# In pursuit of a narrative pedagogy: a study with primary school teachers.

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# Abstract

Within cultures, some narratives of everyday life are elevated to positions of canonicity, whereby they are tacitly accepted as common-sense accounts of everyday shared realities. Such narratives can often perpetuate norms, rituals and values which sustain perceptions of sameness and otherness at intra and inter-group levels. My interest in this theme developed out of my personal experiences growing up in a Protestant community in rural Northern Ireland during the Troubles; a period of sectarian conflict officially lasting from 1969 to 1998. Through cultural forms such as traditions, school curricula, folklore and family, narratives circulated which sustained powerful sectarian representations of 'Us' and 'Them'. Such dominant narrative forms had the power to silence other narratives which challenged their authenticity as universal folk theories explaining why the social worlds people lived in were organised as they seemed to be. Although this work has its roots in my life history, it was not possible for me to pursue a doctoral study exploring these issues in Northern Ireland. Therefore, I worked with a group of primary school teachers because I considered their lives to be rich in dominant, secret and resistance narratives.

This study sits across a range of disciplinary areas where concepts of narrative inform the means, the object and the product of the inquiry. Theories articulating the narrative construction of everyday realities and the value of narrative pedagogies were key in framing the pedagogic and methodological focus of the study. I drew on the work of Jerome Bruner to develop a theoretical framework within which to articulate the aims and focus of this study. I looked to scholars such as Ivor Goodson to develop a conceptual understanding of how a narrative pedagogy might be mobilised as part of inquiries exploring people's everyday lived experiences. Working with these sources and empirical studies discussing the creation of counter storytelling spaces, I pursued the key pedagogic principle of narrative disruption. I did so to prompt the teachers to consider constructing alternative narratives about their lived experiences in response to narrative forms presented to them as dominant representations of teachers' lives.

The study took place in a primary school, which I have given the pseudonym Midview Primary School, in the Midlands of England. Over a five-week period, the teachers participated in weekly sessions, scaffolding their capabilities to use different digital resources to create alternative narrative representations of key incidents from their lives. I generated data through participant observations, post-session feedback questionnaires, participants'

final narratives, mind maps and semi-structured interviews. Through a reflective analysis of the data, one which accounted for my position in the inquiry, I found that while the participants valued having a space in which to talk about their lives as teachers, they were reluctant to challenge narratives presented to them as dominant representations of their lives. The inquiry space became an echo chamber where dominant narrative themes of oppression, self-sacrifice, stoicism, and altruism were reproduced to guard against perceived external interference from performative bodies. I discuss how social dynamics within the group, residual traces of the work day and my positionality as someone known to the group made the creation of alternative narratives difficult.

The thesis ends with a critical reflection aimed at articulating how outcomes from this study will inform future similar studies. By way of proposing a revised pedagogic rationale, I have imagined how this might look in a Northern Irish context, seeking to challenge canonical narratives sustaining sectarian division. This 'imagining' takes the form of two narratives: one depicting an account of the study using the original approach I took with the teachers and the other representing experiences based on a revised approach informed by the outcomes of this study.

# Acknowledgements

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I owe a huge amount of gratitude to the teachers from Midview and the wider School community. Without the teachers' involvement, this study would never have happened.

To my wife, Eimear, I simply do not have enough words to express my thanks and appreciation. Without her love and patience, this thesis would not have been possible. She sacrificed so much and more so I could do the EdD. I will always be grateful for everything she gave up.

Thank you to my beautiful daughters who kept me smiling and laughing during every moment of this doctorate. On the long evenings and weekends 'out the back', it was the thought of their hugs and smiles which saw me through.

Thanks to my parents, who have always moved me forward without pushing. I am always grateful to them for giving up so much for me and for raising me to be proud of my roots but never letting my background stop me looking for other routes in and through life.

I cannot forget all my Grandparents: Johnny, Agnes and Isobel, nor my Great Aunt Jean. Many days and nights of my childhood were spent listening to their tales of the 'Olden Days'. Their stories fired my imagination and made the world a more interesting place. Reliving moments of their life histories, by their sides, kindled my love of stories and learning. For this, I will always be grateful.

And finally, thanks to the boy from Ballysally for sticking around!

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Journalistic triggers – Word document

Northern Ireland stories – video

Teachers' vignettes – audio triggers

Teachers' final stories – video

PGCAP resource – audio triggers (Becoming an Academic)

# Glossary of abbreviations used

| | |
|---|---|
| BERA | British Educational Research Association |
| CPD | Continuing Professional Development |
| EAL | English as an Additional Language |
| ESOL | English for Speakers of Other Languages |
| HE | Higher Education |
| HEI | Higher Education Institute |
| ITE | Initial Teacher Education |
| INSET | In-Service Training Day |
| NQT | Newly Qualified Teacher |
| Ofsted | Office for Standards in Education |
| PGCAP | Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice |

# Chapter 1: Introduction and Rationale

## Chapter Overview

I begin this chapter with a letter to my daughters, Eineen and Rhiona[1], as way of explaining why I pursued my study. I have drawn on an approach by Shawn Wilson (2008), a Canadian First Nation's researcher who wrote a letter to his sons to illustrate how his own life history affected his positionality as a researcher. This letter is not a dismissal of more traditional approaches to writing introductions. My intent is exploratory, seeking to use the letter to understand how my own authorial position both produced this thesis and was produced by it (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005). In writing to my daughters, I "develop the relationships I have with the ideas through the relationships I have with them." (Wilson, 2008:9). Like Wilson with his sons, it is easier for me to write to my daughters than an audience of others I do not know because Eineen and Rhiona share a cultural and familial connection with me.

Drawing on other sources, I follow the letter with a more expanded rationale for my inquiry. I begin by clarifying the motivation for the study, which includes the study aim and the research questions I sought to answer. In the sections which follow, I explain what I mean by narrative disruption, the main pedagogic principle I pursed to encourage the participants to consider constructing alternative narratives about their lived experiences. I follow this section by clarifying how I use the terms narrative throughout the study, drawing on the sources I worked with to arrive at my conceptual understanding. After this, I discuss my reasons for operationalising an approach using digital resources to create narratives which would generate data and also give something back to the participants in the form of continuing professional development (CPD). Following this section, I articulate why I worked with a group of primary school teachers. The penultimate section of the chapter considers the contribution to knowledge this study makes. I conclude the section with an overview of the thesis layout.

[1] These are pseudonyms. Both my daughters have Irish names so I chose names which reflected this.

## A Letter[2] to My Daughters

Hi Eineen and Rhiona,

I write this letter in 2017 when you were both small children, or what Granny North would call, 'wee weans[3]'. It's a story about a period in all our lives known as 'The Doctorate'. Depending on who you talk to, the Doctorate years, or periods of it, are described in terms of frustration, joy, anger, and at times, moments of abject confusion. It was a mysterious time when I would disappear 'out the back' to read and write about things connected to what I was studying. The Doctorate affected us all because it often dictated the daily rhythms of our family life; what we could do at the weekends, on holiday, bedtimes and periods of illness. The story of the Doctorate is made up of many small connecting stories; stories I will now share with you so you can understand why I did what I did. The main focus of these stories is on my experiences of school and how this influenced decisions I've made in life.

Where to begin? I'll start with storytelling as that is essentially what the Doctorate is about. Your Mummy and I, like many parents, have always encouraged you to read, listen to, tell and make up stories. Our reasons for encouraging you to develop a love of stories was because as children your Mummy's life, and mine, were full of stories. As you may find difficult to believe, we didn't have iPads, Netflix, Amazon Firesticks or even remote controls. Very often, we'd sit at the feet of our grandparents, or like we do with you, round the kitchen table, swapping tales and yarns. We grew up being fed a diet of fantastical tales about the fairy folk, banshees[4], loveable rouges, heroic warriors and wise-women. We were also told stories which gave us a sense that we belonged to a group of people who were the same as us.

As you know, I'm from Northern Ireland, if it still exists, and your Mummy's from what is, or was, the Republic of Ireland. As I write this letter, I have a feeling that when you come to read it, Ireland will be one again. A United Ireland is something I'm both indifferent to and worried about, if it's possible to be both. I was born into a staunchly Protestant Unionist family, which made loyalty to the British Crown expected rather

[2] I use a different font for the letter to distinguish it from the rest of the introduction. I also purposely contracted word forms because such a grammatical approach is appropriate for an informal letter.
[3] 'Wean' is a common term for a child where I grew up in Northern Ireland. Its origins are in the Ulster-Scots dialect, a form of Lowland Scots.
[4] In Irish mythology the banshee is a female spirit whose appearance heralds a familial death. Tradition has it that she appears as a wizened old woman or a beautiful young woman, wailing a deathly lament.

than a possibility. Your Mummy was born into an Irish Nationalist family, rich in stories about heroic resistance to the imperialistic British Crown. It was through these stories, we both developed a sense of connection with traditions which had their origins in the distant, and not so distant, pasts. Your Mummy's traditions were Irish, and mine were Northern Irish, which by association were British. While sharing similarities through language, food, customs and stories, both traditions were seen by many as being against one another. Where I grew up, more than where your Mummy grew up, much was done to make sure everyday life was marked by visible signs of sectarian division. Painted kerbstones[5], flags on lampposts, the way you said the letter 'H'[6] and the school you went to were all subtle, and not so subtle, ways of sustaining a visible sense of sectarian difference. I'll let Mummy tell you stories about her upbringing. For now, however, I'll concentrate on my life so you understand how the Doctorate came to be.

I grew up on a housing estate in a coastal town called Sandyford[7] during a period of Irish history known as 'The Troubles'. This was epoch between 1969 and 1998 when every aspect of life in Northern Ireland was tainted by sectarian conflict. Sandyford was, for the main, spared the misery and carnage The Troubles brought to cities like Belfast and Derry-Londonderry. Our family, as I'm sure you know by now, is a working-class Protestant family. I moved from the housing estate to the more sedate surroundings of suburbia when I was nine; a transition which would inform the way I saw the world to this very day. Granda worked shifts in a factory, fitting carpets in between, and Granny was a dinner lady at my primary school, cleaning factories in the evening from time to time. My memories of my childhood days on the first estate I grew up on are happy ones; days full of laughing, playing, exploring, being mischievous and occasionally bickering.

The estate was a mix of people all rubbing along, for the most part, quite well together. Religious difference was a constant presence, but rarely a contentious issue like it seemed to be in Belfast. We did not have ironically named peace walls keeping rival sides of the street, as we say in Northern Ireland, from killing each other. People were preoccupied with other things: paying bills, feeding children and

[5] It is not uncommon to see painted kerbstones in Northern Ireland: red, white and blue in Protestant areas and green, white and orange or yellow in Catholic areas.
[6] It is a common myth that Catholics say 'haytch' and Protestants say 'aitch'.
[7] This is a pseudonym

keeping numerous metaphorical wolves from the door. Some families had more access to material necessities like food, clothes and heating than others. We were lucky in our house because we were always well-fed, warm and clean. Other children were not so lucky because their homes were what some called 'broken homes'. As a child, I was oblivious to the fact that the term 'his/her Daddy is working away' often meant an absentee father. In these situations, I recall my mother and other mothers helping feed or clothe children who had less than we had.

People looked out for one another on the estate; there was a real sense of solidarity. Mothers collected each other's children from school; fed them and kept them safe. People even kept an eye out when the TV licencing van was in the area or the tick man[8] was on the prowl, collecting his money for whatever items he'd sold at extortionate prices. It was during these years I learned what community was and I learned what was meant by terms such as the 'the haves and the have-nots'. It wasn't always great. There were times when it was grim, particularly when neighbours were feuding or a 'bad family' moved in. Such families were often relocated from other areas in Northern Ireland as a result of being ordered out by paramilitaries for what was, and still is, referred to as anti-social behaviour. This anti-social behaviour might have been burglary, joyriding, drug dealing or simply challenging the paramilitaries.

The happy memories I have of those early years on the estate were disrupted by two momentous events in my life: leaving the estate at nine and failing my Eleven Plus at ten years of age. The Eleven Plus was a selection test: pass it and you could go to a grammar school, like Uncle Henry[9]. Fail it, like me, and you went to what can best be described as a technical school. At a Grammar School you got to do nine GCSEs and stay on until you were 18 to do A-Levels. However, at my school, you were only allowed to do six GCSEs and you left at 16. Whereas the grammar school pupils had their heads filled with ideas about professions and university, we were made ready for the building trade, the British armed forces, the local factories – what still existed of them – or the dole queue. In my school, the boys were mostly from the big council estates, with exceptions like me and some of the other boys in my class. It was generally acknowledged that the children in the grammar schools had come from

[8] The tick man could have been any number of men (it was always men), collecting payments for home insurance, household items, clothing and/or cars.
[9] This is a pseudonym.

homes with access to better schools. It wasn't always the case, though. Some of the schools on the estates had high pass rates. However, it was widely accepted that the children who attended 'good primary schools' in the suburbs made it to the grammar schools. While we moved to the suburbs, I still went to my old school on the estate I came from, making it difficult to adjust to life in my new pivot-hedged environment. Even when I was at secondary school, I spent my evenings on another estate with my new friends.

Failing the Eleven Plus set you on a very particular path, and it was one I was not really best suited for. I wanted a more academic education which challenged me. In short, I wanted books, particularly history books. What I got instead was woodwork, metalwork and technology; subjects I was less than competent at, or more importantly, interested in. I recall secondary school being a place of crippling boredom, frustration and anger. It was a hotbed of sectarian hatred. Schools in Northern Ireland were, and still are, mainly segregated; that is, Catholic schools and Protestant schools. Many of the boys I went to school with had relatives in prison for involvement in Loyalist paramilitary activities and some of my peers ended up involved in similar things. Granny and Granda did a lot to keep me out of the marching bands, knowing these were potential gateways to trouble. However, I couldn't avoid the lure of Loyalism as it was everywhere. Like most boys in my school, I'd end up following Glasgow Rangers Football Club, joining the Orange Order and while not in the marching bands, I'd attend parades as a hanger on.

Secondary school was also a place where violence was a constant, not just physical violence but mental violence. To survive in my school you needed a quick pair of fists, a quick mouth or both. Violence was not only enacted among the boys. Some of the teachers believed in a 'firm hand', quite literally, and in terms of how they spoke to us. However, there were other teachers, what some people would call 'progressives' and what we, acting with bravado, derogatively called 'Hippies'. It was the progressive teachers who made school interesting and made us feel valued. Our more progressive teachers included us in the learning experience, showing us that an education need not be a boring thing to obtain. One of the most memorable moments I have of secondary school was a project exploring an epoch of Irish history known as the Home Rule period. We used art, music, interviews and drama to make the period come alive. I got to interview a Battle of Somme veteran,

recording his words for posterity on an old cassette recorder. We entered a national competition, coming third and earning a day out to Belfast, which in 1988 was a heart-in-mouth experience for us and our parents, owing to the violence.

That project was a moment I will never forget as it showed how teachers could defiantly disrupt entrenched ways of thinking through emancipatory forms of education. During the project, we were introduced - uncomfortably at times - to Catholic stories and alternative ways of looking at the problems in Northern Ireland. Irish history, or at least a particular version of it, was not in our text books, nor was it part of our curriculum. I think back to that time and realise what incredibly brave teachers we had to have done something so potentially disruptive and problematic. They took great risks, given so many of the parents could easily have complained about their approach.

After leaving secondary school, I tried A-Level Psychology, Sociology and Politics at the local Further Education (FE) college. I was ill-prepared for the discipline needed to study A-Levels. I dropped out after three months and decided to do a BTEC in Media the following September (1993). Ever since winning a writing competition aged nine, I'd always harboured a desire to be a journalist. I thought that doing a BTEC in Media would be a gateway to a job on the Belfast Telegraph, or at worst The Sandyford Times, which was the local paper. While I never became a journalist, the experience at FE college was a transformational one.

Further Education colleges weren't segregated according to religious denomination, so many of my classmates were Catholics. My best friend was a fanatical Glasgow Celtic Football Club fan, who told us he was expelled from his place of birth by the IRA for joyriding. The biggest impact on my life during those two years was the course leader, Ellen (not her real name). She was an eccentric character who smoked, what I'd like to remember as French cigarettes, out her office window. Ellen was the first teacher I'd ever met who insisted we call her by her first name. She was flamboyant, politically left-of-centre and loved literature. She introduced us to a retinue of 'arty' types who would teach us literature, film studies and radio production. Those were great days and it was Ellen who made me believe that flights of imaginative fancy were perfectly acceptable in education.

Ellen convinced me to study Media at degree level and to explore my love of history, culture, subculture, imagery and music. I started university in 1998, staying at home, unlike friends who left Northern Ireland for institutions on 'the mainland'. I remember feeling like an imposter because I was surrounded by 'posh kids' who'd done A-Levels. I had no cultural reference points or anyone to speak to outside in my everyday world because I was the first person in our family to go to university. My sense of not being good enough dissipated, however, when some of the people who'd arrived along the A-Level route, sought me out for help editing and creating radio programmes; something they had never done before. I, as a BTEC student, had a level of practical knowledge most of them did not have.

I never really enjoyed university or saw the point of it until the end of my second year. It was at this time I met Cate (not her real name), an academic from somewhere in the South of England. I remember being baffled by why anyone from outside Northern Ireland would want to move there during The Troubles, particularly Sandyford. You couldn't have got more of an outsider than Cate. However, she opened my eyes to a wealth of scholarly work. On her photography module, she helped me connect my love of subculture and imagery with different cultural and social theories. To this day, much of what interests me academically connects with my love of language, music, subculture and imagery.

Through photography, I started exploring my family photo album, reinterpreting photos which in common parlance represented me as a loyal son of Ulster. Cate taught me the importance of disrupting ways of thinking we consider to be common-sense. She urged me to make the familiar strange through photographs so other ways of thinking about my everyday worlds might emerge. I now know this approach as Photo Voice; a way of documenting everyday life to study it from different vantage points. Once again, it took an outsider's perspective to make visible to me aspects of my everyday life which held me back.

Sectarian tension was always a constant, but by the time I got to the end of university it was less of a thing. I'd left the Orange Order and stopped travelling to Scotland to watch Glasgow Rangers. Most of my peers at university were Catholics and it seemed less of an issue to me. I replaced residual sectarian elements of my adolescence with Scootering; a fusion of Mod, Skinhead, Punk, Rockabilly and God knows what other subcultures. Some of these names may not be familiar to you, but

the music associated with them will be, as you've been listening to it since before you could talk. I had always been interested in the Mod subculture because of memories of the Mod revivalists of the early 1980s who lived on my estate. I loved the clothes, the music and of course the Italian motor scooters. It was something which stayed with me throughout my childhood and teenage years, leading to me to spend my student loans first on a Vespa, and then a Lambretta; both makes of vintage Italian motor scooters. Most of my Scootering friends in Sandyford were Catholics, purely out of coincidence and nothing else. I still stay in touch with one of them; the only person I remain in contact with from 'back home'. Nowadays, our conversations are filled with tales of everyday life as opposed to Northern Soul all-nighters and scooter rallies.

After university, I headed to Dublin to pursue an ill-advised career as a photographer. I started a post-graduate certificate in photography because I got a First – top marks – in my photography project at university. I realised quickly, however, that while I had an eye for an image, I had neither the patience, desire or skill to create them in the way that the industry demanded. So, upon completing the Certificate, I got a job as a receptionist in a multimedia company, met your Mummy and two years later moved to Barcelona to work as English language teachers. Without any real training, We spent three years teaching English in Barcelona. I use the word taught cautiously because I wasn't the best teacher in the world. In fact, had I been teaching me, I'd have complained and asked for my money back.

Barcelona was an amazing experience when I look back. It was a city were the past lived visibly in the present. The ghosts of the Spanish Civil War were everywhere; in the pock marked walls of buildings bombed by Fascist planes and in the secret stories people told you when you'd earned their trust. I loved how history was a constant presence and how people, unlike Northern Ireland, seemed to be able to cope with difference without recourse to violence. Barcelona was a place of juxtapositions and contradictions; a place of wonder and confusion. Nothing was ever as it seemed in Barcelona, which is what made it so appealing. It wasn't always good, however, as we got paid a pittance and without knowing the right people, getting a good job was difficult. This is why we decided to return to Ireland.

On leaving Barcelona in 2004, we returned to Cork, where I studied my Postgraduate Diploma (Delta) to be an English Language teacher. I'd never felt a

calling to become a teacher, but there was something about it which I enjoyed. What I really wanted to do was a Masters in Peace and Conflict Studies but someone told me there were no jobs in that, so I opted for teaching. We moved to England in 2006 so Mummy could train to be a primary school teacher in a college in Birmingham. She specialised in teaching Spanish and after a year began working in the same school she works in now.

In 2009, I decided to stop teaching English and started working as an academic developer in a university. I'm still in that role, albeit at a different university. Now, how to explain what my job is? Well, the easiest way of putting it is that I help develop lecturers as teachers. I suppose you could say it's partly because of this role I started the Doctorate. I've always been interested in how people learn and how teachers can help people learn. I wanted to develop this knowledge further and also to become a researcher, something I've always enjoyed doing. In fact, I don't see the difference between learning and researching because both encourage us to inquire into things. My particular interest is in exploring, shall we say, alternative approaches to teaching which can be used in formal educational spaces like universities and informal spaces, like community groups. Hence, my interest in narrative approaches like storytelling as a way to help people learn about the worlds around them and change them.

At the point I write this letter, however, I have very grave concerns about what is happening to education in general. I fear that options in terms of what teachers can teach are being narrowed as we're told learners demand value for money. My worry is that this is leading some people to avoid risks as they fret about being held accountable for their learners' successes and failures. People I speak to are feeling watched, counted and overly controlled. For some, the thing that they loved, teaching, has become a burden; just a way to pay the bills. For others, they are not so worried. For me? Well, increasingly, I have more days filled with worry than without it. But that's another story.

What I hope you take from this letter is a sense of how and why the period known as the Doctorate emerged as part of my life history and how it connects with your life histories. These are the memories which have profoundly shaped my own perceptions of who I am becoming. They provide me with a sense of continuity and a connection with an imagined shifting past. These stories remind me of the

contradictions and complexities of life as I reconcile my Northern Irish Protestant working class past with the middle-class existence I presently benefit from. I also hope you understand why I chose to explore stories as a way in which to support people make sense of how their lives connect with the lives of others. I believe that the everyday narratives we construct are never truly ours because other people' narratives can be heard in the tales we tell. Through looking at our everyday narratives in a critical manner, we can start to consider how our lives are shaped by the ideas, histories and beliefs existing in the worlds we live. For this to happen, outside voices are important, where they can be accessed because they can prompt us to see things differently. While it's important you consider outside voices, you must always question them as their intentions may not always encourage discussion aimed at considering multiple perspectives.

So, a father's advice would be to always try to ask questions, especially about why you're asking questions about certain things in the first place. Be wary of anyone who tries too hard to sell you a particular version of events as an unquestionable truth, especially when they are intoxicated by their own sense of righteousness. When this happens, which it will, and providing it's safe to do so, challenge such assertions. Also, don't let chips on shoulders become burdensome yokes of victimhood. Where you may feel aggrieved, use any anger or sense of injustice you experience to challenge ways of thinking you believe hold you down. Finally, while I may well live to regret this, be defiant. Defiance can be good when used to illuminate gloomy worlds where hope may be in short supply. It's important that your defiance is not used to destroy others, or yourselves, though.

All this is a tall order to ask and I'm sure you'll make many mistakes, which is grand, because we all do. The important thing to do is try and learn from them. There is also a lot to be said for having fun and not thinking about stuff too much as well.

