

**A Study of How Middle Leaders
in a Secondary School
Are Making Sense of Their Role
in Relation to Teachers' Professional Development**

by

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Abstract

At a time when the provision for initial teacher training and the continuous professional development of new and experienced teaching professionals is increasingly becoming more school-based, it would appear that a central piece of knowledge concerning teachers' professional development has been overlooked: middle leaders, who are acknowledged as playing an important role in teacher development, have received little consideration in the academic discourse. In response to this lack of attention, this thesis examines how a small group of four experienced middle leaders in a mainstream secondary school are making sense of their role in relation to teachers' professional development.

The data collected within the study was analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), which allowed the middle leaders' perceptions, reasoning and feelings to be revealed in one master theme and five super-ordinate themes. To further strengthen the thematic analysis, the master theme of relationships was considered against Hoyle's conceptual framework of extended and restricted professionalism.

Teacher voice is central to this thesis and its findings. The research provides evidence to suggest that due to a lack of recognition of teacher voice, the middle leaders in this study are closing down external professional learning opportunities and are predominately looking inwards towards their departments and colleagues to facilitate teacher development. In doing so, the middle leaders are able to remain true to the relationship-centred practice that they value, but are failing to perceive teacher development as a holistic process that has the potential to project their professionalism outwards across professional boundaries.

Key Terms: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA); Middle Leaders; Professional Development; Professional Learning

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Acronyms and abbreviation

BERA	British Educational Research Association
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPDL	continuous professional development and learning
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Employment and Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary
GTCNI	General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland
GTCS	General Teaching Council for Scotland
INSET	In-service Training
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
LEA	Local Education Authorities
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
NUT	National Union of Teachers
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status

SEN	special educational needs
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TDA	Training and Development Agency
TES	Times Educational Supplement
TTA	Teacher Training Agency

Chapter 1 Introduction

This research is a small-scale study on four middle leaders working in a mainstream secondary school and how they are making sense of their role in relation to teachers' professional development. Although considerable research has been carried out into the topic of educational leadership, middle leaders have received little consideration in the academic discourse (Harris et al., 2019). With middle leaders acknowledged as playing a key role in teacher development, and at a time when teacher training and professional learning is increasingly becoming more school-based, this thesis is both timely and pertinent.

Within this chapter, I discuss my rationale, aims and intentions behind the research. In section 1.1, I define three key terms that feature throughout the work and are significant to its design, implementation and findings. Section 1.2 outlines my rationale for the work by briefly considering the academic and political context in which it is set. In section 1.3, I introduce the two aims of the research, my intentions behind them, and why I believe they are important. Sections 1.4 and 1.5 describe the context of the research and detail each of the research questions. Sections 1.6 and 1.7 discuss my personal values and position in the study as an insider researcher researching colleagues. And finally, a summary of each subsequent chapter of the thesis is included in section 1.8.

1.1 Definitions

The terms *voice*, *middle leader*, and *making sense/sense-making* are used extensively throughout this work and are significant to what it is trying to achieve. For clarity and to avoid ambiguity, this section defines what is meant by these terms within this thesis.

Middle leaders

Middle leaders within schools are individuals who hold middle-ranking positions and act as intermediaries between a school's senior leadership team and its general teaching staff (Busher, 2007; Fleming, 2014). Some examples of middle leadership roles are key stage coordinator, head of department, head of year, head of faculty, curriculum coordinator, and head of sixth form (Fleming, 2014). The responsibilities in such middle leadership roles vary considerably, but typically they will involve overseeing student success, routines, procedures, resourcing as well as staff leadership and development (Fleming, 2014).

This thesis is interested in the role of middle leaders in relation to the professional development of other teachers. In the context of the school in which this study takes place, only middle leaders who line manage other staff are given the direct responsibility for teachers' professional development. Within the school, these middle leaders are:

- Heads of faculty – An example would be the head of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), who has responsibility for departments such as science and DT (design and technology).
- Heads of department – An example of a head of department would be the head of mathematics.
- Subject leads – An example of a subject lead would be the coordinator of biology who works directly under a head of department but still has line management responsibilities for the teachers in their subject area.

Although this thesis recognises that middle leaders in the school who do not directly line manage others still play a significant role in staff development, this study purposefully placed its focus on the middle leaders listed above. It was felt that these middle leaders, with their direct responsibility for teachers' professional development, would prove the most abundant source of data. The middle leaders taking part in this study also had more than four years of experience in their role. As such, in regards to the four middle leaders in this study, the term 'middle leader' refers more specifically to heads of faculty, heads of department and subject leads with more than four years of experience in these roles.

Sense-making/making sense

People make sense of things through a process in which they construct and reconstruct their understandings by drawing on prior knowledge, experiences, values and beliefs (Weick, 1995). Weick (1995) outlines that sense-making relates to an individual's understanding of themselves and their relationship to the world. Accordingly, when individuals experience something that does not match their existing understandings, they seek to make sense of it. As a result, the individual enters into a period of reflection, reasoning and feeling to arrive at a point of resolution and new understanding (Smith et al., 2009). In addition, sense-making does not happen in isolation to the world but is influenced by other people and the socio-cultural context in which it takes place (Weick, 1995).

In relation to the middle leaders in this thesis, making sense/sense-making is seen as an ongoing and active process in which they construct and reconstruct their understandings and meanings in response to present stimuli. The sense-making process involves the middle leaders drawing on their prior knowledge, experiences, beliefs and values, and is embedded in the social context of their work environment.

Teacher voice

The notion of teacher voice is one that is vexed and open to ambiguity and a range of interpretations (Frost, 2008; Thomson & Riddle, 2018). Frost (2008), for instance, sees the representation of teacher voice as implying the aspiration to help “articulate and amplify the views, experiences and perspectives of teachers on educational policy and practice” (p.347). Hargreaves (1996), from a slightly different perspective, links teacher voice to the three fundamental principles of humanity, democracy and professionalism, positioning it as a fundamental element of educational practice and research.

Teachers’ voices are argued to be an element missing from the discourse on education (Cohn & Kottkamp, 1993; Bangs & Frost, 2012; Hargreaves, 1996; Ingersoll, 2007; Heneveld, 2007). Bangs and Frost (2012) assert that teachers, including senior leadership, exercise little influence in the direction of education outside of their classrooms and schools. Similarly, Harris and Jones (2019) contend that most governmental policy and reform decisions exclude teachers’ voices, in preference for guidance from international organisations and think tanks. As Ingersoll (2007: 22) notes, teachers exercise “very little practical control over the issues which they directly address”.

It could be argued that, in an era of social media, teachers’ voices are more present than ever before. However, as Frost (2008) points out, while these activities may amplify teachers’ voices, they do not necessarily articulate them in the wider political and academic debate. In this thesis, the middle leaders’ experiences and expertise are given a platform from which to be heard and valued, representing their voices as being central to our understanding of education and not merely peripheral expressions of frustration and concern. To this end, the voices of the middle leaders in this thesis are seen as expressions of their unique perceptions, feelings and thoughts; and as bringing with them considerable

insight into and knowledge of education. Accordingly, they should be afforded the space to actively shape our understanding of it.

1.2 Rationale

Over the past thirty years, neoconservative and neoliberal thinking has shifted the education system in England from a welfare and public service model to one based on knowledge and economic success (Apple, 2014; Ball, 2017; Furlong, 2013). Successive governments have placed pupils' academic attainment at the centre of educational reform, changing the landscape of education to one that is preoccupied with pupil achievement and school league tables (Ball, 2017). As a result, a pervasive culture of performativity has been introduced into the education system, with teachers' professionalism being externally defined and shaped through standardisation and accountability (Ball, 2017; Furlong, 2013; Goepel, 2012; Whitty, 2014). In other words, teachers have been repositioned as the key figures responsible for raising pupil attainment, and to quality assure their pedagogical practice, systems of training, standards and monitoring have been introduced. As epitomised in both the 2007 and 2011 teacher standards (TDA, 2007; DfE, 2012), the result has been to place skills and competencies at the heart of teachers' professionalism and professional development (Beck, 2009; Evans, 2011).

As with the repositioning of teachers as the individuals principally responsible for pupil outcomes, so too teachers' professional learning has progressively been repositioned as the responsibility of schools and teachers. The Labour government of 1997–2010 purposefully encouraged the development of school-led routes into teaching, giving schools greater power and autonomy over trainee teachers' development. Under the Coalition and Conservative administrations since 2010, the school-led initiative has undergone rapid expansion, with teaching redefined as a craft whose development is best realised through school-based professional learning. In this model, as Michael Gove (2010) outlines, situated technical know-how is valued above academic and critical reflection: "teaching is a craft and it is best learnt as an apprentice observing a master craftsman or woman. Watching others and being rigorously observed yourself as you develop is the best route to acquiring mastery in the classroom". Adding weight to the initiative of teaching being a craft-based occupation, the 2011 teacher standards was coupled with the 2016 *Standard for teachers'*

professional development (DfE, 2016b), providing schools with a standardised approach for the development and training of their staff. And more recently, in 2018, Damian Hinds, then secretary of state for education, announced a new two-year induction period for trainee teachers and the strengthening of ITT and NQT mentorship provision in schools (DfE, 2018).

In sum, the education system in England has shifted to one in which teachers' skills and competencies have become the primary focus for professional learning. Teachers are viewed as craftsmen and craftswomen whose professional development is best realised through school-based training that is standardised and purely contextual. The role of universities in initial teacher training has diminished, with school-led programs in 2018–19 accounting for 53% of all ITT provision (DfE, 2019a). Similarly, the LEA's input into teacher development has been reduced as academies and multi-academy trusts implement their own brands of professional training and development (Whitty, 2014). It appears undeniable that professional development has swung towards a school-based provision for teachers. But what is less certain is the question of which individuals in schools conduct this training, and what skills, knowledge and academic grounding they have to realise the professional development of others.

It is widely acknowledged that middle leaders have a considerable impact on other teachers' professional development due to their close connection to the classroom and their colleagues (De Nobile, 2018; Fleming, 2014; Grootenboer et al., 2016; Leask & Terrell, 2014). It is therefore not surprising that middle leaders, and particularly those that run departments, are increasingly being given more responsibilities for the professional development of staff they line manage (DfE, 2016b; GTCS, 2012; Fleming, 2014; De Nobile, 2018; Leask & Terrell, 2014). In addition, middle leaders are commonly the individuals within schools who mentor NQTs and student teachers (Fleming, 2014; Willis et al., 2019). As a middle leader myself, running a large science department, I am very much aware of my extensive involvement in the professional development of colleagues. Consequently, I became curious about other middle leaders and how they were implementing professional development for the staff they line manage. From an initial scan of the literature, it became apparent that a great deal had been written about teachers' professionalism and professional development. There was also a large quantity of work that had been produced on senior leadership and leadership models in schools. In stark contrast, very little has been

written about middle leaders, particularly concerning teachers' professional development. As Harris et al. (2019: 270) note, academic interest in middle leadership "remains relatively thin". As a result, my starting point for this research was to ask what the experiences of middle leaders are and how they are making sense of their role in relation to teachers' professional development. With teacher training and professional development increasingly becoming more school-based and middle leaders being acknowledged as key players in the development of staff, it seemed an important question to ask.

1.3 Aims and Intentions

This thesis explores how a small group of four experienced middle leaders working in a contemporary secondary school are making sense of their role in relation to the professional development of staff that they line manage. As previously argued, research into middle leadership has been overshadowed by a focus on senior leadership and leadership models in education (Harris et al., 2019). At a time when teacher training and professional development are increasingly becoming more school-based, it would appear that a vital piece of knowledge in relation to teachers' professional development is being overlooked. Given this, two specific aims and intentions have been identified for this study:

1. To value the individual voices of the middle leaders taking part in the study and to consider what their reasoning, perceptions and feelings tell us about teachers' professional development.
2. To explore the relevance and impact of national policy on the middle leaders' realisations of teachers' professional development, and whether it is extending or restricting their thinking.

The first aim is centred around the middle leaders' voices and the insight they can bring to our understanding of teachers' professional development. Harris and Jones (2019) suggest that teachers' voices are typically excluded from the discourse about education and have very little input or control over the directives they are required to implement and contextualise. Along similar lines, Heneveld (2007) is critical of research that fails to recognise the voice of teachers, considering it to be an omission of the very individuals that know the most about educational practice. In this study, the middle leaders' experiences and voices are very much recognised as being of importance and something to be valued.

Thus, the middle leaders in this research are not seen as objects to be studied, but as individuals whose voices can bring new and significant insight to the debate on teachers' professional development.

The available literature on middle leaders tends to focus on what they do, and broadly fits into three main areas of interest: the role and practices of middle leadership; making links between what middle leaders do and student outcomes; and the tensions and challenges faced by middle leaders as they act as intermediaries between senior leadership and teaching staff. With the middle leaders' voices playing such a principal role in this thesis, there is a purposeful shift of attention, from looking at what the middle leaders are doing to the perceptions, reasons and feelings behind what they are doing. In brief, the thesis considers how they are making sense of their role in relation to teachers' professional development. With middle leaders playing such a substantial role in teacher development (De Nobile, 2018; DfE, 2016b; Fleming, 2014; GTCS, 2012; Leask & Terrell, 2014), I would suggest that such insight is crucial in advancing teachers' professional development in regards to both policy and practice. Building on the first aim, the second aim of the thesis is to explore the middle leaders' sense-making with reference to national policy on teachers' professionalism and professional development. In particular, I explore the relevance and impact of national policy on the middle leaders' realisations of teachers' professional development within their departments, and whether it is extending or restricting their thinking.

Nick Gibb, the minister of state for schools, believes that teachers are increasingly taking control of their professionalism and defining what it is to be an expert teacher (Gibb, 2018). Gibb (2018) argues that teachers are at the forefront of raising standards, designing curricula and advancing pedagogical practice. Despite this rhetoric, however, many would argue that teachers' professionalism is being externally conceived and heavily controlled through accountability measures and standardisation (Ball, 2017; Furlong, 2013; Goepel, 2012; Leat et al., 2013; Parker, 2015; Sachs, 2016; Whitty, 2014). As previously outlined, government reform has recast teachers as craftsmen and craftswomen who learn best by doing the job under a framework of professional standards. Hence, teachers' pedagogical skills and competencies in the classroom have become the primary focus for teacher

development, on the premise that by improving practice, pupil outcomes will also improve (DfE, 2016b).

Hoyle (2008) proposes two contrasting concepts of teacher professionalism and professional development: the “restricted” professional, which represents the teacher whose perspectives and thinking about education are limited to the bounds of their classroom; and the “extended” professional, whose professionalism is located within a much broader framework of professional discourse and engagement. In contrast to the restricted professional, the extended professional would be actively engaged with professional reading and building meaningful collaborations with a wide range of stakeholders to advance their professional status and knowledge. Within an education system in which teacher professional training and development is ever more school-based, it could be suggested that teachers’ professionalism runs the risk of becoming localised (Whitty, 2014). A localisation that could result in restricted practice, if teachers are not considering their professional development in broader, more “extended” terms. It follows that in terms of this study it seems important to consider the middle leaders’ sense-making about teachers’ professional development in regards to it being potentially restricted and how this might relate to policy. This is not to suggest that the middle leaders’ perceptions and thinking about teacher’s professional development could be dichotomised into either restricted or extended practice. This thesis recognises the middle leaders’ work and professional identity as being complex and multifaceted, with role-specific demands played out against personal beliefs and values (Cribb, 2009). Correspondingly, the aim is to explore the subtleties of the middle leaders’ sense-making about teachers’ professional development and whether aspects of it can be identified as being restricted or extended. Lefstein and Perath (2014) suggest that although much research has critically considered educational policy and its impact on teachers, less effort has been devoted to gaining an insight into what teachers’ think of policy and how they are making sense of it. I would suggest that such an insight would provide a better understanding of how teachers are working with policy and how it is impacting on their everyday practices. As the intermediaries between senior leadership and teaching staff, middle leaders are positioned as key interpreters, implementors and drivers of policy in schools. In not considering the relevance and impact of policy on middle leaders’ thinking on and realisations of

professional development in their departments, a vital component of knowledge is being omitted, in regards to not only policy implementation but also in how professional development can be better conceived within schools.

1.4 Research Questions

In exploring how the middle leaders in this study are making sense of their role in relation to teachers' professional development, and the aims and intentions as outlined in section 1.3, this thesis sets out to consider three research questions.

1. What perceptions do middle leaders have of their role in relation to the professional development of teachers?

Middle leaders, and particularly department heads, are increasingly being acknowledged as having a central role in the professional development of other staff (De Nobile, 2018; DfE, 2016b; Dinham, 2007; Fleming, 2014; GTCs, 2012; Leask & Terrell, 2014). Consequently, the aim of research question 1 (RQ1) was to reveal and share how the middle leaders in this study understand, interpret and regard their role in relation to the professional development of the staff that they line manage.

2. What aspects of teachers' professional development matter to middle leaders and why do these aspects of teachers' professional development have meaning for them?

Research question 2 (RQ2) sought to make sense of the middle leaders' practice and values in relation to teachers' professional development. The question aimed to consider what the middle leaders believed to be most meaningful and significant for the professional development of the staff they line manage, and why they have this view.

3. How is professional development realised by the middle leaders in their departments and to what extent is this influenced and shaped by national policy?

Building on RQ2, research question 3 (RQ3) is interested in how the middle leaders in their departments are realising professional development. The question aimed to understand what is influencing the middle leaders' sense-making and subsequently their realisations of teachers' professional development. In particular, the question sought to understand how the middle leaders are working with policy and how it is impacting on their everyday practice.

1.5 Context

This research was conducted in an academy converter mainstream secondary school in the south of England. The region operates under a selective system, and the school participating in this research is a boys' selective school. The school is well known in the area and was accredited as a good school by OFSTED in 2016.

At the time of the data collection, the school had 837 pupils on roll, with 608 pupils in key stage 3 and 4, and a mixed 6th form of 229 students (80% boys, 20% girls). Pupils at the school who were known to be eligible for free school meals made up 11.1% of the total (the national average was 14.1%) (DfE, 2018b). The proportion of pupils at the school with special educational needs was 7.5%, which was below the national average of 14.9% (DfE, 2019b), and the percentage of pupils whose first language was not English was 3.1%, again below the national average of 16.9% (DfE, 2018b). The school had 50 teachers (including the leadership group), 46 of whom were fulltime members of staff.

The majority of the school's pupils come from the borough in which the school is situated. The borough has above average unemployment rates, and earnings are below the national average. Despite the area being slightly above the national figures for homeownership, it has 20% fewer managerial, administrative or professional households. A high proportion of residents in the area either have no qualifications or fall below the national average.

This study purposefully sought to look at a small group of middle leaders so that their experiences could be valued and explored in depth. To further enrich the data, all the middle leaders were experienced, allowing them to draw on more established forms of practice and insight in regards to teacher development. In initial discussions with the school's headteacher, he indicated that he was happy for middle leaders with self-directed professional development time to take part in the study. As a result, eight middle leaders with professional development responsibilities for other staff were invited to take part, and four agreed to do so. The four middle leaders, Hamora, Craig, Laura and Peter (pseudonyms) all had more than four years of experience as middle leaders and more than ten years of experience as teachers. They had all mentored student teachers and NQTs, and the school has been accredited as a leading school for initial teacher training.

As a middle leader myself in the school, the four middle leaders taking part were known to me. I had been a colleague of Hamora and Craig for six years, and of Peter and Laura for eight years. To ensure that the participants felt as relaxed and comfortable as possible, the data collection sessions were held in the school and took place in settings that were familiar to them (their offices and classrooms). The data collection was conducted during term 6 2018 (4 June to 20 July), and took place over three weeks; constituting one focus group meeting and four individual interviews.

1.6 Personal Values

I left school in the late 1980s at a time of industrial decline and high unemployment in the UK. The education system that I had spent the past ten years in had left me ill-equipped for the bleak landscape that I found myself in. Like many of my peers, I had been pushed down a dead-end path by an education system that did not favour working-class children like myself (Wrigley, 2003). A precarious period ensued of various forms of work interspersed with bouts of unemployment. In an attempt to break this cycle, I began attending evening classes at a local FE college and, with the help of the tutors there, I discovered that education was as much about personal exploration and transformation as the accumulation of knowledge and skills. As a result of my return to education, I went on to study physics at university before pursuing a career in industry and then in teaching.

Drawing on my educational experiences, I entered the teaching profession with a clear conviction of providing a space for all of my students to explore and develop their criticality and creativity. In other words, a learning experience that recognises students as individuals and does not undermine the development of innovative and questioning minds. Reconciling, however, my values and beliefs about education with the reality of the education system I work in, has not always been easy. The increasing diminishment of teacher autonomy over the past two decades, coupled with a reductive view of curriculum and pedagogy, has brought constraints and pressure that are difficult to ignore. A dominant discourse of performativity now pervades education, reducing teachers' professionalism and professional development to a diminutive notion of pedagogical effectiveness, as opposed to a space for creativity, experimentation and reflection.

Born out of my frustration with the education system and the lack of professional development I was receiving within it, I embarked on an educational doctorate five years ago, the culmination of which is this thesis. Comparable to my return to education in my late teens, the doctorate led to a period of professional exploration and growth, in which I began to see teachers' perceptions and insight as being essential to educational reform. Unfortunately, as Bangs and Frost (2012) point out, teacher voice is not a prominent feature of academic and political discourse about education. The very individuals who work with children on a day to day basis are being afforded very little input into the directives that govern their work. Equally implausible, is that teachers' professional knowledge and wisdom is being ignored, or even worse completely dismissed.

It is no accident that teacher voice is a key element in this thesis; I firmly believe that it holds the potential to challenge the hegemonic practices and assumptions that appear to have endured in our education system for so long and failed so many children. A belief that in recognising what teachers have to say, teacher development may move beyond mere instrumentalist notions of teachers' work to an agenda of generative transformation for both students and teachers.

1.7 Teacher as Researcher

Conducting research with colleagues who I work with and know firmly situates me within this study as the insider researcher. By definition, this places me and my opinions at the heart of this research. To try to remove myself from the study and research participants would be highly unrealistic and detrimental to the trustworthiness of the work. Accordingly, this thesis purposefully avoids the distancing of the researcher from the researched (Scott & Usher, 1996), and recognises that the research participants and I are engaged in a collaborative process of knowledge co-creation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In so doing, I would argue that the trust, connection and understanding I have with the research participants can provide knowledge and insight that an outsider researcher would struggle to observe and reveal.

The notion of teachers as researchers is not a new concept. Dewey (1929: 46) described teachers as an "unworked mine" in relation to their potential input into educational research. Equally, Stenhouse's (1975) work on action research asserts the

importance of teachers' engagement in self-enquiry; and Carr and Kemmis (1995) are highly critical of theorists working in isolation from practitioners, and the lack of recognition of teachers as active contributors to educational research and theory. More recently, much discourse has highlighted the importance of teachers' involvement in research-oriented practice (BERA-RSA, 2014; Bell et al., 2010; Churches & Dommett, 2016; Childs & Menter, 2017; Cordingley, 2015; Furlong et al., 2000; Sachs, 2016; Sanderse, 2018; Winch et al., 2015). For example, the BERA-RSA (2014) report on *Research and the teaching profession* asserts the positive impact that research literate and active teaching professionals can have on school improvement. The report goes on to suggest a framework for education in which teachers are active agents in research, rather than merely passive respondents and participants. For Sachs (2016), such research-oriented practice would support teachers' transformation as practitioners as well as their collective transformation as professionals.

As detailed in section 3.6 of my methodology, being the insider researcher imposes specific ethical considerations. As Sikes and Potts (2008) point out, the insider researcher has to be mindful of potential points of tension and conflict between the researcher and the research participants. Power relationships that come into play and issues of trust and anonymity all have to be considered. As section 3.6 explains, this requires the insider researcher to create a research environment of trust, inclusion and mutual respect. Unlike the outsider researcher who can purposefully try to have as little impact on a school as possible, as an insider and employee of the school, I am contracted to have as big an impact as possible. Consequently, in conducting this study within my school, the research project had to be balanced against my role as a teacher, middle leader, colleague and employee. Biesta (2007) argues that the distinction between the researcher and practitioner should not be blurred: practitioners and researchers have different responsibilities, and trying to merge the two roles creates a problem of bias in which the teacher-researcher's close proximity to the subject matter taints their objectivity. This is especially pertinent when findings are troubling for teacher-researchers and present issues they would prefer not to hear. Biesta's (2007) argument, however, fails to consider the bias that any researcher might bring to their research. It could be argued that the insider researchers' close proximity to the research participants doesn't necessarily imply any greater bias as their sense of being a critical

observer is heightened. Thus, they write more honestly and respectfully about the context and colleagues to whom they are closely connected.

In conceiving this study, the worth of research-oriented practice has become increasingly apparent to me. It is a means of bringing research literacy into schools and feeding back school-led research to the academic community. Of course, practitioner-led research brings with it ethical concerns, risks of bias and the potential for research inequity. But I would argue that by acting upon the risks, research-oriented practice has the possibility of producing significant, timely knowledge that is contextual and relevant to a rapidly changing education system.

1.8 Summary of the Thesis

Chapter 1 has introduced the rationale and aims on which this study is based. I have argued that the aims of the study are to value and explore the sense-making of a group of middle leaders in regards to what it tells us about teachers' professional development and the relevance and impact of policy upon it. At a time when teachers' professional learning is becoming increasingly school-based, and middle leaders are being recognised as key players in this process, this research is argued to be both significant and timely in the English education system.

In chapter 2, I look at literature relating to teachers' professionalism and professional development as well as middle leadership. I initially outline various perspectives on teachers' professional status before considering how government policy from 1997 to the present day has affected teachers' professionalism and professional development. I also consider teachers' professional identity. This section provides a backdrop to the study, giving it a historical context and informing the subsequent analysis of the middle leaders' sense-making. The chapter also reviews the commentary on teachers' professional development with a particular focus on models of professional development and teachers' professional learning opportunities. Finally, the chapter looks at what has been said about middle leadership and how the literature review informs the research questions.

In chapter 3, I outline the research methodology and design for this study. The discussion explains and evaluates my methodology and design choices for the study. I justify my philosophical positioning, describing how an interpretive sensibility meets the aims and intentions of the research. The research approach adopted in this study is interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), and as such, I outline why this approach was taken and the research methods used. An explanation is given of how the super-ordinate and master themes were developed and analysed, including the use of Hoyle's extended-restricted framework as a theoretical lens. Finally, the chapter considers ethical issues and research quality.

In chapter 4, I analyse transcripts of the focus group and the research participants' individual interviews. I then construct and analyse the overarching master theme with Hoyle's extended-restricted theoretical lens.

In chapter 5, I revisit my research questions and discuss my findings concerning each of the questions. In addition to the discussion around each of the questions, I consider the broader findings of the research and their significance to the debate on teachers' professional development. I also discuss the contributions made by Hamora, Craig, Laura and Peter to the study, and the impact that they and the research have had on my professional development.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This research is concerned with a small group of middle leaders working in a contemporary secondary school and their role in relation to teachers' professional development. This literature review, consequently, examines what has been said about teachers' professionalism and professional development, as well as the role of middle leadership in relation to this. In section 2.2, I initially outline various perspectives on teachers' professional status before considering how government policy since 1997 has affected teachers' professionalism and professional development. I then look at teachers' professional identity, allowing the literature to suggest how teacher identity has been shaped and formed against policy and reform. This section aims to provide both historical and current context to the study, and informs the analysis of the middle leaders' sense-making and the extent to which it is influenced by policy and educational reform. In section 2.3, I review the commentary on teachers' professional development. Given the extensive quantity of material written about this field, the focus is limited to two key areas pertinent to the study, namely models of professional development and teachers' professional learning opportunities. Following Evans' (2019) lead, I felt it was important to establish a definition for teachers' professional development, and this is therefore also included in this section. In the final section 2.4, I turn my attention to middle leaders and consider what has been said about the role of middle leadership in staff development.

2.2 Teachers' Professionalism

In the first part of this chapter, I consider teachers' professionalism and professional development and how it has been reshaped by educational policy over the past twenty years. Initially, in section 2.2.1, I briefly consider the professional status of teachers, outlining various perspectives of teacher professionalism and the lack of consensus amongst authors trying to define it. The section also provides an opportunity to introduce the impact that neoconservative and neoliberal thinking has had on teachers and their professionalism. In section 2.2.2, I move on to consider New Labour's 'modernisation' of the education system, introducing the concept of the new professional. With the central idea that

education would be its best economic policy (Blair, 1995), I argue that New Labour established higher levels of control over teachers than any previous government, transforming their professionalism to be one focused not only on social duty but also economic responsibility. In section 2.2.3, I look at education policy reform since 2010 and its impact on teachers' professionalism and professional development. The section compares and contrasts the education policies of the Coalition and Conservative governments since 2010, with those of the previous Labour administration. It also considers the Coalition and Conservative governments' return to prevailing neoconservative ideas about education and what impact this has had on teachers and their professionalism. In the final section (2.2.4), teachers' professional identity is explored, allowing the literature to suggest how teacher identity has been shaped and formed in the context of the previously outlined educational reform. The section mainly focuses on comparing and contrasting democratic professionalism with that of managerial professionalism.

2.2.1 Teachers as Professionals

The study of professionalism over the past few decades has developed into an extensive body of work, with many attempts having been made to define and categorise the concept (Evetts, 2013). Despite this, the conceptualisation of professionalism remains a highly contested area of debate in which little consensus can be found (Evetts, 2013). Teachers' professionalism is no exception to this, with varying interpretations ranging across professional characteristics, occupational value and ideological purpose (Sachs, 2016). Before the late 1960s, teaching was not widely acknowledged as a profession (Hargreaves, 2000a). Traditionally, true professions were those roles in which one could demonstrate attributes of autonomy, professional knowledge and ethical responsibility (Furlong, 2013). When examined against such characteristics, at the time, teachers were argued to be quasi-professionals, more representative of an occupational group than a professional body (Etzioni, 1969; Greenwood, 1957; Wilensky, 1964). Such ideas, as documented by Hargreaves (2000a), embodied a "pre-professional age" of teaching, an age in which teachers were viewed as unquestioning technicians who learnt through a practical apprenticeship of trial and error. Fortunately, throughout the 1970s these views were contested and replaced with a broader tradition of describing and accrediting teaching as a

profession (Hargreaves, 2000a). The extent, however, to which teaching has gained full recognition as a true, self-determining and autonomous profession still remains an area of considerable debate, interest and disagreement.

In considering teaching as a profession, Hoyle (1974) outlined two distinct concepts: professionalism and professionalism. He defined professionalism as the engagement of an occupational group in increasing its professional status. A definition that authenticates teachers as part of a professional body, whose professional advancement is promoted by teaching unions and through a dialogue that influences policy (Hoyle, 2008). Professionalism, on the other hand, relates to the knowledge and skills employed by teachers as part of their practice. As mentioned earlier, Hoyle (1974) distinguished two forms of professionalism in the context of teaching: the “restricted professional” and the “extended professional”. The restricted professional is portrayed as the teacher who has a limited vision of education outside of their classroom practice. Typically, they will engage with little professional discourse or reading, relying solely on practical experience learnt on the job. In contrast, the extended professional has a much wider vision of education that extends outside of his or her classroom. They are located in a larger social framework, engaging with continuous professional development and theoretical knowledge. From this perspective, teachers’ professionalism is substantiated through an academic underpinning and a collegial approach to the job (Hoyle, 1974).

In more recent work Hoyle (2008) is critical of his initial idea of restricted and extended professionalism, suggesting that it is ambiguous and carries with it negative connotations of classroom practitioners who may still demonstrate high levels of professional skill. In spite of this, as acknowledged by Hoyle himself, since their conceptualisation these ideas have resonated with many other authors interested in teachers’ professionalism (Hoyle, 2008). Evans (2008), for example, with the support of empirical evidence, builds upon the idea of restricted and extended professionalism by setting them as two ends of a professional continuum along which teachers can be positioned. From this perspective, teachers’ professional orientation is not merely seen as being restricted or extended, but also as something that can develop and change. The implication of this is that teachers’ professionalism is not essentially just a collective set of hegemonic behaviours and responsibilities that are required to do a job, but a working

reality that is fluid and formed from the multiple “professionalities” of the occupational group (Evans, 2008: 11). This echoes the thinking of Helsby (1995), as it positions teachers as key players in the construction of their professional identity, crediting them with the potential to achieve and determine their own professional status.

Professionalisation, a term interweaved with professionalism in academic discourse, is defined as the process by which an occupational group gains the status and characteristics associated with a profession (Whitty, 2000). For Englund (1996), teachers’ professionalisation would be realised through teachers gaining autonomy from the state and breaking away from centralised occupational control rooted in a tradition of sociological positivism. Certainly, from the 1950s to the late 1970s the teaching profession experienced a professionalisation in line with that described by Englund, as teachers at the time enjoyed a kind of “licensed autonomy” (Dale, 1998). Since then, however, it can be argued that a professionalisation of a different form has prevailed, one in which successive governments have systematically reduced teachers’ autonomy through greater standardisation and managerialism (Whitty, 2008).

Played out against a backdrop of neoconservative and neoliberal thinking, since the early 1980s teachers’ professionalisation within England has come under greater state control. Throughout the 1980s the neoconservative drive to reduce and reshape public service provision resulted in a shift of emphases from a sense of social justice and the common good, to one of competition, rigour and accountability (Apple, 2014). The education system was no exception to this. The introduction of the 1988 Education Reform Act saw the implementation of a national curriculum centred around technological modernisation, national testing, published league tables and devolved management powers for headteachers (Wriggley, 2009). The Reform Act marked the beginning of what has been referred to as the era of “new professionalism” for teachers (Evans, 2011), an era in which educational reform has come directly under the control of central government with little regard for or consultation with educationalists (Hickox & Moore, 1990). The new mode of professionalism, consequently, denotes a significant change in teachers’ professionalisation, recasting teachers from autonomous individuals responsible for the acquisition of their own professional status, to that of a collective whose professionalism is externally managed and shaped through standardisation and accountability. It would be easy to dismiss this change

to teachers' professionalism as a neoliberal drive to establish greater levels of credibility, transparency and trustworthiness in education. But to do so would paint a very superficial picture of the impact that this reform has had on teachers' professionalism and professional development, and why wave after wave of educational reform has been deemed so necessary.

2.2.2 New Professionalism (1997–2010)

In 1997 Tony Blair's New Labour government swept to power. The Blair government presented itself as a new style of politics encapsulated in its Third Way policies. As suggested by Anthony Giddens (2013) (a hugely influential figure in the thinking behind New Labour), the Third way reconstructed social democratic ideals in a response to globalisation and the knowledge economy. What manifested was a government that combined a market-based approach to policy coupled with strong governmental intervention. In many respects, Labour's neoliberalism continued the neoconservative belief in public sector reform based on a market driven approach (Power & Whitty, 2000). Where they differed, however, was in the view that the market taken alone was not sufficient to achieve both economic and social success (Furlong, 2013). What manifested was a modernisation project that redefined the state as a regulator of market and public services, with the intention of safeguarding quality, public interest and economic growth.

At the heart of New Labour's modernisation project was education. In his speech given at Ruskin College, Oxford one year before becoming prime minister, Blair outlined the importance of education for New Labour in securing economic success and social cohesion (Blair, 1996). For Blair, this would require a fundamental reform to teachers' professionalism. Echoing Jim Callaghan's (1976) speech of some twenty years earlier, Blair outlined a vision of education that held teachers and their schools more accountable for their performance in relation to pupil attainment and progress (Blair, 1996). The aspirations of Labour were not without justification, with half of all schools failing to reach the benchmark levels set for GCSEs, and the UK falling behind many international competitors in terms of skills and qualifications (BBC, 2010; DfEE, 1998a). Labour's vision was consequently offered as a "common sense" solution, in which unaccountable professionals would no longer be left alone to make decisions on curriculum and pedagogy.

We will expect education – and other public services – to be held accountable for their performance; we will urge teachers to work in partnership with parents, business and the community; and we will balance parents’ rights with a recognition of their responsibilities. These ideas have one aim – to improve the educational experience, and raise standards of achievement, for the majority of children.

(DfEE, 1998a)

Labour’s overall approach to raising standards through greater accountability was underpinned by six key principles:

1. Education will be at the heart of government.
2. Policies will be designed to benefit the many, not just the few.
3. The focus will be on standards, not structures.
4. Intervention will be in inverse proportion to success.
5. There will be zero tolerance of underperformance.
6. Government will work in partnership with all those committed to raising standards.

(DfEE, 1997)

Apart from highlighting Labour’s focus on schools and teacher performance, the six principles also suggested a collaborative partnership, presumably with educationalists and other interested parties. New Labour’s rhetoric of greater accountability and government intervention, consequently, was interlaced with the idea that to reform the teaching profession it was “essential that teachers [felt] in control of the implementation of the changes” (DfEE, 1998b). Thereby, the teaching profession could be valued and accredited with the same status and reputation as that of medicine or law (Blair, 1999). It could be suggested that this created something of a contradiction, with the teaching profession on the one hand being subjected to greater levels of regulation and control, and on the other promised greater professional status and autonomy. Whitty (2000) refers to this as “regulated autonomy”, in which professionals are given a mandate to act on the behalf of the state but are heavily standardised and controlled while doing so.

