
- professional identity can be dependent on prior experiences in occupations and or further study and is developed, shaped and reconfigured, firstly by phase-based training and then by ongoing professional experience and by policy and practice relating, for example, to teacher status, conditions of service, regulation and de-regulation, creating a sense of instability which can disrupt agency (Bauman, 2012).

2.2 The policy context

At the core of the New Labour Government's policies was education. In 1997, the Prime Minister of the newly elected Labour Government, Tony Blair, made a commitment to make 'education, education, education' his three main priorities for government (Armitage et al., 2011, p.285; Ball, 2013). In their first swathe of education policies, 'New Labour' set out to commit to, among other things, more spending on education with policies designed to value all learners and not just those who were considered the most academically able, attempting to address issues of parity (Pring, 2009; Hodgson and Spours, 2010; Ball, 2013; Senior, 2015). As part of this, Labour's policies introduced a statutory teaching qualification for the FE phase (Bathmaker, 2000). As Labour's policies continued to reach far and wide, there was significant focus on reforming the post 14 curriculum. A distinct 14-19 phase and accountability targets in schools to measure students' attainment and progression, were introduced. It was clear that the 14-19 age range represented a key transition period for young people reflecting the progression through further and higher education and training towards employment.

There were a number of factors underpinning the 14-19 reform agenda: the global economy and competition, social justice – background, it was argued, would not matter and the personalisation of learning would serve individual learner needs, abilities and aspirations emphasising 'tailoring of the talents' (DfES, 2003; DfES, 2005. p.1; DfES, 2006; Hodgson and

Spours, 2010). Developments included the introduction of a range of vocationally related diplomas which, rather than focusing on preparation for work, focused more broadly on theoretical and practical aspects of learning. Partnership working through local consortia of schools, colleges and other providers was established and this was not without its problems (Senior, 2010). There were a variety of consortia arrangements and for a typical consortium see Figure 1.

a typical consortium

Awarding body

Awarding body

11-16 school

11-18 school

11-16 school

Local authority

Higher education

Employers

Regional Learning and Skills Council

Careers advisory serice

sixth form college

Further education college

11-18 school

Awarding body

Awarding body
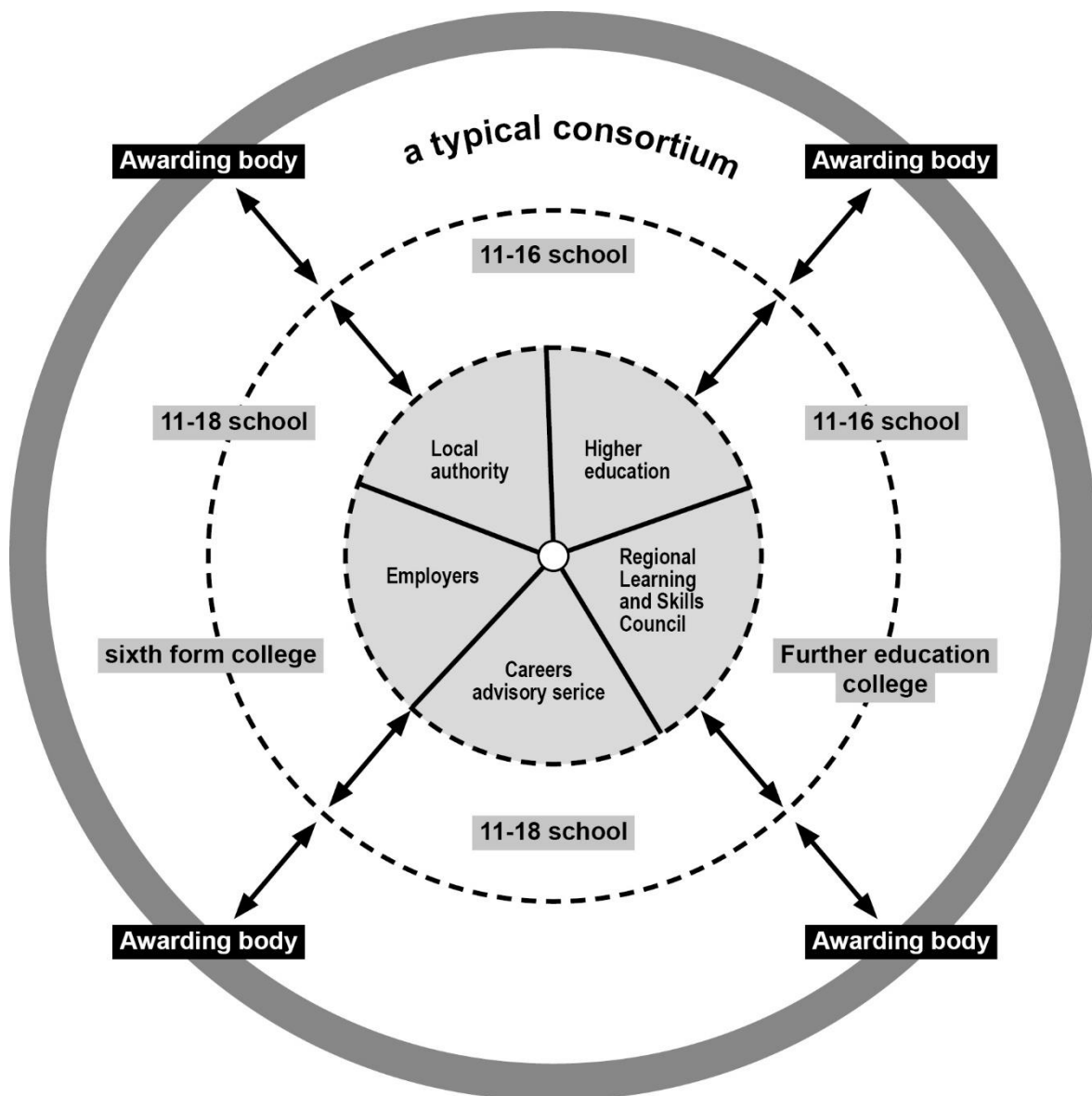
Figure 1

The vocational diplomas constituted a major development in vocational education. They took various forms over nearly a decade but were first announced in the 2002 Green Paper *14-19: Extending Opportunities, Raising Standards.* Among key proposals were a matriculation diploma recognising students' achievement at 19 as well as the introduction of work-related courses from 14. There were, however, growing concerns about young people's participation

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in education post 16 and additional fears about disengagement and risk of disaffection particularly as job markets were able to demand workers with higher levels of qualifications. In 2004, 14-19 curriculum reform led by Sir Mike Tomlinson looked to replace GCSEs and A Levels through the introduction of a diploma covering both general and vocational disciplines with the intention of levelling the historic academic and vocational divisions (DfES 2004b; Hodgson and Spours, 2010). However, the Labour Government did not implement the Tomlinson reforms: some commentators felt that, in an election year, the abandonment of the gold standard of GCSE and A Level was too much of a risk for them to take (Hodgson and Spours, 2010). Indeed, Raffe, (2013) argued that all countries face similar difficulties with parity of esteem for vocational education and deficit discourses around vocational and applied education prevail (Bathmaker, 2013; Wheelahan 2015). Arguing for a more unified approach to 14-19 education, rather than pursue parity of esteem, Pring et.al's., (2009) 5-year review of 14-19 education explored a common baccalaureate structure with core learning and specialised pathways but noted the policy tensions between institutions in part as a result of different performance measurements in the system.

By 2004, over 53% of young people were gaining 5 or more GCSEs at grades A-C, which showed improvement on previous attainment outcomes of 45% in 1997 (DfES,2005). Under a target driven culture, this was seen as a success and the professionalism of teachers, their training and diversity of subjects taught noted in policy documents (DfES, 2002a 2002b, DfES,2005). Alongside general academic study and provision of up to 8 vocational GCSEs, the curriculum entitled all young people to learn about work and enterprise and to continue to study level 2 (GCSE level) literacy and numeracy until 19 years in schools, colleges or adult education provision. Schools providing vocational education courses alongside more general academic curricula, generated more competition for learner enrolments between schools and colleges and ensured a deeper entrenchment of a neo-liberal, market led culture (Ball, 2006). In defining neo-liberalism, Ball (2006, p.5) attributes the most suitable explanation to Shamir (2006, p.3) who states that neo-liberalism is:

> '…treated neither as a concrete economic doctrine nor as a definitive set of political projects. Rather, I treat neo-liberalism as a complex, often incoherent, unstable and even contradictory set of practices that are organized around a certain imagination of the 'market' as a basis for the universalization of market based social relations, with the corresponding penetration in almost every single aspect of our lives of the discourse and/or practice of commodification, capital-accumulation and profit-making.'

In her 'What would Dicken's think?' paper on 21st Century Vocational Education, Unwin, (2004, p.178) pointed out that economic panic drives government policy. It is fair to propose that vocational education and training (VET) is centrally important to the economy as VET is almost always defined by its value to the economy, but this may also be argued for general education and its purpose - yet there are status issues. Unwin (2004) goes on to suggest that it is a waste of time to focus on issues of parity of esteem between vocational and academic learning as this is rooted deeply in historical culture in English society. The academic and vocational divides have long existed and employer needs, and beliefs, individual needs and beliefs often conflict with each other and are then dominated by societal beliefs based on political party ideology. The fragility of this argument is that it assumes that social and political structures are not subject to challenge and change which despite its disappointing outcome, Tomlinson set out to achieve in 2004 introducing a diploma curriculum aiming to shift the paradigm. The structure of the 14-19 PGCE designed for cross phase initial teacher education aimed to support changes in curriculum design for young people through diploma routes which required the knowledge and skills of teachers in schools and further education.

Alongside these policy initiatives, and funded by the Nuffield Foundation, Pring, et al., (2009) began their 5-year inquiry asking the question: 'What makes an educated 19-year-old?'. Underlined as the largest review into this phase of education since the Crowther Report in 1959, amongst other areas, it recommended the following for teachers and teachers' preparation:

- 'recruitment, initial training and professional development of teachers need to take into consideration the practical knowledge required for the changing 14-19 phase;

- qualifications for school teaching (Qualified Teacher Status QTS) and those for FE (Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills QTLS in England) should be more closely related;

- ways should be found for those with much needed practical and work-based knowledge to acquire Qualified Teacher Status;

- continuing professional development should be an *entitlement* and located (where appropriate) in professional centres, run by teachers' (Pring et al, 2009 p.97).

Pring et al, (2009) also drew attention to the plethora of policy initiatives of New Labour and an inability to learn from the past. They also pointed out the problematic nature of further education with endless policy directives exhausting teachers in both schools and the wider further education phase.

In addressing the role of teachers, Pring et al (2009) drew attention to the separate pathways to becoming a teacher in each phase, acknowledging the increasing interdependency across

phases for 14-19 education. Under this review, teachers in both phases were recognised as professionals and the education system under the Labour government continued with this two-track system. However, this review did not address teachers' agency per se but did acknowledge the target setting and accountability culture established in schools adopted by the Labour government through the performance and pay rewards structure which further entrenched neoliberal ideology. Pring et al, (2009) therefore, argued for a more inclusive approach to 14 -19 education which included for example, parity of professional status for teachers across the phases, which is the principle the 14-19 PGCE set out to adopt through its dual accreditation model when both phases were regulated professions.

In his 2005 speech on education, Prime Minister, Tony Blair underlined his party's position, stating: 'the country will succeed or fail on the basis of how it changes itself and gears up to this new economy, based on knowledge' (cited in Ball, 2013, p.14). In order to address some of these concerns, additional reforms in 2005 saw the introduction of 'Specialised Diploma' routes for 14–19-year-olds with plans for a full suite of 15 and an additional 3 for more academic subjects. In March 2007, as part of a political agenda thought to accommodate the Tomlinson Diplomas, these were renamed 'Diplomas' with identified lines of learning (Senior, 2010). This was seen as a 'political compromise' in relation to the Tomlinson Diplomas (Hodgson and Spours, 2010, p.98). The Diploma was at three levels: foundation, higher (GCSE equivalent) and advanced (A Level equivalent) and participants in this study needed to be fully conversant with the requirements of these diplomas, specifically Society, Health and Development SHD, as part of their ITE course.

Further investment in young people saw the introduction of an Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) in 2006, which was seen as an important strategy to encourage young people to continue to participate in education and provided means-tested financial support for post 16 participation. Nevertheless, despite its popularity, EMA ended in England in 2010. Drawing on evidence from the Institute for Fiscal Studies, Ball, (2013) drew attention to its marked success.

The school curriculum is continually tinkered with and the introduction of the 14-19 Diploma learning lines in 2008 covering fourteen vocational and three more general education lines or sectors (e.g., engineering, society, health and development, creative and media) marked a global shift which reflected the emergence of a more knowledge-based economy (Fletcher, 2011). Government invested 45 million pounds in training teachers (Isaacs, 2013) and as part of this introduced a new and innovative type of teacher preparation course, a specialist pathway PGCE (participants in this study), which would enable secondary teachers to teach

on vocational preparation courses and connect cross phase working which mirrored the experiences of young people attending cross consortia provision to access the widest possible curriculum (Hodgson and Spours, 2010, p.96; TDA, 2007).

In preparation for the new curriculum, both schools and FE colleges were involved in preparing to teach the 14-19 Diplomas and sharing students from the 14-19 age phase in Key stages 4 and 5. A new route for initial teacher education was established in 2008 through its innovation category by the then Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) for five University providers of secondary courses to offer initial teacher education courses for one of the first new 14-19 Diplomas in Society, Health and Development.

Further initiatives to encourage participation post 16 included a new curriculum entitlement for young people consisted of: a statutory core curriculum English, maths and science at Key Stage 4; a 14-19 Diploma, including Society Health and Development as one of the first available; as well as Diplomas in the Arts, Design and Technology, Humanities and Modern Foreign Languages. At 16-19 all general and vocational qualifications remained and would now include 14-19 Diplomas and Functional Skills at Level 2. The breadth of the curriculum entitlement provided a challenge for schools and colleges.

The OECD Review of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in 2009 identified a lack of stability in VET and drew attention to the problematic nature of 'innovative and ambitious policy environments' (Hoeckel, 2009). It specifically highlighted the complexity and challenge for industry bodies in undergoing various reforms – in England alone, 5 times during the last 30 years. In terms of employer engagement, the OECD Review pointed out that simplification would offer stability and enhance employer engagement with VET and, as a result, improve skills for employment. Ongoing changes in vocational education (VE) courses mean that teachers can be presented with challenges as shifts in industry practices put pressure on VE teachers' occupational related knowledge and skills. It is important, therefore, that teachers engage with firstly, relevant CPD to maintain occupational currency (Broad, 2013) and secondly, policies that potentially affect their roles as teachers. By the same token, CPD provides opportunities for broadening teachers' practice, building resilience to manage instability in VE, potentially enhancing teachers' capacity for agency.

In 2010, the newly formed coalition government was not committed to the 14-19 Diplomas nor the newly established teacher education courses. It did, however, continue with commitment to the provision in ITE of secondary phase postgraduate vocational or applied subjects, for example in Health and Social Care, Applied Art and Design and Business Studies. However,

these subjects did not continue to attract a training bursary and high value was placed on subjects aligned to for example, Science and maths with vocational routes barely visible and alongside Citizenship, collectively categorised as 'other' in government data suggesting these did not matter. Current government rhetoric concerning levelling up seems to mean through traditional academic subjects. Indeed, Young (2011) argued that the curriculum imposed by the coalition was trapped in the past, elitist and with no place for the future.

Clearly vocational education (VE) operates as a deficit model, with Broad, (2013) also implying that both technical and VE are perceived as mediocre, second best and suffering from a lack of esteem. Indeed, research by Atkins and Flint, (2015) highlighted young people's negative perceptions of VE, seeing it as having little advantage, seemingly through its strong association with learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds studying vocational courses in further education colleges. Because of these negative perceptions, teachers of VE in schools and FE face additional challenges. Teachers' professional agentic capacity, that is, what they do, plays a role in influencing young people in their choices and was one of the features of the diplomas. Despite ongoing changes since in the VE curriculum, it continues to be the case that VE teachers need to understand structures, relationships, and agency as education and industry become increasingly connected through for example, learners' placements, expanding teachers' work outside of the classroom (Vahasantenen and Etalapelto, 2011). Schoolteachers' connections to industry are not usually as strong as those of teachers in further education.

VE is recognised as having a problematic and 'troubled history' and New Labour's focus on target-driven outcomes failed to address the needs or experiences of learners (Fuller and Unwin, 2011, p.191). Despite the lack of transparency in the Wolf Report's methodology (Fuller and Unwin, 2011), her influential work on vocational education (Wolf, 2011), redefined the curriculum for 14–19-year-olds post the Diploma era and realigned the dominant position of subject disciplines in schools and argued that for many young people apprenticeships are the best route to employment and training (Professor Wolf, now a Dame, was herself an economist and mathematician). Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Education at the time, in his foreword (Wolf, 2011, p.4) is nostalgic about the Great Exhibition of 1851 giving the impression that government required a work force skilled in scientific discoveries underpinned by economic competition. The debates about what constitutes an educated person persisted and concerns about studying the natural or human world and what constitutes valuable or even useful knowledge lay at the heart of policy makers' decisions.

2.3 The 14-19 PGCE

In 2003, in anticipation of curricular reforms, a unique dual structured 14-19 PGCE course was established at Canterbury Christ Church University spanning the 14-19 age phase starting with one subject – Art and Design – closely followed by Applied Business Studies and Leisure and Tourism for which a new GCSE had recently been introduced to curriculum provision in secondary schools for learners in Key Stage 4 (14–16-year-olds). The common aims of the 14-19 PGCE were shared with those of all Initial Teacher Education/Training (ITE/ITT) in that a set of phase related professional standards were met. For the PGCE this was sustained through university-based sessions and professional practice development and as part of the structure there were teaching practice placements in secondary schools and FECs. This meant that trainees were able to demonstrate that they met the professional standards for both the school phase and the wider post compulsory phase, for example in Further Education Colleges. This enabled trainees to achieve recognition across two distinct phases in education with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in schools regulated at the time by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and from 2007 onwards, Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) in the further education and skills or lifelong learning phase which at the time was regulated by the Institute for Learning.

In preparation for curriculum implementation, both schools and FE colleges were involved in preparing to teach the 14-19 Diplomas and sharing students from the 14-19 age phase in Key stages 4 and 5 managed through the establishment of localised 14-19 consortia which sought ways to accommodate among other changes, diploma teaching. A new route for initial teacher education through its innovation category had been established in 2008 by the then Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), as mentioned above.

Teacher recruitment numbers were carefully controlled and restricted to ten post graduate student teachers per academic year. My own University was one of the providers approved to prepare teachers. The unique 14-19 PGCE course in applied subjects established in 2003, outlined above, seemed the logical means of supporting this new route and the PGCE in Society Health and Development (SHD) was validated, this being the course the participants of this study attended. The PGCE received endorsement and accreditation from both the TDA and what was then Standards Verification UK (SVUK) – a regulatory body for the further education phase, referred to then as 'lifelong learning' and this dual endorsement and accreditation set my University's SHD PGCE apart from the PGCEs of the other four university providers.

Whilst the secondary school phase tends to focus on academic achievement and attainment – indeed it is measured on its outcomes in this area - the further education phase has traditionally provided the opportunities for young people to start again or study something that is not part of the school curriculum and to prepare entry for or consideration of specific roles or occupational sectors (Armitage et al, 2016; Ball, 2001). The 14-19 policy position at the time participants undertook their PGCE (2008-2010) reflected the necessity for both secondary schools and FECs to work collaboratively in consortium arrangements to support access to a widest possible curriculum for young people which crucially included the implementation of the 14-19 Diplomas where access to specialist teachers was important (DfES, 2002a, 2002b). For an overview of the policy context see Appendix A. Furlong (2013) underlined the strength of New Labour policies which at this time also focussed on initial teacher education.

In contrast, Bailey and Robson, (2002, p.325) had been critical of earlier policy changes in ITE arguing that government's approach to the different phases had been 'piecemeal' and this approach had created significant concern over inconsistencies raising particular concerns for FE teachers about recognition and status. Until regulation in 2001, through the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO), FE teachers had not been required to hold teaching qualifications, yet many did. In a similar vein to some vocationally related areas in higher education, expertise in vocational and professional specialisms had been perceived appropriate in themselves to teach.

As part of the PGCE course, student teachers undertook an additional diploma experience (ADE) through a third non-assessed placement to further boost their understanding of the diplomas either in existing placements or in another setting such as the prison education service and this experience informed a best practice case study for the then Training and Development Agency (TDA) for schools (see Appendix B).

2.4 The 14-19 Diplomas (2008-2010)

The Diploma qualification introduced young people to consider future employment in broader employment sectors rather than specific occupational roles as vocational preparation (Broad, 2013; Hodgson and Spours, 2011; Senior, 2010). Senior, (2010) rightly makes the point that a single secondary school with subject experts mostly relating to the national curriculum would be unlikely to have the staff with relevant knowledge and expertise to teach these qualifications. Senior, (2010, p.11) also raised questions concerning the most appropriate qualifications for those to have who teach the Society, Health and Development Diploma and teach in collaborative models of school and FE partnerships designed to accommodate

learners on these courses. Despite Hodgson and Spours (2010) highlighting a need for a different type of teacher and PrIng et al, (2009) recommending alignment of QTS and QTLS, little was known about the cross phase ITE course for SHD which participants had undertaken or their agency.

The diplomas brought about considerable change in practice in both the secondary and further education phases and specialist teachers, arguably positioned as change agents, were needed to support these changes which was recognised by the TDA and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (2008, p.4) 'Forging links between school/college and the wider community is important in preparing young people for the challenges of the "knowledge economy" and for coping with a world of growing complexity and rapid change,' which involved collaborative working between institutions. The QCA further stated that '… The Diploma brings together employers, educators and others in recognition of the need to help prepare learners for life and work in local and global environments that require flexible adaptation to new problems and settings' (QCA 2008, p.5). For a more detailed overview of organisations involved in 14-19 skills agenda see Appendix C.

Recognising the importance of developing different kinds of skills and knowledge through the Diploma learning and preparing young people for futures not yet imagined, Blair's government launched the diplomas in local consortia, providing a plethora of resources promoting the diplomas and supported a route for specialist teachers (TDA, QCA, 2008). Indeed, some of its literature and media promotion argued that teachers were tasked with preparing young people for an unfamiliar world where employment opportunities had not yet been thought of. Alongside CPD, teacher preparation was key, and a national online CPD course providing occupational currency for diploma practitioners for existing teachers preparing to teach the diplomas was also developed nationally by the researcher's university but failed to recruit sufficient numbers. However, the PGCE recruited to target and through their PGCE, the specialist teachers in this study were able to seek support from university tutors and work alongside others, building professional relationships with the support of their mentors in both school and FE environments, drawing on resources and vocational teacher expertise from a range of institutions, therefore increasing their professional agency.

2.5 The 14-19 Diploma Pedagogy

The design and characteristics of the Diploma had implications for teaching and consequently, initial teacher education. The Diploma qualification introduced young people to consider future employment sectors rather than occupational roles as vocational preparation (Broad, 2013;

Hodgson and Spours, 2011; QCA, 2008; Senior, 2010). Coffield, (2008) writing about FE teachers, also emphasised the importance of increasing the agency of learners and argued that transforming relationships between teachers and learners could achieve more with stronger collaboration and cooperation (Appendix D provides an overview of the different actors in vocational education).

Both the 14-19 diploma and associated pedagogy were research-informed, drawing on a range of important learning theories that suggest learners: 'benefit from a range of different, but connected, contexts that involve interactions with a variety of others. Motivation and achievement are increased when tasks have purposes that are relevant to the individual and 'real-world' contexts, including the workplace, and when learners are actively involved, and supported, in shaping their learning experience' (DfES 2003, Leitch, 2006, QCA, 2008, p.2). In identifying what a good quality learning experience looks like, diploma pedagogical approaches determined that learning should be supported through participation in a range of learning environments and settings, where learners were supported by teachers and mentors, highlighting the importance of relationships in these places particularly workplaces exposing young people to different cultures. These settings were described as 'communities of practice' for young people and not 'restrictive learning environments' where learners could learn from those more experienced and not be entirely dependent on classroom-based learning. Drawing further on European perspectives, it was suggested that:

> 'European research into Work Process Knowledge has shown that workers and
> professionals have to develop an understanding of the processes which are used
> in particular organizations to solve problems and complete tasks' (QCA, 2008,
> p.8).

Through diploma learning, there was a clear understanding that in order to engage with the future, young people needed to know and understand more about problem solving, reflection and flexibility in the world of work (but it was not preparation for this) and as such, the diploma learning aimed to be a: 'catalyst for economic competitiveness and growth', and 'situated within a broader arena, justified by concerns for citizenship, social integration and equity' (QCA, 2008, p.4). An integral part of diploma learning was crossing boundaries where learning in one setting was not seen as good enough in preparing young people for adulthood. It was about social learning which placed high importance on young people's engagement with a range of connected contexts and learning through social relationships with a wider set of actors and these interactions would help shape knowledge and behaviours aimed at increasing the versatility of young people.

The Diploma set out to stretch learners through its component parts. It focused on theoretical knowledge and its application to the real world lending an authenticity to this through learning through experience and in different education settings drawing on the expertise in each phase. This to some extent, mirrored the practice in the existing 14-19 PGCE course, where cross phase teaching placements were considered key to understanding and accommodating the different cultures in school and FE where professionalism and agency of teachers remained equally important and particularly so for courses of learning dependent on the vocational expertise of the teachers. As Edwards, (2005) notes, enhancing professional agency is dependent on building relationships through working with others and collaborative cultures are important in achieving this. The design of vocational education courses means that there is a reliance on a range of professionals' expertise in contributing to learners' education about a specific work sector as was the case with the 14-19 Diplomas.

2.6 Professionalism, professionalisation and identity in secondary schools and further education

It is beyond the scope of this study to fully consider the histories of teacher education or the many debates concerning teachers' professionalism, professionalisation and identity as these have been addressed effectively elsewhere (see Bailey and Robson, 2002; Beijaard et al., 2004; Robinson, 2006; Evans, 2008, 2011; Keating, 2010). However, it is helpful to provide a definition of professionalism and Evans, (2008) underlines professionalism as:

> work practice that is consistent with commonly-held consensual delineations of a specific profession or occupation and that both contributes to and reflects perceptions of the profession's or occupation's purpose and status and the specific nature, range and levels of service provided by, and expertise prevalent within, the profession or occupation, as well as the general ethical code underpinning this practice.
>
> (Evans, 2008, p. 29)

Professionalisation relates to the qualifications required to enter a profession and Evans, (2011) suggests that professional standards give a lop-sided view of professionalism through the focus on behaviour rather than attitude and intellect. Professional identity is complex to define and can be best understood as 'an ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation of experiences' (Beijaard et al., 2004, p.122). Professional identity, as a key dimension of professionalisation, is concerned with such matters as qualifications and

recognition and these vary for teachers across phases dependent on different historical and political developments.

In policy contexts, professionalism is designed and delineated by external agencies and can relate to the value of the service provided by teachers to those in power who grant status (Evans, 2008). A further problem for teachers' professional boundary crossing concerned authority of two government departments (Young, 2011). The appointment of John Hayes (2010-2012) in his position as Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning as a joint appointment between the Department for Education and Business Innovation and Skills (BIS), was aimed at bridging the gap between these two government departments.

Professional boundaries, Edwards (2011, p.35), contends, serve the purposes of organisations and these incorporate:

- 'demarking power in decision making in specific fields of action to ensure sphere of influence;
- identifying the limits of an organisations' resources to ensure that they are used to best advantage in a competitive market; and
- defining an organisation's identity, its sense of 'who we are' in relation to other organisations.'

Professional boundaries, therefore, can sustain practices but not necessarily aid their development despite attempts to try. Teachers' qualifications reveal the professional boundaries for those teaching in each phase where contested concepts of professionalism exist (Armitage et al., 2016). Developing along different paths, teachers' qualifications are connected to the ages and stages of state education provision, with schooling currently compulsory to age 16 years and FE identified as post compulsory from 16 years, reflecting points where the participation age has risen over time, with obligations now for learners up to the age of 18 to engage in education or undertake formal training as part of any employment role. Education, therefore, seems to reflect a social construction of the nature of childhood and mediates the demands of employers and the economy at a given point in time.

The introduction of teacher training for elementary education in the nineteenth century created the conditions that provided recognition for teaching as a profession (Keating, 2010). As schooling ages rose there was no requirement for formal training for secondary school teachers who usually held degrees, for teaching in grammar and public schools. Indeed,

secondary teaching has preserved it graduate entry. However, the idea of a qualified schoolteacher did not emerge until the McNair Report of 1944 and the Butler Act of the same year introduced a swathe of changes which introduced the tri-partite system through the structure of schools and further education (Bailey and Robson, 2002; Keating, 2010).

Further education provision distinguished teachers as 'lecturers' and included teaching a broad range of academic and industry learners with limited enrolment and for example, day release schemes for apprenticeships.   FE lecturers enjoyed higher salaries and better conditions when compared to schoolteachers. In 1979, around 45% of teachers in FE had a recognised teaching qualification. Through major legislation, the Further Education Act (1992) withdrew local authority support, set up as corporate entities and widened participation. This resulted in a huge shift in culture and negatively impacted on employment conditions for teachers. Funding pressures meant many FE teachers were recruited as part-timers, which also created a downward trend in those who held teaching qualifications. The requirement for formal teaching qualifications in FE was recommended by the Dearing Report (DfEE, 1997) and a range of qualifications became available.

Secondary school teaching is a graduate profession, implying a higher professional status with many, but not all, entering straight from university. FE by contrast has around a 50% graduate teaching workforce which can also reflect those dual occupational qualifications such as nursing or social work. Yet for some, who are experts in their fields such as many of those in construction, hospitality or service industries, mastery reflects occupational levels and needs. This diversity in FE creates what Robson, (in Hall and Marsh, 2000, p.12) called 'a weak professional boundary' affecting the status of FE teachers (Hall and Marsh, 2000). According to Avis et al, (2011), pre-service ITE routes in FE are more likely to be graduate ones and in-service routes tend to be followed by those with more technical and work-based qualifications. Understanding, therefore, does vary across the phases and is often dependent on teachers' own perceptions of their professional roles (Goodson and Cole, 1994; Tait, 2017).

There have been key debates in both secondary and FECs concerning professionalisation and as a step 'towards greater professionalisation', statutory requirements in 2001 introduced the requirement for FE teachers to undertake a recognised teaching qualification (Thompson, 2014, p.61) endorsed through a set of phase related standards introduced in 1999 (Bathmaker, 2000). Further reforms in 2007 recognised the need for FE teachers to engage in continuing professional development (CPD). The introduction of Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) in 2007 and gained through an additional and (then) non-fee-paying professional formation process following an endorsed teacher training course, paved the way

for a recognised status similar to schoolteachers. Thus far this status was and remains aspirational. However, anomalies and disputes have occurred concerning professional registration particularly for the FE lecturers and unions who opposed compulsory professional membership of the IfL (Poma, 2016).

In 2013, the Lingfield Review revoked the workforce regulations for the FE phase and fees were introduced for membership of the IfL. Schoolteachers did not escape policy reforms and in 2012 the General Teaching Council England was abolished with some of its functions moved to the Training and Development Agency for schools (TDA), then as functions of the National College for Teaching and Leadership and now the Teaching Regulation Agency. QTS remains the main status for school teaching and is required in maintained schools. Despite FE regulatory changes, Wolf, (2011) in her review of VET had recommended that QTLS be equivalent in status to QTS, now enshrined in statute which meant those in FE could be recognised as qualified teachers in maintained schools. In terms of accountability and quality of provision, all phases (including early years and primary) are currently subject to Ofsted inspections of initial teacher education under one framework.

For schools, there continues to be a set of statutory ITT criteria which ITE providers must be compliant with and a set of teaching standards for student teachers or trainees to meet which do change over time assigning schoolteachers with a special qualified status. At the point of the PGCE in SHD there were 33 standards overseen by the TDA and reduced to 8 in 2012 by the coalition government established in 2010. The FE phase was regulated in 2001, and at the point of the PGCE in SHD in 2008 was overseen by a new sector skills council (SSC) Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) with specific domains which trainees were required to meet, and quality assured by Standards Verification UK (SVUK). There were three levels of qualification, Preparing, Certificate and Diploma to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (more commonly known as PTLLS, CTLLS, DTLLS). In 2014, the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) implemented a new set of 20 Professional Standards for the FE and Skills phase which are embedded in accredited Award, Certificate and Diploma in Education and Training courses. However, it needs to be emphasised that the standards underpinning these qualifications, as well as the qualifications themselves, are based on guidance from the ETF rather than regulation. The qualifications and standards in FE are set to change again.

Each phase has its own idea and recognition of what it means to be a professional teacher. Straddling two phases, the 14-19 Diploma strategy of consortia teaching models meant that at least two education institutions i.e., a secondary school and an FEC and their teachers were involved in the planning, preparation, assessment and teaching of the 14-19 Diploma

qualification. This presented a challenge logistically, culturally and professionally, particularly as mentioned, qualifications held by teachers in each phase had different requirements with different regulations in place (Senior, 2010). Some terminology used in FECs could lead to misunderstandings as many refer to 'lecturer' or 'tutor' as terms to describe their teachers which may lead to confusion with those teaching in higher education unless one reconciles this through conceptions of FE as straddling the boundary for some between school and university. Similarly, university teaching is free from regulation too, but there are cultural hierarchies and differences in status and remuneration generally. Professional standards and regulation in FE might therefore be perceived as negative, resisted, and interfering with professional autonomy (Bathmaker, 2000).

For participants in this study, placed in both school and further education settings, there may have been uncomfortable moments in which they sought to identify professionally with each phase where different histories, recognition, and status exist potentially resulting in a conflicting sense of purpose.   They could, however, be well prepared for a changing educational landscape where existing structures were beginning to be challenged with free schools, academies, and university technical colleges (Armitage et al., 2016).

This is problematic when we cross phases in education as it exposes different understandings of purpose, conditions and practices and different ideas about what it means to be 'professional' or be part of a profession which are ideological. Ideology is also conditioned by temporal dimensions and the neo-liberal agenda established in the late 1970s, dominated both schools and further education resulting in each facing its own crises. These are related to implementing for example, curriculum changes, accountability, marketisation, treating learners as consumers, school improvement and reform increasing economic competitiveness and 'challenges teachers' existing practices, resulting in periods of temporary de-stabilisation (Hall and Marsh, 2000). There was little concern for teachers' professional identities, which Day, (2002, p. 679) argued are central to 'motivation, commitment, job satisfaction and effectiveness' which destabilised teachers' agentic roles. Agency is a key dimension of teachers' professionalism, for transforming teachers' professional identity (Priestley et al, 2015) and for transforming teachers work practices (Kauppinen et al., 2020).

2.6.1 Professionalism and the curriculum
However, teachers have multiple identities, draw on different experiences and have a variety of specialisms and expertise. In secondary schools, teachers' expertise is predominantly and understandably linked to their degree specialism, where pedagogical content knowledge through its intersections with subject knowledge and knowledge about learners is developed

through ITE (Thompson, 2014). CPD is mostly sought through subject association memberships and teacher networks which remain important as support mechanisms for teachers (Priestley et al., 2015). In contrast, it is often the concept of 'occupational currency' or dual professionalism (Clow, 2001) that is recognised and valued in further education colleges (FEC) with teachers maintaining their vocational 'subject' experience through connections with their prior occupational lives. Teachers in FE, therefore, arguably have more complex relationships with CPD (Broad, 2013) with additional pressure to keep up to date particularly where new technologies or approaches emerge in some occupations.

Additionally, the duality of professional status in VET can create tensions in identity formation for teachers particularly in FECs where teachers' vocational occupational specialism has high status (Bailey and Robson 2002; Bathmaker, 2002; Clow, 2001; Orr, 2013). Connectivity to one's past occupation(s) plays an important role in teaching vocational education as a) it is used as a pedagogical tool where teachers can draw on workplace practices and b) in providing professional credibility to the teacher. Teachers of VET occupy complex positions where they understand boundaries in what Kersh, (2016, p.837) writing about the workplace, calls 'the achievement of personal agency'. Kersch (2016, p.837) suggests that agency can be achieved through effective interrelationships between the 'individual, spatial and organisational' elements.

Unlike more subject focused school teaching, where teachers can be informed through subject networks (Priestley, et al, 2015; Berger and LeVan, 2019), interdependencies between different learning spaces are more widely acknowledged in vocational education where practical experiences in workplaces are seen as important to the learning process. This has implications for many VET teachers' professional identities and continuing professional development as workplaces change practices, so must the teacher, to maintain occupational rather than subject expertise. These positions have different drivers and goals through government-imposed curriculum policies and through employer driven needs which can affect teachers' conceptions of the professional self as their values, interests, meaningful responsibilities and beliefs about learning contribute to their roles as teachers and their agentic capacity (Vhasantenen and Etalapelto, 2011). Teachers' perceptions of themselves as professionals, then, can vary across the phases and be related to their practices and curricula taught. As professionals, teachers react to reforms through a process of self-positioning where agency plays a meaningful role as teachers mediate policy change (Vhasantenen and Etalapelto, 2011). Therefore, creating a professional identity is linked to one's motivation to becoming a teacher in the first place and arguably motivation for the subject or curriculum taught (Berger and LeVan, 2019). Additionally, there may be dilemmas for teachers where

conflicting goals exist concerning the content of what is taught depending on how they relate to the curriculum as part of the structural, cultural and autobiographical features that influence their agency (Bergh and Wahlstrom, 2018, p.135).