Love,

Daddy

## Study Rationale, Research Aim and Research Questions

My work began with a desire to develop a disruptive narrative pedagogy to open up inquiry spaces where people could problematise perceptions they held about their everyday lived realties. I sought to create inclusive learning spaces were divergent views, opinions and

beliefs could be shared. I aimed to encourage five primary school teachers to consider how dominant narratives about their lived experiences resonated with their own personal narratives. I wanted them to question why such dominant narratives existed, how they influenced their positionality as teachers and people and how they would respond to them when asked to create alternative narratives.

Such pedagogic approaches acknowledge the multivocal nature of culture by providing people with socially just and equitable educational experiences. My work was committed to pursuing such values by working towards a narrative pedagogy which created spaces for participants to narrativise their lived experiences on their terms. The overall aim of the study was to ascertain the value in pursuing the pedagogic principle of narrative disruption to open up a space where participants could consider constructing alternative narratives about their lived experiences. To help me judge whether or not this aim was met, I identified the following research questions:

### Main research question

1. What narrative pedagogic principles can support people in groups to consider constructing alternative narratives about their lived experiences?

### Secondary research questions

1a. How can narrative pedagogic principles be realised to support primary school teachers construct alternative narratives?
1b. How do primary school teachers respond when asked to construct alternative narratives about their everyday lived experiences as teachers?
1c. What influences can be seen in the narratives the teachers construct?
1d. How successful were the narrative pedagogic principles as implemented in encouraging the teachers to construct alternative narratives about their lived experiences?

## Clarifying My Use of Concepts within the Thesis

Narrative is the core concept underpinning the theoretical, methodological and pedagogical elements of this study. I also use the terms ‘narrative pedagogy’ and ‘narrative disruption’. Here, I discuss the provenance of these terms, explaining how I have made use of them.

## Narrative

The term narrative is one which appears across a wide range of theoretical and empirical sources. The narrative inquirer Corinne Squire (2008:6) points out that, although a ubiquitous term, narrative is one which is understood in a range of ways. She maintains that:

> "In popular culture, it may suggest insight into important biographical patterns or social structures – or, simply, good or less-good forms of representational sequence. In social research, 'narrative' refers to a diversity of topics of study, methods of investigation and analysis, and theoretical orientations."

My own conceptualisation of narrative is rooted in sources discussing it in terms of popular culture and social research. I adapted work from literary and media-orientated disciplines, where narrative is seen in terms of authorial ownership and power (Hunt and Sampson, 2006): that is, narrative is a form of representation where social and cultural variables of power allow some events to be depicted but not others (Cobley, 2001). In this literature, the structural aspects of narrative - the sequencing and organising of events and language - adhere to recognisable patterns of genre (Lacey, 2000).

My conception of narrative is closely aligned to sources depicting it as an organising feature of the mind, that is, as a process in which individuals make sense of why the social and cultural worlds they share with others are as they seem to be (see Bruner, 1990; 1991; Gee, 2014 and Goodson and Gill, 2011, 2014). As I elaborate below, and discuss further in Chapter 2, this conceptualisation of narrative represents it as both a product of culture and a producer of it.

From the outset, I sought to develop a pedagogic process which provided people with opportunities to unsettle, or disrupt, taken-for-granted narratives about their everyday lived realties. This disruption aimed to prompt participants to see their lived experiences from different perspectives. To achieve this aim, I used methodological sources developed in different social research contexts: life history approaches exploring how social structures and power relationships in everyday life constrain and enable the narratives people can construct (see Goodson, 2008; 200; 200; Goodson et al, 2010); and forms of research as activism which provide marginalised groups with opportunities to use narrative methods to understand their social positions and speak back to oppressive voices representing their lives as deficit in some way (Qwul'sih'yah'maht and Robina Anne Thomas, 2005; Haw, 2010 and Bell, 2010).

In summary, my own conceptualisation of narrative focused not on the structural linguistic aspects of the teachers' narratives, as with "event narratives", nor on the biographical content of their narratives, as is the case with "experience-centred narratives" (Squire, 2008: 9). Rather, my focus was on the social and cultural aspects of the inquiry which influenced the teachers' narratives and approaches they took when constructing them. Therefore, according to Squire's characterisations of narrative, my concern was the social, cultural and historical contexts the narratives were situated within. This characterisation of narrative aligned with the theory of the "narrative mode of thought" proposed by Jerome Bruner (1999:52); a key theoretical tenet of this study.

Bruner asserts that culture provides people with mental models with which to organise and sequence thoughts, dreams, intentions and desires into narratives about themselves, about others and about the social worlds they inhabit. Discussing Bruner's work, the sociologist Laurel Richardson (1997:28) claims that "narrative is both a mode of reasoning and a mode of representation. People can 'apprehend' the world narratively and people can 'tell' about the world narratively". My own conceptualisation of narrative is one which concurs with Richardson's observations of Bruner's theorisation, that is, people make sense of their everyday lived realties through narratives they construct.

### Narrative pedagogy

The pedagogic focus of this study sought to prompt the teachers to disrupt their perceptions of their everyday lived realties and to explore them to form different epistemological viewpoints. To achieve my aim, I adapted work which discussed the concept of narrative pedagogy. To provide me with a theoretical grounding, I worked primarily with the literature of Ivor Goodson and Scherto Gill (2011; 2014). The authors see narrative pedagogy as a holistic, critically reflective and collaborative form of inquiry-based learning. It is a dialogic critical pedagogy which supports individuals understand how their social and cultural worlds shape them and are shaped by them. Narrative pedagogy is a pedagogy emphasising democracy and openness: in a

> "safe space […] the teacher and the learner […] examine ethical decisions which confront the individual in his everyday personal and social life and […] examine the ethical decisions that confront the individual in his everyday personal and social life and […] examine what kind of person or human being one would like to become." (Goodson and Gill, 2011:125).

The concept of narrative pedagogy emphasises the mediating role of culture in terms of how narrative forms such as "stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing, and so on" both shape and are shaped by culture resources we use to make sense of our lives (Bruner, 1991: 4). A narrative pedagogy, therefore, aims to encourage learners to remain open to new possibilities of knowing arrived at through questioning and dialogue (Goodson and Gill, 2011; 2014).

## Narrative disruption

A central concept in this study it that of 'narrative disruption'. I have adapted this concept from the work of Iftody (2013) who proposes critical forms of 'self-narration' as a discursive strategy aimed at stepping back from one's own life history. This is with a view to looking at one's life history critically to understand how it came to exist as it did and what role it played in providing us with a sense of who are becoming as people. This conceptualisation of disruption is aligned with the notion of reflexivity, which the literary theorists Hunt and Sampson (2006) advocate as a strategy aimed at prompting people to step back, operationalise a line of questioning aimed at providing multiple possible ways of viewing their lived experiences.

I conceptualise narrative disruption as an act of unsettling aimed at subverting dominant narrative structures to provide people with opportunities to problematise taken-for-granted realties. This unsettling is aimed at creating openings for learners to explore how their life histories connect with those of other people. Through mobilising narrative disruption, the pedagogic aim is to allow versions of narratives to emerge which may otherwise remain concealed or unheard for fear of negative chastisement (Connelly and Clandinin, 1995 and Bell, 2010). An act of narrative disruption is not one aimed at erasing dominant narratives to replace them with another version of reality: to do so would only replace one monological truth with another. Rather, the principle of narrative disruption is part of a critical pedagogy seeking to problematise taken-for-granted truths so that multiple versions of reality might be considered.

## Conceptualising disruption

Within the pedagogic context of this study, I conceptualise disruption as a moment of epistemological disequilibrium, which can be used to provide opportunities for discussion and critique aimed at understanding why we perceive our worlds as we do. In alignment with literary sources, disruption leads to an "interrupted routine" (Johnstone, 1979:138) or "detours" (Cobley, 2001:13). This disruption is necessary because it causes moments of

tension which seek resolution. This tension resolving process is what keeps the audience interested and what turns a sequence of events into a story (Johnstone, 1979; Lacey, 2000 and Cobley, 2001).

Rather than see disruption as a malign intrusion, I view it as an opportunity to facilitate discursive openings in which questioning and critical reflection prompts learners to consider multi-perspectival versions of shared lived experiences. This concept of disruption is offered by Reason and Hawkins (1988) who present storytelling as a dialogic form of critical reflection. They advocate the use of storytelling in pedagogic contexts to prompt people to consider how dominant narrative forms influence perceptions of power and privilege in shared social settings. In this sense, disruption enables critical dialogue aimed at supporting people explore and potentially reinterpret perceptions of their shared social spaces.

Throughout the thesis, I consider the implications of mobilising my disruptive pedagogic approach. In Chapter 3, I discuss the methodological implications of such an approach; Chapter 4 discusses the notion of disruption in terms of the mobilisation of the pedagogic process, in Chapter 5 I reflect on what happened when the pedagogic process was enacted and in Chapter 6 I conclude by discussing the implications of what I observed for future studies seeking to use the concept of disruption as a part of a critically dialogic pedagogic approach.

## Working with Technologies to Construct the Teachers' Narratives

It was never my intention to focus on the use of technologies as a distinct aspect of inquiry. However, I adapted methodological approaches from the discipline of digital storytelling to support the teachers create their narratives. Digital storytelling is a mode of representation which provides storytellers with a sense of creative freedom to explore their lived realties through different modal forms (Robin, 2008 and Lenette, Cox & Brough, 2013). As a teacher and academic developer, I have been adapting digital storytelling approaches to facilitate narrative learning since 2006.

There is nothing new about digital storytelling: it is the latest incarnation of oral storytelling traditions (Robin, 2008; Ohler, 2008 and Jenkins, 2011). Digital storytelling acknowledges the digital nature of communication in the times we live and embraces it for pedagogic purposes (Jewitt, 2006). It is through literature, film, music and other forms of multimodal representation that people learn about their worlds, making such resources and approaches key discursive elements of a narrative pedagogy (see Bell, 2010; Gazarain, 2010 and Crow

and Bailey, 2015). This notion of multimodal communication is underpinned by my own belief that language manifests itself through words, sounds, colours, shapes, photos, moving images and facial expressions (Hall, 1997).

My commitment to using technological methods and resources was strengthened when I read an article in The Observer (Vulliamy, 2014), about cross community work facilitated by the Derry-Londonderry[10] Nerve Centre[11] as part of its Teaching Divided Histories initiative. In one particular project, a group of young people created a short video documenting the experiences of two teenage girls, who had swapped school uniforms and walked through Derry-Londonderry. In Northern Ireland's symbolically rich geographical landscapes, school uniforms visibly signal Otherness. The narrative disruption which emerged from this process led to discussions highlighting how established sectarian narratives obscured commonalities of class, gender and language. Through their experiences, the girls illustrated how when listening to people's narratives:

> "It helps if you listen in circles, because there are stories inside and between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home. Part of finding is getting lost, and when you're lost you start to open up and listen." (Tafoya, 1995:11and12).

The Nerve Centre work provided me with an example of how it was possible to mobilise a pedagogic principle of narrative disruption to facilitate the construction of alternative narratives. In my own work, I aimed to provide people with similar opportunities, albeit using technologies with lower production values.

## Why I Worked with Primary Teachers

Initially, I wanted to carry out the study in Northern Ireland as the genesis of this inquiry lies there. Unfortunately, for a number of reasons, the timing in my life was not right to carry out the study in Northern Ireland. I also had ethical anxieties about my own well-being and that of others who might participate in my work. As an exploratory piece of inquiry dealing with potentially sensitive issues, I could not guarantee the study would not cause distress or harm long after I had left. Therefore, I chose to work with primary teachers as theirs is a profession rich with myriad "stories ripe with possibility for inquiry" (Clandinin, Pushor and Orr,

[10] I use the term Derry-Londonderry as it has become the accepted way to reference this city. Traditionally, 'Derry' is associated with Catholic/Nationalist/Republican traditions and 'Londonderry' with Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist traditions

[11] An Arts and Media based centre which supports educational and cultural initiatives in Derry-Londonderry

2007:33). I still had anxieties about causing the teachers distress, but they were less acute than my concerns about carrying out my work in Northern Ireland.

My decision to work with the teachers was not because I viewed them as the 'next best thing.' I teach[12]; my wife is a teacher, some of my friends and other family members are teachers. Since 2006, I have lived the life of a primary school teacher vicariously through the experiences of my wife. Through her experiences, and those of other friends in primary teaching, I have witnessed how increasingly aggressive market forces are "seeking to turn the teacher's practice into that of a technician, routinised and trivialised deliverer of a pre-designed package." (Goodson, 2008:3).

Viewed from my vantage point as a keenly interested observer, I fear the primary sector is seeing the emergence of

> "A regime of national tests, with their overwhelming emphasis on particular types of literacy acquisition, [making] it very difficult for schools and teachers to offer the broad and balanced cultural learning experiences envisaged in the national curriculum and by cultural education advocates" (Thomson, 2016:26).

This perceived narrowing of the curriculum sees teachers' concerns directed to areas outside of the Arts and Humanities; areas like Maths and Technology, where performative demands and rewards are greater (Nussbaum, 2010). A system of performativity mandates teachers of all disciplinary persuasions "to show that they continuously act in ways that will produce the designated outcomes and in which the need to perform frames all activities" (Thomson, Hall and Jones, 2010:644). Teachers find themselves situated in audit cultures where their worth is judged on their ability to demonstrate measurable gains which have an exchange value (Goodson, 2008; Ball, 2015 and Moore and Clarke, 2016). A maxim of "if it gets results, don't tamper with it" [my words and emphasis] creates a climate of dread in which some teachers are fearful of taking risks. This is not a desirable situation because a risk averse education system is one which "becomes stagnant and eventually alienating" (Bruner, 1996:15).

In a performative culture, the emotional and moral work of teaching becomes obscured as practices are reduced to a series of technical moves and routines (Britzman, 1991 and Tripp,

[12] While my job title is not 'teacher', I consider my role as an academic developer as a teaching role. I began teaching in 2001 and I have continued to do so since then in various forms. Therefore, I still consider myself, or part of me, as a teacher.

2012). In such a climate, simplistic stereotypes such as the "charismatic teacher": a natural teacher who is born, not made, and the "competent craftsperson": a skilful teacher capable of doing what needs to be done based on practical experience, promote technicist discourses (Moore, 2004). These stereotypes sustain a "tyranny of lucidity, the impression that what is being said must be true because it is obvious, clear and familiar" (Belsey, 1980:4). Put another way, when the characteristics of these stereotypes are embodied in everyday practices, it becomes hard to dismiss them as speculative.

Such a pessimistic climate necessitates educational approaches which offer

> "A different perspective to dominant discourses of constraint, prohibition and doom and gloom that feature strongly in the literatures of education, professional education and research." (McNiff, 2013:5)

By encouraging teachers to construct alternative narratives about their practices on their terms, reductive storylines of performative doom and gloom can be challenged.

Throughout this study, I aimed to give something back to the teachers who took part by offering a form of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). I sought to provide the teachers with a space in which they could discuss their everyday lives as teachers and people. Underpinning my commitment to this endeavour was a desire to support teachers to inquire about their own practices. This approach aligns with CPD initiatives where HE academics work with teachers to inquire about their own practices. This is with the aim to empower teachers to generate positive, transformative changes in their practices through inquiry (see Goodson, 2008; Cain and Harris, 2013; Heilbronn and Winstanley, 2016 and Tripp, 2012).

In particular, my approach to CPD was informed by sources advocating that teachers be encouraged to evaluate critically their practices and to challenge performative discourses, viewed in this literature as 'deprofessionalising' teaching (see Goodson, 2008; Ball and Olmeda, 2013 and Ball, 2015). In these sources, the small-group CPD approach where the teachers have a say in the shape of their inquiry resembles a form of resistance aimed at defying attempts to standardise teacher training and education (Craig and Deretchin, 2009). So, supporting teachers' capacity to talk back to voices seeking to define them was an important part of this inquiry.

In this form of CPD (in contrast to other forms), established certainties are interrogated to move the teachers beyond forms of reflection which focus only on technicist routines aimed at honing lesson planning and behaviour management skills (Moore, 2004). In my work, my

aim was to encourage the teachers to consider the social, historical and cultural variables influencing their narratives about what it was to teach and be taught. I saw doing this as moving them beyond reflecting on the technical aspects of their day-to-day routines as teachers.

My motivations to work with the teachers were in part focused on providing them with CPD which developed their digital capabilities. At a time of austerity and cuts, I provided an opportunity for the teachers to develop knowledge and skills. Midview had no funding available to train the teachers how to use the iPads and the study was an chance to provide that instruction. It was for this reason, I adapted the train-the-trainer approach of Lambert (2010); the rationale for which I discuss further in Chapter 4.

While I valued working with the teachers, my primary interest was in the worth of the pedagogic inquiry process as one which was transferable to other contexts. In particular, I sought to judge the extent to which what I did with the teachers could be operationalised with social groups whose narratives are seldom heard.

## Thesis Layout

Chapter 2 serves as a literature review aimed at providing this inquiry with a disciplinary location. By working with theoretical and empirical sources, I aimed to answer the main research question, (1.) What narrative pedagogic principles can support people in groups to consider constructing alternative narratives about their lived experiences? In Chapter 3, I discuss sources I worked with as I developed a methodological framework to guide the operationalisation of the study. Chapter 4 discusses how I mobilised the pedagogic principle of narrative disruption to answer the research question (1a.) How can narrative pedagogic principles be realised to support primary school teachers construct alternative narratives? In Chapter 5, I reflect analytically on the outcomes of the study. Structurally, I have organised Chapter 5 around the following secondary research questions:

1b. How do primary school teachers respond when asked to construct alternative narratives about their everyday lived experiences as teachers?
1c. What influences can be seen in the narratives the teachers construct?
1d. How successful were the narrative pedagogic principles as implemented in encouraging the teachers to construct alternative narratives about their lived experiences?

I conclude the thesis in Chapter 6 by illustrating how the outcomes of the study answer the research question (1.) What narrative pedagogic principles can support people in groups to consider constructing alternative narratives about their lived experiences? This is done by reflecting on the study's limitations in order to justify a revised process, which I also discuss. As part of the conclusion, I have drawn on my own lived experiences and knowledge to create two video-based narratives in which I imagine what would happen if the study were mobilised in a Northern Irish context. The narratives represent a form of "imaginative representation" (Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska, 1999:4) which leave the audience with two speculative scenarios; one where dominant narratives are left unchallenged and one where they are contested in the form of an alternative narrative. In Chapter 6, I also highlight the contribution of knowledge this study makes to the emerging field of narrative pedagogy. I do this by identifying how the inquiry builds on and fills the gaps in sources of literature I worked with.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

## Chapter Purpose and Outline

This chapter identifies the conceptual focus of this study in terms of the research questions I sought to answer and why I answered them in the manner I did. I have worked with literature from across psychological, sociological and literary fields exploring narrative as a theoretical, methodological and pedagogic concept. All disciplinary foci, share a commitment to an assumption that truths are never absolute, with perceptions of reality shaped by constantly shifting spatial, temporal and social variables. Put another way, where you are, when you are there and who you are with affect the sense you make of your everyday lived realities.

The chapter is in two main parts. The first discusses the work of cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner, which acted as a theoretical anchor for this study. After a brief biographical summary, I present the following sub-sections: the narrative mode of thought as a meaning making process we mobilise to make sense of our everyday lived realties; the role of culture; a discussion of "folk psychologies", which are common-sense narrative accounts of why life is as we perceive it to be; and the concept of counter narratives as a way to challenge dominant narratives. Throughout this main part, I supplement Bruner's ideas with those of other authors. The second part of the review justifies the rationale for my study by focusing on empirical sources. These sources illustrate how a pedagogic principle of narrative disruption was pursued in different contexts to encourage people to construct alternative narratives about their everyday realities.

### Using Concepts From the Work of Jerome Bruner (Part 1)

Jerome Bruner (1915-2016) was a cognitive psychologist at the forefront of a cognitive "revolution intended to bring the 'mind' back into the human sciences after a long cold winter of objectivism" (Bruner, 1990:1). Bruner's assertions challenged the dominance of established modes of thinking such as Behaviourism. His theories of an 'active mind' proposed a mode of thinking which was interpretative and brought psychology into disciplinary alliances "with its sister interpretative disciplines in the humanities and social sciences."(Bruner, 1990:2). While his work on a wide range of educational themes is of interest to me, it is his focus on the role of culture and the narrative mode of thought which provided a theoretical lens through which to explore the research questions I posed.

In the sections which follow, I engage with Bruner's work on the role of culture and the narrative mode of thought to provide a warrant for this study. I am mindful that Bruner's canon of work is vast. Therefore, for the purposes of my work, I have selected his texts dealing extensively with themes of culture and narrative. His books *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Bruner, 1986); *Acts of Meaning* (1990) and *The Culture of Education* (1996) are primary texts. I also drew on essays (see Bruner, 1987; 1991) and books (see 1960; 2002) to augment and clarify points Bruner makes in the aforementioned primary sources.

## The narrative mode of thought

Bruner (1986:12) argues there are two contrasting modes of thought: "paradigmatic or logico-scientific" and the "narrative". The paradigmatic mode, Bruner (1986:11) claims, is one which is interested in the abstraction of ideas to prove the existence of an objectively arrived at scientific Truth. It mobilises analytic methods which test hypotheses to establish generalisable truths about why everyday happenings occur in the manner they do. Conversely, the narrative mode trades in possible meanings rather than absolute certainties (Bruner, 1986). Owing to the often unpredictable nature of everyday life, Bruner (1986, 1990) suggests narrative knowledge of the word is verisimilitudinous rather than certain. His assertions acknowledge that people's temporal relationships with other people affect how they interpret their lived experiences. In other words, how I tell a story about a particular event today may not be how I tell it tomorrow, when in the company of different people; people with other ways of seeing and understanding the social worlds we share.

Although Bruner contests the effectiveness of the paradigmatic mode in understanding the vicissitudes of everyday social life, he does not dismiss it as irrelevant. He makes the point that in the paradigmatic mode we search for universal truths, whereas in the narrative mode we focus on "how human beings in cultural communities create and transform meanings." (Bruner, 1996:4). In other words, we consider the contextual situatedness of a person's life when seeking to understand how s/he brings meaning to his/her everyday live. In the narrative mode, people recognise that life's interactions are often fleeting as are the meanings they lead them to create through intersubjective dialogue. Knowledge created in the narrative mode of thought is always contestable depending on the interpretative perspective and motivations of the person seeking to make sense of it.

Other commentators echo the claims of Bruner when emphasising how the knowledge people have of their everyday worlds is often not generalisable to other social contexts. The narratives we construct to make sense of our lives are never truly ours because the narratives

of others are voiced through them (Gubrium and Holstein, 1998; Clandinin and Connelly, 2006 and Goodson et al, 2010). We learn what narratives to share, how to construct them and when to share them by listening to the tales of others. Constructing a narrative is an intersubjective act which makes us sensitive to the needs, wants, desires and intentions of other people we share our lives with (Bruner, 1990). Put another way, we learn how other people think through the narratives they share with us and by doing so, we become familiar with the types of narratives we can and cannot tell in particular social settings (Connelly and Clandinin, 1995 and Bell, 2010). In this sense, the narrative process can be a disruptive and dialogic activity, as people seek to reconcile how they want to represent their lived experiences with the discoursal norms of the audience their narratives are aimed at (Ivanič, 1998 and Bell, 2010).