In July 1997, following proposals put forward by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), Labour released a new training curriculum and set of standards for initial teacher training (TDA, 1997). The reform followed New Labour’s policy drive for education of “standards not

structures” (DfEE, 1997). Revising the existing teacher competencies, the new standards and corresponding curriculum detailed a comprehensive set of specifications for achieving the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). The prescriptive and homogenous nature of the curriculum, particularly in relation to the teaching of Primary English and Mathematics, was criticised at the time by teachers and university tutors alike for its removal of autonomy (Emery, 1998). For Furlong (2013), the initiative was a clear and early indication of the government’s desire to not only shape teachers’ professional identity but to determine what they taught and how they taught it. In other words, the Labour government shifted attention from school reform to teacher reform (Ball, 2017).

The curriculum for initial teacher training, in reality, was short lived, being abandoned by Labour within five years. The theme of what to teach and how to teach, however, persisted in the form of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (DfEE, 1998c; DfEE, 1999), but this time not just for trainees but for all teachers. Moving beyond shaping the pedagogical understanding of trainee teachers, the government now became the decision-maker of what effective pedagogy should look like (Furlong, 2013). For Wrigley (2003), this served only to undermine teachers’ professionalism further, by driving curriculum and pedagogy in an undemocratic direction. He goes on further to suggest that professional knowledge and experience was considerably constrained by the mechanistic approach that schools felt obliged to adopt, for although the National Strategies did not fall under statutory requirement, any school opting for an alternative approach would have to justify this to OFSTED, as Hunt (2001) warned. It is also worth noting that the National Strategies feature heavily in the 2002 *Standards for Qualified Teacher Status* (DfES/TTA, 2002).

Labour’s three terms in office saw a substantial expansion in school-led initial teacher training schemes. Furlong (2013) suggests that centrally defined pedagogy such as the National Strategies made it possible to deliver effective training in schools, because it provided a technical check-list of what teachers needed to do and know. From a government perspective, the expansion of training schools opened up the possibility of greater autonomy for teachers through collaboration and sharing of best practice, putting “bottom-up teacher professionalism at the centre of reform, rather than top-down prescription” (Miliband, 2003). For others, the reduction of university involvement in

teacher training only served to narrow knowledge, diversity and autonomy: although a sense of autonomy and freedom is experienced by trainees and schools alike whilst “learning on the job”, all schools and trainees are nevertheless subjected to a common system of training and standards that exerts control over professional identity (Furlong et al., 2000). As Beck (2009) suggests, for New Labour’s coercion of the teaching profession to be successful, other competing views that were not so easily controlled had to be removed. From such a perspective, it could be argued that New Labour’s intention was the politicisation of teacher identity through the interplay of a putative autonomy regulated through the control of what they teach, how they teach and how they learn to teach. The problem, however, was that this approach was not proving sufficient to secure the hoped-for increase in pupil attainment levels against leading international competitors (Furlong, 2013). Fuelled by disappointing PISA results that still placed England significantly behind other leading countries, Labour during its second term in office forged a “policy shift from ‘standards not structures’ to ‘new structures for higher standards’” (Hargreaves, 2003: 18). The resulting reforms would bring sharply into focus the classroom teacher as the key figure responsible for raising pupil attainment.

Ten years after coming into office, in 2007 Labour made performance management of teachers statutory (DFEE, 2006). The regulation required a school’s governing body or headteacher (under the direction of the governing body) to draft a performance management policy against which the performance of the teachers at the school would be managed and assessed. As Evans (2011) notes, this did not extend to schools outlining the criteria against which performance management judgements would be made, as the new regulation worked in conjunction with the 2007 professional standards for teachers (TDA, 2007). In making performance management in schools statutory, the government consequently was able to lay out a trajectory for teachers’ continuous professional development against a set of standards. From the government’s perspective, this ensured a “framework for a teacher’s career”, providing them with a clarity of what was expected at each career stage and allowing them to identify their professional development needs (TDA, 2007). From a more critical angle, Beck (2009) argues that the 2007 standards served only to diminish teachers’ professionalism, reducing it to a matter of just acquiring a limited corpus of state prescribed knowledge and skills. Similarly, Evans (2011) holds the view that the

2007 standards are dominated by a performativity emphasis on skills and teachers' behavioural attitudes. Leaton Gray and Whitty (2010) view this as a means of social conditioning, as a teacher's compliance to the standards is rewarded by "social positioning", which then, as a result, defines their professionalism. Whether viewed as a milestone or a millstone, the introduction of a statutory performance management framework again highlights New Labour's propensity to see classroom teachers as the key figures in raising educational standards. But it could also just as easily be argued that it highlights their tendency to view themselves as the direct controllers of teachers' professionalism.

It would be difficult to argue that New Labour did not have a considerable impact on teachers' professionalism during its three terms in office. Its relentless drive to develop a new professionalism for teachers based on neoliberal ideals of greater accountability and competition were self-evident (Furlong, 2013). When New Labour came to power in 1997 education was undeniably in need of modernisation and reform, with both spending on education and pupil attainment falling below the OECD average (Heath et al., 2013). In making education its best economic policy (Blair, 1995), New Labour transformed teachers' professionalism from one focused not only on social duty but also economic responsibility. This required a significant change in teachers' professionalisation: "isolated, unaccountable professionals" had to be transformed into a collective group who accepted the need for greater accountability to ensure economic success (DfEE, 1998a). To achieve this, the New Labour government established greater levels of control than any previous government, over curriculum and pedagogy, initial teacher training and teachers' professional standards, and performance management (Jones, 2016). The extent to which this was a genuine drive to increase the professional status of teachers, rather than just to de-professionalise them, is a contentious issue. From the perspective of a teacher, I find myself in agreement with Leaton Gray and Whitty's (2010) view that New Labour's reforms were a means of conditioning teachers. When evaluated under such parameters, being a "new professional" seems best defined as demonstrating a willingness to embrace an externally defined performativity model of professionalism in order to be successful.

2.2.3 Teaching as a Craft (2010–Present)

Since Labour’s loss of power in 2010, three subsequent governments have held power: the Conservative–Liberal Democrat Coalition government (2010–2015), the Conservative government (2015–2017), and the Conservative (minority) government (2017–present). Although opinion has varied over the course of the three governments about appropriate levels of state intervention and the size of the state, a consistent repackaged neoliberal theme has dominated UK politics since 2010. The repackaging combines a belief in a diversified market of provision with a revival of nineteenth-century liberalism, personal responsibility and community (Ball, 2017). In the Conservative Party’s 2010 manifesto, *Invitation to join the Government of Britain*, David Cameron laid out the foundations of this thinking:

So we need a new approach: social responsibility, not state control; the Big Society, not big government. Only in this way will we tackle the causes of poverty and inequality, rather than just the symptoms. Only in this way will we transform the quality of our public services...

So we will redistribute power from the central state to individuals, families and local communities. We will give public sector workers back their professional autonomy. They will be accountable to the people they serve and the results they achieve will be made transparent... Our approach is absolutely in line with the spirit of the age: the post-bureaucratic age.

(Conservative Party, 2010: 35)

Like Blair before him, Cameron draws attention to the importance of professionals in addressing inequality and social justice, but whereas Blair’s focus was on raising professional standards of public sector workers through central government intervention, Cameron’s desire is to give professionals greater autonomy and to hold them accountable to the public. In relation to education, the government’s white paper *The importance of teaching* (DfE, 2010a) reiterates these ideas by promoting the need for greater professional autonomy for teachers and the removal of unnecessary bureaucracy and central control. In reality, however, as Exley and Ball (2014: 23) question, was this rhetoric “more a matter of emphasis and degree than a matter of substance”?

One of the flagships of Cameron’s Big Society was school reform through the expansion of academies and the introduction of the Free Schools initiative. Academies and

free schools were seen as a way of reducing social inequality, by providing access to an education more associated with and accessible to the well-off in society (Conservative Party, 2010). As highlighted in a speech on free schools by then secretary of state for education, Michael Gove, essential to the success of this reform was teacher quality: “The most important element of a great education is the quality of teaching and free schools will enable excellent teachers to create new schools and improve standards for all children” (Gove, 2010). In stark contrast to the previous administration, what appeared to be suggested was a significant change in how teachers’ professionalism was seen, with teachers’ autonomy, expertise and knowledge being valued as a vehicle for raising educational standards.

When placed, however, alongside Nick Gibb’s (2010a) comment that he “would rather have a physics graduate from Oxbridge without a PGCE teaching in a school than a physics graduate from one of the rubbish universities with a PGCE”, the rhetoric did not seem quite so sincere. In terms of free schools and, later, academies, Gibb’s opinion resonated with government policy in allowing non-certified teaching staff to teach in these schools. From this, it seems fair to conclude that the Coalition government placed little value on the professional certification of teachers. What this marked, as pointed out by Furlong (2013: 136), was a return to a traditional neoconservative view of education, “where schooling is fundamentally concerned with the maintenance and transmission of an agreed cultural heritage”. Evans (2011) has argued that within such an education system, the intellectual and attitudinal aspects of teachers’ professionalism becomes immaterial: all that matters is subject knowledge and the classroom skills to pass that knowledge on to others. With a strong belief that the “teaching of knowledge...is the fundamental purpose of education” (Gibb, 2010b), a new national curriculum was envisaged by the government that would ensure that all children would acquire a body of “essential knowledge” (DfE, 2011a). In a speech delivered to parliament in 2013 when unveiling his plans for the new national curriculum, Gove rationalised the idea of essential knowledge further, suggesting it to be knowledge that “we, as a society” consider to be essential, a body of knowledge that, according to Gove, society believes to be of such importance that it must be passed “down from one generation to the next” (Gove, 2013) – in other words, “an agreed cultural heritage” (Furlong, 2013: 136).

For Ball (2017), societal beliefs and concerns had little influence over the content of the curriculum, writing that it was predominately determined by Michael Gove. Using Apple's (2014) definition of "official knowledge", Ball is of the opinion that the curriculum presents a means of cultural control with tightly defined boundaries and authoritative specifications of knowledge content and sequencing. Ball suggests that, within such a framework, teachers' professional judgement is weakened by a return to traditional authoritarian structures of control and coercion over them. Along similar lines, Robin Alexander (2012), in a comprehensive and elegant review of the Coalition government's proposal for the curriculum, challenges the assumption that a group of ministers have the capacity to determine exactly what knowledge is "essential" on the behalf of a culturally diverse society. Like Ball, Alexander saw the curriculum as a means of control over teachers' professionalism and professional development. In a direct comparison to Labour's introduction of the National Literacy, Numeracy and Primary Strategies, Alexander draws attention to the control factors of the curriculum that replace teachers' capacity for judgement, essential for effective teaching, with "dependence and unthinking compliance" (p.9). Thus, the new curriculum not only heralded a return to a traditional 'back to basics' neoconservative notion of knowledge, but also of teachers and teaching (Alexander, 2012; Alexander & Weekes-Bernard, 2017; Ball, 2017; Furlong, 2013; Jones, 2016; NUT, 2013).

As laid out in *The importance of teaching's* sister document *The case for change* (DfE, 2010b), the Coalition government saw teachers' subject knowledge and the transferal of that knowledge as the most important factors of good quality teaching. As a result, teacher recruitment came to be, and has remained, focused on prior academic attainment, and teacher training and development on the practical skills of knowledge transmission (Furlong, 2013). Pedagogical knowledge and theory have been downgraded in favour of learning from other teachers in the classroom. In other words, teaching becomes a "craft" that is "best learnt as an apprentice observing a master craftsman or woman. Watching others, and being rigorously observed yourself as you develop" (Gove, 2010). It could be argued that a greater awareness of teaching is captured in this way, as teachers develop a repertoire of skills through trial and error, moving training from an abstract to a more concrete, and valuable, mode (Grimmett & MacKinnon, 1992; Hoban, 2002; Huberman, 1983). In contrast, of course, it could just as easily be argued that by recasting teaching as a craft and teacher

training as an apprenticeship, teachers' professional knowledge becomes nothing more than an awareness of contemporary practice in schools (McNamara & Murray, 2013). If this is the case, an apprenticeship model of teacher training only serves to remove the theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings that are essential for teachers to be able to go on and extend their scholarship and pedagogical knowledge (Donaldson, 2011). By defining teaching as a craft that is best learnt on the job, teachers' professionalism runs the risk of being defined solely in terms of performativity, with potentially competitive academy chains and teaching school networks turning inwards and having a limited vision of educational provision (Childs, 2013).

The prevailing belief of the Coalition and subsequent Conservative governments that teaching is a craft best learnt through a classroom apprenticeship has found its greatest expression in the expansion of school-led initial teacher training (ITT) (DfE, 2010a). As outlined in the 2010 white paper *The importance of teaching*, the aim has consistently been to "provide more opportunities for a larger proportion of trainees to learn on the job by improving and expanding the best of the current school-based routes into teaching" (DfE, 2010a: 23). Since the release of the White Paper, school-led ITT has increased to over 50% with school-led programs accounting for 53% of all ITT provision in 2018–19 (DfE, 2019a), and there is no indication that the government intends to curb its ambition for school-led ITT provision. In December 2017, a public consultation on "strengthening Qualified Teacher Status and improving teacher career progression" was commissioned (DfE, 2018). The consultation set out to ensure that teachers were receiving "access to high-quality professional development" (DfE, 2018: 5). In response to the consultation, Damian Hinds, then secretary of state for education, announced a new two-year induction period for trainee teachers and the strengthening of ITT and NQT mentorship in schools. For successive secretaries of state for education since 2010, school-led ITT has been seen as a means of addressing social inequality and driving forward educational improvement (Hinds, 2019; Greening, 2017; Gove, 2012; Morgan, 2016). Golding (2015), however, argues that immersing trainees in a purely practical experience weakens their professional foundations as it does not afford them an alternative environment for discussion and reflection. In other words, pedagogy is formed through a two-way exchange of intellectual and practical knowledge, each of which writes and re-writes the other. Therefore, by limiting the

intellectual component of teaching, the practical component is also limited (Furlong & Whitty, 2017).

In tracing teachers' professional development since 2010 a similar trajectory to teacher training toward a school-based initiative can be seen.

We'll also introduce Teaching Schools – modelled on teaching hospitals – to spread outstanding practice across the education system. Brilliant maths teachers in our best schools will be able to work across their school's partnership mentoring and supporting those in weaker departments.

(Gove, 2011)

Under the Teaching Schools model, schools themselves are increasingly becoming the mainsprings of teacher professional development, with experienced and outstanding teachers becoming predominantly the trainers and educators of other teachers (DfE, 2019c; Greening, 2017; TES, 2019a). Although still in its infancy, the government has given indications of strengthening Teaching Schools to a much broader national network (Greening, 2017; Hinds, 2019); including Teaching School Hubs through which “high performing schools in England are set to provide a new way to help struggling counterparts make the most of their resources, boost professional development opportunities for teachers, and recruit and retain staff” (DfE, 2019c). At one level this could suggest a move away from a “culture of accountability” and “punitive sanctions” to one that is “much more about a professional dialogue” (Greening, 2017). But, as Ball (2017: 105) warns, within such political rhetoric there is always the duality of freedom and control, “both a ‘giving away’ and a ‘taking away’ of professional judgement and teacher autonomy”. Hargreaves (2011), an advocate of school networks as a means of enabling professional development and dialogue, has warned of the potential of such networks to drift towards solely focusing on practical knowledge. This may result in not only a craft-oriented profession but also, as pointed out by Whitty (2014), a localised professionalism whose characteristics are restricted to those of a particular Academy Trust. Sitting comfortably within the idea of localism coupled with a diversified market of public and private resource providers, the school-led initiative for Furlong (2013: 140) only needed one more component to complete the conservative neoliberal picture, namely a set of “flexible standards that [could] be adapted to local need”.

Just five years after the creation of Labour's 2007 teaching standards, the Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition government released a new remoulded and streamlined set of standards for England (DfE, 2012). The standards provided a framework for the assessment of both trainees' and experienced teachers' performance. Removing the more prescriptive approach of the 2007 standards, the new standards are presented as affording greater professional judgement to teachers and headteachers in relation to career progression and performance management (DfE, 2012). Sally Coats, chair of the Teacher Standards review committee, made no secret that the central aim of the new standards was to prioritise classroom practice and subject knowledge (DfE, 2011b). Once again, the Coalition government's preoccupation with subject knowledge and its transmission is self-evident. As Evans (2011) suggests, the standards present a lopsided view of teachers' professionalism, with a focus on the practical, behavioural aspects of teaching, rather than on how teachers make professional judgements and what attitudes they hold. In 2016 the standardisation of teachers' professionalism was augmented further with the introduction of a standard for professional development, which asserts, "High-quality professional development requires workplaces to be steeped in rigorous scholarship, with professionals continually developing and supporting each other so that pupils benefit from the best possible teaching" (DfE, 2016a). However, the guidance within the standards for schools to follow is heavily oriented towards professional development that is solely focused on student outcomes. The standard presents a simple linear model of professional learning that starts with "direct professional development" and ends with "improved pupil outcomes" (DfE, 2016b: 5). Recently the standard for professional development has been accompanied by a newly strengthened set of national professional qualifications (NPQs) (Greening, 2017). With their focus on evidence-informed practice and leadership (Gibb, 2016), it remains to be seen whether these initiatives will have a real impact on teachers' professionalism, or just provide teachers with the expert technical knowledge to become better technicians (Paine, 2017), and a propensity for more scripted managerialism that "hollow[s] out the profession" (Sugrue & Mertkan, 2016: 15).

In many respects the education policies of the Coalition and Conservative governments since 2010 represent a continuation and extension of those of the previous Labour administration. The expansion of school-led ITT, private sector involvement in

education provision, and the use of teacher performance management are just a few that overlap. With a belief that economic success can be achieved through better levels of education, the Coalition and Conservative governments, like New Labour before them, have put a considerable effort into the re-modelling of teachers' professionalism along neoliberal lines (Jones, 2016). In addition, however, to New Labour's sole focus on a neoliberal market reform of education, the Coalition and Conservative governments have also returned to a more traditional neoconservative perspective. Ball (2017) argues that this is a romanticisation of education harking back to a pre-comprehensive age. In short, for the Coalition and Conservative governments, the answer to improving the quality of education is to reposition teachers as conveyors of essential knowledge. As Nick Gibb (2010b), the minister for schools put it, "I believe strongly that the teaching of knowledge, the passing on from one generation to the next, is the fundamental purpose of education". Accordingly, with a new curriculum and set of teaching standards that prioritise classroom practice and subject knowledge, it could be argued that under the Coalition and Conservative governments, teaching has been re-evaluated from a profession to a craft, and teacher development as a purely school-based exercise in training teachers how to be better classroom technicians (Paine, 2017). In contrast, the EU Commission (2013) proposes a much broader vision of teacher development with a greater emphasis on formal academic engagement. Citing countries such as Finland as exemplars of best practice, the EU Commission champions the development of teachers' knowledge and competency through high-level qualifications and engagement with research projects. Unlike the English system, in Finland the responsibility for teacher development does not fall solely to schools and individual teachers, but is a shared venture amongst teachers, schools, universities and local government.

2.2.4 Teachers' Professional Identity

Although teachers' professional identity is defined and represented in various ways by different authors, there appears to be a certain level of agreement that it is something that is always evolving and determined by both the individual and the professional landscape within which they operate (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011; Beijaard et al., 2004; Day et al., 2006; Monteiro, 2015; Olsen, 2010, 2011). As such, the development of a teacher's

professional identity can be seen as a dynamic process that is multifaceted, and not only influenced by personal beliefs and experiences, but also by professional contexts. For Olsen (2008), this implies that teachers' professional identity represents a complex collection of internal and external influences that interweave to form the professional as they negotiate their teaching practice. Not only does this recognise the significant personal investment made by teachers in their job (Day et al., 2006), but also the necessity of their professional identity to "do" their job. As Sachs (2005) reminds us, teachers' professional identity is the core of the teaching profession, as it determines what teachers understand, what they do and why they do it.

As outlined in the previous sections, over the past 20 years a neoliberal drive for greater accountability in education has led to the proliferation of a culture of performativity in schools (Furlong, 2013; Goepel, 2012; Whitty, 2014). Despite the recurring rhetoric of increased professional autonomy for schools and teachers, there is evidence to suggest that the lived experience of teachers has come to be predominantly characterised by attainment data, OFSTED inspections and the marketisation of schools and the education system (Leat et al., 2013; Parker, 2015). During this time the increase of school-led ITT and CPD has aided the reclassification of teaching as a craft that is best learnt on the job. Hargreaves (2000a), in his four ages of professionalism and professional learning, suggests that the fourth era of teachers' professionalism will either assume a postmodern or post-professional identity. In characterising the postmodern professional, Hargreaves visualises a democratically inclusive identity, as opposed to a post-professional identity which is heavily regulated and narrowly conceived.

For Sachs (2016), the post-professional teacher is realised in a culture of performativity that forces the teacher's professional identity into that of the compliant practitioner. Surgrue and Mertkan's (2016) study of secondary school teachers in England supports this view, with them concluding that currently, teachers are more likely to conform to a performativity culture than to demonstrate dissent. Of course, this conformity could be linked to materialistic reasons and fears of disciplinary measures. More interestingly, however, as suggested by Moore and Clarke (2016), it may relate to teachers feeling an obligation to enact educational policy. Such an obligation would suggest more than just a feeling of being powerless against an official discourse, but something within the psyche of

teachers that renders them compliant. Leaton Gray and Whitty's (2010) suggest that through subtle coercion, teachers can be encouraged to cooperate with government policy with the reward of social enhancement and being seen as a contemporary within their work environment. From such a viewpoint, the reworking of teachers' professional identity becomes both coercive and subtle. It defines professionalism in terms of competences that are aspirational, measurable and rewardable, identifying itself more with managerialism than professionalism (Sachs, 2003). It is a professional identity that can be imposed from the top down and favours those who are "flexible and adept in the languages of reform" (Ball, 2016: 1050), whether or not they are aware of their compliance.

Evetts (2008, 2011) proposes two contrasting models of professionalism, "organizational" and "occupational". Organisational professionalism is representative of the view outlined above, being managerial and externally conceived. It incorporates a top-down hierarchical structure within which professionals are heavily controlled through accountability measures and standardisation. Alternatively, occupational professionalism is constructed within the occupational group. It symbolises a professional identity that is "based on autonomy and discretionary judgement and assessment by practitioners in complex cases" (Evetts, 2013: 784). Occupational professionalism, consequently, aligns with what Hargreaves (2000a) envisaged as postmodern professionalism, a professionalism that is focused on collegial relations and collaborative practices, what some would describe as democratic professionalism (Apple, 2014; Sachs, 2003, 2016; Whitty, 2006). As opposed to managerial professionalism, democratic professionalism seeks to create a strong sense of autonomy and to demystify professional work. For Whitty (2006), democratic professionalism goes beyond a merely collaborative model. It is a means by which teaching professionals can work in an open and meaningful way with other educational stakeholders, building a professional identity for themselves that is respected and held in high regard. This opens up the possibility of a more activist form of professionalism (Sachs, 2003, 2016), offering an identity for teachers that adopts a more open and informed persona. The concept of the good professional from this perspective is not the compliant individual focused on his or her own instructional capability, but rather the reflective transformative professional (Moore, 2004) who demonstrates intellectual as well as emotional and ethical qualities (Evans, 2008).

In attempting to summarise teachers' professional identity, it is hard not to return to Hoyle's concept of restricted and extended professionalism. The democratic professional as outlined by Whitty (2008) and Sachs (2003) is highly indicative of an extended form of professionalism, whereas the organisational professional who is compliant within a performativity culture is much more representative of a form of restricted professionalism. When considered against the messy reality of practice, however, this simple partitioning of teacher identity seems somewhat superficial. As the literature suggests, teacher identity is dynamic and multifaceted, influenced not only by personal beliefs and experiences, but also by the professional contexts that the professional is exposed to. Just as much, however, viewing teachers' professional identity as a continuum of various professional alignments is also simplistic, as it does not take into consideration the internal conflicts, needs and desires of the professional. As Cribb (2009) reminds us, teacher identity is bound up in the subtleties of role-specific dilemmas and dynamics, which require teachers to meet the demands of policy to do their job, whilst at the same time doing what they believe to be ethically correct for their students. This presents the picture of a practitioner whose professional self is made up of multiple professional identities all of which struggle and coexist with one another, perhaps akin to the mature professional as alluded to by Sachs (2016).

The political landscape over the past 20 years has certainly reshaped the teaching profession, by redefining what it means to be successful as a contemporary professional within education. An inevitability of this is that teachers' professional identity is being constructed within this discourse, as teachers are required to judge their success against performativity criteria (Ball, 2013). From this basis, it seems important to question how teachers' professional identities are being formed against a backdrop of constantly evolving educational policy and reform, and to examine the subtleties and interplay between the policy discourse and teachers' perceptions and feelings about it. If Sachs (2005) is correct, and teachers' professional identity is at the core of their professionalism, determining what they understand, what they do and why they do it, it would be a gross oversight not to try to understand the concept further.

2.3 Teachers' Professional Development

In the second part of this chapter, I consider teachers' professional development and how it is understood in academic discourse. In section 2.3.1, I consider different definitions of teachers' professional development in the effort to bring clarity to what the term means in this thesis. In section 2.3.2, I look at five prominent models of professional development, contrasting their motivations and perspectives, and compare their strengths and weaknesses. Finally, in section 2.3.3, I consider the different types of explicit and implicit learning opportunities that teachers may engage with, ranging from one-off discrete events to more self-directed and autonomous activities. Communities of practice, teacher collaboration and teachers as researchers are all considered.

2.3.1 Defining Teachers' Professional Development

The 2016 *Standard for teachers' professional development* (DfE, 2016b) points out that several phrases are used interchangeably to describe teachers' professional development without any real clarity or distinction between them. The most common of these phrases includes professional learning, continuous professional development (CPD), continuous professional development and learning (CPDL) and in-service training (INSET). Although the 2016 standard does not offer its own stipulative definition of teachers' professional development, it does suggest five key characteristics:

1. Professional development should have a focus on improving and evaluating pupil outcomes.
2. Professional development should be underpinned by robust evidence and expertise.
3. Professional development should include collaboration and expert challenge.
4. Professional development programmes should be sustained over time.
5. Professional development must be prioritised by school leadership. (DfE, 2016: 6)

The 2016 standard makes a clear distinction between sustained professional development programs and one-off professional development activities, arguing that the latter have no real impact on pupil outcomes. To a large extent this echoes the OECD (2014: 86) report, which defines teachers' professional development as an ongoing process with "activities that aim to develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher". Unlike the OECD report, however, the 2016 standard does not make any reference to more informal learning activities in which teachers may participate. As in Darling-

Hammond et al.'s (2017: v) definition, teachers' professional development is seen as being best achieved through "structured professional learning that results in changes in teacher practices and improvements in student learning outcomes". A definition that, with its focus on organisational imperatives to address perceived gaps in teachers' knowledge and skills, could be argued to be limited (Day & Sachs, 2004).

From a broader perspective, Day (1999) defines teachers' professional development as:

... the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purpose of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives.

(Day 1999: 4)

Day's definition posits teacher development as an emotional and intellectual endeavour that is engaged with educational improvement. Seeing teachers as autonomous agents, Day grounds their work in moral and ethical principles as well as instrumental purpose. Knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence are acquired through critical thinking, elevating professional development to a process in which both professional practice and the professional self are examined and extended. There is a recognition in Day's definition of the complexities of teachers' professional development, complexities that reflect the personal and external factors that influence teachers and their practice.

Like Day, Evans (2019) contends that an outcome-oriented interpretation of teacher professional development is narrow and problematic. Evans sees professional development as multidimensional, complex and "relating solely to the practitioner" (p.6). She rejects the idea of professional development being simplified into discrete explicit experiences, arguing that it can also be implicit and occurring without design, method or conscious decision. In this way, new ideas are gradually assimilated into practice, developing dynamically over time both consciously and subconsciously. Put succinctly, Evans defines professional development as "the process whereby people's professionalism may be considered to be enhanced, with a degree of permanence that exceeds transitoriness" (p.7).

Drawing on both Day's and Evans' definitions, within this thesis, teachers' professional development is seen as more than just structured learning experiences that are narrowly oriented to student outcomes. Professional development is recognised as being complex, multidimensional and involving both explicit and implicit professional learning opportunities. In addition to knowledge and skills, professional development is seen as relating to beliefs, morals and emotional intelligence. In brief, teachers' professional development is regarded as being a holistic process in which the teacher's professional self is confirmed, augmented or changed.

2.3.2 Conceptual Models of Teachers' Professional Development

To conceptualise teachers' professional development, a range of models have been proposed by various authors to illuminate the processes and patterns of change that teachers undergo as part of their professional growth. The models sit within two broad categories: linear models that portray professional development as following a simple sequence of events; and more complex models that integrate professional change from a multidimensional perspective. The following discussion considers the contrasting motivations and perspectives behind the linear models of Guskey (1986, 2002), Desimone (2009) and Timperley et al. (2007), as well as the multidimensional models of Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) and Evans (2014).

One perception of teachers' professional development might be to suggest that, by stimulating a change in a teacher's knowledge base, their classroom practice will change, and consequently so will their students' learning outcomes. For Guskey (1986, 2002), however, this model is far too simplistic as it fails to consider how a teacher's opinions and perceptions change as part of the development process. Guskey (2002) proposes an alternative model of teacher professional development that suggests a change to teachers' attitudes and beliefs will occur after evidence of improved student learning has been observed by the teacher. As shown in figure 2-1, Guskey's model is linear, sequencing the events "from professional development experiences to enduring change in teachers' attitudes and perceptions" (Guskey, 2002: 381).

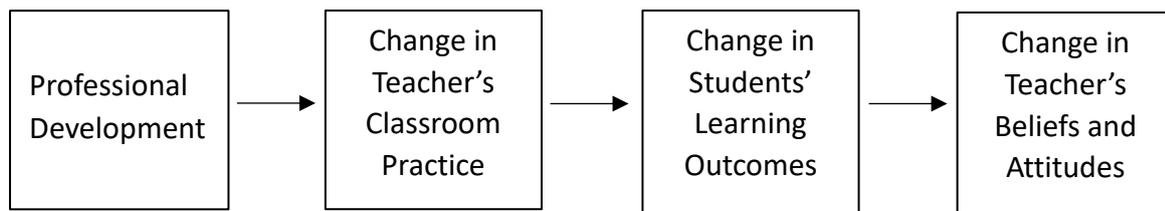


Figure 2-1 – Guskey’s model of professional development

The model represents a non-haphazard way of navigating the complex process of professional development by paying careful attention to the order of each change event (Guskey, 2002). This is not to suggest that Guskey (2002) perceives teachers’ professional development as a closed series of events. For him, development is an ongoing cyclical process that continuously spurs new ways of thinking and working. Underpinning Guskey’s model is the idea that professional change is part of an experiential learning process. Guskey argues that teachers’ experiences shape their attitudes and beliefs, and in order for them to accept something as a better way of working, they need to see proof in their own practice. Hence in Guskey’s model, the teacher is depicted as an active participant in the development process, who makes pragmatic decisions on whether or not to incorporate new ways of working into their practice.

Like Guskey (2002), Desimone (2009) views teachers’ professional development as a learning process that is ongoing and experiential, seeing teachers as learning from their practice and their interactions with other practitioners and professional literature. Where Desimone’s model differs from that of Guskey, is in the emphasis it places on “the critical features of teachers’ learning experiences” (p.183). Desimone’s model incorporates five core features which she argues to be critical in teacher development:

1. **Content focus** – To be most effective, professional development should be focused on improving teachers’ subject knowledge and how they teach it.
2. **Active learning** – Professional development activities should provide opportunities for teachers to engage in active learning experiences relating to the development.
3. **Coherence** – Teacher learning should be consistent with teachers’ current knowledge and beliefs.
4. **Duration** – Professional development activities should be conducted over a sufficient time period for professional change to take place.
5. **Collective participation** – Teacher learning should be a collaborative and collective exercise.

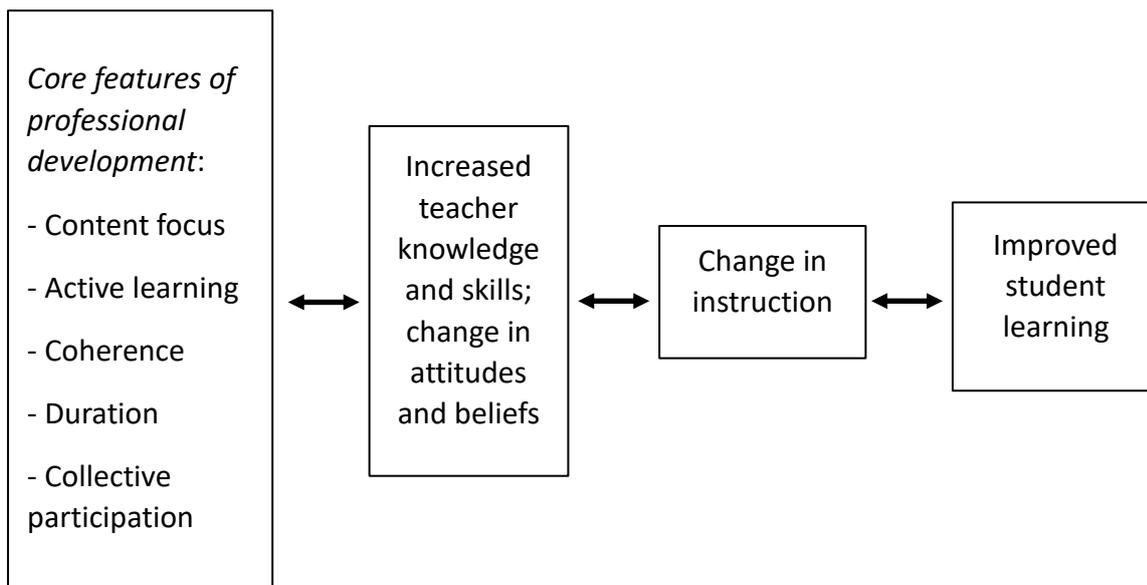


Figure 2-2 – Desimone’s model of professional development

As seen in figure 2-2, Guskey’s (2002) and Desimone’s (2009) models have similarities in their appearance and characteristics. Both models present an episodic sequencing of the professional development process. The two models also make a direct link between teacher development and student outcomes, considering it a principle measure of the development’s effectiveness. Where the two models diverge is in their understanding of when a development change occurs. For Desimone (2009), internal changes in a teacher’s knowledge, skills, attitudes and/or beliefs happen directly after the development experience. As already detailed, in Guskey’s model, teacher change occurs after the teacher has gained evidence of improved student learning outcomes from their practice. Unlike Guskey’s recognition of teacher agency and his attempt to offer some justification of teacher change, Desimone’s model sees teacher agency as a by-product of development (Boylan et al., 2018) and avoids the difficulty of trying to explain why and how professional development changes occur. Desimone writes that “the model represents interactive, non-recursive relationships between the critical features of professional development, teacher knowledge and beliefs, classroom practice, and student outcomes” (p.184). Yet she fails to provide any real insight into the interactive and non-recursive relationships beyond a superficial reference to the links between the different components in the model. As Evans (2014) points out, the model fails to offer little more than a list of

development features that ultimately, through a chain of development events, leads to improved student outcomes.

Timperley et al. (2007), in a bid to illuminate and understand the gap between professional learning episodes and teacher change, introduce the idea of a “black box” in which the synthesis of a professional learning opportunity and its impact on practice takes place. As shown in figure 2-3, Timperley et al.’s model, like the previously discussed models, is linear and focused on student outcomes. Like Desimone’s model it is also non-recursive.

Timperley et al. (2007) contend that within the black box, the teacher goes through three processes and associated outcomes. The first process involves a cueing of prior knowledge, allowing the teacher to examine and consolidate previous experiences and understandings. The second process requires the teacher to integrate new knowledge with their previous understandings, creating a state of dissonance and resulting in the final process with the teacher resolving their current practice with the new knowledge. As part of the three processes, Timperley et al. (2007) are careful to stress that there may be no change to classroom practice if the teacher cannot resolve the dissonance with their current practice, values and beliefs. They also see the learning process as cyclic, with the teacher going through many iterations before arriving at an enduring change in their practice.