Learning in school can be said to be for the most part to be abstract learning and Fordham (2015) makes a powerful case for applied subjects to be removed from the school curriculum which does bear some similarities to recommendations made by Wolf, (2011). Pointing out that in terms of the purpose of schooling, Carr (2000, p.173) suggests teaching is caught up in a multiplicity of purposes. Thus, the concepts of 'discipline' and 'vocation' are problematic in that abstract (theoretical ideas) and practical (applied) knowledge for both young people and their teachers is disjointed. Success in vocational education is often under-valued and underplayed with established, traditional academic subjects continuing to dominate the educational hierarchy (Broad, 2013). Portraying VET therefore as a pathway to an inferior career is not helpful to young people (Evans, 2014).

There are, however, different cultures in further education colleges and secondary schools Bathmaker and Avis, (2005). Wheelahan, (2015) raises concerns with the learning emphasis in VET being applied, experiential and skills based arguing that a skills-based agenda is impoverished and that a knowledge base is needed which is essential to democracy. For learning involving workplace experience, there is often tension between the theoretical and the practical, arguably the case for ITE where different models exist (Furlong, 2013). Fundamentally, VET can enable the construction of knowledge in a realistic situation in what can be a natural social setting and it is here that Dewey's transactional realism circumvents this epistemological dichotomy between knowing and doing (Bergh and Wahlstrom, 2018; Dewey, 1938).

2.7 Summary

The distinctiveness of the PGCE preparing teachers for the Diploma specialism lay in its approach to dual accreditation and endorsement by the then Training and Development Agency (TDA) for schools and the then Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK/SVUK) for the further education and skills phase as outlined above in the section on the 14-19 PGCE. As a result, the TDA placed the 14-19 PGCE secondary school training in what was known as the 'innovations' category. Relevant to this study, 'innovation' and 'change' are terms used in policy to promote different social practices (Priestley et al., 2012). Unlike any other ITE Diploma specialist routes, the dual accreditation meant that student teachers were working towards two sets of distinct professional standards through academic university-based studies and placement experiences in very different teaching contexts with their own 'strong and

pervasive cultures' (Billett, 1998, p.258 cited in Philpott, 2006, p.285). Placing participants in these environments as student teachers, exposed them to the different practices and cultures enabling a wider sense of understanding of the issues faced by each phase such as access to specialist resources. It also exposed them to the expertise of the teachers and how collaboration was essential to the courses taught. Understanding the importance of structures in each setting and forming professional relationships provided a sound platform for participants' achievement of agency (Edwards, 2005, 2011, Biesta et al, 2015, Priestley et al, 2015).

This chapter discussed the relevant policy context for 14-19 as an important transition for learners spanning the years 1997-2018; the development of a unique 14-19 PGCE established in 2003 responding to policy initiatives; a consideration of cross phase professionalisation histories; the 14-19 Diplomas and associated pedagogy. For teachers' agency, this context is important because it explains the context against which the PGCE was initially developed and its flexibility. This provided the environment for participants to experience a wider set of professional practices, build professional networks and relationships and engage in CPD opportunities related to their roles as teachers of 14-19 Diplomas and the wider curriculum equipping them with navigational tools enabling each participant to continue to remain in education as teachers beyond the demise of the Diplomas. Although these teachers trained a long time ago and in a different political regime, the maelstrom of policy implementation continues which seems relevant to the current situation in a post pandemic period where a focus on teachers' agency, policy resilience and professional vulnerability are arguably more significant and where theory related to teachers' agency needs to continue to develop. The study's aim then is to explore the different approaches to understanding the nature of human agency, and its connection to the central concepts of 'teachers' agency' and 'teachers' relationships' (Tierney and Landford, 2019; Caine, Estefan and Clandinin, 2013). The following chapter provides a theoretical discussion examining human agency and teachers' agency leading to the ecological conceptual framework developed for this study.

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the uniqueness of the initial teacher preparation course, the policy context spanning the years 1997-2018 and provided an overview of the histories of teacher professionalisation highlighting some of the tensions across phases. This chapter outlines the different approaches to understanding the nature of human agency, and its connection to the central concepts underpinning this study, which are 'teachers' agency' and 'teachers' relationships'. The first section outlines why there is a focus on teachers' agency generally and revisits the research questions. The next section explores the concept of human agency within different disciplinary approaches. There is a detailed section on teachers' agency which is broken down into sub-sections exploring teachers' agency and autonomy, professionalisation, leadership, teachers as change agents, curriculum reform and finally teachers' agency and identity. The following section explores ecological perspectives in teachers' agency. The conceptual framework is then justified and presented in a diagrammatical form. The chapter concludes with a summary.

3.2 Why the focus on teachers' agency?

There are three reasons for the recent focus on teachers' agency: firstly, raising awareness of teachers as change agents in professional development, school reform and school improvement; secondly, the issue of sustained change in professional and school development and, lastly, the role of teachers' work environment in professional development recognising that professional identity is important to the capacity of change in schools (Imants and Van der Wal, (2020). However, as stated earlier, Imants and Van der Wal, (2020) focussed on school contexts. Pinpointing two approaches to understanding agency, Imants and Van der wal (2020) identified agency firstly, as 'capacity', a characteristic that individuals have, and they draw on the work of Bandura which is explored later. Secondly, agency is associated with action which can be individual or collective and linked to professional identity and the workplace. Agency, therefore, is capacity and interaction within specific contexts which exposes issues related to individual capacity and interplay with contextual factors. Exceptionally, Priestley, et al's., (2012) work on curriculum change and spaces for manoeuvre reflected both school and FE contexts and suggested teacher agency theory needs to address the contexts in which teachers work, which includes their biographies which was helpful to my study as this included for example, the material and social conditions in which teachers work.

Connecting school and FE college practices, Priestley et al's., (2012) investigation examined the enactment of a prescribed curriculum in both settings. The connection to these contextual

conditions highlights agency as something to be achieved in transactional situations which sees agency shaped by social and material conditions within each professional setting. Legitimate questions also arise concerning what sorts of agency teachers can achieve through curriculum policy implementation and reforms where teachers mediate policy via a process of 'iterative refraction' which Priestley et al., (2012) explain as a mutation which migrates from one setting to the next, influenced by agency under the constraints of social and material structures. For agency, relational factors are understood as important elements of professional working lives where possibilities between individuals and situations exist in and across workplace environments (Edwards, et al 2017, Hökkä, et al., 2019). To explore relationships further there are two guiding research questions developed for this study:

1. What understanding of teachers' agency can be generated through using life history to explore cross phase vocational teachers' experience?

2. What can we learn about the importance of relationships in shaping the agency of cross phase vocational teachers?

3.3 What is agency?

This section explores the concept of 'human agency' which has been written about extensively from a range of scholarly perspectives over many years drawing on four traditions: sociology, psychology, socio cultural and pragmatist traditions (Leijen, et al., 2020) all taking the basic premise that agency relates to human action and capacity to act in given structural and cultural contexts (Archer,1982, 1988; Bandura, 1989, 2001; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Giddens, 1984, Biesta, et al., 2015, Priestley, et al., 2015). Yet despite increasing attention, defining agency is complex as views vary depending on one's perspective resulting in different perceptions and interpretations (Leijen, et al., 2020). One of the first problems encountered is the lack of clarity about what agency is and what it means. This vague, inconsistent, and overlapping nature results in its contestability: agency, essentially, means different things to different people (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Etelapelto et al., 2013). Characterisations include: actors' capacity to critically shape their responses to problematic situations; autonomy and causal efficacy; capacity to identify goals and direct one's action towards these goals; evaluating success; agency as the power to transform and resist dominant power relations; obligations and authority; and finally, agency as an emergent phenomenon (Archer,1982, 1988; Bandura, 1989, 2001; Bergh and Wahlstrom, 2018; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Giddens, 1984; Priestley, et al., 2015).

In sociological approaches, Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration has been influential in attempting to surmount divisions between structure and action, claiming that these are closely

related to each other and unable to exist independently. Structures such as social class, family, and community norms affect human behaviour, particularly in relation to autonomy and choice. The agency and structure approach offered by Giddens' (1984) theory does not go far enough in explaining agency as it prioritises the influence of macro structures such as the economy and social class, suggesting these play a major role in the choices actors make. These are, in the main, based on aspects of social life and are concerned with institutions and systems and rules and resources which, whilst important, only partly consider agency as a theory for social action (Priestley et al, 2015).

Through social encounters and relationships, actors can engage in action to consciously reproduce cultures which is often based on understandings of the past or handed down through cultures. A less common view is concerned with a capacity to act independently outside the limitations of social structure where society and the person can be separated for analytical purposes (Archer, 2000, 2003; Priestley, et al., 2015). Although clearly closely linked, Archer, (2000, p.284) separates the concepts of 'social agents' and 'social actors'. Social agency she argues, stems from collectives which involve more than one individual. There is no choice in this collective and through what she calls an 'involuntary social placement' these contexts mostly condition what actors become, for example the child born into a family. Whilst actors in these circumstances are not required to behave as others do, it can be difficult to step outside of this early conditioning.

From a psychological perspective, Bandura, (1989) locates the operation of agency through three different aspects: autonomous agency, mechanical agency and emergent interactive agency. Agentic autonomy is not considered as a serious concept as it requires agentic behaviour enacted upon through one's free will to do anything. Indeed, it is not a desirable state for teachers because it is not ideal to have teachers operate in isolation with their own agendas. Mechanical agency is described as an 'internal instrumentality' where outside influences affect action in a mechanistic way – a sort of conditioned response, lacking any reflexivity where an individual can respond automatically in each situation. Agency in this light is located in 'environmental forces' where one simply is the channel in what Bandura (1989, p.1175) calls 'epiphenomenal byproducts of conditioned responses' but he questions this as a useful explanation of human agency. Social Cognitive Theory relies on the emergent interactive model of agency where individuals are neither autonomous nor mechanical but make causal connections through a 'system of triadic reciprocal causation' through the interplay between environmental, human, and personal factors. Further, Bandura's (2001) agentic perspectives provide three forms of agency: firstly, direct, through personal influence, secondly, proxy through a reliance on others and lastly, collective through interdependence.

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Agentic transactions operate through humans as producers as well as products of social systems. Bandura (2001, p.4) views people as 'agents of experiences' rather than simply 'undergoers of experiences' and promotes intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness which are temporal and closely connected to meaning and purpose. He argues against reductionism to biological principles, as with social systems and functions there is no one single mode of social adaptation which fits all situations. Bandura's (1989, 2001), Social Cognitive Theory, sees agency and intentionality linked to perceptions of efficacy and self-efficacy, that is, how humans or individuals are able to produce anticipated or planned consequences, or exercise control over events. Therefore, people can effect change in self and situations through their own efforts which are also predicated on individuals' motivations (Bandura, 1989, p.1176).

Socio cultural approaches tend to understand agency through actors participating in environments and how cultural tools and contexts shape actors' beliefs, values and behaviours (Leijen, et al., 2020). In socio-cultural approaches, there are a variety of conceptions attempting to establish the nature of agency. Socio-cultural approaches share the belief that there is a significant role for socio-cultural contexts, yet they have often neglected the individual preferring to conceive agency as a core collective concept where meaning is derived from the community (Etalapelto et al., 2012). Edwards (2005; 2011), for example, uses the theoretical framework of cultural historical activity theory derived from scholars whose work stems from Vygotsky. She provides insight into relational agency across professional borders which has implications for professional practice including boundary crossing in health and social work. These ideas attempt to connect the ways people think, feel and act to historical cultures so that learning can occur.

For pragmatic approaches, an important definition for this study originates from Emirbayer and Mische's, (1998, p.962) pragmatic theory which accentuates connections between the person and the environment. They define agency as having many component parts which are 'interrelated empirically' penetrating forms of structure. Thus, conceptualising and classifying agency as entitled to its own analysis, they define it as a:

> 'temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its *'iterational'* or habitual aspect) but also oriented to the future (as a *'projective'* capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a *'practical-evaluative'* capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment)'

Pointing out the socially embedded temporal dimension is reliant on overlapping in the present *(practical evaluative),* Emirbayer and Mische, (1998, p.962-3) argue this is always informed by past events *(Iterational)* projecting forward *(projective)* and imagining possible futures which involves hope. In terms of their contribution to theory, it provides 'a reconceptualised notion of human agency as a temporally embedded process of social engagement'. At any moment, a social actor has orientations towards the past, present or future that will emerge in a given situation where a transaction occurs offering instances where agency can be achieved. These orientations can be seen in contexts where they are both constraining or enabling and can collide in disharmony. Mediation in these contexts means that actors can transform situations through engagement with and maneuvering within the environment where occurrences of agency are achieved. This is through the unique interplay of individual capacity and workplace conditions such as a school or further education setting and their cultural contexts.

Agency then is transactional in nature relying on social actors' human ability to understand themselves and to be able to critically reflect on experience (Hökkä et al., 2019, Leijen, et al., 2020). As a philosophical phenomenon, agency is temporally embedded, therefore dependent on how individuals engage with time and place (Biesta et al, 2015). Additionally, through interactions in environments, humans can and do shape perspectives and individuals themselves do hold different and often competing world views. However, agency is arguably dependent on the kind of society which enables the concept to be explored in the first place. Further, Hays, (1994) makes the case for connecting culture as a part of social structure and agency as something more than individual freedom to act. Similarly, approaches developed from pragmatism see agency as something that is achieved through individual and/or group engagement with the environment (Biesta et al., 2015). In this way, agency is not simply seen as acting in the environment but acting by means of the environment, through 'individual efforts, resources, and cultural and structural factors' (Leijen, et al., 2020, p.297). From a pragmatic ecological position, relationships can be considered as a potential resource for agency.

Teachers' agency can be understood from a pragmatic, ecological perspective which defines agency as teachers' 'active contribution to shaping their work and its conditions' through the '*interplay* of individuals' capacities and environment conditions' (Biesta et al., 2015 p.1-3). Agency is separate from action and involves learning. Agency involves intentionality where there is firstly, scope to create opportunities for action, secondly, active understanding of such opportunities and finally, making a choice (Priestley et al., 2015). Yet, the understanding of

intentionality can be changed through pragmatic ideas in transactional realism seen as action based on philosophical concepts of time and nature (Bergh and Wahlstrom, 2018) where contextual and temporal dimensions influence actors' ability to change the configuration of their agentic positionings. For agency, intentionality, defined by Priestley, et al., (2015, p.23) is 'the capacity to formulate possibilities for action, active consideration of such possibilities and the exercise of choice'. This means that practices always hold the possibility of change, but these cannot be guaranteed. Agentic learning then, according to Biesta, et al., (2015) is aligned with imagination, reconfiguration, and critical judgement.

3.4 Teachers' agency

In education discourse, teachers' agency has been implicitly associated with debates about professionalism, accountability, and education change, particularly school reform (Bergh and Wahlstrom, 2018; Imants and Van der Wal, 2020). 'Agency', as an explicit concept for teachers' work, has been explored by Helsby, (1999) in her account of the way political ideologies from 1979 and the subsequent reform agenda have impacted on education, resulting in a market-led education system. This has inevitably affected the professional lives of teachers through its use of these principles to control social change. Despite this, Helsby argued that teachers can influence and affect the quality of their work. Similarly, impacts of reforms through incorporation of colleges in the 1990s separated FE colleges from local authority control and established the way for neoliberal policy enactment (Hall and Marsh, 2000). Undeniably, since the 1980s, changes in political control and administrative interference in education matters reveal teachers' agency and agentic behaviour have been compromised through constant systemic change where teachers themselves do not seem to matter (Leijen et al., 2020; Priestley, et al., 2015). Yet teachers' agency is critical to the quality of education with Priestley et al., (2015, p. 147) arguing that good teacher agency is key to making the 'operation of the system more *intelligent'*. Developing understanding of teachers' agency during ITE therefore appears beneficial to teachers' working lives.

3.4.1 Teachers' agency and autonomy

Agency is defined by Day et al., (2007, p. 110) as 'intentional acting aiming at self-protection, self-expansion and mastery of social reality' which resonates for example with ideas of teacher vulnerability. However, Hadar and Benish-Wiseman, (2019, p.138) conceive agency as people not simply repeating habits but having the ability to take autonomous action which intentionally changes and enhances their worlds which evidently connects the idea of agency to autonomy. Perceiving autonomy in two ways, as professional autonomy at the local level with teachers as actors within classroom practice and as autonomy in the profession, Frostenson, (2015) presents a three levelled approach to understanding professional

autonomy and de-professionalisation of teachers through, firstly, de-professionalisation as a loss of autonomy, secondly, collegial professional autonomy and lastly, individual autonomy. Indeed, teachers have often been portrayed as being de-professionalised, under attack and suffering reduced agency in their roles as teachers, be it located in the school curriculum or in further education provision. However, Frostenson (2015), in redefining teachers' autonomy, suggests that we make assumptions too quickly and that literature on professionalisation and de-professionalisation ought to be challenged further. Yet under neo-liberal agendas, it is no coincidence that over time, teachers have been revealed as 'villains' or 'victims' rather than '[being seen as] active agents making their own histories' (Goodson, 2003, p.50). Central to the idea of teachers as active agents then is acting with intention through for example, making choices, taking responsibility and making a difference which also involves adapting to changing environments at work (Toom et al., 2015).   Yet, understandably, tempered by cultures of accountability, teachers' orientations may lean towards survival rather than aspirations over the longer term (Priestley, et al., 2015). On autonomy, Edwards, (2015) suggests this is most useful as collective professional agency rather than any freedom for teachers to do what they want in their classrooms.

Perceiving agency from a psychological position and defining agency as the ability to make principled choices, act and make action take place, Maclellan, (2017, p. 255-260) sets out five ways in which agency is a valuable pedagogical resource for teachers and teacher educators. Agency is understood as: 'enacted behaviour' – through actions to improve learning; 'implicit theorising' 'through interpretations of professional responses to a particular situation which can be understood as agentic'; 'self-efficacy' that is mastery through promoting learning and not merely delivering the curriculum; 'epistemic agency' and 'agency as autonomy' where agency enables autonomy.   These ideas are firmly rooted in notions of reflexivity and consciousness and concern teachers' capability both individually and collectively to recognise their powers to navigate structures and institutions, to reform and transform practices and to effect change for the benefit of their learners. Reflective practice therefore seems important to teachers' development and agentic capacity established in ITE. Yet under neoliberal conditions, teachers' agency can face challenges when autonomy and choice have been revealed as restricted.

Whilst interconnected, there is a difference between autonomy and agency which are often unhelpfully conflated (Priestley, et al., 2015). In its simplest terms, agency is perceived as doing something, or the ability to act which involves responsibility. Responsibility is perceived in part as having capacity to act autonomously so involves making choices which exist in two

ways: firstly, in systems of social institutions and social relationships where morality or moral purpose may play a part and secondly, as an internal state involved with self-governance or decision making free from interference or coercion. Another view relating to responsibility is the notion of obligation which changes the nature of teachers' work by confining it to classroom practices and accountabilities (Vongalis-MaCrow, 2007). Autonomy, however, can be perceived as something that is granted rather than possessed as it is determined and assigned by others which can create problems for accomplishing agency.

Day, (2020, p. 247) recognises that 'increasing competitive and turbulent global environments' have created swathes of reforms. Yet claims around loss of teachers' professionalism when connected to teachers' individual autonomy are questioned. Day, (2020, p. 247) further suggests that under neoliberal agendas which involve accountability, observed by Ball, (2003, 2012) as 'performativity', professional autonomy is not an entitlement for individual teachers if there is ongoing learner 'underperformance'. Shifts of power between government control and teachers' autonomy underpin these ideological debates around professionalism and are inevitably interconnected to agency.

On the surface, Day's (2020) autonomy argument seems reasonable but under neoliberal reform agendas, teachers' professional responsibility and trust, arguably key components of agency, have been eroded by such measures when agency is perceived to include teachers' capacity to make principled choices (Maclellan, 2017). Similarly, to Vongalis-MaCrow, (2007), Ball, (2012) suggests that neoliberal environments restrain teachers' agency, where performativity ensures teachers work harder to meet externally set objectives. Indeed, a choice some teachers make is to leave the profession argue Perryman and Calvert, (2020) where data suggests that five years after qualifying, 60% remain as classroom schoolteachers citing the nature of workload linked to accountability and performativity. In comparison, one in five teachers leave FE teaching because of policy neglect through inadequate funding, status and career progression (TES, 2019).

3.4.2 Teachers' agency and professionalisation

Agency, despite being a key dimension of professionalism, has often been perceived as a bolt-on particularly because of the neoliberal policy agenda for education (Biesta, Priestley and Robinson, 2015; Frostenson, 2015). Discourses around professionalism, professionality and professional identity are often linked to teachers' day to day working lives structured around performativity measures and demands (Evans, 2008) specifically the 'pressure to perform in particular ways' (Priestley et al., 2015, p.107) which can affect agentic capacity.

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Additionally, problems can occur in different settings as teachers across phases have their own perspectives and as separate social units tend to promote their own views and values (Evans, 2008) and these are undeniably difficult to shift. A similar view is adopted by Stellmacher et al., (2020) in their comparison of German pre-service vocational and secondary school teachers' motivations to become teachers. The term 'agency' then remains problematic particularly in relation to teachers' work, regardless of professional context.

Policies that aim to support the professionalisation of teachers are inextricably tied to different occupational standards for both the school and FE phases and both have endured various iterations over time outlined in the previous chapter. Nasta, (2007) suggested attempts to professionalise FE teaching through a new set of standards introduced by LLUK in 2007 for the wider lifelong learning sector resulted in a loss of agency through over prescription and control of teachers' professional lives, anchored in neo-liberal agendas. At the level of the FE teacher, professionalisation through the standards was perceived to be narrow and controlling of teachers who valued funded PGCE and Certificate in Education courses where debates around professionalism occurred (Atkins and Tummons, 2017). As Frostenson, (2017) pointed out, professionals usually require some form of certification or state authorisation. In FE and vocational education, the idea of being a professional is flexible where elements of specialist knowledge, autonomy and service arise and where agency and professional capacity emerge (Atkins and Tummons, 2017). The requirement for professional registration through the Institute for Learning (IfL) was not welcomed by FE teachers generally yet schoolteachers seemingly held little objection to registration with the General Teaching Council (TDA, 2008). In terms of policies for schoolteachers' professionalisation, training and certification has been exploited through managerialist discourses, qualification status and compliance to government controls to effectively regulate the workforce (Ryan and Bourke, 2013).

However, despite a move toward parity of status through QTS and QTLS largely to accommodate the status of vocational teachers in schools (Wolf, 2011), professional standards across both phases continue to be subjected to changes and differences in status imposed by political agendas rather than the teachers themselves. Applying Archer's concepts to teachers, structurally, a collective of social agents might be understood for example, to be secondary schoolteachers, or teachers in further education each conditioned by their own social placements where culture and identity are difficult to shift. In this light, social agency sees teachers, possibly unconsciously, acting to reproduce the structures it often seeks to purport to change and in environments where outcomes of tests and numbers matter more than the individual (Ball, 2015).

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Professionalism or more recently redefined as 'new professionalism' particularly in the light of reform agendas, results in for example, tensions around instrumentalist discourses and 'what works' defined by Evans, (2011) as 'demanded' professionalism with more emancipatory views focusing on 'enacted' forms of professionalism (Evans, 2008, 2011). 'Old professionalism' sees teachers as autonomous professionals with little external accountability, but pressure placed on governments and fear of falling behind international competitors have resulted in reforms which are aimed at meeting labour market needs (Evers and Kneyber, 2015). The professional development journey each teacher undertakes can be understood as a socially constructed concept which is subject to change and definition depending upon whose interests the concept serves (Evans, 2008). Professionalism is related to specialised practice which requires certain skills and competences which are recognised in some way. However, this tends to rely on external agencies defining what makes teachers professionals, therefore teachers have capacity to resist or have some control over the construction of their profession depending on their level of engagement or inclusion with those defining it which might be referred to as agency. Drawing on others, Evans, (2008) suggests that quality, status, attitudes, behaviour and beliefs about one's own profession may also have important parts to play.

Occurring through a process of renegotiating professional identities where agency is enacted through a range of social practice opportunities and relationships, research by Kauppinen et al, (2020) highlighted the importance of professional agency for in-service teachers and their understanding of learning in different professional learning contexts. A similar point is made but in the context of other professions, by Edwards (2005, p.168) who recognised the importance of new forms of practice learning from other institutional methods and offers insights into what she terms 'relational agency' resulting in an 'enhanced form of professional agency' which benefits practice. Yet, these ideas are not widely recognised across educational phases of secondary and FE ITE where historic structures mean there is limited scope to learn from each other or recognise the value of exposure to broader professional learning contexts.

Definitions of teachers' professionalism wherever located also change over time and with each phase facing its own pressures. For example, the secondary school phase tends to be more widely affected i.e., judged, and held accountable to performativity outcomes for GCSEs and A Levels than FE suggesting these measures restrict teachers' agency further (Leijen, et al., 2020). Despite this, FE faces its own challenges for example, the criticisms of the vocational curriculum, instability, its breadth and the quality of its teaching and deficit discourses (Wolf, 2011, Fuller and Unwin, 2011, Atkins and Flint, 2015, Hanley and Orr, 2019).

The effects of reforms and marketisation have resulted in what Ball, (2018, p.587) suggested has been a 'reworking... of what it means to teach' and consequently what it means to be a teacher. These effects have impacted on both secondary and further education phases.

The marketisation of education has, it seems, led to different understandings of what it means to be a professional; managerialist cultures and performativity add to the tensions (Atkins and Tummons, 2017). Connecting agency to narrow interpretations of what makes teaching good further compounds our understandings of what agency means for teachers' professional lives. Both phases arguably have experienced a reduction in teachers' agency in recent years, however this has been defined and the call for a (re)turn to teachers' agency by Priestley, et al., (2015) therefore is welcomed. This is so, particularly in the light of, 'performativity' cultures, defined by Ball (2003, p. 216), as a 'technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change establishes a somewhat behaviourist approach to teachers' practice'. Further, Ball, (2012, p.31) argues that performativity is one of the major ways in which neo-liberalism enables management to judge and compare, therefore, in these environments', teachers' agency is suppressed as under these circumstances, the ability to act is reduced.

Additionally, Day, (2020) contends that teachers' sense of professionalism is shaped by their leaders, thus recognising that positive social and professional relationships are important. In the case of the teachers in this study, bonding with mentors and teacher educators during the formative ITE stage seemed critical particularly in terms of the quality of the relationships. As employees, and colleagues, participants' experiences of and relationships with leaders and mentors across a range of educational settings are key areas for exploration as cultures and structures are rooted in temporal spaces where interactions affect socialisation of teachers. Insulander et al, (2019) in their study of teacher agency in professional development courses, found that the interaction of the 'coach' with the professional development materials affected the enactment of agency in teachers but this was based on the concept of a subject centred socio-cultural approach to teacher agency where teachers are seen as active, independent agents operating with free will.

3.4.3 Teachers' agency and leadership

Professional relationships are therefore important territories to consider in connection to leadership, agency and sense of purpose. On the one hand, the relationships between participants and leaders in their settings is worthy of exploration as this may reveal conflicts. On the other hand, participants in leadership roles themselves may experience disharmony in values or beliefs, for example, leading a staff development session on an element of practice such as implementing curriculum changes may not resonate well with their own philosophical

position. However, under the mantra of school improvement, government-imposed accountability measures and the measurement of attainment outcomes, limit teachers' sense of agency (Leijen et al.,2020) or indeed, moral purpose in that their ability to 'make a difference' is diminished (Frost, 2006, p.20).   Exploring participants' experiences over time and focusing on relationships with teachers and the curriculum in a variety of environments may help us understand more about teachers' agency and how this impacts their professional lives.

In Frost's (2006) critique of agency connected to teachers' leadership and its relationship to learning, he presents a range of areas related to human lived experience, contending that one's ability to act, or the potential to act with 'intentionality' is a core feature of human agency. Occupying leadership positions can be problematic for agency as the interplay between the various components such as intentionality, responsibility, judgement, autonomy, choice, and sense of purpose can collide. Gronn (2003, p.71-85), writing about the 'ecology of leadership' and what leaders in schools do, pointed out that school leaders as managers are expected to act as 'transformative agents', yet external accountabilities such as performance targets, marketing to retain students, and meeting the 'overwhelming demands of government directives' affects their ability to be 'self-determined' in their leadership positions in their own institutions'. Leadership dressed up as spreading the burden of accountability can result in resistance, particularly where ideas of distribution exist as it is difficult to pin accountability down to any individual agent (Gronn, 2015). These apparent clashes of habit, attitude and ideology raise questions concerning teachers' roles as agents of change including those in higher level leadership roles where, to use a common metaphor, it is seen quite rightly as being difficult to rock the boat in which one is sailing despite individual or collective beliefs. Yet schools subject to the same reforms can turn out very differently, depending on the approach taken by senior leaders. Gronn, (2003) suggests a conjoint approach where reciprocity is important and where leaders influence teachers and teachers influence each other.

Politically, detaching education from local government for both phases occurred at different points in time with impact on both phases. It can be said, however, that teachers' work in both phases has been affected both within and outside of the classroom and teachers' views were not sought about such changes. Many teacher educators may have felt that there is conflict in detaching educational institutions from local authorities as this tends to suggest that more control goes to schools and colleges through organisational autonomy yet, conversely, this positions leaders as more accountable to central government. Equally, trust in teachers as individuals and their abilities to make decisions about their students' learning has shifted. Accessing teachers' judgements, intentions, and evaluations, Edwards, (2015, p 782)

suggests, is no easy feat, therefore what can be gained by social researchers is often limited but there is a place for life history. Through exploring the experiences of teachers in this study, I can examine how crossing secondary and further education phases and the professional recognition of teachers in these environments can help understanding of these teachers' achievement of agency.

None of these changes occurred overnight as there has been persistent policy implementation on a variety of levels through central and local government controls across phases with professional judgement 'subordinated to the requirements of performativity and marketing' (Ball 2003, p.226). Determined by neo-liberal policy contexts, commodification of education through the incorporation of FE Colleges in the early 1990s under the Further and Higher Education Act (1992) removed local education authority (LEA) control establishing corporate responsibility for assets including teaching staff (Hall and Marsh, 2000:71). Similarly, a move through the Academies Act (2010) removed local authority control and enabled more autonomy for school leaders, who incidentally were not required to be trained as teachers. School leaders were enabled to, for example, manage teachers' pay and conditions and exercise some choice over the curriculum (DfE, 2010-2015). Conversely, both earlier and more recent academisation models had the potential to provide school leaders with autonomy and agency, if agency can be given, but arguably only in the absence of external demands, but as Gronn, (2003) points out, demands have been relentless. Ball, (2017, p.6) reiterates this by citing the DfE website at a point in November 2016 with links to 23 headings for policy documents and 1,639 school related publications, some often sent to school leaders on a daily basis. These social structures and contextual forms affect teachers' agentic capacity and provide explanations for why teachers act the way they do in certain situations and environments (Ryan and Bourke, 2017).

The commodification of education has, as Biesta, (2013) suggested, negatively affected teachers' contribution to education and as a result affected professional identity. Evers and Kneyber (2015, p.4) point out that teachers' 'moral agency' has also been affected by neo-liberal reforms, a similar finding to Biesta et al, (2015) in their study of teachers' agency. That said, Evers and Kneyber, (2015, p.281) argue that the only way to make a difference to teacher autonomy is to act like an equal and not wait until the 'neoliberal oppressor' sets you free. However, for the classroom teacher, in the face of demands around learner performance outcomes in specific subjects, it can be difficult to 'act like an equal' particularly when there is lower learner attainment. Similarly, this can present challenges to school leaders as they too are held to account. The neo-liberal oppressor can take many forms from macro level external policy drivers for government such as Ofsted, to more micro expectations in schools and

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colleges from heads of department and leadership teams which face 'public shaming' (Evers and Kneyber, 2015, p.281) for non-compliance or not meeting expected standards. Evers and Kneyber, (2015), argued further that when there is a perception of failure, the move towards a more marketised or privatised system is seen as a solution.

3.4.4 Teachers as change agents

In their exploration of the characteristics of teachers as change agents, Van der Heijden et al., (2015, p.138) found that little work had been done around this important area. Among other elements like a commitment to lifelong learning, 'mastery' is seen by Van der Heijden et al, (2015) as being important and is defined more clearly as having the knowledge and skills to do the job, that is, teaching. In this light, classroom level teaching and making a difference to students' learning or their own teaching practice through testing out new approaches is seen as agentic behaviour and teachers can arguably be quite autonomous in the confines of the classroom. However, Woolley (2018) suggests many other agents can act as drivers of change affecting teachers' working lives such as curriculum reform, exam boards and subjects. These effectively place teachers in technical professional roles enacting policy rather than professionals exercising judgement, but this largely depended on the nature of the policy, the experience of the teacher and the context.

The policy context is important, and raises key issues concerned with the role of student teachers as change agents in the implementation of the diplomas. One issue is that this exposes them to additional pressure with conflict arising from other teachers' resistance to change placing them in a difficult position as innovators. It might be argued however, that student teachers could be in sound positions to assist curriculum reform, firstly, through bringing new ideas, secondly through their connection to University ITE and finally alongside their school or FE teacher mentors. A further issue concerns utilising student teachers in implementing new curricula assumes 'mastery' and 'knowledge' which they are unlikely to have developed at this stage of their development. It seems therefore, more realistic to suggest that student teachers can aid in enacting policy as they begin to develop professional judgement rather than as agents with autonomy to enact reforms.

As suggested earlier, autonomy alone is not perceived as agency. Perceived as ecological, agency is what you do, not what is done to you or what you possess – it is achieved through action by means of one's environment. How teachers manage what is expected of them relates to how they navigate, interact with and influence their contexts or conditions in which they teach (Priestley et al, 2015) which I explore as their careers develop.

Agency as 'making a difference' is arguably what being human is all about (Frost, 2006, p.20) and as Fullan, (1993, p.4) suggests, teachers' sense of 'moral purpose and change agentry are natural allies' strongly connecting the actions teachers take and the skills to take action as pivotal to improving children's and young people's lives. For a teacher, being an agent, then, is about pursuing goals which characterises agency as actors having certain skills and possessing a moral purpose. To put this another way, unless teachers agree with accountability measures, accountability has the potential to affect teachers' sense of moral purpose which, in turn, affects professionality and autonomy when, for example, the measurement of learning through attainment outcomes is perceived as more important than the learning itself. Indeed, Day (2003, p.686) highlights the imposition of the 'interest of accountability' and how this can make demands on the affective aspects of teaching and learning. Teachers can and do make this work for themselves and their learners through mitigating the effects of accountability through for example, motivating learners in a given curriculum. The emotional investment of teachers in both themselves as professionals and their learners can render them vulnerable when policy changes are imposed, effectively reducing creativity and negatively affecting their relationships with learners (Lasky, 2005). Hökkä, et al., (2019) acknowledge that few have examined the role of emotions in enacting professional agency in workplaces particularly those like education under the firm grip of neoliberal agendas.

Positioning teachers as change agents, Fullan (2003) sees that moral purpose and passion are important for teachers when these go beyond the individual teacher, since, acting collectively, teachers are a much more powerful force for change. Drawing on McLaughlin and Talbot's, (2001) study, Fullan (2003) argued that there are three patterns of teaching practice whereby: (1) individual teachers enact traditions of practice, (2) teachers lower expectations and standards and (3) teachers innovate to engage learners. The third pattern, in terms of measured outcomes, was the only one positively affecting lower attaining students. He also identified two types of teaching communities: one in which teachers reinforced each other's ineffective practice and one in which teachers worked collaboratively to reinvent practice (Fullan, 2003, p.12). But, when it comes to implementing policy, Priestley et al (2012, 2015) rejected the idea of teachers as 'agents of change' arguing that innovation and creativity directly linked to agency is one-dimensional which could be disingenuous as policy is imposed by others in more powerful positions. However, this raises key questions around what teachers can and cannot change, what they want to change, and teachers' voices are important. Agency depends then on teachers' understanding of what can and cannot be achieved in a particular setting or location at a given point in time (Bandura, 1989). This also depends on how past experiences affect agents' ability to consider different futures and roles and this is

not always harmonious as outlined in Emirbayer and Mische's (1998, p.970) 'chordal triad' where the past, present, and future collide and where 'all three dimensions resonate as separate but not always harmonious tones' (Priestley, et al., 2015, p.23).

3.4.5 Teachers' agency and curriculum reform

How teachers construct their roles and how reform is enacted in schools involves what Leander and Osborne (2008, p.23-25) explain as 'complex positioning' which can provide opportunities to 'redraw boundaries'. In their view, teachers as agents of school change, acting in roles as leading facilitators of new curricula, position themselves in 'highly complex ways' engaging with 'multiple political and social others' who are key to enacting reform. For the participants in this study, although potentially cast as change agents at a school level (Fullan, 2003) to support the implementation of wide scale curriculum reform, their ITE placed each of them in locations where they had little choice and possibly limited ability to influence outside of the classroom (Priestley et al, 2012). Their lack of experience would also have hampered their ability to redraw boundaries as these were new to them. However, they were immersed in different organisations where they may have had potential to influence cultures and policies particularly with the support of more experienced teachers as mentors.   Access to different environments, one might argue, enables humans to manoeuvre through existing social structures aided by teachers' notions of moral purpose, transformation and making a difference (Fullan, 1993). However, this tends to confine teachers to a local level in classrooms where teachers are actors rather than collective agents, hindering the ability to influence broader structures and cultures. This study is particularly interested in the achievement of teachers' agency through exploring participants' professional relationships and how teachers are able to navigate across and act by way of different cultures and social structures inherent in institutions.