## The role of culture

In the previous section, I discussed how our personal narratives are never ours. Our narratives are intertextually connected to other narratives representing the everyday experiences of others we share our social spaces with. Bruner (1996) stresses that the meanings we give to lived experiences are both personal and social. He claims that "although meanings are 'in the mind', they have their origins and significance in the culture in which they are created" (Bruner, 1996:3). It is culture's "language and discourse modes, the forms of logical and narrative explication, and patterns of mutually dependent communal life" which give our everyday actions meaning (Bruner, 1990:34). In other words, our thoughts, ideas, conceptual understanding, desires and intentions only have meaning through our participation in culture. When viewed in this way, "it can never be the case that there is a "self" independent of one's cultural-historical existence" (Bruner, 1986:67).

At first glance, some of Bruner's claims about the human mind being a product of culture seem to suggest a lack of agential control over our own thought processes and actions. However, he stresses that culture and the human mind exist in a symbiotic relationship; one that is dependent on accessibility to publicly accessible interpretative frameworks for understanding to occur (Bruner, 1990). Meaning making activities are public acts which depend on shared "modes of discourse for negotiating differences in meaning and interpretation" (Bruner, 1990:13). We require a linguistic awareness of how to represent our beliefs and intentions to people we share our lives with, even when it is to contest claims they make about how the social worlds we share should be. It is through culture we become

familiar with the communicative norms and values needed to understand others and for others to understand us.

Culture provides us with our language as part of symbolic "tool kits … for organizing and understanding our worlds in communicable ways" (Bruner, 1996:33). We learn how to use the resources in these tool kits to create knowledge through our interactions with people we share our social spaces with. Culture's tool kits make available to us "stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing, and so on" (Bruner, 1991:4). By becoming familiar with culture's canonical narratives, we are provided with "a map of possible roles and worlds in which action, thought, and self -definition are permissible (or desirable)" (Bruner, 1986:66-brackets his). Our access to certain narratives and how we interpret them, Bruner (1991:4) suggests, is enabled and constrained by our subject positionality. The amounts of social, cultural and economic capital we have, can influence the narratives we are able to access to make possible particular ways of being.

To develop Bruner's thinking on culture's role in influencing our narratives to make sense of our lives, I worked with other mainly theoretical sources. Studies I reviewed sat across the fields of sociology (Hall, 1997; Goodson, 2008; 2013); communications theory (Cobley, 2001); hermeneutic philosophy (Zimmermann, 2015); educational psychology (Britzman, 1991); cultural anthropology (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain, 2001) and sociolinguistics (Gee, 2014). In working with this literature, I sought to reach some type of consensual understanding of what culture was, particularly how it influences our thinking and our narratives. While there were many similarities, I came to the conclusion the term was a slippery one, with often discipline specific conceptual nuances. In the end, the definition of culture which worked best for me was that of Deborah Britzman (1991:57), who claims

> "Culture is where identities, desires, and investments are mobilized, constructed and reworked. It is the site where antagonistic meanings push and pull at our sensibilities, deep investments, and relationships with others. And consequently there is not one monolith culture that communicates unitary meanings. Circulating within and persuading any culture are an array of contesting and contradictory discourses that vie for our attention."

The notion of 'antagonism' Britzman discusses as being a characteristic of culture was critical for this study. While I was mindful of my ethical responsibilities not to cause the teachers undue distress, I saw antagonism as useful way to manifest a pedagogic principle of

narrative disruption (I discuss what this principle is further below). I had committed to carrying out an inquiry which fostered opportunities for alternative narratives to emerge; something akin to a "community of dissensus." (Readings, 1996:180). In such a community, rather than develop understanding through agreement, people are encouraged to "try and move in ways that keep questions open" (Readings, 1996:193). This disruptive position is a key theoretical underpinning of a narrative pedagogy: it is only by problematising what we take for granted, can opportunities for the creation of new knowledge emerge (Diekelmann, 2001 and Goodson and Gill, 2011). Put another way, an element of epistemological antagonism is fundamental when encouraging people to explore their lived experiences from different viewpoints.

This study was about making culture visible to the teachers so they could explore the ways in which it organised and gave meaning to their thoughts, desires, intentions and beliefs. I sought to use a narrative process as a pedagogic tool the teachers could use to learn about their lives and to consider alternative ways to view their lived experiences. I wanted the teachers to consider how culture uses narratives to "organize and regulate social practices, influence our conduct and consequently have real practical effects" (Hall, 1997:3). I aimed to create a learning space were the teachers could start to explore the role culture plays in giving meaning to their everyday interactions and how these interactions sustain culture (Goodson et al, 2010 and Goodson, 2013). I wanted the teachers to consider how dominant narratives about their lives shaped their own and other people's perceptions about what it was to teach.

## Everyday folk theories acting as common-sense accounts of how people think

All cultures have dominant narrative structures which shape folk theories providing common-sense accounts of why our social worlds function as they seem to. Throughout his work, Bruner labels these folk theories, 'folk psychologies'; "a set of more or less connected, more or less normative descriptions about how human beings tick" (1990:35). Culture uses its folk psychology to maintain perceptions of normativeness and to explain as extraordinary events which challenge idealised representations of everyday shared realties (Bruner, 1990). We are born into cultural spaces where already existing folk psychologies shape our thoughts, utterances and perceptions. Bruner (1990:35) insists "we learn about culture's folk psychology early, learn it as we learn to use the very language we acquire to conduct the interpersonal transactions required in communal life." Culture's folk psychology gives us a sense of a social world which existed before we did.

The believability of a folk psychology depends on its tacit acceptance as a culture's canonical truth; a representation of how things are and more importantly "how they should be" (Bruner, 1990:40). When the common-sense appearance of a cultural canon is contested, a folk psychology is mobilised in the form of a story "*to find an intentional state that mitigates or at least makes comprehensible a deviation from a canonical cultural pattern* [emphasis Bruner's]*"* (Bruner, 1990:50-51). By way of explanation, narrative forms are operationalised to explain as extraordinary any happening which appears to be strange, unusual or not normal. To illustrate this point, Bruner (1990:49) uses the example of a man, who upon entering a post office, starts to wave the flag of the USA. Momentarily, people interpret this as out of the ordinary: there is a breach of normality. However, such unusual behaviour is quickly acknowledged as being the result of the individual's psychological problem(s) or a forgotten commemorative event for veterans. In this state of normality, people go back to living their everyday lives, relieved of the burdensome work of having to analyse life's happenings for theoretical explanations as to why they occur as they do.

A culture's folk psychology is non-scientific: it is rooted in the language, beliefs, intentions and desires of a culture (Bruner, 1990:14). Culture uses its folk psychology to justify the existence of institutions such as schools, family structures and political groups, which in turn legitimatise the existence of culture's folk psychology through their norms, values and rituals (ibid). In this way, culture is both a producer of its folk psychology and produced by it. We become aware of a

> "World outside ourselves that modifies the expression of our desires and beliefs. This world is the context in which our acts are situated, and states of the world may provide reasons for our desires and beliefs […] But also we know that desires may lead us to find meanings in contexts where others may not." (Bruner, 1990:40)

Bruner acknowledges that "at their core, all folk psychologies contain a surprisingly complex notion of the agentive Self." (1990:41). While people may share common interpretative frameworks, the possibility exists they will experience the same happenings differently. Bruner (1990:14) asserts that "folk psychology is not a once for all. It alters with the culture's changing responses to the world and to the people in it." This assertion reinforces the notion that culture is multivocal and never static. Therefore, narrative forms which promote dominant modes of thinking are always contestable as the vagaries of history determine what counts as legitimate knowledge and what does not.

I augmented Bruner's work with other mainly theoretical sources considering how cultures use folk theories to represent idealised ways of thinking about shared social spaces. These sources included work on Figured Worlds, that is cultural realms of interpretation where mental models give meaning to everyday happenings (Holland et al, 2001 and Gee, 2014); cultural myths (Britzman, 1991) and dominant discourses (Moore, 2004; 2012) promoting simplistic notions of what it is to become a teacher; studies exploring how historically located social structures constrain and enable the stories people can tell (Goodson et al, 2010; Goodson 2013) and work exploring the role of craft knowledge in teaching (Tripp, 2012).

The main conceptual similarities with the notion of folk psychology and these other concepts is the manner in which culture uses dominant narratives to offer people mental models of how life should be. Typical storylines represent simplified versions of reality where certain recognisable characters, plotlines and outcomes are privileged over others (Holland et al, 200;1 Goodson, 2013 and Gee, 2014). These typical accounts of everyday life provide us with accessible explanations for why particular events occur as they do (Gee, 2014). In projecting idealised forms of reality, dominant narratives "set up what count as central, typical cases, and what count as marginal, non-typical cases". (Gee, 2014:97). Through these cases power and privilege enable and constrain people's autonomy to construct the narratives they want to in an effort to represent their lived experiences (Bell, 2010).

Exploring the identity work of becoming a teacher, Britzman (1991:222) discusses the existence of simplified narratives in the form of cultural myths, which

> "Perform the work of discourse: communities are counted and discounted; particular orientations to authority, power and knowledge are offered; discursive practices are made available; and persons are constructed or "interpellated[13]" as non-contradictory subjects."

In her work, Britzman (1991) identifies three main myths: everything depends on the teacher, the teacher as expert and teachers are self-made. Similarly, Alex Moore (2004; 2012) identifies three dominant discourses in teaching and teacher education: the teacher made in heaven (charismatic subjects); the teacher as competent craftsperson and the teacher as

[13] The notion of interpellation is taken from the philosophical work of Louis Althusser to mean an ideological summoning. Britzman (1991) explains that by summoning people, they recognise themselves as the myth rather than a product of it. In other words, people perceive themselves to be the authors of these myths rather than their subjects.

reflective practitioner. Both Britzman's cultural myths and Moore's discourses[14] obscure the complexities of becoming a teacher by offering non-contradictory characterisations of particular types of teaching. These serve to perpetuate teaching as a vocational calling favouring craft knowledge over theory-based knowledge. David Tripp (2012:16) labels this the "practical problematic"; a narrow form of interpretation lauding the virtue of routine over critical thinking. The practical problematic stops people considering how teaching can challenge social injustice as it focuses on technicist approaches aimed at improving routines. As I discuss later, this is a feature of performative regimes aimed at measuring and auditing teachers' abilities to meet categorisable and quantifiable outcomes (Ball, 2015).

## Contesting dominant accounts of everyday lived experience

While Bruner (1990; 1996) illustrates the powerful role folk psychology plays in maintaining a sense of cultural order, he points out that individuals are not dupes, that is, they have the ability to make choices regarding what they accept as truthful. Good narratives always communicate possible ways of knowing rather than immutable certainties (Bruner, 1986; 1990). He defines the vicarious and uncertain nature of knowing as the 'subjunctive mode'; a discoursal feature of language used to "highlight subjective states, attenuating circumstance, alternative possibilities" (Bruner, 1990:53). Subjunctive narratives "can be tried on for psychological size, accepted if they fit, rejected if they pinch identity or compete with established commitments." (Bruner, 1990:54). It would seem we have the ability to challenge even the most established of storylines (Bruner, 1986). My interest in this aspect of Bruner's work lay in how willing people would be to explore the possibilities of constructing alternative narratives. It was with this in mind, I pursued a narrative pedagogy to prompt the teachers to represent accounts of their lived experiences differently.

To develop a sense of how to facilitate an inquiry space where alternative narratives could be constructed, I worked with empirical pedagogic studies using counter narrative approaches to address social injustices. I adapted these sources as they provided me with methodological guidance and insights into the issues the practitioners faced when pursuing a pedagogic principle of narrative disruption. The studies focused on themes of race and ethnicity (Bell, 2010; Shain, 2011 and Vassadis, Karimshah, Harris and Youssef, 2015); Australian aboriginal peoples (Quayle, Sonn and Kasat, 2015; McGloin, 2015); Canadian First Nations' peoples (Tafoya, 1995 and Qwul'sih'yah'maht and Robina Anne Thomas, 2005); arts-based

[14] In Chapter 3, I discuss how I worked with Britzman's cultural myths and Moore's discourses to develop trigger materials aimed at prompting the teachers to tell alternative stories.

projects working with residents on UK council housing estates to generate knowledge about their lives (Haw, 2010 and Jones, Hall, Barrett and Hanby, 2013); issues of race and gender (Haw, 1996 and Lenette, Cox and Brough, 2013); Northern Irish issues of gender (Smyth and McKnight, 2013 and Campbell, 2016) and human rights (Curtis, 2014).

A common approach in all the literature was to provide marginalised groups of people with opportunities to explore how powerful narratives about their lives marginalised them, while lionising other more powerful social groups. The counter narrative approaches aimed to support the telling of hidden or unheard narratives which resisted or 'talked back' to dominant narratives in the authentic 'voice' of the marginalised group. For example, Jones et al's (2013) estate inhabitants created positive narratives about living on the estate in opposition to dominant narratives representing it as a place of social deprivation. Haw's (2010) account of the myths that young people on a housing estate held about themselves served to counter the accepted narrative that they were on structurally determined pathways into crime. However, some studies revealed that dominant narratives are not always contested: both Shain (2011) and Vassadis et al (2015) found that some people who identified as Muslim did not counter dominant narratives positioning them as Muslim. In the former study, the participants played on their 'bad boy' image and in the latter participants performed religious values associated with being a good Muslim. In the study of Haw (2010) the youths played with stereotypes projecting images of them as deviant when making films about their lives. These studies highlight how dominant narratives are indelibly linked to the subversive narratives which challenge truth claims the former make (Bamberg, 2004).

## Conclusion to Part 1

The sources in Part 1 set up discussions in Part 2 seeking to conceptualise an unsettling narrative pedagogy prompting the teachers to create alternative narratives. Through the different sources, I have established the role culture plays in shaping dominant narratives which act as "socially scripted and sanctioned way[s] to tell a life story." (Goodson, 2013:5). The sources articulate how our narratives are never ours, that is, acts of thinking done in hermetically sealed bubbles isolated from cultural, social and historical influences (Goodson et al, 2010). Therefore, there is value in exploring the narratives people share to gain insights into how their agency is constrained and enabled by their subject positions at particular points in history (Goodson, 2013).

Part 1 establishes what I interpret a dominant narrative to be. This acts as a counterpoint when illustrating my conceptualisation of a disruptive narrative pedagogy; an approach aimed

at disrupting, not muting, dominant narratives so new knowledge can emerge (see Ewick & Silbey, 1995, Bamberg, 2004 and Milner & Howard, 2013). As I discuss in Part 2, I saw pedagogic value in working with the "interplay in which tensions are uncovered and brought to the fore rather than glossed over" (Goodson and Gill, 2011:79). This was with a view to encouraging moments of strangeness which lead to different narrative encounters giving more interpretative depth and breadth to how make sense of our lives (Goodson and Gill, 2011).

## Conceptualising a Disruptive Narrative Pedagogy (Part 2)

In Part 2 of the literature review, I build up to a conceptualisation of the pedagogic principle of narrative disruption by drawing on a range of theoretical and empirical sources. These sources include theoretical literature discussing: the reflexive and dialogic principles underpinning a narrative pedagogy (Goodson and Gill, 2011); reflexivity as a narrative concept aimed at prompting people to explore perceptions they have of who they are becoming (Moore, 2004 and Hunt and Sampson, 2006) and the use of critical incident techniques to prompt teachers to think reflexively about internal and external variables influencing why they teach as they do.

In the section considering empirical sources, I discuss the mobilisation of narrative pedagogies aimed at providing learners with opportunities to reflect on aspects of their everyday lived realties. Work from nursing education explores the creation of dialogic learning spaces where students are encouraged to problematise lived experiences to prompt learning (Diekelmann, 2001; Brown, Kirkpatrick, Mangum and Avery, 2008; Gazarian, 2010 and Crow and Bailey, 2015). Literature from teacher education contexts highlights how narrative pedagogic approaches facilitate critical reflection through storytelling (Convery, 1993; Clough, 2002 and Wallace, 2010); collaborative approaches aimed at exploring how social structures influence teachers' personal narratives (Sikes and Troyna, 1991 and Goodson, 2008) and critical incident techniques prompting teachers to interpret their everyday experiences through different theoretical lenses (Griffin, 2003).

In the final section, I arrive at my conceptualisation of the pedagogic principle of narrative disruption. The sources I worked with include literature discussing a pedagogy of discomfort as a form of critical inquiry aimed at challenging power relationships which privilege some social groups over others (Boler, 1999; Bell, 2010; Zembylas and Boler, 2003 and Zembylas and McGlynn, 2012); acceptable degrees of emotional discomfort to cause in the classroom (Felman, 1992; Berlak, 2004 and Rak, 2006) and the ethical dimensions of using emotional

discomfort as pedagogic strategy aimed at challenging instances of social injustice (Zembylas, 2015). Other sources I worked with, include those discussing disruptive narrative encounters aimed at encouraging people to consider multi-perspectival ways of interpreting their everyday experiences (Goodson and Gill, 2011; 2014) and pedagogic approaches seeking to develop new ways of understanding how the past affects the present (Iftody, 2013).

I conclude the chapter by justifying why this study was a worthwhile one to carry out. As part of this discussion, I outline the aim of this study, the research questions I sought to ask and provide a rationale for my work.

## The concept of narrative pedagogy

While there is much literature on narrative inquiry, there seems to be a paucity of sources making explicit reference to the concept of narrative pedagogy. I make this claim with care as I recognise there are likely to be other work my literature search did not encounter. However, outside the work of Goodson and Gill (2011) and sources from nursing education (see Diekelmann, 2001; Brown et al, 2008; Gazarian, 2010 and Crow and Bailey, 2015), I found little literature discussing narrative pedagogy as an inquiry-informed educational approach. Therefore, my work seeks to add to the field of narrative pedagogy literature in an effort to generate discussions aimed at developing the concept further, particularly in relation to the notion of narrative disruption as a pedagogic principle.

Sources in nursing education characterise narrative pedagogy as a non-traditional approach underpinned by principles of equality, community, inquiry and critical reflection (Diekelmann, 2001; Brown et al, 2008; Gazarian, 2010 and Crow and Bailey, 2015). Advocates see narrative pedagogy as antithetical to dominant forms of passive learning, that is, approaches which position students as receivers of knowledge rather than constructors of it (Brown et al, 2008 and Crow and Bailey, 2015). Narrative pedagogy values contested forms of knowledge and the possibilities of new knowledge emerging from the open-ended conclusions (Diekelmann, 2001 and Iftody, 2013). A key element of a narrative pedagogy is the creation of a trusting learning space where learners can feel comfortable sharing their narratives; narratives which may contest with the views of others (Gazarian, 2010 and Crow and Bailey, 2015).

Narrative pedagogy is a holistic pedagogic approach which values everyday knowledge individuals have of their lived realities. Educators creating learning experiences based on principles of narrative pedagogy seek to

> "Provide a safe space for both teacher and learner to examine the ethical decisions that confront the individual in his everyday personal and social life and to examine what kind of person or human being one would like to become." (Goodson and Gill, 2011:125)

In this holistic mode, learning becomes about the moral and emotional development of the whole person as well as cognitive growth (Goodson and Gill, 2011). A narrative pedagogy is an inquiry-informed one, which encourages learners to learn through dialogue and active modes of interpretation (Bown et al, 2008 and Gazarain, 2010). It is a pedagogy which values inclusivity and democracy, by acknowledging diverse cultural, learning and social histories as part of cooperative pedagogic approaches (Brown et al, 2008 and Crow & Bailey, 2015).

Sources discussing the interpretative nature of narrative pedagogy emphasise that it seeks to problematise taken-for-granted ways of seeing everyday experiences. This is with a view to encourage people to think about new ways of perceiving shared social realties (Diekelmann, 2001 and Crow and Bailey, 2015). It is a disruptive pedagogy which seeks to facilitate a moment of "strangeness" needed for learning and understanding to begin (Goodson and Gill, 2011:76). In clarifying what they mean by strangeness, Goodson and Gill (ibid) define it as an "encounter with the unfamiliar, 'the alien' (ibid). It is through this encounter, they argue that people engage in an hermeneutic effort to "resolve the dissonance in the experience of the unknown" (ibid). This hermeneutic effort is an attempt to repair disruptions to allow new forms of knowledge to emerge. Goodson and Gill (ibid) argue that:

> "Through our own familiar and common understanding, it is possible for everyone to venture into the unknown, the alien, and thereby broaden our horizons and experiences of the world."

Drawing on the hermeneutic philosophy of Gadamer (1989), Goodson and Gill (2011) conceptualise understanding as a shifting phenomenon influenced by the interplay of time, place and human perspective. They represent this concept through the hermeneutic circle; a philosophical assertion that the whole is only understandable through reference to its parts and those parts are only comprehensible through reference to the whole. In this sense, understanding emerges when

> "That which is being evaluated or reflected upon (that 'part of the picture') is not treated as if it were the whole of the picture, but is made sense of by reference to what is happening in the rest of the larger picture." (Moore, 2004:149, brackets his)

A narrative pedagogy encourages people to consider lived experience as a "reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives" (Giddens, 1991:5). The reflexive project acknowledges the self as a matrix of interconnected experiences, which while exhibiting features of continuity, are constantly open to reinterpretation (Griffiths, 2003; Moore, 2004; Akkerman and Meijer, 2011 and Goodson and Gill, 2011). A concept of reflexive understanding places

> "An emphasis on accommodation rather than assimilation (opening ourselves to the possibility of modifying our own understandings and behaviours rather than limiting our understandings and behaviours to what we have pre-decided, or seeking to force situation and other people into conforming to our unquestioned world-view)." (Moore, 2004:143)

Thinking reflexively asks people to consider their lives from multiple viewpoints: inside looking out; outside looking in and inside looking around. It involves the "*doubling* [emphasis theirs]of the self: distancing ourselves from ourselves to a greater or lesser extent, so that we have a sense of standing outside ourselves and observing what we are doing and thinking" (Hunt and Sampson, 2006:4). Being reflexive asks people to critically reflect on how happenings in their lives are influenced by "their own history, dispositions, prejudices and fears, as well as wider social, historical and cultural contexts" (Moore, 2004:149). In the reflexive mode of thinking, people consider life's happenings as part of a much bigger picture (Moore, 2004 and Tripp, 2012).

I found the concept of reflexivity proffered by Moore (2004) to be particularly relevant because he discusses it in relation to teachers' lives. He advocates developing teachers as reflexive thinkers as it moves them beyond the classroom and competency-focused modes of reflection. In the latter mode, teachers ask questions seeking answers about more practical aspects of their practice, for example, did learning occur, were the correct classroom management strategies used and was the planning appropriate? (Moore, 2004:149). Thinking about teaching practice in this way perpetuates perceptions of it as a technicist undertaking

isolated from wider social, cultural and historical variables (Moore, 2004; Goodson, 2008 and Tripp, 2012).

Discussing the notion of the reflective practitioner, Tripp (2012:12) claims that unless people set out deliberately to disrupt the way they look at their practices, their reflections reinforce dominant mechanistic ways of thinking. He maintains that

> "Reflection is always informed by a view of the world which is created by our culture, values and experiences. This forms a circularity that reinforces our existing view of the world: we construct our world through reflection, but how and on what we reflect is largely determined by our existing world view." (ibid)

In making these observations, Tripp (2012) urges teachers to disrupt what they take for granted in an effort to see their practices anew from different perspectives. He encourages teachers to look outwards in different directions to become more aware of how their agency as teachers is constrained and enabled by external cultural, social and historical variables. In essence, he calls on teachers to think more reflexively.