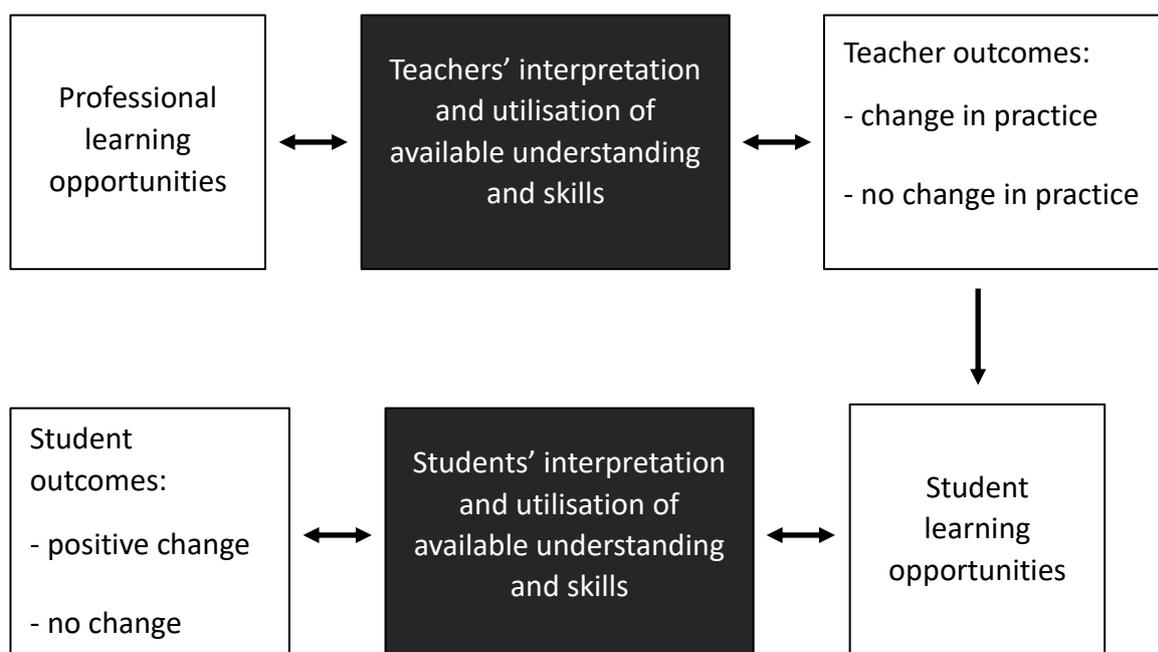


Figure 2-3 – Timperley et al.’s model of professional development

To this extent, it could be suggested that Timperley et al.'s (2007) model goes beyond those of Guskey (2002) and Desimone (2009) by attributing to teachers a higher degree of agency and self-regulation in their professional development. It is the teacher who accepts or rejects the new knowledge through a judgement based primarily on their professional knowledge, values and beliefs. Also, unlike Desimone, Timperley et al. try to provide some insight into the reciprocated interplay between the different components in their non-recursive model – in other words, why and how professional change occurs within individuals. That notwithstanding, Timperley et al.'s model, like Guskey's and Desimone's, still represents a simplistic path model, with a single entry point into the development sequence; and oriented towards understanding professional learning solely on the basis of explicit learning opportunities and how they improve student outcomes. As Timperley et al. assert, "The major challenge of this synthesis is to unpack the black box between professional learning opportunities and teacher outcomes that impact positively on student outcomes" (p.7).

In a move away from the linear models of teacher professional development, Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) propose an interconnected non-linear model. Similar to the previously discussed models, their model focuses on the relationship between different stages or elements in the development process, characterised as four domains: the personal domain, the external domain, the domain of practice, and the domain of consequence. Unlike the linear models, in Clarke and Hollingsworth's interconnected model, there are multiple possible entry points into the development process. Teacher change can happen in all four of the domains, with the change reflecting the specific domain in which it occurred. The model also comprises two mediator processes of reflection and enactment that operate between the domains, indicating that change within one domain can lead to change in another.

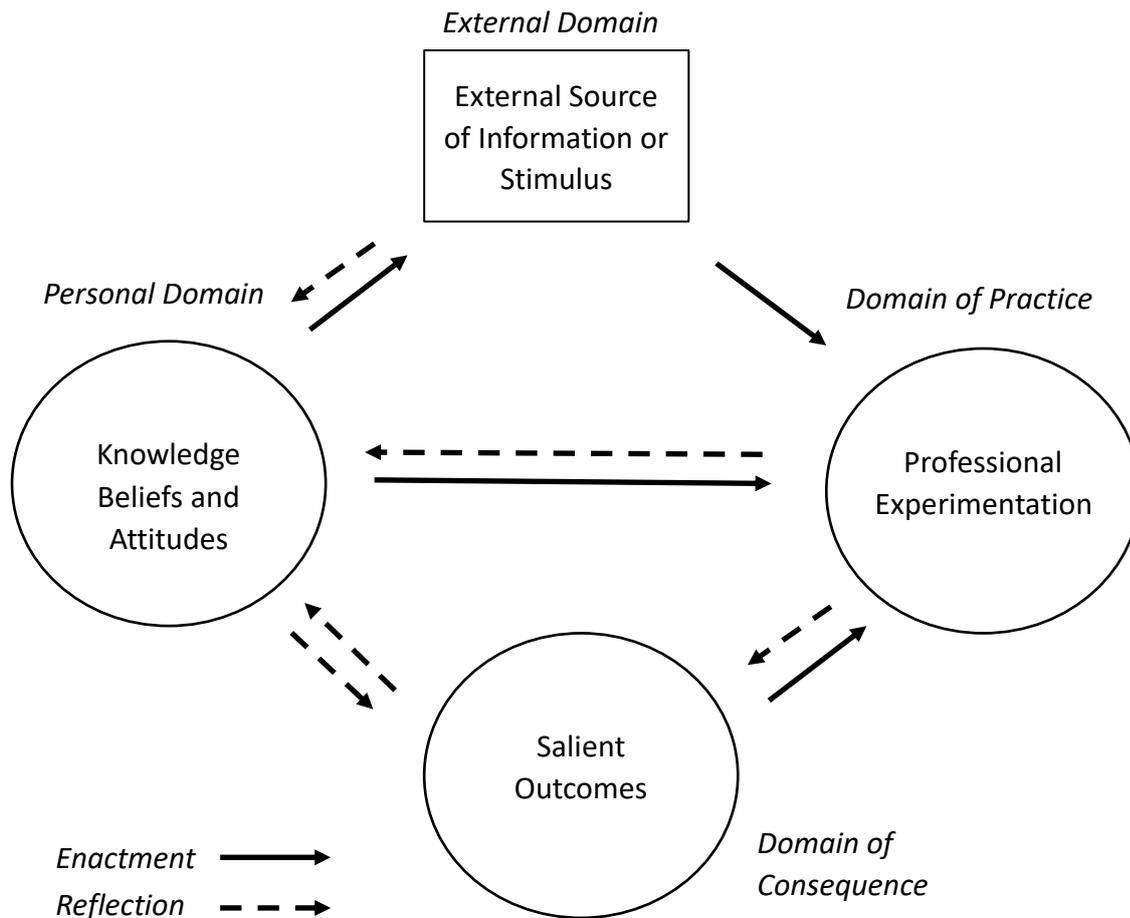


Figure 2-4 – Clarke and Hollingsworth’s model of professional development

The model’s non-linear structure presents an awareness of the complexities of professional development in its “identification of multiple growth pathways between the domains” (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002: 950). Evans (2014) argues that Clarke and Hollingsworth’s (2002) model, in considering the mechanisms that operate between the different domains, starts to ask the “why?” questions about the triggers and prompts that facilitate professional development. Similarly, Boylan et al. (2018) contend that the model digs deeper into how professional learning and growth occurs through both formal and informal professional learning opportunities. In the words of Clarke and Hollingsworth, it is “a model of teacher growth that does not constrain teacher learning by characterising it in a prescriptive linear fashion but anticipates the possibility of multiple change sequences and a variety of possible teacher growth networks” (p.965).

Unlike Timperley et al.'s (2007) model, Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) do not simply portray teacher change as resulting from a set iterative learning cycle through which new knowledge, beliefs and values are either rejected or accepted. A change sequence can start in any of the domains and may consist of one or multiple domains simultaneously influencing further changes via the reflective and enactive links. Inherent to this thinking is the belief that professional development is individualistic and influenced by both a teacher's subjectivity and their working environment. In this respect, Clarke and Hollingsworth's model goes beyond the aims of a prescriptive linear model by drawing attention to the idiosyncratic nature of teacher development, and the constraints and opportunities afforded to teachers for professional growth.

As an alternative to Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) model, Evans (2014) offers a model of professional development that does not just consider professional learning to be a conscious act but also one that occurs unintentionally and unconsciously. The focus of Evans' model is on the micro-level cognitive processes that teachers go through when engaged in a professional development episode. Drawing a comparison between her model and that of Clarke and Hollingsworth, Evans suggests that Clarke and Hollingsworth's "change sequences" and her "micro-level professional development" seek to illuminate the same thing, namely the mechanisms by which professional change occurs in individuals. Where the two models diverge for Evans, however, is in their consideration of how teacher change materialises. As previously discussed, Clarke and Hollingsworth see the mediating processes for professional change as resulting from a cycle of enactment and reflection. Evans, on the other hand, considers enactment and reflection as being limiting constructs, as they reduce the possibility of professional change solely to conscious acts of focused consideration and evaluation. For Evans, micro-level professional development happens when an individual, through a conscious or unconscious mental internalisation process, arrives at a "better way" of doing things. As Evans (2011: 864) details:

the enhancement of individuals' professionalism, resulting from their acquisition, through a consciously or unconsciously applied mental internalisation process, of professional work-related knowledge and/or understanding and/or attitudes and/or skills and/or competences that, on the grounds of what is consciously or unconsciously considered to be its/their superiority, displace(s) and replace(s) previously-held professional work-related knowledge and/or understanding and/or attitudes and/or skills and/or competences.

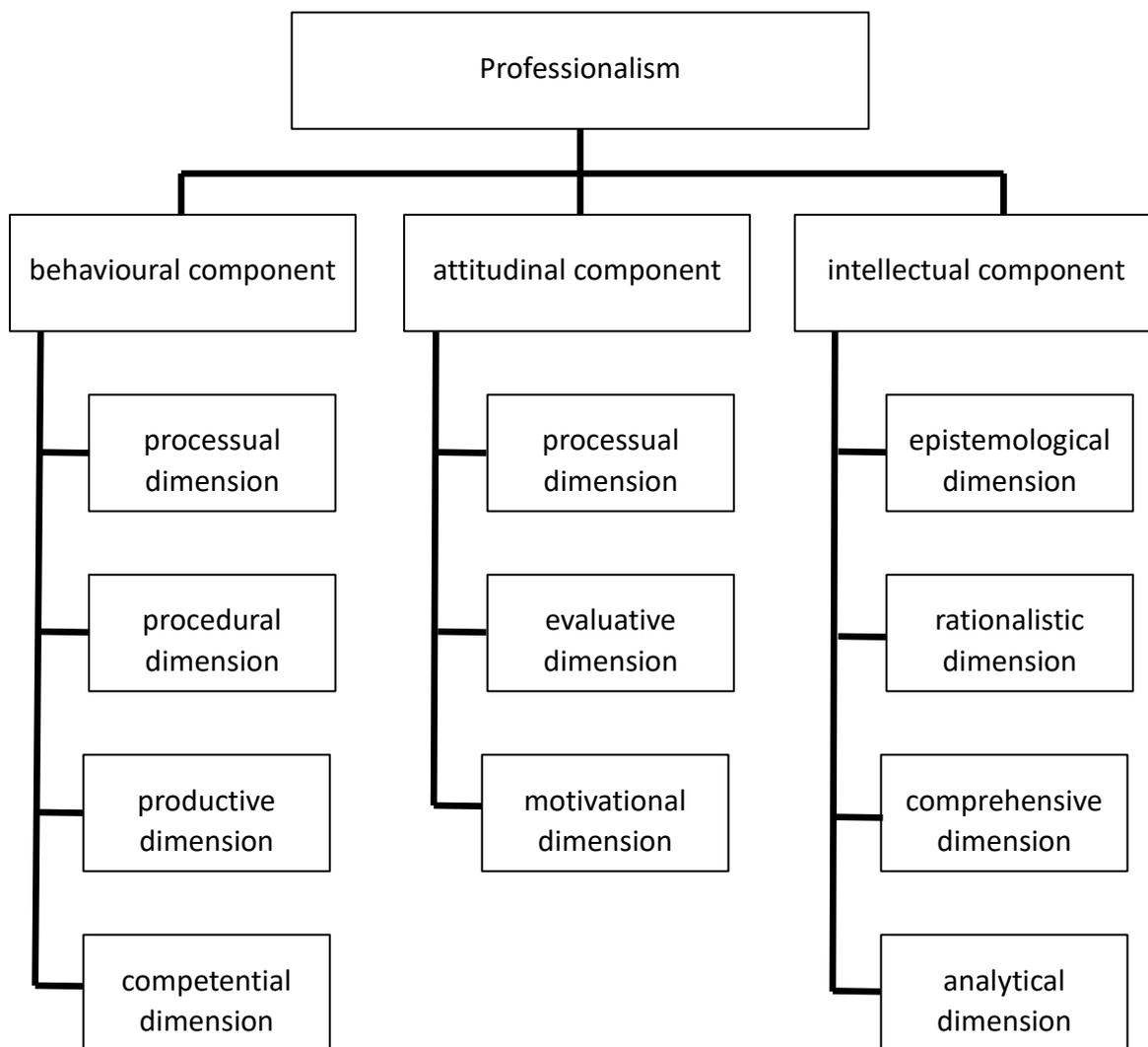


Figure 2-5 – Evans’ model of professional development

Evans’ (2014) model is multidimensional and made up of three main constituent components of behavioural, attitudinal and intellectual development. The behaviour component relates to the physical work of the professional and has four sub-components associated with the processes, procedures and productivity of a practitioner’s work as well as their competences and skills. The attitudinal component correlates to the practitioner’s professional attitudes and consists of three sub-components of perceptual, evaluative and motivational dimensions. As such, the characteristics of the attitudinal component relate to the perceptions, beliefs, views, values, motivations and morals held by the professional. Finally, the intellectual component considers the practitioner’s epistemological, rationalistic,

comprehensive and analytical dimensions; relating to their knowledge and understanding as well as the degree of reasoning and analysis they apply to their practice.

Arguably, Evans' (2014) model is by far the most complex and ambitious of the ones discussed in this section. Although Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) model, affords the possibility of multiple simultaneous change sequences, the micro-level development episodes in Evans' model hold the potential of spiralling into more multifaceted episodes of development as they cross component boundaries. Evans likens this to a chain reaction in which successive sequences of chains emerge. Bound into this complexity is the idea that the micro-level developments can be incidental and even unidentifiable within a teacher's day-to-day practice. Thus, the best that can be hoped for is to make a credible attempt at distinguishing the specific dimensions of the professional development episode(s) retrospectively. Nevertheless, Evans is hopeful that a theory with some level of generalisability of what prompts practitioners to develop professionally can be established. Therefore, unlike the other models' authors, Evans is not focused on the contextual elements of professional development and student outcomes. Evans is interested in understanding the general cognitive aspects of why and how teachers develop professionally. As acknowledged by Evans herself, however, in trying to arrive at something that is universally applicable, the idiosyncratic and contextual aspects of professional development inevitably have to be bracketed out, which can mean that the "resultant theory or theoretical perspectives may end up being of limited use to practitioners" (Evans, 2014: 186).

The five models discussed in this section all have strengths and weaknesses. Guskey's (2002) and Desimone's (2009) models provide a clear and straightforward linear framework under which to consider teachers' professional development. But, beyond a simplistic suggestion of when teacher change happens, neither Guskey's nor Desimone's models attempt to elucidate why or how a professional change might transpire. In contrast, Timperley et al. (2007) posit that professional change occurs through an iterative learning process in which a teacher assesses if new information is congruent with their existing understandings. That said, Timperley et al.'s model still sees development as a simple sequencing of events, which fails to recognise the multidimensional and variable interplay between a teacher's knowledge, beliefs, practice and student outcomes. Clarke and

Hollingsworth's (2002) model affords the possibility of multiple simultaneous change sequences and growth networks, giving recognition to the multidimensional and individual nature of teachers' professional development. Clarke and Hollingsworth also provide an account of the teacher change via their two mediator processes of enactment and reflection. Although Clarke and Hollingsworth allude to a relationship between the change domains and mediating processes, they do not stipulate the relationship between them or how a change in one domain directly leads to a change in another (Boylan et al., 2018). The model also limits professional change to conscious acts of reflection and enactment (Evans, 2014). Alternatively, Evans offers a model of professional development that identifies professional learning as being both a conscious and an unconscious act. Evans' model incorporates behavioural, attitudinal and intellectual elements, identifying them as constituent components in successive and spiralling chains of professional development. Shifting the focus from student outcomes, Evans' is interested in the cognitive processes that teachers go through as part of professional development. She believes that in so doing "it is possible to develop a theory (i.e. universal truths) of what prompts individuals to develop professionally" (Evans, 2014: 186). However, in her pursuit of generalisability Evans inevitably must bracket out the fundamental individualistic and context-specific elements of professional development.

Boylan et al. (2018) contend that to assume one model as superior to another would simply ignore the strengths that the other models present. They also suggest that to seek a synthesis of the models would be unrealistic due to their differing purposes and theoretical underpinnings. Consequently, Boylan et al. (2018) suggest that the models of professional development are viewed less as representations that challenge one another and more as alternative tools to be used by researchers and practitioners in the dialogue about teachers' professional development.

2.3.3 Teachers as Professional Learners

Professional development and professional learning are terms that are used interchangeably within academic literature without any real distinction made between them. Within this thesis, however, professional development and professional learning are considered to be subtly different things. As stated previously, this thesis regards teachers'

professional development as being a holistic process in which the teacher's professional self is confirmed, augmented or changed. Professional learning, on the other hand, is viewed as the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills and understandings through an explicit or implicit learning experience. Hence, professional learning is inextricably linked to professional development as it is through a learning experience or experiences that professional development can take place, but they are not the same thing. For example, the growth of a teacher's confidence might be the result of a series of professional learning experiences, but the growth of the teacher's confidence in itself is not learning, it is a development.

In agreement with Winch et al. (2015), this thesis sees professional learning as relating to three interconnected and complementary conceptions of professional knowledge:

- Situated Knowledge – relating to tacit knowledge which is acquired through experience and allows teachers to make intuitive, practical and ethical judgements.
- Technical Knowledge – relating to teachers' practical knowledge of how to do their job. (Unlike situated knowledge, technical knowledge is not only learnt through experiences but also by listening to, watching and imitating others.)
- Critical Reflection – relating to professional scholarship and learning that takes place through the critical examination of educational practice, policy and theory.

In addition to the above, professional learning is also considered to be a complex and multidimensional process in which the working environment, subjectivity and psychological states all affect and influence the learning process (Smylie, 1995).

Professional learning activities for teachers take on many forms, ranging from explicit knowledge transferral to subtler and more implicit models of learning (Evans, 2014, 2019). At the explicit end of the spectrum, professional learning is formal and conducted through prescribed learning events (Eraut, 2004). Kennedy (2014) characterises this formal approach to teacher development as a "transmissive" style of learning in which teachers are instructed on how to improve their professional practice. The learning is planned and structured with a focus on knowledge sharing from an expert to a passive group of recipients. As a result, there is a clear delineation between the providers of professional

development and the receivers of it (DfE, 2016b) – a particularity that has attracted considerable criticism for its lack of context and continuance and its promotion of compliance and replication (Cordingley, 2015; Desimone, 2009; Earley & Porritt, 2009; Garet et al., 2001; Keay & Lloyd, 2011; Kennedy, 2014; Van Veen et al., 2012). In contrast, situated and sustained professional learning is argued to be a much more autonomous and effective approach to teacher development.

Evans (2014, 2019) sees professional learning as a process that principally should be recognised as being situated and contextual. Rather than a limited corpus of designated learning opportunities, teachers are seen as continuously developing as they learn from their work and working environment (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Within such a framework, teachers' professional learning opportunities are argued to be not only explicit but also implicit. For Eraut (2004), explicit and implicit professional learning opportunities cannot be dichotomised but should be considered as a continuum ranging from formal to informal learning experiences. Eraut argues that in moving away from the formal side of the continuum, professional learning becomes more varied with a greater scope for social engagement and individual agency. The teacher, consequently, is transformed from being an isolated passive receiver of generic knowledge to being an active social learner who is part of a working community. Developing the idea of a community of practice, Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that professional learning should not be individualist but communal and framed around a shared repertoire of professional knowledge and beliefs. As opposed to a planned prescriptive program of development, the learning within a community of practice stems from the immersion and participation of the individual in the working environment (Engeström, 2013), and is inevitably informal, unanticipated and sometimes unrecognisable (Evans, 2014).

Closely associated with the idea of professional communities are professional networks and teacher collaboration. Collaborative practice is seen as having a marked impact on pupils' learning, as well as building teacher confidence, self-belief and their willingness to embrace new knowledge (Cordingley et al., 2005; Lofthouse & Thomas, 2017; Turner et al., 2018). As Nias et al. (1989) suggest, collaboration is not only about the sharing of teaching ideas but also a way of building social and emotional capital within teachers through an exchange of reciprocated professional learning. For Boylan (2013), such

exchanges hold the potential of projecting teachers' professionalism and professional knowledge beyond their own school setting. Through professional networks and collaboration, Boylan proposes that "teacher leaders" could become "system leaders" who have an impact on teachers' professionalism and student outcomes at a system-wide level. From such a perspective, collaboration becomes a means of expanding teachers' professionalism and professional identity by transforming them into systemic thinkers who have a moral purpose and a desire to shape education.

Within such commentary, it seems difficult to argue against the benefits of communities of practice and collaborative professional learning, particularly when they are hailed internationally as the key ingredient to educational success (OECD, 2014). Kennedy (2015), however, worries that collaborative endeavours in which teachers lack sufficient professional knowledge and the potential to challenge dominant views from within and outside of the community may result in closed, restricted practice. Arguably, within such closed communities, socialisation functions come into play as collaboration is used to impose an artificial and contrived form of collegiality that is bound to compliance and performativity (Hargreaves and O'Connor, 2017; Kennedy, 2015). This is a form of professional learning heavily associated with multi-academy trusts that operate within a competitive market and promote their own brands of teaching and teacher professionalism (Whitty, 2014). Against such a backdrop of localism and fragmentation, Cordingley (2015) proposes that more self-directed professional learning opportunities should be made available for teachers, an argument that sits at the heart of a more transformative view of teachers' professional development, by recasting them as autonomous learners engaged in reflective and research-oriented practice.

Widely accepted as a fundamental component of teachers' professional development, reflective practice allows teachers to develop a deeper understanding of their actions (Schön, 1987; Vermunt & Endedijk, 2010; Zeichner & Liston, 2014). As a result, teachers augment their pedagogical practice and understanding through a learning process of reassessment and discovery. Day and Sachs (2004) argue that reflective practice creates an awareness in teachers of the importance of professional learning, ensuring a commitment to professional growth and development. Brookfield (1995: 47) claims that reflection is a means by which the professional discovers their own "authentic voice", by

questioning aspects of their professionalism that may at the surface appear to be beneficial but in reality are detrimental to pupil development, even discriminatory and oppressive. Brookfield, therefore, moves reflection beyond an isolated classroom procedure, to one linked to professional integrity, self-respect, beliefs and actions that have a moral grounding. The picture created is one of a truly reflective practitioner who goes beyond a confessional style of reflection to interrogate practice and challenge accepted norms (Bolton, 2010). The vision of reflective practice in schools, however, is suggested to be increasingly limited, with teachers provided with little training or mentorship in how to be genuinely reflective (Furlong, 2013). Korthagen (2017) suggests that with so little support given to teachers on how to be reflective, it becomes a vague and unbeneficial process for them. In light of such comments, it is interesting to note that the 2012 *Teaching standards for England* (DfE, 2012) and the 2016 *Standard for teachers' professional development* (DfE, 2016b) make little reference to reflective practice. In comparison, the Northern Ireland competences (GTCNI, 2007) dedicate entire sections to teachers' reflective practice.

Equally marginalised from the 2012 *Teaching standards for England* (DfE, 2012) and the 2016 *Standard for teachers' professional development* (2016b) is the idea of teachers as researchers. This is an omission that runs contrary to empirical evidence that research-oriented practice is an effective form of professional development (Cordingley, 2015; Furlong et al., 2000). The OECD in their 2011 report "Building a high-quality teaching profession: Lessons from around the world" outline a vision of teachers as collaborative professionals who play an integral and vital role in the development of educational theory and practice through research. Similarly, the BERA-RSA (2014: 5) report envisages teachers as being engaged in individual and collaborative research, with its authors asserting:

in a new environment of self-improving education systems teachers will need to become research literate and have opportunities for research and inquiry. This requires that schools and colleges become research-rich environments in which to work. It also requires that teacher researchers and the wider research community work in partnership rather than in separate and sometimes competing universes.

The notion of teachers as researchers is not a new one: more than a century ago Dewey (1904) argued that teachers' professional development should be a scholarly activity in which praxis becomes the vehicle for making real and vital contributions to theoretical development. Equally, Stenhouse (1975) highlights the importance of teachers being

actively involved in professional enquiry. Building on Hoyle's (1974) concept of extended professionalism, Stenhouse considers action research to be a means by which teachers can gain professional autonomy over their development. This is a position shared by Cordingley (2011), who believes that through action research, data and evidence can be used as a catalyst for teachers' professional learning, as opposed to an instrument of judgement.

For Bell et al. (2010), three types of research-oriented practice should be explored by teachers as part of their professional learning:

- Researcher-led studies, involving experienced academic researchers designing and leading teachers in a joint research project.
- Teacher-initiated studies, comprising of a small group of teachers conducting small-scale pieces of practice-oriented research, typically with some form of academic support or guidance.
- Masters-based studies, in which individuals as part of a masters program are given academic guidance on conducting teacher research.

According to Sachs (2016), teachers engaging in the kind of practice outlined by Bell et al. would constitute a central aspect of teaching being seen as a mature profession. For Sachs, it would mean that teachers would possess the skills to produce and consume research, pushing boundaries and propositioning change. The problem, as outlined by Barrow and Foreman-Peck (2005), is that teachers have historically had little or no training in conducting research. And although this picture to some extent has changed with ITT providers engaging student teachers in small-scale research projects (Carter, 2015), research literacy is still seen as an impoverished aspect of teacher development (Sachs, 2016). Hence, teacher research has a tendency to be poorly conceived and limited to reinvented knowledge that adds very little to the wider academic debate (Furlong, 2013).

In summary, teachers' professional learning spans a whole spectrum of learning opportunities, from passive intermittent learning events to more active self-directed forms of development. It is argued that in moving away from formal one-off CPD events, teachers' professional development becomes continuous, situated and contextual (Evans, 2019). As a result, professional learning is framed as a shared social endeavour in which the learning is recognised as being both explicit and implicit. Communities of practice and collaboration are

central to these ideas as they link teacher learning to the teaching environment and the support of peers. The result is a more transformative view of teachers' professional learning, recasting teachers as self-directed agents in their development, who are involved in research and more profound levels of reflection – in other words, professional learning that facilitates professional, personal and societal growth (Sachs, 2016).

2.4 Middle Leaders

The final part of this literature review looks at middle leadership and its role in relation to teachers' professional development. In section 2.4.1, I look at how the role of middle leadership is defined and portrayed in the academic literature. I consider the links between middle leadership and student outcomes, and the challenges that middle leaders face in being both an agent of senior leadership and a leading colleague to staff. In section 2.4.2, I look more specifically at middle leaders' responsibilities for staff development. In particular, the section considers the challenges and influences faced by middle leaders from national policy, senior leadership, colleagues as well as themselves in directing staff development.

2.4.1 Middle Leadership

Fleming (2014) argues that over the past thirty years, the importance of middle leadership in schools has become firmly established, with middle leaders now occupying unique and pivotal roles in the education system. Typical examples of primary school middle leaders are assistant head and key stage coordinators, and in secondary schools, head of department, head of year, head of sixth form, and key stage coordinator (Fleming, 2014). Such roles bring with them considerable pressures and responsibilities for student outcomes, routines, procedures, resourcing as well as staff development and wellbeing (De Nobile, 2018; Fleming, 2013, 2014). In addition, middle leaders tend to have substantial teaching commitments and thereby practice their leadership amongst their teaching colleagues (Grootenboer et al., 2015). Thus, middle leadership is a position of responsibility for staff leadership and school improvement that is closely connected to the classroom, students and colleagues.

In a small-scale study by Busher (2005), a group of secondary school middle leaders identified six key functional aspects of their work to be of greatest importance:

1. Developing and projecting a vision to those they line manage.
2. The will to use power to create and implement policy successfully.
3. Working with staff by successfully negotiating and interacting with colleagues.
4. Coordinating departments effectively to ensure the improvement of teaching and learning.
5. Mediating different context by negotiating with different stakeholders in different arenas.
6. Being considered a good teacher by colleagues.

The list highlights how middle leaders make the connection between leadership and the classroom, on the one hand being the developer and implementor, and on the other, the negotiator, coordinator and exemplary teacher. In a reflection on his study, Busher (2005) contends that middle leaders negotiate the interface between leadership and collegiality by acting simultaneously as “advocates” for staff and “agents” for senior leadership. Inevitably, being in support of colleagues and an agent of leadership creates points of tension, with pressure coming from both directions in the school structure (Harris et al., 2019). Bennet et al. (2007) advocate that middle leadership should be considered under a lens of structure-agency dualism, arguing that the organisational requirements placed on middle leaders and their own agency cannot be polarised. Thus, middle leaders always have some agency within their roles and are never totally determined by the structures in which they operate. But equally, they are always partially determined by the structure.

Harris et al. (2019), in a quantitative review of academic literature on middle leadership, found that on average less than four peer reviewed articles were published per year between 2008 to 2017. They conclude that in comparison to the volume of articles published on senior leadership within schools, middle leadership is an area of academic interest that “remains relatively thin” (p.270). In an attempt to explain why middle leadership has received so little attention, Harris et al. suggest that other leadership themes of distributed and instructional leadership have taken precedence over research into discrete leadership roles. In addition, it could be suggested that the considerable governmental focus over the past two decades placed on senior leadership in schools as a mechanism for improvement (Ball, 2017; Barber et al., 2010; Gunter et al., 2018) has inevitably cast a shadow over other areas of interest.

Harris and Jones (2017) argue that despite the lack of research interest in middle leadership, the available evidence indicates that middle leaders have a direct and positive impact on students' learning experiences. Barber et al. (2010) suggest that the role of the middle leader is becoming increasingly significant in contributing to school improvement. Along similar lines, Grootenboer et al. (2017) contend that middle leaders have a pivotal role in building professional capacity within other teachers. In their interviews with 22 middle leaders, they found that the middle leaders saw themselves as builders of knowledge and expertise. Additionally, in a review of research focusing on department heads (including 16 studies from the UK), Leithwood (2016: 135) suggests that department heads are an underused source of leadership: "results of the review suggest that the influence of departments and department heads has a greater influence on student learning than the influence of schools, as a whole, and school-level leaders". One explanation of why middle leaders (particularly subject leads) have such an impact on student learning is due to their direct influence on school culture and classroom practice (Dinham, 2007; Leask & Terrell, 2014).

On a more cautionary note, Gurr (2019) points out that the effectiveness of a middle leader depends on the expectations placed upon them and the leadership style they adopt. As might be expected, there is evidence to suggest that successful middle leadership is more likely in a supportive environment where middle leaders are given autonomy and responsibility to support staff and find their own solutions (Day et al., 2016; Ghamrawi, 2010). In contrast, some middle leaders may have to mediate their professional values and beliefs against the performativity expectations of their role. For example, Maguire, Braun and Ball (2015) found that middle leaders in key departments, such as Maths and English, demonstrated greater levels of awareness and compliance to policy than other middle leaders. More patently, Hammersley-Fletcher and Strain (2011) present evidence that primary school middle leaders are defined by the external agendas and policies imposed on them. They suggest that primary middle leaders have become efficient in demonstrating compliance to national policy and headteachers' agendas, reducing middle leadership to nothing more than a means of disseminating standardisation and managerialism further into education. From an alternative perspective, some studies show that middle leaders avoid staff performativity management entirely by adopting a purely collegial position

(Bennett et al., 2003; Bennett et al., 2007; Jarvis, 2008). Bennett et al. (2003), for example, found that some department heads would avoid observing or reviewing the work of members of their department. Instead, they would focus on syllabus requirements and procedures, seeing these as falling more squarely within their remit. Wise (2001) suggests that department heads do not feel comfortable passing judgement on the competency and quality of colleagues' teaching as it demonstrates a lack of trust and risks damaging collegial relationships. In relation to newly appointed middle leaders, the sense of having to safeguard collegial relationships and minimise resentment from other staff is particularly pronounced (De Nobile, 2018). Bennett et al. (2007: 456) describe a legitimisation process that new department heads go through to justify their appointment, by positioning themselves as guardians of their department, as such, adopting the "language of collegiality rather than line management".

As outlined above, academic interest in school middle leadership has been relatively minor (Bennett et al., 2007; De Nobile, 2018; Harris & Jones, 2017). The literature on middle leadership tends to focus on three areas: roles and practices of middle leadership; the links between middle leadership and student outcomes; and the tensions and challenges of being the intermediary between senior leadership above and teachers below. Little inquiry has been made into how middle leaders are exercising their leadership – for example: How are they responding to national policy in their practice? What are the explicit and implicit things they do to build the professional capacity of other staff?

It is interesting to note how middle leadership within schools has recently risen to the forefront of Ofsted's thinking. The deep dive initiative in Ofsted's new inspection framework places curriculum leaders at the heart of school inspections with an evaluation of their thinking and planning (Ofsted, 2019). Ofsted has also outlined plans to offer one-year secondments to middle leaders as part of their professional development, the hope being that some would stay with the organisation as contracted Ofsted inspectors (TES, 2019b). Such an interest in middle leadership may potentially mark a significant change in how schools and researchers recognise middle leaders.

2.4.2 Middle Leaders and Teacher Development

Middle leaders, and particularly department heads, are increasingly being seen as having responsibilities for facilitating the professional development and professional learning opportunities of the staff that they line manage (De Nobile, 2018; DfE, 2016b; Dinham, 2007; Fleming, 2014; GTCS, 2012; Leask & Terrell, 2014). In playing such a central role in staff development, middle leaders face the difficulty of reconciling national guidance, school policy and their perspectives on teachers' professional development. In doing so, they may face many of the tensions and pressures discussed in the previous sections as they find themselves caught in the middle of trying to meet the expectations of both senior leadership and their colleagues, and juggling these potentially conflicting demands with their own views and ideals.

In relation to national guidance for England, the 2016 *Standard for teachers' professional development* (DfE, 2016b) outlines that "professional development must be prioritised by school leadership" (p.11), with school leadership defined as "headteachers, leadership teams, and heads of subjects or phases" (p.4). The standard stipulates that leaders should ensure that:

1. Professional development should have a focus on improving and evaluating pupil outcomes.
2. Professional development should be underpinned by robust evidence and expertise.
3. Professional development should include collaboration and expert challenge.
4. Professional development programmes should be sustained over time.
5. Professional development must be prioritised by school leadership. (p. 6)

The guidance given within the standard for schools is heavily oriented towards professional development that is focused on student outcomes. In line with Desimone's (2009) and Guskey's (2002) linear models of professional development, the standard presents teacher development as a sequence of events from "direct professional development" to "improved practice" and "improved pupil outcomes" (DfE, 2016b: 5). There is very little that relates to teachers' individual learning needs or scope for experimentation outside the bounds of development that is "underpinned by robust evidence and expertise" (p.6). The conclusion that might be drawn is that from the government's perspective, department heads should

be leaders of professional development that is explicit and directly seeks to improve student outcomes. This position could be criticised for being heavily focused on performativity, with development limited to behavioural components of processes, procedures, classroom skills and competences (Evans, 2011).

As an interesting comparison, Scotland's *Standards for Leadership and Management: supporting leadership and management development* (GTCS, 2012) specifies that in relation to professional development:

- Middle leaders work within school policies with regard to staffing and personnel issues.
- Middle leaders establish and use strategies to identify individual and team professional learning needs to support the school's improvement agenda.
- Middle leaders create coherent opportunities for collaborative development activities.
- Middle leaders evaluate the impact of professional learning on teachers' practice and understanding, in relation to outcomes for learners.
- Middle leaders critically engage with literature, research and policy in relation to all of the above.

The Scottish standard, in contrast to the English one, refers to middle leaders and not just subject leads, who are arguably more closely associated with pupil outcomes. It makes greater reference to evaluating teachers' understandings and identifying the professional learning needs of both individuals and the working team. The document makes references to ensuring opportunities for professional learning, the building of constructive relationships, fostering collegiality and providing support for colleagues. In conclusion, the Scottish standard presents a view of middle leaderships' responsibility for professional development that involves encouragement, providing opportunities, moral support, collaboration, as well as mentoring and coaching (Dinham, 2007; Fleming, 2014; Leask & Terrell, 2014). This is a view of teachers' professional development that is not just limited to pupil attainment.

Perry and Boylan (2018) contend, that effective teachers' professional development depends on the teaching expertise of the individuals acting as the development facilitators. With teachers often promoted to middle leadership roles on the basis of being accomplished practitioners (Glover et al., 1998; McCulla et al., 2015) it could be suggested

that middle leaders firmly meet Perry and Boylan's criteria. As Grootenboer et al. (2016) suggest middle leaders with their experience and knowledge of teaching are well-positioned to model and pass on best practice to their colleagues. The position of being the exemplary practitioner, however, is not without difficulties. Middle leaders may be victims of resentment or other cultural boundaries that make it difficult for them to perform their role in relation to staff development (Bennet et al., 2007; De Nobile, 2018). For example, De Nobile (2018) talks about the 'tall poppy syndrome' of newly appointed middle leaders who receive resentment from colleagues. De Nobile goes on to suggest that building teams through positive relationships and communication are essential. Grootenboer et al. (2016) found that for middle leaders to change practices, they had to create new communicative spaces and dynamics within which teachers could encounter and learn from one another. Along similar lines, Harris and Jones (2010, 2017) stress the importance of middle leaders in developing healthy professional learning communities in which teachers can collaborate and learn. They argue that collaboration does not just happen; it needs to be structured, supported and given a direction by the middle leader (Harris & Jones, 2017). Thus, middle leaders not only have to demonstrate leadership and empathy for teachers but also for the community in which they operate (Gurr, 2019).