The day-to-day work of teachers is both politically and socially constructed, placing both teachers and teacher educators in complex positions at times of curriculum reform particularly when it involves agentic capacities. This can present opportunities to 'redraw boundaries' and as agents of change teachers position themselves to build relationships with other educators relative for example to pedagogical practices (Leander and Osborne, 2008, p.24-25; Vahasantenen and Etelapelto, 2011). Goodson and Numan, (2002, p.272) suggested that the problem teachers face with for example, curriculum policy change, effectively jeopardises teachers' practice, reducing it to a technical level which 'routinises and trivialises' teachers' working lives, and this is particularly so with top down 'predesigned packages'. But it also raises questions concerning teachers' agency in relation to curriculum policy enactment (Priestley, et al., 2012). Worryingly, curriculum change is often perceived as a systemically

driven solution to improve the quality of education (Priestley et al., 2015). Despite this, the attempt by politicians to change the system through the 14-19 Diplomas was welcomed by many in education yet doomed to fail as criticisms surfaced concerning their complexity, prescribed nature driven by employers and associated bureaucracy even before a change of government in 2010 (Isaacs, 2013).

Vocational teachers do react differently to curriculum reforms positioning themselves in relation to reform agendas based on their own interpretations of the reforms and whether these will be of value to themselves and their learners. This is because understandings of a range of employment sector-based cultures influence their thinking (Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto, 2011). However, Leander and Osborne, (2008, p.26) describe a 'reform motivated' teacher able to enact curriculum reform through 'relational positioning and joint action' but their work focused mostly on school-based teacher facilitators. Edwards, (2015) promotes teachers as decision makers with teachers' agency perceived as relational, collective and transformative which is secured to the broader values and commitments of the profession where cultural historic accounts of agency can inform teacher education. Yet, Priestley et al., (2012) raise important points concerning teachers' agency in the context of curriculum reform, questioning to what extent agency can be achieved in these circumstances particularly with a prescribed curriculum like the National Curriculum or in this study, the14-19 Diploma, for which a new professional teaching route was also introduced to aid implementation of a new 14-19 curriculum.

Indeed, change, perceived as imposition, leads to the idea that teachers are manipulated into accepting changes in 'delivering other people's intentions' (Goodson, 2003, p.57) suiting the particular ends of politicians. In this way, obligations placed on teachers such as a new curriculum or changes in management processes and accountability can mean that teachers are often left with feeling they have little control over their working practices therefore reducing their agentic capacity. Attempts to improve the quality of education has focused on systemic issues intent on monitoring and measuring outcomes of learners rather than finding solutions to make the system more intelligent through good teacher agency dependent on teachers' satisfaction and motivation (Priestley et al., 2015). Under neoliberal conditions, responsibility and professional judgement have been replaced by professional expectations which 'focus on behaviour rather than attitudes or intellectuality' where organisational not professional values displace moral and educational purpose (Evans, 2011, Ryan and Bourke, 2017, p.412). In neoliberal policy contexts, teachers matter in ways prescribed by the policy that may not take account of these aspects.

Agency designates the ways in which relationships become visible in action through negotiated spaces in the workplace where conditions for collegiality can be created through, for example, teachers' networks and professional learning communities. Subject networks also play an important part in teachers' relationships yet there is little known about their development and how these may shift over time (Eikeland, 2018, Priestley, et al., 2015). Professional relationships therefore are important as they influence journeys to becoming a professional and involve processes of meaning making in situations where transactions occur (Bergh and Wahlstrom, 2018). In the context of this study, these are important as professional expectations and recognition can vary according to context and practice across school and further education and potentially vocational expertise which may impact on agency. This is particularly so for teachers of VET in both schools and further education where concepts of professionalism may also relate to teachers' occupational specialism, which is somewhat different to subject allegiances more commonly located in traditional school curriculum subjects. Professional development opportunities may therefore vary considerably in both discipline and phase.

Perhaps it is the nature of accountability that teachers seek to change rather than the system per se as teachers' own learning careers can affect their professional dispositions (Bathmaker et al, 2002). What is clear, is that those in positions of political power strengthen dominant discourses around who teaches what in the curriculum mostly to serve their own ends in competitive global markets. Goodson (2005) suggests, for example, that A level qualifications serve the interest of the middle classes providing access to higher education opportunities. Further education colleges identified once as second chance organisations offering something culturally different to schooling (Bathmaker and Avis, 2007), are now more commonly and unhelpfully referred to through a deficit metaphor as 'Cinderella' provision because they are undervalued and underfunded (Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015). As Thompson, (2014, p.48) points out, a single FE college may contain up to 200 subject specialisms reflecting how structures and importantly how knowledge and for that matter progression in each phase is perceived. This has implications for teacher educators, phases in initial teacher education and the provision of subject or vocationally specific training opportunities. It also restricts teachers' abilities to achieve agency, particularly in the vocational curriculum in that it narrows the environment in which a teacher may feel comfortable to teach as relationships across the phases are not supported or nurtured. Unless exposed to these phases early on in a teachers' career, these boundaries could further embed teachers into siloed cultures.

For the participants in this study, the structures within which they completed their ITE and the organisations each has experience of teaching in since, do vary considerably. The 'relational

agency' gained through working in a variety of contrasting settings across phases has meant that each had the opportunity to develop 'enhanced professional agency' (Edwards, 2005) which has enabled movement across and between a wider range of education organisations. Exploring agency and agentic behaviour is therefore important as local authorities'-maintained schools, academies and FE colleges all have their own infrastructures. It is helpful to consider how crossing structural boundaries helps build common knowledge (Edwards, 2011) and understanding across phases as intersections of similar work undertaken by teachers in each phase. For participants in this study, the experiences in each phase and the environments each one encountered and developed in, provided the platform to play an important part in shaping their understanding of each phase and the importance of building professional networks. Exploring and understanding relationships is a key dimension to understanding how participants achieved agency in shifting policy contexts.

3.4.6 Teachers' agency and identity

In her deconstruction of teachers' agency, Vongalis-MaCrow, (2007) focusses on ways in which teachers navigate change (in global contexts) through action teachers take. Defining education as systems consisting of structures, where these are used to systemically organise both human and capital, agents and relationships, Vongalis-MaCrow, (2007) employs the categories defined by Archer (1984) relating teachers' agency to obligations, authority, and autonomy which reduces teachers' work to daily classroom practices. She explores the nature of teachers' agency in this context where the notion of an obligation seems to change professional expectations from responsibility to accountability which reflects the new professionalism for teachers highlighted by Evans (2008).   Teachers' authority, once understood as knowledge specialism is now more aligned to teachers' skills linked to learner outcomes. Teachers' autonomy, seen collectively and through unions, Vangolis-MaCrow, (2007) argues peaked in the 1970s with individual autonomy seen as problematic. Teachers are required to work under a constant process of change requiring them to operate as responsive adaptable professionals which ultimately commodifies teachers' agency.

In her socio-cultural examination of teacher identity and teacher agency, Lasky (2005) noted that mediation between early influence on identity and the current reform context plays an important part in shaping both a sense of identity and a sense of purpose. Agency, seen this way, is not about whether humans have agency but is a belief about human beings having abilities which impact on their lives and environment. Whilst inseparable and not to be reified, structure and agency can be viewed from different perspectives for analytical purposes (Archer, 1982). Teacher agency is part of a complex set of dynamics where culture, structures and the policy context interplay within and outside of school cultures. The focus is on 'the ways

cultural tools actually shape human cognitive functioning and the possibilities for action' where what a teacher or teachers' believe, think or act are 'always shaped by cultural, historical and social structures' which as teachers use them, continue to evolve (Lasky, 2005, p.900).

Human development is both social and psychological and Lasky (2005, p.902) acknowledges that emotion is partly biological, arguing, however, that for the most part emotion is a social construction which when related to professional vulnerabilities, is interlocked with 'belief, context, power and culture'. Fundamentally, teachers, like all humans, depend on social interactions and social norms where rules guide thinking and how to act. Rules may change in contexts, for example, in secondary schools or further education colleges as these are developed locally within institutional boundaries and in separate departments. Externally produced policies interact with teachers' identity and affect agency and a breadth of possibilities emerge which impact on teachers' professional vulnerabilities and self-efficacy.

Exploring the concept of 'agency', in social theory, sees agency often defined as having some sense of control and direction in one's life: an important part of living in a democracy where one has the capacity for autonomy (Biesta and Tedder, 2007, p.135). Indeed, social actors' agentic behaviour, intention and action rely on the human ability to anticipate the response of another or others, for example in the roles of government and teacher, or teacher and student. In the ecological sense, agency is dependent on actions of organisms i.e., humans in their environments and, in the example of the teacher and student, this means the classroom, the school, the community, and the wider local, national and potentially international political arena with all potentially having influence.   Agency is transactional in nature relying on social actors' human ability to place the self in the position of others and to be able to reflect on this experience. But as Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p. 962-3) point out in their seminal work on agency highlighted earlier, the socially embedded temporal dimension is reliant on overlapping in the present *(practical evaluative)*. This is informed by past events *(Iterational)* projecting forward *(projective)* and imagining possible futures. This framework underpins Priestley, Biesta and Robinson's (2015) work on teacher agency. This reconceptualised notion of human agency outlines a temporally embedded process of social engagement. At any moment, a social actor has orientations towards the past, present or future that will emerge in a given situation. These orientations can be seen in contexts where they are both constraining or enabling and can collide in disharmony. Mediation in contexts means that actors can transform relationships through manoeuvring within the environment. For teachers, there exists a close association between agency and professional identity which makes exploring the agency of participants as cross phase 14-19 vocational diploma teachers more appealing.

In exercising agency through reform, Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto's, (2011, p.292) view is that teachers progress through a process of self-positioning and renegotiation at certain stages throughout the reform to realign professional identities which they define as the 'subject's current conception of himself/herself as a professional actor'. In the context of reform, negotiations in professional identity are more straightforward if the reforms align with educational values but habits also play a part. If there is conflict then this is more problematic as teachers need to fill the void 'between existing identity and the expected identity' (Beijaard et al., 2004) which suggests an imagining of a possible alternative socially expected professional identity. But as Lasky (2005) suggests, outsiders' expectations have little effect if teachers are not willing to change, which highlights the formidable nature of teachers' agency when deciding not to act but arguably this is different for those beginning in their careers and for more experienced qualified teachers.

There are problems associated with what teachers' agency and agentic capacity mean which are compounded by their complicated multifaceted conceptions. More research needs to be done in this complex area and this study provides important insights into the achievement of agency of teachers who completed a unique ITE course at a point of planned mass curriculum change. Hadar and Benish-Weisman's (2019) exploration of teachers' motivations and values relates agentic capacity and agentic behaviours, finding that an openness to the new and self-promotion are seen as positive when related to agentic capacity and that maintenance of self-independence is important yet there is no one type of agentic capacity. Self-independence can be seen through several perspectives and is conceived as one's capacity to act on one's own goals (Hadar and Benish-Wiseman). But intentionality, seen as the power to act, may lead to undesired consequences for teachers as intentionality does not always determine specific consequences (Frost, 2006).

3.5 Ecological perspectives

Under prescriptive regimes and neoliberal accountability, there seems to be 'a tension between freedom to choose and responsibility for choice' (Brint, 2006, p.108). An ecological model for exploring teachers' agency as something that is achieved, rather than something that teachers have, therefore, can be helpful to understanding these tensions (Biesta, et al., 2015; Priestley et al., 2015). Likewise, the factors that support the achievement of agency are important too and may relate to the ways in which participants in this study were taught during their PGCE and the variety of environments in which they located as teachers. Teachers' agency is action based and there has been a tendency to focus on the routine elements, its purpose and engagement with the present. Teachers' agency, seen from a 'pragmatist view

where humans are always socially and historically situated and always placed within a situation' (Bergh and Wahlstrom, 2018, p.137), is better understood through narrative methods exploring the life course of the teacher (Priestley, et al, 2012). The complexity of teachers' agency means that it can be perceived in many ways, therefore clarity is necessary. The conceptual framework is the tool utilised to explore teachers' agency told through the stories and experiences of a unique group of alumni and their relational bonds to teachers, the curriculum and their professional selves ten years after their initial training. Using life history as a mechanism to explore teachers' experiences and agency using ecological models can aid understanding of the environments in which teachers do their work and help in understanding more about vocational specialists crossing school and FE divisions.

From an ecological perspective, stemming from pragmatism and transactional realism (Priestley, et al, 2015; Garrison, 1994), agency is understood as 'an emergent phenomenon of the ecological conditions in which it is enacted' (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 22). This means that agency is understood as something that people do, which involves intentionality, something which can be achieved through interaction in the environment. It emerges through the interplay between actors and their environments and is dependent on an actor's efforts, obtainable resources, contexts and structures coming together (Biesta and Tedder 2007, p.127). From this viewpoint, it aids understanding of how actors can also be constrained by material and social structures in a given environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Powell and Tod, 2004). Social structures within which participants developed formative relationships are a key area of this study to explore and analyse, so that more could be learned about how teachers' agency might be shaped. Relationships can be better understood through exploring participants' interrelationships seen through three dimensions of their professional lives: relationships with other teachers, the curriculum, perceptions of themselves as professionals which all connect to social, cognitive, and emotional domains embedded in ecological concepts for child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Powell and Tod, 2004). This was the case with these teachers' 'expanding horizons of observation' through exposure in ITE, which offered the potential to 'interrupt habitual forms of practice' and consider possibilities for new forms of practice (Priestley, Biesta and Robinson, 2015, p.89). For this study, professional life histories are identified as providing significant sources of data (Priestley, et al, 2012) which build on archived materials and researcher reflections from the position of a teacher educator.

The merits of agency, particularly during curriculum change where 'exercising agency', that is actors' abilities to respond to environmental situations, may also be used for 'non-beneficial' purposes (Priestley et al, 2012, p.192; Biesta and Tedder, 2007, p.11). Therefore, in an

ecological model, achieving agency is the ability to respond in a particular situation at a particular point in time in a particular context albeit perceived as positive or negative in nature.

3.6 The conceptual framework explained

The conceptual framework consists of interrelated elements which connect ideas from three existing models. These were selected at different points throughout the research process and started as a way of organising the data for the life histories. The first model takes the notion of concentric circles or nested Russian dolls (Bronfenbrenner,1979) to explore participants' lives from the position of the present *(the practical evaluative)* with the participant teacher at the centre. This part of the ecological model recognises that there are different points in one's life where experience can be layered so that looking back over each life can help deepen understanding of why each participant became a Society, Health and Development Diploma teacher and their subsequent experiences as teachers. This model was influential in developing participants' life histories and as a further tool for categorising and analysing participants' lives. Using a range of current and archived data adding to the two life history interviews, each participant's story developed into a richer professional life history. These inform and are informed by the nested experiences in the concentric circles and draw on participants' temporal encounters.

The second part of the model emerged from Powell and Tod and Ellis and Tod's work (2004, 2009) initially used to understand children's behaviour for learning. This involves the adoption of three domains: the social, the cognitive and the emotional. For this study, I have used these domains to firstly label and then explore the relationships of participants with:

1. teachers, *(the social)*
2. the curriculum (*cognitive*) and
3. the professional self (*the emotional*).

Relationships in this study are perceived as participants' connections to teachers, the curriculum, and professional identities, therefore, the social, cognitive, and emotional aspects of being human.

The third and final part of the conceptual framework connects the above to the work of Biesta, Priestley and Robinson's, (2015) ecological model which was used to explore teachers' agency and teachers' beliefs during a curriculum change programme in Scotland. Biesta et al's., (2015) model was useful as it provided a way to link life history, experience and agency so that the analysis of teachers' relationships in this study could shed light on what might have

shaped their agency. Therefore, my conceptual framework guides the study and addresses my two research questions.

The work of Emirbayer and Mische (1998) provided solid ground for Biesta et al.'s, (2015) ecological model. Focusing on orientations that always lie in the past, are positioned in the present and at the same time look forward to imaginings of the future means that teachers' agency is situational and dependent on something that is to be achieved by way of the environment rather than something that teachers possess and take with them. As previously stated, the model developed by Biesta, Priestley and Robinson (2015) emerged from their work researching curriculum change across primary and secondary schools (Priestley et al., 2015). Despite this study taking a different approach, Biesta's work resonated well with the position of the teachers participating in this study who, at the point of becoming teachers, were part of an implementation strategy supporting wide scale curriculum reform. These reforms impacted on two very different teaching environments, the secondary school and FECs and policy innovation (TDA, 2008) meant a distinct route emerged for those training to be teachers.

The ecological explanations locate this work in environments where agency is achieved in concrete settings. One's ability to respond to situations is shaped by past experiences and where reflection and adaptability play a part in understanding our responses to environmental conditions. Habits are formed and acted on in context under certain social conditions and are influenced by values and beliefs which can be ameliorated through our understandings of relationships. These habits are often selective and manifested through personal or group interests (Biesta, et al., 2015). Arguing that 'the achievement of agency will always result from the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural factors as they come together in particular and, in a sense, always unique situations', Biesta and Tedder, (2007, p 137) perceive agency as an 'emergent phenomenon of actor-situation transaction'. Additionally, Biesta et al, (2015, p 626) suggest 'the concept of agency highlights that actors always act by means of their environment rather than simply in their environment'. Therefore, social exchanges are important and for participants in this study who were building their professional identities as teachers in different structural environments, relationships are key to achieving agency.

Combining these ideas and models has led to the construction of a conceptual framework focusing on the features of relationships defined in three relationship domains highlighted in the conceptual framework below. Through the three relationship domains deeper experiences

can be examined to explore participants' achievement of agency through the construction of life histories which are critical to exploring agency of the teachers in this study.

3.6.1The conceptual framework

Figure 2

Conceptual framework for the achievement of agency

TEMPORAL OVER TIME

ITERATIONAL PAST

- Life histories
- Professional life histories

PRACTICAL EVALUATIVE PRESENT

- Cultural, ideas, beliefs, values, language discourses
- Structural, social structures, **relationships**, roles, power, trust
- Material, resources, physical environment

PROJECTIVE FUTURE

- Short term
- Long term

DOMAINS

Background information like home, family and early education experiences (formative)

Prior Employment (1)

Degree subject studied. Employment experiences (2). Reasons/rationale for applying for Society, Health & Development PGCE

On programme PGCE experiences including additional teaching placements. Experiences of being mentored

Working life post PGCE including subjects taught. Promotions and different roles

Leadership experiences

Participant

INFORMED BY

Relationships with
- Teachers
- Curriculum
- Self (Professional)

ACHIEVEMENT OF AGENCY

Bronfenbrenner (1979)

Background information like home, family and early education experiences (formative)

Prior Employment (1)

Degree subject studied. Employment experiences (2). Reasons/ rationale for applying for Society, Health & Development PGCE

On programme PGCE experiences including additional teaching placements. Experiences of being mentored

Working life post PGCE including subjects taught. Promotions and different roles

Leadership experiences

Participant

3.7 Summary

Chapter 3 explored the different approaches to understanding human agency, and its connection to the central concepts underpinning this study, which are 'teachers' agency' and 'teachers' relationships'. Agency, although intertwined with autonomy and professionalism, can be perceived as something separate providing a different explanation of how things relate to each other in the world. As conceptual bedfellows, 'agency' can be perceived as a key component of 'professionalism', but this is problematic when professionalism is connected to performativity which Priestley et al., (2015) argue questions the notion of teacher professionalism itself. The concept of 'agency' which, again, often has contested views and definitions, is therefore worthy of further exploration (Frost, 2006; Priestley, et al 2015; Hadar and Benish-Wiseman 2019). Agency is transactional in nature and the arguments for such an approach are convincing, particularly as little work has been undertaken which explores how teachers' relationships over time can shape or contribute to their achievement of agency.

The participants in this study were unusual in that their initial teacher education crossed the professional boundaries of secondary school and further education, preparing them to teach in two historically and culturally distinct settings as part of an innovative strategy to support government-led curriculum reform requiring institutions to work more closely across the 14-19 age range. This suggested a new type of teacher, not deterred by professionally bounded spaces to form a new kind of professional identity which tends to be linked to agency. This is because how participants acted *by means of* their environments rather than *in* their environments (Biesta et al., 2015) is key to enhancing understanding of teachers' agency for this study and the connections to relationships with other teachers, connections to the curriculum and connections to the professional self are perceived to be important.
Using a combination of models to guide this investigation, the conceptual framework highlights:

- the professional and life histories and nested experiential contexts so that encompassing the past, present and future with a slant towards the short- and long-term prospects of each participant can be explored
- the cultural context for each participant with a focus on relationships
- the social structures which enable a deeper consideration for analysis and bring new ways in which to consider how teachers' agency can be shaped through these temporal relationships teachers form through their transactions with a) other

teachers, b) the curriculum and c) the professional self which involves identity formation, and renegotiation as teachers' careers develop.

The following chapter sets this out the design, rationale, data collection and the plan for data analysis in more detail.

Chapter 4
Methodological Considerations: a life history approach

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the qualitative, narrative methodology, using life history techniques and this is congruent with pragmatism. In the pragmatist tradition, this research centred on exploration of participants' relationships and experiences (Leijen et al., 2019) and how these might be important in shaping agency.   I justify the research design and the rationale for using this approach. This is followed by a discussion of the role of the researcher, how the participants were selected, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, and the data analysis plan. Also addressed are trustworthiness of my data as a criterion of validity, and ethical procedures including ethical considerations.

The aim of this research was to explore and understand more about participants' relationships and individual agency. In order to do this, the research questions were formulated and developed over time as the data were collected and analysis began, resulting in the following two research questions:

1. What understanding of teachers' agency can be generated through using life history to explore cross phase vocational teachers' experience?

2. What can we learn about the importance of relationships in shaping the agency of cross phase vocational teachers?

The conceptual framework in Chapter 3 provided the foundation on which this study is based and synthesised three existing ecological models (Biesta et al, 2015; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Powell and Tod, 2004). These were attractive because each model informed the building of professional life histories, supporting the idea that relationships are a suitable topic for study, exploration and analysis and that categories for exploring this over time would be helpful in considering how these helped or hindered participants' achievement of agency. This study, therefore, aims to build on and contribute to existing theory through exploring teachers' agentic capacity through the domains of relationships (Dewey, 1938; Clandinin, 2013; Priestley et al., 2015)

For this study, a pragmatic position was adopted to accentuate the importance of teachers' experience as a practical source of knowledge (Rosiek and Gleason, 2019; Clandinin and Husu, 2017). Inspired by Dewey, (1938) the study of experience is defined as interaction and continuity 'enacted in situations' where 'temporality, place and sociality' are key dimensions (Clandinin, 2013, p. 12). For teachers, and their agency, the above emphasises the

importance of problem solving or action, in the context of real-world practice where relationships exist over time. Critics of Dewey often misconstrue pragmatism as instrumentalism, the idea that knowledge is pursued not for its own sake but for action. Another view is that Dewey was more comfortable with the term 'cultural naturalism' as this aligned more with Darwinian thinking (Stanford, 2018, p.1). However, Sleeper, (2001, p.3) noted that a less common conception of Dewey's 'philosophy required him to think of action itself as instrumental', which from this standpoint sees Dewey's pragmatism as a

> 'radical form of realism – transactional realism in which instrumentalism
> plays a subordinate role…and thinking entails active involvement with
> independent reality, an involvement that is causally efficacious. Even reflection is
> a means of conducting transformational transactions with the world, a means of
> changing or reconstructing the world'. (Sleeper, 2001, p.3)

Transactions can be transformative, and Garrison, (1994) suggests that Dewey's ideas are centrally linked to useful transactions and engagement in environments where humans can thrive. Experience is perceived by Dewey (1938) as knowledge for living where connections with further and wider experiences are seen as important. This can be particularly important for teachers in adapting and diversifying as professionals as each experience may open more possibilities for the future. However, experiences are not always positive and do vary in quality; these are important points which, as Dewey (1938) points out, affect future experiences which are independent of aspiration or purpose. These experiences influence later experiences through the formation of habit, particularly when this is interpreted as a biological characteristic which may seem instrumental in nature but does help or hinder future experiences through adaptation which is active. Garrison, (1995, p.10) suggests that Dewey's 'instrumentalist logic is the tool that functions to aid the Darwinian labor of staying alive and living well' in an environment, thus establishing a theory of pragmatism where connections are made between experience and learning. Environments are constructed by humans or evolve in nature, and experience, Dewey (1925) suggests, is about interactions and transactions in and with an environment; humans as organisms are part of this and not merely spectators, a view echoed by Barad, (2003, p.29) where the 'knower does not stand in a relation of absolute externality to the natural world being investigated…we are not outside observers of the world… rather, we are part of the world in its ongoing intra-activity'. For this study, the exploration of teachers' experience is central to understanding more about their relationships particularly in terms of how these shape agency.

Taking a more holistic approach, Dewey abandoned all psycho-physical dualisms and argued for a reconstruction of a theory of inquiry which sees entrenched divisions dissipated: for example, stimulus-response models are seen as inflexible, falsifying kinds of genuine interaction (Stanford, 2018). Dewey makes the point that human interactions are social interactions where social structures and relationships are not fixed but functional and transient depending on time and place. There is always change, yet change can be slow or fast paced and will often require action so that for this study, capturing participants' lives through their stories seemed appropriate. Life history approaches are concerned with 'capturing the process of change' (Ojermark, 2007, p.3) and deepening understanding about social position and context through a process of interpretation and meaning making (Goodson and Cole, 1994; Denzin, 2003).

This study is influenced by transactional realism where knowledge is grounded in real life experience where transactions occur (Dewey, 1938; Garrison, 1995; Hammersley, 2012) and where connections are made between the personal and practical aspects of teachers' experience. Exploring agency through personal stories helps to shed light on teachers' lived experiences and their capacity to interplay with contextual aspects in their lives. Inevitably, stories involve consideration of past experiences and achievements and can, if examined closely, provide insight into the emergence of behavioural patterns (Biesta, et al., 2015). There are challenges in understanding life history research, and I set out a clear rationale for adopting this approach where meanings can be ascribed to locations, events and social interactions through researcher interpretations (O'Reilly and Kiyimba, 2015). This is done through the collection of personal, oral testimonies – most often through interviews with participants and the interpretation of this as data which is part of a wider collection of data which includes my own reflections. However, the boundaries between participants' stories and researchers' reflections are what Goodson and Sikes call 'artificial' (2001, p.40) which echoes well with my position as researcher and teacher educator as the participants in this research were my student teachers, albeit a decade ago.

The pragmatic position I have adopted resonates well with both the conceptual framework described above and the qualitative, narrative research approach subsequently employed.

4.2 Narrative approaches
Various scholars have suggested that a 'narrative turn' in the late 1980s provided a way for many voices to be heard and where understanding experience was seen as important to the inquiry (Polkinghorne, 1988; Reissman and Quinney, 2005; Goodson and Gill, 2011; Clandinin, 2013; Caine et al., 2013). Indeed, Goodson and Gill, (2011) point out that social research such as narrative has been used by many disciplines where positivist approaches

have not enabled sufficient scrutiny of human action or social interaction as it positions the researcher outside of the social reality. Yet, there are many terms used to describe the different ways narrative approaches are used which can be challenging (Eikeland, 2018). Narrative inquiry is a subset of qualitative research where the focus on human action is supported through using stories to describe and attribute a variety of meanings (Polkinghorne, 1988). Humans story their worlds in order to create meaning for their experiences and narrative inquiry is a methodology used to understand experience (Clandinin and Caine, 2008). Ojermark, (2007) provided a useful overview of the terminology used across both narrative and life history research covering biographical, family history, narrative, oral history, case history, life story, life history and testimoni (for definitions see Appendix E). This is a complex field, but it does mean that narratives can provide more insight into human agency and contribute to different ways of thinking in social sciences; it can connect to the wider socio-political world of individuals who reveal their own 'truths', 'unfolding the depth and complexity of human experience' (Goodson and Gill, 2011, p20) and the world which they inhabit. Relationships crossing professionally bounded spaces and teachers' agency are not easy phenomena to grapple with and Creswell, (2007, p.40) suggests that when issues are this complex there is a need for a more detailed understanding:

> 'This detail can only be established by talking directly with people, going to their homes or places of work, and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature. We conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimise the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study.'

Narrative inquiry requires a clear outline of the researcher's position both ontologically and epistemologically and begins with a curiosity concerning the experiences of humans (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Caine, Estafan and Clandinin, 2013). The grounds on which I claim this is narrative work is through my interpretations of each participant's reality (Goodson and Sikes, 2001).

In mapping the field, Robert and Shenhov, (2014, p. 2) suggest two fundamental statements concerning the status and perspective of narrative work where narrative is:
1) 'the very fabric of human existence or a representational advice among others'
2) 'the quality of an approach or an object of investigation or both'.

Polkinghorne, (1988, p.7) suggests that the term 'narrative' represents a variety of meanings for researchers claiming further that the social world is constructed by narratives. Others such as Reissman and Quinney, (2005) suggest that narratives are used to portray aspects of what the researcher aims to portray. However, Robert and Shenhov, (2014) also concede that in some narrative studies these positions coincide, albeit with one more prevalent than the other. Narrative approaches vary with diversity stemming from different ontological perspectives, namely relativism and realism (O'Reilly and Kiyimba, 2015). Narrative approaches involve subjectivity, which assumes that there is no objective reality. Holliday, (2002, p.6) clarifies this in that 'reality contains mysteries to which the researcher must submit and can do no more than interpret'. People lead storied lives where experience can be seen as providing explanations for knowing which for this research sits within an interpretivist, pragmatic and not positivist epistemological framework. Axiomatically, my world view position as the researcher, teacher educator and participants' former tutor will affect the research process as my values impact on what I feel is appropriate for this study.

Using narrative approaches in education research as a way of examining the world we live in concerns stories about change and giving voice which are respectful and sensitive to participants and locations (Creswell, 2008). How we use these stories intellectually to develop theories about human social life which is complex in nature, in a particular social and political context, is the role of the life historian who explores human potential (Sikes, 2006; Goodson and Cole, 1994; Goodson and Numan, 2002; Issler and Nixon, 2010; Goodson and Lin Pik Choi, 2008). Reissman (2015), acknowledged the powerful nature of narrative work particularly in the face of disruption and exploring and analysing participants' lived experiences provided the opportunity to reconstruct these in a social reality (Goodson, 2008). Capturing the political turbulence of participants' professional contexts on qualifying as teachers was therefore important to this study.

Narrative refers to a story told by the teller of the narrative. Life history can focus on a whole life, parts of a life in specific contexts such as occupations or take particular themes. Additional sources of evidence such as historical or archived documents and other testimonies all add to the data (Goodson and Gill, 2011) which, for this study, also included my reflections after the interviews. For Goodson et al., (2017, p. 5) the life story alongside other data 'triangulates' the life story to locate its wider meaning.

Narrative inquiry has increasingly been used in professional and educational experience since there are benefits in these approaches being used for improvements in education. However, Goodson and Numan, (2002) recognise the tensions and the crises in teaching generally as

a profession. They point out that education research and many education reforms do not represent or reflect teachers' voices or concerns which arguably is still the case. What is more worrying is that teachers can feel silenced through their lack of opportunity and time to engage in research which focuses on their lives and life history can help fill this void. It is through exploring life stories, presented as life histories, that meanings can be made but not generalised or in any way be representative of all teachers. The findings may well provide points for interest, and I suggest in the final chapter that there are several important areas for consideration concerning vocational teachers' achievement of agency and their ability to build relationships that help them adapt in different education settings.

4.3 Life History

The underpinning nature of this qualitative paradigm characterises the fundamental properties of the narrative approach and a range of methods commonly associated with life history research, which confidently established itself in the Chicago School of Sociology (Sikes, 2006; Ojermark, 2007; McNeill,1990). Sikes, (2006) argues there is no 'proper way' of undertaking research when using life history but notes that the researcher brings with them their own sets of values, experiences and emotions and through engagement with others will seek to interpret meanings which will be dependent on individual circumstances – there is then, a sense of uniqueness to this type of approach which means turning one's back on objectivity and embracing subjectivity and positionality (Sikes and Goodson, 2001; Sikes, 2006; Plummer, 2001; Ojermark, 2007). The term 'objectivity' tends to be aligned to research where data that emerges from methods such as large-scale surveys can be measured in statistical ways, generalised and applied to human life experiences. Life history is more than a collection of stories and the overlap with me as the life historian reaches into my life as a teacher educator and researcher linking my past and my present to participants' lives on a continuum connecting the historical and the social (Goodson and Gill, 2011).

Life history research can provide rich data with insights based on the stories set within a particular social context and time. The researcher then collects these 'storied lives' and tells stories of them often focussing on a community or group where these collective stories enable us to 'make new stories' (Connelly and Clandinin, 2009, p.2). A point Plummer (2001) reiterates and suggests is that the social context in which a life history is told is important because it enables us to focus on change and this provides considerable value. This is expressed well through Slim and Thompson's 'Listening for A Change' (1993) which links listening to and working with vulnerable groups in Africa for political change (Ojermark, 2007; Thompson, 2000). As previously mentioned, to a certain degree, the life history methodology is often criticised for its focus on those in vulnerable circumstances (Sikes, 2006). And, indeed,

it might be argued that teachers' lives are particularly vulnerable in the context of for example accountability and wide-ranging policy reforms. It seems important, therefore, to explore the stories of participants' agentic capacity, as it might be the case that this mitigates any vulnerability.

In exploring teachers' achievement of agency across boundaries of school and further education, the methods used in life history research are helpful in gaining additional insight into the daily lives of teachers and more importantly, for this context, of those entering the teaching profession. There are criticisms of this approach in that it can focus more on the individual being studied than the social context in which the individual experience is set (Connelly and Clandinin, 2009). Plummer (2001) suggests we are misguided if we think that life history is individualistic pointing out that life history as a method serves to discover 'confusions, peculiarities and contradictions' (p. 40) in daily experiences. Yet topics for life history studies are not straightforward as impact of this kind of research needs some consideration (Tierney and Landford, 2019). Of course, there are risks and vulnerabilities associated with life history research and the potential for exploiting those being researched is an ethical dilemma which I explore later.

Employing a life history approach meant that it was necessary to create themes and codes to use as tools to analyse the relationship domains outlined in the conceptual framework. This made possible the exposure of instances of teacher agency located in contexts which provided more insight into participants' relationships over time. Interestingly, Tierney and Landford (2019) suggest that life history research presumes participants have agency yet, for this study, agency is understood as something that is achieved and not possessed or ever present in an individual but surfaces as an 'emergent phenomenon' specific to a situation and context for action (Biesta, et al., 2015). Although this research focusses on exploring teachers' agency in professional contexts, it is possible that engaging in research is empowering as it gives voice to the participant therefore could affect behaviour.

Epistemologically, for life historians, the social world we live in is interpreted from the stories told by participants – the 'life as told' and the reality of the 'life as lived' and the connections made by the participant and the researcher (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p. 39). Knitting together and analysing the life and work of teachers (Goodson, 1994) is an important task for the life historian who seeks to draw out and make connections in and across the personal and social histories of participants. Life History interviews have the potential to provide some captivating descriptions of the lives of teachers and of the human world in general (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). The realities emerging from conversations are rich and deep where

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interviewing is recognised as a 'knowledge-producing activity' (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 55).

Life history is collaborative and transactional by nature: through a process of story-telling, listening and interpreting, knowledge can be produced. Indeed, as Cole and Knowles, (2001), suggest, life history research is concerned with exploring and understanding more about, for example, an individuals' day-to-day decision making in a particular context and can provide insight into social conditions. Similarly, Sikes, (2006) argues that examining the political context and exploring human potential itself produces knowledge. For Goodson and Cole, (1994), teachers' voices produce knowledge when we listen closely to what is being said and this can be further utilised, for example, to understand more about teachers' agency, inform continuing professional development (CPD) or enhance understanding of professional identities. Participating in and undertaking life history research can be empowering (Goodson and Gill, 2011) which might be why it is increasingly popular among education researchers (Goodson and Pik Lin Choi, 2008; Roberts, 2002; Hammersley, 2002; Roberts, 2002; Roach, 2005; Eikeland, 2018).

I was interested in exploring participants' lives, specifically their relationships as components of their experiences and to capture the 'interplay of individual's capacities and environmental conditions' to explore agency (Priestley et al., 2015, p.3). Life history seemed the most suitable vehicle to capture these experiences providing opportunities for insights. These stories are about looking backwards to what drew participants to become vocational teachers in the first place and crucially, forwards to how each has managed to sustain a career in teaching after significant policy changes early in their careers. Ojermark, (2007, p.4) defines life history as an:

> 'account of a life based on interviews and conversation. The life history is based on the collection of a written or transcribed oral account requested by a researcher. The life story is subsequently edited, interpreted and presented in one of a number of ways, often in conjunction with other sources. Life histories may be topical, focusing on only one segmented portion of a life, or complete, attempting to tell the full details of a life as it is recollected.'

Using life history techniques, the purpose of this study was to explore teachers' lives and analyse their relationships using three specific domains so that more could be learned about relationships and how these might help shape teachers' agency. Using life history methods to explore relationships can help us understand more about teachers' professional lives and their

achievement of agency in education environments often troubled by turbulent policy context exposing 'larger realities' (Tierney and Landford, 2019, p.17). As data emerged through the interview transcripts, I began to investigate participants' relationships firstly, with teachers, secondly, with the curriculum and lastly, with their professional selves, essentially focusing on how they had become who they are now (Gee, 2001). For sample transcript see Appendix F.