A reflexive stance is a disruptive one because it asks people to move beyond the certainties they may experience as part of their everyday practices. I acknowledged such disruptive approaches were risky because they potentially made the teachers aware of constraints they may have no control over changing (Moore, 2012). However, the risk was worth taking because it provided opportunities for forms of "imaginative representation" through which to explore established narratives from different perspectives (Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska, 1999:4). I saw facilitating a reflexive positionality as a way to encourage the teachers "to switch back and forth fluidly and playfully from one position to another, giving [themselves] up to the experience of 'self as other' whilst retaining a grounding in [their] familiar sense of self" (Hunt and Sampson, 2006:6). By not asking the teachers to reinvent themselves, I negated the risk of leading them to think they had to dismiss past experiences and memories as irrelevant.

### Empirical studies exploring the concept of narrative pedagogy

While the empirical studies I discuss in this section are primarily concerned with teacher education, the theoretical and methodological principles underpinning them are transferable to other contexts. As a collective body of work, the sources inform how I operationalised the pedagogic principle of narrative disruption. In a practical sense, they highlighted 'how to' get people exploring their lived experiences from different interpretative standpoints. I drew on

studies discussing teachers' professional development through group storytelling approaches (Wallace, 2010); collaborative critical reflection in the form of dialogic triads (Sikes and Troyna, 1991); critical incident techniques (Griffin, 2003) and autoethnographic approaches exploring teacher identity (Convery, 1993; Iftody, 2013 and Schaefer, 2013). I also worked with sources using narrative forms as part of educational research methodologies (Clough, 2002 and Geelan, 2003); the exploration of narrative as a reflexive vehicle in literary contexts (Hunt and Sampson, 2006) and in social health contexts (Winter et al, 1999).

The approaches I worked with aimed to move the teachers beyond seeing continuing professional development (CPD) as the accrual of tips and tricks. Working with religious education (RE) student teachers, Sikes and Troyna (1991:14) used dialogic triad methods to support students "excavate their own histories", that is, to understand how events in their lives influenced their desires to become teachers. Students took it in turns to be scribes, narrators and questioners in activities aimed at prompting the each other to consider how their own autobiographical narratives influenced their practices. In a similar vein, Wallace (2010), working with further education (FE) student teachers, used fairy tales to encourage reflection in group contexts. The students created stories from incidents in their practice, shared them with their peers and invited critique of their practices. In a study with pre-service teachers in the United States, Griffin (2003) used a critical incident approach locating practice in theory for similar purposes. In all three of these examples the reflections were public, advocating a form of "collective witnessing" which leads to multiple viewpoints challenging, supporting and problematising people's assumptions about their practices (Boler, 1999). The studies were reflexive because they invited the teachers to consider what "emotional, historical 'baggage" they brought into the classroom and how it impacted on their practices (Moore, 2004:143). Asking the teachers to share their experiences in this way moved beyond modes of reflection which position the teachers as the beginning, middle and end of their practices.

In contrast to these more public forms of reflexivity, I drew on more autoethnographic sources exploring forms of critical reflection. Both Iftody (2013) and Schaefer (2013) mobilise forms of self-narration to disrupt familiar experiences from their lives to understand who they are becoming as teachers. Iftody (2013) does this by exploring relationships between her memories of being a girl and the dominant narrative of the 'English teacher as an avid reader'. In this work she considers the role of culture in mediating both these positions and how they have shaped her practices. In her study, Schaefer (2012) narrativises her remembered experiences as a beginning teacher to try and understand why new teachers

leave the profession early. She uses these narrative accounts to reflexively move between her own remembered experiences and the literature discussing teacher attrition to offer her own views on attrition levels. The work of Convery (1993) discusses his use of fictitious forms of reflection to counter the self-censorious approaches he believed inherent in reflective journaling methods used in formal learning processes. Geelan (2003) created a fictitious account of his doctoral findings to represent his ethnographic observations of life in an Australian secondary school. Like Convery (1993), he did so to preserve a degree of anonymity he believed would lead to a more authentic telling.

The work siting outside the teacher's literature also explored the role of storytelling as part of research methodologies aimed at challenging established modes of interpretation in qualitative inquiries. In his exploration of fictitious narrative accounts as research methods, Clough (2002:7) seeks to inspire and empower people "to make their own attempts to redefine research". His work was disruptive as it set out to challenge established assumptions about notions of validity in qualitative research. His approaches trouble the very notion of truth. I drew on the work of Hunt and Sampson (2006) not just because of their clarity of explanation in defining reflexivity, but the substantive examples they provide in how to be reflexive. Their work provides practical strategies aimed at developing people as reflexive thinkers seeking to understand their positionality in their social settings (Hunt and Sampson, 2006). The work of Winter et al (1999) illustrates the power of fictitious writing as part of cathartic modes of critical reflection aimed at supporting health workers cope emotionally with their roles. While divergent in disciplinary focus, these sources all advocate the use of imaginative narrative approaches to support people to learn reflexively about how their lived experiences shape and are shaped by their social worlds.

While the sources in this review shared methodological and theoretical commonalties, there were also differences, mainly around the notion of authorial visibility. In other words, the extent to which the person authoring the story was visible vis-à-vis, recognisable to the audience. A source of contest is the effectiveness of writing in the first person singular. Whereas advocates of critical incident approaches (Griffin, 2003 and Tripp, 2012) claim writing in the first person connects the writer to his/her experiences, Wallace (2010) is critical of it. Allying her thinking with that of Winter et al (1999), she maintains that writing in in the first-person 'I' lacks the imaginative distance needed for the author to feel safe enough that their reflections will not expose their emotional vulnerabilities. Supporters of fictionalised accounts, claim, authors are given the opportunity to step back and adopt an

anonymous position to consider their lived experiences in a non-threatening manner (Winter et al, 1999 and Wallace, 2010). While I was in agreement with the need to offer people the option of anonymity, past experiences as a teacher and academic developer made me cautious of assuming everyone was comfortable being imaginative to that degree. Therefore, I resolved to encouraged the teachers to be imaginative, but not to force it in case it caused distress or a creative block. I discuss the ethical motivations for this in Chapter 3.

## Defining The Pedagogic Principles of Narrative Disruption

### Facilitating narrative disruption

In pedagogic contexts, disruption is a necessary element of any activity prompting people to ask themselves why they construct their personal narratives as they do and if there are alternative ways of creating them (Clandinin, Pushor and Murray Orr, 2007). Through facilitating narratively disruptive encounters, I sought to foster internal and shared discussions aimed at

> "Making what once was discursively invisible and operating below the surface, visible, in ways that allow[ed] these experiences to be represented again in productive rather than reproductive (or worse, insidious) ways." (Iftody, 2013:383).

In order to facilitate narrative disruption which led to interrogative dialogue, I drew on sources discussing the 'pedagogy of discomfort'; a notion widely held to have originated with Canadian academic Megan Boler. She conceived the pedagogy of discomfort as an approach aimed at challenging forms of social injustice such as racism and homophobia. It asks "educators and students to engage in a critical inquiry regarding values and cherished beliefs, and to examine constructed self-images in relation to how one has learned to perceive others." (Boler, 1999:202). According to Zembylas (2015:163), a pedagogy of discomfort

> "Is grounded in the assumption that discomforting feelings are important in challenging dominant beliefs, social habits and normative practices that sustain social inequities and they create openings for individual and social transformation"

Put another way, a pedagogy of discomfort seeks to harness incommodious feelings to subvert dominant forms of social inequity. This is often with a view to engendering transformative outcomes which make positive changes to social worlds where inequalities are believed to exist.

While its aims may be transformative, there is no guarantee the operationalisation of a pedagogy of discomfort will lead to change. As Zembylas and McGlynn (2012) found in their study asking Northern Irish primary school children to challenge power inequities, transformation is never guaranteed. Their work showed there were no positive changes in how the pupils thought about addressing perceived power distribution imbalances. Through their inquiry they illustrated how care needs to be taken when using a pedagogy of discomfort to avoid causing emotional distress. Some of the children continued to feel levels of discomfort and emotional dissonance some months after the study. This, the authors claim, illustrates the need for educators to carefully consider whether such approaches are right, and if judged to be so, there are adequate "safety nets" in place for learners to cope with any resultant distress, (Zembylas and McGlynn, 2012:56).

Within the sources on pedagogy of discomfort, there was disagreement on the extent to which discomfort could, and should be caused. Some of the studies saw value in accentuating discomfort to almost confrontational levels when exploring themes of race (see Berlak, 2004 and Bell, 2010) and trauma caused through studying the Holocaust (see Felman, 1992). To differing degrees the authors of these studies believed they were justified causing heightened levels of unsettled emotionality. They maintained that hidden narratives sustaining oppressive hegemonic structures could be made visible and contested in an effort to address social injustice. However, as Rak (2006) suggests when responding to Felman's claims about the need to elevate students to levels of crisis, it is unethical for educators to purposively cause students distress in a bid to challenge forms of social injustice. Like Rak (2006), I find the notion of pushing students to levels of emotional crisis as ethically and morally dubious. I also have concerns that it could lead to people being labelled with a collectivised identity tag which denies them the right to exist as a being in their own right. For example, a person is deemed sexist because of his/her gender.

As an educator, while I believe in the liberating value of a pedagogy of discomfort, I am also wary of its ethical implications. Where learners are asked to challenge their cherished beliefs, there are inevitable ethical responsibilities (Zembylas and Boler, 2013 and Zembylas 2015). When mobilising a pedagogy of discomfort educators need to

> "Wonder how ethically responsible it is to create conditions of discomfort, pain, and suffering in students in the name of ethical norms – no matter how 'noble' they may be. Where and how does one draw the line?" ( Zembylas, 2015:164)

Heeding Zembylas' warning, I endeavoured to take an ethical position which was sensitive and responsive to the potential changing conditions of the inquiry space (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). Therefore, mindful of claims Zembylas (2015:173), makes about the potential for causing "ethical violence", I asked myself was the cost of causing the teachers discomfort and pain pedagogically worthwhile. In short, I asked myself could I be sure I would not cause the teachers lasting distress.

While I saw much value in the counter narrative and pedagogy of discomfort literatures in helping me conceptualise narrative disruption, I questioned the methodological and ethical viability of what I intended. As someone advocating a participatory form of research, I had no right to coerce the participants to counter any narratives I presented to them as hegemonic representations of their lives. That assumed too much: firstly that they needed emancipating and secondly that I could and had the right to make them create counter narratives. While I saw the idea of countering as problematic, I continued to see the value in causing disruption as a reflexive mechanism aimed at prompting people to take a step back, question their lives and consider different ways of representing their lived experiences. Therefore, I conceptually aligned my sense of disruption more with a notion of "narrative encounter", characterised by Goodson and Gill (2011:78) as consisting of the following four elements:

1. *encounter requires attentiveness to the other, and otherness*
2. *encounter unfolds something new about the other, and otherness*
3. *encounter has embedded in it the interplay of social and historical traditions*
4. *encounter involves different language(s) i.e. different modes of expression which play a part in enabling the fusion of horizon.*

Together, these four elements of the narrative encounter are the conceptual cornerstones of a narrative pedagogy which aims to use critical peer-supported dialogue to encourage people to continually question established perceptions of reality. This conceptualisation of narrative disruption was potentially less ethically violent and emotionally traumatic than some of the studies advocating causing crisis in the classroom.

### Perceived gaps in the literature

In the literature, little coverage is given to how the social, cultural and political dynamics of the inquiry space affect the researcher, particularly in relation to his/her discomfort. While autoethnographic studies exploring Islamophobia (Zempi, 2017; Zempi and Awan, 2017) and interactions between the researcher's inquiry role and other aspects of his/her life

(Hemelsoet, 2014) deal with themes of discomfort, there are few references in the wider body of literature I worked with, particularly in relation to narrative pedagogy. In a discussion of her own work, Boler (in Leibowitz, 2011) admits that she neglected to talk sufficiently about the discomfort of the educator when operationalising a pedagogy of discomfort. She reflects that more work is needed to explore the notion of discomfort from all perspectives, that is, the learners' and the facilitators'. It is through this study, I sought to contribute to these fields by reflecting on my own discomfort.

The empirical literature discussed studies using disruptive narrative approaches to address obvious forms of social injustice. Outside of this literature, there seems to be a scarcity of work dealing explicitly with contexts were no obvious warrant to prompt the telling of alternative stories exists. Through this study, I sought to explore the potential of disruptive narrative approaches in educational contexts where there was little or no obvious acknowledgments that a form of social injustice needed to be addressed.

## Conclusion: Arriving at a Justified Conceptual Framework

The aim of this study was to ascertain the value in pursuing a pedagogic principle of narrative disruption to provide teachers with an inquiry space where they could consider constructing alternative narratives about their lived experiences.

To help me judge whether or not this aim was met, I identified the following research questions:

### Main research question

1. What narrative pedagogic principles can support people in groups to consider constructing alternative narratives about their lived experiences?

### Secondary research questions

1a. How can narrative pedagogic principles be realised to support primary school teachers construct alternative narratives?

1b. How do primary school teachers respond when asked to construct alternative narratives about their everyday lived experiences as teachers?

1c. What influences can be seen in the narratives the teachers construct?

1d. How successful were the narrative pedagogic principles as implemented in encouraging the teachers to construct alternative narratives about their lived experiences?

Using the above questions as reference points, I worked with the literature to identify an analytical framework through which to judge the extent to which the study aim was met. I consider questions **1** and **1a** to be answered by the theoretical and conceptual literature I worked with. Questions **1b-1d**, were answered primarily through the analysis of the data generated through field work (see Chapters 3,4, 5 and 6 for a more in-depth discussion).

Combining the two parts of this literature review provided me with a warrant for carrying out this study. Together they illustrate how this study sought to develop a disruptive narrative pedagogy encouraging people to inquire into their own social and cultural worlds. I see value in facilitating "ways [of learning] that hold everything open and problematic" (Diekelmann, 2001:53), particularly given the sense that educators in all areas are being stifled by the diktats of auditing bodies seeking to measure teachers competency and excellence (McLean, 2006; Crook and Cluely, 2009 and Ashwin and McLean, 2016). In such times, it is imperative those in teaching positions are supported to take risks with their teaching. This is in order to ensure reductive one-size-fits-all approaches to teaching do not become the norm across educational landscapes. In line with the thinking of Skea (2017), a core function of education is to support individuals cope with life's complexities as they search to find comfortable subject positions which acknowledge the complexities of becoming a person. Facilitating a pedagogic principles of narrative disruption can help people come to terms with life's uncertainties.

Education is about more than filling heads with quickly assembled, consumable forms of knowledge. It is about providing learners with "the freedom to explore, both their being, and their relations to others in the world." (Skea, 2017:369). Through this study, I sought to develop a process which provided such a holistic approach to inquiry-informed learning. Building on the work of others, I aimed to create a pedagogic process which prompted the teachers to consider using disruptive narrative approaches as part of a "playful action" aimed at subverting familiar life histories to allow alternative interpretations to emerge (Griffiths, 2003:116). It was not asking them to erase personal storylines, plots or narrative structures. Rather, I wanted to encourage the teachers to consider that their life "stories remain unfinished – they are part of ongoing narrative construction and reconstruction" (Goodson et al, 2010:2).

# Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the methodological factors influencing the research process I followed to answer the research questions below:

1b. How do primary school teachers respond when asked to construct alternative narratives about their everyday lived experiences as teachers?
1c. What influences can be seen in the narratives the teachers construct?
1d. How successful were the narrative pedagogic principles as implemented in encouraging the teachers to construct alternative narratives about their lived experiences?

The chapter begins with a discussion of why I consider this work to be methodologically aligned with similar studies mobilising participatory narrative inquiry approaches. I then discuss the creation of the methodological framework which guided the implementation of the research design. As part of this section, I consider my reflexivity as an ethical dimension of the study, particularly in relation to my position as an outsider with inside knowledge. Following this, I reflect on the data generation methods I used, the data sets the inquiry produced and I provide a rationale for the analytical framework I created. In the final part of the chapter, I discuss how I worked with the study outcomes to imagine what would happen were the study to be carried out in a Northern Irish context. I illustrate how I created forward-looking stories and provide a rationale for doing so. I conclude the chapter by drawing together the different sections to justify the methodological approach I took.

## Working with Narrative Inquiry Approaches

The methodological framework guiding the implementation of this study adapted forms of narrative inquiry, particularly those working with people's personal narratives to understand their agential relationships with the social, cultural and historical structures they live within (Goodson et al, 2010 and Goodson, 2013). Narrative inquiry approaches appeal to me because they cut "across the arts, humanities, sciences and social sciences." (Day-Sclater, 2007:103). In doing so they counter the reductive reasoning of univocal forms of "methodological imperialism", which seek to claim people as belonging to one disciplinary tradition or another (Scott, Brown, Lunt and Thorne, 2004:48). In simplistic terms, a narrative approach is one which utilises the most appropriate methods to construct a narrative from data in an effort to answer an inquiry's research questions. Its analytical value lies in its

desire to generate "knowledge that disrupts old certainties and allows us to glimpse something of the complexities of human lives, selves and endeavours" (Day-Sclater, 2007:103). As a study pursuing a disruptive pedagogic principle, I saw the epistemologically unsettling tendencies of narrative inquiry as appropriate.

While I adapted narrative inquiry sources to inform my methodology, this study was not a typical narrative inquiry. I did not explore the teachers' narratives as "object[s] of inquiry", that is, the means with which to understand "how stories are produced through social action and function in mediating action and constituting identities." (Ewick and Silbey, 1995:202). I did not aim to use the teachers' narratives as the "method of inquiry" (ibid), that is, a way to understand the psychological or sociological reasons why certain things happen. Rather, my work was more aligned with that of Goodson et al (2010:5) in that it sought to contribute "to the development of a theory of *learning [their emphasis]*, not a theory of living." That is not to say I was dismissive of the teachers' narratives because without them I would not have been able to carry out the study.

On beginning my study, I was aware of tensions within the narrative inquiry community about what constituted a narrative inquiry methodology. Nowhere are these tensions better represented than in conversations between ethnographers Paul Atkinson, Arthur Bochner, Arthur Frank and Elliot Mishler. In response to the paper 'Negotiating the contested terrain of narrative methods in illness contexts', written by the narrative inquirer Carol Thomas (2010), Atkinson contests the methodological purpose of narrative inquiry with Bochner, Frank and Mishler. At the heart of their contestations, was a methodological binary positioning narrative inquirers as either story analysts or storytellers: Atkinson arguing that inquirers are analysts and Bochner, Frank and Mishler that inquirers are storytellers.

Atkinson (2010:662) maintained that narrative inquirers need to be cautious not to fall foul of "narrative exceptionalism", that is, a belief that narrative data does not have to be exposed to rigorous narrative analysis because it is a personal story. Bochner (2010) and Frank (2010) both see Atkinson's claims aimed at protecting traditional objectivist views of sociological rigour and truth. This, they claim, denies the ethical good that narrative inquirers can do in letting people tell their stories, their way.

My own position in light of these arguments was to avoid falling foul of Cartesian dualisms seeking to position narrative inquirers as belonging to one camp or another (Trahar, 2009). Ultimately, however, I see myself as being more aligned to the reasoning of Frank, Bochner

and Mishler than Atkinson, that is, as someone who through inquiry learns from listening to people's narratives. However, I agree with Atkinson that there needs to more analytical rigour to ensure the claims narrative researchers make are credible. Overall, my personal position is one viewing narrative inquirers as faciliatory presences offering people opportunities to learn about their social, cultural and historical worlds through the narrativisation of their lived experiences (Andrews, 2007 and Frank, 2010).

# Discussing the Methodological Framework

## Developing a participatory narrative inquiry approach

While I locate this study in the field of narrative inquiry, I also adapted participatory forms of action-orientated research when developing my methodological focus. I sought to develop a research-informed pedagogy which supported the teachers learn about their lives through narrative disruption. This was an exploratory piece of inquiry I was carrying out for the first time. I anticipated the study would be messy and unpredictable, which I illustrate in Chapter 5 it was. Therefore, I drew on action-orientated approaches because they offered an agile research approach which allowed me to ask "where I was at, what I hoped to achieve and how I thought that I would get there" (McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 2003:35). In short, they afforded me the possibilities to change tack where the opportunities or need to do so arose.

It was always my intention to be adaptable and flexible owing to the exploratory nature of the study. In spirit of narrative pedagogy, I aimed to create an inquiry space which promoted the values of inclusion, participation and collaboration. Therefore, I required a methodology which allowed me to work with the teachers and not on them in the inquiry setting. I sought to foster a culture of co-operation during the study; one which gave the teachers some control over how they were positioned as participants (Reason and Hawkins, 1988). I believed that by providing the teachers with more of a say in how the inquiry progressed, more meaningful areas of inquiry would "grow out of their own expressed stories." (Reason and Hawkins, 1988:100). I saw this commitment to participatory values as integral to becoming a narrative inquirer; one seeking to develop a narrative pedagogy aimed at disrupting established ways of knowing so new knowledge can emerge.

When discussing the participatory nature of the study, I do so with care because I am mindful that the term participatory is a contested one (Delamont, 2007). This was not a co-operative inquiry in the vein that Reason (1994) identifies a co-operative inquiry being, that is, one

where the participants and the researcher collaborate to identify an inquiry focus, research questions, methods of inquiry, an analytical framework and then write up together. Neither was this study participatory in the same methodological sense as a piece of participatory action research (PAR). I was not working with the teachers to help them generate knowledge about their lives which could be harnessed to make political and social changes benefiting them and their community (Reason, 1994; McArdle, 2013 and McArdle et al, 2015). Rather, my notion of participatory related to working with the teachers in the inquiry space to make sure they took something from the study they could use in their practices. I sought to provide them with opportunities to communicate with me before, during and after the sessions to shape the inquiry space and our work.

I viewed the work with the teachers as a form of CPD for them and I wanted to ensure they could inform the nature of our work so it fitted with their contextual needs. As I discuss in Chapter 1, I opted to use digital resources and technologies (these were in the form of iPads) because the School lacked the resources to do this. For this reason, I was guided by the "Seven Steps of Digital Storytelling" model developed by Joe Lambert (2010); an experiential learning approach developing participants as facilitators who can support people use digital resources to construct personal narratives. The model foregrounds the construction of narratives over the use of technology; acknowledging the latter as a potentially distracting presence as individuals construct their personal narratives (Gazarian, 2010; Kearney, 2011 and Jenkins, 2011). While I wanted the teachers to be more comfortable using the iPads, I wanted to avoid what we were doing being perceived as IT training. Therefore, in everything we did a focus on the construction of personal narratives was foregrounded over the technical elements of the study.

The inquiry space was one aimed at facilitating interrogative dialogue to support the teachers learn about their lives through stories. To make this happen I drew on the concept of story circles, that is, group activities aimed at developing participants' trust and confidence through the sharing of narratives (Reason and Hawkins, 1988; Hartley and McWilliam, 2009 and Lambert, 2010 and Bell, 2010). By discussing their personal narratives, I wanted the teachers to feel comfortable listening to and questioning each other. In fostering a dialogic climate of reciprocity, I aimed to create an inquiry space were the teachers' felt comfortable and valued as equals.

## Pilot studies and reconnaissance work

In the early stages of planning, I carried out reconnaissance work to pilot my methods and develop a sense of the issues facing primary school teachers. The first thing I did was create a "validation group" who were sympathetic to my intended research, yet were prepared to provide critical feedback on aspects of it they believed weak (McNiff, 2016:223). This fluid group comprised of my supervisors, four Initial Teacher Education (ITE) tutors at my place of employment and Gwen (a pseudonym), the Deputy Head at Midview. I considered all these people to be perfectly positioned to provide me with insider knowledge that I as an outsider could not possibly have possessed. I sought to make sure I was being ethical in my conduct and realistic about what I could expect the teachers to do in terms of time commitments. I also wanted to develop a sense of what the key issues affecting teachers were so I could work with those, or avoid them, during the sessions.