The leadership of a community will invariably involve introducing new members into it. With the statutory induction of newly qualified teachers and a move toward greater school-led initial teacher training, schools are increasingly required to develop teachers new to the profession. The mentoring of student teachers and NQTs is commonly undertaken by middle leaders such as department heads (De Nobile, 2018; Fleming, 2014; Willis et al., 2019). It follows that middle leaders can have a considerable influence on teachers' early careers, by shaping their thinking, values and practice. Willis et al. (2019) point out that middle leaders bring with them significant "cultural relay" (Bernstein, 2000) to the mentoring role. On the one hand, such pedagogical knowledge and expertise is surely beneficial to the mentoring process, but on the other, the accountability pressures felt by the middle leader might impact on the quality and direction of their mentorship. Willis et al. raise the critical point that middle leaders need support to realise the impact and significance of their role. Likewise, De Nobile (2018) and Fleming (2014) signal the importance of professional development and support for the middle leaders themselves so

that they can adequately support and develop other teachers. For Perry and Boylan (2018) this would require a greater focus on ‘developing the developers’ to enhance their skills and knowledge of teaching, professional development facilitation, and professional development.

A significant aspect of the support and development of middle leaders comes from their headteachers (Day et al., 2016; De Nobile, 2018). As outlined in the previous section, middle leaders act as the intermediate layer between senior leadership and the teaching staff they line manage. The directives, guidance and influences of the headteacher are all crucial factors in how a middle leader is constrained or enabled. Gurr and Drysdale (2013) found that in some cases middle leaders were expected to be autonomous agents who made decisions and had considerable influence on teaching practice, but often this was not the case with middle leaders awarded little opportunity to exercise leadership. Grootenboer et al. (2016), in their study, observed that headteachers’ support is a substantial part of middle leaders being able to develop other staff effectively. Their findings suggested that “principals were limited in their capacity to actually make a difference to the educational practices of the classroom, but they could be influential in shutting things down or constraining the practice architectures” (p.33).

While many middle leaders may have the capacity to influence and develop teachers’ professionalism, they may be restricted from doing so. The structure of leadership in schools is, therefore, important in how effectively a middle leader can perform their role. Harris and Jones (2017, 2018) allude to the need for greater power distribution in schools to utilise the expertise of middle leadership better. The result would be a leadership structure that values staff contributions, fosters high-quality teaching and seeks to nurture talent (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2019).

2.5 Summary of the Literature Review

This study is set within the context of an education system in which teachers’ professional development has been shaped by governmental reform over the past thirty years. In 1988 the Conservative government launched their Education Reform Act that challenged the idea of education being founded on a welfare and public service model to one based on knowledge and economic success (Ball, 2017). In conjunction with the Act, a national

curriculum was released that for the first time specified for teachers what they should and should not teach. The period marked the introduction of standardisation and accountability into teachers' professionalism and set the precedence for successive governments (Ball, 2017; Furlong, 2013).

Making education its best economic policy (Blair, 1995) the Labour government from 1997 to 2010 set out to modernise the teaching profession with substantial educational policy that shifted the attention from school reform to teacher reform (Ball, 2017). The period marked a significant change in teachers' professionalisation as teachers were recast from "isolated, unaccountable professionals" (DfEE, 1998a: para 13) into a collective group whose professionalism could be externally managed and shaped through standardisation and accountability. By repositioning teachers as the key figures responsible for raising pupil attainment, common systems of training and standards could be introduced to control and quality assure teachers' practices. As epitomised in Labour's 2007 teacher standards (TDA, 2007), the result was to place skills and competencies at the heart of teachers' professional development (Beck, 2009), replacing a 'reflective' model of teaching with an 'effective' one (Menter, Mutton & Burns, 2019).

From 2010 the Coalition and Conservative governments, like the Labour one before them, have seen education as a means of achieving greater economic success and have put considerable effort into the re-modelling of teachers' professionalism along neoliberal lines (Ball, 2017; Jones, 2016). Where the Coalition and Conservative governments diverge from Labour's thinking is in their return to more traditional neoconservative perspectives that the fundamental purpose of education is the passing on of essential knowledge (Ball, 2017; Jones, 2016). Accordingly, classroom practice and subject knowledge have been prioritised and teaching reimagined as a craft which is best learnt through school-based professional development. In line with this, a new streamlined set of teacher standards (DfE, 2012) were released to support professional development and growth, in addition to schools being given higher levels of autonomy over teacher training and development. More recently, in 2016 the *Standard for teachers' professional development* was released (DfE, 2016b), outlining for schools a standardised approach to teachers' professional development for schools to follow. Additionally, in 2017 a public consultation was set up on "strengthening Qualified Teacher Status and improving teacher career progression" (DfE, 2018). In response

to the consultation, Damian Hinds, then secretary of state for education, announced a new two-year induction period for trainee teachers coupled with the strengthening of ITT and NQT mentorship provision in schools.

In reviewing educational reform and the surrounding commentary in this literature review I wanted to give some historical context and background to the current position of teachers' professionalism and professional development. What appears to be undeniable is the prevailing drive to create a performativity culture in schools through accountability measures and the standardisation of teachers' professional practice. As highlighted in the literature, a considerable part of this drive was to reposition teachers as primarily classroom technicians (craftsmen and craftswomen) whose professional development was best realised through school-based training and professional learning. The result has been a diminishment of university input into teacher training, with school-led programs in 2018–19 accounting for over 50% of all ITT provision (DfE, 2019a). Similarly, the LEA's input into teacher development has also gone into decline as academies and multi academy trusts implement their own brands of professional training and development (Whitty, 2014). Conspicuous by its absence, however, from all of the policy and reform is any attention to the individuals in schools who have responsibilities for delivering teacher training and development. For, although there have been some indications of development in this area, such as the announcement of strengthened ITT and NQT mentorship training (DfE, 2018), it still only represents a superficial layer. The question of the skills, knowledge and academic grounding required by individuals in schools to train and develop others has not been sufficiently questioned or explored by policy writers.

The national guidance given to schools in the 2016 *Standard for teachers' professional development* presents teachers' development as a linear sequence of events from "direct professional development" to "improved practice" and "improved pupil outcomes". In contrast, Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) suggest that professional development is far more complex. They argue that teachers' professional growth has the possibility of multiple change sequences which are interconnected and do not follow a simple linear pattern. Similarly, Evans (2014) sees professional development as being complex and multidimensional. For Evans, professional development is not just about behavioural attributes relating to the physical work of the professional, but also about

attitudinal and intellectual attributes. Evans, in agreement with Clarke and Hollingsworth, draws attention to the need for professional learning and development to be viewed more holistically and not limited to a linear model that is solely focused on pupil outcomes. Within such a framework, those working in schools with a responsibility for the training and development of staff would need to see professional development as more than just facilitating explicit professional learning opportunities. They would need to recognise teachers' professional development as behavioural, attitudinal and intellectual (Evans, 2014). Professional learning could then be reframed as a shared social endeavour that is continuous and involves a whole range of learning opportunities, from informal conversations in a school corridor to teachers conducting their own research within schools. Central to this reframing would be an acknowledgement of what teachers have to say about their professional development, something that appears to be sadly underrepresented in both policy and academic discourse.

As highlighted in the literature, middle leaders, and particularly those that run departments, are increasingly being given more responsibilities for the professional learning opportunities of their colleagues (De Nobile, 2018; DfE, 2016b; Fleming, 2014; General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012; Leask & Terrell, 2014). In addition, middle leaders are commonly involved in the mentoring of NQTs and student teachers (Fleming, 2014; Willis et al., 2019). Due to their close connection to the classroom and their colleagues they are acknowledged as having considerable impact on teachers' professional development and students' learning experiences (Barber et al., 2010; De Nobile, 2018; Dinham, 2007; Fleming, 2014; Harris et al., 2019; Leithwood, 2016; Willis et al., 2019). It could even be suggested that in relation to school leadership middle leaders have the biggest influence and impact on teachers' professional development (Leithwood, 2016). Certainly, as a middle leader myself I feel that I have over the years had substantial input into my colleagues' and student teachers' professional development. With teacher training and professional development increasingly becoming more school based, coupled with the importance of middle leaders in staff development, it seemed important to question what middle leaders contribute to the professional development of colleagues.

What emerged from a review of the literature on middle leadership in schools was an absence of research and interest in middle leaders' and their views. To address this gap, I felt that it was essential to bring some insight into how a small group of middle leaders are making sense of their role in relation to teachers' professional development. In doing so, teacher voice is positioned as the central theme running throughout this thesis. Both at a personal and academic level, the study is interested in what Hamora, Laura, Peter and Craig have to say about teachers' professional development. What do their voices have to tell us about what is important for them in teacher development? Are theoretical models of teachers' professional development truly representative of their reality of teaching? Do they see themselves as activist democratic professionals (Sachs, 2003, 2016; Whitty, 2006) who are listened to and project their professionalism outwards at a systemic level (Boylan, 2013), or is their thinking restricted to their daily practice? Are they indifferent, in agreement, compliant with national guidance, or subversive towards it, and if so, what forms of resistance are they demonstrating?

In taking an interest in middle leaders' sense-making and what they have to say, this study presents a perspective and version of teachers' professional development that is being poorly represented in the academic discourse. To address this gap, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: What perceptions do middle leaders have of their role in relation to the professional development of teachers?

RQ2: What aspects of teachers' professional development matter to middle leaders and why do these aspects of teachers' professional development have meaning for them?

RQ3: How is professional development realised by the middle leaders in their departments and to what extent is this influenced and shaped by national policy?

Chapter 3 Methodology and Research Design

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology and design for this study. The discussion explains and evaluates my methodological and design choices, justifying why I considered them to be appropriate in relation to the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of the research. In section 3.2, I rationalise my philosophical positioning, explaining how an interpretive approach meets the aims and intentions of the research. Similarly, in section 3.3, I explain my reasoning in choosing interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as the research approach for this study. I also outline why case study is applicable to this study as part of an IPA approach. Section 3.4 provides an outline and justification of the research methods used, namely a card-sort, focus group interview and semi-structured interviews. In line with IPA, section 3.5 describes how super-ordinate and master themes were developed as part of the data analysis process. The section also describes how Hoyle's (1974, 2008) extended-restricted framework of professionalism is used as a theoretical lens to explore the master themes further. Finally, in sections 3.6 and 3.7 I consider ethical issues and how research quality was ensured.

3.2 Philosophical Positioning

Cohen et al. (2011: 115) suggest that research design should be “governed by the notion of ‘fitness for purpose’”. As such, the aims and intentions of a research study determine its design and methodology. For Thomas (2009), this means that the research should be underpinned by a philosophical perspective that brings coherence to the study, and flows from the research questions into the methodology and ultimately to the analysis and findings. It could be argued that not only does this strengthen the rationale behind the methodology so that the research outcomes can be better defended, but also allows the researcher to demonstrate a deeper commitment to how the research is conducted and what it has to say (Pring, 2015). In other words, in adopting this approach, the research is transformed from a mere approach into something that is personal and full of meaning. Denzin and Lincoln (2011: 11) suggest that the “personal biography of the researcher”, inevitably shapes the philosophical positioning that permeates their work. From the outset, I

wanted to demonstrate a deep commitment to this piece of work, and therefore, as Pring (2015) suggests, I felt it was important to seriously consider my biography and any points of tension it may hold in relation to the research.

Positivism reflects the view that the world is fixed and can be objectively studied; and that through measurement, laws can be established that are replicable and universal (Cohen et al., 2011; Newby, 2010; Thomas, 2009). My background and qualifications in physics inevitably substantiate a belief in this viewpoint. It is a belief that the natural world can be understood through a systematic approach encompassed in the 'scientific method', and that data can be used to form generalisations of truth. Richard Feynman famously said that "tomorrow's experiment might succeed in proving wrong what you thought was right. We never are definitely right, we can only be sure we are wrong" (Feynman, 1994: 158). Feynman's position here is one of pragmatism, resonating with the thinking of fallibilists such as Peirce, Dewey and Popper, and in agreement with this thinking, I would suggest that the pursuit of truth coexists with an awareness that our understanding should be open to re-evaluation and constant questioning. That truth-telling is a pragmatic practice in which ideas and actions can be formed and questioned – a social concept that is fundamental to our development, as it allows us to recognise and acknowledge our doubts and limitations. Essentially, this aspect of my biography presents a philosophical position that sees the natural world as something that can be understood through quantitative research, and that within such an evidence-based model pragmatic and workable solutions can be determined. The question is, however, whether this philosophical positioning translates to this piece of research and its interest in a phenomenon of the social world.

For many years, I have worked as a secondary school teacher in an environment that is highly complex and unpredictable. It is a setting in which individuals actively construct their realities of the social world around them, forming multiple interpretations and perspectives that are unique, multi-layered, experiential and socially based (Cohen et al., 2011). To capture the richness of this human experience, Lincoln and Guba (1985) reject a positivist approach to research in favour of a qualitative one. Similarly, Cohen et al. (2011) view the positivist framework as restrictive, arguing that it does not offer the flexible and personal approach required to understand the social world around us and the individuals within it. The central tenet of this thinking is that, unlike scientific inquiry and its strict

separation of the researcher and object of study, both the researcher and the researched in qualitative inquiries act as interpreters and meaning-makers – a “double hermeneutic” (Usher, 1996: 18). It follows that qualitative research is about the human experience. It is a way of making sense of the world by engaging in human interaction. As Usher (1996) suggests, educational research is a social practice that is focused on extracting meanings from social context through interpretation.

Biesta (2010a), in reference to Deweyan pragmatism, contends that the most important aspect in forming a methodological approach is to consider the aim of the study. This research sought to explore how a small group of secondary school middle leaders were making sense of their role in relation to teachers’ professional development. The research had two main aims: firstly, to value the individual voices of the middle leaders taking part in the study and to consider what their reasoning, perceptions and feelings could tell us about teachers’ professional development; and secondly, to explore the relevance and impact of national policy on the middle leaders’ realisations of teachers’ professional development, and whether it is extending or restricting their thinking. The intention of the research was not to make any objective claims, but rather to elucidate a social phenomenon to gain a better understanding of it. As Smith et al. (2009) remind us, a qualitative study is an exploration of personal and social experiences – a means of offering a rich interpretation of a social phenomenon. Central to this study was the personal lived experiences of the four middle leaders involved, and how they were making sense of their own and others’ professional development. As a result, the ontological and epistemological setting for this research is interpretivist in nature, recognising that individuals have alternative subjective readings and conceptualisations of the world around them (Thomas, 2009). This is not to suggest, however, that individuals are isolated entities separated from one another and their social worlds. The middle leaders in this study were viewed as being very much part of a shared, working professional reality. And through an interpretative process, the study sought to reveal where the middle leaders’ thinking, perceptions and feelings were comparable. This was not an attempt to confirm some sense of tangible social reality akin to that of critical realism (Collier, 1994), but a way of presenting commonalities and themes that may inform practice, while at the same time holding an absolute commitment to respecting and detailing the diversity of each participants’ individual experience.

The embrace of an interpretive sensibility in this research was based on a recognition that people are complex and have different perspectives and beliefs. It is an appreciation of the individual who is inextricably linked to their own personal and social worlds and constantly involved in a sense-making process. From a positivist perspective the research participant is objectified, but within this study, the participants were very much recognised as individuals whose alternative subjective voices had importance and should be valued. With its focus on the individual and the particular, this research was designed and conducted in such a way as to make no grand generalisations or nomothetic claims. This is not to suggest, however, that within the shared working reality of the middle leaders' practice, important 'petite' generalisations could not be revealed. As Stake (1995) reminds us, 'petite' generalisations can often be made in small-scale studies that both resonate with the experience of others and inform practice. Stake's notion of 'petite' generalisations, as part of this study, appealed to my sense of pragmatism, as it afforded the possibility of the research being informative and beneficial to the working practice of teaching professionals, as well as opening up a dialogue to further interpretation and re-evaluation.

3.3 Research Approach

3.3.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a qualitative research approach that seeks to understand and explore how individuals make sense of their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). IPA studies are structured around the collection of reflective first-person accounts of a phenomenon, which provide rich data sources for interpretation, as well as a means of valuing and giving a voice to research participants (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). The origins and influences behind IPA are made up of three key conceptual elements: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Smith et al., 2009). As such, IPA has taken an eclectic approach to selecting various aspects of philosophical and theoretical ideas to build its conceptual underpinnings (Smith et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2010).

Phenomenology is the study of human experience and consciousness, with the aim of understanding an individual's perceptions and conceptualisations of a particular phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). Husserl, who laid the foundations of phenomenology, is credited by Smith et al. (2009) as having established the importance of an attentive

approach to examining human experience through a process of reflection and re-evaluation. Husserl believed that, by identifying the fundamental characteristics and qualities of human experience, a universal essence of a given phenomenon could be illuminated for others (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). The approach developed by Husserl was a descriptive form of phenomenological research, in which the researcher's own preconceptions and assumptions of a context or situation are bracketed out (Smith et al., 2009). Husserl's background in mathematics partly explains his desire to bracket, or treat separately the subject in question (Smith et al., 2009). But, more importantly, it relates to his desire to suspend trust in the objective world, and through a series of reductions move closer to the true essence of a particular phenomenon (Husserl, 1936/1970). In such a reductive approach the meaning-making is focused on how a phenomenon is experienced by individuals and not on how individuals experience a phenomenon. This aspect of Husserl's work, to develop a phenomenology that transcends our everyday natural attitudes by capturing the essence of an experience, is not one shared by IPA researchers (Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Shaw, 2001; Shinebourne, 2011; Smith et al., 2009). As Smith et al. (2009: 16) outline, "IPA has the [more] modest ambition of attempting to capture particular experiences as experienced for a particular people". IPA is consequently concerned with understanding an individual's personal account of a phenomenon, rather than determining the phenomenon's essential features (Smith et al., 2009). In summary, although Husserl's thinking is recognised as laying the foundations for an attentive approach to examining human experience through a process of reflection and re-evaluation, his descriptive and transcendental agenda is rejected by IPA researchers in favour of a phenomenology that is more idiographic and interpretative in nature.

Heidegger, a student of Husserl, developed phenomenological philosophy by repositioning it in a framework of hermeneutics and existential thinking (Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Smith et al., 2009). Heidegger is concerned with the individual as a person-in-context; a being of the world who both influences and is influenced by the historical, social and cultural context surrounding them. Introducing the concept of intersubjectivity, Heidegger argues that it is not possible to remove ourselves from or step outside of our engagement with the social world. For Heidegger, individuals have a relatedness to the world, which explains how they come to understand and make sense of it

(Heidegger, 1962). The idea of relatedness and the person-in-context firmly places the person and their relationship with the world as the central concern of the phenomenological thinking. Within such a framework, neither the participant nor researcher can isolate themselves from their assumptions and prior experiences. To try to do so would be a futile exercise (Moran, 2000). Phenomenological inquiry, from this perspective, becomes an interpretative process in which the focus is not on determining the essence of human consciousness and how it is constituted, but on understanding the human as a being-in-the-world (Moran, 2000). With reference to the Greek roots of the word phenomenon (meaning 'to show itself'), Heidegger presents hermeneutics as an absolute prerequisite to his approach in order "to let that which shows itself be seen from itself" (Heidegger, 1962, p.58). As Moran (2000) reminds us, Heidegger links phenomenology with hermeneutics to discover and uncover the meanings that may be self-concealed within a particular phenomenon.

In agreement with Heidegger, IPA views phenomenological inquiry as being grounded in hermeneutics (Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Smith et al., 2009). IPA studies are explicitly interpretative in nature and position both the researcher and research participants as being-in-the-world (Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Smith et al., 2009). The prior experience or "pre-understanding" of the researcher is not bracketed out as suggested by Husserl but is adopted in "a more enlivened form of bracketing as both a cyclical process and as something which can only be partially achieved" (Smith et al., 2009, p.25). As such, the IPA researcher's values, beliefs and assumptions become an integral part of the sense-making process as they critically re-evaluate their interpretations (Smith & Osborne, 2015). As Gadamer (2004/1960: 267) suggests:

Every revision of the fore-projection is capable of projecting before itself a new projection of meaning; rival projects can emerge side by side until it becomes clearer what the unity of meaning is; interpretation begins with fore-conceptions that are replaced by more suitable ones.

Smith (2004) refers to the double hermeneutic nature of IPA, where the researcher is trying to make sense of the research participants as they try to make sense of their personal and social worlds. In so doing the IPA researcher is required to take on a dual role: standing alongside the participants to empathetically understand their perspective, while at the same

time critically questioning their conceptualisations (Eatough & Smith, 2006). The hermeneutic circle sees the researcher moving through a cyclic process of analytical iterations to constantly re-evaluate the contributing parts of the study against its whole (Smith, 2007). In other words, to better understand the whole, the researcher has to perform a meticulous examination of the individual parts and vice versa. Smith et al. (2009) contend that the hermeneutic circle is of considerable importance in IPA as it facilitates a positive process of engagement with the research participants, which allows an open, inclusive understanding to be formed from inside the study, as opposed to an exclusive and bracketed one from the outside. From a different angle, Larkin, Watts and Clifton (2006) draw our attention to the significance of the researcher's biography and its influence on the interpretation, suggesting that although this may be the case, the hermeneutic circle opens the study up to constant revision and elaboration that can reveal biases and blind spots.

The use of the hermeneutic circle in IPA results in a much richer analysis that not only can make sense of an experience, but also capture a sense of what the experience is like for a particular individual or group. The focus on the particular in IPA relates to its third major theoretical influence, namely idiography. Eatough and Smith (2017: 204) talk about the importance of foregrounding the research participants, advocating an "intensive examination of the individual in her/his own right". An idiographic study is interested in the depth and finely-textured detail of the phenomenon as experienced by individuals, as opposed to a nomothetic approach, which is focused on establishing averages and explanations of a whole group or population (Smith, 2004; Smith & Osborn, 2015). This is not to suggest, as Smith et al. (2009) contend, that generalisations cannot be established in IPA; it is simply to underscore that they emerge from the particular and should always be presented tentatively. As opposed to the passive individual engaging with an objective reality, the idiographic focus of IPA is an exploration of the individual as the active interpreter of their personal and social worlds. In this sense, less is more as the in-depth study of a person's sense-making of a phenomenon is able to reveal significant generic themes and commonalities (Eatough & Smith, 2017). As Smith et al. (2009: 38) put it, "the specifics are unique, but they are hung on what is shared and communal".

The idiographic aspect of IPA is committed to the detailed exploration of a phenomenon, both in revealing patterns and themes across a study while also recognising

and representing the narratives of the individual lives from whom the patterns and themes have emerged (Smith, 2011). Such studies start with a detailed examination of each case before moving on to look for emerging themes across all cases. IPA is thus grounded in an inductive approach that does not attempt to test a specific hypothesis but takes a flexible approach to presenting and building themes from the bottom up (Smith, 2004). It could be argued that, in attempting to build a picture of commonalities, IPA research runs the risk of losing sight of its commitment to detailing the diversity of each individual experience. To safeguard against such a loss of commitment, Larkin et al. (2006) advise that IPA researchers adopt a broad range of analytical strategies, coupled with carefully formulated research questions and a meticulous reflective analysis. In addition, Smith et al. (2009) highlight the importance of maintaining an awareness of the contextual background of the study and that the researcher and the research participants are engaged in a shared interpretive process.

In summary, IPA is a qualitative research approach that facilitates the in-depth exploration of an individual's perceptions of a phenomenon. From an IPA perspective, people are believed to be actively engaged in the world and constantly trying to make sense of their experiences within it. The IPA researcher is attempting to get as close as possible to the personal world of a research participant to make sense of it through a process of active interpretation. To achieve this, IPA has taken an eclectic approach to its theoretical foundations, combining phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith et al., 2009). The phenomenological influence on IPA is one that is committed to elucidating a phenomenon through a "focus on experience and its perceptions" (Smith et al., 2009: 21). Rather than developing a phenomenology that transcends our everyday natural attitudes, IPA aims to grasp the essence of the phenomenon as it is experienced by the individual. In short, "IPA has the modest ambition of attempting to capture particular experiences as experienced for a particular people" (Smith et al., 2009: 16). Phenomenological inquiry, from this perspective, becomes an interpretative process in which the researcher and the researched are firmly positioned as being-in-the-world (Smith et al., 2009). To realise this, IPA adopts a double hermeneutic nature, in which the researcher tries to make sense of the research participants as they try to make sense of their personal and social worlds (Smith, 2004). Within IPA, the research participant is not seen as an object of study, but as an individual whose voice is essential to the debate. Phenomenological and hermeneutic

aspects of IPA are thus wrapped in an idiographic framework that is focused on in-depth small-scale studies, ensuring that any generalisations are tentatively made and emerge directly from the particular (Smith et al., 2009).

Criticism of IPA would suggest it to be ambiguous and mostly descriptive, capturing opinion more than human experiences (Giorgi, 2010; Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). I would argue, however, that IPA, with its emphasis on detailing the convergences and divergences of lived experiences, offers a flexible research approach that through an attentive, in-depth analytical process values the individual.

3.3.2 Rationale for Selecting IPA

Newby (2010) contends that educational research is a “messy business” and warns against ill-considered research decisions that may undermine the credibility of a study. Along similar lines, Cohen et al. (2011) discuss the importance of harmonising the purpose of the research with its design and methodological underpinnings. For Cohen et al., this is achieved through a two-phase approach of divergent and convergent thinking. During the divergent phase, the researcher considers a range of possibilities, comparing and contrasting different options against the research aims. In the convergent phase, the researcher filters down the various possibilities into a research plan that is coherent and realistic. Following the guidance of Cohen et al., in the initial stages of this research, I looked at a number of possible qualitative approaches (as detailed below), filtering and matching them against the intentions of the study. Out of this initial exploration IPA emerged as the most appropriate research approach to adopt for this study.

Smith et al. (2009: 37) suggest that “[w]ithout the phenomenology, there would be nothing to interpret, without the hermeneutics, the phenomenon would not be seen”. IPA, as outlined by Smith et al., is underpinned by a phenomenological commitment to getting as close as possible to the personal experiences of the research participants. While such a pursuit could be seen to be a realist endeavour, IPA’s hermeneutic stance embraces a recognition of the individual and the individual’s personal understandings of the world around them. This research study was interested in the subjective experiences of a group of middle leaders in relation to their sense-making of their role in relation to teachers’ professional development. It was an interpretive piece of work that sought to reveal and

recognise the individual voices and experiences of the middle leaders involved. This is not to suggest, however, that each middle leader's views were considered to be entirely idiosyncratic and holding no commonalities and general themes with the others'. As Willig (2013) contends, IPA subscribes to a relativist ontology, but at the same time, recognises that individuals' interpretations are formed within shared social interactions and events.

Larkin and Thompson (2012) describe IPA as an interpretative process fundamentally aimed at identifying what matters to the research participants, and then, through an inductive exploration, what meaning this holds for them. In line with this thinking, this study did not seek to provide a pure description of a phenomenon akin to that of Husserlian phenomenology. Neither was it trying to build an explanation or theoretical claim of the middle leaders' experiences, as would be associated with Grounded Theory. The intentions of this research were to explore the personal experiences of a small group of middle leaders in relation to teachers' professional development, through a process in which both the researcher and research participants entered into a shared interpretative endeavour (Smith et al., 2009). Although some critics of IPA see this focus on perceptions and interpretations as limiting, suggesting that it does not provide any real understanding of the triggers for a particular experience or its responses (Willig, 2013), I would argue that the focus of IPA on understanding human experience from the perspective of the actual meaning-makers opens up the possibility of delivering a rich understanding of how an individual's feelings, reasoning and perceptions cause them to act and respond in certain ways.

It is suggested that IPA does not recognise the integral role of language in how individuals bring meaning to experiences (Tuffour, 2017). Willig (2013), however, draws attention to the importance of language in phenomenological research, arguing it to be the means by which individuals capture and translate their experiences to others. As this piece of research held a central commitment to the voice of the research participants, a focus on language was viewed as being both important and essential to the data collection and analysis. From this perspective, it could be argued that discourse analysis (DA), with its focus on spoken and written language and how language enacts the beliefs and social perspectives of individuals (Coulthard, 2014), might have presented an alternative research approach. Gee (2011) outlines two broad approaches to discourse analysis, one that is interested in the description of linguistic structures and the organisation of language, and

the other more focused on a critical stance and concerned with social structures and relationships. As outlined by Gee, what links these two approaches is a heritage rooted in linguistics and the study of language-in-use. For this study, neither a critical perspective of examining language to illuminate regulatory structures of power nor a purely descriptive exploration of discursive context would have met its aims. This study was focused on the middle leaders' perceptions and views of their role in relation to teachers' professional development and what this could say about how they were making sense of their role. The study was not interested in how the middle leaders used language to construct meaning, but in what their verbal reports could tell us about how they were making sense of their role in relation to teachers' professional development. In other words, the intentions of this study were to better understand the thoughts and feelings of the middle leaders (Smith, 2015).

Underpinning this research was the belief that the research participants have something important to say and share about their experiences as middle leaders. In particular, the study wanted to present a detailed and nuanced analysis of how the middle leaders were making sense of their roles in relation to teachers' professional development and what meaning this has for them. I have argued in this section that this study had an interest in the lived experiences of the middle leaders involved, rather than in building an explanation or theoretical claim about their experiences. Similarly, although meaning-making is recognised as taking place in narrative and discourse, this study is not interested in presenting a linguistic account of the middle leaders' perceptions. The intentions of the research were to conduct an intimate small-scale study to explore the convergences and divergences of the research participants' views and perspectives through an interpretative process. As a result, IPA was selected as an appropriate research approach – not only due to IPA's propensity to capture valuable insight into how the middle leaders were making sense of their role in relation to teachers' professional development, but also by giving them a voice in the debate on teachers' professional development. As Smith et al. (2009: 3) propose, "IPA is committed to the detailed examination of a particular case. It wants to know in detail what the experience for this person is like, what sense this particular person is making of what is happening to them".

3.3.3 Case Study and IPA

The idiographic nature of IPA means that it lends itself to applying a case study framework to its data collection methods (Shinebourne, 2011; Smith et al., 2009). Smith (2008) holds that within a case study framework, IPA research can penetrate further into the detail of human experience. The benefits of this for Smith are twofold; firstly, it gives more insight into each individual experience, and secondly, it provides the scope for connections to be made between experiences. Echoing Warnock (1987), Smith makes the noteworthy point that by looking more closely at the particular, we can move closer to understanding the universal.

In trying to define the basis of what a case study is, it is difficult to find any real consensus. Stake (1995, 1998) defines case study as a means of analysing a single case in depth, to capture its nuances and complexities. Central to Stake's definition is that the methods applied in the case study are subordinate to the more important context of the case itself. As Stake (2005: 443) argues, "case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied". Along similar lines, Simons (2009) sees case study as an approach that sits within an overarching methodology. Like Stake, she is interested in the particularity of a case, and for her, it is this that determines the direction of the research and selection of the methods used. In contrast, Yin (2003: 14) defines case study as a "comprehensive research strategy". According to Yin, case study is a means by which answers to questions regarding real-life phenomena can be determined through in-depth empirical inquiry. Unlike Stake's more flexible naturalistic perspective, Yin's focus is on answering research questions and bringing definition to the design and implementation of case study research, filling, as he sees it, "a void in social science methodology" (p.2). Along similar lines, Newby (2010) defines case study to be a principle methodology in educational research; assembled with a distinct set of principles, procedures and applications. Like Yin, Newby believes that "case studies that emphasise uniqueness are not really all that helpful" (p.51), but rather the case should solve an issue and produce understanding that is transferrable to other situations. In what could be seen as an attempt to find some middle ground, Merriam (1998: 34), from yet another angle, defines case study in terms of "the process of actually carrying out the investigation, the unit of analysis (the bounded system,

the case), or the end product". Within her definition, Merriam echoes Stake's emphasis on the importance of "the case" and its delineation; placing boundaries around it to focus the study and produce a greater depth. But she also asserts the importance of the process of conducting the inquiry and its end product, and so, like Yin (2003), is interested in the case study as a procedure that has predetermined criteria to meet.

In agreement with Stake (2005) and Simons (2009), I reject the idea of case study being a methodology in its own right, in favour of Stake's view that the central focus is the case, and as such a case study is more about the "choice of what is to be studied" (Stake, 2005: 438). In relation to this research project, the case study was seen as part of an IPA research approach, which as Smith et al. (2009) argue, utilises case study to illuminate and provide an in-depth perspective of individuals' experiences and to explicate shared themes of importance and interest. Therefore, the use of case study in IPA seemingly opens up the possibility of detailing the complexities and particularities of individuals' subjective perspectives, while at the same time establishing generalisations from intersubjective commonalities. Such a viewpoint holds the promise of producing rich, detailed studies, but it also raises an important question in relation to the purpose of a study and its clarity: is the study primarily intrinsic in nature and interested in the research participants for their own sake, or extrinsic and interested in the participants' perceptions because they tell us something about a reality beyond their individual experiences? This was a question that seemed important to consider in relation to this piece of research.

Stake (2005) separates case study research into two classifications, 'intrinsic' and 'instrumental'. Intrinsic case studies are selected on the basis of a particular interest in a specific case and not with a secondary purpose in mind. Thomas (2015) refers to this as "blue sky" research, which is driven by a curiosity in a subject and not an ulterior motive. As such, an intrinsic study is undertaken to bring understanding to a particular case because the case is of interest in itself, and not to be representative of other cases or to solve a particular problem (Stake, 2005). This is not to suggest that the findings of an intrinsic study cannot transcend beyond the particular case. Stake (1995) argues that 'petite' generalisations born out of small-scale case studies can lead to more general ones, as naturalistic generalisations emerge from the interpretation of such studies by others who make connections to their own practice and understanding. In summary, intrinsic case

studies are focused solely on the case and aim to present research findings that resonate experientially with others to build greater understanding and knowledge of a phenomenon.

In contrast, a more intersubjective approach is found in instrumental case studies that are conducted with a purpose in mind. As Thomas (2015) outlines, instrumental case studies are not purely done for the love of knowledge but are used as a tool to understand, explain or evaluate some area of interest. This may take the form of a tested hypothesis, where empirical findings are used to either verify or falsify previous understandings or theories (Yin, 2003). As a result, instrumental case studies can be seen as a means of facilitating an explanation of an issue and establishing generalisations (Stake, 2005). A researcher adopting an instrumental case study approach is primarily focused on a special area of interest, which dictates the research design and direction. Subordinate to the researcher's area of interest is the case, which "plays a supportive role, and ... facilitates the understanding of something else" (Stake, 2005: 445).

An aim of this study was to explore how middle leaders were perceiving and contextualising recent national policy in relation to teachers' professional development. An integral part of this was a purposeful exploration as to whether the middle leaders' perceptions of teachers' professional development were expansive or restrictive in nature. The study in this sense demonstrated an instrumental element, with the inquiry being used to provide insight into a particular issue. Stake (1998: 123), however, reminds us that "there is no hard-and-fast line distinguishing intrinsic case study from instrumental". Stake argues that a case study may simultaneously have several interests that are both particular and general, creating what he refers to as a "zone of combined purpose" (p.123). This study was no exception to this line of thinking, as an intrinsic interest in the personal lived experiences of the middle leaders and how they were making sense of their own and others' professional development was seen as fundamental to the research. The study is a recognition of the importance of the particular experiences and voices of the middle leaders and what they could bring to the debate on teachers' professional development. It was the middle leaders' subjectivity that allowed for emergent themes to develop and to be studied from multiple perspectives, within the study's IPA framework. Although the study, from an instrumental perspective, sought to consider the middle leaders' sense-making for extended and restricted characteristics of professionalism (Hoyle, 1974, 2008), the substantial aspect

of the study was an intrinsic interest in the research participants' subjectivity. Adhering to Stake's viewpoint that "the purpose of case study is not to represent the world, but to represent the case" (Stake, 1998: 104), this study had a prevalent intrinsic interest in the middle leaders' perspectives and viewpoints.

In summary, the case study aspect of this research was seen as an integral part of the idiographic element of IPA research. As Smith et al. (2009: 32) contend, IPA research is conducted in a particular context with particular individuals, whose experiences are explored in detail "before moving to more general claims". The research was conducted as an exploration of Hamora's, Laura's, Peter's and Craig's sense-making about their role in relation teacher development. And from this perspective, the case study element in this research was approached predominately from an intrinsic perspective.

3.4 Research Methods

3.4.1 Card-sort

Influenced by Q-methodology's Q-sort, a card-sort activity was employed as part of participants' interviews to stimulate discussion points and greater depth in their sense-making.

Q-methodology is a research method developed by William Stephenson (1953) to analyse people's positioning and viewpoints on particular topics. Stephenson's rationale in developing Q-methodology was to move away from a purely quantitative approach to conducting psychological research, to one that was more focused on individuals' subjectivity (Stephenson, 1953). As opposed to purely looking for patterns across a population or group, Stephenson wanted to gain a holistic understanding of people and how they made sense of the world around them. In Q-methodology, "people and not tests are the variables" (Coogan & Herrington, 2011: 24).

Shinebourne and Adams (2007) contend that Q-methodology and its research methods have a part to play in phenomenological research. The premise behind Shinebourne and Adams' argument is that Q-methodology shares with other phenomenological methods, such as IPA, a desire to explore "subjective accounts of phenomena from participants' perspectives, attempting to identify broad categories and

common themes and a commitment to a collaborative engagement with participants” (p.104). Like IPA, Q-methodology, therefore, seeks to bring insight to the uniqueness and commonalities of human experience. Central to the application of Q-methodology is to ask research participants to consider what is meaningful and significant about a topic from their perspective. They do this by ranking statements in what is referred to as a Q-sort. The underlining principles of the Q-sort method have been embraced and adapted into a card-sort process within this study.