This was important as policy changes require that teachers position themselves in relation to changes to organisations, other teachers and students (Priestley, et al., 2012; Leander and Osborne, 2008). The participants had graduated from the PGCE in 2009 or 2010 and I wanted to know more about what had prompted them to become diploma teachers, the educational environments these specialist teachers had worked in and explore how each had managed to survive vocational curriculum policy changes.   It was necessary, therefore, to root this study in the narrative research tradition adopting life history approaches so that through exploring participants' experiences, the broader effect of political policies on teachers' lives could be better understood as well as investigate how this might affect teachers' agentic capacity (Priestley et al., 2012).

As Sikes, (2006) suggested, positioning an actor in the broader social, cultural and historical contexts they occupy is important in understanding the personal, subjective perceptions and experiences of participants' professional lives where each will have inimitable personal and emotional experiences. Connolly and Clandinin (2006), observed that in shaping their daily lives, people depend on stories of themselves, and this involves interpretation of past events and interactions. Focusing on the past in the life course can help deepen our understanding of how experiences can influence the present and project toward the future where agency emerges in different contexts (Eteläpelto et al., 2013)

4.4 Research Design and Rationale

Studying teachers' lives was given prominence through the work of Goodson and Ball in the 1980s (see Ball and Goodson, 1985) and influenced by others (Sikes, 2006; Ojermark, 2007; Reissman, 1993). I seek to understand teachers' experiences through their stories and explore further how agency might be achieved.

Despite the focus on teachers' stories, little has been discovered previously concerning cross phase or secondary trained teachers in relation to vocational curricula. The choice of a narrative approach provided a voice for the participant to tell their own story and talk about their views about education as the experts and actors within it. Methodologically, interactions between the researcher and participant in life history work involve dynamic and recursive processes (Tierney and Landford, 2019). For this study, participants' stories provided the opportunity to explore past and present experiences and engage in discourse about the environments in which they had and were teaching and so that more could be understood about how relationships could help shape agency.

4.5 The role of the researcher

Advocating life history methods, Tierney and Landford (2019, p.3) suggest research can 'stimulate further dialogue about the intersection of the individual and society.' Again, there is a call for understanding both the historical policy context and the position of both the researcher and the participants as professional lives intertwine and adapt to future possibilities. Although this study is not about me as the researcher, it is important to note that I was also entangled professionally in my role as a teacher educator at this policy departure when specialist Diploma ITE was revoked, and I acknowledge this and my own agentic capacity (Caine, et al., 2013). Because of my professional relationship with participants during their PGCE studies and for some beyond this, I know them more intimately than any outsider researcher and I believe this makes the study more authentic. Extending beyond their ITE, and my role as their tutor, the level of trust and confidence was something which helped when sharing their personal stories with me. The reassurance that their personal and intimate stories and other data would be treated respectfully and with sensitivity was both implicit and explicit in the protocols for the study.

Exploring individual lives was an intimate undertaking which focused on the one-to-one conversations with participants which were personal and sensitive in nature. The research relationship developed over time with repositioning of roles, with my role changing from tutor to researcher and their role changing from student teacher to participant. There was a sense of strong identity in the PGCE cohorts and as their tutor I was inside this and able to acknowledge it (O'Reilly and Kiyimba, 2015). In this role, I would provide critical and developmental feedback that in essence meant there was an inevitable power difference and hierarchical relationship. This was understandable when learning from more experienced teachers and I was mindful not to have my version of the PGCE era dominate the interviews. But it did mean that interviews became like natural conversations and then became more awkward as we readjusted to researcher – participant personas and my questions became more probing as each story unfolded. Gaining insights into participants' experiences

necessitated an idiographic and emic approach defined as a focus on understanding individuals and their behaviours as unique and specific to the socio-cultural context (Holliday, 2002; O'Reilly and Kiyimba, 2015). I hope that I did not cause any anxiety through questions I pursued about, for example, continuing professional development or that I had expected a particular level of career progression. Over time, as these teachers became education colleagues in the broader sense, I kept in contact with two, for example through social media. Although these interactions were infrequent, they gave snapshots of our lives as we each wanted to present them. It was these ongoing relationships that had enabled me to invite them to participate in this research.

My theoretical interest in teachers' achievement of agency was linked directly to their relationships and the social and cultural structures within their spheres of practice as outlined in the conceptual framework. There were, however, implications in implementing this life history approach as it was time consuming yet necessary in gaining a deep understanding of the context in which participants taught. With this approach, there was scope to include historical documents archived from 2008 onwards and researcher reflections after each interview as I perceived these as a potential source of data as my thoughts, feelings and concerns for participants were captured throughout the research process (Holliday, 2002). This also enabled me to deal with any biases I felt towards participants, their stories, and their experiences in their settings and indeed what had happened politically. I had for example, been strongly influenced by my preconceptions about participants' experiences since being awarded their PGCEs. It meant that I was required to think again about cross phase divisions and the different actors in education more broadly and more generously. Teachers and teaching are politically and socially constructed and my role as the researcher was to locate the political, personal, social and ethical dimensions in professional life histories reflecting a snapshot in time (Goodson and Gill, 2011; Goodson and Numan, 2002). There are different paths to becoming a teacher with distinct political drivers as outlined in Chapter 2. In exposing the micro political challenges and contextual realities of college teachers in Canada, Goodson and Cole, (1994) argued that a teacher's position as a change agent is through engagement with institutional arenas that offer possibilities for change. The teachers in Goodson and Cole's (1994) study had not experienced typical teacher preparation and understandably struggled to comprehend their new roles. Yet over time, they began to see themselves as participating in the wider micro-political spaces of their institutions beyond the classroom. In contrast to the college teachers above, participants in my study had experienced teacher preparation, albeit unique, across secondary and FE as well as vocational experience prior to embarking on their training (such experience was a requirement for admission to the course).

In this study, it is important to explore and analyse the achievement of agency seen the through the relationship domains and stories outlined in the conceptual framework where the life histories encompass the experiences of teachers initially trained to teach vocational Diplomas in both secondary school and further education. The meanings emergent from each life history are drawn from a range of sources based in historical and political contexts which have dominated during the last two decades. The methods used for this study support the view that using life history techniques is a highly effective and widely acknowledged means to explore teachers lives, and importantly for this study, participants' achievement of agency.

4.6 Ethical considerations and procedures

Alongside identifying some potential pitfalls for me as the researcher there was the temptation for me to tell my own story. I chose not to do so but to use my reflections after interviews as a source of data to inform the life histories as our pasts had been closely connected through my role as their tutor. Power differentials and sensitivity considerations like trust, featured prominently and the challenge this presented ethically were carefully considered throughout the process. Any life history researcher must think about the potential effects on participants as changes will occur as a result and learning will take place (Biesta and Tedder, 2006). Indeed, dialogic exchanges and reflexive processes are important in research about teachers' agency because it can empower participants and connect with action where agency can occur.

It is, therefore, important to acknowledge the life historian. The researcher occupies a privileged position holding power to alter existing thoughts and beliefs of the storyteller (Pring, 2015). This is two dimensional as the assumptions of the researcher can influence thought patterns through habitual ways of thinking, feeling and acting through cognitive and emotional elements (Mezirow, 1997). Agency as a phenomenon is occupied by these kinds of dilemmas as it deals with the personal and political – the self and social structures such as relationships and interconnectivities.

4.6.1 Ethics

This study has been subject to ethical review processes and follows the British Education Research Association guidelines (BERA 2011). The absence of flawless and stringent rules for life history research presents a challenge for me as a researcher and is a recognised dilemma in narrative approaches (Goodson and Gill, 2011). I have paid special attention to BERA guidelines on 'Responsibilities to Participants' (BERA, 2011). Plummer (2001) points out that ethics requires contextual decision making and is not simply just following any rules.

For this study, there is an established relationship between the researcher and the participants and whilst there has been some time lapse between PGCE and the present day, there continues to be a level of intimacy which might not have existed without this shared history. Because of such narrow selection criteria, participants were aware of each other's participation but at no time were names or details shared.

All participants have been respected and protected and this is central to the approach I have taken through life history interviews. The participants received information sheets designed to explain the purpose of the study and their position within it. All participants participated voluntarily, and sufficient time has lapsed that they are not dependent on me to contribute to their professional lives and enhance their careers. Through reminiscing and sharing memories and experiences, the process did not leave me untouched. The interview data reflected this and there were times when there was a discussion in the interview data which went off topic and seeped into other aspects of both the researcher's and participants' lives. The humanness of the experience was important as participants exposed intimate aspects of their lives and professional experiences which was, at times, difficult for some to do. It was also disturbing for me to watch them physically try to maintain their composure and myself mine and continue to listen and I hope it was helpful to do this. The nature of the relationships between the researcher and participants are acknowledged as challenging spaces in life history research where for example, reciprocity, intimacy, and empathy exist through interactions (Goodson and Gill, 2011).

The sometimes-uncomfortable nature of listening to accounts of participants' lives has affected me too as the researcher as I capture my thoughts and continue to try to face my prejudices and acknowledge my biases. We have sometimes danced well together but sometimes trodden on each other's toes as we manoeuvre our way through this new relationship (researcher – participant). It is like learning to dance when there is uncertainty of who leads. I have taken care with their stories and valued participants' experiences, and I am vigilant in not representing them as victims of historical circumstances even though I am a critic of the missed opportunities for integrating vocational and academic education that policies implemented in 2010 gave rise to. Nor did I see participants as teachers merely trained to deliver predesigned packages of qualifications like the diploma, the termination of which might be seen to have left them professionally disadvantaged.

4.7 Participant selection

Selection of participants was bound by the limited numbers who undertook the PGCE in Society, Health and Development (SHD) across two separate academic years – 2008-9 and 2009-10. At first, I thought this would be a straightforward process, but I was constrained by having limited or no access to up-to-date contact details on these students who are now qualified teachers and additional considerations around data protection of which I was conscious. Overall, the majority of those who undertook the PGCE during this period were female. Selection, a decade on, was also dependent on whether I knew the names of those who had changed their names on marriage. There were data protection issues involved with seeking a wider sample. For the reasons above, I pursued those who had maintained some form of contact with me post qualifying to teach. This has implications for the data in that the sample is selected on a narrow set of criteria. For example, for some, their selection relied on my continued relationships with them post training.

4.7.1 Procedures for recruitment and participation

Access to participants proved to be more difficult than I had envisaged. I approached potential participants using a variety of contemporary media. There was limited success with this approach but sufficient to continue as depth was prioritised to breadth. Of the sixteen potential participants for this research, six were able to participate initially with five continuing. A participant was omitted for ethical reasons. There were three participants from 2008-9 cohort and two participants from 2009-10 cohort, collectively, four females and one male.

Each participant was sent a formal letter inviting them to participate accompanied by a protocol sheet explaining in more detail what the study was about, using life history, why they had been approached to participate, consent, protection of identities through pseudonyms and data protection, and I invited further questions regarding the study (see Appendix G). Participants agreed to participate and subsequently signed consent forms. During the interview process, we discussed historical documents I had collated and there were no objections to these being included as part of the data set. Participants were also invited to send additional thoughts after each interview via email.

As a researcher working in an interpretive paradigm, I acknowledge that my assumptions and influence are inseparable from processes of data collection, data analysis and interpretation. My connection with each participant and our relationships are entwined through historical tutor and tutee relationships which existed prior to the interview stage. Our experiences of the time we spent together in a relationship of power imbalance must also be acknowledged.

4.8 Data collection and setting

There were four groups of data collected illustrating how different data sources build a picture (Holliday, 2002) to help construct professional life histories with participants' names pseudonymised:

Desk Based research - the policy context

1

Julia's, Erica Grice's, Peter's, Lorraine's, and Baptiste's interview transcripts/emails

2

Groups of data

Researcher reflections captured

after interviews

3

Archived documentation

4
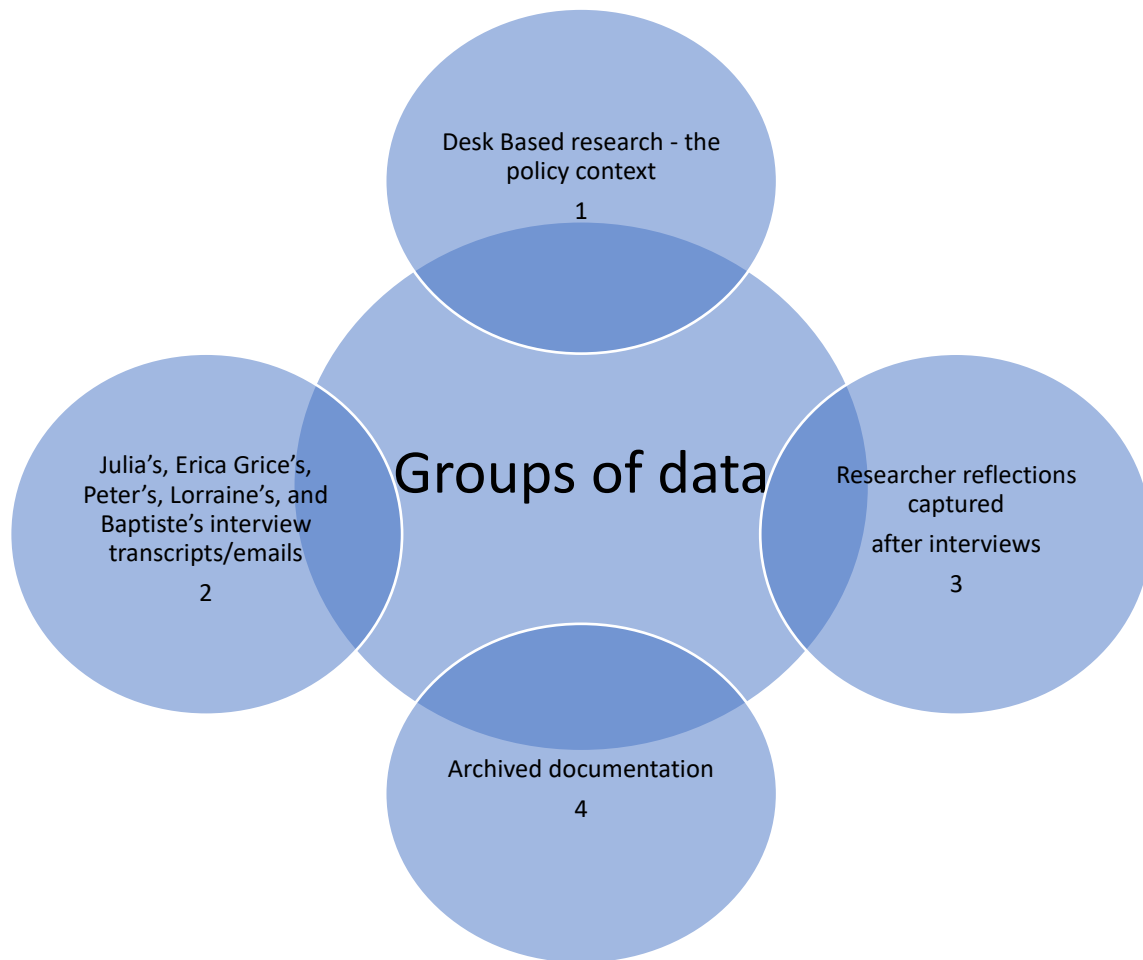
1. Policy documents and government produced 14-19 Diploma resources.
2. Interview transcripts.
3. Researcher reflections after each interview.
4. There are four additional forms of historical data archived from 2008 which although patchy and inconsistent across all participants, add more value to participants' stories and professional life histories. This includes their experiences during and beyond the PGCE and includes the following documentation:

a) 'What I bring to teaching' parts 1 and 2 writing in subject ITE sessions in university for Erika Grice and Baptiste.

b) Reflections from the Additional Diploma experience from Erika Grice, Peter and Lorraine

c) Summative reports from FE for Baptiste

d) Mentor feedback from Julia as a mentor

There are historical relationships with the participants in this study and I have interacted with each of them since their progression from the PGCE for different reasons such as writing their references for further study or when they have become ITE mentor colleagues in schools or FECs. I felt I knew them well professionally, but I needed to be open to new discoveries. Holliday, (2002, p.5) points out the importance of the setting in qualitative research and the distinct nature of this type of research in leading to 'unforeseen areas of discovery'. My memory of them as student teachers has an influence on what I think of their professional lives. My perception of their successes or failures must be seen in the context of a challenging environment for teachers generally and for them as teachers of vocational education post 2010.

Data were collected through two one-to-one interviews so ten in total, which took place in a variety of locations suggested by each participant, minimising the distance between researcher and participant (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Wellington et al., 2005). For me, it was about where each participant felt comfortable enough to have an interview with me as the researcher investigating their lives that would be recorded, transcribed and analysed for the purpose of this study. One participant was interviewed at home and then at my home and risk assessments were completed and submitted to my supervisors. Two participants were interviewed (separately) in my workplace in vacant teaching rooms. One participant was interviewed in the workplace. The second set of interviews maintained the same approach and the settings remained the same or similar as with the reciprocal location chosen by Peter who invited me to his home for interview one and suggested mine for interview two which I accepted as a fair and even exchange and we went to lunch afterwards. For others, the settings included participants' workplaces, university rooms where I was able to offer light refreshments

There were no barriers to access that were not resolvable and as such, the participant outside England was interviewed using FaceTime technology, both times when the participant was at home. I conducted the interviews from my home deciding not to capture any film footage as it

may have been uncomfortable for the participant and hindered the interview process. During the interviews, participants were able to decline to answer any questions that arose during the interviews. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Member checking involved offering drafts of professional life histories to participants and invitations to address any issues of inaccuracy (Creswell, 2008). Participants were asked to create their pseudonym and two participants did this. Participants were also invited to send any additional thoughts or writing to me if they wished. All information provided by participants is confidential and names do not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study. Participants were reassured that there are no known or anticipated risks associated with being a participant in this study. I acknowledge that interviews often feel intrusive and awkward, and I was conscious of this throughout the process. It is not a natural thing to record a conversation.

Data collection from interviews took place over a period of fourteen months which ended in February 2019. The interviews themselves were unstructured with one question as a prompt to help with the flow at the beginning of each of the first round of interviews: '*Can you tell me your life story and why this led to you becoming a teacher?*'

Participants were not prepared in advance for this other than the text in the protocols and information sheet. This was risky and I had not thought about the context and breadth of the question but for consistency I did not change this. I found I needed to explain to some participants that the focus was on their professional experiences but if they felt that any information was pertinent to the question then to say so. The second interviews took a more individual approach and were based on what the participants had told me in their first interview, picking up on the narrative flow, revisiting what had been discussed and providing opportunities for clarifications and contextual details (Goodson, 2017).

My written reflections were captured after some interviews as these were valuable, firstly, as a record about my thoughts at the time of the interview in relation to what participants had told me about their lives and secondly, when it came to writing the life histories it could provide a different enriching perspective linking my own personal experiences (Roach, 2005; Thoresen and Öhlén, 2015) which could add context to the life histories. Shared stories are important for narrative work. Goodson and Gill (2011) draw on Dewey and the idea of 'intense listening' (p.127) where two people converse using a trans-actional process and this seems common practice among life historians. The opportunity to capture the inter-play between participant and researcher beyond the interview transcripts seemed too good to miss. It helps when constructing the historical context if the memories of researcher complement those of the

participant. For this study, these established relationships provided opportunities for deepening understanding of participants experiences and reflecting on our conversations seemed important. Yet for some, the interview process was rewarding, but for others, at times, it seemed uncomfortable. Often the process of tape recording was the problem and sometimes it was where a participant touched upon a painful area of their life experience which seemed to me to be a critical incident needing capture. On each occasion, I have sought to reassure participants through just listening quietly to what they were saying and to lessen any anxieties and I feel that because of our connected pasts, participants have trusted me to do this sensitively and ethically. The stories told are participants' and the life histories are my interpretation of a segment of their lives as I understand it (Cole and Knowles, 2001) so that more could be understood about their agency.

4.9 Data analysis plan

Using interview data, historic documents and my reflections, professional life histories were constructed for each participant to enhance understanding of their professional lives as teachers. Professional life histories then formed the central data for further analysis, and I used the concentric circles from the conceptual framework to temporally nest different parts of participants' lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The framework of relational themes for analysis (Figure 3, page 88) was constructed through revisiting and redefining the *relationships* in the conceptual framework situated in the practical evaluative dimension outlined by Biesta, Priestley and Robinson, (2015). Linking to this, the relationship domains (Powell and Tod 2004; Ellis and Tod, 2009) and redefining of them, provided the categories for the development of themes under which participants' temporal experiences were coded and analysed facilitating the identification of instances of the achievement of agency. These captured the temporal nature of relationships looking to the past, the future and always from the present. Thematic analysis is considered by O'Reilly and Kiyimba (2015, p.75) as 'epistemologically flexible' in qualitative research as it resonates with a variety of epistemological positions. It was compatible for the pragmatist approach taken by this research because of the focus on the experiences of participants. It enabled a flexible approach as themes emerged from the data and were subsequently organised for analysis (Holliday, 2002) and facilitated the theoretical focus on experience, agency and relationships related to the research questions.

Collecting and analysing data from different places entailed a logical inductive process, collecting detailed knowledge of the lives of the participants and their experiences that led them to sustained teaching careers. The interview transcripts and my reflections after each interview and archived documents have made the stories and professional life histories more credible going beyond the mere capture of events, delving into intimate recollections of

incidences and occurrences in each human life. The life historian values each contribution made by human subjects and large samples are not the aim in life history research generally.

Human experience is complex and messy and the relationships that we build and maintain are often cemented through shared experience and understandings. In professional development contexts, these early relationships are tentative and fragile, and the social construction of the world is based on the way in which we think and talk about concepts and how we accept these as 'reality or realities' through meaning making in multiple contexts (Bradbury-Jones et al, 2012). These are the harvests of our own personal experiences inextricably merged and something that even if we wanted to, we could not easily separate or escape from (Creswell, 2007). This position does not assume *a priori* beliefs on the part of participants in this research which captures multiple perspectives and interpretations of lived experiences (Roller et al, 2015). into, during and beyond the cross phase 14-19 PGCE training course.

As an iterational, not linear process, the pattern below summarises each stage of data scrutiny:

- Transcribing interviews.
- Researcher observations made after each interview kept in field notes as reflections.
- Initial researcher notes made through listening to audio recordings of interviews over a period of fourteen days to identify emerging themes from the first and second interviews.
- Initial content analysis from the transcripts of what the participant were saying about themselves and their experiences (meanings, experiences, and views).
- Questions asked by the interviewer, categorising types of questions into ideal, provocative, leading, loading.
- Coding using the conceptual framework relationship domains to create a structure.
- Coding what was not said – perceived through gaps in the analysis framework.
- Pen portraits set the context for each life history and provide a brief snapshot of current and previous positions and relate to the concentric circles in the conceptual framework which informed each life history.

The data analysis planning took into consideration a variety of factors which raised questions for me as the researcher and my role as interviewer. Indeed, collecting the data and analysing this occurred as an ongoing process between me and participants as we moved from the first interview to the next (Tierney and Landford, 2019). I became more aware of how difficult it

was to detach my influence and assumptions from this process (Gillham, 2000). It was uncomfortable to listen to, notice and then explore leading questions. For example, when I asked Baptiste about her PGCE being highly valued as I had assumed that it would be, she told me quite clearly that other teachers on in-service routes were more celebrated. Another occasion was with Peter. When I pressed on with a question concerning any power balance, I assumed he experienced this when he was observed as a student teacher. I had again assumed he would remember and be able to recall these times. I accepted that he was unable to remember much about this despite my reassurance that he was impressive as a student. I reflected on how this might have been uncomfortable for him considering the experience he had with observations in the FE college.

The time spent listening systematically to tapes and taking notes meant that I was able to start to explore patterns and categorise relationships which began to emerge into themes. The consistency and discipline of this approach provided a starting point in making connections between the first interviews and the follow up interviews. This formed an early preliminary content analysis which by itself was insufficient but did facilitate a deeper engagement with the data which was captured in note form. Through this process, I noticed that patterns began to emerge (Gillham, 2000, p. 61). As I returned to the interviews, additional avenues and themes started to form and evolve from the data (Tierney and Landford, 2019).

I began to grapple with the huge amount of rich data I had gathered through the interviews, participants' archived work (written) and my reflections. To connect all the data together, and after the initial transcribing of the interviews, I listened to each recording systematically each day over the course of a two-week period and took additional notes of these conversations and the stories I was being told which was time consuming but valuable as I was able to capture the stress and intonation in a way which is not always possible when functionally transcribing tapes (Appendix H). Using the conceptual framework as a tool for analysis, I began to code and categorise the data which provided additional assurance that the life histories created were as honest an account of each participant's life as possible. The stories told by each participant were plotted along an interview journey (Appendix I) and as key themes began to emerge, these were categorised according to the relationship domains located in the analytical framework which were: social – relationships with teachers, cognitive – relationships with the curriculum and emotional – relationship with the professional self (see Figure 3, page 88).

I wanted to know how participants' lives had led them to their current positions in the field of education and how they had achieved this. I wanted to provide meaningful professional life

histories and I set out to profile each participant using the experiences nested in the concentric circles, with each participant at the centre and applied the conceptual and analytical framework focusing on the relationship domains.

In order to manage the interview data, the coding system used to analyse the content of the interview transcripts utilises the domains from the conceptual framework in ways which will enable the data to support answering the research questions.

The two research questions are:

1. What understanding of teachers' agency can be generated through using life history to explore cross phase vocational teachers' experience?

2. What can we learn about the importance of relationships in shaping the agency of cross phase vocational teachers?

I listened to and transcribed the interview tapes. I plotted each interview transcript along a road map starting where each participant began their story of why they became a teacher. As each story unfolded, I asked questions which were not pre-prepared which took each story along in a different direction. As I began to make sense of the data, I started to see three themes emerge which related to:

1) transactions with teachers over time;

2) thoughts about the curriculum that each had studied or taught and;

3) ideas which started to emerge about their roles as teachers across different settings which I have categorised as a relationship with the professional self.

I colour-coded points along the journey so I could analyse the data and develop life histories. There are gaps in this framework which I use partly to suggest a structure for coding what was not said by participants – for example, one participant said very little about early encounters with teachers which suggested to me a lack of an early role model. Historic relationships with me as the tutor provide additional information such as prior industry related qualifications which are occupationally relevant but not mentioned during interviews – this type of data informs the portraits.

Figure 3: The framework of relational themes for analysis

with teachers	Positive +	Negative -	with the curriculum	Positive +	Negative -	with the professional self	Positive +	Negative -
Early experiences with teachers	√ √ √	√ √	Thoughts and feelings about learners	√ √ √ √ √	√	Thoughts about becoming a teacher	√	√ √
Access to school experience prior to ITE		√	Thoughts about the range of subjects taught	√ √ √ √ √	√ √	Thoughts about becoming a teacher of SHD	√ √ √ √ √	
Experience working in school prior to ITE	√		SHD Diploma experience	√	√ √	Related occupational experience prior to ITE	√ √ √	
Thoughts about school mentors in ITE	√	√ √	Thoughts about assessment of learners	√	√ √	Occupational experience – non SHD related prior to ITE	√	√ √ √ √
Thoughts about FE mentors in ITE	√ √ √		Paperwork and the curriculum	√	√ √	Leadership roles Course leader, Head of Department, Leading CPD	√ √ √	√ √
Thoughts about colleagues	√ √ √	√ √ √	Relationship with occupational sectors	√	√ √	Experiences as a mentor	√	
Thoughts about management	√ √ √	√ √ √	Thoughts about how to teach the subject	√ √ √ √ √		Relationships with peers during ITE		√
			Early experiences with the curriculum	√ √	√ √ √ √	Relationship with ITE qualification	√ √	√ √
Thoughts about teacher education	√√√√	√				Higher academic study	√ √	
Thoughts about post ITE study	√ √ √					Engagement with accredited CPD	√	√
						Applications rejected to ITE		√ √

√ in both boxes can represent a participant has both negative and positive experiences

4.10 Establishing trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a characteristic of the quality of qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The evidence I present is plausible and trustworthy for the following reasons: I have drawn on extracts of text to support my interpretations which included primary and secondary source materials which also provides the 'necessary information' for the audience to 'evaluate the data-driven claims' (O'Reilly and Kiyimba, 2015, p.30). Further, the choice of setting, the research topic, the depth and breadth of the material and the choice of themes and how these emerged provide sources of validity (Holliday, 2002, p. 8). Additionally, through a process of member checking, which provides additional credibility, I also sought the views of participants through offering each an opportunity to comment on the content of their life history and to provide a pseudonym. The inductive logic and nature of this method and the data presented in this research is based on full and open accounts of participants' professional and personal life stories which they felt were related to their entering the teaching profession. As data emerged from the interviews, reflexively, my historical relationship with participants meant I was able to add another perspective from the time they undertook the course. Whilst there were some incidents I remembered, participants were not always able to corroborate my version of events even when I had documentation from the time which could do so. I chose not to press further on some topics as I felt it was merely a lapse in memory or, the activity I referred to, held little or no meaning to participants' lives. The political landscape had continued to change, and participants' stories reflected their current positions distanced somewhat from the diplomas of the 2008-2010. Triangulation is difficult in life history, and this gives additional importance to the historical context (Goodson and Gill, 2011). There is, it seems, potential in qualitative research for creativity; therefore, it is important for researchers to be clear about methodological justification and research procedures and I have been explicit concerning these (Hammersley, 2007; Meyer, 2001; Flick, 2009; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011b).

Asking the same initial question of all participants elicited a variety of responses. 'Life story' is an ambiguous phrase and proved a little unsettling for participants who struggled to answer this. I refined this to focus more tightly on the circumstances which made participants decide to become a teacher. Participants' voices have credibility as others using this approach have demonstrated (Jasper, 2017; Eikeland, 2018; Roach, 2005). I have confidence in each participant's account of their own life story and the sometimes-uncomfortable moments captured within the interview transcripts (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). Working the data appropriately, thick descriptions were able to develop which show the distinct and complex aspects involved in exploring teachers' achievement of agency through relationship domains (Geertz, 1973; Holliday, 2002). Exploring participants' stories and other artifacts enabled detailed descriptions of each professional life which shaped the direction of the study (Tierney

and Landford, 2019). Through a process of member checking, feedback from participants about the accuracy of their life histories was also sought (Creswell, 2008, 2013; Ruan et al., 2020).

4.11 Summary

This chapter explained and justified the research design, methods used, and the approach taken. Underpinned by pragmatism, the conceptual framework was used to guide this study. Life history was used to explore participants' encounters so that more could be learned about how their relationships helped shape their agency. Participants have been open and trusting in their stories, and I have protected participants with pseudonyms either chosen by participants or by me when given liberty to do so and removing data which could contribute to identification. Interviewing participants about their lives and their professional experiences is an intrusive act regardless (Dawson, 2006). Inevitably, power relations exist between researcher and participant, and I have been careful to mitigate this reflexively. Life histories and narratives dwell in the realm of subjectivity where insights and interpretations aid understandings of our actions (Goodson, 2017). Life history research is a dynamic and recursive process and I have taken careful consideration of the research data, drawing on relevant content which addresses the research questions. Life history research is undeniably complex and messy (Roach, 2005) yet the value of undertaking research using life history is demonstrated in the rich accounts of experience presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: The Life Histories Presented

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents five professional life histories of the teacher participants in this study starting with Julia, followed by Erika Grice, Lorraine, Peter and finally Baptiste. There is no reason for this order: it merely reflects the order in which each life history was drafted and written. The life historian attempts to gain insights into the social lives of others which are seen as situated in cultural, historical, political and educational contexts where teachers' professional lives exist (Goodson and Numan, 2002). This study uses life history as an approach to explore teachers' agency (Eikeland, 2018) and a discussion of this follows in Chapter 6. Teachers inevitably have a connection to the curriculum in their lives and using life history techniques helps to understand this further. Through exploring the experiences of others, life histories can also provide evidence of aspects of identity negotiation and can portray how individuals make sense of their lives (Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Goodson and Cole, 1994). However, in life history research, ideas around what constitutes truth and reality are not straightforward, yet these stories provide unique individual accounts of participant teachers' lives that are authentic with extracts from the data used to support this further (O'Reilly and Kiyimba, 2015). I do not use participants' real names. Two participants provided their own pseudonym and three were provided by myself as the researcher. Each life history commences with a short pen portrait which includes such content as participants' work history and qualifications to aid understanding of the context in which each participant has worked, and at the time of data collection, was currently working as a teacher.

5.2 Julia's pen portrait

On graduating from the PGCE course, Julia completed her Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) Induction in a large nonselective coastal secondary school in Kent. She now teaches Health and Social Care (H&SC) in a large general FE college in Kent which recently merged with another large FE college in the same county. The main college is situated in a busy tourist area and many of the schools from which the college recruits students have low levels of attainment (Ofsted, 2017). For a time, Julia acted as a subject mentor for student teachers undertaking a PGCE in Health and Social Care or Psychology. For her Additional Diploma Experience (ADE) placement Julia travelled abroad.

On completing the PGCE Julia enrolled on a Master's in Education at the same university where she undertook her initial teacher training and as part of the course, spent a period abroad studying.

Born in and growing up in Kent, Julia is in her 30s and is married. She has two children under 5 and as a busy mum, works part-time.

5.2.1 Julia's Professional Life History

Julia wanted to start her story at the point when she found learning interesting. Beginning her story with her teenage years, Julia did not touch on her earlier childhood experiences or of her family. She began quietly and described herself as a difficult teenager with personal problems. This had affected her engagement with secondary education, and she spent a lot of time truanting. She did not get on well with schooling until an encounter with her GCSE sociology teacher whom she recalls saw through her difficult behaviour. This early relationship with the curriculum and with the teacher is critical for Julia as she enjoyed the subject and she felt that although she was not given any special attention, she was treated as a human being. The curriculum in sociology introduced Julia to studying people and real life and Julia particularly enjoyed learning about the class system and oppression. Leaving school with two GCSEs [English and Sociology] Julia was grateful for these successes.

5.2.2 Julia's life prior to the PGCE

Post GCSE study, and leaving school at 16, Julia did not have any direction in her life and no aspirations to become a teacher. She had worked in administration but felt she wanted to help people so she continued to search for a satisfying career, holding down three jobs at one time including running a shop, working in a bar and felt she was not progressing in her life. Possibly influenced by her sociological knowledge, Julia felt all her efforts were for other people's profits, so she entered the care sector providing care for elderly people with dementia and Alzheimers. To some extent, the role frustrated Julia and she found that she wanted to know more about why these people were in this situation and she found herself more interested in psychology, the care packages provided and how the system worked.

Returning to study as an adult learner and enrolling on an Access to Higher Education course in Social Science at the local FE college provided Julia with the opportunity to go to university. Initially wanting to study Psychology, Julia did well in politics and the more sociological topics and told me quietly that she needed maths. Initially enrolling on a sociology degree at her local university she became bored with some of the content describing it as *'killing me slowly' [37]* and transferred to the degree in Health and Social Care where the lack of equality in the system continued to motivate her. Julia came across the Society, Health and Development (SHD) PGCE and this was the first point at which Julia had thought about becoming a teacher. Julia whispered as she recalled seeing me at a recruitment day at the University for the PGCE, and thought *'yes, this is what I want to do.' [46]*

'what I really like about teaching so even though you might have the most rotten student ever that you literally want to pull your hair out when you see them through and they achieve and you've helped them and you've shown them that kindness after people have washed their hands of them that's what I really like about it and my subject of course.' [48]

5.2.3 Julia's life - the PGCE and NQT in secondary school

Interestingly, Julia does nor recollect teaching any Society, Health and Development (SHD) during her PGCE which would have been either school or FEC based. Placements providing SHD were difficult to find and with a general election during this period there was some apathy towards them with ongoing confusion about the future of the Diplomas and of their rules and regulations

I asked Julia about her first teaching position and she divulged that she had accepted the first job she was offered as she was taking her additional diploma experience placement abroad and she felt she might miss out on any opportunities whilst she was away. The secondary school she taught in as a Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) was quite challenging. Julia had what she describes as *'rose tinted glasses' [86]* about the reality of being a NQT but found the experience strengthened her character. Julia doubted herself…

'I was quite shy and timid the whole way through my PGCE. Actually, I had quite a lot of self-disbelief and the whole anxiety was really difficult for me and I don't know how I really passed but anyway I just had good mentors. Yeah so it was good for me to go through that coz it kinda beats anything you've got out of you.' *[91]*

Describing her PGCE as something to get through, as a NQT Julia did not benefit from the same kind of support and recalls her lack of preparation in managing challenging behaviour [learners] mistakenly thinking that as a difficult teenager herself and full of empathy for teenagers that she would be able to deal with this easily…

'*the behaviour as well really challenging and I wasn't prepared and because I'd been a horrible teenager I thought I'd be brilliant at it but no – they don't see you as someone that understands you just have to work to get them to trust you and things like that and I just didn't know how to deal with that behaviour if I'm honest and I had to really learn.' [110]*

Julia tells how the PGCE was protective saying…

> '*You've got this big kind of hug round you if you've got good mentors and I did. So I was protected a lot and got through it that way.'* [97]

Her school placement during the PGCE was in a challenging school too but Julia was never left alone in the classroom to teach. She feels that she had an easier time than she should have and that she could have done more teaching given the opportunity. Julia felt more comfortable in the FE environment teaching learners who have chosen to study H&SC who are perhaps more motivated. In the school Julia describes learners as just '*lumped together'* [135] because of problems with learning academic subjects or have opted for a course in childcare and this is part of the deal.