The four exploratory interviews with the ITE tutors served as a valuable opportunity to pilot my interviewing questions and techniques (Appendix 1). Two of the ITE tutors were established researchers and provided me with feedback on how to facilitate semi-structured interviews more effectively. In addition to piloting my interview approaches, I also worked with two newly qualified primary teachers (NQTs) to trial the use of memory books (Thomson and Holland, 2005) and the creation of personal narratives using digital approaches as potential data generation methods. The memory books were scrapbooking approaches encouraging multimodal methods of reflection aimed at exploring aspects of identity.

I met the NQTs every six weeks between August 2012 and January 2013 to discuss their experiences as beginning teachers and to evaluate the methods. Neither NQT engaged with the methods, claiming that their lives were too busy to do the work in their spare time. By doing this pilot, I saw the limitations of the methods I planned to use (Hayes, 2000; Cohen and Manion and Morrison, 2007). In short, I realised that I could not expect people to do work outside of the inquiry space.

My reconnaissance work also served as a piece of inquiry in its own right, illustrating the methodological challenges involved in working with people (Bjork Gudmundsdottir and Brock-Utne, 2010). Initially, I had wanted to work with NQTs as their lives are often characterised as being fraught with emotional turmoil as they make the transition from graduate to teacher (Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010; Meijer, de Graaf & Meirink, 2011 and Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013). Therefore, I imagined their lives would be rich in narratives for

disruption as Wallace (2010) demonstrates with her study of beginning Further Education teachers. However, I realised after several attempts to recruit participants that for most NQTs the life of a beginning teacher was too busy. Being unsuccessful in recruiting NQTs, I decided to take a more purposive approach and ask the teachers at Midview; a group of teachers I knew to differing degrees. In the past, I had worked with different teachers in the School as part of CPD initiatives and also projects with the pupils. I believed that the teachers at Midview would have many narratives to share, making it possible to explore my pedagogic aims.

### Gaining access to Midview and the teachers

Midview is located in the heart of a large town in the Midlands of England. For many of the teaching staff and support staff, there was a personal connection with Midview because some of them and their children had been/were pupils. The School has a high ratio of children with English as an additional language (EAL). Therefore, Midview has always promoted the Arts as a way of providing pupils with opportunities to learn about each other's cultures. This is done through activities involving drama, drawing, painting, cooking and embracing multimodal technological approaches. I have worked with different teachers within Midview on a number of projects exploring the use of audio and video technologies to facilitate learning.

I asked the teachers to participate through Gwen, who had been Deputy Head at Midview since 2009. She acted as my gatekeeper, building up a relationship between me and the participants before and during the study (Denscombe, 2007 and Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). I approached the six full-time teachers and the Head, inviting them to participate in the study. I did not ask Gwen to participate given her gatekeeper role. The potential participants were provided with participant information sheets (Appendix 2) and prompted to contact me directly, or via Gwen, with any questions they had. All seven of the teachers I approached agreed to participate. This was all the teaching staff with the exception of Gwen and a part-time member of staff. Prior to the commencement of the study, I asked the teachers to read and sign consent forms (Appendix 3), which they did.

In the main, the teachers decided to take part in the study because Gwen asked them to. They also saw the study as an opportunity for continuing professional development (CPD) aimed at developing their digital capabilities. The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) coordinator had recently left the School and there had been little iPad training. Therefore, the study represented an opportunity to become more familiar with the technology. Among the

group, there were also teachers who wanted to attend the sessions to explore perceptions they had of who they were and were becoming as teachers.

Two weeks before the study, I visited Midview on a logistical reconnaissance aimed at familiarising myself with the School and the inquiry space. Midview is a small primary school and space is at a premium. The sessions were held in the music room/storage room (Appendix 4), with all my equipment being stored in a holdall in Gwen's classroom. As I discuss in Chapter 5, the spatial dimensions of the inquiry space and its location in Midview influenced the social dynamic of the group, which in turn affected the teachers' narratives.

## Reflecting on my place in the inquiry

As I discuss in Chapter 1, I chose to work with the teachers because I am an academic developer and teacher; my wife is a teacher; my brother is a teacher, as are many of my friends and colleagues. My experiences as a teacher and vicariously living the experiences of others leads me to have a huge degree of admiration and sympathy for teachers across sectors. Over the last decade and half, I have become perturbed by representations of teachers in the media, which often seem fixated with pointing out imagined faults and deficits. I am with Jane Miller, who in her memoirs contends that "teachers are despised in this country" [the UK] (Miller, 2016:88) because of how the media represents them.

My own experiences as a teacher and academic developer in HE lead me to believe that higher education institutions (HEIs) are following similar paths to "schools and FE colleges in having their mission narrowed to concentrate on economic returns" (McLean, 2006:44). The encroachment of market values has led to the emergence of a pervasive audit culture, which imposes performative restrictions on teachers' willingness to take pedagogic risks in the classroom. In my everyday role as an academic developer, I witness how sometimes a prevalent sense of performative anxiety, particularly in newer academics, manifests itself as a form of risk aversion. The fear of bad National Student Survey (NSS) results and student feedback in general is a malign presence inhibiting pedagogic risk taking. Therefore, while this research was located in a primary school context, I saw parallels with the experiences of teachers in the HE sector, where I have worked since 2009.

I was aware that my motivations for this study where located in my personal life history. Thus, my natural sympathies for teachers made it likely that my own biases would influence the interpretations of what I observed and heard. I was conscious of how difficult it would be for me to "be an objective, authoritative, politically neutral observer standing outside and

above the text of [my] own research report" (Gibbs, 2007:91). However, at every stage I took a reflexive step back and observed myself as the inquirer, constantly questioning why I thought as I did, did what I did and how these actions affected the inquiry. In this section, I discuss how I operationalised a reflexive stance as part of the inquiry. Before, I discuss how, I facilitated a reflexive position, I clarify what I mean by reflexivity.

My conceptualisation of reflexivity is in line with that of Gibbs (2007:91): "put simply, reflexivity is the recognition that the product of research inevitably reflects some of the background, milieu and predilections of the researcher." Through my reflexivity, I highlighted how aspects of my own life history; my personal intentions, wants, needs and beliefs influenced the focus of the study and the research design.

During the inquiry, I acknowledged that "reflexivity in research is not a single or universal entity but a process – an active, ongoing process that saturates every stage of the research." (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004:274). My reflexivity was represented in a range of different ways within this thesis: for example, the letter to my children in Chapter 1, which illustrates the ontological and epistemological settings of this work; the location of me as part of the study through my critical reflections on the data in Chapter 5: The Reflective Analysis and discussions of the strengths and limitations of the research design in Chapter 6: Conclusion. These examples are reflexive methods Brewer (2000) advocates mobilising to provide readers with an audit trail they can use to judge the validity of one's research.

In addition to previously discussed methods, I used a variety of reflexive devices during the study to facilitate critical self-reflection. The main mode of critical reflection I used during the inquiry was a research diary. The diary was nebulous in form, that is, I represented my thoughts across a range of formats: notes in notebooks, email conversations with my supervisor, notes on my iPhone, the end-of-session reflections on my fieldnotes and post-participant interview reflections. The benefits of keeping an amorphous format of research diary was the affordance it provided me in reflecting across a range of locations at times which suited me. However, this posed me, challenges bringing the notes and reflections together as a cohesive whole. In the remainder of this section, I refer to aspects of my research diary to illustrate my reflexivity as the researcher.

I recognised that self-reflection alone was not enough and could lead me to retreat into solipsistic internal spaces where reflections were perfunctory rather than critical. Therefore, at every stage of the study I asked my supervisor and Gwen (gatekeeper/my critical friend) to

provide me with feedback about my conduct as a researcher and also to question my work. An example of how I used my own critical reflections and the support of these two validators, can be seen in my decision not to pursue the idea of getting the teachers to identify an unresolved incident as a way of prompting them to create disruptive narratives. This approach essentially required the teachers to revisit a teaching incident from their pasts, which ended in a manner they were not happy with. The intention was to use this incident as a moment of dramatic dilemma the teachers could utilise to re-imagine the incident so the ending was more acceptable to them (See Chapter 4: page 96 for a more in-depth discussion). However, the thought of doing this proved to be too distressing for some of the teachers (See Chapter 5: page 102 for a more in-depth discussion).

So, my concerns about leaving a legacy of distress, prompted me to jettison the idea of using unresolved incidents as prompts for the teachers' narratives. In effect, the decision not to proceed with the unresolved incident, lessened the potential for narrative disruption. For disruption to occur, there must be a moment of emotional dissonance prompting individuals to consider seeing the incident from a different perspective (Goodson and Gill, 2011). As I was ethically bound not to cause the teachers distress, I could not push them to do something they were not happy with. The tensions emerging from this moment were captured in my post-Session 2 reflections:

> I think I've been too focused on the idea of helping the teachers to resolve incidents. They don't actually feel they need to. It could be argued that maybe they need to revisit unresolved incidents and that this process provides the breach in their everyday narratives to do that. However, is it my role to do that and potentially open a Pandora's Box of negative introspection? Margaret and Deborah both said that the problem with reflection is that you can do harm by obsessing about 'what you're bad at'. From my conversations with Joan [my initial second supervisor], I do believe that research can do harm and I do not want to do that here, particularly when considering the fallout it may have for Gwen. I am too close to the action, so to speak.

As a result of the above reflection, I had a telephone conversation with my supervisor, explaining my conundrum, which was that pushing the teachers may have caused distress but not pushing them effectively meant I could not meet the study aim because there was a lack of disruption. In the end, my supervisor and I reached the conclusion that I had to be ethically responsible and also methodologically true to my word, that is, I was participating with the

teachers and not on them. Therefore, I had to beresponsive to their needs and respect their wishes. I also recognised that I could not force the teachers to disrupt their stories even though I wanted them to. Placing myself in their position, I reflected that had someone insisted I do something I was not happy with, I would not have done it, particularly when there was no warrant to justify the procedure.

Rejecting the notion of the unresolved incident made it difficult to pursue the principle of narrative disruption. At the time, I could not see an alternative way of doing this as I was very focused on the idea of a moment of dilemma needed to prompt narrative resolution. However, the rejection of the unresolved incident provided me with insights into the difficulties of prompting people to re-narrativise their lives from different perspectives, particularly when they are resistant. It illustrated that for this level of reinterpretation to happen there has to be a strong warrant justifying the approach and acknowledgement from the participants that they want to be disruptive. In short, there needs to be consensual agreement that the lives of the participants are troubled in some way and pursuing a principle of narrative disruption is worthwhile in an effort to resolve this trouble.

My position as an outsider with insider knowledge reinforced how in social inquiries of this nature, the researcher can never be a disinterested observer (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007 and Zimmermann, 2015). The study caused tension between my methodological aim and ethical responsibilities to the teachers. I could not separate myself as a researcher and someone who knew the teachers, making it difficult for me to facilitate the degree of narrative disruption I believed was needed to prompt the emergence of alternative narratives. This tension is represented in the following extract from my post-Session 1 reflections:

> I do not think the process was disruptive enough as I was fearful of the consequences: Gwen's position and the teachers dropping out. Also, I am not sure how I would have coped with large-scale distress. It is somewhat arrogant of me, as the researcher, to go into the School presuming there is something intrinsically wrong with the perceptions the participants have of themselves as teachers and how this impacts on their jobs. I am not a saviour coming in from outside to change things.

The above extract from my research diary captures the moment I realised I, and by association my work, had the potential to cause distress. I recognised that even with good

intentions to be egalitarian, participatory and transparent, I still had more power than the teachers had; power to control the study in a manner which possibly positioned them in ways they were not comfortable with. Through my own reflexivity, I realised my own hypocrisy. In pursuing a study aimed at challenging dominant forms of power, I was potentially exerting an equally oppressive power over the teachers. Had I not been reflexive, I may have remained oblivious to the power inconsistencies in the study and the potential distress they could have caused the teachers.

The inquiry space was full of emotions, ideas, life histories and beliefs, which on occasion clashed and on other occasions complemented one another. There were contested perceptions about the value of academics from outside primary settings having a say in how practices were shaped in primary contexts. I also witnessed moments of unity when the teachers united behind a colleague who was believed to have been unfairly treated. In Chapter 5, I discuss these happenings and others to illustrate how the residual traces of the school day and historical tensions between the teachers could influence the sessions. Moments of contestation and solidarity among the teachers, and me, heightened my sensitivities with regards to my obligations to the teachers. Being reflexive through my research diary or conversations with my supervisor, reminded me that as a researcher I had a responsibility not to enflame tensions or create any new ones which may have had residual effects long after I left the field (Zembylas and McGlynn, 2012).

Being reflexive, also meant coping with the frustrations, annoyances and confusions emerging from the inquiry process. As I acknowledge above and in Chapter 1, I hold that teaching across a range of educational sectors is being deprofessionalised because of performative demands making teachers accountable for their learners' successes and failures (Ball and Olmedo, 2013 and Ball, 2015). However, during the study, I found my dispositions of solidarity and sympathy challenged at different times by the actions of the teachers. The following pre-Session 4 reflection from my research diary illustrates how events in the sessions left me anxious and frustrated:

> Last week left me really feeling frustrated with some individuals within the group. I felt they acted like children and I was annoyed that they were being quite disruptive and not in the way I wanted them to be disruptive. Marc[15] asked me how the research was impacting on me because he was more interested in this

[15] Marc, which is a pseudonym, was a colleague who knew about my study.

> than the study. I did not know how to respond to this, but after thinking about it, I realised why it would be easy, if I were a member of the public, to have ill feeling towards teachers based on media stories. The constant negativity and moaning of some of the group about the good old days was, I feel, destructive. It stopped any real discussions taking place and I felt that those responsible for those views had taken sanctuary in the comfort of their own negativity.

As part of the analytical process, which I discuss below, I often went back to my initial reflections and reflected on them again, which was effectively a double-loop reflection. It provided me with a temporal distance which sometimes made it easier to understand my own feelings. In relation to the aforementioned pre-session 4 incident, I reflected that:

> Note how my views changed. As an advocate and defender of teachers, I was pushed to rethinking my unquestioning support for them. I felt like they were their own worst enemies and doing little to help themselves. It was as though some of the teachers had denied any modicum of responsibility for the direction of their own lives. There was sense of a martyrdom theme, even though it was never referred to in such explicit terms. Has this got any relationship to the work of Hochschild (2003) on emotional labour?

In addition, to contributing data to the study, these reflexive accounts represented my own coming to terms with personal moments of emotional and epistemological disruption. Naively, given my role as an academic developer, I was unprepared for some of what I would term uncooperative behaviour in the sessions. Moments of uncooperativeness are not new to me and I expect them. However, in the context of the study, they took me by surprise. The critical reflection I engaged with after the sessions and discussions with Gwen and my first supervisor helped me to cope with any negative feelings I experienced. It reminded me that while I had the right to feel angry, annoyed and sometimes let down, I had to acknowledge the teachers were helping me. Through my reflexivity, I was aware that while I could affect the teachers' lives, exploring their live histories had the ability to affect me emotionally and epistemologically.

My conceptualisation of reflexivity was one which saw it as an "active process that requires scrutiny, reflection, and interrogation of the data, the researcher, the participants, and the context that they inhabit." (Guillemin and Gillam, 2014:274). My reflexivity was a constant holistic source of critical dialogue aimed at keeping lines of questioning open (Winter, 1989).

Whether engaging in internal dialogues with myself, through the above methods, or as part of discussions with my first supervisor and/or Gwen, I sought to use my reflexivity to understand how I was shaping the inquiry and how the inquiry was shaping me.

## Ethical responsibilities and challenges

I believe my sense of ethical responsibility was heightened because of my position as a researcher who was neither an insider nor an outsider. To differing degrees, the teachers knew me and I knew them. My own life history connects with the life history of Midview because a relative works in the School and I have visited it frequently over the years. In 2011, I worked with a group of Year 5 children as part of a twinning activity with a school in Dresden. This project involved linking the two schools together using video conferencing technologies so the children could share stories about their everyday lived experiences. During 2013, two teachers from Midview participated in an after-school enquiry group I facilitated. The group comprised of teachers and students in my previous place of employment and explored the use of video and audio technologies as part of STEM lessons in a primary context. In addition, to these projects, I have also visited the School on countless occasions with my daughters because their nursery school is in the same town as Midview.

I have a lot of admiration for the Midview staff, so I did not want to cause any of the teachers lasting distress, particularly where it might have impacted upon the School. To safeguard against any ethical maleficence, I factored in opportunities for the teachers to let me know how the study was affecting them. This included the post-session feedback questionnaires (see Table 3.2), which allowed the teachers to communicate with me anonymously. I also stressed to them throughout the study that I would not make them do anything they did not want to. I was sensitive to the impact of the research on the lives of those taking part as well as to methodological issues such as the validity of data.

The closeness of my own life history to the teachers' life histories urged me to maintain a "critical and reflexive dialogue with [my own] individual and professional morality (Freshwater, 2001 cited in McArdle et al, 2015:71). Having knowledge of the teachers lives and the teachers having knowledge of mine, made some of the decisions I arrived at emotionally straining. At the end of Session 1, I knew I had to ask Dorothy, the Head, to leave because her presence was evidently affecting the responses of other teachers. My observations were confirmed by feedback I received via the post-session questionnaires. As can be seen from my post Session 2 reflections, this was an uncomfortable experience for me:

> I felt sorry for Dorothy when she came into the room and told the others she would not be taking part. She struck a lonely figure standing in the doorway. I really like her as a person […] I guess this is the hard bit: separating myself from the setting, which is really difficult but necessary. I now realize that I have to be a slightly 'disinterested observer' otherwise I may get too caught up in things and end up with no data.

In the final two sentences of the above extract, I demonstrate ethical and methodological tensions; tensions which led to me being "reflexive to interpersonal and ethical aspects of research practice, not just the epistemological." (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004:277). To achieve a sense of distance from which I could avoid causing unwanted distress, I asked myself questions at every juncture of the study as part of an internal dialogue. These are questions about the research focus and questions about the effect of the study on the teachers' lives. Questions in these categories are highlighted in Table 3.1[16]. To illustrate how these questions influenced my ethical reflexivity, I refer to reflections from my research diary focused on the incident with Dorothy. These reflection highlights outcomes of the questioning process.

*Table 3.1: Questions prompting reflexive thought*

| Question focus | Typical questions | Outcomes |
|---|---|---|
| Research focus | • What knowledge am I generating and why?<br>• How will I use it during this study and beyond?<br>• What does the knowledge tell me about the pedagogic process? | This was knowledge about how hierarchical positions can affect social dynamics within and inquiry space and by association the type of knowledge produced. This observation indicates to me that the pedagogic process can be affected by power dynamics within groups and therefore, while the creation of an inclusive inquiry space is a virtuous principle to pursue, it may not be practically expedient. Put another way, involving everyone may produce a social dynamic which contributes to the unsuccessful completion of an inquiry. |

[16] This approach adapts a questioning technique advocated by McArdle et al (2015:72) to explore the complex ethical dimensions of personal and professional values as part of a researchers' ethical positionality.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Teachers' lives | • What effect is the study having on the teachers (at this point)?<br>• How is my position affecting the teachers?<br>  ○ Am I being mindful not to abuse the power and privilege I have as the researcher? How?<br>• How is the study (at this point) affecting the relationships between the teachers? | The teachers were very reticent with Dorothy in the room and it was clear that her continuing presence was not going to create a comfortable sharing space. I observed how the group with Dorothy in it was less interactive in terms of the discussions they were having. They seemed wary of saying anything which may have been misconstrued as inappropriate. I sensed a strain in terms of their ability to communicate with each other, which is why I think I cannot ask Dorothy to continue with the study. It is not fair on her, nor the teachers. Plus, I think if she continues, people will drop out. I have to stand by my ethical obligations to the teachers that I will not cause them distress. I have told them this will not happen. |

Even when engaging in the reflexive dialogue I highlight in Table 3.1, I was not always prepared for the challenging ethical dimensions of the social dynamic of the group. Some of the teachers' life histories overlapped in ways that affected how they interacted with each other. Old alliances and animosities influenced power dynamics and in doing so had the ability to affect behaviours within the inquiry space. On occasions when there were moments of contest within the group, I found myself acting like a teacher trying to manage behaviour. In these instances, I was sometimes unsure of how far I could or should go in managing tensions. I was concerned that by seeking to mediate between individuals, I might put a stop to generating rich data. However, these methodological anxieties were tempered by ethical worries about causing longer lasting damage to relationships after I left Midview. As I discuss Chapter 5: page 126, I sometimes had to bring proceedings to a halt to cope with fractures within the social dynamic of the group.

My liminal position as an outsider with insider knowledge accentuated my need to be ethically responsible and responsive to potentially unexpected happenings. I was sensitive to an ethical dimension Guillemin and Gillam (2004: 64) characterise as "ethics in practice." Ethics in practice "pertain to the day-to-day ethical issues that arise in the doing of research."

(ibid). These could be matters which arise through interactions between participants, and/or participants and the researcher: moments which procedural ethics, that is, institutional ethical clearance protocols cannot account for (ibid). Prior to the study, however, I also followed procedural ethical protocols identified by the School of Education at the University of Nottingham (SoE). In conjunction with these, I consulted ethical guidelines in British Educational Research Association's Ethical Guidance for Educational Research (BERA, 2011).

In line with the requirements of the SoE, I gained ethical clearance to pursue the study (Appendix 5). I referred to the BERA guidelines (ibid), which identified the following as key principles researchers need to follow to be ethical:

1. Minimising harm
2. Respecting autonomy
3. Protecting privacy
4. Offering reciprocity
5. Treating People Equitably

(Hammersley and Traianou, 2012)

In the section which follows, I outline how I pursued these principles.

My biggest ethical concern was leaving a legacy of distress and ill-feeling among the teachers I worked with. Given that the study actively aimed to foster narrative disruption, I foresaw emotional discomfort and uncertainty about how the teachers would react (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000 and Murphy and Dingwall, 2007). I do not see discomfort as a synonym for harm. The former is about moving people beyond the familiarity of epistemological comfort zones, whereas the latter refers to mental, and/or physical pain and suffering (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000 and Zembylas, 2015). While I never intended to cause harm, or believed I would, I knew that I could not control how people might react when asked to delve into memories of the past (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). Therefore, I resolved to provide the teachers with modes of anonymous communication, such as the post-session questionnaires (see Table 3.2), to let me know when they were feeling vulnerable. I saw this as a way of safeguarding against distress manifesting into forms of mental harm.

I was always explicit with the teachers that they could expect discomfort when I asked them to challenge their personal opinions and beliefs. I also emphasised that we would assess the situation and consider how to proceed without causing distress. As the above incident with

Dorothy illustrated, I made adjustments when I observed there was the potential for distress. There were also other occasions where problematic group dynamics led me to reorganise pairs and groups to avoid potential conflict. Being a teacher and an academic developer I had strategies such as ending activities early which allowed me to diffuse tensions. While there were moments of discord, nothing in the teachers' comments or behaviours led me to believe they were caused any undue residual distress.

Prior to the beginning of the study, I provided the teachers with a participant information sheet (Appendix 2) and consent forms (Appendix 3) to be transparent about my intentions. I saw gaining consent as more than being a safeguarded against litigation, should any of the teachers have believed I had been unethical (Murphy and Dingwall, 2007; Tinson, 2010 and Hammersley and Traianou, 2012). I viewed informed consent as an ongoing dialogue between the teachers and me; a process emphasising the 'informed' component of the term more than the 'consent' (Price, 1996; Howe and Moses, 1999 and Josselson, 2011). At every point of the study, I reminded the teachers what we were doing, why we were doing it and what all our ethical responsibilities were to each other and the people whose work we used.