To conduct a Q-sort, a set of statements (the Q-set) have to be generated about the topic of interest. The statements typically are taken from relevant literature and/or interviews with individuals who have an interest in the research topic (Coogan & Herrington, 2011). Alternatively, requests can be made to research participants via email or as part of a focus group session to generate statements (Coogan & Herrington, 2011). Within this study, in the initial focus group meeting (discussed in the next section 3.4.2), participants were asked to generate statements on aspects and areas of professional development that they felt teachers should be provided with or given opportunities to engage with. Further, as suggested by Coogan and Herrington (2011), the focus group meeting was audio-recorded and additional statements were selected from the transcript and added to the statement set. (For clarity and to avoid duplication, some of the participants’ statements were rewritten by myself, these have been indicated in Appendix 2). It could be suggested that by limiting the generation of the statements to just the research participants in this study, the research would not be completely representative of the topic or provide a wide range of opinion. The inquiry, however, had an intrinsic interest in a particular group of middle leaders and their perspectives. Consequently, to introduce external understandings and knowledge would have run contrary to the IPA approach of the study, as it was the middle leaders’ own words and experiences that were of interest. The range of statements generated by the research group also provided further insight into the participants’ perspectives of teachers’ professional development.

The Q-sort process involves the research participants modelling their points of view by ranking the Q-set statements on a points scale grid. The Q-sort process is thereby a means of evaluating how meaningful and significant something is for a research participant. Stephenson (1953) sees the Q-sort as a dynamic process in which the participants’

subjective views are revealed, through an active process of positioning the Q-statements and discussing their decisions. Similarly, Brown (1980) argues that the Q-sort process allows for greater clarity in research interviews, as it allows a participant to express their subjective thinking more coherently. Adapting the Q-sort process for this study, a card-sort was used in the individual interviews to specifically answer the second research question: What aspects of teachers' professional development matter to middle leaders and why do these aspects of teachers' professional development have meaning for them? The intention behind using a card-sort to answer the above research question was to help generate greater clarity in the participants' sense-making.

To avoid restricting the participants' subjectivity within the card-sort process, the Q-methodology procedure of positioning the statements on a point scale grid was discarded in favour of giving them more freedom. The participants were allowed to position the statements in a way that best represented their thinking. The only condition placed on the sort was to rank the statements in order of what aspects of teachers' professional development the participants considered to be 'most important' to 'least important'.

In Q-methodology, once all of the participants' interview data has been obtained, the next stage is to analyse the data for themes and commonalities across the participants. A factor analysis is then applied to the Q-sort to identify connections and similarities in the data. As the research approach adopted in this study was IPA, a factor analysis of the participants' data was not applicable and discarded. Factor analysis would have introduced a quantitative element to the study, distorting the interpretive process that is so fundamental to IPA (Smith et al., 2009). The card-sort employed in this study is merely influenced by Q-sort and not a replication of it.

3.4.2 Focus Group

The initial phase of the research project consisted of a focus group meeting with the research participants. The focus group meeting was audio-recorded, and transcripts of these were used to provide additional data to the individual semi-structured interviews (as discussed in section 3.4.3).

Although the use of focus groups is not uncommon as an IPA research method (de Visser & Smith, 2007; Dunne & Quale, 2001; Flowers et al., 2003; Lamb & Cogan, 2016;

Randazzo et al., 2015), Smith et al. (2009) warn that they should be used with considerable caution. The argument against focus group interviews in IPA research is that multiple voices in a group setting add a level of complexity to the IPA analysis, making it difficult to infer and identify personal, phenomenological accounts (Smith et al., 2009). The focus group in this study was set up to generate the card-sort statements and to provide an opportunity for additional viewpoints and themes to develop outside of the individual interviews. Also, the focus group was seen as an opportunity to help create a collaborative environment of openness and mutual respect, in which the participants felt more inclined to share and talk freely about their experiences. Therefore, while this research project acknowledged the inherent complexity that group discussions can bring to IPA research (Smith et al., 2009), in this study the focus group discussions were seen as an enhancement to the participants' individual accounts and their connection to one another. As Palmer et al. (2010) suggest, rather than weakening an IPA study, focus groups can add extra experiential data that provides greater insight not only into personal experiences, but also into how they relate to others. Similarly, Tomkins and Eatough (2010) see naturalistic focus group discussions as a space in which participants' feelings and memories can be stimulated by others' sense-making efforts.

As part of the focus group meeting, it was important to build the research participants' confidence so that they felt relaxed and not threatened by the group setting. The participants were emailed an agenda for the focus group meeting before the event to remove any concerns about what would be involved (Appendix 1). At the start of the meeting, an outline of the research was given to create a sense of inclusion. The participants were made aware of the importance of their voices to the study and why they had been selected. To remove concerns about members of the group or myself breaking the confidentiality of the meeting, I requested that the participants did not share the content of the discussion outside of the group. There was also a reassurance given that at no point would the participants be asked to reflect on school policy or the school's leadership. Adopting Wilkinson's (2004) suggestion, the focus group interview was conducted with me, as the interviewer, acting as a facilitator to a group discussion, by encouraging the group to interact with one another in a naturalistic discussion. Stewart and Shamdasani (2015) point

out, that by adopting the role of the facilitator in focus group meetings the researcher can avoid the risk of reducing the session to something more reminiscent of a group survey.

During the focus group meeting, the participants were given a single prompt, namely to consider and discuss their thoughts on teachers' professionalism and professional development. The discussion lasted for just over 13 minutes, with very little redirection being needed from me. Following on from this discussion the participants were asked to generate the card-sort statements as a group. As the group generated the statements, they actively engaged in a debate about the statements. Twenty-five card-sort statements were generated, which are listed in Appendix 2.

3.4.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Smith and Osborne (2015: 56) advise that "probably the best way to collect data for an IPA study and the way most IPA studies have been conducted is through the semi-structured interview". Semi-structured interviews allow a dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee that, while based around a set of pre-planned questions, retains the flexibility to explore unexpected and interesting points in the dialogue to capture a participant's subjectivity more faithfully (Kvale, 2008). Semi-structured interviews, consequently, create a relationship between the researcher and the research participant, in which the participant's views and perspectives are valued and are allowed to be heard.

As this research was an exploration of the middle leaders' perceptions in relation to teachers' professionalism and professional development, interviews were seen as a key element in bringing insight to the participants' sense-making (Smith & Osborne, 2015). As a middle leader interviewing other middle leaders, the interview design and format naturally adopted that of a professional dialogue between colleagues. Kvale (2008) states that the researcher's authenticity and integrity are integral aspects of the interview process. In this respect, the interviews were approached as a social encounter between colleagues who knew one another, and in which the interviewer, namely myself, played a role in the knowledge production (Holstein & Gubrium, 2016). To do otherwise would have been to suggest that my social proximity and connection to the research participants could be disguised or ignored, potentially jeopardising the depth of knowledge that could be obtained from the interviews (Kvale, 2008). As Holstein and Gubrium (2016) suggest, the

researcher unavoidably affects the interview process, and to view the interviewer as a neutral participant who does not distort the interview dialogue would be to labour under a false pretence. In approaching the interviews in this study as a dialogue between colleagues, I felt that it was possible to create an environment of open exchange that would more easily reveal emergent themes and multiple realities (Stake, 1995). As Simons (2009: 43) asserts, interviews are an active engagement between the interviewer and interviewee in which learning takes place for both of them, with “the potential for uncovering and representing unobserved feelings and events”.

Following Smith and Osborne’s (2015) outline for constructing the interview schedule, the broad themes of my research questions were drafted into an initial set of interview questions. The interview questions were then repeatedly reviewed and redrafted. The intention behind the redrafting of the interview questions was to ensure that the questions were sufficient to address the research questions without being too explicit. The process also involved considering possible prompts, to probe responses further, again without being too explicit and disrupting the naturalistic flow of the interviewee’s thinking. In all, the careful consideration and redrafting of the interview questions underpinned the interpretivist positioning of the research, by striving to get as close as possible to a true representation of the middle leaders’ perceptions. The final interview schedule consisted of five questions (Appendix 3) with the second question incorporating the card-sort activity as detailed previously (see section 3.4.1). All of the interviews lasted just over one hour and were audio-recorded.

3.5 Data Analysis

While Smith et al. (2009) provide a step-by-step guide to conducting IPA data analysis, they are also careful to point out that IPA research does not propose one set, prescriptive way of working with data. Likewise, Larkin et al. (2006) see IPA’s analytical process as being adaptable, arguing that IPA should be viewed more as a stance than a distinct process or method. It is the phenomenological and ideographical focus of IPA that directs the analysis and not a predefined repertoire of strategies. Of course, as Smith et al. (2009) point out, a researcher’s ability to be adaptive and flexible comes with experience, as it requires the careful balancing of creativity with a commitment to rigour. With this in mind, the

guidelines for IPA data analysis, as set out by Smith et al. (2009), were broadly adhered to in this study, with only a few adaptations made when it was deemed necessary to do so. The stages of the data analysis are outlined below.

3.5.1 Super-ordinate Themes

The ideographic nature of IPA dictates that the individuality of the research participants within a study is of fundamental importance. Given the ideographic commitment of IPA and the importance it places on the individual, each of the participants' cases were analysed separately and in detail. Adhering to the warning of Smith et al. (2009), the focus group transcript was not considered to be a suitable starting point for the analysis, as it is believed that multiple voices in a group setting make the analytic process more complicated. Consequently, the order of the data analysis was Hamora, Laura, Peter and Craig, followed by the focus group. There was no particular reason for starting with Hamora's transcript, other than that she was the first participant to be interviewed.

During the first stage of my analysis, the research participant's interview transcripts were read many times, in conjunction with an examination of their card-sorts. It also proved useful during this phase to revisit the audio-recordings of the participant's interviews, to gain a better sense of intonations and speech characteristics. During the reading of the transcripts, exploratory notes of anything that appeared interesting or significant were entered into the right-hand column of a transcript table (see Appendix 4). For each line of the transcript, the dialogue was engaged with by questioning what each word, phrase and sentence meant for the participant, thereby retaining a phenomenological focus on the participant and their sense-making (Smith et al., 2009). During this phase of the analysis, it became apparent that certain phrases and words had particular significance for the participants. As an example, Hamora used the phrase "the head-line figure" several times during her interview, and this became a point of interest for me. Initially, I felt that Hamora was using the phrase to vindicate her actions; in being responsible for the "headline figure", she was not entirely free to follow her own direction. On further examination of her transcript and interview recording, my interpretation changed as I began to see the phrase as being more representative of the way Hamora saw and talked about her role in

education. Specifically, I interpreted the phrase as underscoring a frustration in Hamora brought about by her sense of professional exclusion and accountability.

During the next stage of the analysis, the participants' transcripts and card-sorts were returned to, developing the initial exploratory notes into emergent themes. Throughout this stage, the aim was to uncover themes that remained true to each participants' original words, while building an interpretation of their perceptions, feelings and thoughts. In other words, this constituted a double hermeneutic, in which I tried to make sense of the research participant, as they tried to make sense of their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Eatough and Smith (2006) warn that within a double hermeneutic analysis, the researcher can lose sight of the participant's original meanings as their interpretations develop. To ensure that this research remained as faithful as possible to the participants' original text, I applied a hermeneutic circle to the analysis (Eatough & Smith, 2006; Smith et al., 2009). The iterative nature of the hermeneutic circle introduced a reflective aspect to the analysis, in which I as the researcher questioned my interpretations repeatedly and whether or not they were coming directly from the participants' sense-making (Smith et al., 2009). Initially, I adopted an approach of trying to pin-down the participants' sense-making into neat explanations, which prove to be a fruitless exercise. The main problem stemmed from my failure to recognise the multiplicity of individuals' sense-making. Eventually, I arrived at a more expansive way of working that involved thinking broader about the emergent themes. Peter, for example, positively reminisced about his formative years in teaching which appeared to help him maintain a sense of continuity and professional identity. In exploring the multiplicities behind Peter's recollections, themes centred around ideas of professional growth and self-esteem became prominent in my interpretation of Peter's transcript.

The themes that emerged over numerous iterations were recorded in the left-hand column of the transcript table (see Appendix 5) before eventually being typed into a list of themes that were printed out. The printed themes were cut up into separate units so that they could be manipulated on a tabletop. This enabled the themes to be arranged and grouped, providing a clear visual representation by which they could easily be explored and considered. By arranging the themes in such a way, it was possible to cluster the themes

according to conceptual similarities, and a single main super-ordinate theme could be determined. The main super-ordinate themes were given descriptive labels before being reconsidered against the interview data to ensure that it represented a clear association with the participant.

Finally, when writing the analysis of each interview transcript, it became necessary to return to the hermeneutic circle, with a re-evaluation of each transcript extract against the whole text as part of the writing process. The result was several significant changes and enhancements to the emergent themes. Laura's super-ordinate theme, for example, up to the point of writing the analysis of her transcript had been centred around professional dualism. Through the writing process, an alternative interpretation opened up, in which Laura's professional dualism appeared to be better explained within the context of a more encompassing theme of collegiality. Similarly, Craig's theme of "professional talk", which stemmed out of his references to teachers all being on receive and not communicating enough, was re-evaluated during the write-up stage. On a re-examination of Craig's transcript, I started to feel that at several points, his sense-making was better represented in the idea of teachers listening to one another more. Craig's theme was consequently amended from "professional talk" to "listening".

The analysis of Hamora's, Laura's, Peter's and Craig's interviews and the focus group discussion are presented in the super-ordinate themes section (4.2) of the data analysis chapter. The super-ordinate themes identified in section 4.2 are: "inclusion" (Hamora), "being a colleague" (Laura), "nurturing" (Peter), "listening" (Craig) and "professional self" (focus group).

3.5.2 Master Themes

Once all of the interview and focus group transcripts had been analysed, the next phase of the analysis was to look for patterns across all of the cases to identify overarching master themes that reflected the higher-order concepts and experiences shared by the whole study group (Smith et al., 2009; Willig, 2013). To capture the master themes requires a researcher to make connections across the different participants' conceptualisations of a phenomenon, however subtle or disparate they may be (Larkin & Thomas, 2012). The process is not just a case of trying to form a set of connections and associations across the participants' thinking,

but also to reveal the subtle nuances of “how participants manifest the same theme in particular and different ways” (Smith, 2011: 24). To achieve this, the IPA researcher is required to concurrently consider multiple layers of interpretation, to substantiate group-level claims while retaining an idiographic focus (Smith et al., 2009).

Following the guidance of Willig (2013) and Smith et al. (2009) the super-ordinate themes of “inclusion”, “being a colleague”, “nurturing”, “listening” and “professional self” were considered for possible connections. A substantial period of time was committed to exploring possible master themes, through an iterative process of tentatively forming ideas and then checking them against the participants’ transcripts. Thus, as with the building of the super-ordinate themes the hermeneutic circle enabled a constant questioning of the individual parts against of the analysis as a whole (Smith et al., 2009). Through this iterative process, several master themes were considered until the final master theme of “relationships” was arrived at.

Willig (2013) points out that after the construction of the master theme or themes, it is not uncommon for an IPA researcher to extend their study with more explicit and focused interpretations, typically using a theoretical lens of some description. By doing so, the researcher takes the research beyond a thematic analysis of the participants into a higher level of interpretation, which has the potential to provide more insight and understanding (Willig, 2013). One of the aims of this study was to explore the relevance and impact of national policy on the middle leaders’ realisations of teachers’ professional development, and whether it is extending or restricting their thinking. This aim was addressed in an additional level of interpretation, by interrogating the master themes under Hoyle’s (1974, 2008) conceptual framework of extended and restricted teacher professionalism.

3.5.3 Extended and Restricted Teacher Development

Hoyle’s (1974) concept of extended and restricted professionalism provides a framework by which the nature and quality of a teachers’ professional development can be assessed. The framework can effectively be seen as a continuum ranging from ‘restricted’ perspectives of teachers’ professional development to much broader extended ones (Evans, 2008). Hoyle’s model considers individual, organisational and wider social dimensions as being important factors in teachers’ development.

A restricted professional was construed as a teacher for whom teaching was an intuitive activity, whose perspective was restricted to the classroom, who engaged little with wider professional reading or activities, relied on experience as a guide to success, and greatly valued classroom autonomy. An extended professional was construed as a teacher for whom teaching was a rational activity, who sought to improve practice through reading and through engaging in continuous professional development, who was happily collegial, and who located classroom practice within a larger social framework. (Hoyle, 2008: 291)

Hoyle's (2008) extended-restricted model has found great favour with many researchers investigating teachers' professionalism. For example, Evans (2008) argues that empirical evidence supports Hoyle's heuristic model, and that it is a useful tool for the analysis of professionals working in education. Hoyle (2008), from a self-critical perspective, has questioned his original formulation of the restricted–extended model, suggesting that the use of 'restricted' carries with it negative connotations of classroom practitioners who may sit more towards the restricted end of the continuum but nevertheless are highly skilled. In a response to his own criticism, Hoyle asserts that the continuum relates to the scope of professionalism and not the denigration of individual teachers. Furthermore, in considering Hoyle's framework to be a continuum, teachers are not factored into being a restricted or extended practitioner. In seeing Hoyle's model as a continuum teachers' professional development is regarded as being continuous, ongoing and multidimensional.

In this piece of research, teachers are viewed as being very much part of an occupational community in which their development is dynamic and multifaceted, and a process that is both individual and socially oriented. The study, in part, was interested in whether the middle leaders' perceptions, thoughts and feelings could be suggested to be extended or restricted in relation to teachers' professional development. Hoyle's model, consequently, was seen as a theoretical lens that could bring clarity to the analysis and draw out items of interest for greater consideration. Figure 3-1 shows the version of Hoyle's extended-restrictive continuum used within this study for the analysis.

Using the following table as a lens to examine the master theme of "relationships", the participants' transcripts and card-sorts were returned to once again to check them against the interpretations being made. Taking note of Willig's (2013) warning, the interpretations formed during this phase of the analysis were offered tentatively and as a starting point for further discussion. They were also conceived as a companion to the other

interpretations made in the study, and not as a means of superseding the voices of the participants.

	Restricted professionalism	Extended Professionalism
1	Skills derived from experience.	Skills derived from a mediation between experience and theory.
2	Perspective limited to the immediate in time and place.	Perspective embracing the broader social and educational context.
3	Focus is on isolated classroom events.	Focus on classroom events in relation to broader influences.
4	Introspective with regard to methods.	Methods compared with those of colleagues and with reports of practice.
5	Value placed on autonomy.	Value placed on professional collaboration.
6	Limited involvement in non-immediate professional activities.	High involvement in non-immediate professional activities (e.g. networks, research, professional associations).
7	Infrequent reading of professional literature.	Regular reading of professional literature.
8	Involvement in professional development limited and confined to practical courses.	Involvement in professional development considerable and includes learning of theoretical nature.
9	Work seen as an intuitive activity.	Work seen as a rational activity.

Figure 3-1 – Hoyle’s extended-restrictive continuum (Hoyle, 1974; Hoyle & John, 1995)

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The consideration of ethical issues in educational research is of the utmost importance, particularly when research participants are involved, to ensure that they are treated fairly, sensitively and with respect (BERA, 2018). In line with the ethical guidelines laid out by BERA (2018), this study was subjected to the ethical procedures and requirements of Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU). Three main ethical issues were identified. Firstly, the participants’ involvement in the study was judged to have the potential to alter their ideas and beliefs in relation to their professionalism, which could result in them changing their current professional practice, or causing them emotional harm. Secondly, depending on what the study revealed, there may have been some risk of reputational harm to the school

or research participants. Thirdly, as the research was conducted with colleagues, a level of personal involvement between the participants and me (as the researcher) needed to be considered, along with the potential harm that this may have incurred. Following closely the BERA Ethical Guidelines and CCCU guidance, the following processes were put in place to make all possible attempts to address these issues.

Before starting the study, permission was sought from the school's headteacher to conduct the research with members of staff in the school. In selecting the research participants, consideration was given to their suitability, time and availability (Cohen et al., 2011). Through discussions with the school's headteacher about conducting the research, the headteacher indicated that he would be happy for middle leaders with self-directed CPD time to take part. Adhering to the headteacher's request, meant that only middle leaders with self-directed CPD time were invited to take part in the research. Initially, I viewed the exclusion negatively as it did not sit well with the study's aims and intentions. A central theme of the work is teacher voice, and by limiting participation, individuals, who may have wished to contribute to the research, were silenced. After a period of reflection, however, the headteacher's restriction led to a purposeful shift in the study. As all of the middle leaders with self-directed CPD time had more than four years of experience in their roles, the study was refined to look solely at experienced middle leaders. With their capacity to draw on more established forms of practice and deeper levels of insight, it was believed that experienced middle leaders would prove to be a richer data source. Also, with their self-directed CPD time, it meant that the research could be conducted in the school during allocated time, causing little inconvenience for the participants.

To ensure openness and privacy, participants were initially emailed individually to find out if they would be interested in taking part in the study (Appendix 6), and this was subsequently followed with a research information letter (Appendix 7). The information letter introduced the research and what the participants' involvement would entail. As the research participants were my colleagues and may have felt a degree of obligation to consent to participate, the information letter also stressed that their participation was voluntary. Accompanying the information letter was a consent form (Appendix 8), which the participants were asked to sign to acknowledge that they understood their anonymisation in the study and right to withdraw. Two further letters were sent to the participants, one

before the focus group meeting (Appendix 9) and the other before the individual interviews (Appendix 10). The intention behind the two additional letters was to provide an extra layer of clarity in relation to how the focus group and interview data was to be used and protected. The focus group discussions and individual interviews were recorded directly on to a computer, and stored in an encrypted password protected folder, as was the case with all of the research data.

Having an awareness that the participants may have become emotional or frustrated about their current professional practice, the focus group meeting and individual interviews were an important focus of the ethical considerations. Asking participants to reflect on their practice could have triggered some doubts about their personal competence or their professional effectiveness. To reduce the risk of the participants becoming upset, sensitive questioning was used during the data collection sessions. The sessions were also set up to be informal and held in settings that were familiar to the participants (their offices and classrooms). Although this did not occur, if at any point during the data collection sessions a participant had become distressed, the session would have been paused or ended. In actuality, as opposed to distress, all of the participants commented after the focus group meeting and individual interviews on how much they had enjoyed the process, and the opportunity to reflect in a free and open way on their practice.

Consideration was also given to power relationships between me as the researcher and as a colleague to the research participants. As Sikes and Potts (2008) suggest, “insider research” has the potential to set up points of tension and conflict, with both researcher and participants holding concerns about professional relationships, their position in the school and whether their contribution to the research will affect their career prospects. My relationship with the school and the participants would also continue beyond the study, so also had to be considered. These issues of power relationships were addressed in the following ways.

1. It was made clear to participants that they would not be required to comment or reflect in any way on school policy, their colleagues or school leadership. The participants were only required to reflect on their perspectives of teachers’ professionalism and professional development.

2. It was made clear to the participants that anything they said would not be used for purposes they could not control.
3. Each participant was given the chance after their interview to review, amend and/or confirm their interview transcript.
4. To create an atmosphere of inclusion it was made clear to the research participants that, at every stage of the research, the research was being done with them and not on them.
5. Although I did not line manage any of the research participants, as a more experienced middle leader in the school, some of the participants may potentially have felt intimidated and anxious about being interviewed by me. To try and address this, I attempted in all of my correspondence and interactions with the research participants to separate myself as the researcher from my role in the school.

In addition to point 3, as the insider researcher it is impossible to guarantee the participants their full anonymity. Even with the use of pseudonyms it may be possible for other members of the school's community to identify who took part in the study, on the basis that I was the researcher. In an attempt to minimise this as much as possible only a brief and general description of the research participants is provided as part of this thesis. Further, the headteacher was the only other member of staff in the school privy to who participated in the research, and the participants were also made aware of anonymity concerns in my initial research invitation to them (see Appendices 6 and 7).

3.7 Research Quality

Yardley (2015) writes that human experience cannot be reduced to a single reality, but that as human beings we have individual perspectives and ideas shaped by our unique and particular interactions with the social world around us. For Yardley, this means that the validity of a piece of qualitative research should not be judged against a criterion of objectivity, but against human subjectivity. As such, the validity of a piece of qualitative research should not be judged on its factual lucidity, but on its quality and value. Similarly, Stiles (1993) rejects the idea of qualitative research adopting a concept of validity that is associated with quantitative research methods. Introducing the idea of trustworthiness,

Stiles posits that the reliability and validity of a qualitative study relates to the quality of the study's procedures and interpretations. In other words, "how well can readers trust the methods to have adequately exposed the investigators' ideas to empirical observations and how well can they trust the interpretations to improve people's understanding of the phenomena that were investigated?" (p.100).

Smith (2011) holds that good quality IPA studies, which are trustworthy, demonstrate:

- A clear sense of IPA's theoretical underpinnings: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography.
- Transparency and openness, so that readers are able to see clearly what the research has entailed.
- Plausibility through an in-depth analysis of the topic.
- Strong meaningful data and interpretations.
- Relevance and engagement that enlightens readers.

Adhering to Smith's criteria, throughout this study particular attention was paid to ensuring that the research was seen as trustworthy. Drawing on the work of Yardley (2015), Stiles (1993), Maxwell (1992) and Kvale (1989), the following aspects of research quality were considered as being the most relevant to this study: descriptive and interpretive validity; research transparency; impact and pragmatic validity.

3.7.1 Descriptive and Interpretive Validity

Maxwell (1992) refers to descriptive validity as the accuracy by which a researcher captures and presents research data. Under Maxwell's criteria, research data should be robust, free from omissions and a true representation of the research participants' views. Descriptive validity relates to the accurate reporting of research data such as interview transcriptions, as well as how the research is carried out, so that the true voice of the research participants is aired without restraint or corruption. Yardley (2015) talks about good quality research demonstrating a sensitivity to context, arguing that researchers should value and have an awareness of the research participants' differing experiences and perspectives. For Yardley, the social interactions between the researcher and the research participants, particularly

during interviews, is crucial in producing valid research outcomes. As the voice of the research participants in this study was of the utmost importance, the interviews were conducted in such a way as to put the participants at ease and to allow their perceptions to flow and develop naturally. Great care was taken to create an environment of responsiveness, free of restraint or manipulation. As argued previously, as a middle leader interviewing other middle leaders, the interview design and format tended toward that of a professional dialogue between colleagues, creating a more intimate environment of mutual respect and negating the normal power relationship between interviewer and interviewee (Holstein & Gubrium, 2016). To further strengthen the descriptive validity of the research, considerable and extensive extracts of the interview data have been included in the data analysis chapter, allowing the voice of the research participants to be heard and considered in their own right (Smith et al., 2009).

Interpretative validity relates to the credibility of the inferences made within a study. As with descriptive validity, interpretative validity is grounded in a respect for the research participants, as it seeks to faithfully represent them without bias or misjudgement (Maxwell, 1992). The use of extensive extracts in the data analysis chapter, therefore, strengthens not only the descriptive validity but also the interpretative validity, as it allows a reader to evaluate the interpretations made against the participants' own words (Smith et al., 2009). Interpretative validity is further strengthened in this study by the use of the hermeneutic circle inherent to IPA. The iterative nature of the hermeneutic circle introduces a reflective aspect to the analysis, opening up the interpretation to constant revision and re-evaluation that can expose bias and misjudgement (Packer & Addison, 1989). It is a means by which a sense of caution is introduced into the research, as it requires the researcher to question repeatedly whether, or not, their interpretations are coming directly from the research participants (Smith et al., 2009). Repeatedly returning to the participants' interview data, consequently, became a prominent feature of the analytical process in this study. I also found it useful to maintain an audit trail of my thinking and ideas, to help safeguard against the interpretations becoming more about me and my own sense-making than the participants (Smith et al., 2009).

3.7.2 Research Transparency

The transparency of a research study refers to how well a study documents its processes and findings, and is established through an honest and detailed communication with its readers (Yardley, 2015). At a basic level, transparency relates to the itemising of all relevant research processes – what was done and how it was done. But transparency also incorporates consideration of “why” things were done, moving beyond the pure detailing of research methods into the underlining motivation and positioning of the work (Yardley, 2015). As Stiles (1993: 602) notes, “having [a researcher’s] orientation in mind, whether or not we share it, helps us put their interpretations in perspective”.

A clear and thorough account of all processes undertaken as part of this study has been detailed in the methodology and research design chapter, and the data analysis chapter. As advocated by Smith et al. (2009), this includes a description of how the participants were selected, how the interviews were conducted and how the data was analysed. Ethical considerations have also been documented, and lengthy extracts from the interviews included in the data analysis chapter. Care was taken to ensure that the philosophical underpinnings and orientation of the research were apparent throughout the thesis, particularly in relation to the phenomenological and hermeneutic dimensions of IPA. Accordingly, throughout the thesis a focus is placed on valuing the voice and experiential sense-making of the research participants, coupled with an awareness of the interpretative purpose behind IPA (Smith et al., 2009).

3.7.3 Impact and Pragmatic Validity

Yardley (2015) asserts that for a piece of research to be truly valid it should demonstrate some level of impact and importance. Moving the argument beyond a mere consideration of research procedures and processes, Yardley makes a fundamental link between research validity and outcomes. In other words, for a piece of research to be deemed valid it should be informative and useful, building on what is already known and helping to answer questions that are significant to individuals and society. Similarly, Kvale (1989, 1994) introduces the concept of pragmatic validity in which the aim of the research is to produce insightful and useful knowledge that has direct practical implications. Kvale’s notion of pragmatic validity also brings perspective to qualitative research, as it requires researchers

to adopt a realistic awareness of their research and its limitations, goals and claims. Pragmatic validity, consequently, sits comfortably with IPA and its aspiration to provide useful insight into human experience, while at the same time holding an awareness that knowledge of human experience can only be seen as transitory and should be presented with caution.

From the outset, this research study was focused on giving a voice to a group of secondary school middle leaders, with the anticipation that they could bring important insight to the debate on teachers' professionalism and professional development. It was hoped that the research would have an impact on teachers' professional development, by helping teachers foster their professionalism more effectively. This is not to suggest that the research had any intentions of making formal generalisations about teachers' professional development. Adhering to Stake's (1995) concept of 'petite' generalisations that can emerge out of small-scale studies, this study simply sought to afford the possibility of its findings being informative and beneficial to the working practice of teaching professionals, and to potentially open up a space for further discussion and exploration. As Stake argues, small-scale studies have the potential to resonate experientially with others, building a greater sense of inclusion and validity with the work.

Chapter 4 Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a rich picture and narrative of the middle leaders' experiences and sense-making in relation to teachers' professional development. Five super-ordinate themes emerged out of the interpretative analytic process, as described in chapter 3. One super-ordinate theme is presented for each of the four research participants (Hamora, Laura, Peter and Craig) in addition to a collective super-ordinate theme taken from the focus group meeting. Thus, section 4.2 details the super-ordinate themes "inclusion", "being a colleague", "nurturing", "listening" and "professional self".

In section 4.3, the master theme of "relationships" is considered. The master theme is drawn from an analysis of the super-ordinate themes and reflects an overarching commonality in the middle leaders' experiences and sense-making. As Willig (2013) points out, IPA research can apply a theoretical lens to extend and bring greater clarity to the analysis of its master themes. In this study, Hoyle's (1974, 2008) conceptual framework of extended and restricted teacher professionalism is applied to the master theme of relationships.

Throughout the analysis process, careful attention was paid to representing and respecting the experiences and voices of the middle leaders. For this reason, lengthy extracts from the interviews are included in the analysis, and a detailed iterative process of analysis was adopted to represent the participants as honestly as possible.

4.2 Super-ordinate Themes

4.2.1 Hamora's Theme – Inclusion

Hamora's interview transcript offered a rich account of her role as a middle leader and what she believes to be important in the development of staff within her department. She expressed a wide range of emotions when talking about her role, ranging from a great sense of pride and significance in being a teacher to high levels of frustration and pressure that she feels in doing her job. In polarising the contrasting and conflicting emotional content of Hamora's transcript, the theme of inclusion emerged as being significant for her.

At the beginning of her interview, Hamora made a clear statement about the importance of inclusion in relation to teachers' professional development:

So I suppose an important aspect of professional development for me is to have an ethos in the department in which staff feel included and valued so that they're comfortable to contribute and challenge things. That's not to say that me rolling up my sleeves and saying, "OK, we need to do this," is not something that doesn't happen. But it's always done with a sense of being respectful to my team and their experience and what they bring to the discussion.

Hamora sees professional development as more than just discrete CPD sessions and courses, it is about an ethos of inclusion in which teachers feel valued and respected. This represents an inclusive membership, in which teachers can share their collective knowledge and understandings to self-regulate and develop their practice more effectively (Sachs, 2016). Central to Hamora's thinking appears to be the idea that inclusion builds confidence and emotional capital in staff to influence and challenge practice (Nias et al., 1989). This is important for Hamora not only in relation to staff within her department trying new ways of working, but also to reduce isolation and introverted practice. This is illustrated in her comments in the following interview extract:

I think as teachers, we need to feel confident about ourselves and about what we're doing so that we are not scared to try out new ideas and question things. I want members of my department to feel confident in their teaching so that they don't become isolated in their practice. So ... for example, we might look at our marking or data together as a department and have open discussions about the organic stories behind the data and our assessments ... it's not about using book scrutiny and data as a stick to beat teachers with, but as a way of pooling expertise and building consistency and confidence in what we're doing with our pupils ... I suppose CPD for me is about providing teachers with opportunities to work together, and to get involved, as much as anything else, so that they feel part of discussions.

Hamora's responses in the interview suggest that she provides teachers with opportunities to share their understandings and gain a knowledge of one another's work, with the understanding that judgements and decisions arrived at collectively are a fundamental part of professional development and confidence building (Cordingley et al., 2005). Marking and data are not considered purely from a monitoring and assessment perspective; Hamora sees them as a tool to stimulate greater levels of professional learning, responsibility and collaboration. Hamora considers teachers' professional development to be continuous, dynamic and inclusive, allowing collective knowledge and understandings to

develop and flow through professional interactions in a socio-cultural context. Furthermore, professional development is seen as a core property of being a professional, and not just a peripheral requirement of it, as highlighted in the following extracts:

CPD is increasingly becoming just another box we have to tick. The amount of time that I've had to sit through those how to teach CPD sessions and gained very little from them ... and ... it shouldn't be like that, it should be meaningful, relevant, about us and right at the core of who we are as teachers.

So much of the time it feels like professional development is being tagged on the end of everything else, and that is such a shame because it should be first and foremost.

Hamora's negative experiences of professional development sessions have resulted in her seeing them as just another box to tick. In the two extracts above, she associates CPD with discrete events that are conducted as a matter of course and do not extend beyond a top-down model of "how to teach" that promotes compliance and replication (Cordingley, 2015; Kennedy, 2014; Van Veen et al., 2012). Offering an alternative approach, Hamora expresses her frustration that teachers' professional development is not more meaningful and relevant, an argument she develops further in the following extract:

I think middle leaders are a linchpin and incredibly important because we are constantly implementing the vision from the top down, but within that, there is a certain amount of frustration that we don't have more of a say in the direction of the school ... I sometimes think it would be nice to be more involved in the decisions that are made. You know, why the individuals who actually do the teaching and know the pupils best within a school are not seen as the experts whose opinions and ideas can have the biggest impact on the pupils is beyond me. We just keep pedalling this idea of top-down initiatives ... and it means that we just keep telling teachers how to teach instead of skilling them to make judgements ... and develop who they are as teachers.

Exclusion, not inclusion looms largest in this extract. Middle leaders and teachers are not involved in school decisions; they are simply implementers of directives that come from above (Hickox & Moore, 1990). The dynamic interaction between teachers within a situated social and cultural context, which Hamora believes to be of importance for professional development, is consequently not met. Instead, professional development is something that is imposed and exerted on teachers, removing their professional judgement and autonomy. It is interesting to note that Hamora not only links this to how they teach but also personal judgements on who they are as teachers, a statement that appears to open up questions

about professional status and responsibility. This is a concern that leads Hamora to express a sense of frustration and hopelessness, as this exchange towards the end of her interview demonstrates:

Hamora: I'd love to send members of my department off to do some form of course or qualification, but getting it approved in terms of time, money and arguing its impact, that's a different question ... I think CPD has become heavily reactionary in school to data and OFSTED reports.

Interviewer: How does that make you feel?

Hamora: Well ... I suppose a bit frustrated and helpless ... err ... because I can't give my team the CPD that they should be getting ... and there's always that sense of what I should be doing and what I have to do, and if I'm honest, I do more of what I have to do because at the end of the day I'm responsible for the head-line figure.

Hamora's admission of personal conflict, between what she feels she "should be doing" and what she "has to do", is a telling one. Hamora's sense of teachers' professional development, based on valuing teachers' understandings and "skilling them to make judgements", is suppressed in favour of a more collectivised, accountable and "externally managed vision of [teachers'] professional expertise" (Furlong, 2013: 128). The net result for Hamora, as shown in her following reflection on national policy, is a removal of professional ownership:

Well ... in relation to the teaching standards I think it's a bit limited and prescriptive in what they outline ... There does need to be a framework, but is it inclusive? And does it join up of the dots between things? I'm not so sure ... Perhaps that's where middle leaders could have the biggest impact ... but without greater continuity and communication between us and a feeling that we have more control over our professionalism, then it is what it is.