In a new institution as a NQT, Julia had to learn how to gain the trusting relationships she had nurtured during her ITE. She liked teaching in FE and preferred being called by her first name. The more adult environment suited her personality, and she did not care for the structure, uniformity or the rules of the secondary school where she felt that education was a bit like a '*factory'* [140]. She liked too, that learners in FE could if they wanted to, dye their hair purple.

I commented that as a graduate Julia had succeeded in education and she laughed, almost as if she could not quite believe it herself. As an adult returning to education and graduating in her late twenties, Julia had more working life experience. Julia thought the 14-19 Diplomas went against what she referred to as '*the whole factory' [147].* Reflecting on her PGCE experience Julia explained that the system forces people to go through it [education] which may not be suitable for all. It was not until Julia was a teenager studying sociology that she thought that education might lead to a better life for her.

I asked Julia if she felt her PGCE was valued in FE and she thought not, although as a result of her qualifications she did have a slightly higher salary. The pay scales are different to the school sector. The pay scales are lower for teaching in the FE phase which values initial teacher training qualifications designed for its phase placing high value on vocational qualifications linked to work sectors. Julia recalls apologetically how she at first felt inexperienced in FE wondering what her qualification was there for and how the school phase felt like a more professional environment. She thought this was as a result of ITE and having similar underpinning qualifications like a degree.

Julia is content teaching in FE and working part-time which suited her a bit more than full time school teaching. Although she did try, she has been unsuccessful in her applications for jobs teaching in school. Julia thinks the pace is slower in FE and that school life is more pressured. She gave an example of changes being introduced, then staff reacted instantly, and this was checked. In FE, staff took their time, with more autonomy but there was standardisation. She felt this was about trusting teachers.

Graduating from the PGCE with no master's credits, Julia started her master's degree in education leadership and management as a NQT supported through the then government's (TDA) funding. She did not think she would finish it when she left the school to work in FE as her employer would not fund it but managed to self-fund. Speaking highly of tutors on the course and her experiences abroad gained through Erasmus, Julia enjoyed her studying and was surprised she could fit it all in, spending weekends in the university library. She felt the MA had made her a better teacher and not aspiring promotion to management Julia was appointed as an advanced learning practitioner – leading learning.

During the PGCE Julia was able to travel to Africa to teach in a school for her additional diploma experience placement. She found that she learned much about the people, the culture, happiness and how not to worry about unimportant things in life such as hair and make-up. It was better to focus on being a good person and she enjoyed this. She spoke warmly of the children and less so of the bugs and told of how she cried on the first night because she was unable to cope at first but did so with some assistance from bug sprays and through wrapping herself in a mosquito net. Julia did not get on with one of her fellow PGCEs during this placement and felt she had irritated them with her fears.

Julia remembered going to the church each week with the children and of the death of one of the children from cancer. She told of how the whole village took food and money to the parents and how people began to sing and cook. Julia remembers the agonising cry of the mother and Julia cried too as she paid her respects. *'It was a real community thing'* [413] she says, and she kept in touch for a while.

Teaching in college for H&SC Julia draws on her experiences from this placement, Julia tells her learners how others in the world are less fortunate particularly she says, when her learners have what she calls a 'sense of entitlement'. She tells them how lucky they are to have electricity and computers.

5.2.4 Julia's life as a teacher in FE

Telling me about her teaching Julia does not say anything about subjects or topics she is currently teaching. She talks about a time she had close relationships with learners established under a tutoring system which has since been abolished. She recounts how lovely it was to know her learners so well and to provide the personalised support they needed for their study and pastoral needs. Julia has kept in touch with some through social media and had not thought about any of them potentially being graduates or becoming teachers.

For our second encounter, I wanted to delve more deeply into how Julia perceived her professional identity from her perspective as a teacher in FE…

> *'People often get confused when I say I'm a lecturer [they think university]. I don't really get their opinion from when I explain as a college. I don't know how or what difference that makes. I suppose to lecture you are more specialised with a subject. As a teacher in a school*
>
> *I guess you seem a bit more of a role model kind of educator rather than just specialised in my subject.' [9]*
>
> *'I think that the culture is different in school you get involved in the whole school. Whereas here you're in your own specialist bubble.' [27]*

When Julia talks about her teaching role, she feels that generally people do not understand the nature of further education or the function it serves. She finds that people are often confused by the term lecturer which many misunderstand as teaching in universities. Relating to the difference in status between the schoolteacher or FE teacher Julia made a point about types of entry qualifications and how it was necessary to have a degree to teach in a school setting but this was not the case for FE where a range of vocational qualifications could be recognised…

> *'I don't know about public perception, but I know my perception. I feel quite confident in my role. But then often I think we talked about this before to compare my journey to someone else's journey and in terms of qualifications and things. I don't even have to have a degree to do this [teaching] job in FE. I feel like status wise I suppose in a school they [degrees] are more valuable - you couldn't do that [teaching] job without one.'*

Julia compared her experiences as a teacher in school to her experiences as a teacher in FE recognising that she had only been employed by one school. Schools, Julia thought, were more aggressive and teachers held more accountable. She recalled when she was a NQT how the management culture had been driven by intimidation and how they [managers] wore little black suits and would talk down to you. School teaching for her was as much about control and paperwork which diverted energy from the actual teaching and learning. She does not feel exposed to this too much in FE and feels her role is more manageable, particularly now as she is part time.

Julia found reflecting on leadership during her master's course pivotal in her understanding of how she could maintain her autonomy and agency and be confident to challenge and change things in her workplace. She understood more now how she was a leader in her classroom practice and found this empowering and a sense of belonging. Feeling thus empowered Julia took the risk and was elected as the teachers' union representative but felt she was sometimes used as a mechanism for disgruntled colleagues to make complaints to management…

> '*It was nice to be in a club. There were a few rogue characters that wanted to get me personal and bitchy with the management but it's nice to be in a club that wanted to make change and at the time senior leaders were involved in a quality committee as well so I felt like it was more of a conversation thing that they were invested in a equality as well. So I felt I was on their side but now they've abolished the Equality Committee.*' [137]

Julia became the union representative because the role was concerned with equality and fairness, and she thought she could help change things that staff were unhappy about. There was a committee structure where she felt she had a voice, and it was participatory. Keeping busy in this role meant a lot of additional work for Julia. The FEC restructured, de-establishing the committee as it stood. Julia resigned as the union representative in her workplace as she does not feel she has the voice or confidence to engage in senior management discussions in the boardroom which to her seemed like an intimidating thing to do. She also tentatively mentioned a colleague who had had a bad experience, but we did not go into detail. Julia thought the new staff structure had negatively affected relationships with college management. Some of her colleagues on the committee though had sought ways to protect themselves seeking good retirement packages for themselves or redundancy deals. Other, more vocal colleagues, she thought, had become weakened in some way. Julia, to some extent, thought these people had let staff down and that she ought to be shouting more loudly

but she did not have the energy or the inclination and she was not one of the vocal ones, tending to be more careful about what she said. Julia was also expecting her second child.

I asked Julia if she thought the PGCE had prepared her for teaching. Julia felt her PGCE prepared her well particularly through immersion in placements…

> *'I definitely got inside both sectors because we had all that placement in four days a week one and one in the other you know. We really have to learn in placement given a timetable. Definitely good to get both experiences to be able to develop in both settings.' [245]*

She also participated in a lot of training supporting the SHD diploma which was, she felt, wasted. In terms of keeping up to date with her subject area now, Julia engages in CPD which is mostly sourced by her rather than her employer. The team do have training, but this is not like it used to be. She implied that the resources for CPD had been greatly reduced.

Julia thought about teaching in school again but only for a while. She had applied twice and was interviewed once. She wanted to progress to management and use her master's degree more, so she felt a little disappointment at this as it had improved her confidence so much – more so even than the PGCE. However, she is content in FE for now and still gets butterflies when the new students arrive, but she is excited by this, not daunted. And as she declared it just shows she cares.

5.3 Erika Grice pen portrait

Erika currently teaches in a girls' grammar School in Kent which is part of a Trust consisting of two schools. The school gained a 'Good' judgement from its most recent Ofsted Inspection in 2018 and is a smaller than the average-sized, girls, selective grammar school. The proportion of pupils from multi-ethnic groups and those who have English as an additional language are below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below the national average. There are much lower numbers of disadvantaged pupils compared to the national average. No pupils currently attend alternative provision (Ofsted, 2018).

Erika's first teaching post as a NQT teaching Health and Social Care was in a local high school in Kent during which she enrolled on Masters in Education module designed to both support NQTs and accredit participants with level 7 credits through the process of the NQT Induction period. Following this Erika secured four more positions in Kent schools teaching Health and

Social Care becoming a Head of Department in two of these. She also taught in a Kent FE college for a short period of time and worked briefly as a Family Learning tutor in Adult Education. She has also acted as a mentor for a PGCE student teaching psychology. Erika gained a Distinction for her Masters' degree and presented her work at one of the awarding university's research conferences.

Prior to studying in university Erika was employed by the Office for National Statistics who sponsored her entry to Oxford University to study Social Policy. After two years and for family reasons she relocated to Kent where she completed her final year in a local university gaining her first degree. Erika has three children, and her family commitments made her reconsider her career and whilst her children were still at school she began studying locally for a degree in Radiography. Erika left the course after one year with a Certificate in Health and Social Care and applied for the PGCE in SHD.

For her Additional Diploma Experience, Erika chose to teach in a prison. She also designed careers guidance materials for young people to support the Diploma in SHD and this was evidenced as part of a national funded case study commissioned by the TDA in 2009.

Erika is married and her children are adults.

5.3.1 Erika's Professional Life History

Erika is the participant I have stayed in contact with most since her ITE. She did not seem in a good place during our first interview encounter and seemed somewhat disaffected. I sensed she was struggling with something when I asked her to tell me her life story and how she became a teacher and she responded quite sharply with...

> *'I've no idea, life story since when?' [10]*

Treading cautiously, I asked her to think about what made her want to become a teacher and she thought teaching only appealed to her when she saw the SHD PGCE being advertised. It was not that she had ever had any aspiration to become a teacher because as she explained…

> *'I could have done citizenship or any other subject which I found very uninspiring*
> *– it was the subject, the academic versus the vocational that's what attracted me.'*
> *[16]*

I tentatively invited her to go into this in a bit more detail hoping to gain more insight into her relationship with the curriculum and she explained how she liked the way the Diploma was set up and described schools and colleges as *'bog standard'* [20] as places of *'institutionalisation'* *[21]* and how she had struggled with this when she was a pupil in school. She thought the Diploma released this tension and this attracted her to teaching. The Diploma had the potential to change things and she thought it could have been more successful if it had not been so strongly opposed. She describes how…

> *'everyone hated it and anything to do with it – they just pulled the plug at any opportunity.'* *[28]*

I did not pressure her to identify who she meant by 'everyone' was but thought this might relate to her relationships with other teachers. She went on to describe how she adapted her own teaching style and her success at finding ways to get around rules, potentially linking her sense of professional identity as generally anti-authoritarian. She explained how she used her ITE resources and the same teaching methods to teach H&SC and Sociology. Erika went on to tell me about how creative she is in her teaching and how she personalised the learning. She would not use a particular chalk-and-talk style but prepared activities for individuals and supported her learners by continuously checking each individual and using applied learning through the application of theories, practice and models which had been part of the Diploma learning.

Using applied learning techniques to teach H&SC contextualises the material in the topic being studied, she felt. She had the ability to adapt her teaching approach for Sociology but also felt it was hugely applied. Erika talks about the behaviour of her learners describing some of them as…

> *'naughty kids and I mean seriously naughty kids. …make a poster, sit down, make a poster, I didn't really care even if it was on an envelope, as long as I could submit it to the exam board as their evidence.'* *[51]*

In terms of her approach to teaching, Erika thought hers had remained consistent and I asked her if this was something she had learned through her PGCE or if it was related to her own beliefs. She thought she had it in her because of the *'institutionalisation'* [62] and her loathing of school when she was a pupil. She reiterated her point about her choice of training and the only course that enticed her was the SHD PGCE – to her, this was all that was worthy of knowing. She thought that if other subjects had attracted her she might have trained years ago...

'I choose not to because I think it was a farce. In my opinion, kids only begin their education when they leave school. We teach them skills, but they just have all the creativity knocked out of them.' [66]

I revealed she might not be the first to say that and pressed her further. Erika thought it was a series of demands from: the exam regulator, league tables and senior management. She was also frustrated by her learners' lack of success in exams particularly when they had excelled in coursework. This is what Erika thought had a detrimental effect on learners' creativity. Assessment methods were to blame. She recalled how lots of colleagues did not like technical awards but that she thought these were interesting.

To be a successful teacher you need to be creative. Erika's position was that she was passionate about this. It had got her into trouble because she would not abide by the rules in the school. She did things how she wanted and recalls how she was promoted to head of department in two schools and how she felt sorry for her line managers. She was accountable to them and when questioned on her methods she would claim that she gets the results and that is why she does things her way. However, it is possible that Erika's managers valued her passion and commitment. I asked Erika what the expectations of her were and she recalled…

'everything is so boxed in…if you're gonna succeed and I'm talking about secondary, you've got to have that personality that will be boxed, you've got to, otherwise you won't survive.' [105}

I said this was interesting and she continued…

'so I never was'. [110]

'so last year I got the top 1% in the country for results'.[112]

I was impressed by this and Erika continued…

'they all got Distinction stars – all girls and I remember the headteacher   showing me… and they laminated it.' [115-119]

I asked what the school leaders thought about this…

'oh they were absolutely gobsmacked because they said I can't do it. I said I can because the previous head put them [the girls] on the A level and they were failing.'
[121]

5.3.2 Erika as the head of department

As a HoD Erika was able to change the curriculum to a more technical course. She pushed her learners hard and fast, completing a two-year course of course work in nine months. I asked her what the learners had thought about this. She was quiet for longer than felt natural and responded that they had become very close. Her approach she said was high risk and had required parental consent to use this strategy. It also involved additional marking and reassessing but with her personality she could, she argued, manage this. Her learners wanted to please her as the teacher but they [the learners] were doing this for themselves.

Thinking about her relationship with other teachers in her department I asked if they were committed to this approach, and she said no as they did not understand it. Erika worked extra hard teaching three times as much as her timetable using up all hers and her learners' free time. I wondered if she enjoyed being a HoD and she said she did not but needed to be in this role to sidestep all the school rules. She was silent for a moment and disclosed that it was not a good time for her and that she may be looking at her experiences negatively. She revealed that she is never going back into formal education [school] again and she has done her time, doubling her salary in the process.

5.3.3 Erika in crisis

As her story unfolded Erika began to talk about how she was on leave with work related stress and that she had had enough. She had been looking after her mother too and she was looking forward to working as a sessional tutor for adult education. Her professional identity shifted easily with her intention to teach family learning and vocational skills to adults in the community. She recalled how there had been four schoolteachers at the interview and all had left to do the same and Erika seemed reassured by this. Erika thought her ITE had prepared her for this adaptation in her career as she had taught in both school and FE. I did not share her confidence but was unable to say so. This presented an ethical dilemma to me which I explore later. I did not doubt Erika's commitment to education but reflected in my field notes my concerns firstly about her wellbeing and secondly, her disposition to teach these groups having had experience of these groups in my own professional life.

Erika recounted a time before she left her school position when she was so desperate for her hair to be cut and she did not have the time to attend appointments, she had asked one of her

learners' parents [a hairdresser] to cut her fringe in school. She thought the cleaner had seen her using the vacuum cleaner to clear the hair cuttings and reported her to school management. They told her she was not to have her hair cut on school premises and we both laughed at that point – it was difficult not to. She quickly stated that it was not a safeguarding issue. Erika also provided food for the learners in class and she recollects them as *'starving'*.[229]. She told of how a senior leader in the school was rude to her in front of her learners when he came into her classroom to complain about the smell of the pizzas. Erika sought permission to take her learners out for meals instead making the point that she was in charge.

I asked Erika if she would have taken a PGCE in H&SC which replaced the SHD PGCE and she said no. Erika wanted to teach in secondary schools but her experience as a NQT was difficult recollecting that she had no support from the HoD stating *'she was useless' [256].* The security of school teaching has become unstable. She tells of how there is nobody left now that she knows and how fast the staff turnaround is. I asked her about the teaching jobs she has had since leaving the PGCE. Erika lists them for me saying she would not last long and she only really wanted to hang on for a pension. Erika describes herself as being *'burnt out' [288]* and that she is unable to deal with being a schoolteacher anymore. She says the NQTs now do not know how to plan, that there is a problem in their training. Thinking that values and expectations were established through her ITE, she asks me if this was me [as the tutor] and my teaching style as she struggles to work out why. I explain that we followed a set of specific preparatory tasks, and she nods. It is all so simple, she says, when you know how to plan.

Erika recalls how the headteacher just walked out of her last school and how tough it was in terms of disadvantages and the pupils with child protection cases and many different foreign languages spoken. She says she loved it but could have done no more – the politics were too much for her. Erika has completed her assessors award which she plans to use for assessing apprenticeships.

She finishes the first part of her story telling me about her children and of her son…

> '*doing an amazing job with the United Nations - he just chucked it in – he's just like me – he's got a hip hop dance girlfriend'.* [385].

Erika was in a better place personally for the second interview and I reminded her of how, when we last met, she was looking forward to her new role as a family learning tutor…

'Family learning lasted two sessions. I hated the bureaucracy of [the provider] – *they did my head in and I resigned. I said I don't even want the salary. Don't even pay me – you think schools on bureaucracy are bad –* [the provider is worse] *- forget it. And then I thought right still not finished on teaching, registered with an agency and was very very specific on where I would work, who I'd work with – I don't care about subject.'* [13]

Erika was back teaching in school covering year 7 and 8 for children with SEN…

'So on Friday afternoon I was supposed to be teaching about humanities geography and history. 30 in each class most of the time they were outside in a line. I just said get out, just get out. So we did also a bit on geography and we did Thailand and they really liked the name Bangkok. So I had that all the time.' [31]

I asked Erika if she was supported by a teaching assistant…

'I did have a TA – she just shouted at them – she just screamed at them so the worse they got the quieter I then went – I went right back to my training on that voice projection and I also just stood so I would be spending most of my time - I went right back to my training – somehow it sort of like just stuck right in. I had to – it's ingrained. I'd literally just stand there and choose my spot and literally just stand there like this. Till they went quiet. So I did that and um and then I got that class on my side. It took me two terms. I used to come home and I was just absolutely exhausted.' [39]

Erika did not want the TA in the classroom and recalls how she felt when travelling to the school…

'I was exhausted and the family kept say to me 'mum just quit' , my husband said 'Erika just quit, this is killing you,' [48]

Erika did not feel supported by the SENCO and told of a less experienced teacher resigning because of this group. She (Erika) kept the learners in the cold with their coats on, letting them in the warm when they behaved. Erika was covering maternity leave and was offered three days teaching this group. Although the HoD was supportive, she felt she was not treated well and was not coping with this and decided to leave the school leaving all the resources for the next teacher...

> *'I'm not coming back. I'm not coming back, um I can't do it, I can't cope with this anymore it was 3 days and the behaviour of the kids.'* [93]

Erika then went travelling alone for some time leaving her husband at home and describes herself as a resilient person. Overshadowed by her experiences in her previous school during our first encounter, Erika began to revisit this disclosing that she had been under investigation as a NQT had made a complaint. Despite being cleared, there continued to be disagreements and discrepancies on learners' assessments and parents had made complaints. As HoD Erika felt this was undermining her...

> *'How the conversation came about – she was saying a colleague of hers wasn't getting on with her mentor and I said you've got to get on with your mentor in your NQT year because they are the ones to support you and get you through. The next day she put an allegation in saying that I threatened her and I said if anyone reported me I would make their life hell. I was under investigation for three months. Because of this –she - it was just horrible – absolutely horrible.'* [123]

Eventually, Erika walked out of school and did not go back and the NQT was given her job. She recalls how she had serious psychiatric problems which continued after leaving the situation…

> *'everywhere I went I could see her. I needed medication. I went to a KCC place for mental health stuff just to go through this to get her out of my* head.' [158]

5.3.4 Erika returns

Erika recalls the rawness of the experience and how she will never put herself in that position again. She tells me teaching is in her blood and she is now teaching PSHE in a girls' grammar school to the lowest ability – no other teachers can handle them she tells me. She has been offered permanent contracts to teach in the linked school but refuses to take these describing the all-female senior management team as…

> *'in their 30s and really hard – Jesus Christ and you just look at what they wear and the size of their heels.'* [199]

Exploring the experiences Erika had with school management after her telling me of the double standards and rules I probed a bit deeper asking her what she had noticed…

'oh god yeah - it is horrific – management styles females are awful. I would say any school with female management they are nasty – very, very nasty – they are ruthless. They're not just nasty – they have to climb the ladder very very quickly and have a lot to prove then their jobs can be gone just like that. So I was – see [school maternity cover] is just a joke. Two and a half thousand people there - the head I think she's paid about 150K and just sits on her arse.' [226]

Erika, clearly not impressed with management, also described a culture where nepotism was rife, with promotion for certain people without transparency and of family members being appointed. Schools run like armies says Erika and you need to survive...

'It's also the impact of your training and how you are going to survive this – you have be a certain type of person to survive this – you really do.

Describing a ruthless competitive world and attributing the current school culture to academisation, she argues that a corporate world will not work for teachers. Erika points out that schools are having difficulty retaining teachers and under these conditions Erika is able to do this on her own terms. She believes a sense of professionalism is weakened as she describes a world full of back biting where people are less proud of what they do and feel less valued. She clearly does not agree with schools as businesses and describes new teachers as rabbits in the headlights. I asked her what she thought the solution was...

'all bloody heads should be sacked and the whole lot needs redoing and they need to be back into government control where they don't have the power - they can't have the power. What Michael Gove did in giving them all this power – that's the worst thing you could possibly do.' [475]

5.3.5 What Erika brought to teaching – the early days

At the start of the PGCE course, Erika wrote briefly about what she brought to teaching mentioning an interest in society and a general respect for equality and to be up to date with current affairs. She listed her placement in a hospital as one of her key experiences and her qualities were being 'energetic, positive, determined, sociable and generous'. Some months later she wrote more fluently about what she brought to teaching and wrote of teaching being an engaging and motivating experience for all. She noted that teaching was not a parenting role and of her duty to teach the necessary skills required for the workplace. Another element

concerned boundaries and discipline and the vulnerability of the14-19-year-old. She wrote about motivation and praise and that inclusion of one should not be at the detriment of all.

5.4 Lorraine's pen portrait

Lorraine is currently an Education Manager in Her Majesty's Prison Service in one of the second largest prisons in Scotland housing up to 900 offenders. She has taught Maths, Psychology, Communication Skills and a wide range of project-based learning where subjects are embedded across the curriculum. As an education manager Lorraine is not required to teach but insisted on being able to as part of her role.

Lorraine completed her NQT Induction in a non-selective secondary school in Kent where she taught A level psychology, sociology and SHD. Moving back to Scotland, she taught as a tutor in a young offenders' institution where she was quickly promoted to lecturer and then to manager. During the PGCE in SHD, Lorraine was placed in a non-selective secondary school and a large FE College. Lorraine's Additional Diploma Experience placement was undertaken in a prison in Kent. She also designed careers guidance materials for young people supporting the Diploma in SHD and in 2009 was showcased as part of a funded national TDA case study. Lorraine is now in her 30s.

5.4.1 Lorraine's Professional Life History

Lorraine's story began with her telling me about her time growing up on a small Scottish island and her relationship with the curriculum and how she had always been drawn to the idea of teaching but was turned off during her high school years by a fleeting comment made by one of her peers relating to teachers spending their entire lives at school...

> *'You know I think I was like 14 that just kind of really struck a chord…I didn't really understand the subject range that could be available because you know, the school offered quite a basic curriculum.' [35-38].*

5.4.2 Lorraine's life prior to the PGCE

With exposure to a limited curriculum, Lorraine did not feel inspired to teach subjects offered at her school, listing these as maths, English, Science or Modern Languages. Despite Lorraine's early desire to be a teacher, her experience of the limited curriculum and thoughts about being confined to school led Lorraine to abandon any thoughts about becoming a teacher and to make choices that in her mind would potentially restrict her ability to be a secondary school teacher. Leaving the island to study psychology at a university on the

Scottish mainland did not at that time provide any obvious or traditional routes into becoming a secondary school teacher.

After graduating, Lorraine spent some months exploring Europe and based herself at her mother's house in Spain. Returning to the island where she grew up, she commenced her career working as a manager in the tourism industry where she began to re-engage with her aspirations to become a teacher through involving herself with the school groups who visited the stately home where she worked.

Following her teaching aspirations, Lorraine connected with family living in Kent, mentioning her thoughts about becoming a teacher and was advised to look at the local university website that provided teacher training. Lorraine has never regretted her decision to move south to undertake her ITE in SHD revealing how she packed up her life in three months.

5.4.3 Lorraine and the PGCE

As her story unfolded, Lorraine recounted how she felt being observed during her teaching practice, recalling how nervous she felt and how normal this was and at the same time acknowledging how good her placements were. She had felt really supported by her mentors who were experienced teachers and her understanding of her relationships with teachers is clear through her recollection of how important this was for her…

> *I think it makes a massive difference no matter how good you are or how motivated…if you don't have that support in those initial stages and those kind of off the record chats about this is what you need to do you would fall on your face quite quickly unfortunately.' [68-71]*

As the researcher, I understood and recognised the importance of relationships with others and the emerging sense of teachers' professional agency and the empowering feeling of fitting in and of acceptance. Lorraine spoke then about her experience as a student teacher in the prison education service. For her this was a profound experience and she tells the story nearly every day of her professional life about how she realised by lunchtime on her first day that this was what she wanted to do, that she was really drawn to this despite one of her peers telling her not to be *'silly'*.[81]

5.4.4 Lorraine post PGCE – continuing on the road to prison education

After the PGCE and teaching in a non-selective secondary school in Kent, Lorraine spoke of feeling valued and of enjoyment but felt the time was wrong for her as she went on to describe the school as in a bit of turmoil. Lorraine was used to being more supported by teacher colleagues through her experiences with her mentors and the NQT process did not mirror this for her. The school was disappointed at her leaving, but she had secured a teaching position in a young offenders' institution on mainland Scotland where she was quickly promoted to lecturer. Following this she was promoted again to manager and transferred to the second biggest prison in the country to essentially turn around a failing education department.

Lorraine's PGCE (QTS) school teaching qualification is not recognised in Scotland which she was surprised at and she is critical of the ITE provided there…

> *'I know my mates have done teacher training in Scotland and when I look at what they do it's really not that good' [112] I'm not really impressed by what they do… the time on placements or things like that but that's just my own snobbery.'[115]*

Lorraine is happy in the prison education service and uses her psychology degree to deepen her understanding of her learners; she attributes trauma as a root cause of many offenders' behaviour. She cites the lack of secure attachment and experiences of multiple early bereavements having a negative effect on young people's brain development and goes on to explain how many seek maternal figures which can present challenges for the female teacher. Now working with adult prisoners, Lorraine feels that these learners have similar needs but as adults they are more independent. There are, however, many offenders with special educational needs or learning difficulties who tell her stories of being called and labelled as 'stupid' in school.

I asked Lorraine what she taught in the prison as I was curious about her relationship with the curriculum. She had taught maths for a while and told me how proud she felt when her group all passed their exams with a few gaining As which made her cry. She had taught psychology describing how the prison service itself became uncomfortable…

> *'because they worry that I'm going to be training them [offenders] to condition [manipulate] their staff.' [208]*

Clearly, she thinks this is absurd when she spoke about this and she challenges this and tells them…

> 'if that's how much faith you 've got in your staff maybe you need to look at your recruitment drive.' [209]

Where she has taught offenders psychology, she says they have done really well. She is introducing the concept of project-based learning, drawing in topic materials. Presenting an example, Lorraine spoke of how she is embedding literacy and numeracy and basing topic work on current affairs. Her approach recognises that learners need to be engaged and interested and achieving first before learning more traditional abstract academic subjects. She explained how she is building learners' self-esteem through small steps and embedding learning through projects so that learners can then feel more able to progress to some of the more academic subjects…

> 'you know a lot of them went through a schooling system that told them they 'll never amount to anything so they're just almost set up to or preprogrammed to fail.' [224]

Under the conditions of trauma, multiple bereavements and learning difficulties the self-fulfilling prophecy is formidable. Lorraine's approach enabled many of the learners to apply their skills of literacy and numeracy in a functional way contextualised through activities such as brick laying or joinery or working out how much to charge a customer and writing quotes rather than learning about letter writing generally with its focus on punctuation and grammar. This approach also builds employability skills: future employment is something offender learners worry about. Applied learning is not new in vocational education and embedding skills is recognised as an important element. It was, however, new to this prison and introduced by Lorraine.

I asked Lorraine how she thought her PGCE had prepared her…

> 'I think to be honest just that broad kind of skill base that we got. You know obviously working in a high school and a college and the prison having the days at university…you do not realise how much you take in quite so quickly. You know I think that people probably don't realise the different skills you need to work in a school and a college you probably think it much of a muchness but really in reality

*in my opinion this is two very different roles and you do need two completely
different skill sets.' [351].*

Lorraine's passion to teach remains and is evident when she recounts her promotion to
manager…

> *'I teach as an element to my job at the minute because I love teaching and
> that was one of the reasons when they asked to promote me I said I would only
> do it if I could still teach a few days a week. But I think you know for me because
> of the level of the guys that I'm teaching in terms of academic ability, intellectual
> ability kind of emotional awareness and things like that you know for me kind of
> having learned to work in a school… teaching in the subjects and things of working
> with younger kids but also adults is kind of that's just kind of married up and
> allowed me to kind of connect to bring out the best in both and bring out the best
> in myself.'[358]*

> *'I think it's just given me an opportunity to be able to pull out the best of both
> roles and kind of mould myself into something that's the kind of teacher that can
> be engaging in that kind of unusual environment.'[369]*

I reminded Lorraine of the uniqueness of her PGCE course and began to talk about
professional identity. When Lorraine explained to her colleagues that she was trained in both
school and FEC they wanted to understand how that worked...

> *'it's something to be honest that you know when I started working in the prison
> service and then all my colleagues are secondary school teachers through training
> and others are FE Lecturers.' [380]*

> *'I explained the program to them and a lot of them were like…that's so valuable
> and we would have done that given the chance or the choice to do that. They'd
> never heard of it. I would look now at some of my colleagues, and they seem a
> bit pigeonholed even though you know you've got the freedom to work within
> schools. You know I think it's an element of freedom that they don't have.' [384]*

They [Lorraine's colleagues] seemed to appreciate the usefulness of her ITE course and of
the skills she was able to bring from school and FE teaching. She also shows confidence and

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a level of awareness of her own agency and potentially adaptable professional identity and of her freedom to choose.

Lorraine described how she was able to recognise when things were not working and thought this was something she had learnt from her ITE...

> *'that was something that you kind of taught us very early on when I came into the teaching program I really felt under a lot of pressure that you had to be that polished finished article on your first day at your first placement. Oh yeah. I remember you kind of saying no that won't happen. And really that's good because it will give you things to reflect on and things to respond to.' [410]*

5.4.5 Lorraine returns to the PGCE

Lorraine describes herself as a bit of a control freak and we both recalled how she had several shiny black folders for her PGCE. She still has them and is amazed by the contents which hold her resources for other areas she taught as a student teacher like child development and tourism where she drew on her experiences in the industry. She also felt that her placements and the SHD curriculum helped her understand that it is possible to develop the curriculum at the same time as teaching it.

As her tutor I had been quite open about the pioneering work we were doing, and her mentors also faced uncertainty in how the Diplomas were going to work and she felt valued. In her FE placement her mentor and teaching colleagues were open about the Diplomas and considered her an expert through her training. Senior managers in her school placement were more critical and less supportive of the vocational Diplomas thinking they would affect the academic standing of the school and the teachers just did as they were told.

Through her ITE course, Lorraine's confidence grew and she learnt quickly how to change things if something was not working and to try again. She valued the space for reflection in her learning journal. We returned again to her NQT experience and the SHD Diploma she taught on there. There seemed to be a lack of support for the Diplomas and Lorraine disclosed more about how her head of department had not been coping well and had been signed off sick. Lorraine was left with two days to get her learners to rewrite their portfolios and how she had sat up all night marking and redoing paperwork. The school leaders were honest about not knowing what to do about this.

Lorraine described the small class of student teachers she trained with, the quality time spent in university sessions and how strong the bond they shared was. She compared this to her peers in subjects with large groups who she thought did not seem to share a similar connection. In summing up her training year, Lorraine said...

> *'A lot of that comes from that first year…if I could sum up my year… it would be think outside the box because I really feel like that's what we've got instilled in us. Yeah it has taken me so far in my career - definitely.'* [742]

5.4.6 Lorraine's professional identity

For the second interview I asked Lorraine more about her professional identity and what this looks like from her perspective of training for both secondary school and FE teaching. She felt she possessed two identities which she related to how she would present herself and how she would engage with her learners and her ability to change and facilitate learning through using these different identities. The roles in school, Lorraine felt, were more clearly defined and that FE was less formal and more adaptable with teachers able to respond more to pastoral needs.

Essentially, the core job was the same, but she describes these as very different with different skills used by the teacher. On the surface, teachers are doing the same thing but the lesson plan in school was rigid and teachers need to stick to this whereas the FE lesson plan felt more adaptable. She spoke of the rigidity of the school experience, the set times for lessons across the school and the expected level of behaviour. She used phrases like no flexibility and how in FE it is possible to decide when your class can have a break. She felt this is more democratic – that teachers have more ownership and students have more ownership.

She went on to talk about how children are unable to see what they are being prepared for and the authority of the teacher. She preferred the contextualised learning she spoke about during the first interview and creating and developing resources for her learners and how she found teaching young and adult offenders hugely rewarding and has that passion to make a difference. She felt school is about talent selection and she had a strong sense of social responsibility to young people and adult learners.

In 2009, Lorraine wrote about her Additional Diploma Experience in the prison placement where she sought to gain a deeper understanding of an element of the SHD which was concerned with justice...

'The security briefing on the first morning of the placement did not do much to ease my worries and if anything made me realise even more the enormity of what I was about to undertake and the tour of the prison which followed was an eye opener in that the prison was noisy with the constant sound of doors banging shut and being locked. Also the way the offenders looked at us on the first day as we had a tour of the prison – it was like we had arrived from another planet, I felt very vulnerable and worried about being in a classroom environment teaching these individuals who may feel patronised by me.'

'However, from the very first morning of being in the classroom and participating in sessions I was made to feel welcome and valued. The learners were receptive, interested and much more focussed and motivated than any learners I have worked with in school or college. Furthermore, the learners truly valued education and as such encouraged their children to achieve at school which could change the lives and chosen paths of their children. The teaching environment was a good one and the tutor/learner relationships were positive to the extent that I often momentarily forgot not only the environment I was teaching in but also who the learners were in terms of how they had ended up in that environment'.

5.5 Peter's pen portrait

Peter currently teaches in a Sixth Form college in Bedfordshire, and this is his second position since graduating from the PGCE. His first teaching position was in a large FE college where he remained for 5 years. The Sixth Form college provides academic and general vocational education for 16-18-year olds. Peter teaches and has taught on a range of courses including Health and Social Care and Psychology.

The Sixth Form College where Peter teaches is in a largely residential area in one of the UK's most diverse towns, with over 140 nationalities and 100 languages spoken. The student population has a higher proportion of minority ethnic groups than the local population. There are almost 3000 students mostly studying advanced-level courses.

A quarter of the students resit their qualifications in English and mathematics. Almost half of the students live in the most deprived districts of the town the college serves with unemployment rates above the national figure. The proportion of the population with high-level qualifications is lower than the national average. At key stage 4, pupils' average attainment 8

score is below the national figure, and the percentage of pupils who achieve grade 4, or higher, in mathematics and English GCSE is below the national average (Ofsted, 2017).

Peter is married, is in his 30s and grew up in Bedfordshire. He has a degree in psychology and post PGCE, gained a master's degree in education.

5.5.1 Peter's Professional Life History

Peter began his story by telling me about his early childhood in an infant school where he was surprised to remember his early experiences and how he had affinity to some teachers and not others. He spoke warmly and positively of Mrs Brown, his favourite teacher when he was 4 years old and then immediately after told me of a negative experience of another teacher blowing a whistle at him, telling him off for messing around and he did not like this. Peter wanted to please his teachers and was an attentive student always wanting to sit at the front, listening and putting his hand up to get involved. He recalls how his peers did not smile much at school, but he loved it. His teachers always asked him to do tasks and he enjoyed this level of responsibility and it made him feel important and he saw it as a privilege.

After attending the local primary school, his parents were unimpressed with the local secondary school's performance and aspirations, and they applied through the government assisted places scheme for private education. Peter passed the entrance exam and was able to attend an all-boys boarding school in Hertfordshire which he compared somewhat to Harry Potter and Hogwarts. Peter spoke collectively about himself and his parents and used phrases like: '*we won't be going there then'* [47] when the local secondary school was rejected and *we didn't earn much money* [50], when he explained about the assisted places scheme. I found this interesting as he was reflecting on his childhood and my expectations were that he would refer to them as my parents, mum and dad or mother and father.