Throughout the study, I had concerns about the extent to which I could protect the anonymity of the teachers given the technologies they were using. Their final narratives contained the teachers' voices, anecdotes about their teaching contexts, reflections on events known to others and references to other people. This latter point was particularly sensitive because there was the potential to discuss past and present pupils. For this reason, during the creation of the teachers' narratives, I stressed to the them their ethical obligations to each other, their pupils and colleagues. I told them to use of pseudonyms for characters in their narratives and locations. We discussed ownership of the narratives and what was appropriate sharing behaviour. For example, I warned them that while I could not stop them distributing their work via social media platforms such as YouTube, the public nature of these platforms meant there was an increased possibility of negative comments. In addition, they also amplified the possibility of themselves and their characters being recognised. These were all issues the teachers understood because there is a strong emphasis in Midview on safeguarding and internet safety.

My concerns about issues of anonymity extended to the write-up and the potential for representing the teachers in ways which made them recognisable or were disingenuous. I put in place different measures to protect the teachers' anonymity. I have avoided giving too much depth when describing the contexts in which the teachers work, such as their year

groups or profiles of their pupil cohorts. I have avoided being too revealing about aspects of the teachers' life histories, which may betray their true identities. As part of the write-up, I shared drafts with my supervisor, which on one occasion illustrated that my frustrations with behaviour in Session 2 had led me to portraying a teacher in a biased manner. When redrafting, I omitted this account as it compromised the teacher's anonymity at the same time as representing them in a manner which could have been construed as negative.

Even with all these measures in place, however, guaranteeing anonymity is difficult. While pseudonyms were used, I could not guarantee complete anonymity (Wiles et al, 2008). The teachers' final narratives[17] made them recognisable because they were about events familiar to them as a group and other teachers in Midview. Also, because they used their own voices to narrate their narratives, it was difficult for me to make them totally anonymous. Therefore, throughout the study, I made the teachers aware of this, providing them with opportunities to withdraw.

During the study, I sought to offer the teachers channels of reciprocity to engender a sense of participation. The main feedback method I employed was the post-session questionnaires (see Table 3.2), As I discuss in the section called 'Data Generation Methods'(page 62), these questionnaires offered the teachers an anonymous feedback channel to raise any issues they had about the study. It was a useful way of being alerted to potential concerns the teachers had, particularly in relation to problematic group dynamics. I also made it clear to the teachers that if they needed to contact me with any questions, they could do so by email. In addition to these channels, the participant information sheet (Appendix 2) and consent form (Appendix 3) stated that the participants could contact me and/or my supervisor if they had any issues regarding the ethical conduct of the study.

In the initial stages of the inquiry, I intended to carry out member checks as a way of asking the participants to validate my observations and their words as truthful representations (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). However, as the study progressed, I realised that this was not possible owing to the large amounts of data, particularly the fieldnotes. My fieldnotes were snapshots of particular happenings in the inquiry and as such had "unstable meanings" (Riessman, 1993:66). I worried that sharing unrefined fieldnotes, reflections and opinions may have been misinterpreted by the teachers, causing undue distress. I resolved that an acceptable compromise was to provide the teachers with access to my fieldnotes with the

[17] The teachers' final narratives can be accessed here: http://bit.ly/CJJDavisEdD

caveat that they understand it was how I perceived events at their point of occurrence. In the end, no one asked to validate my observations or the interview transcripts, which I also made available.

The study was an ethically complex one owing to my liminal position as an outsider with inside knowledge. This insider-outsider position made me sensitive to my ethical obligations to the teachers, acting like a moral "guardian against wrong-footedness or wrongdoing in my work with [the] teachers" (Tickle, 2001:345). I used my reflexivity as an ongoing ethical strategy aimed at making me vigilant against causing the teachers distress. Even though I adopted such a reflexive position, I was unable to foresee some of the ethical problems the inquiry presented me with (Tickle, 2001 and Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). Some of these issues such as admissions of bad practice and an unwillingness to change it made me angry, frustrated and saddened, as I discuss in Chapter 5, page 115. Situations like these brought home the illusionary quality of impartiality. When my natural empathies for teachers were challenged by events in the inquiry space, bracketing off my feelings to manifest a disinterested stance was difficult.

My closeness to the teachers probably compromised my ability to push them to disrupt their narratives and consider reconstructing them from different perspectives. Throughout the inquiry, I was troubled that the study had begun from a position of ethical tension because I positioned the teachers as a means to meet my end of showing the power of alternative narratives, which was the aim of the study (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). In an effort to resolve this ethical tension, I assured the teachers I was not going to exploit them and I would not make them do anything they did not want to. I feared creating an inquiry space were I led the teachers to believe they needed to be liberated from a tyrannical narrative, only to be entrapped by a seemingly emancipatory one of my making. The outcome of this anxiety was that I was not prepared to take the pedagogical risks needed to vigorously pursue a principle of narrative disruption. In the end, my decision to seek to resolve ethical tensions which positioned the teachers as means to my end, comprised the methodological and pedagogic aim of the study. In short, I made it difficult for myself to meet the aim of my study.

I believed, and still do, that there is worth in disrupting hegemonic views of shared social realities to understand how power works on and through people. I see pedagogic value in providing learners with opportunities to identify, disrupt and reinterpret dominant narratives which marginalise some social groups while valorising others. I view the act of narrative disruption as being conducive to a critical pedagogy aimed at exposing and challenging forms

of social injustice. However, I recognise that do this in a manner which is ethically sound and methodologically robust, it may require the researcher to seek working in an inquiry space where s/he is more of an outsider. While I found knowing the teachers helpful in terms of not having to 'get to know them', my closeness to them made it difficult for me to fully pursue a pedagogic principle of narrative disruption. I was too hesitant and cautious about playing Devil's Advocate; something I needed to do to prompt the disruption I sought.

## Data Generation Methods

In the section which follows, I discuss the data generation methods I used to create data sets which informed the claims I make and the conclusions I have arrived at. I begin the section by summarising the content of each of the data sets. I also include the codes[18] (see Table 3.2) I use to refer to the data sets in Chapter 5. I follow this with a more in-depth discussion of why I chose the methods I did and how I operationalised them.

*Table 3.2: Data generation methods*

| Data corpus | Data set | Purpose of set | Code |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-session data | Biographical data (x5; one set for each participant) | Online questionnaires (Appendix 6) aimed at eliciting key biographical data, that is, age, name and gender. Questions were also asked which elicited why the teachers taught and what they saw the purpose of teaching to be. | BD |
| In-session data | Scratch notes (x5; one set for each session) | Handwritten notes taken during the sessions to record observations. (Appendix 7) | Not applicable |

[18] I have organised the different data sources into pre, in and post-session categories to represent the different stages of the inquiry at which they were generated.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Expanded Fieldnotes (x5; one set for each session) | Post-session descriptive and reflective accounts of what I observed (Appendix 8) | FN + session number, e.g. FN1 = Session 1 fieldnotes |
| | Post-session reflections on fieldnotes (x5; one set for each session) | Reflections on the descriptive fieldnotes (Appendix 9) which allowed me to ask what I thought was happening and why. | PSR + session number, e.g. PSR1 = Session 1 post-session reflections |
| | Post-session feedback (x5 sessions; one set for each participant) | Online feedback questionnaires (Appendix 10) aimed at eliciting feedback from the teachers about issues arising from the sessions and how they felt about the sessions. | PSF + session number, e.g. PSF1 = post-session 1 feedback |
| | Mind maps (x5 in Session 1; x4 in Session 2 and x2 in Session 3 | The mind maps (Appendix 11) were created during activities in sessions 1-3. They provided the teachers with opportunities to represent their thoughts when on task. | Appendix 11+ session number, e.g. 11(1a) |
| | Participants 'final narratives (x5; one by each participant) | Each of the teachers created a final | FS + teacher's name, e.g. FS-Deborah = |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | narrative[19] representing their perceptions of who they were and were becoming as teachers. | Final narrative by Deborah |
| Post-session data | Participant end-of-study interviews (x5 transcripts; one per participant) | The interviews provided the teachers with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences as participants in the inquiry (Appendix 12). | PI + teacher's name, e.g. PI-Margaret = participant interview with Margaret |
| | Post-interview reflections (x5; one set for each interview). | To provide me with opportunities for a holistic reflection not just on what the teachers told me, but the manner in which they communicated with me.(Appendix 13). | RPI + teacher's name, e.g. RPI-Cynthia = post interview reflections on |

### Background information questionnaire (Appendix 6)

On agreeing to participate in the study, I sent the teachers an online questionnaire to generate the following data:

- biographical information
- teaching information: year groups taught, length of career as a teacher and time at Midview
- levels of experience creating audio, video and/or digital story content
- reasons for taking part in the study and what the participants hoped to gain from participation

[19] The teachers' final narratives can be accessed here: http://bit.ly/CJJDavisEdD

- perception of what makes a good teachers and perceptions the participants had of themselves as teachers

There were thirteen open-ended questions, all of which required brief answers. I used Lime Survey, an open-source survey generator, hosted locally by the institution I worked at. At the beginning of the study, I ensured everyone was able to access the online questionnaires, which they were. On completion of the questionnaires, I exported them to Word for back-up and coding purposes.

### Scratch notes (Appendix 7)

During each of the five sessions I took "scratch notes", that is, basic notes with which to aid descriptive and reflective writing up of fieldnotes after the sessions (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995:18-19). I informed the participants at the beginning of each session why I was taking the scratch notes to naturalise, as much as possible, the presence of someone in a room taking notes about them (Emerson et al,1995). Taking scratch notes afforded me opportunities to listen to, watch and scrutinise the participants' actions as they took part in the study. This method was suited to the intimate spatial dimensions of the inquiry space as it was relatively unobtrusive and required little more than a pen and paper (Denscombe, 2007 and Robson, 2011).

When taking scratch notes, I described what I saw happening, making inferences about why it was happening. I was constantly asking myself, what was happening, why and what the implications of this were for what I was doing. I was particularly sensitive to the social dynamics of the group and how people were interacting with each other. This included taking notes on how the teachers spoke to one another, paying particular attention to facial expressions, body language and other linguistic and non-linguistic indicators of mood.

I was aware of criticisms about fieldnotes being open to inferential error, based on the selective attention and memory of the observer (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). To counter these potential issues, I audio recorded the sessions; using a main recorder and a back-up recorder. As I point out below, I also used triangulated data sources to gain a bigger picture of what was happening (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). In addition, to these measures, I expanded on the session scratch notes by writing them up descriptively and reflectively as close to the finish of the sessions as possible.

### Expanded fieldnotes (Appendix 8)

Soon after the sessions finished, I used Microsoft Word to write the scratch notes up as more expanded descriptive accounts of my observations. In line with the recommendations of Emerson et al (1995), I first wrote the scratch notes up descriptively. Doing this while events were still fresh in my mind not only lessened the potential to forget things, but allowed me to notice happenings I missed first time around (Denscombe, 2007 and Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). At this stage, I tried not to reflect too much on what I had observed in case it distracted me from recalling what I had observed. While I endeavoured to avoid reflecting on the events in the session, it was difficult to completely bracket off my reflections.

### Post-session reflections on fieldnotes (Appendix 9)

After writing the expanded descriptive fieldnotes, I reflected on them to provide me with opportunities to translate the data into evidence. This translation occurred by looking for reasons why particular incidents had happened and what their implications were for the study (McNiff, 2016). The reflections on the descriptive data involved two stages: first I read through the fieldnotes adding comments in Word and then read over the notes and comments to inform a more in-depth reflection (Appendix 9).This process was part of a double-hermeneutic reflective approach aimed at providing me opportunities to re-interpret my original interpretations (Bazeley, 2013).

### Post-session feedback questionnaire (Appendix 10)

At the end of each of the five sessions, I sent the participants an anonymous online feedback questionnaire, which asked:

1. What, if anything, worked well about the session? Explain briefly.
2. What could have been better about the session? Explain briefly?
3. What value, if any, might the session have for your teaching? Explain briefly.

I modelled the feedback questionnaire on the Harvard One-Minute-Paper method, which is used primarily as an end-of-class formative assessment technique (Angelo and Cross, 1993). As I discuss in Chapters 3 and 5, the questionnaires flagged up issues in the group, providing me with opportunities to adapt the research design. The feedback forms were an invaluable source of data which allowed me to assess the general mood of the group and the value they saw in what they were doing. Reponses were kept anonymous so as to encourage the teachers to be as honest as they believed they could be. However, complete anonymity was difficult to

ensure because on a couple of occasions remarks were made about incidents between particular individuals, which made the teacher making the comments quite easy to identify.

### Mind maps (Appendix 11)

During Sessions 1, 2 and 3, I asked the teachers to create mind maps as part of different small-group discussion activities. There were two mind map activities in Session 1, one in Session 2 and one in Session 3. The mind maps created opportunities for the teachers to brainstorm and represent their ideas, thoughts and learning. They were triangulated data sources aimed at providing extra interpretative viewpoints from which to analyse the teachers' activities.

### Participants' final narratives[20]

During the Sessions 4 and 5, the teachers worked alone to produce their final narratives. There were five final narratives in total; one from each teacher. Each final narrative was a combination of voice, images and text; put together to represent the individual teachers' perceptions of who they were becoming as teachers. In Session 5, the final narratives were shared, prompting the teachers to provide more in-depth insights into their perceptions of who they were becoming as teachers (Wallace, 2010). During these discussions, the teachers shared their reasons for the narratives they constructed and the manner in which they constructed them. In this sense the final narratives acted as trigger resources for further instances of critical reflection.

### End-of- study interviews (Appendix 12)

At the end of the study, I held a 45-60 minute recorded interview with each of the participants. The interviews took place in Midview and provided the participants with opportunities to reflect on their involvement in the study. I decided on a semi-structured approach as it allowed me to address general points I wanted to cover but also more specific themes relating to each participant (Denscombe, 2007). I wrote and revised the questions as the study progressed, basing them on incidents emerging from the observations and participant feedback.

[20] The teachers' final narratives can be accessed here: http://bit.ly/CJJDavisEdD

I used NVivo to transcribe the interviews, exporting transcripts in formats compatible with Microsoft Word. Once in Word, I began coding, categorising and identifying themes; a process I describe in more detail below in the section 'Data Analysis'.

### Reflections on participant interviews (Appendix 13)

The post-interview reflections were an opportunity to take a more holistic view of the teachers' perceptions of their experiences. This involved reflecting on aspects of the interview, such as the teachers' body language, language they used, their tone of voice, how they reacted to my questions and the extent to which they were happy to be interviewed. I sought to use the reflections to provide me with further insights into why the teachers participated and what, if anything, they took from the study.

## Data Analysis

In this section, I discuss the analytical process of constructing a thesis which communicated claims aimed at demonstrating trustworthiness rather than objective truths (Riessman, 1993). I aimed to arrive at credible conclusions which generated the possibility of transferability rather than generalisability. To illustrate how I sought credibility, I begin the section by discussing the operationalisation of the analytical process. I then go on to outline the methodological underpinnings of the thematic analytical approach I adopted. I conclude the section by reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of the analytical process as I worked to synthesise the different data sources.

I adopted a two-stage analytical process (Appendix 14) aimed at interpreting the extent to which the pedagogic process facilitated an inquiry space where the teachers created alternative narratives. The progressive nature of the study meant data sets emerged at different points before, during and after the five-week run of sessions. I progressively worked in and across nine data sets, which I categorised as pre-session data, in-session data and post session data (see Table 3.2). In stage two of the process, this approach was much more holistic as all the data sets had been produced. I characterised the analysis as a "double hermeneutic" approach because I was moving:

> "between striving for an inside view, where you see things from the perspective of the participant, and taking an outside view standing alongside the participant, questioning, assessing, and interpreting the latent meaning in what is being said." (Bazeley, 2013:14).

Put another way, I sought to judge the value of the pedagogic process through interpreting the experiences of the participants, which in themselves were interpretative acts aimed at making sense of what they were doing.

The fieldnotes and participant interviews were my main data sources. I considered the fieldnotes as representations of an outsider view, that is, my attempts to observe the teachers to understand what sense they were making of the narrative process. The participant interviews offered me an insider view of the teachers' perceptions of the study. The teachers' final narratives, mind maps and post-session feedback comments all acted as forms of triangulation to "enhance the completeness of the findings" (Denscombe, 2007:138). These triangulated sources both confirmed and challenged assumptions I was making as part of my observations. On more than one occasion, the post-session feedback questionnaires flagged up issues with social dynamics within the group, which had I not addressed, may have caused the study to falter. This was particularly significant when I was made aware of how Dorothy's (the Head) inclusion, which I believed was inhibiting the other participants' involvement. In Chapter 5, I discuss this issue in more detail.

While working with multiple data sources provided me with opportunities to gain a multitude of insights, it was also challenging to synthesise. Interpretation of the different types of data required "some fancy epistemological footwork" (Riessman, 1993:70) to ensure that the claims I made were rigorous and trustworthy. I was aware that taking a narrative approach to analysis could open up "different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning" (McArdle, Hurrell and Muñoz Martinez, 2013:80). Therefore, I needed analytical methods which offered me a degree of theoretical and methodological flexibility; something Alleyne (2015) claims a thematic analysis provides when synthesising multiple data sources to create a coherent narrative.

I adopted a thematic analytical approach because it "seeks to uncover 'concrete practices' in the text through focusing on what is said in the narrative rather than how it is said or by whom or for what purpose." (Alleyne, 2015:70). The thesis I have produced is about the pedagogic process I developed to support people tell alternative stories. This focus on the process rather than the teachers' stories, moved me away from more traditional narrative forms of structuralist or discourse analysis. Had I taken the former approach, my analytical focus would have been on how linguistic, and/or literary features shaped the form of the teachers' narratives (Alleyne, 2015). The latter approach would have focused on the content of the teachers' narratives, that is, what they said and in what context, to make inferences

about some aspect of their lived experiences (ibid). Rather than focus primarily on the form or the context of the teachers' narratives, I analysed the validity of the pedagogic process as a way of supporting the teachers to construct alternative narratives.

The thematic analytical approach (Appendix 15) I took saw me synthesise and adapt the interview-based thematic methods of Hayes (2000) and the analysis of ethnographic fieldnotes advocated by Emerson et al (1995). Synthesising and adapting these methods offered me a systematic approach at gaining inside and outside interpretations of the teachers' experiences: the interviews representing an inside perspective and the fieldnotes an outside perspective. Both approaches focused on working cyclically with data to identify themes which could be woven together into a narrative representing the outcomes of an inquiry. By combining the approaches and shaping them to my needs, I created an eight-stage analytical procedure aimed at interrogating the data (see Table 3.3).

*Table 3.3: The analytical procedure*

| | Analytical activity | Purpose of analytical activity |
|---|---|---|
| Stage 1 | Preparing sources for analysis: writing up field notes; transcriptions and preparation of participant generated content. | As the data sets emerged, I familiarised myself with the content. The early stages of the analytical process were also focused on preparing the data for analysis. This involved writing up the fieldnotes, transcribing interviews and categorising information obtained through the questionnaires and mind maps. These preparatory activities were in themselves analytic methods because I was starting to interpret the data (Gibbs, 2007). |
| Stage 2 | Initial scanning of data looking for potential themes. | After each data set emerged and I had prepared them for analysis, I scanned them looking for potential themes. To begin with I looked within the data sets and as more data sources emerged I began looking across them. This was an progressive process of creating codes and identifying their analytical focus (Appendix 16 – Biographical data and Appendix 17– emergent themes from interview data). |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Stage 3 | Identifying early themes through open coding. | I worked in and across the data sets, identifying themes through open-coding (Appendix 18 – fieldnotes and Appendix 19 – interviews - Cynthia). I moved through lines of text in fieldnotes, questionnaire responses, reflections and interview transcripts by inserting codes in the margins. This work aimed to both identify themes and counter themes (Hayes, 2000). I paid close attention to what I was reading, using a priori themes (Table 3.4) as reference points to stop me getting lost in the myriad data. I was also mindful, however, that I did not shut myself off to seeing themes emerge which lay outside the focus of a priori themes. To help me do this I created reflexive accounts of what I was doing in the form of memos. |
| Stage 4 | Consolidating early themes into proto-themes. | I used the memos (Appendix 20 – fieldnotes and Appendix 21 – Cynthia's transcript) to catalogue the themes and describe the information they held. By doing this, I both described the codes I was using and identified their analytical purpose (Gibbs, 2007 and Gibbs and Taylor, 2010).The memoing activity acted as a reflective device through which to take stock of the analytic process and consider what was happening and why (Winter, 1989 and Emerson et al, 1995). This reflective activity allowed me to begin identifying potential meanings for the early themes by categorising the codes in proto themes (Appendix 22), which when consolidated started to reveal a loose narrative. |
| Stage 5 | Revisiting the data sources to test themes and reinterpret, where necessary., | At this stage, I began to develop more coherent themes through cross-referencing the proto themes (Appendix 21) and early themes (Appendices 16 and 17). This stage of the analysis was about looking across the data sets for connecting and disconnecting points. It was also about considering how some themes might fit with one another to create new themes. The process involved categorising |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | codes into thematic areas and considering what questions these answered and what further questions they raised (Appendix 23). |
| Stage 6 | Creating distillations of the data sets to consolidate themes and associated meanings. | The distillation process sought to refine the analytical process by ensuring I was looking at, and for, the right relationships in the data which would answer my research questions.<br><br>I started distilling the data sets (Appendix 24) into themes which would form the basis of a critical dialogue between me and my supervisor. My supervisor was able to point out weaknesses and strengths in what I was doing, providing me with guidance on how to transform the data into a coherent narrative. An example of how feedback helped my analysis was when I shared the distillation of the interview data with her. She observed how distilling the interviews as a homogenous whole, meant that the individual voices of the teachers became somewhat lost. Therefore, I revisited the transcripts and distilled each of them as an individual source. Doing this allowed me to categorise themes more clearly and start to identify how they synthesised with other themes which emerged from the other data sources. |
| Stage 7 | Refine the final themes, identifying content for excerpt commentary units. | I recoded the data sets (Fieldnotes - Appendix 25 and Interview transcripts - Appendix 26) one final time in order to consolidate the themes from which I could make claims and draw conclusions. I was reaching saturation point at which working further with the data would have led to nothing new emerging (Denscombe, 2007). At this stage, I was able to construct the form of the final themes, define them and identify the supporting data to give credibility to the claims I was making (Hayes, 2000). |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Stage 8 | Organising final themes into claims and conclusions (constructing the thesis narrative). | As I recoded, I also created the final "integrative memos", which in essence were the first draft of Chapter 5 (Emerson et al, 1995:162). I categorised the different themes which emerged according to what I referred to as meta-themes (Appendix 27). These then went on to act as the key areas of focus in the write-up. Like every other aspect of the analysis, this point in the process was one of refinement and change. During the writing up stage, I revisited themes to ensure they aligned with the concepts informing the study and its analysis. |

Moving in and through the data sets, I adopted a coding process where the codes were based on themes (Gibbs, 2007 and Gibbs and Taylor, 2010). The coding approach was a semi-structed thematic approach using both "concept-driven" and "data-driven" codes (Gibbs, 2007:44-45). Concept-driven codes are a priori themes which act as an interpretative framework for the type of narrative the analyst expects to emerge. In line with Bold (2013), I used the research questions which focused on the operationalisation of the pedagogic process to identify priori themes (see Table 3.4) with which to guide my initial analysis:

*Table 3.4 – Research questions informing a priori themes*

| **Research questions** | **A priori themes** |
|---|---|
| 1b. How do primary school teachers respond when asked construct alternative narratives about their everyday lived experiences as teachers? | a. social dynamics within the group<br>i. interactions between the teachers<br>ii. tensions between the teachers<br>iii. allegiances between the teachers |
| 1c. What influences can be seen in the narratives the teachers construct? | b. other narratives nested within the teachers' narratives<br>i. perceptions of what it is to teach<br>ii. routes into teaching<br>iii. roots in teaching<br>iv. life history moments |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1d. How successful were the narrative pedagogic principles as implemented in encouraging the teachers to construct alternative narratives about their lived experiences? | c. moments of disruption, that is, when conventionally held narratives are contested<br>i. counter narratives challenging notions of the heroic embattled teacher<br>ii. counter narratives challenging notions of teaching as under attack from performative culture(s)<br>d. the emergence of new narratives |

Data-driven codes are posteriori themes which emerge from the analysis, confirming, adding to or challenging the concept-driven codes analysts start out with. This coding approach allowed me to move through the data, constantly comparing and contrasting the emerging themes in order to identify the claims I sought to make (Gibbs, 2007 and Gibbs and Taylor, 2010). This process was a cyclical one, which Bazeley (2013:15) characterises as a "hermeneutic spiral", that is, it involved systematically re-examining the data to avoid missing and/or misinterpreting key themes. When working in and across the data sets, I was mindful that "human perception is selective, and it is so easy to overlook information if we are not actually looking for it." (Hayes, 2000:177).