Here again, Hamora returns to the idea of inclusion, this time questioning whether national policy relating to teachers' professionalism and professional development is inclusive. She suggests that middle leaders could have a big impact on addressing issues of professional inclusion and extensiveness, but is dismissive of the possibility of this happening based on a lack of professional identity and ownership.

The declaration seems to suggest both helplessness and passivity, as she adopts a position of compliance, accepting that “it is what it is” and that she has very little control over her and others’ professionalism. This is a position that seems to create both frustration and contradiction in Hamora’s thinking, as demonstrated in the rationale of the ordering of her card-sort (figure 4-1).

Hamora: For PGCEs and NQTs, making sure that they are doing these *[Hamora points to the ‘self-directed personal development’ and ‘creativity’ card-sort statements]* is important, but for me and more experienced members of my department, it’s not a priority. We need CPD that is more about what we are trying to achieve with our pupils, so more bespoke and focused.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on that a little further?

Hamora: Well ... student teachers and NQTs are not so much responsible for GCSE and A level results, so they can be afforded more space for exploration and self-directed CPD, and I want them to do that. *[long pause]* You know ... looking at that now, it should really be the other way around with more experienced staff given greater freedom and students more structure. That’s quite telling, isn’t it ... but that is actually what I do.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Hamora: I suppose I just feel so much pressure over exam results that they dictate everything ... I’m sure members of my department get sick of me going on about attainment and progress, and feel at times really demotivated ... But everything is about data, and attainment. You know, the things that keep me awake at night, which I know makes me sound hypocritical as I’ve talked so much about valuing my team, but I feel I just have to prioritise results even though it doesn’t sit well with me.

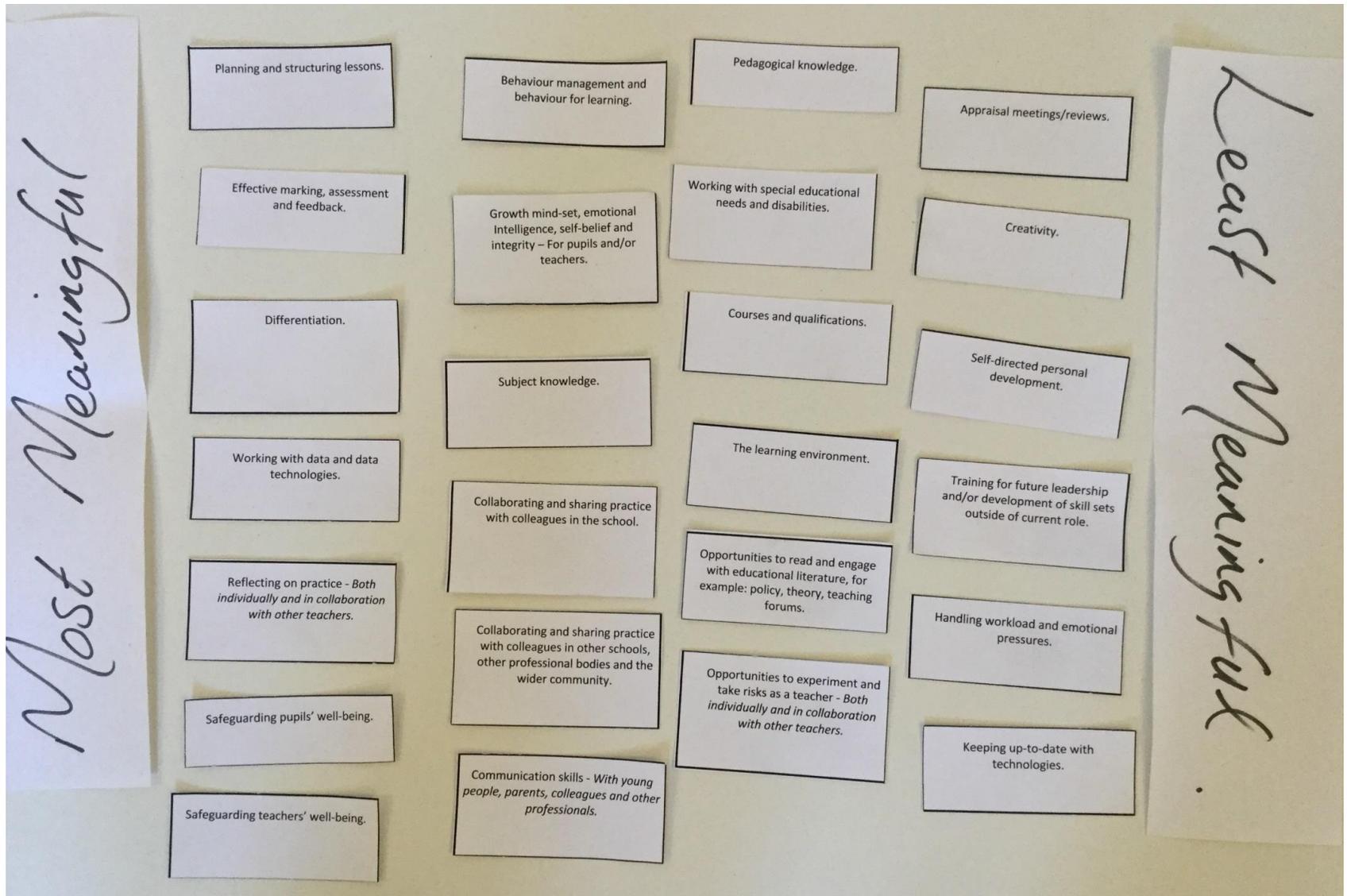


Figure 4-1 - Hamora's card-sort

There is a strong sense here of Hamora arguing with herself. When talking about the importance of 'creativity' and 'self-directed professional development' Hamora initially limits these statements to student teachers and NQTs. More experienced teachers are seen as requiring professional development that is more focused on departmental needs. When asked to elaborate further on this, Hamora begins to question herself, considering whether "it should really be the other way around", with more experienced staff having greater opportunities for self-directed development. She presents an apologetic tone in her confirmation that her card-sort is representative of what actually happens in her department, justifying her sort on the basis that student teachers and NQTs have less responsibility for exam results so they can be afforded greater space for exploration and self-directed CPD. More experienced staff, on the other hand, are given professional development that is more tightly controlled as they have greater responsibility for exam results. For experienced staff, as seen in Hamora's card-sort, "data training", "marking and assessment" and "differentiation" are positioned as more meaningful components of development (see figure 4-1). And although, as detailed earlier, Hamora views these aspects of professional development as opening up opportunities for professional learning and collaboration, their strong association with student attainment cannot be overlooked. The pressure that Hamora feels as a head of department in relation to exam results is plainly evident in the extract and leads her to reflect on the broader implications of her drive for results on her staffs' engagement and motivation – a reflection that could be said to be equally apt for Hamora.

4.2.1.1 Summary of Hamora's Theme

Within my interpretation of Hamora's sense-making about being a middle leader and her views on professional development, inclusion became a point of interest. Hamora does not see professional learning as an isolated, individualistic process delivered in a top-down manner. She understands professional development in terms of teacher involvement and interactions within a social, cultural and situated context. She values an "ethos and culture of inclusion" in which teachers can share collective knowledge to develop and self-regulate their practice. As seen in her negative comments about "how to teach CPD sessions", Hamora sees teachers' professional development as a means of equipping teachers with the

professional skills, knowledge and attitude to be critical and reflexive practitioners. Resonating with me as a practitioner, this is a vision of professional development that is as much about building emotional capital and self-belief in teachers as it is about having an impact on student outcomes (Cordingley et al., 2005; Nias et al., 1989).

The significance of inclusion on professional development for Hamora is empowerment. Teachers feel part of the discussion and through democratic engagement see professional development as a core property of their professionalism, rather than a peripheral requirement to be fulfilled (Sachs, 2016; Whitty, 2006). In reality, however, Hamora presents a picture as much about exclusion as inclusion. Hamora does not feel that teachers are involved in decisions relevant to them, but simply function as implementers of directives from above. Reverberating with this study's interest in teacher voice, Hamora presents a picture in which teachers' expertise and experience is not acknowledged. Hierarchical models within the school system are seen by Hamora as threatening teachers' professionalism by restricting their development to a limited corpus of pupil attainment-related CPD. In other words, policy limits professional knowledge and judgements to a performativity culture (Sachs, 2016). The net result for Hamora is a sense of frustration and helplessness.

When talking about her card-sort, Hamora gives the impression of self-contradiction and personal conflict. Self-directed professional development and creativity are not deemed to be of importance for more experienced staff, a position contrary to Hamora's original sense of teacher inclusion and empowerment. Her contradictions could be explained on the basis of passivity, as it is difficult not to be compliant in a high stakes environment of exam results (Ball, 2003). Alternatively, it could be suggested that Hamora is a product of social conditioning within an education system of social positioning and expectations (Leaton Gray & Whitty, 2010). From such a perspective, Hamora's inclusive collaborative sense of professional development comes to be consumed and restricted by the limited scope of an examination-focused syllabus. Whether as a result of conscious compliance or social conditioning, Hamora's emotions of frustration and helplessness are real for her, born out of a state of tension between, on the one hand, her strong sense of providing inclusive professional development, and on the other her strong sense of professional accountability.

In arriving at an interpretation of Hamora's interview I was struck with the question of how many teachers might share her frustrations, concerns and inconsistencies. I certainly can identify with the pressure she feels from the competing interests of what she is required to do and what she would like to do. In this respect, I would suggest that Hamora's sense-making reveals something important about teacher development. Hamora, potentially like many other teachers, wants to look further and more holistically at professional development, and engage with broader perspectives on teacher professionalism, but feels stuck in a performativity culture where opportunities to do so are not prioritised.

4.2.2 Laura's Theme – Being a Colleague

At the beginning of her interview Laura immediately drew attention to the importance for her of being seen as a colleague within her department:

I think being a head of department, you're so directly associated with your team that unlike other leadership roles, you have to be more of a colleague than a boss.

The extract suggests that Laura forms her interpretation of her role around a sense of collegiality. She negates the hierarchical aspect of being the head of the department by positioning herself as more of a colleague than a leader or decision-maker. Being part of a team and supporting colleagues provides Laura with a sense of professional satisfaction and an affirmation of her position, particularly in relation to staff professional development:

It's really important that members of your department see you as someone who is supportive and approachable to talk about their careers with ... I think as a head of department you're in a unique position to do that. So, for example, a member of my department who was looking to be a head of department herself had no problem in sharing that with me, and for me to support her with that gave me a great sense of professional satisfaction.

It could be suggested that Laura's professional identity as the supportive colleague stems from her close association with the teaching in her department. As Busher et al. (2007) suggest, heads of departments tend to associate themselves more closely with their department and subject area than the whole organisation. It could also be suggested that by adopting a collegial position, Laura was able to evade dissension and gain greater acceptance in making the transition to middle leadership (De Nobile, 2018). Laura's transcript, certainly, provides evidence that she craves the acknowledgement of colleagues:

I think we don't place enough emphasis on soft skills ... those things that cannot be taught effectively on a course. So just a conversation with a member of staff to make them feel valued and to recognise that there are pressures in the job can have a big impact, I think, on professional development. I certainly appreciate ... and need that acknowledgement from my team ... that sense that I'm going in the right direction and that they have faith in me.

To reduce Laura, however, to someone who has positioned herself as a lead colleague to gain approval and avoid conflict and resentment would probably be a misrepresentation. The extract above shows Laura to be someone who values the significance of soft professional skills of being able to have meaningful conversations, valuing people, demonstrating empathy and being supportive. Beauchamp and Thomas (2011) suggest that professional identity is formed as much from personal values and beliefs as it is from professional experience and context. Laura values being part of a team and cares about her colleagues; she recognises that emotional wellbeing is an important factor in professional identity and development, and of significance in today's educational system of performance-related reforms and expectations (Day, 2018):

Interviewer: Can you talk about some professional development opportunities you have provided in your department, and how you fostered these opportunities?

Laura: The first thing that comes to mind is that we meet once a week and have a department lunch together in my classroom. There's not an agenda as such for the meetings, it's more of a discussion forum and as simple as offloading that you've had one of those weeks sort of thing. So, in terms of handling workload pressure and emotional pressures, it gives that opportunity to vent ... err ... I suppose that might be something that is not always viewed as valuable and necessary in all areas of the school, but for me I'm a people person and I gain far more from conversations with staff and their concerns than I do when I'm having to think about data and targets ... So I suppose it becomes more about feelings about things and students than just numbers on a data sheet, and with members of my department I want that aspect of their professionalism to be strong ... For me this job is about people and valuing people and I think we're losing sight of that.

Again, the extract above demonstrates Laura's propensity for collegiality in setting up a period of time every week for her colleagues to share personal and professional experiences. Interestingly, Laura sees the lunch meetings as professional development, a

perspective that is not a typical view of professional learning (Sachs, 2011). Laura's meetings are informal with no set agenda or format; centred on staff's emotional wellbeing, they provide an opportunity to share experiences and "vent" concerns. Laura could be said to be actively modelling and trying to develop within her team a connection to their emotions and feelings about teaching. Like Korthagen (2017), Laura sees core qualities of instincts, intuition and empathy as principal components of teachers' professional development. What is less clear, however, is whether Laura sees teachers' core qualities as aligning with and building coherence through their entire professional practice, contributing to "an all-encompassing view of what it means to be a good teacher" (Korthagen, 2017: 397).

Laura in the above extract separates her conversations with colleagues from departmental responsibilities of "having to think about data and targets". At several points during her interview, Laura used the phrases "putting to one side" and "as an aside" to separate departmental issues and initiatives from teachers' individual development. For example, while reflecting on staff appraisals, Laura states:

Within our appraisal meetings, I put the department first ... so we would focus on what's good for the department and how we are going to achieve our targets, and then we put that to one side and discuss what that teacher needs and wants to do for their professional development.

In detaching her departmental concerns from her supportive role of considering the professional development needs of her colleagues, Laura appears to suggest a duality in her role, a duality that became more apparent later in her interview:

Of course, there has to be a balance, and you always have to bear in mind that, in encouraging a member of the department to pursue a particular development program or path, they don't lose track of their teaching and marking. So I have to wear two hats, if you like: the selfish head of department one that's focused on what we need to drive the department forward and get results, and the other one that's more about responding to the needs and interests of colleagues.

Laura's metaphor of wearing two hats is a revealing one. Laura does not indicate in the extract that she is wearing the two hats simultaneously and that they function symbiotically with one another, but that they are worn separately and are detached. Seemingly, Laura's professional identity is pluralistic and made up of two distinct elements, one that appears to be more personal to her and about being a supportive colleague, and the other that is more

occupationally focused and involves her being the head of her department. As is perhaps inevitable, this duality of being the colleague and being the head of department causes points of tension (Bennet et al., 2003; Nias, 1996):

I'm more about self-directed CPD for the simple reason that staff just don't fully engage with CPD that is imposed upon them. Of course sometimes you have to say to your team, "We need to do this because of some departmental or school initiative", and my team always respond to that ... but I'm much more comfortable looking at CPD on a case-by-case basis and going with their enthusiasm to do something than saying, "You need to do this".

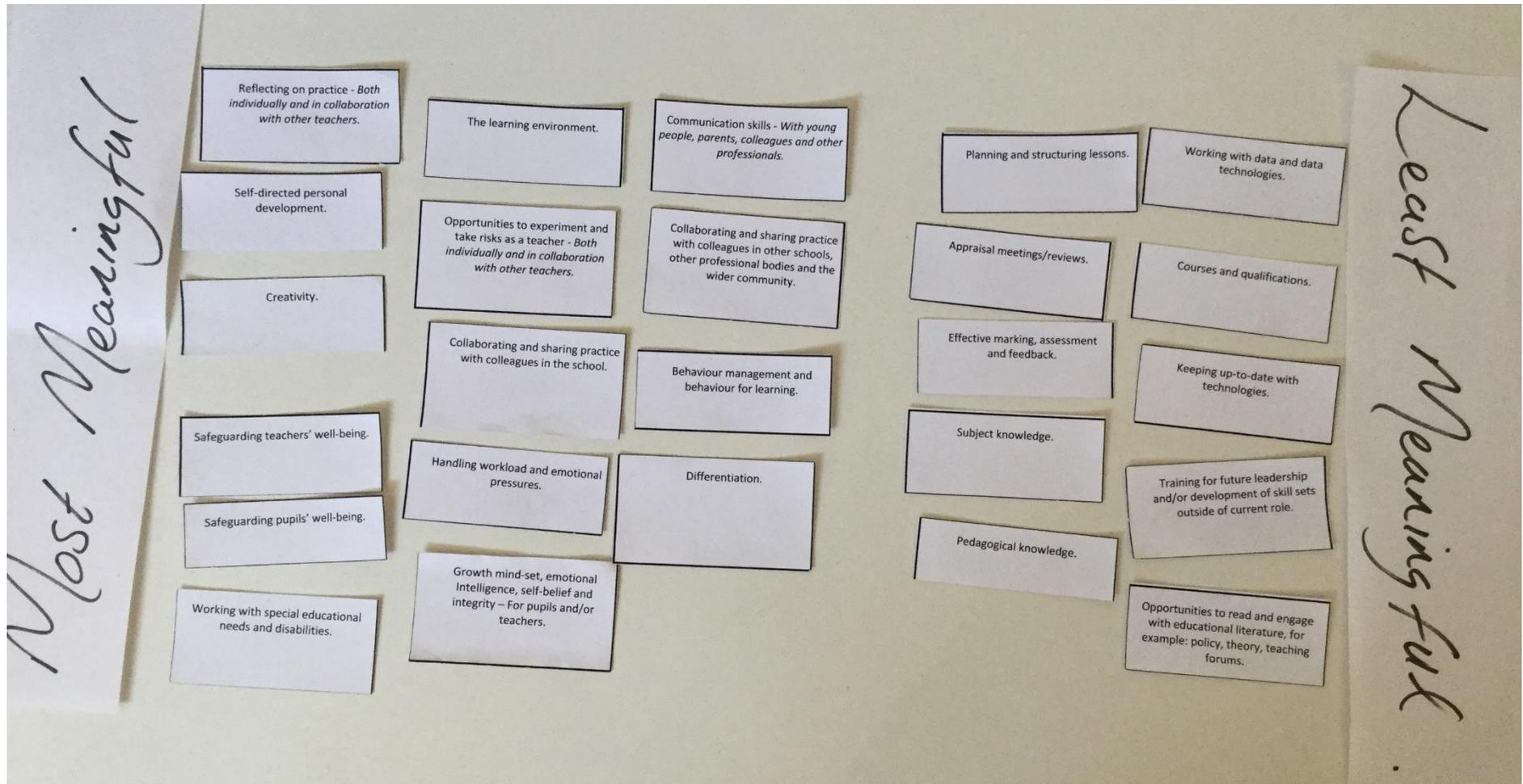


Figure 4-2 - Laura's card-sort

Laura's card-sort (figure 4.2) also demonstrates a duality in her thinking. Interestingly, there appears to be a subtle divide in the positioning of the card statements between what Laura sees as important professional development and what she does not. For Laura, communication, collaboration, self-directed, and staff wellbeing all factor highly, whereas courses, qualifications, and engaging with educational literature are of little relevance to her. In justifying her rejection of qualifications and educational literature, Laura returns to a collegial focus:

Engaging with educational literature, if it served a purpose ... but just to pick up and read everything that is going on, my head would just go into a spin, so I'm not terribly excited by that one. And courses and qualifications I would also say are not at the forefront of my mind. Good CPD for me tends to be about sharing good practice with members of my department, and I'm not sure how qualifications help me, or my colleagues do that ... I've learnt more from doing the job than reading about how to do it.

For Laura, sharing practice and learning from colleagues is what equates to good professional development. She sees little relevance in more theory-based professional development, rejecting it on the grounds that it has little applicability to the practice of her or her colleagues. Laura's viewpoint could be explained on the basis of her being "a people person" who is concerned and interested in others and what they do. But, as revealed towards the end of her interview, this explanation might be something of an oversimplification with respect to Laura's tendency for more collegial forms of professional development:

I think the teaching standards provide a suggestive layer for teachers at the beginning of their careers ... if I go back to the beginning of my career, I needed a layer of structure and some basic reference points ... and then being part of a really supportive department I was able to build my understanding on that ... So they're a good starting point but beyond that ... I don't know ... I feel like the standards and a lot of policy that we're expected to adhere to is irrelevant and simplistic in terms of the professional development of teachers ... it really does need to be more meaningful and relevant, and not what we're exposed to at the moment.

Two significant points emerge from this extract. Firstly, the importance that Laura places on being a colleague appears to have been modelled for her early in her career. Laura tells us that during her formative years in teaching she was part of a supportive department within which she was able to build her understanding. Secondly, Laura feels that the

national guidance and professional development that teachers are receiving is of little relevance. There is a clear disconnect from policy and theory in Laura's thinking, which might suggest her tendency to see professional development as something that is more credible and relevant when conducted through collegial engagement.

4.2.2.1 Summary

Within my interpretation of Laura, the essence of her sense-making about her role and teacher development are posited as being held together by her strong sense of collegial responsibility. Laura sees herself more as "a colleague than a boss" and someone who is both professionally and emotionally in tune with the members of her department. Emerging from her interview transcript is a real sense that she values and promotes emotional empowerment, self-regulation and social competencies, attributes closely associated with the idea of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998). In scrutinising the significance that Laura places on the social and emotional aspects of teaching, I would argue that they cannot just be dismissed as a by-product of her predisposition for collegiality. Laura clearly promotes and recognises the need for professional development in which teachers can strengthen their social and emotional capital (Nias et al., 1989). What is less clear to decipher, however, is whether Laura sees attributes of emotional intelligence and collegiality as linking to and building coherence throughout teachers' professional practices (Korthagen, 2017). Laura clearly rejects qualifications, courses, theory and educational literature on the basis of it being irrelevant to her and her colleagues. Similarly, she feels that national policy, such as the teaching standards, provides nothing more than a "suggestive layer" for professional development. Suggesting a detachment from broader professional practices, Laura does not appear to recognise teacher development as being a holistic process that connects the emotional, technical and intellectual aspects of teachers' work. Laura's model of professional development could therefore be criticised as yielding practice that is narrow and homogenised, as teachers are limited to a localised professional practice that does not project itself outwards across professional boundaries. Interestingly, in terms of the localisation of practice, a similar concern has been levelled against education policy over the past twenty years (Cordingley, 2015; Ball, 2017; Furlong, 2013; Whitty, 2017).

Like Hamora, the social conditioning of a performativity culture and the lack of exposure to wider CPD opportunities has seemingly resulted in Laura conceptualising professional development within the confines of her department. She appears to view staff development as being more pluralistic than interconnected. Laura in her interview transcript uses the imagery of wearing two hats, separating her head of department role into two distinct components, one associated with accountability and results, and the other with staff wellbeing and emotions. Inevitably, with reference to staff development, this appears to have caused points of tension for Laura as she tries to balance her strong sense and conviction in being a colleague with her professional accountability (Bennet et al., 2003). Interestingly, I would suggest that the result has been a compartmentalisation of teacher development into departmental issues associated with student outcomes, and teacher needs associated with individual wellbeing and personal fulfilment. As part of such a compartmentalisation, it might be argued that although Laura is purposefully adding detail after detail to the professional development in her department, she is losing sight of the whole composition.

4.2.3 Peter's Theme – Nurturing

Although Peter did not directly use the word nurturing during his interview, the idea of nurturing professional growth emerged as a central component of his thinking in relation to his head of department role. At the start of his interview, Peter gave an initial indication of the importance of a nurturing professional environment for him:

I don't think we care about one another enough. There's a real competitive element in teaching now with everyone competing against one another for the best results, and I just don't feel like we really talk to one another or share ideas ... it's all a bit artificial with teaching fads and everyone protecting their own secret ingredient of how to get the best results.

The extract is an unfavourable reflection on neoliberal educational reform, emphasising the reshaping of the profession within a performativity culture (Ball, 2013). Peter sees the drive for competition and performativity in education as limiting educational progress and growth, with teachers cloaking their professional knowledge from one another in a competitive market. Peter introduces the idea of an artificial professional environment and

laments the lack of professional care, communication and knowledge sharing between teachers.

Similarly, when asked about the importance of his role in regards to the professional development of staff, Peter talks about the support and encouragement of staff:

Well, I've received no training as a middle leader, so it has all been ad hoc and just looking around me at what other middle leaders are doing and stealing their ideas and that sort of thing. I suppose I'm more about support than direct intervention with staff development ... and so in terms of pedagogy, I'm not sure if I'm doing all that much. I just don't think that we allow teachers to grow and try out new things as much anymore, so I'm conscious of really encouraging that in the department, and letting staff learn from their mistakes ... and successes.

In regards to both his development as a middle leader and the development of the staff in his department, Peter refers to an osmotic process in which professional knowledge is accumulated implicitly, as opposed to explicitly. Peter learnt how to be a middle leader by observing what other middle leaders were doing. Similarly, he does not provide direct pedagogical intervention for his staff. For Peter, staff development is about providing the right conditions for professional growth, namely a caring and supportive environment in which staff feel confident to experiment with their practice. Peter's use of the word "anymore" in the extract is also noteworthy, as it appears to be suggesting a previous time when teachers were afforded greater scope for professional growth, a time before teacher reform and regulation became a central focus of policy (Ball, 2017). Whether Peter's reflection is one of embellished nostalgia or an accurate account is debatable. What is clear, however, is that Peter values professional development that is non-directive and naturalistic:

Peter: When I first came into teaching, I worked under a super head of department who gave me lots of time and space to build up my practice and learn from more experienced colleagues. And I personally think that's the best form of professional development, because it just seems more natural as opposed to being imposed and something that you might not be ready for or interested in.

Interviewer: And would you apply that approach to potentially weaker members of staff in your department?

Peter: Well ... weaker members of staff do need more directed support, but again that would mean them working with and learning from

stronger practitioners. To be honest I've never been in that position. Every member of staff that's come into the department since I took over has been really good and keen to learn from our practice ... And of course, we've also learnt from them.

Like Laura, Peter's formative years in teaching have left a big impression on his conceptualisations and understanding of professional development. Peter's initial head of department gave him time and space to learn and develop his professional knowledge, in what is characterised as a nurturing environment ('a super head of department who gave me lots of time and space to build up my practice and learn'). For Peter, the best form of professional development is one in which teachers learn from one another's practices. Corresponding to Lave's (1997) concept of a community of practice, Peter describes a form of professional learning in which the teachers within his department come to acquire the same values and working practices by sharing their understandings. As Lave (1997) suggests, a community of practice is a working environment in which individuals learn from one another, both absorbing and augmenting the practice of the community. Thus, individual beliefs, values and practices become merged with those of the community (Lave, 1997).

The idea of a community of practice that provides an environment for professional growth was also apparent in Peter's card-sort. In contrast to the other participants, Peter discarded the criteria of positioning the card-sort statements from most to least meaningful. Instead, he created a card-sort that gave the impression of something more organic in structure (see figure 4-3):

So ... underneath represents the key attributes about being a teacher for me, so safeguarding, well-being, professional integrity. And then on the top is a circle to represent how we constantly learn, review and cycle round. So you might have a problem with behaviour management in one of your lessons [*Peter points to the behaviour management and behaviour for learning card-sort statement*] which leads to you seeking advice from members of your department [*Peter points to the reflecting on practice – both individually and in collaboration with other teachers card-sort statement*] and then to re-evaluating your planning and perhaps, consequently, become more creative in your teaching [*Peter points to the Planning and structuring lessons & Creativity card-sort statements*].

As figure 4-3 shows, the base of Peter's card-sort consists of five "key attributes" associated with professional integrity, forming the roots of professional development for him. On top of the base is a circular, leaf-like structure of professional elements that, from Peter's

perspective, practitioners constantly cycle around. As highlighted in Peter's example, the cyclic process is not sequential and from one element to another, but one in which various components are selected from the circle to match particular development needs and questions. From this perspective, it is the teacher who ensures a commitment to their professional growth as they continuously reflect and learn from their own and others' practice (Day & Sachs, 2004). The circular part of Peter's card-sort also appears to consist of two halves. On the left-hand side, card statements are positioned that could be associated more with the technical elements of teachers' professionalism, for example, planning, assessment, differentiation and behaviour management.

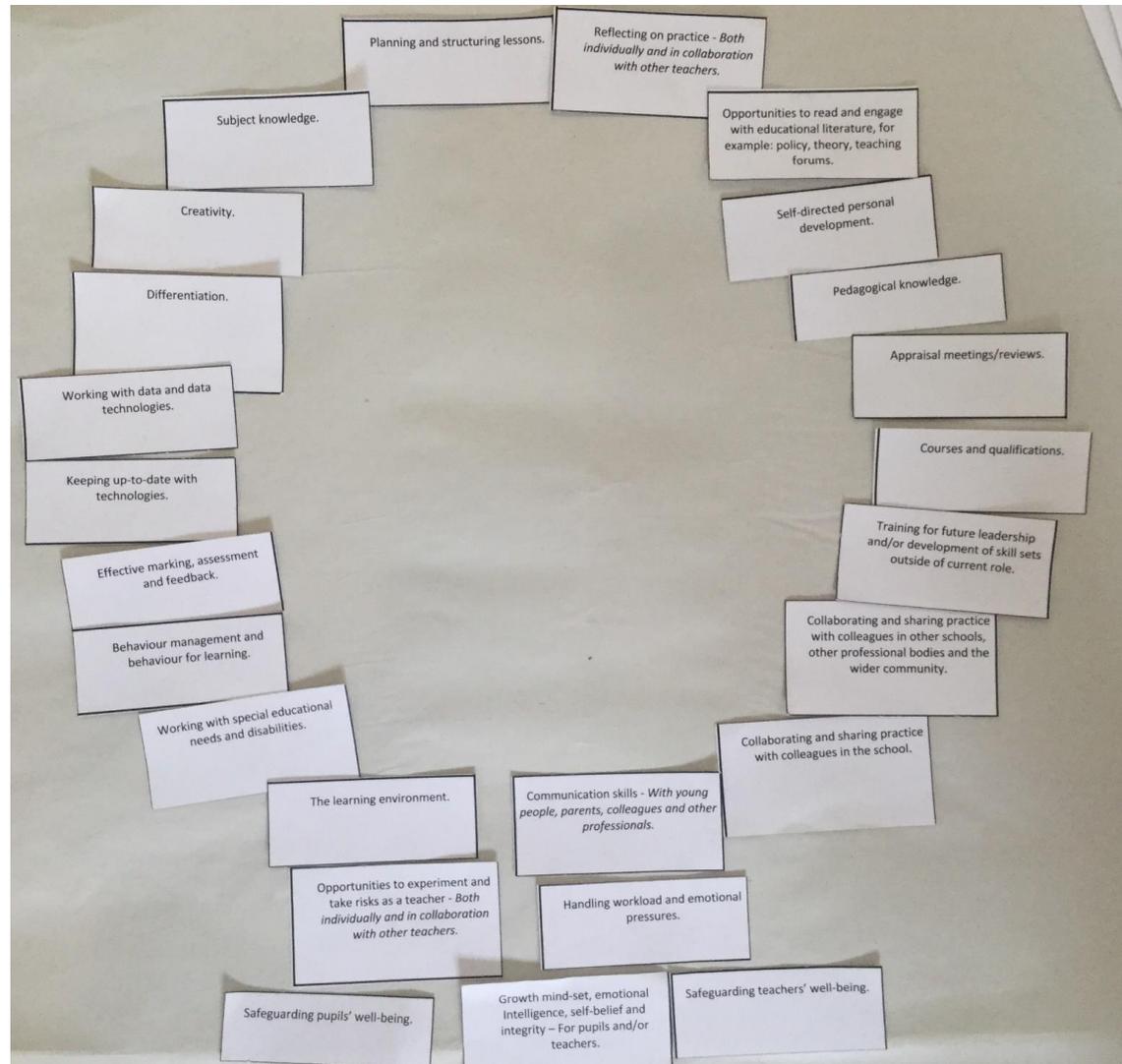


Figure 4-3 - Peter's card-sort

In contrast, the focus on the right-hand side is more on the acquisition of knowledge through collaboration, reading, theory and reflection. Viewed as a whole, it could be argued that Peter's card-sort presents an interconnected, multidimensional perspective of teachers' professional development (Clarke & Hollingworth, 2002; Evans, 2011). As seen in the following extract, however, Peter does not place an equal weighting on the statements in his card-sort:

If people are part of a rich environment, then they can become better teachers ... it's that immediate day-to-day environment and what they're surrounded by that counts ... So, for me, it's about doing the job and learning from other teachers as opposed to theory and courses ... Not that that doesn't have its place, but if I wanted a member of my department to learn how to do something better, I wouldn't tell them to go and read about it, I would tell them to go and observe someone else.

Again, Peter returns to the idea of a supportive working environment in which professional learning is best achieved on the job – seeing theory and courses as being subsidiary to working with and observing colleagues. Peter's perceptions of professional development emerge as being localised and narrow, relating solely to what teachers do within their classrooms: specifically, physical actions that are observable and directly linked to the learning of the students they teach (Evans, 2014). The caring and non-directive professional development that Peter spoke so fervently about at the beginning of his interview appears to be bound into interdependence:

I've not found any of the external CPD sessions that useful. The sessions I've found the most informative have come from our staff, simply because they know our pupils and their needs the best. There is a lot of experience and expertise in this school and to simply sweep that aside and bring someone in to tell us how to teach feels a bit dismissive and threatening.

Like Hamora, Peter's experience of external CPD sessions has not been positive. The idea of the external expert for Peter serves only to devalue his professional identity by disregarding his knowledge and expertise. Peter chooses to look inward for the development of professional knowledge because the learning, for him, is applicable and comes from the active lived experiences of the teachers in his school. Moreover, as highlighted in the following extract, it is a way of him holding on to his professional pride and responsibility:

- Peter: I'm sick of going around the loop of educational reforms and policy, and so if I'm perfectly honest I just tend to block them out and just get on with my job ... A job that I've been doing for 20 years ... I do feel quite defensive about who I am as a teacher and the lack of recognition of my experience and what I do beyond a set of exam results.
- Interviewer: Can you explain what you mean by feeling quite defensive about who you are as a teacher?
- Peter: Well protecting who I am as a teacher, it's all become about being the same and how to get better results ... but for me, it's about allowing young people to flourish and that's not just about their exam results.

The experiential impact of educational reform and policy on Peter is striking. He is sick “of going around the loop of educational reforms and policy”, and has become resistant and non-receptive towards it. Peter wishes to enact his own pedagogy, one that is grounded in caring for young people beyond their attainment and progress. Of course, it could be argued that Peter's inward perspective of interdependence runs the risk of homogenisation and restricted practice (Kennedy, 2015), but for Peter, it appears to have become an essential part of protecting his and others' professional identities.

4.2.3.1 Summary

In my interpretation of Peter's transcript, the concept of a caring professional community in which teachers' wellbeing is of importance and ideas are readily shared is a prominent feature. Peter talks about allowing teachers to grow within a supportive space where they can learn from others – projecting a belief of professional development that, for him, is more natural and collegial. In contrast, Peter is critical of what he sees as an artificial professional environment in which competition and performativity have resulted in the instrumentalisation of practice and teachers hiding knowledge from one another, what Connell (2013: 99) refers to as “cultural fakery”. Peter's formative years in teaching have clearly had a significant impact on his understanding of teachers' professionalism and professional development. Peter tells us that he was part of a department in which he was given the time and space to develop his practice by learning from more experienced colleagues. Like Laura, Peter alludes to a community of practice within his department, in

which learning the intricacies of the job takes place through an immersion in the working environment. It would appear that Peter adopts a framework for the professional development for his staff that facilitates the acquisition of teaching skills, as well as an integration into the culture of the department (Lave & Wenger, 1991). It is interesting to reflect on Peter's viewpoint, as teacher development is moved beyond simply a model of how to teach to one of professional integration. In this respect, Peter exemplifies for me one of the central characteristics of the middle leaders within this study, in that they see teacher development not just in terms of 'how to do' but also 'how to be'.

One of the dangers, however, with such communities of practice is that their interdependence limits the working group from looking outwards for new ideas and ways of working (Kennedy, 2015). Peter when discussing his card-sort rejects the idea of theory and courses because learning to be a teacher for him is "about doing the job and learning from other teachers". From such a viewpoint the professional learning in Peter's department could be argued to be limited as it relies solely on the inner activity and experiences of the working group. As such, it represents a form of professional development that is narrow, localised and homogeneous (Kennedy, 2015; Whitty, 2014).

In building an interpretation of Peter and his sense-making, I find it difficult to not be drawn to Peter's self-assurance; he tells us that he and his colleagues have a considerable knowledge and expertise, and that he has not found external CPD provision very useful. Peter's inward-looking focus might, therefore, be explained on the basis of egocentricity, but I think to do so would probably misrepresent Peter and his professionalism. The outside expert, for Peter, seems to symbolise an indifference and threat to his sense of professionalism. His professional self is diminished by others telling him how to teach. Peter seeks to listen to his inner voice, his own experiences and insight, rebuffing the outside expert, which to him represents a top-down model of education that is ill-equipped to understand the particularities of his classroom and school (Dadds, 2014; Smith & Kuchah, 2016). It is interesting to note, however, that in Peter "protecting" himself and his department from an education system that is "about being the same", he resorts to a localised community of practice that itself could be argued to be limited and homogeneous. Consequently, one possible interpretation of Peter's sense-making about his role in relation to teacher development might be to suggest it is tapered by an education system that does

not recognise his voice and expertise. The relationship that Peter has with his colleagues and the nurturing environment he seeks to offers them for professional growth is limited by his relationship with the education system he works within.