Doing well was expected in the all-boys secondary school and unexpectedly for Peter he found his position was not what he was used to. He had topped the class in primary school and now he was *'down the league table'* [60] although he was not doing badly, gaining As and Bs he says it was not acceptable and why bother to get a C in anything – it just did not exist in this school.

5.5.2 Peter and educational experience

Peter understands the privilege his education gave him and that without the assisted place he would have been disadvantaged. Peter worked hard and enjoyed learning but did not revise or prepare for exams. He tells people he *'cheated by listening in the lesson' [149].* He felt that

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one's attitude and outlook in life was affected by educational experiences and that education had the power to change expectations. He spoke of the aspirations of his own 6th form students and how they had tried to navigate a system from their socio-economic position. Aspirations may be high in terms of progressing to university, but he felt his students were not equipped with the necessary understanding of how the system worked. He spoke of a student applying through UCAS to study English who had written a personal statement about her love of a kind of literature which Peter thought was inappropriate...

> *'wanting to study English Literature and she put in her personal statement I read like Goose Bumps by R L Stein and the Twilight series and I was saying what literary texts and they don't know about it, their parents don't read literary books she doesn't know about it and because of the socio economic group they are trying to enter structures in society that have a completely different language.'* [88]

Peter returned to his childhood experiences drawing on what he called a *'critical incident'* [138] for him where his physics teacher – he remembered his name – reprimanded him for pressing down hard on the scales as it would cause damage. Peter argued his point and his teacher was impressed and praised him for standing up for what he believed in. Peter thinks this is a good lesson for life although he could not recall why he was using scales.

As a child Peter wanted learning to be fun and spoke of how he and his peers tried to distract the economics teacher [Peter remembered his name too] on a national budget day with the intention of wasting time. The teacher went along with it and made economics relevant and applicable to real life and Peter relished this through *'accidently learning loads about economics in a more fun way'* [165].

5.5.3 Peter prior to the PGCE
Peter studied for a psychology degree in a London university where says he was not the best student preferring to focus more on gigs and art events and leaving everything to the last minute. He feels that he did not deserve his 2:2 and it was also seen as not good enough when he disclosed that he had applied for and was *'declined'* for primary school teacher training, which he thought might be an easy option for him. He feels he was rejected as a result of his reputation as an undergraduate. In his second interview, Peter would *'almost admit to a disordered and wasteful life'* during these years [25]. Peter gave up on a teaching career at this point and after graduating, became a manager of a bar which he describes as a job with no meaning. He also recognised that something was missing. He had always wanted

to be a teacher and he vowed to sort his life out, give up his decadent ways and be sorted by age 26 [40].

After a short period of unemployment, Peter searched through UCAS and applied for the PGCE in SHD. He needed to have some experience working in a school setting and sent 34 letters to headteachers and received 4 replies all saying 'no'. On the advice of a friend Peter telephoned a local primary headteacher and was invited in the following Monday. Peter and I talked about his interview for the PGCE in SHD and we both remembered the location which Peter thought was peculiar. Peter appreciated the opportunity the PGCE brought him, he felt that he had been throwing his life away and *'like being born'* [46] it gave him a fresh start. He relocated for his PGCE renting a small flat in one of the Medway towns and he describes this as one of his happiest times…

> *'I absolutely loved my PGCE and really enjoyed going to it and that was one of the best years I've had in my life for sure. I wasted Uni and completely embraced that and loved going to the library and getting books out and reading about it going in early and going to placements – it was such a delight and living in my little flat in [the town] walking to school [the school] and that just felt a real beginning of something – life had properly begun then – I found what I was made for and was just being taught how to do that stuff.' [181]*

> *Initially, Peter had assumed that teaching was about power over children, but he had changed his mind. He thought he would prefer to 'work with' older children who he felt he could reason with more. The 14 – 19 age group was right for him and his placements in school and particularly FE meant he was exposed to 'a completely different world I hadn't even considered and that I love even more than school'. [97]*

Remembering his experiences in placements, Peter recalled…

> *'when I started the PGCE and went to a school placement – I thought this is teaching – this is good and it's when I went to the FE college placement I just noticed a completely different way of doing things where at school I stand at the front of the classroom, I'm sir and I'm expected to be the fountain of all knowledge by the students. And, in many observations I did of school teaching, the teachers tried to live up to that completely unrealistic expectation and when they don't know something make it up.' [390]*

Recalling his mentors Peter spoke warmly of his FE mentor and had mixed feelings about his school mentor who had low expectations of some of her SHD students...

> *'my mentor showed me the register and said, "Look out for this one, he's trouble." And I thought, "Oh God, I wonder what this guy, this [name] is gonna be like then." And the class comes in and I was taking the register, and [name] he's like, "yep," and okay, that's him, that's the one I've got to look out for. And during the lesson, it's early on in my teaching career, so I'm reading slides off the board, pretty boring, and [name] gets up and wanders to the back of the classroom and listens to the radiator, puts his ear against it and he goes, "Sir, this radiator needs bleeding." And I thought, that's interesting, he knows about things here and there, that's a good little bit of plumbing knowledge there. That could be useful in some career. And he went and sat back down in his own time, and I just let that carry on.*

> *And later on, I just thought, I'll talk to him. And I said, "Hello [name], how was your weekend?" And he sorta looks up to me quite tentatively like, "you're talking to me or asking me?" And he said, "It was good. I went fishing with my dad down at the Medway." I said, "Oh, good. Yeah, beautiful river. That sounds nice. Are you interested in fishing?" He said, "Yeah, I am." And we go on to the subject of what we'd like to study in the future. And he was saying, he'd like to do something with fish, with the sea. And I said, "Well, at university, there's courses called things like marine biology. And he's like, "Really, you could study that?" Nobody bothered to tell him of course. And I said, "Yeah, marine biology, yeah, study fish, study the sea." And he was astounded by that. And I said, "Well, first you need to go college, get your level 3 qualification." And a few days later, we went to the local college, and he got signed up for an Animal Management class.' [1165].*

Peter reflected further…

> *'Maybe he's a marine biologist now. Who knows? But the thing was, it was listening to him, having respect for him, not judging him, that allowed him to express these ideas. And yeah, just have a little dialogue with him, and maybe, it's put him on a new path in his life, and I hope it has.' [1186]*

Peter did not remember much about his additional diploma experience which he carried out in his school placement, but he remembered the PowerPoint slides and the learners having to copy each criterion.

During the PGCE Peter reflected on the world of Diplomas citing them as 'strange and new' for both students and educators. He raised concerns about students finding difficulty in connecting all the parts with teachers involved in some elements but not all, unable to relate to the holistic nature of the Diploma. There were many documents and '*many pieces of desperate propaganda constantly distributed to those involved in in its teaching*' (Appendix I).

5.5.4 Peter as a teacher

Peter's first teaching position was in an FE college teaching SHD and other subjects. He recalls with distaste how some teachers asking for resources happily just reading slides on things they know nothing about. Initially, Peter was happy to work in the FEC but he became increasingly disturbed by the consumerism and customer satisfaction approaches adopted by the management. Peter argued that education is not always a comfortable and pleasurable environment and some things are more difficult. Things soured somewhat for him and he disclosed that there had been some *'dodgy stuff going on'*. *[289]* Tentatively, we explored this further, Peter had been to the union about pressure put on him to complete paperwork using the right format. Peter felt this was ridiculous, the union representative agreed with him and when he challenged this was told it was a '*disciplinary matter'*. *[292]*

Peter's discursive teaching style had recently been observed by an Ofsted inspector and he challenged the feedback highlighting there is no one effective formula for teaching rejecting the behaviorist position...

> '*there was no clear objective stated on a slide at the start - ???? and I wrote a 12 page essay fully referenced supporting my work and met with them and of course they can't be reasoned with. They also hate being outmaneuvered intellectually'. [325]*

Peter laughed as he went on…

> '*they [Ofsted inspectors] hadn't taught an interesting lesson in their lives these people who want to see a ppt slides saying we are going to do this, this is it a sliding comic sans and here's the handout and have you differentiated by saying*

to somebody basically you're not good enough to do what we're doing so you can do the little activity.' [329].

Peter decided to leave the FE College and went to teach in an outstanding local 6th Form College.

Reflecting on the Diploma in SHD, Peter recalled how difficult it was for teachers to manage the enormous amount of paperwork. He describes it as incredibly bureaucratic…

'if you wanted to do interesting things like role plays, observations you know if you wanted the students to be doing a really practical course then I'd have to write an essay detailing every single moment of every interaction probably want it filmed and transcribed and everything so they were absolutely unwilling to trust to say they demonstrated these care values or whatever it was. There was a ton of forms for it.' [219]

Peter knew that there had been a lot of money spent on resources to support and implement the 14-19 SHD Diploma and rather than trust teachers to make their professional judgements he thought it had been what he termed *'teacher proofed'* as a huge range of evidence was required in essentially a *'top down'* [228] process aimed at quality assuring the qualification. Peter felt there had been a missed opportunity for bringing in new ways of doing things – he wanted to be more *'creative'* [228]. Instead, the Diploma resources had ended up in a skip, little used and holding little value for teachers.

Peter believes that applied learning techniques are powerful and that this is the only way he understands how to teach. He worries about boring his students.

Peter had taught some psychology but felt uninspired about old research not being relevant to people today and he found difficulty in applying this. He feels there is more freedom teaching Health and Social Care and talked with me about his students. He spoke of a trip to London when covering a unit on Public Health which he was given as a new teacher because, Peter says, nobody wanted to teach it. He took his students on a field trip taking them to Soho...

'on a walking tour of John Snow's water pump and the old slums and the red light district and just go round telling them what it used to be like here – cesspits and sewers.' [253]

And we both laughed when Peter said…

> *'I was doing that one day and some tourists joined in on the tour as well.'*
> *[256]*

He told of teaching about discriminatory practice in H&SC and how his students understood more when he asked them how discrimination might feel. They related this to their own experiences on a college trip to Budapest…

> *'we felt like the only black girls in the entire city and people look over not in*
> *a bad way but we felt very different like you don't feel in [town].' [181]*

Peter has a clear sense of purpose in his role as a teacher, seeming to realise at 26 that he wanted to do something better with his life. He noted that doing things for others is better than doing things for oneself. He rejected money and status as being inconsequential. He likes to challenge ideas and found his PGCE gave him the freedom to do this. He could test the boundaries and engage in what he called 'intellectual banter' [173].

Studying for a master's degree in education has solidified Peter's beliefs and he has grown more confident in his approach. He was encouraged to use the idea of critical incidents to reflect on and develop his practice and feels freer to teach the way he wants to and like he experienced as a student in HE. He uses jazz as a metaphor for his teaching where he uses improvisation techniques...

> *'improv lesson is like jazz in that well improv isn't making up as you go*
> *along. It's knowing your stuff so well they [the musicians] can look at it in a*
> *thousand different ways on the spot.' [666]*

5.5.5 Peter as a leader

More recently, he had been asked to present on differentiation strategies to the teaching and learning group at his 6th form college which included the principal and other managers. Rather than do this, Peter wanted to present on a meta-analyses on the critiques of differentiation which ripped to shreds the whole notion of differentiation. He was advised not to do this and because he respected his manager agreed to focus on what worked. He brought this round to what he called his *'dialogic teaching style' [158].* Peter was offered a promotion.

And finally, after his additional diploma experience as a student teacher Peter reflected on the diplomas…

The world of Diplomas is a strange and new one for both students and educators. I have been teaching Society, Health and Development this year, as well as observing their visits to college, their functional skills lessons and their placements. The students have had some difficulty seeing the bigger picture, how all these elements fit in together to give the overall qualification. This is not surprising, as the staff delivering these courses are only involved in one element and can't relate their teaching to the holistic philosophy of The Diploma. A member of the local council staff that I interviewed seemed to know the structure in theory, but was not involved in personally teaching it, just demanding various projects in on time, leading to quite some unpopularity with the students. Yet these Diplomas do have a strong core element, useful and applicable in many situations beyond their scope.

5.6 Baptiste's Pen Portrait

Since graduating from the PGCE course, Baptiste has been working in a large further education college in Kent. Baptiste teaches on level 1 and level 2 Health and Social Care and Childcare courses with learners mostly spanning the 16-19 years age group and in the main the learners are female. Baptiste has also taught maths and English in her college. Having undergone many management changes, the college is currently part of a large corporate group and in terms of its performance at its latest inspection, Ofsted rated it as 'requiring improvement' (Ofsted, 2018).

Learners attend from a wide geographical area across Kent and north Sussex. The college currently has around 3,100 students enrolled and approximately one third of these attend a sister campus. The college provides a range of post-16 education and training, including 16 to 19 study programmes, adult learning courses, apprenticeships and courses for students with high needs. The sister college has higher levels of social and economic deprivation and a larger transient community than surrounding areas. The proportion of residents attending Baptiste's college have qualifications at level 2 and above which is higher than the regional and national rate, but lower for residents in the sister college area. Employment in areas served by Baptiste's college is above the national average (Ofsted, 2018).

Now in her 50s, Baptiste lives in Kent is married and has three grown up daughters. Baptiste grew up in the northeast of England.

5.6.1 Baptiste's Professional Life History

Baptiste started her professional life story talking about her early aspirations to teach...

> *'Being a teacher was something. I always wanted to do. Even before I went to school, I would line up the dolls and the teddies and give them a piece of paper and a pencil and do what I now know is emergent writing. I would write their little bit for them and I would write stories in books.' [8].*

Baptiste explained that after completing her A Levels at school she went to university to study for a degree in English, a subject she loved, with the goal of becoming an English teacher. After completing her degree and applying for a PGCE in English at a university in the west of England, Baptiste faced rejection having been told she was...

> *'too quietly spoken and too timid to go into teaching'.[14].*

Baptiste decided to look for a job in the area where she grew up and gained employment working for the local council. At this point, Baptiste married and because of her husband's work moved to Scotland and started a family and stayed at home to look after the children. When Baptiste's children were small, the family moved to Kent and at this point the children entered preschool. Baptiste followed the children and worked part-time in the setting, enrolling on a course to study a level 3 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in Childcare. Later, Baptiste gained more part-time employment in a local primary school and studied a City and Guilds course for Teaching Assistants (TA). Noticing a job advertisement for a pastoral and teaching assistant in a local school 6th form, Baptiste applied, was successful and worked part-time fitting her working pattern around the needs of her family.

In the secondary school, Baptiste was asked to complete the Higher-Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) qualification. As a result of staff shortages, she was asked to teach on two units in the 6th Form for the Health and Social Care course, an experience she recalls, she really enjoyed. This experience gave Baptiste the confidence she needed and in her early 40s the SHD PGCE *'caught her eye'.* [35]

5.6.2 What Baptiste brought to teaching- the early days

Alongside her degree, Baptiste had relevant sector vocational experience and was asked at two points during her PGCE to capture what she brought to teaching. Initially, she noted her sense of humour, her flexibility and what she called her *'vague sense of organisation'*. She

drew on her ability to find resources for lessons across the breadth of the SHD curriculum and on the progression of learners. She knew about career paths and coping with rejection drawing on her own experience, her uncertainty about her own career and how this gave her empathy with learners and their potential. Essentially, she wrote about providing a safety net for any disappointments her learners may have experienced and she had a deeper understanding of those learners who struggle with learning for example, through a lack of adequate key skills like English and maths. She had the ability to support learners through their frustrations using her *'creative spirit, innovative nature, determination, perseverance and optimism'*

Around mid-way through the PGCE course, Baptiste wrote about her patience and her ability to explain something in many ways. She wrote about her respect for individuals and the strength of character her learners possessed. Baptiste declares she is *'not a quitter'* and after 5 years in a secondary school prior to the PGCE points out that she understands adolescents. She wrote about inclusivity, differentiation, and special educational needs. Baptiste revealed her optimism and coupled this with not being naïve in her expectations of others. She wanted to expand learners' worlds through visits, trips and participation in the community outside the classroom. Baptiste recognised that she needed to develop her classroom management skills to exploit on these attributes.

5.6.3 Baptiste's experience as a PGCE student

In the interviews, Baptiste remembered her experience of working in secondary school and her PGCE placement and was not keen on what she described as the *target-oriented* and *regimented* school environment [45]. She recalled how her mentor had no experience of working in the health and social care sector revealing she felt relevant experience was important...

> *'it was not as vocational as FE was. That people were teaching especially in health and social care and had not worked in that field and I was really impressed when I came into FE that we had an ex midwife and ex nurse and people who'd worked in schools with disabilities.'* [47]

> *'So it was just that people knew what they were talking about really. You really did. Unless I'm teaching Early Years I feel a little bit the newcomer to it. But I think with life experience the range of residential care and things like that I have a good feel for it now.'* [54]

During her PGCE, she remained in the college for her Additional Diploma Experience placement as it provided the opportunity for her to gain more experience of implementing the new SHD Diploma. Baptiste's final report from her placement had highlighted that she had been particularly helpful to other members of staff and had often volunteered specialist knowledge and support where she perceived a need. She became a valued and much liked member of the team and on completing her PGCE was and remains employed by the FE college.

5.6.4 Baptiste as a teacher in FE - a Diploma leader

In her new post, Baptiste led on the SHD Diploma which lasted for two years. She recalls how the paperwork was onerous, and how the SHD course stopped mid-way leaving a small cohort of students to finish. Parents complained. Over the years, the college had undergone several different management changes.

Baptiste feels that government has taken its focus from vocational education and that this is a mistake...

> *'We need people who can work in those areas.'[69]*

Baptiste had worked in early years, reception classes and in a pastoral position in secondary school. I asked her about her early aspirations to become an English teacher and she recalled how she loved and still loves the subject, but she studied it such a long time ago and it now helped with her marking...

> *'I loved it. And I don't think I would have gone to university at 18 to study anything else.' [125]*

Baptiste teaches the lower-level learners, levels 1 and 2, those who failed to pass their GCSEs at the appropriate grade to enable them to progress to level 3 courses. Baptiste is frustrated for them. These learners excel in their practical elements – placements in childcare and other care settings is overall excellent but their English and maths remain barriers to their progression.

5.6.5 Baptiste's Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

In terms of her CPD, and occupational currency for the H&SC sector, Baptiste has continued to study whilst working part-time in FE. As well as mandatory staff training, she has completed a level 2 Certificate in Mental Health Awareness, English for Teachers with a local university

which included a maths and English entry assessment. Additional study has been online for example a level 3 qualification in Dementia Care. Baptiste also did a 10-week flower arranging course in preparation for her daughter's wedding and she really enjoyed the experience. She tells me she is creative but being a florist is hard work with 4am starts and late nights.

Baptiste had applied for school positions nearer to home but there was uncertainty about her qualification which she described as a *'strange fish to them'* [259]. Baptiste believes her degree and PGCE has meant that she has managed to continue to cope throughout the many changes at the college. She knows that the H&SC department places high value on sector related qualifications and experience. Her expertise is in early years at an advanced level and alongside midwives and operating theatre nurses has lower status occupationally. Baptiste does not teach on the level 3 learning like she did with the SHD Diploma. Despite her degree in English, she does not think of herself as an English teacher; her degree is in English Literature, but she uses functional knowledge to help with dyslexic learners and to embed literacy in the curriculum she teaches. Baptiste teaches a unit on Creative and Leisure Therapies. She respects her manager and feels she uses her team's skills and expertise well and draws on the idea of a theatre nurse teaching mood music and movement as inappropriate – teachers with this expertise, qualities and skills are better for teaching anatomy and biology.

5.7 Summary

This chapter presented five life histories with each history reflecting the point at which participants started their stories. Each life history developed using interview data from two interviews for each participant and a selection of archived documents. Life history data is commonly taken from interview sources (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). Life history approaches can be used to focus on themes such as professional development or curriculum (Goodson, 2017). The themes began to emerge as I plotted participants' interview transcripts on a journey. Each interview was coded into a framework for analysis with the three relationship domains in Table 1 below. These were categories taken from the 'relationship' component in conceptual framework and codes included both positive and negative aspects of participants' experiences (see page 88 respectively). For consistency, the categories remained the same and transcripts were scrutinised and words and phrases plotted on journey pathways (Appendix I).

The conceptual framework consisted of interrelated elements which developed using ideas from three existing models. The first model takes the notion of concentric circles or nested Russian dolls (Bronfenbrenner,1979) to explore participants' lives from the position of the present *(the practical evaluative)* with the participant teacher at the centre. This part of the ecological model recognises that there are different points in one's life where experience can be layered so that looing back over each life can deepen understanding into why each one became a Society, Health and Development Diploma teacher and their subsequent experiences as teachers. This model was influential in developing participants' life histories and as a further tool for categorising and analysing participants' lives. Using a range of current and archived data including two life history interviews each participant's story developed into a professional life history. These inform and are informed by the nested experiences in the concentric circles and draw on participants' temporal events. The second part of the model is derived from the work of Biesta, Priestley and Robinson, (2015) when for them, exploring teachers' agency they focused on teachers' beliefs. However, the focus of my study was on relationships.

The adoption of three domains identified in Powell and Tod and Ellis and Tod's work (2004, 2009): the social, the cognitive and the emotional helped in constructing the relationship domains for this study. I have used these domains to explore the relationships of participants with 1) teachers, 2) the curriculum and 3) the professional self for analytical purposes. Relationships in this study are perceived as participants' connections to teachers, the curriculum, and professional identities so the social, cognitive, and emotional aspects of being human. It is a feeling of connection and as something that brings with it empathy and conflict which is temporal in nature, and these have helped shape the life histories. The data on which the discussion is based is structured around the three relational themes generated which were coded using the life histories. This enabled the following chapter to provide detailed discussion of participants' relationships and offer possible explanations for the achievement of agency in specific contexts.

Table 1

Relationships with teachers over time
Early experiences with teachers
Access to school experience prior to ITE
Experience working in school prior to ITE
Thoughts about school mentors in ITE
Thoughts about FE mentors in ITE
Thoughts about colleagues
Thoughts about management

Relationships with the curriculum over time
Thoughts and feelings about learners
Thoughts about the range of subjects taught
SHD Diploma experience
Thoughts about assessment of learners
Paperwork and the curriculum
Relationship with occupational sectors
Thoughts about how to teach the subject
Early experiences with the curriculum

Relationships with the professional self over time
Thoughts about becoming a teacher
Thoughts about becoming a teacher of SHD
Related occupational experience prior to ITE
Occupational experience – non SHD related prior to ITE
Leadership roles Course leader, Head of Department, Leading CPD
Experiences as a mentor
Relationships with peers during ITE
Relationship with ITE qualification
Higher academic study
Engagement with accredited CPD
Applications rejected to ITE

This study aimed to understand more about teachers' agency through exploring the three relationship themes and the temporal experiences of five dually trained cross phase specialist 14-19 vocational diploma teachers from 2008-10. The consequences of successive governments' policies reforming the curriculum resulted in the removal of the diplomas, introduction of a more traditional curriculum and a change in accountability measures in schools which had the potential to impact on participants' agency as teachers, their professional vulnerability and their sense of purpose (Lasky, 2005). Conceptually, 'agency' and 'vulnerability' are linked through mediating systems of social and cultural structures alongside the political and social context in which teachers' experiences are located. As a multidimensional emotional experience, vulnerability exposes individuals to possible threats which mean that supportive relationships with others are important and arguably more so for teachers of vocational curricula where issues of parity of esteem affect learners. Connected to agency, then, it is about how actors act under conditions of threat such as reform (Lasky, 2005; Vahasantenen and Etelapelto, 2011).

Unlike other teachers, participants learned to teach in two distinct phases of education in up to three contrasting settings, each with different structures, cultures, histories, discourses and tensions which were outlined in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 explored and discussed the different approaches to human and teacher agency and introduced the conceptual framework which guided this study.   Employing a conceptual framework that was developed using ecological approaches influenced by others (see Biesta, et al 2015; Powell and Todd, 2004; Ellis and Todd; 2009 and Bronfenbrenner, 1979) made it possible to focus on three areas connected to relationships and transactions over time. Adopting a pragmatism perspective, placing emphasis on the experiences of participants in different environments, acknowledges the social and historical contexts and transactions in which each was located (Bergh and Wahlstrom, 2018; Priestley et al., 2015; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). This connected well to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological concentric circle model which helped with layering aspects of participants' lives as told from the present. The relationship domains, influenced by categories used to explore children's behaviour for learning by Powell and Tod, (2004) and Ellis and Tod, (2009) were equally useful particularly when it came to coding and categorising interview data.   For participants in this study, their authentic life histories started with why each became a teacher.

Using life history techniques as a central part of the framework and defining relationships over time as connections to a) other teachers, b) the curriculum and c) participants' understanding

of themselves as professional teachers, enabled a detailed exploration of their stories. Defining relationships this way and for analytical purposes, enables transactions to be explored temporally in social structures in specific contexts.   It is well known that no research process is without values. Qualitative data were produced using life history techniques which also drew on archived documents, with data collected over the period 2008 – 2019 and researcher reflections which captured some of my thoughts, feelings and assumptions after each interview. There were two interviews with each participant during the period 2017-2019 and transcripts from the first interview were also important to my reflexive thinking as I scrutinised the dialogue. Chapter 4 outlined the methodological approach drawing together the pragmatic positioning and narrative methodology. Chapter 5 presented the professional life histories of the five participants in this study: Julia, Erika Grice, Lorraine, Peter and Baptiste. A discussion of each relationship domain follows drawing on the ecological model to discuss and note instances of agency for participants. This starts with relationships with teachers over time, followed by relationships with the curriculum over time and concludes with a discussion of agency related to participants relationships with the professional self over time.

The two research questions that underpinned this study set out to explore the following:

1. What understanding of teachers' agency can be generated through using life history to explore cross phase vocational teachers' experience?

2. What can we learn about the importance of relationships in shaping the agency of cross phase vocational teachers?

As previously stated, participants interviewed for this study had unique experiences of training to teach a particular qualification at a time of significant curriculum reform. Their stories are important in seeking to understand how teachers achieve agency under these shifting policy conditions through successive governments and how the past and the future impact on their daily lives as teachers. As central concepts underpinning this study, teachers' agency and teachers' relationships were important to explore and a structure was designed in which themes and codes could be used to examine participants' temporal experiences. Exploration of these experiences aids understanding of how participants' agency has been shaped. Whilst these stories were told from the present, they provided glimpses into participants' past and their hopes and aspirations for the future (Biesta and Tedder, 2007). Therefore, life history research as part of the ecological framework was the most effective way to fit with the goals of this study which explored the experiences and relationships of teachers to understand more about relationships and their role in shaping agency.

I wanted to know in some detail what had happened to these teachers over the last decade since their teacher preparation course and I wanted to tease out, explore, interpret, and provide possible explanations for their responses to events and happenings in their social contexts and how these experiences might have enabled the achievement of agency (Biesta, et al, 2015; Priestley, et al, 2015; Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Plummer, 2001). However, as stated earlier in Chapter 1, the focus on agency emerged gradually. The reasons why participants became teachers were worthy of exploration because it was important firstly, to understand more about why each had chosen to embark on a course in 2008 and 2009, preparing them to teach a new and unfamiliar vocationally driven 14-19 curriculum where practice bridged two distinct professional boundaries of school and FE. Secondly, this new curriculum did not survive a government elected in 2010 which might have made participants professionally vulnerable through changes in policy. Yet each showed resilience to policy changes in continuing to have careers as teachers and exploring their achievement of agency seemed important to understanding more. Exploring their relationships with teachers over time could provide insight into how these might have influenced their agency. As pioneers in undertaking the PGCE in SHD, their relationships with the curriculum also seemed important as did the ways in which their professional journeys had helped or hindered their professional lives and their renegotiation of their professional identities. Their employment patterns dissected more than a decade after their PGCE gave some insight into their professional identities as teachers as each was able to articulate the decisions made concerning the contexts in which they had taught and were teaching. This provided some insight into two things: firstly, participants' sense of purpose and, secondly, differences in perceived autonomy linked to responsibility rather than merely doing what they felt best in each setting. The data also provided some insight into participants' experiences of ITE, including for some, their judgements of other models. The following section addresses each relationship domain drawing on the framework for analysis to guide the discussion.

6.3 Relationships with teachers over time

In the intervening years before the PGCE commenced, participants recounted a variety of experiences and transactions that occurred with teachers which were both positive and negative for them, evoking different responses. Exploring these incidences seen through participants' recollections of their actions and their capacity for action at the time in each context, the components of agency come to the surface and begin their interplay.

The evidence illustrates transactions with other teachers occur in different contexts at different periods of time such as when participants were children, students in education and as adults

in the workplace. Additionally, experiences concerning the teacher preparation course captured evidence where relationships with teacher mentors and tutors in specific contexts resulted in participants' achievement of agency which can be seen through the actions participants take. Under reform agendas, relationships with other teachers are important to agency (Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto, 2011). Yet for education generally and the teachers, there appears to be continuous reforms or edicts both locally from senior leaders and from government policy makers as external quality and accountability measures are imposed (Day, 2002, Day, 2020)

As each participant's story unfolded, some naturally focused on early encounters, recalling experiences of teachers from the perspective as learners in primary, secondary school and further education. Julia started her story clearly oriented to the iterational dimension of agency at an educationally critical point in her life when she had been mostly disaffected in secondary school. It was at this point that Julia recognised the positive relationship with one of her teachers who took an interest in her, making her feel valued, which seemed to pave the way for her achievement of agency as a learner. She had the 'capacity to formulate the possibilities for action', considered her choices, took responsibility and made a decision (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 23). This suggests that feeling valued by another person in a more powerful position such as an adult to child and the quality of the transactions that occur can have a positive effect on agentic capacity. For Julia, this positive experience looked to lay the foundation for her future commitment to the widest range of 14 + learners in further education where she forms bonds with her students, and she focusses on this in her story.

Unlike Julia, Erika did not touch on early teacher interaction much in her story, only to mention that as a pupil she struggled at secondary school with the institutional constraints it imposed yet she did not elaborate on what these were. Importantly, early experience is critical to the achievement of agency as the past influences both the future and the present (Emirbayer and Miche, 1998). Looking back to Erika's training year there was more support from her school-based mentor than in FE where she was afforded much more responsibility than she was ready for at that time. As previously discussed, this is not unusual in FE as the majority of teachers enrolling on in-service ITE courses are already teaching in their specialist area and would be expected to take on high levels of responsibility. Kauppinen et al., (2020) add that meaningful support for teachers during their training is important in developing and supporting teachers' agency and particularly valued where colleagues support hands-on pedagogical practice.

The evidence shows that institutional constraints emerge in many settings throughout Erika's story where she takes a professional stand from her own values, and she is clear about these

when choosing to become a teacher. As a teacher, she is critical of management hierarchies often challenging authority and, paradoxically, this seemed to motivate her to ensure her learners achieved well and to prove to management that she had a high level of professional ability and responsibility. It is possible that her early experiences of feeling oppressed as a pupil in a school environment affected her relationships with those in roles with more power and authority, making her so vociferous about this. The past, present and future clash in her 'chordal triad' of agency where past experiences affect actors' ability to consider different futures are not always harmonious (Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p. 972). All 'three dimensions resonate as separate but not always harmonious tones' (Priestley, et al., 2015 p.23). Yet this does not prevent Erika from becoming a manager herself, which results in an increase in responsibility, and she feels autonomy where her capacity to act can be seen through, for example, her efforts to change the qualification for her learners so that they could succeed. However, when managers supported her colleague with less experience than Erika, this affected her achievement of agency to an extent that it resulted in mental health difficulties for her. There can be serious consequences then when a lack of agency is experienced for some individuals. However, the evidence illustrates how, after a period of rest, Erika moves on, exercising her capacity to act, make choices and decisions by working in another area of education albeit for a very short time. Despite her resolve to never teach in a school again, Erika returns but on her own terms, refusing established contracts which would require her to conform. Erika portrays a commitment to her identity as a schoolteacher and she achieves agency through this. Her attempt to manage and control her environment demonstrates a form of achievement of agency informed by her past experiences where she was also professionally vulnerable. She also recognises that she has a bargaining chip through her power to sell her labour as an experienced teacher. Although she reluctantly sees herself as a commodity, she can do this because teachers often leave the profession.

Lorraine did not speak of any particular teacher who connected with her as a child, but generally had positive relationships with her teachers, imagining herself in their roles.

Unprompted, Peter recalled an incident of being intimidated by a teacher when he was a young child and of another teacher that he 'loved' and was able to interact with positively. These early experiences suggest that Peter's capacity to act in asking to sit at the front of the class and enjoying learning was at best a fleeting emergence of his future agentic capacity as he felt it was his decision and he took responsibility for learning. Evidence for the achievement of agency is problematic in this instance as Peter was very young and it might be argued that he was an able child who wanted to please his teacher. His reflection showed that positive interaction with the teacher was important to this learners' success which the evidence

suggests he uses in his own practice. Another time, Peter drew on his experience of being reprimanded in secondary school and was able to defend his action by seizing the opportunity of articulating to his teacher what he was trying to achieve. There was capacity to act, and he chose to do so taking responsibility. It could be the case that in this fee-paying all boys school which Peter attended on a scholarship, structural and cultural forms created a more respectful environment. The teacher accepted his explanation, praising his ingenuity rather than dismissing his arguments and sanctioning his behaviour. For Peter, being listened to is important to his achievement of agency and comparisons can be made to the time when he was not listened to as a teacher which brought a sense of frustration when it surfaced through a negative Ofsted judgement of his professional ability. His attempts to mediate prove futile and there is no relationship or connection formed with the inspector. Under these conditions, Peter sees no future in this organisation where management cultures did not support him or his decision making. Agency, suggests Edwards, (2015) is tightly connected to the values and commitments of teachers and these seem compromised for Peter. In Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto's (2015) study into teachers' agency, identity and emotions on leaving employment, resistance to work practices was a way of maintaining professional identity and enacting multidimensional agency seen as influencing and making choices and is linked to histories and possibilities for the future.   Peter projects into the future and demonstrates a solution through his capacity to act, make choices and decisions, takes responsibility for his career, decides to move from one environment to another from his FE college to paradoxically an Ofsted graded Outstanding 6th Form College. He is asked by his new line manager to deliver CPD to other staff and he quickly gets promoted. This is what achievement of agency looked like for Peter and after a challenging experience he was confident enough in his abilities as a teacher to seek a more supportive employer.

Baptiste's early rejection after applying for a more traditional PGCE in English meant she did not try to become a teacher for 20 years yet, after having her family, she worked in education, first in a nursery where she gains qualifications to practise followed by primary and secondary schools where she gains qualifications as a teaching assistant, all the time following her children's developmental journeys. Baptiste is the only participant with a degree in a traditional subject. During her work as a teaching assistant, Baptiste gains promotion as the secondary school invests in her. Asked then by another teacher to step in to cover teacher shortages, she leads units of learning for Health and Social Care. She enjoys this experience, projects towards the future, filled with hope and starts to aspire to be a teacher again. Peter, a graduate in Psychology, also faced rejection from primary teaching and after some time in unsatisfying job roles and after a period of maturity, he tried again but does not seek employment in schools

preferring to teach in post 16 where mentoring was stronger in both subject expertise and support.

As PGCE students, participants experienced a variety of teacher mentors in different environments and phases. Baptiste and Peter had the same mentor in school but were in different PGCE cohorts and independently reflected on this mentor's lack of expertise in vocationally related learning. This mentor was supportive but not confident in the SHD Diploma or related subject knowledge. For both participants, stronger mentoring relationships were established in the FE phase settings where they were able to build stronger, more positive relationships. Peter was highly praised by his FE mentor and developed well, teaching across a range of health and social care related courses. Baptiste gained her first and only teaching position in her FE placement and in the early days was seen as the Diploma specialist. The evidence provided tends to suggest that these early relationships with teacher mentors and the support provided in these environments seem to influence their decisions later in their careers as both opted for teaching positions in further education settings. Unlike Peter and Baptiste, Julia, Erika and Lorraine completed their NQT induction period in a secondary school setting. Julia and Lorraine did not continue as schoolteachers. Julia found schools managerial and controlling. As a NQT she studied for a funded MA which she continued to fund when she left her school and gained a teaching position where she had studied for her Access to HE course and completed her FE teaching placement for her PGCE. Lorraine was disappointed in her NQT period and despite doing well had little support from more experienced teachers for a variety of reasons. There was a lot of pressure and Lorraine returned to offender learning having been exposed to this environment during her training where she did feel supported by mentors.

Interestingly, Erika had a more positive relationship with her school-based mentor and was well supported in the prison during the additional experience. She taught in prison over the summer before starting as an NQT in a secondary school. Her mentor experience in FE was not positive and management deployed her as a teacher, and she was left to write her own progress report. FE was not her choice for employment as the conditions were not so beneficial. The evidence suggests that participants gravitated towards where they experienced positive relationships and perhaps where each felt valued. Participants' relationships with me as their tutor were positive and driven by high expectations from both phases through the practical experiences in placements. These were pivotal to the Diploma curriculum and teaching other vocational and academic courses with each gaining benefit from the additional experiences the PGCE provided. In order to address the research questions, the conceptual framework provided the guide with life history providing a mechanism for each

story to be told. I have learned that relationships with teachers before, during and beyond the PGCE are important for most participants' achievement of agency. Being listened to and heard is pivotal to agentic capacity and perhaps the special nature of the PGCE gave participants a stronger sense of voice.