To aid my analytical interpretation of the data I worked with it systematically asking myself the following questions, which I adapted from work of Emerson et al (1995:146):

- *What exactly are people doing/saying? What are they trying to accomplish?*
- *How, exactly, do they do this? What specific means and/or strategies do they use?*
- *How do members talk about, characterize, and understand what is going on?*
- *What assumptions are they making?*
- *What do I see going on here? What did I learn from these notes?*
- *Why did I include them?*

These questions formed part of a coding approach which moved from the descriptive to the analytic. This process was part of a "reflexive critique", aimed at avoiding taking what I observed at 'face value' thus thinking it was factual (Winter, 1989:44). Asking these

questions as part of the coding process, facilitated a rigorous open-minded reading of the data in a systemic manner to identify and categorise themes (Gibbs, 2007). As Braun and Clarke (2006) point out, ensuring such analytical rigour counters the potential for a thematic analysis to resemble little more than a descriptive account of a series of incidents.

As an interpretative piece of inquiry, I realised that the degree to which my study was accepted as credible depended on how plausible the reader found it (Gusfield, 1990; Murphy and Dingwall, 2007 and Riessman, 1993). I had concerns about how the strengths and weaknesses of my analytical approach would be viewed both by narrative inquirers and those who were not. In particular, I was sensitive to criticisms that a thematic approach was not a true form of narrative analysis because it reduces people's narratives to decontextualised chunks of data, removing the sense of sequence, consequence and emotional experience which give texts a narrative quality (Riessman and Quinney, 2005 and Riessman, 2008). Such claims allude to a structural narrative analysis, that is, exploring linguistic and/or discoursal features to make claims about what the participants' narratives reveal about the aspect of their lived experiences under inquiry (Alleyne, 2015).

As I discuss above, while I was not dismissive of the linguistic, discoursal and emotional features of the teachers' narratives, I was not focusing on them as part of the analysis: I did not seek to learn about the teachers' lives through their narratives. Rather, I aimed to observe the teachers' as they constructed their narratives to ascertain the extent to which the pedagogic process might support people perceive their lived realities from different viewpoints. Therefore, taking a thematic analytical approach was justified as it has long been associated with observational methods seeking to understand what is going on as opposed to understanding participants' inside stories (Alleyne, 2015). Put another way, it was a justifiable approach as I sought to construct a narrative about the pedagogic process.

I was not oblivious to the potential pitfalls the flexibility of a thematic analytical approach presented me. My biggest concern was that working across a range of different data sets would make it difficult for me to identify nuanced similarities and differences, or rather specific synthesised themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). A sense of getting lost in the data and not finding thematic threads to weave into a coherent narrative was a constant source of anxiety for me. Seeking synthesis across a range of data sources made me aware of the benefits and challenges involved in working with different types of data. In the remainder of this section, I consider some of those strengths and weaknesses.

When reflecting on my use of fieldnotes, I was worried they would be viewed as unreliable owing to the subjective nature of the interpretation (Gibbs, 2007). In other words, I had anxieties about questions being raised about whether or not what I claimed happened actually did happen. These concerns were heightened by criticisms that because fieldnotes are written up after the event, observers are prone to misinterpretations (Denscombe, 2007 and Cohen et al, 2007). While I accepted these claims, I chose to take fieldnotes as they were relatively unobtrusive and allowed me to be both observe and facilitate the sessions. To counter criticisms about the verifiability of the fieldnotes, I mobilised different methods, which I discuss presently, to enhance the credibility of the analysis and the resultant claims I made.

I audio recorded the sessions so I could go back and listen to sections where I believed incidents of value occurred. Like the interview transcripts, this allowed me to use the teachers' words in the write-up. Using the teachers' comments, added validity to my claims as they authenticated my analytical points (Gusfield, 1990; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Denscombe, 2007 and Cohen et al, 2007). Adapting the work of (Emerson et al 1995:182), I used the teachers' words as part of "excerpt-commentary units" (see Table 3.5), an approach which takes excerpts from fieldnotes and weaves them together with analytic commentaries to create coherent commentaries.

*Table 3.5: Excerpt commentary units*

| Analytic point | Focuses attention |
|---|---|
| Orientating information | Articulates what the event is |
| Excerpt | Uses a descriptive account to give credence to the analytical account |
| Analytic commentary | Develops the ideas in the excerpt by commenting on them further. |

While audio recording the sessions was valuable, the method was not without its limitations. The coverage of the mics in the recording devices was limited and would only pick up conversations at a relatively close range. This limited coverage meant that potentially I missed conversations, and/or remarks, which may have proved useful sources of data. On reflection, videoing the sessions could have picked up on things I missed. Using video could have captured a range of paralinguistic features such as gestures and body language,

representing non-verbal forms of communication. Where I carry out similar studies in the future, and providing I obtain ethical clearance, I will consider video recording sessions to capture a range of verbal and non-verbal communications.

To gain an inside view of the study, that is, from the teachers' perspectives, I used participant interviews, post-session feedback questionnaires, biographical data questionnaires, the teachers' final narratives and mind maps. As I discuss above, I used these methods to compare with my own perceptions of what was happening: they provided inside (the teachers') and outside (mine) perspectives.

The semi-structured interviews allowed me a degree of flexibility to develop lines of enquiry which I had not considered prior to the interviews (Denscombe, 2007). In each of the interviews this gave the scope to personalise the interviews to focus on the individual teachers' experiences. However, when it came to analysing this data, a synthesising the themes to create a coherent narrative posed a challenge. In short, there were quite a few divergent threads to work with because I had taken a less structured approach. One way I approached this issue was through the use of the distillations (see Table 3.2), which provided opportunities to reflect on the different narrative threads emerging from the analysis of all the data sets. I was then in a position to identify where there were thematic points of convergence and divergence across the sets.

Another weakness of the interviews was the degree of responsiveness from some of the participants and what they told me, in terms of content. I had concerns some of the teachers may have been wary of talking to me, which was an impression Sarah gave me. I was also worried that some of the teachers told me what they thought I wanted to hear. It did transpire in the interviews that some of the teachers wanted to help me by making sure I got what I needed. During the analysis, I found it helpful to compare what I was told in the interviews about particular incidents with my own observations of them. This highlighted any similarities and differences between my accounts of what had happened and the teachers'. Where there were differences, it provided me with opportunities to speculate as to why there were variances.

The post-session feedback questionnaires were invaluable in terms of generating data which provided me with insights into the teachers' experiences and also as a way of allowing them to have a say in how the study progressed. A strength of the method was the anonymity the questionnaires offered the participants in feeding back what they liked, and did not like, about

the sessions. In the early stages this identified potential issues with the social dynamics in the group, which was a major theme across the data sets. Another strength was the relative immediacy the questionnaires offered in terms of providing feedback. For the first two sessions, the teachers used them to comment quite soon after the sessions. However, as the study progressed, the amount of feedback I received lessened. Some of the participants provided feedback for several sessions at the end of the study.

When considering the biographical-data questionnaire, the main strength it offered was the insights it provided into the teachers' routes into teaching and their beliefs about what it was to teach. The data provided me with a sense of who the teachers were becoming as people and how they might respond to the study. I was mindful, however, not to view this information as absolute, that is, a definitive representation of the teachers' individual identities.

Out of all the methods, the mind maps generated the least amount of data in terms of quantity and insights into the value of the pedagogic process. The strength of the mind maps was in their functionality as a tool through which the teachers could externalise their thoughts as part of activities. In one incident, which I discuss in Chapter 5: page 117 the mind maps provided evidence of how influential generational entry points into the profession could be in terms of shaping notions of what a teachers' role should be. A corollary of this was that certain narratives were perceived to be sacred and beyond challenging. One such narrative was the deprofessionalisation of teaching at the hands of technocratic external auditing bodies; bodies which did not exist when some of the teachers began their careers.

Analysing the teachers' final narratives revealed much about the extent to which the study led to the construction of alternative narratives. From this I was able to speculate how successfully the aim of the study had been met. As I discuss in Chapter 5, the teachers mostly rejected the opportunities to create alternative narratives; instead reinforcing stoical narratives about embattled, humanistic teachers. When cross-referenced with other data sets, I was able to make assertions about how social dynamics, routes into teaching and the effect of the inquiry space influenced the teachers' reluctance to challenge the dominant narratives representing their lived experiences.

In the section which follows, I move on to consider the methodological rationale for working with forward-looking narratives as a way in which to hypothesise what might happen were the study mobilised in a Northern Irish context.

## Forward Looking Narratives as Part of the Reflective Analysis

The motivations for this inquiry are partly located in my autobiographical attempts to understand my own sense of becoming as an Northern Irish exile. This study was not an attempt at facilitating a "so-called return to roots but a coming-to-terms with [my] routes." (Hall, 1996:4). Northern Ireland is a source of contradiction and complexity for me. I have no desire to return there, yet there are familiar cultural markers I miss: the dialectal peculiarities of a vernacular I seldom hear and the guarded compassion of the people.

In keeping with this personal motivation, this section speculates what might happen were I to conduct my study in a Northern Irish cross-community context. I have created two imaginative forward-looking narratives: one imagining what might happen were the pedagogic principles mobilised without the revisions based on the findings of this study; and, the other speculating what could happen if the pedagogic principles were operationalised with the revisions being made. The conceptual underpinning of the approach I have taken is adapted from work on of Maxwell (2013:68) on thought experiments, who discusses them as a way to:

> "draw on both theory and experience to answer "what if" questions, and to explore the logical implications of your models, assumptions, and expectations of the things you plan to study. They can both generate new theoretical models and insights, and test your current theory for problems; in fact, all theory building involves thought experiments to some extent. They encourage creativity and a sense of discovery, and can help you to make explicit the experiential knowledge that you already possess."

Taking such an approach provides me with an opportunity to understand "experience through imaginative representation." (Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska, 1999:4) and is in keeping with the exploratory ethos underpinning my study and subsequent write-up.

The main protagonist in both narratives is Davey, an imagined participant in both inquiries. He is a composite character based on my own autobiographical memories of people I know and people I knew. The dialogues in each narrative is based on things I imagine those people I know, and knew, might say. I have also drawn on things the teachers said and alluded to during the study to inform Davey's reflections. None of the dialogue, however, is directly lifted word-for-word from the transcripts or fieldnotes.

## Providing a rationale for the imagined stories

The past looms large in "our commemoration-heavy culture" in Northern Ireland (Magennis, 2015:354). It is often an imagined past steeped in tales of realities that possibly never were or might have been. As Magennis (2015), citing abridged lines from 'Three Plays for Ireland' (Parker, 1989), contests "they forget nothing in this country, not ever [. . .] It's far worse than that. They misremember everything." Seemingly timeless typical narratives act as folk psychologies ensuring particular cultural canons endure. The Northern Irish Assembly elections on March 2017[21] are a testimony to the "bogus historical-causal entailment" (Bruner, 1991:19) which ensures old sectarian enmities are canonised owing to a sense of temporal continuity. Although I left Northern Ireland in 1999, and have no desire to return, I cannot leave it, or rather it will not leave me. My past as a so-called Child of the Troubles (Holliday, 1997), is ever present. It acts as an interpretative framework, intensifying feelings of existential and geographical exile. I often reflect that I am cultural nomad betwixt and between worlds that I never truly belong to. I am an Outsider, even at 'home', the place I was born, yet do not want to return to.

In creating the imagined narratives for this study, I worked with literature providing alternative perspectives of themes of sectarianism. They counter the dominant narratives representing Northern Irish life from male perspectives, which often tend to accentuate the violence of Troubles and their legacy. I drew on sociological sources: a discussion of how human rights discourses sustain sectarian division (Curtis, 2015) and a paper sharing young mothers' accounts of how they navigate the geosocial symbolically rich landscapes of their everyday lives in interface areas[22] (Smyth and McKnight, 2013). I also worked with literary anthologies made up of people's mundane, tragic, joyous and trivial everyday experiences (Parker, 1994 and Holiday, 1997) and books telling women's stories of the day-to-day lived realties if life during the Troubles in Derry-Londonderry (Campbell, 2016). Another literary source I worked with, and was one which had personal resonance, was Lapsed Protestant by Glenn Patterson (2006). It is an autobiographical "desire to both open up and complicate episodes from Northern Irish history" by reimagining Protestant Northern Irish male identity (Magennis, 2015:349). This work was important because it represented a counter narrative challenging dominant narratives of Protestantism from the perspective of a Protestant. Like

[21] The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) [28 seats] and Sinn Fein [27 seats] took the lion's share of votes in the elections. Both parties represent mainstream extremes and the outcomes of the election suggested a step back in a reconciliatory sense.

[22] Interface areas are found in cities such as Belfast were geographical features such as a roundabout or a road mark boundary lines between one cultural and another.

me, Patterson has sought to reconcile the tensions between, what I will call Left of Centre viewpoints, with growing up in a world often represented as very much on the Right of the ideological divide. This book struck a very personal chord with me, providing a sense of autobiographical connection with the study.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed how the methodological choices I made position this study in and across participatory narrative approaches. Working with participatory narrative approaches provided me with a degree of methodological flexibility needed for an exploratory study of this nature. However, as I point out early in this chapter, this study was not a typical narrative inquiry. The focus was on developing a disruptive pedagogic approach as a form of pedagogic inquiry, aimed at prompting people to explore their life histories from different perspectives. This was with a view to supporting people understand the role culture plays in shaping their personal narratives.

A key concern of this study was my ethical responsibilities to the teachers given my status as an outsider with inside knowledge of aspects of the teachers' life histories. I aimed to cause emotional discomfort to prompt the telling of alternative stories. While I saw this as necessary, I was mindful not to cause lasting distress to the teachers. To manage this potential source of ethical tension, I adopted a reflexive position which made me "alert not only to issues related to knowledge creation but also ethical issues in research," (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004:277). I achieved this through feedback measures I put in place for the teachers and also through discussions with critical friends like Gwen and my supervisor.

In the following chapter I consider the implementation of the pedagogic principle of narrative disruption to facilitate the construction of alternative personal narratives.

# Chapter 4: Operationalising the Pedagogic Principles

This chapter discusses the operationalisation of the pedagogic principle of narrative disruption as part of an inquiry-informed process prompting teachers to construct alternative narratives about their lived experiences. I begin by articulating my understanding of learning in the context of narrative pedagogy in order to clarify the educational aims of the study. I then highlight how I have drawn on theoretical and empirical sources, discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, to conceptualise the pedagogic process. As part of this discussion, I provide a detailed account of how I mobilised the five weekly two-hour sessions the teachers attended. Following this, I rationalise my use of trigger resources and task-based approaches to prompt moments of disruption filled with interrogative dialogue. The conclusion draws together the main themes in this chapter to rationalise the operational approach I took.

## Learning and its relationship to narrative pedagogy

My conceptualisation of learning is underpinned by theoretical tenets associated with constructivist paradigms. Constructivist theories of learning posit that individuals construct knowledge through the accommodation and assimilation of new knowledge, which when reconciled with prior knowledge, shapes cognitive structures influencing future learning (Moon, 2004). The learning process, which flows from a constructivist understand of learning, is learner-centred and the knowledge people create is made through interactions with other people, and/or residual artefacts of people's learning (Laurillard, 1993; Prosser and Trigwell, 1999 and Moon, 2004). Learning from this perspective is social, that is, how meaning is made is dependent upon the mediating effects of who we are with, where we are located and at what point in time we are there.

My role in the inquiry was that of a facilitator, prompting the teachers to change their conceptions of their lived experiences through internal and shared critical dialogues. This view of the teacher as mediator aligns with learner-centred notions of the teacher/facilitator as someone guiding discovery as opposed to someone telling learners what to think (see Bruner, 1960 and Prosser and Trigwell, 1999). I provided the teachers with opportunities "to acquire knowledge of someone else's way of experiencing the world" (Laurillard, 1993:24). I aimed to mediate moments of cognitive and affective dissonance to facilitate dialogic encounters through which the teachers "critically engage[d] with their life histories and

place[d] these lived stories and experiences within broader contexts" (Goodson and Gill, 2014:3). These moments of dissonance were part of a pedagogic strategy aimed at provoking external variations in experience needed for new learning to occur (Moon, 2004). Through these moments of variation, the teachers were asked to accommodate emerging knowledge with prior knowledge they had of their lived experiences. This moment of variation is synonymous with a the notion of narrative disruption because it prompts individuals to repair epistemological breaches caused by encounters with new knowledge.

The pedagogic principle of narrative disruption facilitates narrative learning which is "a process in constant flux […] with many events influencing and modifying each other simultaneously" (Moon, 2004:11). Learning is a messy social process in which "the person and the world cannot be seen as separate but as existing in a dynamic relationship" (Moon, 2004:20). Narrative learning places the personal lived experiences of learners at the heart of meaning making activities, located in social, cultural and historical contexts (Goodson et al, 2010). The lived experiences of individuals are not bracketed off as part of decontextualized learning experiences, prescriptively pursuing the attainment of bankable learning outcomes as the end goal. Learning is one full of possibilities; possibilities to fail, succeed and see lived experiences differently.

## Mobilising the Pedagogic Principles

Between Wednesday 10th September and Wednesday 8th October, I facilitated five two-hour sessions, which I outline in Table 4.1. These sessions were task-based, with an emphasis placed the teachers responding dialogically to the trigger resources. The triggers aimed to prompt the teachers share their everyday experiences in narrative forms, such as stories and anecdotes (I discuss the trigger resources in more detail below). I entered the inquiry space with the assumption that while initially the teachers may have been happy to work on tasks at home, it was probable their enthusiasm would wane given their other commitments. Therefore, drawing on the experiences of Chandler (2012), who co-researched with young people in a social work context, and my own experiences on the pilot (see Chapter 3: page 46), I did not set the teachers any work to do outside of the sessions.

For each session, I created a plan (Appendix 28), as I would in a teaching or academic development context. However, I fully expected I would have to accommodate the residual traces of the teachers' working days. Therefore, I was also prepared to be flexible in terms of what we did in the sessions. To support the teachers throughout the inquiry and beyond, I

created a resource site (Appendix 29), which contained all the session resources and links to other sites the teachers may have found useful for their teaching.

*Table 4.1: Session schedule and outline*

| Stage | Activity | Location | Date | Duration |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | • Discussing the aims of the study and participant involvement.<br>• Small group activity: Exploring the narrative process: thinking about the nature of narratives and what narratives are used to represent teachers' lives. | Midview | Wed 10th Sept 2014 | 1530-1730<br>2 hours |
| | Post Session 1: the teachers were asked to complete a three-question online evaluation questionnaire. | | | |
| 2. | • Considering cultural myths about teachers and how, if at all, these resonate with personal perceptions of what it is to teach and be taught.<br>• Small group activity: Authoring narratives based on practice to share and discuss.<br>• Listening to other participants' narratives, sharing interpretations and offering alternative endings. | Midview | Wed 17th Sept 2014 | 1530-1730<br>2 hours |
| | After Session 2: the teachers were asked to complete a three-question online evaluation questionnaire. | | | |
| 3. | • Preparing final narratives: Storyboarding and deciding on resources<br>• Small group activity: providing critical feedback on other participants' narrative designs | Midview | Wed 24th Sept 2014 | 1530-1730<br>2 hours |
| | After Session 3: the teachers were asked to complete a three-question online evaluation questionnaire. | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. | • An introduction to the digital storytelling app, Book Creator[23].<br>• Starting to create the final narratives using Book Creator. | Midview | Wed 1st October 2014 | 1530-1730<br>2 hours |
| | After Session 4: the teachers were asked to complete a three-question online evaluation questionnaire. | | | |
| 5. | • Finishing the final narratives using Book Creator<br>• Sharing final narratives with the group and using them as triggers to explore intentions behind their construction.<br>• Discuss general participation as a member of the inquiry group. | Midview | Wed 8th October 2014 | 1530-1730<br>2 hours |
| | After Session 5: the teachers were asked to complete a three-question online evaluation questionnaire. | | | |

Overall, the sessions were designed to scaffold the teachers' narrative construction activities, which is an approach proposed by proponents of using digital tools to encourage narrative processes (Hartley and McWilliam, 2009 and Lambert, 2010). The dialogic nature of the sessions provided opportunities to explore how personal narratives within the group where intertextually linked as part of a "broader socio-historical framework." (Goodson, 2008:27). Throughout the study, the teachers connected experiences they shared through discussions about incidents in the School and happenings outside them, such as policy changes deemed to represent watershed moments when their practices changed.

By fostering a critically dialogic space, the teachers were given opportunities not only to share narratives but also to consider why they constructed them as they did: they both recounted and listened. In Table 4.2, I outline how I achieved this procedurally.