4.2.4 Craig's Theme – Listening

The idea of professional development being a social experience was a recurring feature of Craig's interview:

The strange thing about being in a small department is that professional development is not a case of me providing professional development for members of my team, but more a case of, as a team, we develop and grow together ... & the main ways we do that is by talking to one another ... I don't know if that is the same in larger departments.

Craig identifies information sharing as the primary way that professional growth is fostered. For Craig, language and communication brings meaning to professional learning, as it places it in context and makes it tangible:

The new GCSE specifications have been a big focus for us this year, and for me to take sole responsibility in breaking the spec down, I don't think that would have made any sense ... you know; I've never been that person who thinks they know more than everybody else ... you have to be open-minded, don't you? ... So it was a case of us sitting down together and talking through things to build up a common language of what we were looking to do and how we could make it relevant for our students here.

In reflecting on the implementation of the new GCSE specifications, Craig portrays himself as the progressive professional who is open to new ways of thinking and acting. He values open-mindedness and sees discussions as a means of cultivating professional growth and building confidence to develop practice (Lofthouse & Thomas, 2017). Rejecting a heroic leadership model in which he takes sole responsibility for departmental initiatives, he favours inclusion and collaboration, with listening being the central medium through which professional understanding occurs. Face-to-face conversations not only allow for an exchange of ideas but also the building of social and emotional connections between teachers as they listen to one another (Nias et al., 1989), a theme that Craig developed further while considering his card-sort (figure 4-4):

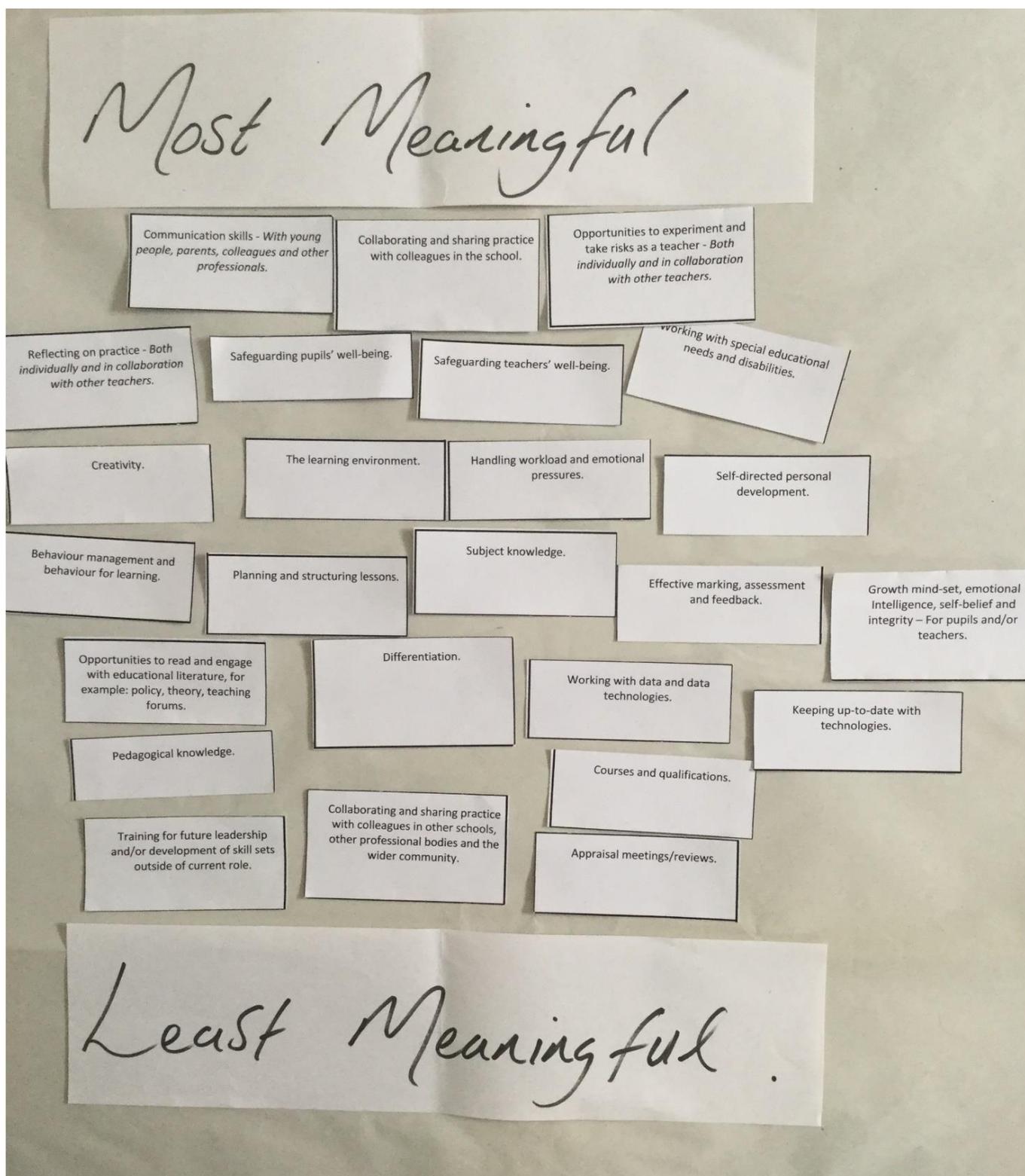


Figure 4-4 - Craig's card-sort

Craig: I've put communications here [*Craig points to the 'Communication skills' card-sort statement*] because I think it is so vital for our development and how we communicate with our students. I do worry that we're losing our ability to really be able to communicate and engage with one another ... I think as part of this big production line that is education at the moment there's no time to actually get to know our students and ourselves as teachers. It just feels like we're all on receive and that's having a limiting effect on how we talk about education.

Interviewer: What do you mean by "on receive"?

Craig: Well, I think we're just filling students with knowledge to pass exams and there's very little time spent in trying to get them to be creative or really think about things. And inevitably our professional development just reflects that, so we're told what's important and how we should teach but not asked to share what we think or what we would do ... or what we're already doing.

Communication is important to Craig. He positions communication and collaboration as the two most meaningful components of teachers' professional development within his card-sort. He is worried about teachers losing their ability to communicate with one another and their students. Portraying the current education system as a "production line" in which human connections are limited, Craig sees teachers' input and dialogue about education as becoming narrow and restricted. The use of the phrase "on receive" in relation to teachers and students evokes an image of passive recipients of information who have no real voice in the education system. It is an outside framework of professional development that looms largest for Craig, with limited opportunities for teachers to engage in the discourse about education (Bangs & Frost, 2012; Cohn & Kottkamp, 1993; Hargreaves, 1996; Heneveld, 2007; Ingersoll, 2007). Craig sees communication as fundamental to teachers' professional identity:

Interviewer: You've identified collaboration with colleagues in the school as being very important to you but collaboration with colleagues in other schools as not so important. Can you explain why?

Craig: I think you need to build a community within a school and not so much outside of it ... and that sense of community for me is getting lost because we're looking outside too much for quick fix

solutions and not talking and listening to one another enough ... there are some really good teachers in this school, and I think we just need to reconnect with ourselves. You know, it's OK to talk about collaboration and sharing ideas with other schools, but that just becomes a pointless exercise if you have no sense of who you are as a school.

Collaboration, communication and community are, thus, seen by Craig as being inextricably linked: without communication it is not possible to establish a professional community, and without a professional community, collaboration becomes a fruitless exercise. It is not possible to say exactly what Craig means by community, but it does appear to include a strong sense of the immersion and participation of the individual in the working environment (Engeström, 2013). Somewhat paradoxically, however, Craig's desire for teachers to be "talking and listening to one another" is limited to a localised concept of community, collaboration and communication. It appears that external frameworks of professional development are rejected by Craig, as they lack the context of his local community. Craig's sense of localism, consequently, appears to be in line with political moves in education, over the past decade, towards greater levels of decentralised control and increased autonomy for schools (DfE, 2010b, 2016). Within such a framework, teacher quality is envisioned as being substantiated through an increase in localised training and development, giving teachers and schools greater freedom and control. Craig's sense of the school community as "getting lost because we're looking outside of the school too much for solutions", appears to resonate with this rhetoric of autonomy and individualism, free from superfluous external intrusion.

Alternatively, however, we could interpret Craig's comments as being somewhat negative towards the current education system. Craig sees teachers as needing to reconnect with who they are as teachers, and education to regain a sense of itself. Central to ideas of localisation and increased autonomy for schools is the neoliberal commitment to market forces, wherein independence and freedom are seen as imperative to success but need to be regulated (Ball, 2016; Furlong, 2013; Whitty, 2014). The rhetoric of autonomy in education is, consequently, juxtaposed with that of performativity and accountability. As Berry (2012) argues, the illusion of teacher autonomy is bound up in a reductionist view of

curriculum and pedagogy that is geared toward results and league tables, an idea that Craig appears to be in tune with:

I'd like CPD to be more enjoyable and to feel like it's something I can take ownership of ... So not just some idea but something that I can take ownership of as a teacher. Learning should be enjoyable, so I'd like to see CPD that is not constrained to the aims of the curriculum or student attainment ... but something like confidence, and imagination, and creativity, and team work that you're not going to get an immediate grade improvement form, but indirectly has a much bigger impact on your students.

Craig wants to create a space in his and others' professional development for fostering greater levels of creativity and imagination in students. There is a real sense within the extract of him wanting to take ownership of his professional development so that it "becomes part of him as a teacher". It would appear that instead of the practice in his department becoming homogenised through his sense of localism, Craig is rejecting what he perceives to be a hegemonic education system consumed by productivity:

I think as a head of department you can get lost in the attainment and progress game and start to see members of your department only in terms of GCSE grades and not what they're actually doing or saying.

Craig is explicit in how a performativity culture serves to undermine teachers' identity. By getting lost in attainment and progress, teachers are only valued in terms of performance and not as individuals who do a complex job and have a professional voice. In other words, a controlled autonomy, with teachers coerced into self-discipline and conformity (Ball, 2017). The use of the word 'game' suggests a disengagement or distancing for Craig from the performance management aspect of his job. In reducing attainment and progress to a game, he appears to strip away the meaning and importance of it for him, drawing attention to what he sees as the more meaningful pursuit of knowing and listening to his staff. Thus, Craig's sense of being a line manager and staff professional development is rooted in an authentic interest in the members of his department:

I think we can get very anxious sometimes because we think that we are not doing things well enough, because it can be quite a lonely profession at times ... we are all in our little cubes all in our little classrooms and we have our department meetings but then we go back ... we can take things too seriously.

To some extent, the above extract explains Craig's focus on the importance of communication and being listened to. Through personal experience, he is aware that teaching, particularly in a small department, can be a lonely profession. He outlines his sense of isolation as a result of a reduced engagement with colleagues in a dialogue about his teaching and students. Craig believes that teachers' professional development needs to demonstrate an awareness of teacher anxiety and stress. Going beyond "a joke and a laugh with one another", Craig sees conversations as a means by which teaching professionals can really engage with and listen to one another.

4.2.4.1 Summary

In arriving at an interpretation of Craig's sense-making about teacher development and growth, his repeated references to the importance of teachers' voices and their professional communication with one another asserted an interest. At the heart of ideas about democratic teachers' professionalism is the conviction that teachers should be recognised as having a significant voice in the education debate and should be listened to (Stevenson & Gilliland, 2015). Such a recognition would mean that teacher voice is not only considered important because of the value it would bring to educational reform and policy, but also its acknowledgement of the professional standing and responsibility of teachers.

Craig describes building a "common language" with colleagues through which his department forms new ideas and directions. Rejecting a heroic leadership model in which he takes sole responsibility for the course of his department, Craig favours inclusion through which all the members of his department can contribute to decisions and understanding. Language interactions, for Craig, form the basis of a social learning experience within which human connections help teachers scaffold new states of knowing and feeling, something that he feels is under threat: "It feels like we're all on receive and that's having a limiting effect on how we talk about education". Craig appears to see himself and his colleagues as just passive receivers of their professionalism highlighting their exclusion from decisions about policy, by leadership and successive governments who have chosen not to recognise their voice (Bangs & Frost, 2012; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1996; Stevenson & Gilliland, 2015; Thomson & Riddle, 2018).

Linked to the importance and frustrations that Craig feels about teachers' professional communication is his sense of community and being connected to others. Community is referred to as being "vital" in maximising communication opportunities, something that he sees as being lost in the "big production line that is education at the moment". Community not only appears to represent for Craig a means of establishing social learning, purpose and identity, but also a way of making human connections and ensure social wellbeing. The use of phrases like "we're all on receive" and "the attainment and progress game" appear to suggest a certain level of distancing and disengagement from the current education system by Craig. He does not want to value teachers solely on performativity measures: his own experiences have taught him that teaching can be a lonely profession and he seeks to remove isolation through his sense of community and communication. Consequently, Craig wants teachers to really listen to one another as opposed to passively being "on receive". A desire that could be interpreted as stemming from a professional identity that is characterised by the human connections and relationships that teachers have to others.

4.2.5 Focus Group Theme – Professional Self

The final super-ordinate theme of this section comes from the discussion in the focus group meeting. The central purpose behind the focus group meeting was for the participants to discuss and generate the card-sort statements used in the individual interviews. The meeting involved very little input from myself as the researcher, which enabled the participants to take control over the discussion and consider one another's comments more freely. What emerged was an exploration by the participants into their sense of being a professional and how this related to the professional development of those they line manage. At the beginning of the meeting, the group started to discuss themselves as teachers and professionals:

Laura: I think society perceives us in a set way and I am conscious of that with friends and parents, and so I think that part of who we are as professionals is about what we are expected to be.

Peter: Yes, it is difficult to feel like you're off duty and I think that can make you quite defensive of who you are and what you do for a living.

Hamora: I do roll my eyes in despair sometimes at how we are portrayed in the media. One minute we're the solution to all of society's ills, and the next we're the moaning militants that get 13 weeks off every year and need to be sorted out by some executive head because we're so bad at our jobs.

In the above extract, there is an awareness of how teachers' professional identity is shaped by the wider community and media (Olsen, 2008). Laura sees her professionalism in terms of societal expectations and how she responds to them. Similarly, Peter finds it difficult to remove himself from his professional role; he is never "off duty", resulting in a defensive positioning of who and what he is (feeling defensive also features in Peter's individual interview). Hamora sees the portrayal of teachers by the media as creating two extreme versions of teachers' professionalism with teachers seen as both the solution to and the cause of a range of problems. What is interesting in this extract is the participants' use of other reference points to form a definition of their professionalism. Their reflections are not based on their own sense of professionalism but on how others perceive them, suggesting an organisational form of professionalism that is defined externally by governments and society; not from within the occupational group (Evetts, 2008, 2011, 2013). In other words, teachers' professionalism is demarcated through public management within which teachers are expected to present a professional persona that meets the expectations of society (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Newman, 2000). It could therefore be argued that the participants' professional self, in part, is established in how they believe they should present themselves and be received. This is seen in the following extract, a theme that extends to teacher–student interactions:

Craig: Learning should be a more enjoyable experience, and I don't think we're providing that so much in our classrooms now. I personally get the greatest job satisfaction when I can see that the kids are really enjoying my lessons and are engaged in their learning ... that's what makes teaching worthwhile for me and provides that sense of professional pride.

Laura: Yes, I would agree with that ... I think those connections you make in your classroom with pupils is the most rewarding aspect of the job. And I also think that so much is about progress and not about empathy and support, and being seen as that caring and supportive teacher by the pupils can make the difference between them engaging with you and school or not.

How one presents oneself as a teacher and how one is viewed by one's students is evidently of significance in this exchange between Craig and Laura. By delivering lessons that are enjoyable and engaging, Craig is able to find a meaning for himself as a teacher and a professional. He communicates a sense of pride in being recognised by his students as a good teacher; and it is from his students' recognition that he can experience his greatest sense of professional satisfaction and self-esteem. In agreement with Craig, Laura sees teaching in terms of making connections with students and being seen by them as a supportive and caring professional who is more than just a conveyor of knowledge. From such a perspective, the professional self is realised and reinforced through the very act of teaching and an interpersonal connection with students:

- Laura: For me the most important aspect of professional development and learning how to teach is being in the classroom with the students ... that's how you learn how to teach ... So something like SEN, it's not until you actually teach a student with autism or the like that you really understand how to work with them.
- Peter: Absolutely ... I think you find yourself as a teacher within your classroom by actually doing the job and engaging with pupils.
- Hamora: I would agree with all of that ... It's all about those real connections, isn't it? ... I think you learn so much from how pupils respond to you ...

As with the previous extract, in relation to the professional self, engagement and human connections with students loom largest. The participants all see classroom practice as a social activity that requires an understanding of how emotions, perceptions and values shape and guide their sense of being a teaching professional. Teaching, for Hamora, Laura, Craig and Peter, is an emotional and socially situated practice that is directly and intimately linked to human relationships (Hargreaves, 1998, 2000b). For Laura, being in the classroom and interfacing with students is seen as the most important aspect of teachers' professional development. Peter sees the classroom as the primary site within which teachers discover who they are as teachers through interactions with pupils, and in agreement with Hamora sees it as the place where "real connections" are developed with students. As such, the very act of teaching appears to substantiate and symbolise the professional self as it is a social experience that allows you to "learn how to teach", "find yourself as a teacher" and make "real connections with students". From an alternative perspective, however, it could be

suggested that in seeing classroom practice as the substantive part of professional development, the middle leaders are reducing their professional knowledge to a “what works for me” criterion (Hargreaves, 1998: 33). There is certainly a noticeable absence of seeing classroom practice as extending beyond a personal space and development process:

My classroom is the one place where I can shut everything else out and just get on with the job of teaching. (Peter)

I do find it hard now not to feel a little nervous ... and I suppose hostile to people coming in to my classroom because I just associate it with being evaluated. Even with student teachers I feel like I’m being judged, and I’m sure they’re not, but it does feel like that. (Craig)

There is a somewhat defensive over-tone in Peter and Craig’s extracts above. Peter sees the classroom as a place in which he can block out peripheral interferences and can focus on his teaching. Craig feels nervous and hostile about opening his classroom door to others because he associates doing so more with evaluation than peer learning. For the middle leaders, classroom practice represents a space in which their professional self can be authenticated and demarcated against external threats.

It is argued that the intensification of teachers’ work through a neoliberal agenda of standardisation and performativity has diminished teachers’ professionalism and left them with little space to exercise their agency (Apple, 2001; Ball, 2017; Gewirtz et al., 2009; Whitty, 2017; Wriggley, 2009). Such criticism sees government intervention in education as attempting to manufacture a compliant workforce of teachers whose professional autonomy is stripped away in favour of standardised practice that is performance focused (Ball, 2017). In the following extracts, Laura and Peter share their concerns about the homogenisation of their professional identity and professional development:

Laura: It does feel who I am as a teacher and as a head of department is being broken down all the time ... Although it’s not directly implied, we are expected to work in certain ways, aren’t we?

Peter: And our CPD just mirrors that.

Laura: Yeah, so I just feel a bit disconnected from what is valued in education ... you know we might talk about equality and every child matters, but in reality, we all know that lots of pupils don’t

get the attention that they should because our efforts are best placed on maximising results.

Peter: We've become risk-adverse, haven't we? But results are something that cannot be ignored.

Laura's sense of professional identity appears to be diminished by imposed ways of working that are causing her to question her sense of purpose in the current education system. Part of her problem comes from feeling "disconnected" from what "is valued in education". She talks about an empty rhetoric in education framed around morals and social justice, but in reality, for Laura education has become nothing more than a numbers game in which some pupils are just left to flounder because they distract from the maximising of results. In other words, the meaning of education has been reworked "from being a public good to an economic good and a commodity" (Ball, 2017: 140). Similarly, Peter communicates a sense of frustration with the direction of education. In a statement that seems to highlight the dominance of performativity on his professionalism, Peter describes teachers' as being risk-averse and constrained within a system of accountability that "cannot be ignored" – a sense of constraint that is also shared by Hamora and Craig:

I do feel that I have a lot of freedom to set the CPD in my department and I start each year with good intentions ... but after half a dozen line manager and head of department meetings our training does turn into, "OK, we need to do this." And suddenly it's not about what you need or think you will benefit from but, "Here we go, we have all got to do this." So I suppose my ideas about what we should be doing to become better practitioners is consumed by the pressure of results. (Hamora)

We should trust and invest in ourselves more and trust in our reflections ... you know we're asked to reflect all the time, aren't we, but reflection has become just another word for thinking about results, and we all go along with it because we're scared of making a mistake ... really those reflections should be about us. (Craig)

Hamora projects a sense of powerlessness over the focus and direction of her department's professional development. Even though she feels like she has a lot of freedom over her department's CPD in her school, there is for her an implied indirect agenda that she will inevitably have to submit to. Hamora talks about starting each year with good intentions, but after several line manager and head of department meetings, there is a shift in her thinking. Hamora's sense of purpose and direction about her department's development is "consumed by the pressure of results". For Craig reflective practice has

become merely an instrument of improvement and performativity (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009), not a tool for authentic professional growth (Day & Sachs, 2004). Although Craig sees it as an exercise he does not wish to engage with, nevertheless, he feels compelled to do so. Like Hamora, Peter's sense of professional self is suppressed and internalised in favour of external pressures that he clearly feels.

4.2.5.1 Summary

Within a non-directed discussion, the participants during the focus group collectively drew on their own and one another's experiences to repeatedly explore and examine themselves as professionals. What emerged was a discussion that revealed some of the complexities of how the participants realise themselves as professional teachers. In line with Olsen's (2008, 2016) view that teachers' professional identity is shaped by both external and internal influences, the participants gave a sense of their professionalism as being both public and private.

At the beginning of the focus group meeting, the participants could be seen to demonstrate an awareness of their professional self in relation to what is expected of them by society. With reference to their public professional persona, the participants appeared to acknowledge the societal expectations placed on them and how this forms part of their professional self. As Laura suggests, "part of who we are as professionals is about what we are expected to be". This sense of societal expectation could be attributed to an increased marketisation of the education system. Giroux (2010) argues that through market forces schools and teachers can be repositioned as the suppliers of education who can be held accountable to the expectations of their consumers. This is a perspective that recasts teachers from autonomous individuals responsible for the acquisition of their own professional identity, to that of a collective group whose professionalism is externally managed and shaped through standardisation and accountability (Ball, 2017; Day & Sachs, 2004; Furlong, 2013; Goepel, 2012; Whitty, 2014). In many respects, I would suggest that this is representative of the participants' dialogue, as they bemoan the constant drive for improved pupil attainment. There is a sense of frustration and disappointment in the current education system, with the participants expressing feels of being adrift from policy and constrained by accountability measures:

... we've become risk-averse. (Peter)

I just feel a bit disconnected from what is valued in education. (Laura)

... my ideas about what we should be doing to become better practitioners is consumed by the pressure of results. (Hamora)

... we all go along with it because we're scared of making a mistake. (Craig)

The extracts give an impression of conformity and acceptance, in which the participants' side-line their convictions of teaching and teachers' professionalism in favour of external contingencies. Accordingly, we might interpret the middle leaders' professional self as being wrapped and compliant in a social engagement to deliver an agenda of national policy that is designed by governments to define and represent what society believes should and should not be (Ball, 2003). As Apple (2001) reminds us:

More time and energy is spent on maintaining or enhancing a public image of a "good school" and less time and energy is spent on pedagogic and curricular substance.

(Apple 2001: 74)

An alternative interpretation, and the one that I feel is more representative of this group of middle leaders, is that they demonstrate greater levels of subversion than compliance. Their subversion may not be overtly present but it is still there. For despite the demands of the performativity culture in which they work, at the heart of this group of middle leaders' practice is a care and desire to deliver an education to their students that goes beyond pupil attainment and results. A professional self that is complex and has developed strategies of subversion and avoidance to remain true to a professional identity it believes in.

4.3 Master Theme – Relationships

After conducting the analysis of the super-ordinate themes, a common overarching master theme was searched for that would reflect the higher-order concepts and experiences shared by Hamora, Laura, Peter and Craig (Smith et al., 2009; Willig, 2013). The process required looking for patterns and connections within the participants' super-ordinate themes and against their original interview transcripts (Smith et al., 2009). Out of the analysis, the master theme of *relationships* was identified as being highly significant in the participants' sense-making about teachers' professional development. Hence in this section,

I look at the master theme of *relationships*: how the participants build and value their professional relationships with others, and how they present their understandings of collaborative interactions with colleagues.

For Hamora, Laura, Peter and Craig, relationships constitute not only a connection to others but a connection to who they are as middle leaders and teachers. Hamora's inclusive leadership of her department, the importance that Laura places on collegiality, Peter's strong sense of care and community, and Craig's need for communication all hold a sense of professional worth and purpose. It would appear that for this group of middle leaders, relationships form the foundation of who they are as professionals and how they develop others professionally. Central to many of the middle leaders' experiences of staff development is the awareness of building reciprocal relationships with colleagues and students, and how the two are interwoven. For example, Craig links the importance of his relationships with his staff to the development of positive teacher–student relationships:

... as a head of department you've got to be seen as that positive individual who can create a feeling in your team that as a teacher you're more than just a facilitator of knowledge, but someone who is creative and respected and trusted to do the right thing, so that you're happier in your job and inclined to pass that joy on to students.

Similarly, Laura actively promotes discussions within her department to refocus her team's attention on the importance of relationships:

So, I suppose it becomes more about feelings about things and students than just numbers on a data sheet, and with members of my department I want that aspect of their professionalism to be strong ... For me this job is about people and valuing people and I think we're losing sight of that.

As highlighted previously (section 4.2.2), Laura values people and her relationships with them. She has no doubt that education, at its core, is about relationships and relationship building. For Laura, feelings and insight developed through relationships supersede judgements based on data. We might argue that such an intuitive approach is quite restrictive, as it downplays more rational procedures for student evaluation and judgement (Hoyle, 1974). However, what Laura demonstrates is an awareness of the social complexities of education and that professional judgements cannot be made solely on rational quantitative grounds. By providing professional learning opportunities for her department to develop their perceptions, values and beliefs, Laura provides evidence of extending the

attitudinal component of their professionalism (Evans, 2014). As with all of the middle leaders in this study, Laura is conscious that teacher development is about more than just the development of professional skills, processes and procedures.

A recurring feature of the participants' card-sorts was their disaccord with the statement "*behaviour management and behaviour for learning*". Although they had created the statement during the focus group meeting, when presented with it during the construction of their card-sorts, they all challenged the two terms as not being representative of the same thing. As highlighted in Peter's extract below, 'behaviour for learning' is seen as more complex, and requiring a greater level of professional development and understanding.

... I see behaviour management and behaviour for learning as being different things, to develop someone's behaviour management skills I would talk to them about set techniques and phrases, their planning, about being consistent. But behaviour for learning is far more subtle. It's about positive relationships with pupils, motivating pupils, encouraging pupils ... and I don't think you can learn that directly, so for me that would be about encouraging staff to observe other people and then trying things out.

Peter describes the development of behaviour management skills as a simple verbal transfer of advice and techniques. In contrast, behaviour for learning is represented more like a professional quality that is learnt by observing others and then developed through trial and error. Peter's comments, consequently, carry with them a strong sense of teaching being a craft that is best learnt from other practitioners (Grimmett and MacKinnon, 1992; Hoban, 2002) – what could be classified as a restricted form of professionalism that is limited to isolated classroom experiences and events (Hoyle, 1974). Like Laura, however, Peter does not see teacher–student relationships as being coincidental and emerging as a by-product of other professional learning opportunities. Peter encourages staff to look at how other teachers develop interpersonal relationships with students to inform their own practice. Whereas Peter's comments can be said to be restrictive in how he sees the development of teachers' knowledge and practice, his awareness of the interconnectedness of the learning process and how practitioners learn from one another are all indicative of a more extended view on teachers' professional development (Hoyle, 1974; Hoyle & John, 1995).

Similarly, in the following extract taken from the focus group meeting, Hamora expresses a desire for professional learning opportunities that recognise the importance of developing teachers' knowledge and practice of teacher–student relationships and students' emotional wellbeing. With reference to the card-sort statement "*Growth mind-set, emotional intelligence, self-belief and integrity – For pupils and/or teachers*", she said

I like the idea of emotional development of students, so we are developing the person and not just their grade potential ... there is a definite need for CPD that is more about student wellbeing and about our connections with them and how that ultimately gets the grades.

Hamora links teacher–student relationships directly to student attainment, perceivably seeing it as resulting in pupils working harder and accepting direction more readily (Little & Kobak, 2003). Hamora's comments illustrate the point that being a teacher is about working with young people, and in agreement with the other middle leaders, she sees this human element of her job as being ignored and downgraded in the current climate. For Hamora, it would appear that the social importance of teaching has been replaced by concerns for rigour, competition and accountability (Apple, 2014; Ball, 2017; Furlong, 2013).

I really struggle to carve out the time that I'd like to give to my pupils and colleagues. There is always such a backlog of things to do, that we never find time to prioritise more important things like networking and collaborating with colleagues or thinking about how we inspire and engage young people more.

Hamora is clearly struggling with finding the time to engage with more extended forms of professional development that chime with her values and open up the possibility for greater student engagement and collaboration with colleagues (Hoyle & John, 1995).

Teacher collaboration is widely recognised as being important in teachers' professional development (Cordingley et al., 2005; Hargreaves and O'Connor, 2017; Lofthouse & Thomas, 2017; Turner et al., 2018). All of the middle leaders in this study share this viewpoint. As Craig states:

... professional development is not a case of me providing professional development for the members of my team, but more a case of, as a team, we develop and grow together.

And, in reference to her card-sort, Laura expresses that:

Collaborating with others in the school, I'm a big fan of that, particularly when it's about things that don't work. For me that ties in with reflecting on practice, so I think we reflect on our own lessons, but also when I observe others and the discussions we have afterwards, that kind of reflection helps to think about a way forward and to build confidence.

Not only do Craig's and Laura's extracts encapsulate a sense of collaborative relationships as enabling professional growth, but also as a means of building self-belief and confidence (Cordingley et al., 2005; Lofthouse & Thomas, 2017; Turner et al., 2018). Along similar lines, Hamora expresses that:

I want members of my department to feel confident in their teaching so that they don't become isolated in their practice. So ... for example, we might look at our marking or data together as a department and have open discussions

Like Craig and Laura, Hamora is conscious of the significance of collaboration for teacher confidence and autonomy, and she also sees it as a means of avoiding teacher isolation (Kelchtermans, 2006; Saunders, et al., 2009). This is something that Craig also appears to be particularly aware of:

I think we can get very anxious sometimes because we think that we are not doing things well enough, because it can be quite a lonely profession at times ... we are all in our little cubes all in our little classrooms and we have our department meetings but then we go back ... we can take things too seriously.

Collaborative interpersonal relationships for teachers are consequently not perceived as a given, but something that has to be worked on and created. Relationships provide the support and care that creates a productive environment for teachers to develop and change in. As Peter contends, "it's that immediate day-to-day environment, and what [teachers are] surrounded by that counts". Hence, collaborative relationships are valued by the middle leaders as something that extends teachers' professional knowledge, skills and self-assurance, and safeguards against isolated introspective practice (Hoyle, 1974).

For Hamora and Laura, collaboration also extends outside of the local environment, as they indicate that they like to build wider collaborative relationships. Hamora, for example, states:

I think it is refreshing to look at what other people are doing, I personally feel like I can come back after sitting down with colleagues from other schools and share some really good teaching ideas with my team

Very similarly, Laura suggests:

I've not had a lot of experience of collaborating with other schools, but when I have I've found it really useful and always been able to bring back something useful that we've been able to adapt to our teaching.

In contrast, Craig and Peter express less enthusiasm for collaborative practices with colleagues outside of their local community. While creating his card-sort, Peter introduces a concern about collaborating with other schools in regards to it being sporadic and too general:

Collaborative practice is important and something that doesn't happen enough, but I've never found collaboration with other schools that useful. In my experience they tend to be events that have been set up by other people and ... err ... I suppose I've found them quite limited and they just take place on that day and then that's it.

Craig sees collaboration with colleagues in other schools as a loss of a school's identity and sense of community:

... that sense of community for me is getting lost because we're looking outside too much for quick fix solutions and not talking and listening to one another enough.

Whereas all of the participants value collaboration with colleagues in their primary community and the development opportunities it can bring, only Hamora and Laura appear to recognise the potential of building relationships with others in a broader professional context. For Craig and Peter, collaborative relationships outside of the immediate workplace environment are viewed negatively, representing something of a restricted view of teacher development (Hoyle, 1974; Hoyle & John, 1995). Peter, while not opposed to collaboration, finds it to be a contrived exercise "set up by other people" and limited in its usefulness when conducted outside of the school community. As Hargreaves (1994) points out, collaboration can be a negative experience for teachers when it is over-prescribed and controlled by administration. Teachers need ownership of their collaboration, otherwise it can be perceived as just a directive from management with set targets and goals to be achieved (Hargreaves, 1994). Craig's desire to look more to the individuals around him than for external solutions appears to resonate with this argument. Craig feels that external influences are causing confusion because the ideas and solutions they offer do not correlate to the local requirements of his department and school. From such a perspective, it is

interesting to re-evaluate Hamora's and Laura's statements. Both Hamora and Laura see relationship building with other professionals outside of the school community as a means of bringing something back into their departments – seemingly, a healthy process of acquiring new ideas and knowledge. However, when examined against Hoyle's extended-restrictive framework it could be argued that Hamora's and Laura's thinking represents a more restricted than extended form of professionalism, as it does not appear to embrace a broader social context or engagement with non-immediate professional activities (Hoyle, 1974; Hoyle & John, 1995). Hamora and Laura do not talk about collaboration in terms of how it might foster or broaden teachers' professional identity. It is viewed in terms of the sharing of teaching ideas and strategies that, while having a valuable part to play in teacher collaboration, only positions teachers as the sharers and consumers of teaching tips. A more extended form of teacher professionalism would position them as engaged in a more outward process of consuming and distributing professional knowledge across professional boundaries (Hoyle, 1974; Hoyle & John, 1995). In other words, this would be a teacher collaboration that is about more than just the sharing of ideas and products to enhance classroom practice. It is about being engaged in an ongoing process of inquiry and the building of deep meaningful relationships across the teaching profession to transform education (Boylan, 2013; Sachs, 2016; Whitty, 2008).

4.3.1 Summary of the Master Theme

In seeking an overall interpretation of the middle leaders' sense-making, it was their relationships with colleagues and students that stood out as most significance for me. Within their dialogue there is a strong sense that relationship-centred practice is a defining feature of who they are as teaching professionals. It is widely acknowledged that teacher collaboration and positive teacher–student relationships have a significant impact on student achievement as well as teacher job satisfaction and professional identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011; Beijaard et al., 2004, Hargreaves, 2000b; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2017; Lofthouse & Thomas, 2017; O'Connor, 2008; Roorda et al., 2011). When Hamora, Craig, Laura and Peter talk about their colleagues and students, they do so with an underlying awareness of their emotional needs.

Classroom practice, somewhat unavoidably, is viewed by the middle leaders as being the primary space in which the emotional needs of students and teachers are met. Being in the classroom is seen as “the most important aspect of professional development” (Laura); the place where “you find yourself as a teacher” (Peter) and make “those real connections” with students (Hamora). Hoyle and John (1995) are critical of teachers whose sole focus and job satisfaction is based on their primary colleagues and classroom practice. For them, such a restricted perspective comes at the expense of more extended broader professional learning opportunities that can further professional knowledge and job satisfaction. Certainly, as shown in the participants’ interviews and card-sorts, more academic and scholarly professional learning opportunities are viewed as being less meaningful. As Laura tells us, academic literature, courses and qualifications are not at the forefront of her mind when she is evaluating the professional development needs of her staff. In justifying such a perspective, there is evidence in the middle leaders’ extracts to suggest that time limitations result in them prioritising more restricted forms of professional development, which they perceive to be more effective and direct (Hoyle & John, 1995). However, there is also evidence of a real need for a connection with their students, classrooms, colleagues and departments. Authenticating for me a real a sense that for these middle leaders teaching is about human needs, and that by fostering positive relationships, teaching and learning becomes valuable, significant, creative and enjoyable.

Within their discussions about collaboration, I saw the middle leaders as expressing a sense of confidence and autonomy. Collaboration connects them to colleagues and is a means of building professional knowledge and self-belief (Cordingley et al., 2005; Lofthouse & Thomas, 2017; Turner et al., 2018). Hamora’s theme of inclusion is about involvement and creating a context in which teachers feel respected and empowered. Laura’s sense of collegiality is based on her respect for people and her desire to create a feeling of connectedness to others within her department. Peter’s nurturing outlook on teacher development is about providing a supportive and safe space in which to grow and develop; and Craig’s desire to listen and be listened to is concerned with valuing one another’s ideas and thoughts. Taken together, these can be interpreted as view of collaboration that goes beyond teachers merely sharing, discussing and observing one another’s best practice.

When examined against Hoyle's (1974) extended-restricted framework, however, the middle leaders' perceptions of collaboration could be argued to be somewhat restricted to a localised vision. In their dialogue about collaboration they do not position themselves as being engaged in a more extended, outward process of distributing professional knowledge across professional boundaries (Hoyle, 1974; Hoyle & John, 1995). Hamora, Craig, Laura and Peter present a picture of looking inwards to meet the professional development needs of their departments. One way of interpreting this response would be to suggest that for these middle leaders, there is an absence in national policy and teachers' professional development of the human and emotional element of teaching. As such, they are increasingly looking inwards to their departments and colleagues to fulfil and facilitate this vital element of teacher development, and are rejecting external professional learning opportunities that fail to value this aspect of their work. Whether this is an entirely conscious or unconscious decision on the middle leaders' part is difficult to say, but nevertheless, I would suggest, that it is very much present in their sense-making about teacher development.