6.4 Relationship with the curriculum over time

Since 2010, the policy driving a more traditional curriculum with its focus on maths, English and the sciences, has resulted in less choice for young people. It is fair to claim that the current English school curriculum is hierarchical and based on traditional subjects which appear more valuable than those which include concrete, practical experiences such as vocational education. That vocational education for 14–19-year-olds continues to have low status is indisputable yet as an attempt to provide a more balanced curriculum, Dewey argued for a more problem-solving curriculum grounded in social problems that were more authentic, reflected interactions in one's social cultural environments and could therefore be transformative (Bleazby, 2015). Traditional subjects have been recognised as 'facilitating' in terms of access to Russell group universities (see Dilnot, 2018) and it is argued, lead to higher paid graduate careers. However, the universities attended by participants in this study (see pen portraits) show that four of the five participants did not pursue national curriculum subjects in university but according to The Times Good University Guide in 2013 (Dilnot, 2018), the institutions attended were in the top third.

There are different perspectives on academic and vocational learning where connectivity between the two has rarely featured in debates (Doyle, 2012). Further, distinctions between the two are blurred and according to Pring, (2009) these divisions are false and lead to social injustice (DfES, 2004). There is, however, an understanding in VET that vocational qualifications are designed to lead to or introduce learners to a line of work or a particular job role. Evans, (2014) in her review of lessons for reform in 14-19 education policy suggested that focus on high quality provision in school or college for vocational education should be sustained. Similarly, to Unwin, (2004), Evans, (2014) acknowledges that parity is unlikely for all academic and vocational qualifications, but a vocational route should not be seen as less valuable. Evans (2014) draws on systems of VET in other countries where collaboration between education institutions exists with school VET being overseen by training organisations like FECs. This suggests there is recognition of specialist expertise in FECs and that FECs will be key organisations for VET for this country. However, the scope of Evan's review did not consider models of ITE.

Historically, there have been concerns about specialist subject training in ITE in FE for some years despite the quality of generic training being generally good (Thompson, 2014). However, specialist subject pedagogy, or a vocational pedagogy in this phase is problematic in such diverse provision with viability of groups and subject specific mentoring affecting quality. The qualifications of teachers in FE and the breadth of specialisms challenges common notions of subjects themselves as for the most part the links are to occupational sectors such as Health and Social Care, business and finance, or construction. For participants then, the 14-19 cross phase course provided a sound beginning for specialist teachers as it drew on models that are underpinned by strong subject associations and mentoring models in schools and links to occupational sectors through for example, sociology/psychology and the health and social care sector. The 14-19 Diploma terminology dealt with these problematic issues through terms such as 'learning lines' referred to on page 32 which drew on a range of synthesised disciplines and for participants this meant that degrees in psychology, health and social care, social policy and experiences in relevant work sectors were advantageous. Participants' stories provide some justification for this as all remained in the teaching profession for more than a decade without any reported challenges to their subject or vocational expertise, but it has not always been a linear journey and their relationships to the curriculum are important to their agency as teachers.

Drawing on her past experiences and recounted in her life history, Julia's first positive engagement she recounted was through her relationship with a nontraditional subject (sociology). It was in this context that Julia experienced achievement of agency as she learned more about structural factors like family, social class and education including disadvantage and was able to begin to understand more about her own life, take responsibility, make choices and formulate capacity for action. Agency then is a form of learning through reflection (Leijen, et al., (2020). It was like a door unlocking her potential to future success and helping her imagine a different future for herself. Julia became interested, through these pivotal early relationships, with the teacher and the curriculum, shifting towards the projective dimension of agency in which she begins to tentatively aspire to and hope to go on to higher education through an Access to HE course. Changing her degree course when she becomes disengaged demonstrated her capacity to act and make choices and decisions and this is agentic and an instance of achieving agency in this context, and she is aware of her own influences. In this environment, she had been accepted and rather than give up, is able to exercise choice – an integral part of agency.

The evidence shows that as a teacher Lorraine sought broader learning environments such as offender institutions where, as a teacher and manager, she had more agentic capacity to

create and implement the curriculum through negotiating her workspaces (Kersh, 2016). The status of teacher, therefore, was important to her professional identity suggesting strong ties to her experiences as a teacher and her agentic capacity in this role. She recounts crying with joy at her students' achievement.

Many participants noted the bureaucracy laden SHD diploma but also recognised the massive investment in supporting the diplomas with resources, CPD and guidance. Peter criticised the diploma as a top-down qualification where delivery rather than teaching was the dominant discourse. Education, in his view, was not to be perceived as a formula. Peter had a 'fantastic' time on his PGCE – it changed his life. He felt valued and was able to try out, test and discuss many things related to teaching. He liked what he called the 'intellectual banter' and recognising that teachers do not know everything inspired him.

The PGCE did not prepare teachers to teach the SHD diploma alone which was helpful to participants' futures. This was a result of two issues: first, that there was not enough Diploma provision and secondly, there was tacit agreement that a broader experience of teaching across qualifications and related subjects would be beneficial to trainees' development. Indeed, Julia never got to teach on the diploma but engaged in as much CPD as she could through attending training and conferences with her school-based mentor. Julia drew our attention to teachers in FE now having to pay for their own CPD.   (Biesta and Tedder, 2007; Biesta, et al., 2015; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Through the relationship with the curriculum domain in the conceptual framework we can learn through participants' life histories that a strong commitment to the curriculum exists and a commitment to CPD. Keeping as up to date with the vocational curriculum particularly for FE teachers in this study is important to teachers' agency. Using life history to explore this is helpful in understanding how agency can be supported through relationships with other teachers and how teachers contribute to parts of vocational curriculum.   How teachers affect learners in terms of aspirations and opportunities to learn different subjects is also important to acknowledge. Teachers' emotional engagement with the process of learning and the joy at learners' success seems important to acknowledge for achieving agency as it provides a strong sense of purpose – the making a difference defined by Frost (2006) in Chapter 3 helps to understand this.

6.5 Relationship with the professional self over time

Understanding what it means to be a professional teacher varies across the phases as dictated by different entry criteria, professional standards, and notions of expertise. Understanding can also be dependent on participants' own experiences, perceptions, and their professional roles in a given context (Goodson and Cole, 1994; Tait, 2017). The different

cultures and ways in which organisations like schools and colleges utilise the expertise of staff affects the daily working lives of teachers and how they react within these socially constructed environments (Vongalis-MaCrow, 2007). Yet teachers' work conditions change constantly, therefore engagement with continuous professional development (CPD) is seen as important as there is constant renegotiation of professional identity (Kauppinen, 2020). For some teachers, maintaining a professional identity can be difficult as changes in working environments such as curriculum reform can affect perception of security (Vahasantenen and Etalapelto, 2011) and professional vulnerability (Lasky, 2005).

The ability to navigate different work environments was key to participants' development as trainees implemented through the placement model. It is problematic to know if this was significantly sustained beyond the training. Yet Priestley et al, (2015) suggest that the active interplay of past influences and future projections is enacted in the present suggesting a sense of preference. The participants in this study were, through their ITE experience, able to move more freely between phases without becoming entrenched in the cultures of those phases even when they showed a preference for one phase over another. These cultures are recognised as difficult to shift as cultures often dictate practices (Evans, 2008).

Yet teachers' work is continually redefined leading to a new kind of professionalism (Robinson, 2012) which was needed for vocational education as it expanded more widely into the school phase (Senior, 2010). However, this could unintentionally de-professionalise teachers' work as broader conceptions of being a teacher exist across education (Evans, 2008). It is interesting that four of the five participants now teach in non-school settings where historically VET has been stronger. Despite their degrees and other qualifications – additionally remunerated – one of the participants has a recognised vocational qualification in terms of occupational credibility - Baptiste with Level 3 Childcare and she achieves agency through making decisions about her own CPD.

From an early age, Baptiste had imagined herself as a teacher enacted through playing with her teddies and dolls. She projects this into the future with aspirations to teach English in secondary schools yet is unsuccessful and is told her quiet disposition presented as a lack of confidence. However, Baptiste perseveres through gaining training and employment closely related to teaching roles eventually finding the right route for her to enter the profession and she achieves agency. She accepted the offer of a position in her FE placement to teach the diploma and was welcomed into the department teaching childcare and health and social care courses. Her experiences were valued, particularly with the diploma preparation. Yet she continued to struggle with becoming a schoolteacher evidenced through her telling of

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applications where the headteacher did not understand her certificate which was clear in that it was a PGCE across the phases and she had a teacher reference number enabling her to become a qualified schoolteacher. This should have been sufficient to employ her as a NQT in a school, yet the evidence suggests she did not try again. Despite her love of English and her degree in this, Baptiste rejects English teaching as a career choice in both FE and school where her graduate knowledge is likely to be highly valued. She maintained a commitment to vocational teaching and her quiet disposition meant she was able to build trust with students who struggled with academic work but were good in practical elements. She is a teacher with a PGCE, QTS and QTLS on her certificate and that is good enough for her.

Interestingly, Julia had no aspirations to be a teacher, nor had she imagined herself in the role of a teacher until she attended a graduate careers fair. She spoke quietly, almost as if she still could not quite believe she had become a teacher.   Julia did complete her NQT induction and disliked the environment, so she moved back to FE where she felt more comfortable and where she had previous successes. Interestingly, Julia was remunerated more in FE for the level of her qualifications, for example her degree in Health and Social Care, her PGCE and MA. Both she and Baptiste had vocational experiences and qualifications in roles that would be lower down any vocational hierarchy of health caring and childcare roles. Each was outranked by qualified nurses and midwives in terms of experience but not in terms of ITE qualifications where Certificate and Diplomas in Education are prevalent. The evidence shows that Baptiste tried hard to build her CPD with relevant courses and I also asked her about teaching English with her degree. She preferred teaching about play and activities to support learning drawing heavily on her childcare experiences. Peter's psychology degree, PGCE and MSc were valued yet he preferred to teach vocational subjects and build the cultural capital of his post 16 learners. He argued that he was helping them make sense of what he termed the real world where emotional aspects are key and where learning is rejected if it cannot be applied to one's own life. In his first role, he was not valued and attributed this to the FE college being run by accountants not teachers. Like Erika, he disliked and disagreed with the customer/consumer approach to education.

Despite being drawn to teaching when she was a pupil in secondary school, Lorraine's perception of her own teachers being trapped meant that she had no desire or aspirations to become a teacher at this point in her life. Working in tourism and connecting with children was the pivotal point when her aspirations to teach re-emerged and she made the decision to uproot her life, move 500 miles and train to become a Diploma teacher. After her NQT induction she returned to her roots and her PGCE was not recognised by the Scottish General Teaching Council. Her degree and additional experience on the PGCE prepared her well for

the next experience as a teacher in offender learning. Lorraine is clear that teachers in schools and colleges have quite different roles requiring what she calls different skill sets. She has responsibility and autonomy in her management role and says she draws on her past experiences to shape the teacher she is now, having to be engaging in an unusual environment. Her teaching peers in FE and schools are curious about her training, recognising through Lorraine's experience the value this has brought. Given the opportunity, they would engage in cross phase training too.

Peter experienced no problems in gaining employment as a teacher but has remained in post 16 provision and not sought employment in the school setting. He did not complete NQT induction for QTS nor professional formation for QTLS, but employers recognise Peter's PGCE and the 14-19 age phase. He does not seem to distinguish between teachers in school or FE, yet 6th form provision bridges the gap, so this is understandable. During the PGCE experience, Peter had a strong relationship with his FE mentor and had a more positive experience of being mentored in Health and Social Care. His diploma teaching experience was in school, and perhaps the school mentor was under more pressure implementing a new curriculum despite mentoring Baptiste the year before. Baptiste had been unsuccessful in gaining employment in school settings and has remained in FE. Julia could not take the pace of school workloads and managerial cultures and left after completing her NQT induction and returned to teach in the college where she studied her Access to HE qualification and completed her FE teaching practice.

Julia thinks schoolteachers are seen as more professional as they have similar teaching qualifications to each other as graduates at Level 6 or above with QTS. This standardisation is seen as helpful as it defines the professional level rather than in FE where the Level 3 or above occupational expertise and a teaching qualification at Level 4 and above are current (Clow, 2001) which was discussed in Chapter 2 (see Bailey and Robson, 2002; Hall and Marsh, 2008; Thompson 2014). Teachers of VET operate in complex conditions (Kersch, 2016) where there are different understandings of professionalism (Evans, 2008). Perceiving agency as a key dimension of teachers' professionalism and professional identity (Priestley et al, 2015) might therefore be problematic for cross phase teachers as each institution has its ideological positions. Kerch, (2016). Both Baptiste and Julia have above and beyond the necessary qualifications for FE yet they both maintained a commitment to CPD, funded themselves mostly to keep their occupational expertise as up to date and relevant and important when teaching vocational subjects in FE. In a 6th form college, Peter bridges the divide between school and FE provision yet provides little information on his own CPD. Unlike

the school phase and more traditional subjects, there are no real subject associations in FECs and teacher training routes are in the main, generic.

Lorraine rose through the ranks of the offender learning system achieving agency through insisting that she retains her identity as a teacher and not just as a manager. It is important to her that she retains some classroom practice. Erika has no difficulty in gaining teaching positions in schools and had been a head of department in two. She had many teaching jobs in multiple settings (mostly schools) and is now resistant to taking established contracts preferring fixed terms contracts so she can maintain her freedom from the constraints she associates with secure employment for which she has a lack of trust. This way she retains responsibility, autonomy and choice in her environment which are interconnected elements of agency. She is deeply concerned about how teachers are treated, particularly those new to the profession. Paradoxically, Erika sees no place for neoliberal policies in education yet pushes her students as much as she can to maximise examination/assessment results and to prove to management that this can be done. Being valued is important yet does not appear to feature heavily in discourse around teachers' agency where there is more focus on the values teachers bring (Hadar and Benish-Wiseman, 2019; Day et al, 2006).

Summary
The conceptual framework helped to highlight that post qualifying, the evidence in participants' stories show that contexts and environments were different for all participants, and all had remained in active teaching roles across phases. Evans, (2008) recognises the changing nature of education professionals as roles and definitions of teaching collide with each other across the phases and beyond. Goodson, (2003) argues that professional status, ideals and purposes are constructed by different professional groups yet there was little evidence provided for this from this sample which may reflect the possibility of a distinct identity for a 14-19 teacher (Senior, 2015). This could, therefore, be the influence of their initial teacher training with exposure to a different professionally bounded environments early in participants' careers, plus the additional benefit of teaching in offender learning for some which helped disrupt workplace and phase cultures. The evidence does seem to suggest that participants have preferences for teaching in certain types of institutions and have a recognition that different skills are valued. There was little to suggest that their own status as teachers was questioned but the evidence provided suggests that there are differences in further education colleges where vocational, that is, knowledge and skills from occupational experience and expertise rather than academic qualifications alone are valued more highly in terms of subject knowledge.

All participants were teaching 10 years after the course, with 3 completing NQT induction post PGCE.   Four of the five participants continue to teach in non-secondary school settings. National data shows that five years after qualifying only 60% of schoolteachers remain in the classroom citing the nature of workload linked to accountability and performativity. Worryingly, 54% said they did not think they'd be teaching in 10 years' time (Perryman and Calvert, 2020). In comparison, one in five teachers leave FE teaching citing policy neglect, inadequate funding and a lack of status and career progression (TES, 2019).

Chapter 7

Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

This study used life history to explore cross phase vocational teachers' experiences from which an understanding arose about how teachers' agency can be shaped. The focus on teachers' experience of relationships over time helped in developing this understanding. The two research questions were refined and asked, therefore:

1. What understanding of teachers' agency can be generated through using life history to explore cross phase vocational teachers' experience?

2. What can we learn about the importance of relationships in shaping the agency of cross phase vocational teachers?

7.1.1 How using life history can aid understanding of teachers' lives and agency

Life history was a useful approach to understanding more about the professional lives and agency of teachers and little research has been undertaken using this method (Edwards, 2015). The contextual background to the life stories was important to understanding more about the professional lives and work of participants and further modified to understand more about their agency. Teachers' work is continuously refined, and reconstructed, with ongoing policy reforms acting to de-professionalise and re-professionalise teachers' work which can, for some, result in a sense of vulnerability. The backdrop of the socio-political context of neo liberalism with market led systems helped develop more of an understanding of the problems teachers face. Teachers often feel like they are treated as commodities where policy reform, accountability and other measures act to create a sense of instability which affects teachers' agency. The contexts and environments in which teachers do their work, therefore, was important to consider, particularly with regard to how teachers adapt to changes over time.

7.1.2 Agency and relationships

Agency is a slippery concept which has been written about from a variety of scholarly perspectives. This study drew on pragmatism, taking the basic premise that agency is achieved, therefore related to human action and a capacity to act in a given situation. This stance places emphasis on the importance of the interplay between experience and environmental contexts in which transactions occur. Participants' capacity to act in socio-structural contexts means that agency is seen as an 'emergent phenomenon' in that it is achieved in a specific context for action where an actor intentionally takes action (Priestley, et

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al, 2015). Agency, therefore, is something an actor does opposed to something an actor possesses. From this position, participants' experiences reflect proactive rather than reactive attitudes (Imants and Van der Wall, 2020). For analysis purposes, three domains of relationships were examined focusing on temporal relationships with: 1) teachers, 2) the curriculum, and 3) thoughts about the professional self.

Relationships were seen as resources which help shape agency. In this framework, the factors I have identified as particularly meaningful to participants' achievement of agency are a) being valued, b) being motivated, and c) being supported. These three factors could bolster intentionality where capacity to formulate possible action informs decision making (Priestley et al., 2015). Using these three components, compelling examples of the achievement of agency can be found in the data. It offers more than identification of component parts of agency such as autonomy, responsibility and freedom which tend to align more to concepts where agency is given and possessed rather than in an ecological model where it is emerges and is achieved in specific contexts for action.

The evidence in the professional life histories in Chapter 5 and the discussions in Chapter 6 showed how, through their training, the relationships participants had with others in boundaried professions, the teachers in secondary and FE, prepared them well for their careers as teachers. The findings suggest that participants were much less vulnerable to the dramatic policy changes rapidly implemented in 2010 through a newly elected government. The curriculum taught and their own ideas about themselves as professionals, re-configuring their identities, all add to the richness in their stories which highlight how each one remained policy resilient and firm in their dedication to the purpose of education which for them was about their learners' learning. Indeed, Harkin (2008) made the point that…

> 'Young people look to teachers for positive regard and respect, as well as for subject expertise. Diploma teachers should be able to relate positively with young people and their aspirations; be willing to help young people shape their own learning and their own futures. It is a role that is as much about general support and encouragement as it is about subject-specific expertise. (Harkin, 2008, p.6)'

7.2 Conclusions

My conclusions are structured making use of the nested circles so that an ecological approach can be taken. These reflect interactions of participants in the immediate surroundings. and encompasses the three relationship domains over time, making prominent the socio-cultural contexts and conditions that helped shape or hindered participants' agency.

7.2.1 Background information – home, family and early education experiences

The background information each participant shared about their lives as children and early education experiences suggested that relationships had been built on both positive and negative aspects of their experiences. For example, there was evidence of an unstable home life and disaffected behaviour changing because of positive transactions with one teacher, the participant therefore feeling valued and supported which aided agentic capacity. For another, with a more stable early life, there were clear expectations about teacher - pupil behaviours in primary school which were based on emotional reactions and motivation to achieve was stronger when valued which set the scene for the future agentic behaviours. A further secondary school teacher-pupil transaction involved a reprimand which was perceived as unfair, subsequently challenged and highlighted by the participant as a critical incident and resolved positively, again where being valued resulted in the achievement of agency. Another participant spoke of a transaction with a peer as influencing her perceptions of becoming a teacher which described a restricted life spent entirely at school. This reaction, it could tentatively be claimed, stemmed from an isolated island life. And an ability to take action here, with a focus on the future possibilities, to be proactive, move away and study, all amounted to agentic behaviour.

One participant spoke little about formative years in education but with comments concerning progression through A Level and university which on the surface appear uneventful. However, this lack of comment may mask a past disappointment at not becoming a teacher at this point. Stories included accounts of struggling at, and loathing school with claims of institutionalisation affecting children's creativity. Ironically, this participant continues to be a schoolteacher who achieves agency through her efforts to ensure her learners succeed. Choice of and access to a range of subjects is important to young people and one participant reflected on the limited curriculum offered to her as a young person which she perceived as problematic, with others claiming interest in one subject as a turning point in their own learning. A lack of curriculum choice was powerful in affecting agency for one participant who reimagined her future by going on to study Psychology, a subject not available in her school curriculum. Intentions to become a teacher started early for another participant who, through role play, projected toward the long-term future and imagined being a teacher connecting motivation as a factor shaping the achievement agency.

7.2.2 Prior employment – before training to teach

All participants had experienced a range of job roles prior to starting teacher training which are significant for achieving agency, as understanding professional contexts and cultures is

helpful to trainee teachers, since these can be exploited as pedagogical instruments in vocational education where connectivity to employment and aspiration are equally important. Three had directly related experience in health care: one as a trainee radiographer, another as a carer in nursing homes, one with qualifications in early childhood practice with additional experience as a secondary school higher-level teaching assistant (HLTA). In her 40s and in the context of employment as a HLTA, this participant was given the opportunity, through short staffing, to solo teach a few lessons in Health and Social Care. This experience resulted in her feeling valued, supported by the teachers, and motivated. Her relationship with a new curriculum, some of which was based on her practical experiences in the care sector, gave her confidence to overcome her earlier rejection and apply to become a teacher again. Coupled with being valued, being supported and being motivated, agency can be further understood as an emergent phenomenon where something new occurs in a process of growth (evolution).

7.2.3 Degrees, employment experiences and the reasons for becoming a diploma teacher

As a factor shaping agency, motivation is important for aspiration and progression in life. The conditions that led to participants becoming teachers seemed important because there was a sense that participants wanted to do more with their occupational lives where, it could be claimed, each was dissatisfied with their careers. Two had experience in different types of employment as 1) an industry manager in tourism and 2) in hospitality as a bar manager. Both participants return to the idea of teaching as a career, and there was a similar thread in that both had degrees in psychology which provided a good grounding for teaching. Another had become disenchanted about working to make employers money which could affect agentic capacity as a result of not feeling valued or supported.

It could be argued that becoming a teacher for some, is achieving agency seen though action taken to enter the profession yet there were opportunities and barriers.   One participant did not consider teaching as a career until well into her twenties, when conversations with recruiters made her feel valued, supported and motivated to apply to become a teacher. Another knew she could apply to teach other routes but was not motivated to do so which is particularly striking as her teaching career continued despite the swift demise of the diplomas. Two participants had been rejected for other teaching courses. Part of the then government entry criteria for teaching required entrants to have at least two weeks' experience in a school setting prior to the course starting which presented a barrier for some. One participant recalled how he had written to 34 schools, subsequently receiving only 4 (negative) replies. Motivation and persistence are clear factors, and, through a friend's connection with a headteacher he

was eventually provided this opportunity. All participants expressed some excitement at the possibilities their teacher training gave them.

7.2.4 The teacher training experience, placements, and mentors

There were a variety of experiences remembered by participants about their teacher training generally, including placements where they were exposed to a broad range of professional environments which helped them understand the different contexts in which education operates. Recollections of the training periods between 2008-2010 highlighted that the experience of being mentored varied with three of the five participants feeling more supported in the further education phase. Departments with larger teaching teams existed in FE and participants seemed more impressed with the knowledge and expertise of their mentors and had generally felt more valued as members of the department. Some, but not all, school-based mentors had struggled with their own subject expertise for teaching the diploma. For example, one mentor was a food technology teacher and SHD was taught in the kitchens which was not generally thought to be an appropriate environment. For others in school, the departments often consisted of just one teacher which seemed to place pressure on some relationships.

Teacher training was seen as a place and space to develop and experiences of good relationships with mentors and other teachers affected how participants felt about settings. For one, it was the best year of his life, for another, the mentoring felt like being encompassed in a 'big hug' which suggests a sense of being valued and supported. Relationships with mentors and other teachers acted as resources for participants. There were also stories about mentors' discomfort with the subject matter of the diplomas and other teachers disagreeing with government policy. This was more prominent in stories about school settings where vocational education seems to be held in lower esteem. FE seemed to accept changes in the curriculum possibly because colleges seemed better prepared for, or perhaps resigned to changes in vocational curricula. More positive professional relationships tended to exist in FE which could be claimed to relate to strengths such as confidence evolving from previous occupational roles of mentors or the sheer size of the departments. Participants were also often viewed as experts in SHD thorough their connectivity with university teacher preparation, linking new knowledge and skills for new work practices (Imants and Vander Wall, 2020). There was clearly evidence from participants' claims that exposure to such a range of placements improved self-confidence in the curriculum and in building professional relationships which could provide supportive networks meaningful to agency (Kauppinen et al., 2020). This helped shape their agency as the different environments encouraged their adaptability.

Experiences of university ITE surfaced at varying points in the interview data. University classroom settings were claimed to be places where there was encouragement to engage in discourse, challenge tutors and peers and solve problems. There were claims about other teachers' training experiences being narrow which suggested participants felt theirs was more useful. Most felt valued and supported as trainees which could have helped in shaping agency. Thoughts captured during training reflected participants' intentions to be a good teacher as well as concerns about the problematic nature of the diplomas. The curriculum participants encountered in their teaching practice included, but was not restricted to, preparations for SHD diploma teaching. Other experiences of teaching practice included, for example, A Levels in Psychology and BTEC Health and Childcare courses and a broad range of courses in ADE at a variety of levels meant there was additional preparation which resulted in exposing participants to a wider curriculum. This gave participants connection to areas of the curriculum which they might not have considered, and preparation for both academic and vocational teaching.

Humans are influenced by and influence their environments. Participants completed placements in school and further education college (FEC) settings, built relationships in these work environments and met the demanding, regulated professional standards for both sectors. The third placement, known as the additional diploma experience (ADE), encompassed participants' experiences of: teaching in offender learning, teaching overseas and lastly, focusing on curriculum development for diplomas in a school/FE setting. In the main, participants' felt valued and supported in these settings. Importantly, the structure of the PGCE reflected the pedagogy of the diploma in attempting to reconfigure academic and vocational divisions and benefited participants in the following ways:

1) support was provided by tutors
2) learning was supported through a range of learning environments
   (3 placements)
3) settings provided exposure to different workplace cultures (3 placements)
4) support in settings was established through effective relationships with experienced teacher mentors
5) focus on problem solving, reflection and flexibility in the workplace
6) understanding of boundary crossing where learning in one setting was not deemed sufficient for diploma learners
7) interactions would help shape and increase versatility of learners

8) focus on diploma learner agency which emphasised the importance of professional relationships

7.2.5 Working life as a teacher, and promotions and roles

The interviews enabled participants to reflect on their PGCE experiences and the evidence illustrates a variety of reactions and responses such as that the PGCE was just 'something to get through' yet also a deeply emotional experience for example, a placement spent at an orphanage and teaching in a school in Africa. Another used resources and teaching methods defined as 'no chalk and talk' but activity-based, personal and applied learning. Another impact of the training was concerned with survival and the different skill sets required for different settings. There was clear indication that experience on the PGCE had prepared participants to adapt to different educational environments which reflected the placement model. Others had thought that it was possible to develop the curriculum and not just teach it and that this had been taught to them through processes of reflection and how to respond which is evident in recollections about exposure to, for example, offender learning and participant vulnerabilities. There was also a sense of frustration with the 'unrealistic expectations' placed on teachers 'knowing all' even at the expense of giving misinformation to learners to save face. Assertions regarding the 'regimented' and 'institutionalised' environment of secondary schools surfaced, with claims of more supportive professional relationships in FE. This could relate to the value placed on VET in this environment where it was also felt that teachers were more trusted by managers to do the job. It could be that the changes imposed on the curriculum and the threats and vulnerabilities this brought to schools created resistance. It could also mean that FE teachers have other professional options such as returning to prior occupations or teaching, say, in higher education. There was a sense that participants were committed to teaching VET with similar threads emerging such as 'I found my niche', 'what I was made for' and 'it's in my blood'. There was evidence of deep emotional responses to their learners' successes.

Post training, three were motivated to study for master's degrees in education – this is agentic behaviour with investment in the professional self. One participant claimed the MA enhanced confidence in her teaching, had engaged in the well-resourced CPD provided to support diploma implementation and continues, as do others, to engage with self-funded subject related CPD. Maximising opportunities to support subject CPD is agentic and in these stories, seems to occur more in FE settings where occupational expertise seems to matter more in VET. Post training, participants had taught on a broader range of areas which included Sociology, Special Education, Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education, Maths, English, Humanities, Geography and History. Three participants gained positions as a NQT in

schools, one remained in further education (her placement), and another was employed in an unfamiliar further education college. Of the three in schools, following NQT induction of one year, two gained teaching posts in further education, in college and offender learning and one remained in the school phase moving to another post. One remained in FE and one gained employment in a 6th form college (see Table 2). This is interesting as prior to the PGCE, the majority of participants had little or no exposure to FEC environments, yet most now teach in further education where the culture of support and being valued in larger departments by other vocational and further education teachers may exist and help achievement of agency. The conditions under which one participant has remained in the school teaching environment are interesting, in the main because she does this on her own terms ostensibly because she understands that she is part of a commodified system. Whilst she does not agree with market led education, she believes, under current circumstances, she is more highly valued and, in this context, achieves agency.

Table 2   *Table representation of participants' professional roles as teachers*

Participant	First teaching position	Next step teaching roles	Areas of responsibility beyond the classroom	Current roles post research interviews
1	NQT school	Mostly remained employed in various schools Some FE/Adult Education and Offender learning.	2 Head of Department roles in 2 schools	Class teacher
2	NQT school	Offender learning	Management and teaching	Management and teaching
3	NQT school	FE	Union representative	Class teacher
4	FE	Remained in FE	Course leader roles	Class teacher
5	FE	6th form college	Head of Department	Head of Department

7.2.6 Leadership experiences

All participants had experienced leadership roles beyond the role of a classroom teacher which involved motivation and for some, negotiation. One had insisted on a teaching role in her management promotion clearly perceiving this to be meaningful to her professional identity and sense of purpose, whereas another had taken head of department roles so that she was listened to and able to effect change. Another had taken on a leadership role as a rep, intending to speak up for others and another as a course leader. There had been incidences

of leading CPD sessions which had led to leadership roles. There was disappointment for some with these roles and a reconfiguring of professional positions which would include identity renegotiation such as the case for one participant leaving a leadership role and becoming, albeit for a short time, a part time family learning tutor. Under these circumstances, the amount of bureaucracy involved working for a local authority on such a part time basis suggests that there is little value or support attached and that had affected agentic capacity.

7.3 Recommendations

Through the conceptual framework developed in this study which focused on the relationship domains and subsequent relational themes, the professional life histories provided a deeper understanding of how participants navigated their environments and how they were able to do this through a deeper understanding of how different workplace cultures operate.   If their achievement of professional agency is a result of their training experiences, then there needs to be more attention paid to teachers' understanding of agency and what this means to them in their contexts.

Studies on teachers' agency, says Edwards, (2015), would benefit from a more detailed engagement with the dialectic of person and practice as a form of interplay particularly as environments in which teachers work are subject to this. Therefore, mentors as experts have vital parts to play in helping student teachers understand agency and Edwards connects this to the broader values and commitments of the profession. Early experiences and a lack of commitment to the broader goals of education were raised as important areas of focus for ITE including developing space to work with others. Agency, Maclellan (2017) suggests, is a key pedagogical resource for teachers therefore teacher educators are important in shaping conversations in ITE to effect real change such as promoting learning and not merely preparing teachers to deliver the curriculum. It is clear then that teacher educators have a part to play in building ITE courses which include learning about teacher agency, yet this is a complex construct with many interpretations which could be problematic. Edwards', (2015, p. 779) consideration examining a range of theoretical positions offers an encompassing definition of agency which includes 'commitment, responsibility, strong judgements, self-evaluation, connections to the common good and attention to what people do'. The ecological model developed for this study recognises and acknowledges experience and learning across different institutional settings, the bonding where relationships with mentors were important and likewise the university-based teacher education through the conceptual framework and the relationship domains.

Building professional relationships across professional boundaries can be seen as a valuable way of broadening understanding of the professional role and support teachers' identity formation. Each life history provided evidence of how relationships with other teachers, including mentors during ITE, helped in shaping a deeper understanding of each other's roles, specialisms and contributions to the curriculum and its impact on learners lives in both school and FE. Any tensions between contexts noted by participants tended to relate to conditions of service and daily practices which impact on teachers' lives in one phase or the other rather than professional status for participants. However, it may be the case that participants did not fully understand the differences in teachers' status in each phase and were comfortable with their own adaptable professional identities as teachers.   I can, therefore, claim that a positive outcome of this cross-phase approach was that it afforded the potential to increase, beyond the norm, participants' professional networks and increase opportunities for them to remain as professionals in education regardless of phase. It is clear then, that broader experience during the training phase would prepare trainees for adaptation and reconfigure professional identity, provide for wider choice in professional roles and increase capacity to teach across different education settings. Specifically, recommendations include the following:

- More emphasis should be placed on school/college experience prior to an ITE course with assignments set focussing on and comparing institutional cultures. These could then be used in the selection process.

- In the selection process, attention could be paid to applicants' understanding of the importance of relationships in previous non-teaching careers.

- It would be desirable for those training to teach KS4 and above to have placements in both schools and colleges as well as additional placements in other learning settings such as offender learning, family learning or adult education.

- More of an ITE course should involve trainees considering their relationship with placement colleagues, particularly those with mentors. Trainees should consider in greater depth how to be effective mentees.

- There should be more emphasis on trainees developing their subject pedagogy rather than subject knowledge.

- More consideration needs to be given to techniques to develop trainees' emotional intelligence and capacity and particularly the development of resilience and occupational flexibility.

- Trainees should have more of an understanding of how their own life histories contribute to the development of their agency as teachers.

- ITE mentors and those implementing the Early Career Framework should be encouraged to involve trainees and new teachers in all aspects of school/college life, particularly CPD. There is a strong argument for the ECF being extended beyond two years.

For me, the experiences of teaching these students meant that I had to learn the languages and cultures of both phases quickly and without exposing my lack of experience in one sector or another. This was made possible through the innovative nature of the PGCE and the recognition that this was a new curriculum (its innovation status was meant to protect it from inspection, but it was nevertheless included in the secondary phase inspection and its strong coherence with post-compulsory provision noted, in May 2010, ironically the week the Coalition Government came to power). The teaching/professional standards were unfamiliar and heavily prescriptive for both phases. They were not the standards I had trained with, so I learned how similar yet different they were in serving each phase and mapped them for simplicity. Leading this PGCE had been a powerful experience for me which served me well in the following years because it helped me reflect on the transient nature of education policy, regulation, and its relationship with time, place and professional space. Undertaking this research has helped me understand and further develop my professional identity as an educator. I can reflect more purposefully on when I achieve agency in professional spaces and when I cannot.

The relationships, the context and environment are all important as these interplay with one's past from the standpoint of the present and raise possibilities for the future. The synthesis of the ecological models represents the ways in which relationships connect to agency seen as an emergent phenomenon which emerges in a specific context for action (Priestley et al., 2015). Analysing teachers' relationships over time provided insights into what drove participants to become vocational diploma teachers in 2008 and 2009 and why they continue to be teachers. There were of course, problems with the diploma and its implementation, and it is apparent that the strategy for this had not been clearly thought through such as the rules of combination with other qualifications. Participants were therefore in a potentially vulnerable position in that they were seen as 'experts' on the diplomas. As such, the innovation category with the TDA was important as it facilitated cross phase experience for trainees. These stories could help inform current policy across Key Stages 4 and 5 which includes contribution to the debates concerned with vocational education for young people and how teachers across secondary school and Further Education and Skills are prepared for teaching in and across these phases particularly in support of T Levels and apprenticeships.

7.4 Reflection on my contribution to knowledge

This study explored agency through the accounts of dual qualified cross-phase teachers (14-19), initially trained at a time of curriculum reform and somewhat unusually involved in enacting these reforms (Imants and Van der Wal, 2020). Taking a life history approach has helped me capture important voices and bring to the surface the initial, spontaneously offered responses of participants which required an empathic sensitivity on my part. As their tutor I was also involved, and a central theoretical friend has been pragmatism from a Deweyan perspective. This gave participants' experience the attention it deserved. It was my intention that, in looking back and building on the experiences of the teachers interviewed, we can look forward and co-construct a new reality for vocational ITE. The development of a conceptual framework used to explore teachers' agency using life history as a key component was important as crucially stories which involved cross phased training has generated new insights into how teachers' agency is shaped. The kinds of relationships participants had fostered over the course of their lives, meant that interrelational aspects of context, time and place made it possible to understand more about participants' achievement of agency as it emerged in specific contexts for action. The focus on their relationships over time as a tentative play of ideas and interconnections was useful for analysing such a complex phenomenon as agency and contributes to wider discussions. The role which teachers' work environments play is also significant as transactions within these spaces are important to consider. Exploring and bringing to the surface the existing structures and barriers within and across professional boundaries may clarify how nurturing professional relationships across different professional spaces can help shape agency (Edwards, 2011) particularly for teachers of VET.

The development of a conceptual framework to understand the achievement of agency of these teachers influenced by ecological approaches, provided the structure which guided this study and combined different ecological models. In this light, teacher agency is seen as something a teacher does, by way of their environment, not just in it and the capacity to act in social settings rather than something a teacher possesses. The focus on relationships in this study contributes to agency theory for teachers, particularly through the exploration of participants' relationships over time in relation to three specific domains: the social, connected to teachers, cognitive connected to the curriculum and emotional connected to the professional self.