Chapter 5 Conclusion and Reflections

In this final chapter, I consider my findings and reflect on the research as a whole. In sections 5.1 and 5.2, I revisit my research questions and discuss the broader findings of the research and their significance to the discourse on teachers' professional development. Section 5.3 presents a conclusion for the thesis drawing together the key threads and arguments of the work. Section 5.4 critically evaluates the methodology by considering the benefits of adopting an IPA research approach and where I feel enhancements could have been made. Section 5.5 discusses some of the implications resulting from the study and my hopes for future research. Finally, in section 5.6 I present a brief personal reflection on this thesis and my educational doctorate

5.1 The Research Questions

1. What perceptions do middle leaders have of their role in relation to the professional development of teachers?

The first research question aimed to reveal and share how the four experienced middle leaders in this study perceive and regard their role in relation to the professional development of the staff that they line manage.

The middle leaders projected an understanding of their role in relation to teacher development as overwhelmingly being about human connections and professional social learning experiences. They identified professional interactions and relationships as the fundamental aspects of teacher development, actively facilitating and encouraging members of their departments to share and develop practice together. As a result, collegial professional learning emerged as a prominent feature in the middle leaders' thinking about teacher development. They talked about members of their departments working together to build skills and competencies through open discussions and looking at one another's practice. In other words, they projected the idea of a community of practice in which colleagues learn from one another by both absorbing and augmenting the practice of the community (Lave, 1997). Firmly associated with this thinking was the idea that collegial collaboration was a means of empowerment, with the middle leaders seeking to build emotional capital within their staff and break down isolation. Korthagen (2013) asserts that

there is an over-emphasis in teachers' professional learning on practice and theory. He contends that a more meaningful and realistic vision of teacher development would recognise the teacher as a human being who works within a social context. What this study reveals is that this sense of "the teacher as a person" (p. 399) is a well-established feature of the middle leaders' perspectives and practices in relation to teacher development. Within their departments, it is trust, openness, mutual support, and a connection to others that looms the largest.

Within the middle leaders' transcripts there is little evidence of them supplying or organising direct professional development. Peter, for example, states, "I suppose I'm more about support than direct intervention with staff development", and Laura outlines that she is "more about self-directed CPD for the simple reason that staff just don't fully engage with CPD that is imposed upon them". In interpreting their role, the middle leaders appeared to exhibit a strong awareness of teacher development that is more informal than formal. They did not see themselves as the top-down organisers or implementors of professional learning events. For Hamora, Laura, Peter and Craig, their role in regards to teacher development is more about being responsive to the needs of staff and students, and creating a space for teachers to grow professionally. This corresponds to an interpretation of teacher development that is not narrowly conceived as outcome-oriented, but as a process that is ongoing, complex and multidimensional (Evans, 2019). In turn, this gives the impression that the middle leaders have an awareness of the importance of implicit professional learning opportunities in which staff develop dynamically over time by assimilating new knowledge and thinking into their practice (Evans, 2019).

In not seeing themselves as the top-down implementers of teacher development, the middle leaders positioned themselves as the facilitators of professional learning. As highlighted in their super-ordinate themes of inclusion, collegiality, listening to one another and the nurturing of professional growth, the middle leaders are operating more as guides of professional learning than directors of it. Their close connection to their colleagues, students and classrooms indicates that they value their association with others (Bennett et al., 2003; De Nobile, 2018; Dinham, 2007; Fleming, 2014). For Hamora, Laura, Peter and Craig, professional development is not about telling others how to teach, but about providing an environment in which active participation and social engagement allow

classroom skills as well as the human and emotional elements of teaching to thrive. As such, this group of middle leaders do not see classroom skills as being separable from the human and emotional elements of teaching. In the current education system, however, these human and emotional elements are seen by the middle leaders as being devalued, while technical and evidence-based practice gains ever-increasing momentum (Biesta, 2010b). As Laura outlined, “for me this job is about people and valuing people and I think we’re losing sight of that”.

2. What aspects of teachers’ professional development matter to middle leaders and why do these aspects of teachers’ professional development have meaning for them?

The second research question sought to make sense of the middle leaders’ practice and values in relation to teachers’ professional development, by considering what the middle leaders believed to be most meaningful in teacher development.

As might be expected, the middle leaders’ card-sorts and interview transcripts demonstrated a certain amount of divergence in their thinking about professional development. Hamora, for example, unlike the other middle leaders, ranked effective marking, assessment and feedback highly in her card-sort, explaining that she had actively promoted professional learning episodes around these areas. Thus, the middle leaders’ perceptions and feelings about teachers’ professional development displayed a strong sense of individuality. As Willig (2013) reminds us, however, IPA research is not just interested in subjectivity but also intersubjectivity, and in relation to research question 2, it was the commonalities in the participants’ thinking that proved to be the most revealing.

As shown in the master theme, relationships with others and the human element of teaching was of considerable importance to the middle leaders. A relationship-centred approach to education was a recurring theme within their dialogue, not only as it appeared to define who they were as professionals but also how they conceptualised professional development. The classroom was seen as the primary site in which professional learning and development took place – where you “learn how to teach” (Laura) and “find yourself as a teacher” (Peter). Going beyond mere technical skills, the middle leaders gave a sense of seeing classroom practice as a social activity in which teachers have an awareness of the importance of teacher–student relationships.

Intimately linked to the significance the middle leaders placed on relationships was also their sense of collaborative practice. In their transcripts, they alluded to practice within their departments in which both formal and informal collaboration took place. The middle leaders portrayed collaboration as a process that was as much about collective engagement as the sharing of best practice and student attainment concerns. Where the middle leaders' views on collaboration diverged, however, was in their assessment of collaboration with colleagues wider than their school. For Hamora and Laura, collaboration that extended outside of the local environment was viewed as valuable and a means of feeding knowledge back into their departments. In contrast, Peter and Craig saw it as a contrived exercise that did not provide solutions and ideas for their particular students and classrooms. Peter's and Craig's views are interesting in the sense that they undermine the idea of an expansive learning framework, by seeing collaboration outside of their school as lacking the personal and differentiated qualities needed to effect real professional change.

As can be seen from the middle leaders' card-sorts, "Safeguarding pupils' well-being", "Safeguarding teachers' well-being" and "Reflecting on practice – both individually and in collaboration" also factored highly in their thinking about teacher development. Peter, for example, referred to pupil safeguarding as one of the "key attributes" of being a teacher, and Laura described it as "a given".

In relation to what emerged as least meaningful for the middle leaders in teacher development, courses, qualifications, engagement with educational literature and pedagogical knowledge were all unfavourably represented in the middle leaders' card-sorts and interview transcripts. Laura told us that scholarly literature, courses and qualifications were not at the forefront of her mind when she was considering the professional development needs of colleagues. Similarly, for Peter, teacher development was about "doing the job and learning from other teachers as opposed to theory and courses". Formal professional development events were also looked on unfavourably by the middle leaders as a tick-box exercise from which they gained very little. Some possible suggestions of why the middle leaders demonstrated such a disconnection with these forms of teacher development might be: time constraints, the accessibility of academic research for them, or simply a lack of interest in what academia and outside experts have to say. In addition, as revealed within the middle leaders' sense-making in this study, it could also be suggested

that the image of CPD presented to teachers does not incorporate the idea of engaging with more scholarly forms of professional learning. Hamora, Laura, Peter and Craig gave no indication that national policy, researchers, or school leaders had modelled or promoted any form of academic professional development for them. As such they gave the impression of operating in an isolated system where they were given no incentive to translate research or expert advice into their practice.

In summary, a response to research question 2 would be to suggest that the middle leaders placed a great deal of value on developing relationship-centred practice and the human element of teaching. The classroom is seen as the primary space in which a teacher learns how to teach and build a connection with students. Although there was a divergence in the middle leaders' thinking about collaboration outside of the school community, collegial collaboration was nevertheless seen as a fundamental element of teacher development. In contrast, more scholarly and external professional learning opportunities were viewed as being less meaningful, with evidence suggesting that the middle leaders are closing down these opportunities because they do not see them as being relevant to their practice.

3. How is professional development realised by the middle leaders in their departments and to what extent is this influenced and shaped by national policy?

This research question aimed to shed light on what is influencing the middle leaders' sense-making and subsequently their realisations of teachers' professional development. In particular, it sought to explore how the four experienced middle leaders in this study are working with policy and how it is impacting on their everyday practice.

As brought to light through research questions 1 and 2, the middle leaders in this study understood teachers' professional development in terms of professional interactions and the sharing of ideas and practice. They did not depict themselves as the top-down directors of teacher development, who purposefully designed and managed the professional learning of their colleagues. Teacher development was portrayed by the middle leaders as a process that was more organic than explicit and by design. This is not to suggest that professional development within the middle leaders' departments is achieved by accident. They demonstrated an awareness of the importance of teacher development and

had created coherent professional learning opportunities for their colleagues. But as opposed to direct intervention, the middle leaders gave the impression of acting as facilitators of professional learning by building an inclusive environment within which teachers felt supported (Harris & Jones, 2010).

In contrast the middle leaders conveyed a real sense of frustration with and lack of inclusion in the education system, giving the impression of being disconnected from national policy. Spillane (2009) contends that teachers' make sense of policy based on their professional understandings, beliefs and prior experiences. Certainly, in this study the middle leaders' reflections on policy were heavily interwoven with their professional identity and values. Hamora saw national policy as limited and formed around an "externally managed vision of [teachers'] professional expertise" (Furlong, 2013: 128). Laura talked about her disengagement with national policy due to its empty rhetoric and commoditisation of the education system (Ball, 2017). Similarly, Peter lamented national policy's drive for performativity, suggesting that it had created an artificial professional environment in which teachers and schools have become highly competitive with one another; while Craig referred to "the attainment and progress game" and the "production line that is education at the moment".

Plainly, for Hamora, Laura, Peter and Craig, national policy was seen as being heavily focused on student attainment at the expense of other aspects of education, which they identified as being of equal importance to student success. Despite their remonstrations, however, results and attainment were an ever-present feature of their work and something that they clearly felt could not be ignored, as Hamora explained:

there's always that sense of what I should be doing and what I have to do, and if I'm honest, I do more of what I have to do because at the end of the day I'm responsible for the head-line figure.

Middle leaders are characterised as intermediaries, acting as the agents and policy drivers of the organisational structure around them while at the same time being the agents and advocates of their colleagues (Bennet et al., 2007; Busher, 2005; Harris and Jones, 2017; Maguire, Braun and Ball, 2015). From such a perspective, it might be suggested that the middle leaders' realisations of teacher development within their departments can be polarised into their responses to educational policy and their views and values. In part, the

middle leaders are “consumed by the pressure of results” (Hamora) and are enacting teacher development in their departments that is focused around student outcomes. At the same time, however, they are trying to remain true to their own beliefs about education, that are grounded in relationships with young people and colleagues, going beyond mere attainment and progress measures. Reducing the middle leaders’ sense-making about teachers’ professional development to such a dualism, however, seems an oversimplification. The middle leaders’ realisations of professional development in their departments appear to be more multifaceted and influenced not only by policy and professional values but by collegiality, professional identity and their working environment. As Maguire, Braun and Ball (2015: 14) argue, national policy is not the sole driver of school life. In schools, there is a complex mixture of national guidance and teacher-mediated initiatives that go beyond policy and extend into the corners of education “where policy does not reach”.

5.2 The Research Findings

This research set out to explore the reasoning, perceptions and feelings of four experienced secondary school middle leaders about their role in relation to teachers’ professional development. Central to the research was the voices of the four middle leaders and the insight that their experiences could bring to our understanding of how teacher development is being realised within schools. From the middle leaders’ commentary, it is apparent that they see the professional development of teachers as being a valuable and significant part of middle leadership. They outlined aspects of teacher development that they considered to be most meaningful, and drew on their experiences to offer suggestions of what professional development should encompass. Out of their sense-making, three key research findings emerged:

1. The four middle leaders valued human relationships and saw relationship-centred practice as a key aspect of teachers’ professional development.
2. The four middle leaders appeared to be looking inwards to their departments and colleagues to facilitate and meet the professional learning needs of the staff that they line manage.

3. In looking inwards to their departments and colleagues to facilitate professional development, it would seem that the middle leaders are closing down external professional learning opportunities, and are arguably not perceiving teacher development as a holistic process that projects outwards across professional boundaries.

For Hamora, Laura, Peter and Craig, relationships with colleagues and students are clearly important. Relationships appear to substantiate who they are as teaching professionals, bringing both meaning and purpose to their work. It is also through these relationships that they are able to make more informed judgements based not just on data but on feelings and intuition. The middle leaders in this study painted teaching and teacher development as an emotional and socially situated practice that is directly and intimately linked to human relationships and our connections to others. Throughout their interviews, the middle leaders returned to the idea of relationship-centred practice and identified it as a defining feature of the professional development within their departments. Accordingly, the classroom was outlined as the primary site within which teachers learn how to teach and discover who they are as professionals through their interactions with students.

The human element of teaching, however, was something that the middle leaders did not see as being a prominent feature in teachers' professional development as a whole. They were critical of national policy and teacher CPD events, seeing them as being heavily focused on teaching practice and student outcomes. In this sense, a top-down model of teacher professionalism defined and shaped by standardisation and accountability (Ball, 2017; Furlong, 2013; Goepel, 2012; Whitty, 2014a). It might be suggested that in valuing colleagues and students, the middle leaders gave the impression of trying to avert an erosion of the human element of teaching and address the lack of explicit professional development in this area. In their department's inclusion, collaboration and relationship-centred practice were all valued, with evidence to suggest that the middle leaders are actively promoting teaching that is about fostering positive human relationships, and bringing value, significance, creativity and enjoyment to teaching. The primary source of professional learning opportunities that the middle leaders facilitate in their departments is through learning from one another's practice. Collaboration and reflecting on practice emerged as dominant features within the middle leaders' thinking and realisations about

teacher development. They talked about enabling both explicit and implicit professional learning opportunities, ranging from informal meetings where teachers could share concerns and pressures, to more formal gatherings in which initiatives and strategies were considered collectively. Thereby, reflecting a professional environment built around values and orientated towards a professionalism concerned with human well-being (Biesta, 2010).

In contrast, the middle leaders' interviews and card-sorts revealed a lack of interest in promoting academic-based professional learning opportunities. Pedagogical knowledge, courses, qualifications and engagement with educational literature were dismissed by the middle leaders and positioned as least meaningful in their card-sorts. Along similar lines, external professional development events were portrayed in a negative light, being regarded as too instructional, non-inclusive and thinly conceived around teaching skills. For the four middle leaders in this study, professional development was seen as something that is best realised in the immediacy of their departments and day to day work, as evidenced in the following extracts:

... it's that immediate day to day environment and what they're surrounded by that counts ... So, for me, it's about doing the job and learning from other teachers as opposed to theory and courses. (Peter)

The amount of time that I've had to sit through those how to teach CPD sessions and gained very little from them ... and ... it shouldn't be like that, it should be meaningful, relevant, about us and right at the core of who we are as teachers. (Hamora)

... we're looking outside too much for quick fix solutions and not talking and listening to one another enough ... there are some really good teachers in this school, and I think we just need to reconnect with ourselves. (Craig)

Good CPD for me tends to be about sharing good practice with members of my department, and I'm not sure how qualifications help me, or my colleagues do that ... I've learnt more from doing the job than reading about how to do it. (Laura)

It might be suggested that the middle leaders focus on, and close connection with, their colleagues and the teaching in their department (De Nobile, 2018; Dinham, 2007; Fleming, 2014) inevitably leads to an inward-looking perspective of teacher development. In addition, time limitations and student attainment targets may also result in the middle leaders prioritising forms of professional development that they perceive to be more direct and

immediate (Hoyle & John, 1995). However, taking into account the importance of relationship-centred practice for the middle leaders, it could also be argued that in looking inwards to their departments and colleagues to facilitate professional development, the middle leaders are trying to safeguard an aspect of teaching that they see as being absent elsewhere. They present an awareness of education and teacher development that is value-base, relationships centred and about human connections. Aspects of teaching that appear to be inadequately represented in both national guidance and academic models of teachers' professional development.

Sachs (2016) urges teachers to be activist professionals who see themselves as transformative practitioners who are able to communicate and collaborate with colleagues and students at a deep level. In many respects, the four middle leaders in this study articulate such qualities; they value interpersonal relationships, inclusion, teacher communities, collaboration and the sharing of good practice. However, the activist professional also produces and consumes educational research and is confident to cross and push at professional boundaries (Sachs, 2016). As highlighted above, Hamora, Laura, Peter and Craig are closing down such scholarly and external professional learning opportunities.

Boylan (2013) suggests that "teacher leaders" have the potential to be "system leaders" who can affect change in contexts wider than their local setting, particularly in regards to teacher development and collaborative networks. This is a vision of teachers' professionalism and professional development that extends outwards, enabling teachers to interact and contribute at a system-wide level. Within this study, there is little evidence of the middle leaders seeing professional development as something that projects outwards. Even in Hamora and Laura's enthusiasm for collaboration with other teachers outside of their school, it is exclusively referred to in terms of feeding professional knowledge into their departments. Thus, the middle leaders depicted themselves and their colleagues purely as recipients of professional development, emphasising passivity and a lack of active agency (Sachs, 2016). Although extended forms of professionalism (Hoyle, 1974, 2008) are evident in their departments' collegiality, collaboration and relationship-centred practice, this is restricted to a local level. The middle leaders in this study appear to fall short of perceiving professional development as a holistic process that incorporates a whole range of technical, attitudinal and intellectual elements (Evans, 2011, 2014).

5.3 Conclusion

The research findings tell us that for this group of experienced middle leaders, teachers' professional development is not perceived as a holistic rationale process that projects their professionalism outwards across professional boundaries. In sharp contrast to the idea of teachers being activist and democratic professionals (Sachs, 2003, 2016; Whitty 2006), these middle leaders are focusing their attention inwards to their working environment, colleagues and personal experiences to facilitate the professional development needs in their departments. As evidenced in their transcripts, the middle leaders' position is not merely a factor of departmental and collegial connectedness. Hamora, Laura, Peter and Craig are critical of the current education system and its lack of recognition of their voice and expertise. In looking inwards, these middle leaders have found a way of managing and dealing with a performativity culture that is not listening to them; enabling them to be true to what they regard as being important in education. For these middle leaders it is relationships and human connections that are most significant to teacher development, aspects that appear to be inadequately represented in policy and academic models of teacher development. It is interesting that at a time when educational practice seeks to be more rational and evidence-based, these middle leaders, drawing on their considerable experience, are subversively rejecting this view of teacher development. Instead, they have averted their attention from the rational end of the spectrum to the intuitive end, valuing the human and emotional elements of teaching, and reasserting the teacher as a person.

It would appear that at a time when the provision for teacher training and development is increasingly becoming more school-based, and university and LEA provision is being eroded, middle leaders, who are at the heart of teacher development, are still finding it difficult to project their professionalism outwards. The potential of a new mechanism for teacher development is therefore lost, as teachers' viewpoints on what is important in education remain overlooked. To address this shortfall, I would argue that it will not only require teachers to see themselves differently. But for school leaders, policy writers and academics to acknowledge the very professionals who work with children all of the time, thereby collapsing their pursuit of templates and models for teaching and teacher development.

5.4 Critical Evaluation of the Methodology

This qualitative study set out to explore the personal and social experiences of four experienced middle leaders working in a mainstream secondary school. Central to the study were the individual voices of the middle leaders and the insight that their sense-making could bring to the understanding of teachers' professional development. The study did not seek to objectify the four middle leaders but to represent them as individuals whose perceptions, reasoning and feelings are personal and linked to the social world around them.

Larkin et al. (2006) contend that IPA combines phenomenological, interpretative and idiographic components which enable detailed descriptions to be formed of particular people and their relatedness to the world. Reflecting on the three key theoretical underpinnings of IPA in this study, in agreement with Larkin et al., the use of IPA has allowed the research to illuminate an in-depth representation of the middle leaders' experiences. The idiographic aspect of IPA positioned Hamora, Laura, Peter and Craig at the centre of the study, acknowledging their voices and illuminating their individual experiences. The phenomenological and interpretative aspects allowed the middle leaders' engagement with teachers' professional development and the meaning it has for them to be explored in depth. Willig (2013) points out that some critics of IPA see it as being limited, offering nothing more than a superficial description of a phenomenon. I would suggest that in this study the IPA approach enabled a rich interpretative account to be provided of the middle leaders' perceptions and feelings that went much further than a simple description.

Underpinning IPA's interest in first-person accounts of phenomenon, semi-structured interviews were employed to capture the experiences of the middle leaders. The interviews enabled a dialogue between the middle leaders and myself to be conducted, which consisted of a small number of relatively broad interview questions, allowing the participants to give their interpretations of their experiences (Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Smith et al., 2009). As part of the individual interviews, the card-sort activity provided extra depth to the data and subsequent analysis. Certainly, in terms of the meaning and value placed on different aspects of teacher development by the middle leaders, the card-sort process opened up discussion areas that perhaps would not have been present without its

use. Including the card-sort in a one-hour interview, however, did compromise the time that could be spent on the sorting process. In hindsight, the card-sort would have been better conceived as a separate process that preceded the interview. This would potentially have produced data of greater depth by giving the participants more time to explore their thinking and reflect on their decisions before the interview.

5.5 Implications and Future Research

Through an interpretive sensibility, this study was able to reveal a group of middle leaders' perceptions, feelings, and thinking about teachers' professional development. The methodology enabled the voice of the middle leaders to be recognised and considered, constituting one of the work's main strengths. At the same time, however, the intimate, idiographic and small-scale approach brought with it several epistemological weaknesses.

The results of the study relate to a small group of middle leaders whose accounts and experiences are authenticated solely through a set of interview transcripts. Although the gathering and analysis of the data was methodical, it is not possible to suggest that the perspectives and experiences of middle leaders in general, nor even those taking part in the study, have been comprehensively reflected in this work. The participants' interview transcripts are partial and transitory and do not reflect the sense-making of all middle leaders. Compounding the limitations further, the research was conducted in my school with colleagues I had known for several years. Therefore, reproducibility is questionable as an outsider researcher, with no connection to the school, may have arrived at a totally different set of conclusions. Even for me to reproduce the study in a different school with participants I am unacquainted with, poses questions of replication. In this sense, the research findings offer no universal relevance to middle leadership or teachers' professional development. The intention of this research, however, was not to generalise about middle leaders and their perceptions on teacher development. Instead, in line with IPA, the study sought to provide an insight into a group of middle leaders' sense-making that would prove useful for other teachers and open the possibility of further academic discourse. In this respect, the implications of this study hold the potential to resonate experientially with other teaching professionals, giving this work not only a sense of pragmatic validity but also inclusion (Stake, 1995).

For the middle leaders in this study, relationships and relationship-centred practice was of considerable importance and an essential aspect of staff development within their departments. They appear to crave professional learning opportunities that recognise the human element of teaching, making it more meaningful for them and “right at the core of who [they] are as teachers” (Hamora). Schools and providers of professional development may, therefore, wish to consider whether their CPD provision acknowledges the significance of relationships and human connections in teaching and learning. Requiring them to question whether they believe relationships have a central role to play in education and are a critical factor in ensuring student wellbeing and success. While this study does not expect to have an impact on national policy, I would suggest that it too would benefit from a similar reconsideration. As Biesta (2010b: 501) suggests evidence-based policy and practice “urgently needs to be rethought in ways that take into consideration the limits of knowledge, the nature of social interaction, the ways in which things can work, the processes of power that are involved in this and, most importantly, the values and normative orientations that constitute social practices such as education”.

The study also suggests that while the middle leaders are engaged in meaningful forms of professional development within their departments, they are closing down external professional learning opportunities. Despite their extensive experience in their roles, the middle leaders gave the impression of seeing themselves as merely the recipients of professional development and not active contributors towards it. Boylan (2013) points out that in the current era of managerialism and standardisation, classroom teachers are not usually seen as systemic thinkers who can affect educational change outside of their local community. Boylan argues that with the correct support, teachers can have a much wider impact on their professionalism and student outcomes. At the heart of Boylan’s argument is teacher identity and the potential of them being activist professionals who innovate, create knowledge and have a moral purpose (Sachs, 2003, 2016). For middle leaders, like Hamora, Laura, Peter and Craig, this would require them to see their professional development as a projection of their professional knowledge outwards – in other words, professionals who understand their development as a means of substantiating their professionalism through a commitment to personal and social transformation (Sachs, 2016).

To strengthen and extend the implication of the study further, several possible future research opportunities exist. One such option, for example, could be to repeat the study with middle leaders from similar and contrasting schools. Such a study would allow for themes and characteristics to be compared within a much larger data pool. As opposed to expanding the research, however, I am more interested in focusing in more closely on a smaller population of middle leaders and the decisions they are making about teacher development. Potentially this may involve looking at a single department, to triangulate the head of department's sense-making against that of their team. I believe that such a study would provide insight into the subtle triggers and interplays that occur during a professional development episode within a professional community.

5.6 Personal Reflection

The purpose of this study was to determine how a small group of middle leaders were making sense of their role in relation to teachers' professional development. In doing so, I wanted to value the voices of the middle leaders and the insight that I believed their sense-making could bring to the discourse on teachers' professional development. The impact, however, of the thought processes involved in creating this piece of doctoral research has stretched beyond the original aims and intentions. My professional pedagogical practice as a middle leader has been significantly affected not only in the way that I work but in the way I think and feel about education. When I began this study, I did not anticipate the extent that the research participants would place on the importance of relationships in their practice. Although I would like to think that I have always had an awareness of the importance of relationships in education, throughout this study I have begun to realise how fragile and at times how invisible the value of relationships can be in successful teaching and school leadership. It is certainly not an area I can recall being the focus of any professional development events or meetings that I have attended. Reflecting on the four middle leaders' thoughts and the importance they all placed on relationships has renewed my thinking within the context of middle leadership. An area for me to consider, as I complete my thesis, is how relationships will factor in and impact on my daily practice as a middle leader with the responsibility for continuous professional development in my department.

As well as revealing what the four middle leaders believed to be most meaningful in teachers' professional development, the research also revealed what they saw as being less meaningful. As indicated in the extracts included in this thesis, the participants dismissed academic literature and research, and did not see it as something that informed their practice or leadership. The government has articulated the importance of evidence-informed practice, and linked it directly to student outcomes, but for me, engaging with academic literature and research is about so much more than implementing the findings in practice. In conducting this piece of research, it has become apparent to me that it is the process of conducting research and engaging with academic literature that has the greatest significance for teachers' professional development. In this respect, the value from engaging with academic research as a development tool appears to be the process itself, as teachers become not just the recipients of professional development but the agents of it.

It would be true to say that, at times, I have found this research both challenging and demanding; however, it has also been stimulating and rewarding. I feel that it has afforded an insight into the professional lives of four middle leaders whose voices might otherwise have not been heard. It has also provided the opportunity for me as a teacher, middle leader and teacher-researcher to carry out a piece of academic work. Although, by the very nature of the study, it would be difficult to demonstrate an impact on student outcomes in line with evidence-informed practice, the research has shaped my thinking, altered my practice, and given depth to my understanding of educational theory and policy and an awareness of the complexities underpinning teachers' professional development.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Agenda emailed to the research participants before the focus group meeting.

Dear Craig, Hamora, Laura and Peter

I'm looking forward to seeing you all at the focus group meeting on Wednesday. Please see the agenda for the meeting below.

1. I will outline what my research is about and how your discussions and perspectives will contribute to the study.
2. As a group, you will be asked to consider teachers' professionalism and professional development.
3. You will then be asked to generate a set of statements relating to what is important in teachers' professional development. The statements will be used in the individual interviews in a card-sorting process. I will outline this process for you as part of the meeting.
4. At the end of the session, I will word process the statements removing any duplicates in preparation for the individual interviews.

Many thanks.

Phil

Appendix 2

The table below shows the card-sort statement set generated at the focus group meeting and used for the participants' card-sorts in their individual interviews. The statements are shown in no particular order. For clarity and to avoid duplication, some of the participants' statements were rewritten by myself, these have been indicated with “*”.

Subject knowledge	Creativity
Pedagogical knowledge	Self-directed personal development
*Opportunities to read and engage with educational literature, for example: policy, theory, teaching forums	Planning and structuring lessons
Safeguarding pupils' well-being	The learning environment
Safeguarding teachers' well-being	Differentiation
*Communication skills – <i>With young people, parents, colleagues and other professionals</i>	*Growth mind-set, emotional Intelligence, self-belief and integrity – For pupils and/or teachers
Keeping up-to-date with technologies	Courses and qualifications
Working with special educational needs and disabilities	Effective marking, assessment and feedback
Working with data and data technologies	Appraisal meetings/reviews
Behaviour management and behaviour for learning	*Training for future leadership and/or development of skill sets outside of current role
Collaborating and sharing practice with colleagues in the school	Handling workload and emotional pressures
Reflecting on practice – <i>Both individually and in collaboration with other teachers</i>	*Collaborating and sharing practice with colleagues in other schools, other professional bodies and the wider community
*Opportunities to experiment and take risks as a teacher – <i>Both individually and in collaboration with other teachers</i>	

Appendix 3

The following questions were asked of all of the research participants during their individual interviews.

1. As a middle leader how do you see your role in relation to the professional development of the staff in your department?
2. Participants were asked to talk through their ordering of the statements generated in the focus group meeting.
3. What professional development opportunities do you provide in your department, and how do you foster these opportunities?
4. How do you encourage professional development in your department with the staff you line manage?
5. What is your vision of what workplace learning should be and how do you feel this sits with recent national guidance on teachers' professional development?

Appendix 4

Blank copy of the data analysis transcript table.

Hamora – Transcript Analysis		
Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments

Appendix 5

Example of annotated data analysis transcript table.

Hamora - Transcript Analysis		
Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments
<p>* Pressure of the role.</p> <p>* Skilling teachers to do their job.</p> <p>* Desire to support and skill her staff.</p> <p>* Focus on curriculum and exams.</p> <p>* Support for staff</p> <p>* Inclusion of them</p>	<p>I: As a middle leader how do you see your role in relation to the professional development of the staff in your department?</p> <p>H: um ... well, I take it quite seriously, possibly because of the subject. ... The last couple of years where we've had so many changes, I have been very, very aware that I need to equip my teachers with the skills to do their jobs. ... because they have felt adrift and unsupported by the exam board and powers that be. ... So I've felt, very much, the need to equip them with every possible resource I can, so that they feel skilled rather than threatened. And I think also the enormity of the changes, both at A level and GCSE have happened in the same year, so if you were both an A level and GCSE teacher you really were bashed on the head twice. ... So I suppose an important aspect of professional development for me is to have an ethos in the department in which staff feel included and valued so that they're comfortable to contribute and challenge things. That's not to say that me rolling up my sleeves and saying OK we need to do this is not something that doesn't happen. But it's always done with a sense of being respectful to my team and</p>	<p>Role is taken seriously. Seeking to skill teachers to do their job.</p> <p>Sense of responsibility - Recognising that staff have been overwhelmed and that the lack of support is perceived by them as not being filled by her. Can we also suggest that Hamora has felt overwhelmed & not supported?</p> <p>Praise for colleagues, their ethos and collaboration - recognised as important - Sense of belonging. PD seen as more than just discrete CPD sessions - it about ethos of inclusion - teams feel valued and supported</p>
		<p>Request for collective knowledge & understanding of colleagues.</p>

their experience and what they bring to the discussion.

I: Can you give an example of how your staff contribute and how you encourage that?

H: So for example, we've had quite a big shuffle in the department this year with members of the department who have tended to do more of the key stage 3 teaching and given them greater exposure to key stage 4 and 5 ... and vice versa ... that has led to some healthy discussions and challenged how we've been doing things ... I think we are a department that is prepared to make changes together and think outside of the box.

I: Can you elaborate on that further?

H: Well when I joined the school, I read all of the exam board specs and then I mapped out key stage 4 teaching... so the grand vision came from me, but the department has always thrown in ideas and said can we do something with this ... we are quite reflective and innovative ... The repetitive nature of some of the A level and GCSE material we think it's going to kill our subject, so we've tried to think more this year about pupil engagement and getting year 10s to focus more on big chunks of the exam paper and bring it into a project to lift it off the page

Inclusion
focus on curriculum & exams.

Inclusion of text - inclusive phrases.

Inclusion of text.

recognition of her years of expertise - valued.

Discussions seen as being healthy - so this because they are inclusive and as a professional learning opp.

Inclusive phrase

Grand vision comes from Horrocks. Is there a contradiction here? Horrocks' term adds ideas to her vision. Term however, recognised as a contributor & valued. Is this really thinking outside of the box.

relates directly to exams - professional learning opp & student engagement seen in these terms.

Appendix 6

Research invitation email to participants.

Dear ...

I am currently conducting a research project looking into teachers' professionalism and their professional development. The research forms part of the requirements for my Doctorate in Education that I am currently completing with Canterbury Christ Church University.

Middle leaders, within schools, have a responsibility for the professional development of the staff they line manage and the student teachers they mentor. The focus of my research is on middle leaders and how they are making sense of their role in relation to teachers' professional development. Your experience as a middle leader would provide valuable insight and I would, consequently, like to invite you to take part in the study. If you decide to take part you will be asked to participate in a focus group session with other middle leaders and an individual interview. You will be free to withdraw from the study at any point in time, and any data relating to you will be anonymised. As part of the study you will not be required to comment or reflect in any way upon school policy, your colleagues or the school leadership. The headteacher will be the only other member of staff privy to who is participating in the study, and all discussions and interviews presented in the thesis will be anonymised and any identifying characteristics removed.

If you are interested in taking part in the research, I will send you an introductory letter containing more details and a consent form for you to sign. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Phil Stone

Appendix 7

Participants' information letter.

Dear ...

Thank you for demonstrating an interest in my research study. The purpose of this letter is to outline the research that will be conducted and to gain your written consent to say that you are happy to take part in the study.

As briefly described in my email to you, I am currently involved in Doctoral Research at Canterbury Christ Church University. The research involves exploring middle leaders' perceptions of teachers' professionalism and how they relate to government policy. As such, it is concerned with how professionalism is conceptualised in a contemporary educational setting.

As a participant involved in the study, you will be required to attend two data collection sessions. The first session will consist of a focus group discussion in which you and a small group of other middle leaders will consider teachers' professionalism and professional development. The focus group session will last approximately 45 minutes and will take place at your school. At a later date, using information generated from the focus group discussion, you will be required to participate in an individual interview. The interview will be an informal discussion with me and will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Both data collection sessions will be recorded and subsequently transcribed. Transcriptions of the collected data may be included in the appendices of the doctoral thesis, and some sections quoted within the main body of the text. Discussions and interviews presented in the thesis will be anonymised and any identifying characteristics removed. Your name will not be stored electronically, and you will have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. You will also be given the opportunity to request the removal of any data relating to you. As part of the study you will not be required to comment or reflect in any way upon school policy, your colleagues or the school leadership.

I have included a consent form below, which will need to be completed and signed by you prior to the research work starting. It is to show that you agree to be part of the research and that you understand what is involved. When the study is completed, I will be more than happy to talk to you about the research and to provide you with a summarised version of the research findings. If you have any further questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to receiving your consent form and working with you on this research project.

Yours sincerely

Phil Stone

Appendix 8

Research consent form.

Research Title: A study of how middle leaders in a secondary school are making sense of their role in relation to teachers' professional development.

Name of researcher: Phil Stone

Email: pas35@canterbury.ac.uk

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information about the research included in this letter.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researcher will be anonymised.
4. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant:

Date:

Signature:

Appendix 9

Focus group information sheet.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the focus group discussion on *date/time/location*. The information you disclose during the session will be anonymised. The session will be recorded and then transcribed. The transcription may be included in the appendices of the doctoral thesis, and some sections quoted within the main body of the text. In accordance with the 1998 Data Protection Act, all collected data will be stored securely, and the recording will be destroyed after transcription.

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in the focus group discussion, please contact me. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time and you will be provided with the opportunity to request the removal of any data relating to you. As part of the focus group you will not be required to comment or reflect in any way upon school policy, your colleagues or the school leadership.

Focus Group Agenda

1. An introduction to the research project and your contribution to it.
2. A group discussion to consider teachers' professional development.
3. A group activity to consider the key elements of teachers' professional development, this will involve the generation of statements as a group.
4. A brief outline of how the information generated from the focus group discussion will be used in the next part of the research study.

Many thanks for your support.

Phil Stone

Appendix 10

Information sheet for the interview.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the research interview on *date/time/location*. The information you disclose during the interview will be anonymised. The interview will be recorded and then transcribed. The transcription may be included in the appendices of the doctoral thesis, and some sections quoted within the main body of the text. In accordance with the 1998 Data Protection Act, all collected data will be stored securely, and the recording of the interview will be destroyed after transcription.

The interview will last between 45 to 60 minutes and will focus on teachers' professional development. The statements generated in the focus group session will be used as part of the interview.

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in the interview, please contact me. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time and you will be provided with the opportunity to request the removal of any data relating to you. As part of the interview you will not be required to comment or reflect in any way upon school policy, your colleagues or the school leadership.

Many thanks for your continued support.

Phil Stone