In seeking to explore the emergent phenomenon of teachers' agency, I have attempted to make visible any distinctiveness of participants' agency and how this has been achieved and

if this is meaningful. Drawing on insights from the research data has implications to potentially inform the advancement of research in areas of practice and theory which could strengthen the future training of vocational teachers in school and/or further education (Edwards, 2005; Biesta, Priestley and Robinson, 2015).

Building professional relationships and networks, sharing resources, and connecting colleagues across the traditional professional boundaries of school and FE were, although difficult in terms of cultures and expectations in different settings, considered highly valuable for trainees' professional development (Edwards, 2005). The study's findings, therefore, have implications for initial teacher education, continuing professional development, the relationships between professionals and the value of a broad range of experiences crossing institutional borders (Edwards, 2015). Through exploring agency, the PGCE and the policy context, relationships helped prepare participants to develop practices which were intended to enhance their occupational flexibility and agentic capacity as teachers including drawing on their experiences before they became 14-19 Diploma teachers. There is a clear role for ITE where consideration of prior experiences could bring additional value to a range of settings. This would in turn help teachers understand more about the work of each phase and provide opportunities for occupational flexibility. Discussions of agency and agentic capacity can be integral to initial teacher education particularly through the idea that agency is achieved as opposed to possessed or given by others. In understanding this, new teachers can be empowered to act both individually and collectively.

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14+ developments emphasis emboldened

Year	Paper/report/review	Focus	Main recommendations/outcome
1997	Green Paper: *Qualifying for Success*	16–19 Level 3 qualifications	• A levels spilt into AS and A2 to diversify studies and facilitate 'access' • GNVQ becomes a 'vocational A level' or AVCE • Key skills: the creation of a stand-alone award to address lack of generic skills (e.g., Application of Numbers, Communication and Information Technology (CIT)).
Sept 2000	*Curriculum 2000*	Application of *Qualifying for Success*: AS and A2 modular programmes and Key Skills are introduced, GNVQ is replaced by AVCE qualifications	• The General Certificate of Education (GCE) or A level programme becomes modular: 3 unit Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and 3 unit A2 levels • Offers greater flexibility, variety and broader AS subjects such as European Studies, + Communications, Citizenship or Critical Thinking • The AS can be taken as stand-alone qualification or be continued at A2 level • The AVCE (6 units) also contains a 3-unit subsidiary level (ASVCE) mirroring A level programme but with vocational focus (e.g., Business, Information Technology (IT) or Health and Social Care) • Key Skills
2002	**Green Paper 14–19 *Education: Extending Opportunities, Raising Standards***	**14–19 phase**	• **More flexibility of curriculum** • **Broader curriculum**
2003	**White Paper 14–19: *Opportunity and Excellence***	**Builds on previous Green Paper**	**As above** **Reiterates the need to break down barriers between vocational and academic curriculum** **Cooperation between schools and colleges and vocational education and training**

			• Sets up the 'Tomlinson' working group review of 14–19 education
2004	Tomlinson Report *14–19*: *Curriculum and Qualifications Reform*	14–19 education unified framework an English 'Diploma' or 'Baccalaureate'	A balanced 4 level (entry, foundation, intermediate and advanced) 14–19 curriculum allowing progression at own rate and a 'pick and mix' of vocational and/or academic subjects: • general skills and knowledge • specialized learning or vocational or academic skills for • employment of HE • supplementary learning *with* 'functional' Maths, English and IT *plus* work experience, or involvement with community work, sports and arts Grade for A grade at advanced level to stretch high achievers Diploma is 'named' after the age of 16 allowing for 'discovery' of subjects and paths pre-16 Apprenticeships to be integrated within the framework
2005	White Paper: *Education and Skills*	14–19 curriculum and assessment	Adopts some recommendations from Tomlinson but leaves out the unified approach GCSEs and A levels are 'strengthened' and stay as stand-alone qualifications 'Specialized' diplomas act as a bridge between vocational and academic studies Emphasis on functional skills Qualification does not depend on age anymore but 'readiness' The Diploma is to be delivered in partnership with colleges, schools and employers Entitlement to all 14–19 to undertake any line of the Diploma by 2013 Work experience is encouraged
2007	Green Paper *Raising Expectations*	Youth participation in education or training	Recommends a progressive increase of participation in education and training until age 17 by 2013 and to age 18 by 2015

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| Year	Policy	Focus	Outcome
2008	White Paper *Raising Expectations: Enabling the System to Deliver*	Application of Green Paper recommendations	Encourages 14–19 sub-regional grouping and the delivery of Foundation Tier and Diploma learning (Society, Health and Development Diploma introduced in schools and FECs – Secondary phase ITE in 5 HEIs – with one pilot providing cross phase dual training)
2008	*Curriculum 2000* Review	A levels	A levels modular system is simplified from 6 to 4 modules A grade A∗ is introduced as well as a stand-alone extended project
2008	Education and Skills Act	Youth learning participation	Raises the learning and training age to 18
2010	Schools White Paper	Introduces the English Baccalaureate	Leagues tables in schools show English and Maths as part of the 5 good GCSEs (A*-C)
2011	Wolf Review	Review of vocational education in schools and FE	Reduces vocational qualifications by 3,000.
2012	Ofqual Consultation A level reform	A level standards	More rigorous assessment
2013	National Curriculum Reforms published	Subject content and approval	Change in qualification performance measure in schools to point scores
2015	Education Bill	Rapid academy conversions of failing schools	Imposing sponsors –closing legal loopholes

Armitage et al, 2016:213

TDA Case Study Additional Diploma Experience

https://cccu-my.sharepoint.com/personal/ac291_canterbury_ac_uk/_layouts/15/onedrive.aspx?FolderCTID=0x01200030481B33899B7546A6F257D116430D97&id=%2Fpersonal%2Fac291%5Fcanterbury%5Fac%5Fuk%2FDocuments%2FDesktop%2FDoctorate%202020%20Master%20folder%2FDOCTORAL%20FINAL%20DRAFT%202020%2FNovember%202020%2FFinal%20Submission%2FTDA%20Case%20Study%20Strand%202%20Additional%20Diploma%20Experience%20%283%29%2Epdf&parent=%2Fpersonal%2Fac291%5Fcanterbury%5Fac%5Fuk%2FDocuments%2FDesktop%2FDoctorate%202020%20Master%20folder%2FDOCTORAL%20FINAL%20DRAFT%202020%2FNovember%202020%2FFinal%20Submission

Organizations involved in delivering the skills agenda to young people (< 19) in education
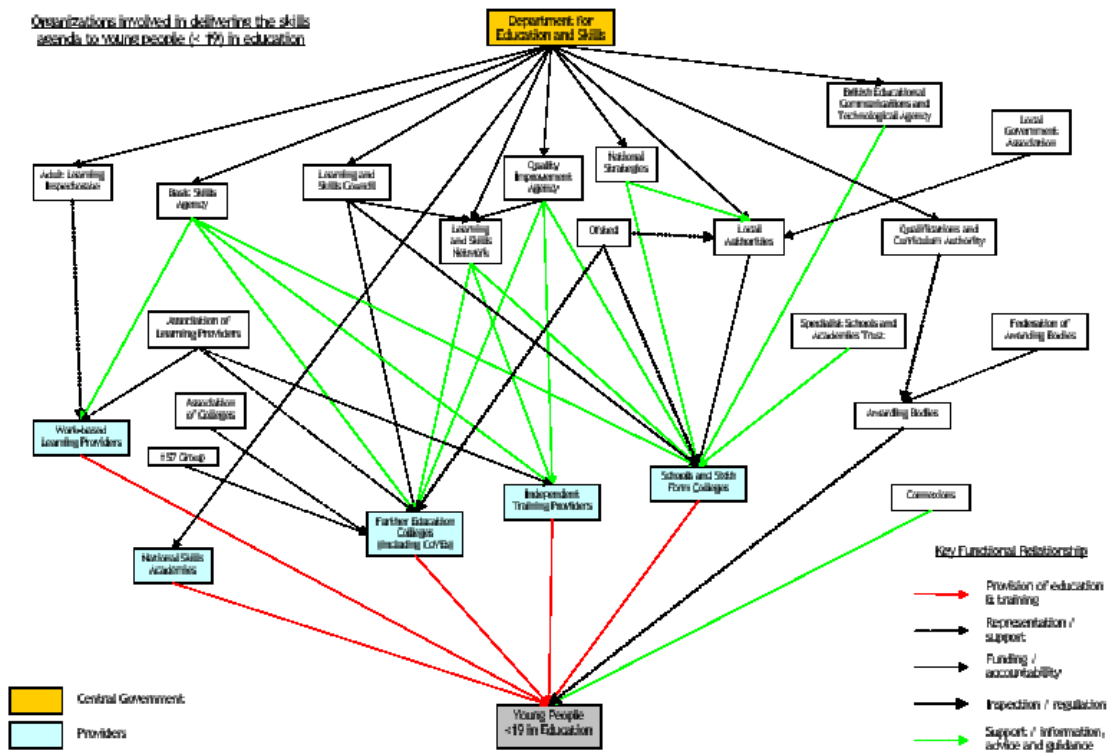
Prepared by the National Audit Office   16 March 2007

The various actors in vocational education illustrated in the table below:

Individuals	Educational Institutions	Employers	Government and its agencies
Students/pupils	Schools	Large	Central government
Trainees	Colleges (FECs)	Medium	Regional government
Parents/carers	Universities	Small	Local government
Lecturers	Training organizations	Private sector	Government bodies
Teachers	Trade Unions	Public sector	Political parties
Coaches	Professional bodies	Third sector	
Mentors	Examining bodies	Employers organizations	
Youth workers			

Lucas, Claxton and Webster, (2010:34)

Life History Definitions from Ojermark, (2007, p.4)

Life History Terminology

Biographical research: Research undertaken on individual lives employing autobiographical documents, interviews or other sources and presenting accounts in various forms (e.g. in terms of editing, written, visual or oral presentation, and degree of researcher's narration and reflexivity).

Ethnography: Written account of a culture or group. Family history: The systematic narrative and research of past events relating to a specific family, or specific families.

Narrative: A story, having a plot and existence separate from life of the teller. Narrative is linked with time as a fundamental aspect of social action. Narratives provide the organization for our actions and experiences, since we experience life through conceptions of the past, present and future.

Oral history: Personal recollections of events and their causes and effects. Also refers to the practice of interviewing individuals on their past experiences of events with the intention of constructing an historical account.

Case history: History of an event or social process, not of a person in particular.

Case study: Analysis and record of a single case.

Life history: Account of a life based on interviews and conversation. The life history is based on the collection of a written or transcribed oral account requested by a researcher. The life story is subsequently edited, interpreted and presented in one of a number of ways, often in conjunction with other sources. Life histories may be topical, focusing on only one segmented portion of a life, or complete, attempting to tell the full details of a life as it is recollected.

Life story: The account of a person's story of his or her life, or a segment of it, as told to another. It is usually quite a full account across the length of life but may refer to a period or aspect of the life experience. When related by interview to the researcher it is the result of an interactive relationship.

Narrative inquiry: Similar to 'biographical research', or 'life history research', this term is a loose frame of reference for a subset of qualitative research that uses personal narratives as the basis of research. 'Narrative' refers to a discourse form in which events and happenings are configured into a personal unity by means of a plot.

Testimonio: The first-person account of a real situation that involves repression and marginalization.

Interview 2

I: recording the second interview with xxxx and I just want to pick up where we left off xxxxx when through our last interview where we talked about your past experiences in schools and colleges. We talked about your training experiences, and we talked about you looking forward to your role as a family learning tutor. And other elements of education that you were dipping your toes into.

P: yeah, yeah, I remember now

I: So, can you give me an update?

P: Family learning lasted two sessions. I hated the bureaucracy of xxx (LA) – they did my head in and I resigned. I said I don't even want the salary. Don't even pay me – you think schools on bureaucracy are bad – xxx - forget it. And then I thought right still not finished on teaching, registered with an agency and was very very specific on where I would work, who I'd work with – I don't care about subject. So they sent me to xxxxx which was lovely – because my, one of my PGCE - one of your students and the student I mentored was there in xxx as HoD.

I: xxxxxxxx?

P: yeah – she's married with a kid so that was really good and so we were discussing loads and loads of stuff in xxxx and I was still supporting her so as soon as we met there was still that role that I was her mentor even though I was there teaching – I was covering special needs children and they gave me yr 7s and 8s on Friday afternoons for an hour each

I: teaching SN not xxxx?

P: Yeah, they shouldn't even be in mainstream education. So, on Friday afternoon I was supposed to be teaching about humanities - geography and history. 30 in each class most of the time they were outside in a line. I just said get out, just get out. So, we did also a bit on geography, and we did Thailand, and they really liked the name Bangkok. So, I had that all the time.

I: did you have a TA?

P: I did have a TA – she just shouted at them – she just screamed at them so the worse they got the quieter I then went – I went right back to my training on that voice projection and I also just stood so I would be spending most of my time - I went right back to my training – somehow it sort of like just stuck right in. I had to – it's ingrained. I'd literally just stand there and choose my spot and literally just stand there like this. Till they went quiet. So, I did that and um and then I got that class on my side. It took me two terms. I used to come home, and I was just absolutely exhausted.

That was on the xxxxxxx I started. 5 days a week used to take me an hour to get there an hour to get back – I was exhausted, and the family kept say to me 'mum just quit' xxxxxx, my husband said 'xxxxx just quit, this is killing you, just absolutely killing you – absolutely killing you.' I said no I'm going to persevere, why I wanted to persevere I don't know and then – I was teaching humanities, geography, history and the powerpoints they sent me were appalling so because they were SNs and they sent me the top ability I then had to spend every hour plus rewriting - they couldn't access any resources. All the worksheets had to be rewritten so I did all of that. It was really tough work and then I just got settled - up until half term they were literally standing outside – I wouldn't even let them take their coats off – I had my coat on but hey, let me speak, do some work and then you can come into the nice warm classroom. I got them round and then the school decided to call me and muck around all my hours and muck around – the woman who I was covering for, for maternity – she decided to come back early so she could leave so she could resign and get paid for the summer.

School then said to me right we only want you these days and I just thought stuff that – because these kids are going to go ballistic at having two teachers - they really needed that stability every hour. Because for an hour a day each – so I had two hours of hell a day – same class. Seating plan was nonexistent.

I: Were you supported by the SENCO?

P: No - - she gave me her business card – she gave me her business card. The NQT teacher who was filling the gap resigned because they gave him these classes. He lasted from September to Christmas.

I: What was his subject?

P: I don't know - he went there - coz xxxxxxxx do a lot of teacher training and Jesus Christ. He did his GTP there and then his PGCE there – I don't know what subject. I think he did it in ethics – religious studies. Then they gave him this job and he lasted til Christmas. I mean what a shit thing to do to him. And I don't think he's going back into teaching. He left halfway through his NQT year he then got a job in a private school – not teaching – supporting. He's not going to go back – so they ruined his career in teaching by giving him those classes.

I: it's not very supportive, is it?

P: no - and the TA I don't even want her in the class – they do not want her in the class – she just winds them up. Anyway, so the condition was why I said I'd go across we had two tickets for (overseas) – and we were going to go in May me and my husband and they did this to me so I thought stuff it so I walked in on the Friday and I burst into tears – I made myself cry – I really wanted to show I couldn't cope with this anymore. Although my HoD was lovely – xxxxx was lovely so I cried coz I didn't want to leave him in the lurch. All the resources were there, and everything was done. So, I did bring on the waterworks - um knowing. So, I then walked in and the bastards only paid me half a day and so I walked in and said no, I'm not coming back. I'm not coming back, um I can't do it, I can't cope with this anymore it was 3 days and the behavior of the kids – he was so supportive though – really really – nice guy.

 Um so, then I went to (overseas) and then I just thought right let's have a look at er it's almost that Gaugin expression when your sort of like what actually do you want. So I went travelling by myself and just thought and thought and got so much strength and was thinking right - oh the last 10 years – the situations I've been in have completely knocked it out of me so it has been yoyo……..but because I have the resilience and my training I can still keep going back.

I need recovery, the NQT at xxxxxx who got my job absolutely finished me. Coz I don't know if I said about this in the other interview?

I: I don't think so - I don't think you mentioned the NQT getting your job…

P: and the investigation I was under?

I: No – you mentioned leaving XXXXXXXXX

P: right oh that was horrific. NQT came in on xxxxxxxxx

I: was it something about cutting someone's hair?

P: no that was me - yes – that was me – but I didn't disclose this – NQT started – she wanted my job. She did xxxxxxxxx at XXXXXXXXX

I: you did mention the new teacher was xxxxxxxxxx.

P: she reported me for saying on xxxxxxx – she did a whistleblowing allegation against me – apparently saying if anyone reported me I would make their life… hell. How the conversation came about – she was saying a colleague of hers wasn't getting on with her mentor and I said you've got to get on with your mentor in your NQT year because they are the ones to support you and get you through. The next day she put an allegation in saying that I threatened her, and I said if anyone reported me I would make their life hell. I was under investigation for three months. Because of this –she - it was just horrible – absolutely horrible.

So, I then um – on the xxxxxx the mocks came – we're doing the mocks. I um showed her how to mark A Level Sociology 3 times. I got the marks back and I was thinking no way has this student got an A or a C - she'd upgraded them by 3 – so the A should have been a C and the C should have been a U.   Because she was undermining me all the way with students – every opportunity she could she was undermining me. Anyway, the students went ballistic – because she said well, I would have given you an A but xxxxxxx has given you a C or has failed you. I went…I lost it.

I: because she was an NQT at this point?

P: she was an NQT. I went in and just got the papers – I didn't swear at her. I just slammed the papers down. Because the students had told me what she said and then there were complaints from parents. So not only had I been under investigation and was cleared – she then did this to me. I then – oh and the XXXXXXX guy from XXXXXXXXX used to come across a lot.

I: *****? – did he visit the NQT?

P: yeah – no – there were lots of PGCE xxxxxxx students there. I just slammed the papers down and I said haven't you got any intelligence or something. I cannot understand why you have done this – I've shown you how to do it. And how dare you undermine me with the students and I just walked out (of school?).I just left - and then they paid me off – to get rid of me. I was surprised she got my job. But from that I had serious psychiatric – everywhere I went I could see her.

I: yeah – you do mention that you were signed off with stress

P: everywhere I went I could see her. I needed medication. I went to a (Local Authority) place for mental health stuff just to go through this to get her out of my head.

So that was the bit I missed out – I thought no I'm never going to be put in that position again. Obviously, I wasn't strong enough it was still too raw. So, then I went to (overseas) and I decided right I'm going to do teaching because it's in my blood I can't still quit. There's something about it that I really enjoy – spending time with those naughty years 10 and 7 – no not year 7 they're too sweet, the year 8,9,10 girls – there's something about that. The same teaching strategies – and I just love that time – I think it's something – to be in that position it's fantastic coz no one else is in that position and if you can still do it and they are so funny and they love me to pieces – there's something in my personality – because I break every rule under the sun – if I can. I won't do it their way – still won't do it their way – anyway so I phoned the agency up and said right I'm now only going to work at grammar schools. I've had behavior management – no more behavior management – I've done it, it's exhausting. Only put me in grammar schools so I'm now working at xxxxxxxx *school for xxxxx. Very naughty xxxx, very funny xxxxs, most teachers can't handle them at all*

I: really?

P: they just love me – um year 7s are sweethearts but year 8

I: what are you teaching?

P: PSHE – which is brilliant – teachers can't handle them at all its really interesting - so I went in and just was myself and was – erm very good – they offered me – so I put in an application for xxxxxxx *then withdrew – I'm not working at* xxxxxxx *– you must be joking. I didn't realise* xxxxxxx *was linked. They offered me two full time permanent positions and I said – nah – I'm not touching it. I said to the head it's all the shit you have to put up with and I said shit– I'm not touching it. I'll work – I said to* xxxx *that I like the school and I'll do contract for you.*

I: xxxxxxx the head?

P: xxxxx*'s the principal –*

I: the executive principal?

P: No – that's the one at xxxxxxxx, *they are hard – Jesus Christ that team from* xxxxxxx *. The teachers at* xxxxxxx- *They've all left coz they want them all gone. They've been so nasty to all the grammar schoolteachers – so all* xxxxxxx *are now –* xxxxx *is in a gay relation with* xxxx *who is the executive at xxxxxxx is. All senior management are female and in their 30s and really hard – Jesus Christ and you just look at what they wear and the size of their heels. I don't care. So they all come in.*

They xxxxx two xxxxxxxx – and its ok for xxxx *to leave early to pick the kids up from school. First this she did – she's only been there from September – she's got a shaved head and a ponytail shaved head - first thing she did– is she's forbidden staff to leave site to go off site so from 8.00am to whatever time she says you can go you are now allowed offsite. So I just thought stuff this – so I said what happens if you want a fag? You can't – it's the rule – sorry - I want a fag.*

I: are you smoking – do you smoke?

P: yes – I still smoke – one a day it's a roll up – it's like a …

I: I'm not judging you – laughs

P: I have a roll up so I just said no you can't do that. So, I discreetly took off – this is what – you must be joking. You just can't do that.

I: so, do you think – you've got a lot of experience in schools - more than usual – I would say to be fair –

P: Yeah, yeah

I: do you notice anything different in terms of the time you been teaching in management styles?

P: oh god yeah - it is horrific – management styles females are awful. I would say any school with female management they are nasty – very, very nasty – they are ruthless. They're not just nasty – they have to climb the ladder very very quickly and have a lot to prove then their jobs can be gone just like that. So I was – see XXXXXXX is just a joke. Two and a half thousand people there - the head I think she's paid about 150K and just sits on her arse.

I: are there x schools atXXXXXXXXX ?

P: yep, there's one and you've got heads of colleges so there's headships and they're females – Jesus Christ and some males for promotion– there teaching jobs will be filled by their wives or husbands because with my department at xxxxxxx – my HoD was the trade union rep. He was dealing constantly with the stuff that - staff who were unhappy because – at xxxxxxx - I think it was 3 years ago that 50 staff left at once.

I: Wow – how many staff are there – must be a couple of hundred?

P: I dunno – there aren't that many. xxxxxxx's like an army. It's run like an army – it's very much so – it's got that army mentality

I: like a military?

P: but its – they pretend they're nice but all they all wear high vis – yellow coats and high vis. It is run like an army. I'm just thinking – I'm on a daily rate and you've given me these classes – the serious. I would just kick up and say no – you sort it out. I kept pushing it back to them and they really didn't like it – I just said do your job and xxxxx the HoD totally supported me. Coz he knew how bad these classes are and these kids and 30 in a class is tough – they all had something. That's tough - the management on academisations is just disgusting.

I: Of all the schools you've worked for – have they all been academies?

P: No – xxxxxxx wasn't an academy xxx wasn't an academy. I quite liked xxxxxxx. Most people in education don't like her but I got on well with her – she was very direct.

I: is she still there?

P: I think she is – it's the senior management that got me – because I was with them in that whole vocational department. That was why I left there because it was horrid.

I: were they female?

P: - yeah – xxxxxxx wasn't an academy and then it became an academy through xxxxxxx's so time to leave. xxxxxxx wasn't an academy - had to leave because it closed – and anyway xxxxxxx's had took over and they would have sacked me. I remember at sportsday and they clocked me - they would have got all sorts of stuff to get rid of me – I just thought go before they do that. Now where did I go from xxxxxxx?

I: XXXXXX?

P: Yeah – which was horrible, that was just a couple of months – no that was 6 weeks. Then I did supply and then they all started to get academies – so xxxxxxx then was an academy and had gone rockbottom – it's still pretty bad, pretty bad. I don't know anyone left now at xxxxxxx – all my friends – all my colleagues – none of them there have all resigned. Because the woman at xxxxxx – her kids go there, and I asked her to find out. Because of the deal I'm not allowed to contact anyone, so I haven't. They've all gone – they've all left – which is very interesting.

I: yeah, yeah – there seems to be some kind of pattern emerging. We all know that sometimes it's a good thing to have fresh blood come in but it actually – this new broom sweeping through and people fear it – for real genuine reasons.

P: it is because the power they've got and what they can do. Because of academisation they can do what they like. There either burgundy book – or existently wrong. They can stop your pay or any observations. But the problem is now they haven't got teachers – xxxxxxx still has vacancies anyway they still haven't got teachers for September.

I: So part of the problem from your perspective for teacher recruitment and retention is about the impact of academisation, management teams and too much change

P: It's also the impact of your training and how you are going to survive this – you have to be a certain type of person to survive this – you really do.

I: But even with survival – you don't just want to survive you want to thrive?

P: I've got friends – hm is he as bad as me – he's worse he's in an academy in London and he says to them when he offered him a job – he said don't give me a form coz I never know what time I'll be here because I might be stuck in traffic, and I was thinking that is really cheeky. Anyway, they gave him a form – he never turned up. He then was told to wear a suit and he said no I'm not wearing a suit – then he was told to wear a high vis on duty, and he said I'm not wearing a high vis – so the head called him in - she said we've got seriously problems with you – she couldn't sack him - she really wanted to but she couldn't replace him. He said I told you at the interview – I'm not doing it. So, she said I would seriously like you to consider this and get back to me tomorrow. He said No – I'll think about it in the summer – I'm going back to Jamaica – she said to him are you going to get a one a way ticket or two-way ticket?

He's going to tell them to stuff it. So teachers – if you play the system you have so much power now – we have a lot more power now than we used to because it is so desperate. Especially good teachers. Now that group of year 8 – now most teachers in school cannot cope with. I thought they were pussycats – they are just … coz I'm used to the bottom of the pile they're just funny.

I: this is xxxxxxx

P: yeah – they are funny girls and er I was just – on the last day of term, all the good kids they had a cinema thing for them. To treat them – popcorn and everything and they were hand chosen to go and see this film. So, guess which lot weren't chosen…so I had them for two hours and I was exhausted. So, I said right were going to do our own party. So I booked rooms way away from anywhere so I could see who was coming and they were just dancing, putting music on and getting ready for the end of the day - doing all the eyebrows xxxxx/we had to change rooms and go to another building and just carried on and we had such a ball.   I just thought no that's just so mean, so mean to do that.

I: and you have to pick up the pieces of that

P: Yeah, yeah, I thought no just come on girls – we gonna have our own party

I: there must be something to praise about what they are doing?

P: yeah, their make up for a start

I: works of art?

P: you watch them do it and erm and then they were showing me pictures on their phones and asking me questions

I: and you're going back there in September?

P: Yeah, I'm covering Sociology coz I saw xxxxx on the last day of term – again she's offered me jobs at xxxxxx and I said no just stuff it I told you I'm not going anywhere near …I am not even setting foot

I: So, what I can see maybe, and you may disagree with me but after all this time you actually found your niche?

P: Yeah, I have

I: You've got some bright girls who you can interact with but get it and actually in that particular school they'll leave you alone if everything is alright. So, they must have been of a higher ability to be there?

P: Oh yeah, yeah – they are.

I: So ultimately those xxxx you could make such a difference to their lives. Essentially, they're not the cream of the grammar school. There is the bottom of the rung and they may have problems dealing with that and may have had all sorts of things to get through and some kind of test to get in there which doesn't suit them – but do you know what I mean – there's something you can do

P: yeah – Sociology is all A Level which is fine I was told I want to be back on my proper
I'm never doing that permanently or they control you -   I've said to the school I will do sociology on TPS 1, daily rate, otherwise forget it and find someone else

I: so, what will you get a couple of days a week with that?

P: no, its full time – she's got a really yukky operation coming up so she's gonna be off for about 6 months. (The sociology teacher) So I just said to xxxxx I can teach virtually any subject here erm and because they can't get staff coz they will go to XXXXXXXX, no teachers will touch the school.

I: because they'll have to teach across grammar and…?

P: no – just - no teachers will touch xxxxxxxxxxx school for girls because of XXXXXXX and its reputation it's just disgusting.

I: the management of xxxxx?

P: H&SC teacher lasted two week – they resigned so this is what I mean with training.

I: We only had one last year (trainee)

P: that isn't good is it

I: Numbers are down in xxxxx but we have xxxxxxxx

P: who was it was telling me the number of teachers has gone down at xxxxxxxxx?…

I: err they rally – they've rallied – probably the Professional mentor?

P: no – someone told me yesterday – they're just not getting the numbers.

I: I think in January it was a worry, but I think now it's kind of now better than we thought it would be. But there is a downward trend nationally. And until they sort out the sector erm

P: Well, they need a jolly good minister to get power back from academies. Also, with performance related pay now – that has made such a difference to schools because you've got these people just dobbing anyone in so the teamwork – especially the young ones – they're dobbing each other in, creeping round the head to get the money that's what 's happening – I see it all the time.

I: at least you're going back

P: yes – coz I control myself because I'm daily – I could just walk if they upset me

I: But if you're a young person supporting yourself, living on your own

P: Yeah, yeah – you can't. Coz there was this lovely girl on DT and then they decided – without interviewing – they decided to give the head of department – art and she going to control the budget. They didn't advertise the job because she creeps to the head

I: I think it's the corporate world

P: Yeah – but you can't have that in teaching – it doesn't work because you haven't got the teamwork with the kids – whatever school you are at they are still difficult – coz I put one of the kids in detention she went ballistic – she kept following me around. I said xxx - you …. You had a detention, and she wouldn't have it. I just said stop or you're going to get in more trouble and get another detention so if I was you, I would just stop.

I: I think – the authority of the teacher is challenged both internally and externally

P: yeah yeah

I: So, do you think that the values have changed?

P: erm what type of values?

I: The values, the professional values that…

P: oh definitely

I: the values you would have as a professional – to be a teacher

P: No, I don't think – the professionalism is going out the window. People don't look at themselves as professionals because of all the backbiting and it's about dealing with performance related pay and it's all now in the heads control

I: we found out yesterday didn't we that teachers have been given a pay rise but that's going to create even more disharmony potentially.

P: yeah, yeah

I: schools won't have the budget

P: so, there's going to be more backbiting

I: potentially they might have a loss of job so it's creating a more political environment so where you had all the - so it's about self-interest as a political value?

P: yeah, I don't think people are proud to help each other anymore – that's what I would say – all the schools

I: it's seen as a weakness?

P: yeah, I still help – I still help colleagues even though I'm still on a contract- if they're struggling or I'm always like – the amount of – if it's a PGCE I'm just like giving them tips – just do that or try that. Or urm there was this one teacher who was really struggling with these year 8 xxxs - I was having my lunch and I was walking through the classroom and I just stopped so I just said could I have a quick word with the class please – they were expecting a real bollocking and I said er you do realise that this class is the and I just paused and they were expecting me to say worst class blah blah and I said they are the best class in the whole school and d'you know what the and I said but I do not want to hear you speak to sir like that and I don't want to have to come through on my lunchbreak because you are too noisy and disturbing sir. So but teachers don't do that anymore, they just walk past and they just think no – they're struggling and I've got too much to do. Too much to prove –

I: so what do you do as a solution?

P: all bloody heads should be sacked and the whole lot needs redoing, and they need to be back into government control where they don't have the power - they can't have the power. What Michael Gove did in giving them all this power – that's the worst thing you could possibly do

I: So back under local authority…

P: Definitely, definitely – Because it's not a business. We are dealing with – it's turned into a business, but teachers are… to society that you're playing with. But kids don't change but they're getting harder and harder because society is getting harder and harder. But if we're not there as teachers to educate them – who is going to so I just see it as a downward – it's going but I'm still not giving up. I'm still doing it but on my terms.

I: feeling empowered because your able to do that through experience, finance and life age, maturity

P: yeah, yeah and all the rest of it. So, I don't have to jump and I see them jump. I look at these young teachers and they're just rabbits in the headlights and I feel so sorry for them and then they could be gone if one line out of place. They're no – it's absolutely ruthless so all these teachers doing GTP or Teach First – (school direct) unless you've got the support through the first year – forget it.

I think we can stop there that's lovely thank you.

Alison Cogger Doctorate in Education

Information Sheet for SHD student teachers 2008-2010

and Invitation to Participate

I am currently undertaking a doctorate in education and am at the thesis stage and would like to invite you to take part in this research. This sheet provides information about the research so you can decide if you are able to help me and are interested in participating. Feel free to ask any questions you have about this work - contact details are given at the end of this sheet - and I will answer your questions and provide you with any further information.

What is the Study about?

It is about a unique cross sector PGCE providing initial teacher education (ITE) to postgraduates teaching vocational subjects in secondary schools and Further Education Colleges as part of their training. The specific focus is on teachers who undertook initial teacher training for the 14-19 Diploma line in Society, Health and Development.

Why have I been asked to participate?

As someone who has successfully graduated from the 14-19 PGCE I want to hear your views on your professional experiences. I want to hear your experiences of your ITE programme and also to have discussions about how your career has developed since leaving CCCU.

Do I have to take part?

No, participation is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given further information, choices about how to participate and asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to opt out without giving a reason, right up until my draft thesis is produced at the end of December 2018.

What will happen if I take part?

If you decide that you're interested in taking part, you'll need to send me your details. Then, I will contact you and discuss how you would like to be involved in the interviews. I am flexible in how you can do this and would be happy to talk to you about this to discuss the best way for you.

Here are the ways I aim to collect your feedback:
- Life History interviews – face to face in a location of your choice.

What are the benefits of taking part?

I hope to involve as many alumni as possible from the 2008-2010 PGCE years. I will also share my thesis with you and you can request an electronic copy of that whether or not you have taken part in our research.

What about anonymity and confidentiality?

All participants will remain anonymous and I will do all I can to protect identities. However, no information in the report will make reference to any individual person or school/college. All personal details collected throughout the project will be destroyed at the end of the research period.

If you are interested in taking part in my research, please reply before August **2017** to: Alison Cogger by email on alison.cogger@canterbury.ac.uk and details for how best / where we can make initial contact with you (email or telephone call).

THANK YOU VERY MUCH

TELL ME YOUR LIFE STORY AND ESPECIALLY HOW THIS LED TO YOU BECOMING A TE...

Narrative analysis

What is said — What is meant?

I: Could you tell me your life story and how this led to you becoming a teacher?

(Peter) An Investigation into The Diploma

The world of Diplomas is a strange and new one for both students and educators. I have been teaching Society, Health and Development this year, as well as observing their visits to college, their functional skills lessons and their placements. The students have had some difficulty seeing the bigger picture, how all these elements fit in together to give the overall qualification. This is not surprising, as the staff delivering these courses are only involved in one element and can't relate their teaching to the holistic philosophy of The Diploma. A member of the local council staff that I interviewed seemed to know the structure in theory, but was not involved in personally teaching it, just demanding various projects in on time, leading to quite some unpopularity with the students.

Yet these Diplomas do have a strong core element, useful and applicable in many situations beyond their scope. From my SHD teaching to my assistance and investigation into the Creative & Media Diploma, I can see that they have similarities, that they engender certain working methods and apply teaching theories consistently across the subjects. Experiential learning, constant reflection and analysis, work-related learning, this cycle is clear whichever Diploma is being studied. This means that they do have a structure. We just need people to become more aware of this, to see why we are analysing, changing and applying their ideas, why functional skills are different to just ICT, maths or English.

This needs to be embedded into the teaching. The functional skills are embedded very well, I was investigating the functional skills of ICT in Creative & Media, and on my first day I helped with an exhibition of the students work, work involving glossy portfolios of images, research charts and graphs, computer-aided design, electronically-composed music, banks of digital images and slide shows, all alongside hand painted pictures, wooden sculptures, textile pieces and drawings. The whole event was captured in digital video and photograph, and interviews digitally recorded and stored to aid the reflective process. I really couldn't have asked for a more comprehensive example of the embedding of these skills. If only the council staff member had been there to see it...

Perhaps, though, a greater focus on how The Diploma aims to teach would be of use to the students and teachers alike. If students were made aware of Kolb's learning cycle, if they were shown how the learning is 'work-related' then maybe they could appreciate how The Diploma can be very different to their other lessons. 'When it is taught well' as the council staff member said in a caustic aside.

Yes, the pedagogy of The Diploma is explained to the educator in vast documents, one of many pieces of desperate propaganda that seem to be constantly distributed to those involved in its teaching, but many teachers don't read this, they don't have the time or the inclination. They've heard it all before. The students haven't though. Therefore, teachers could 'show their working,' let the students understand how learning happens; how when one helps another, you are extending the zone of proximal development... This may be difficult to illustrate at first, but if you teach someone *how* to learn, how learning *happens*, then your work as a teacher is done. They become the autonomous investigator that is so beloved of education theory. It would empower the learner, and enable them to apply their skills wherever life takes them. I believe this is the aim of The Diploma, and with a little more thinking, it could be achieved.

In functional skills standalone lessons, there is a more applied approach to learning than some of the maths or English lessons. An interesting point to note is that the students from the comprehensive schools in the local authority area achieve higher average grades on function skills exams compared to the grammar school students. This may indicate that the teaching in the comprehensive schools is more usually of the applied type that functional skills relies upon, whereas the grammar schools may have an approach that involves rows of equations to be solved, for example, rather than finding situations to apply the learning. Yet again, this is evidence that the pedagogy of The Diploma can work, when applied correctly. They could even give an advantage over the 'traditional' subjects. This advantage could be capitalised upon if the students knew that they were doing things in a different way. When I ask 'how

are functional skills maths lessons different from maths lessons?' they don't really know. Yet observing them, they use maths in real-world applied situations such as designing a business card, then working out paper sizes, printing costs, bulk discounts and other ways of showing the students how maths can be of use beyond the rows of textbook questions. Perhaps it is because a lot of the main strand maths teaching is also trying to work in these sorts of ways, that the students don't often see the difference.