*Table 4.2 – the narrative creation procedure*

| Session | Activity | Rationale |
|---|---|---|

[23] I used Book Creator www.bookcreator.com, an iPad app, as it was straightforward to use and came recommended by a colleague who had used it with children.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Discussing what makes a narrative, the types of narratives the teachers have experience of and why people share them | This was an orientating activity which was aimed at activating the teachers' schematic knowledge of narrative types and purposes. Through this activity, I sought to set the scene and break the ice. The discussion activity provided me with an opportunity to observe how the group worked together, particularly how the social dynamic within the group functioned. I was able to get a sense of who the strong voices were and to gauge potential alliances and tensions. |
| | Viewing the model narrative, A Ghostly Encounter | This activity modelled the type of final narrative I wanted the teachers to produce. It was a trigger resource which prompted the teachers to resolve the ending. The notion of an ending was in line with the concept of resolution, which Todorov discusses as part of his narrative structure (see Table 4.3). Through the discussions which emerged from this activity, the group shared their beliefs about what the role of a teacher ought to be and why. |
| 2. | Engaging with cultural myths about teachers | I used the journalistic triggers (see Table 4.4) to move the teachers on to thinking about conventional narratives about teachers and how these resonated with their own perceptions. The aim was to prompt the teachers to consider their own positions and how these narratives connected with their own life histories. Through the discussions, I sought to foster interactions which prompted the teachers to consider how their actions were located within particular temporal and structural conditions which constrained and |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | enabled them to construct certain types of narratives about their lived experiences (Goodson, et al, 2010). |
| | Sharing their own narratives | After exploring dominant narratives, I shifted the focus to the teachers' personal narratives. I did this to provide them with time to start reflecting on their own lived experiences and to become comfortable sharing them within the small groups, and the larger group. I sought to create a supportive environment where the teachers could become comfortable sharing their personal narratives. I was creating a community of sharing and interpretation, a key participatory feature of a narrative pedagogy (Diekelmann, 2001; Brown et al, 2008; Gazarian, 2010 and Crow and Bailey, 2015). |
| 3. | Listening to other teachers narratives | In session three, I started to focus the teachers on their final narratives. They listened to the narratives of other teachers from outside the group to prompt further thinking about incidents which could be developed into personal narratives. This session represented the development of the inquiry space into a place where the teachers could feel more comfortable sharing and critical reflecting on their narratives. |
| 4. | Introducing the technology | Following the Seven-Steps Model of Digital Storytelling outlined by Lambert (2010), I worked with teachers to transform their narratives into digital artefacts. The session was more in line with an expository mode of delivery and facilitation, than the discussion- |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | based session in weeks one to three and week five. I took such an approach as I was modelling how to use the Book Creator software. This included creating the digital book; selecting and adding images to it; adding voice overs and special effects. After modelling different aspects of the creation process, I gave the teachers time to try what I had shown them by themselves. I worked with individuals in a one-to-one capacity providing guidance which was specific to their needs. |
| 5. | Sharing the final narratives | The session began with an opportunity for the teachers to finish creating their narratives. I sought to create an environment where through dialogue the teachers could share reasons for their narrative choices, reflect on how the inquiry made them feel and to provide each other with feedback on their final narratives.<br><br>This session represented the fulfilment of a key principle of a narrative pedagogy, that is, a moment when the teachers and I connected as an "egalitarian and cooperative" group (Brown et al, 2008:283). The space was one which the teachers had control over through the presentation of their narratives and the discussions they chose to have around them. I was there to prompt particular lines of thought through my questioning. |

## Creating a Space to Share Personal Narratives

In Chapter 2, I discuss how I drew on different literature sources to conceptualise a disruptive pedagogic process aimed at prompting the teachers to consider constructing alternative narratives about their everyday experiences. The interrogative space I created sought to act as "an 'empty space', a Lichtung or clearing, as Heidegger describes it, which becomes a vessel in which meaning can take shape." (Reason and Hawkins, 1988:81). I envisaged the inquiry space being a clearing where the teachers could gaze upon their lived realties and re-narrativise aspects of them they felt compelled to. To do this, I drew on a range of theoretical and empirical literatures, which I now discuss in relation to the operationalisation of the study.

Considering how to put the knowledge I took from the literature in Chapter 2 into practice, provided me with concerns. My biggest concern was a lack of teacher engagement. I worried the study would be seen by the teachers as another performative exercise aimed to get them act like reflective practitioners. I was mindful that reflective activities perceived to be part of a performative policy aimed at gauging teachers' competency can lead to strategic and anodyne responses (Findlay, 2008 and Wallace, 2010). In Chapter 5, I illustrate how, to a degree, my anxieties were justified as the teachers vociferously contested the claims made in one of the journalistic trigger articles about how to become a reflective practitioner (Table 4.4). My own reservations about the teachers lack of engagement was heightened by my own anxieties about being perceived as a meddling outsider. To counter any potential issues with regards to my position and the purpose of the study, I repeatedly stated I was not scrutinising the teachers. I hoped to allay any fears the teachers may have had that they were being evaluated or that I wanted to mould them into some idealised characterisation of a reflective teacher. Ironically, by doing this I was confident I could increase the possibilities of critical reflection (Tripp, 2012).

Another of my concerns was that the teachers would see no worth in the study beyond learning how to use the iPad. Past experiences, as a teacher and academic developer, had highlighted the potential of technologies to distract from the creation of personal narratives because participants became preoccupied with mastering the technology (Kearney, 2011 and Jenkins, 2011). To address these concerns, I left working with the iPads until Sessions 4 and 5. I also emphasised my dual intentions: to support the teachers consider constructing alternative narratives and to ensure they finished the inquiry with ideas on how to facilitate similar approaches in their teaching.

When conceptualising the operationalisation of the study, I wanted to avoid it appearing as adhering prescriptively to a scheduled plan. I was also mindful that activities seen as being about 'storytelling' can potentially carry the connotation of being a form of entertainment. Therefore, I aimed to ensure the teachers worked with the theories of representation, narrative and reflexivity as interpretative lenses through which to critique their narratives. To support me do this, I drew on critical incident technique approaches conceptualised by educational researcher, David Tripp (2012). Through Tripp's critical incident techniques, teachers problematised moments of practice, scrutinising them through a critical lens in an effort to transform their practices going forward. However, I worried some of the teachers might have seen a theory-led approach as being too academic, accentuating the sense of a theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge as binary. So, I took an approach which discussed general events in the teachers' lives to contextualise theories of representation, narrative and reflexivity. Put another way, I brought theory in the back door after exploring the teachers' lived experiences.

The moment of problematisation in the critical incident technique mirrors the disruptive moment of dilemma in a narrative, which causes the protagonist(s) to seek a resolution and ending. To covertly accommodate an element of theoretical work, I loosely mapped the concept of the critical incident technique, as discussed by Griffin (2003)[24] to Todorov's Narrative Structure (cited in Lacey, 2002:29) [See Table 4.3]. I chose this particular conceptualisation of a narrative structure because it is represented in the Story Mountain resource (Appendix 30). This is a familiar tool in primary teaching used to support pupils construct narratives. Using the Story Mountain, allowed me to ground some of what I did in the teachers' practices. I introduced the Story Mountain in Session 2 and encouraged the teachers to use it throughout the study.

*Table 4.3: Mapping the critical incident approach to Todorov's narrative structure*

| | **Critical incident approach** | **Narrative structure** |
|---|---|---|
| **Part 1: INCIDENT** | **What:** rich concrete facts. | **The Beginning**: a state of equilibrium at the outset. Setting the scene, introducing characters and locations. |

[24] I drew on the work of Griffin (2003), which is based on the work of Tripp (2012) as it makes explicit reference the role of emotion, which is key element in any narrative form.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Emotion**: what emotions were evoked. | **The Build-Up**: the manifestation of disruption, which builds to unsettle the equilibrium created at the outset of the narrative. |
| | **Why**: explanation of the incident from the perspective of each participant; use 'I' for each participant's explanation. | |
| **Part II: CRITICAL INCIDENT** | **Classification**: a list of aspects of teaching/learning/schooling illustrated by the incident; the most compelling aspect is the focus for the general meaning component. | **The Problem or Dilemma**: a recognition that there has been a disruptive happening and a discussion of the unsettling moment. |
| | **General meaning**: two to three paragraphs about the selected Classification topic. There is an explicit connection of theory to the incident. Viewing the incident through a theoretical lens makes the incident critical. | **The Resolution**: an attempt to repair the disruption by indicating how the breach in narrative continuity is repaired. |
| | **Position**: summary of beliefs; 'As an educator, I believe/value …' | **The Ending**: a reinstatement of the equilibrium. |
| | **Actions:** related to position, observable actions outlined; 'As an educator, I will …' | |

## Using trigger resources to prompt the construction of alternative narratives

Mapping the concepts of the critical incident technique and the narrative structure provided an accessible model. However, it did not guarantee the teachers would find narratives to construct. Everyday experiences may be full of stories to tell, but not everyone knows how to, or wants to, tell them. Often, people require prompts, or triggers, to reconnect with the memory of a moment so a narrative might be created (Griffin, 2003 and Wallace, 2010). Locating the moment is something akin to the concept of the "punctum"; a moment of

emotional wounding when on viewing an image some small detail triggers an autobiographical connection with it (Barthes, 1982). To help the teachers identify a moment they could turn into a narrative, I developed a series of triggers aimed at connecting with the teachers' emotional experiences of practice. Basing the triggers on other teachers' accounts of practice provided a familiar context the group were likely to recognise (Haw and Hadfield, 2011).

From the outset, I aimed to "keep the trigger[s] simple, short and target[ed] on the key issues." (Haw and Hadfield, 2011:84). I also wanted the triggers to be provocative, that is, to prompt moments of disruption which could be exploited to explore alternative narratives. To identify content with which to produce the triggers, I worked with literature discussing dominant representations of teachers' lives: examples of 'cultural myths' (Britzman, 1991) and 'dominant discourses about the 'Good Teacher' (Moore, 2004). Table 4.4 illustrates how I worked with both sources to identify a series of journalistic trigger resources. Working explicitly with Britzman and Moore's work, would have been too theoretical, leading to disengagement. The journalistic articles[25] were topical and offered more universal perceptions of the themes I wanted the triggers to communicate as a conversational pivots.

*Table 4.4: Identifying journalistic trigger resources*

| Britzman - Cultural Myths | Moore – The Good Teacher | Trigger resources | Article[26] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teachers are self-made. | Made in Heaven – charismatic subjects | The charismatic teacher – the teacher as saviour | How Educating Yorkshire helped me find my voice |
| Everything depends on the teacher | | The teacher is responsible for everything | Don't blame teachers when it's parents who are failing |
| | The Appeal of Reason – reflective practitioner | The teacher as reflective practitioner | Six Steps to Master Teaching: Becoming a Reflective Practitioner |

[25] By journalistic articles, I am referring to online newspaper and magazine articles.
[26] The journalistic triggers can be accessed here http://bit.ly/CJJDavisEdD

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| The teacher as expert | The Training Discourse – competent craftsperson | The teacher as expert | Scandal of the untrained teachers: Thousands don't have degrees in the subjects they teach |

In addition to the journalistic triggers, I used a range of video and audio resources to stimulate reflection and discussion. I developed a video trigger (A Ghostly Encounter[27]) from my own experiences as a teacher and audio triggers[28] from the experiences of ITE tutors I worked with (see Table 4.5). In both instances, the triggers sought to connect the teachers to their own experiences through potentially familiar happenings in the lives of others. I sought to use these resources to pull together different elements of the teachers' fragmented memories to create a coherent narrative (Haw and Hadfield, 2011).

*Table 4.5: Audio triggers created from ITE Tutors' anecdotes*

| Anecdote | Synopsis |
|---|---|
| Hawk Man | The teacher was teaching her class when she looked out the window and noticed a man in the playground, holding out his arm. When she looked further, she noticed that the man had a hawk, which he was beckoning out of a tree. When the hawk landed on his arm, the man disappeared out of the playground through a hole in a hedge. |
| The Teaching Assistant and the Lawnmower Incident | The teacher in this triggers recalls how a teaching assistant (TA) she was supposed to be working with was nowhere to be seen. The teacher was wondering where the TA was, when she noticed outside in the fields there was a ride-on lawnmower towing a trailer full of pupils. She realised that it was her TA driving the lawnmower and trailer across the field. The TA was not even supposed to be working with the children in the trailer. |
| The Wasps' Nest | In this anecdote, the teacher tells how a child she was not supposed to be teaching brought a wasps' nest into her |

[27] A Ghostly Encounter can be accessed here http://bit.ly/CJJDavisEdD
[28] The audio triggers can be accessed here http://bit.ly/CJJDavisEdD

| | |
|---|---|
| | class for dissection. This was not a planned activity and led to a scheduled Maths lesson being jettisoned. The lesson then became a literacy lesson. The teacher discusses the benefits and challenges of her deviation from the curriculum as part of her anecdote. |

The triggers were designed to be around three minutes long because this is the optimum time which guards against participants going into audience mode and becoming frustrated at not being able to talk about their reactions to the content (Haw and Hadfield, 2011). I used the ITE tutors' anecdotes as they inhabited similar professional worlds to those of the teachers in the study. I was concerned, however, the ITE tutors' anecdotes would cause a fug of nostalgia to descend on the inquiry space. As I discuss in Chapter 5, this was something I was unable to avoid.

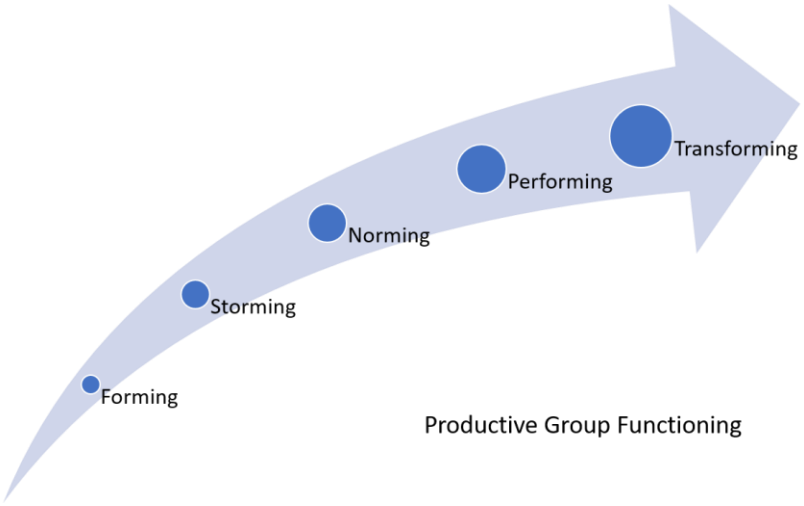
In addition to the journalistic, video and audio triggers, I created a series of resources to support the teachers consider how they would construct their narratives. Working with the 'writing exercises' proposed by Hunt and Sampson (2006) at the end of selected chapters in their book, I created a list of potential narrative types the teachers could use (Appendix 31). I also created a list of teachers and pupils from works of fiction to prompt the teachers to consider potential characters (Appendix 32). Fictitious sources can often connect participants with themes quicker than 'academic' sources, such as text books because they are current and familiar in an everyday sense (Brown et al, 2008). However, I was also aware that often the degree to which we connect with fictitious works is dependent on our cultural awareness of them. Therefore, I created lists which had weblinks to sites explaining who these characters were.

## Managing the social dynamic within the group

Working with a group of teachers I knew, and who knew each other, posed me some ethical responsibilities, which I highlight in Chapter 3. Given I was seeking to cause a degree of emotional disruption, I fully expected there to be moments of tension. I hoped, however, that out of this tension, there would emerge alternative narratives as the teachers considered different points of view. In her counter storytelling study, Bell (2010) refers to the 'small group dynamics' model proposed by Tuckman and Jensen (1977) to represent the transition from disruption to transformation. While I saw the model as too tidy, a point Bell (2010) makes when highlighting how groups can stall at any given point, I did find the

transformational concept a useful one. It helped me to make sense of what was happening in the group in terms of the dynamic and how to provision for any changes as part of the activities I facilitated. For example, when they were storming or norming, I held back and did not push for too much disruption.

*Figure 4.1: Small group dynamics*




## Overview and Discussion of Session Focus

In the following section, I provide an overview of each of the five sessions I facilitated. Where applicable, I relate procedural elements to theoretical and empirical sources I worked with in Chapter 2 and the methodological literature I worked with in Chapter 3. I loosely based the study schedule on the 'Seven Steps of Digital Storytelling' approach of Lambert (2010), which I summarise in Table 4.6. In the table I identify how I mapped the Seven Steps approach to the sessions.

*Table 4.6: Mapping to the Seven Steps model of Digital Storytelling*

| Step | Purpose | Mapped to session |
|---|---|---|
| Step 1 – Owning your insights | Prompting the teachers to start thinking about the focus of their personal narratives. | 1 |
| Step 2 – Owning your emotions | Supporting the teachers to consider the emotional resonance of their narratives and how they would communicate these. | 2 and 3 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Step 3 – Finding the moment | Finding a moment the teachers could use to communicate the meaning and emotional resonance of their narratives. | 2 and 3 |
| Step 4 – Seeing your story | To provide the teachers with opportunities to consider how they would visually represent aspects of their narratives. | 4 |
| Step 5 – Hearing your story | Supporting the teachers to create voiceovers and decide on extra audio effects such as soundtracks. | 4 |
| Step 6 – Assembling your story | Helping the teachers assemble the different multimodal components of their narratives. | 4 and 5 |
| Step 7 – Sharing your story | The teachers shared their narratives, giving reasons why they chose to construct their narratives as they did and who they were aimed at. | 5 |

### Session 1

At the beginning of the session, I aimed to provide the teachers with an opportunity to familiarise themselves with my intentions and to also discuss their own expectations. I invited them to seek clarification about any aspect of the study they were uncertain of. I viewed the initial part of Session 1 as an orientation activity.

During the first activity, the teachers worked in groups on tasks focused on eliciting their perceptions of what a story was, why people told stories and what made a good story. The teachers represented their ideas on mind maps (Appendix 11(1a)), while I observed and made fieldnotes for data generation purposes and also to prompt further discussions. I saw this activity as one which set the scene for the rest of the sessions, promoting a dialogic approach. I drew on literature discussing the creation of story circles as safe spaces where people can share and question lived experiences (Hartley and McWilliam, 2009 and Lambert, 2010).

For the second activity, I sought to introduce the notion of an unresolved ending as a prompt with which to construct an alternative narrative. This was an approach I used with the

teachers to aid them when considering how they would construct their final narratives. I wanted them to reflect on an incident from their lives they were not happy with in terms of how it ended and to write an alternative ending for it. I did this because I anticipated they would find it difficult simply thinking of a narrative when asked to do so. As a trigger resource, I created A Ghostly Encounter[29]; a narrative about a teacher being visited by his ghostly self, who admonished him for not dealing appropriately with a humiliating incident earlier in the day. The idea for the ghost story was taken from Hunt and Sampson (2006), who propose it as a way of constructing narratives in different voices.

The session was concluded with the teachers sharing their alternative endings and explaining why they chose those endings. I clarified that I wanted the teachers do something similar, that was, finding an unresolved incident which they could use as a moment to turn into a personal narrative (Griffin, 2003). I also highlighted how we would be creating narratives and sharing our reasons for doing so in an effort to understand how our lived experiences shaped our personal accounts of everyday life (Wallace, 2010).

In addition to ascertaining the teachers' expectations, the session also provided an opportunity to introduce the teachers to the notion of narrative disruption. I did so to make the teachers aware that they may find some of the activities discomforting and reassure them I would not make them do anything they did not want to do. I did not make explicit reference to the pedagogy of discomfort (Boler, 1999 and Zembylas, 2015). However, I explained that the study was one which sought to make the teachers question why they perceived themselves to be the teachers they were. I emphasised this disruptive process had the potential to cause emotional dissonance. However, I stressed to the teachers it was not my intention to cause them distress and reinforced they had the opportunity to shape the trajectory of the study.

### Session 2

In Session 2, I introduced the teachers to the concept of dominant narratives acting as folk theories communicating culture's canonical versions of reality (Bruner, 1990, Holland et al, 2001 and Gee, 2014). I did this using the journalistic trigger materials I discuss above (see Table 4.4). I used the resources to prompt the teachers to consider the extent to which these narratives acted as scripts for their own personal narratives as teachers (Goodson, 2013). From there, I sought to facilitate interrogative dialogues prompting the teachers to question

[29] A Ghostly Encounter can be accessed here http://bit.ly/CJJDavisEdD

how such narratives came to exist, what work they did in positioning people in terms of power and privilege and the extent to which they enabled and constrained people's abilities to create the narratives they wanted to. I drew on the work of Bell (2010) who used similar approaches when asking people to begin considering how some dominant narratives of race sustained forms of social injustice. In her study, Bell (2010) wanted the participants to consider how the narratives of powerful social groups forced the narratives of more marginalised social groups to be concealed, or labelled stories of resistance.

I also used this part of the session to prompt the teachers to think about the types of narratives people constructed about teachers and why. I asked the teachers to consider how, where we are, when we are there and who we are with influences the narratives we construct. From this discussion, I wanted the participants to reflect on the narratives teachers shared in secret and those they held to be sacred (Connelly and Clandinin, 1995). I aimed to generate discussions around the nature of social dynamics within groups and how sometimes a "discourse of neutrality" (Zembylas, 2005:940) emerges which convinces people it is better to say nothing and carry on as normal. I hoped the teachers would reflect on their own relationships with people inside and outside Midview and how these relationships influenced their narratives.

After discussing the notion of dominant narratives in relation to the journalistic triggers (see Table 4.4), the teachers worked on their own narratives. They were asked to think about unresolved incidents form their teaching careers, that is, incidents which ended in ways they were not overly happy with. I then invited the teachers to share their narratives and suggest alternative endings for them. I rationalised that this sharing activity would start to develop a sense of trust within the group as well as establish a sense of narrative etiquette (Reason and Hawkins, 1988, Lambert, 2010 and Bell, 2010). The session was structured to ease the participants into sharing narratives they had significant emotional attachments to (Wallace, 2010).

### Session 3

The aim of Session 3 was to move the teachers to a point where they were able to identify an incident they could turn into a narrative. I prompted the teachers to share moments and to support each other in considering how their narrative might be reinterpreted from other perspectives, for example, an incident with a pupil from the viewpoint of the pupil. To help the teachers find moments they could turn into narratives, I used a series of audio triggers[30]

[30] The audio triggers can be accessed here http://bit.ly/CJJDavisEdD

(see Table 4.5) to trigger their memories. These were created from anecdotes of memorable incidents from three initial teacher education (ITE) tutors' experiences as primary teachers.

My intention was to trigger discussions around the teachers' beliefs about what it was to teach and how these beliefs influenced their narratives. I aimed to use these moments to encourage the teachers to see their "stories and storylines … not just as personal constructions but as expressions or particular historical and cultural opportunities." (Goodson, 2013:5-6). I wanted the teachers to reflexively step back and question why they narrativised their experiences as they did and what influenced them to do so (Hunt and Sampson, 2006). This was to prompt them to consider what work their personal narratives did in shaping their own and other people's perceptions of what it was to teach. As part of this activity, I asked the teachers to consider whether or not they would construct their narratives differently as a result of stepping back from them and discussing them with the other teachers.

In using the anecdotes and the subsequent discussion, I scaffolded the introduction of the pedagogic principles of narrative disruption and discomfort. I had two reasons for doing this. Firstly, I wanted the teachers to become comfortable problematising their cherished narratives and beliefs, to open up breaches which would allow alternative ways of seeing to potentially emerge (Boler, 1999; Bell, 2010 and Zembylas, 2015). I aimed to generate discussions around how the teachers' narratives were both products and producers of canonical accounts of everyday realties they shared with other people in their social spaces. Secondly, I wanted to disrupt any potential social hierarchy in the group so that the space became one where the teachers believed they had an equitable voice. Doing this was essential in building a culture of trust in which the teachers could feel free to speak without fear of criticism or reproach (Brown et al, 2008; Bell, 2010; Gazarian, 2010 and Crow & Bailey, 2015).

### Session 4

At this stage of the inquiry, I aimed to introduce the technology I wanted the teachers to use in order to create their stories. I drew on sessions four, five and six of the 'Seven Steps of Digital Storytelling' model (see Table 4.6). This was the point in the study where I provided the teachers with opportunities to work on their own and support each other to develop the technical aspects of their narratives. I also covered the teachers' ethical responsibilities, particularly when it came to narratives involving their colleagues and their pupils. I sought to make the teachers aware of how even when pseudonyms are used, people are still

recognisable, especially when key features of locations, and/or people are described through text or represented in images (Wiles et al, 2008 and Prosser, Clark and Wiles, 2008). I also intended to generate discussions around issues such as copyright and attributing work to sources. I decided not to labour over this because I had concerns I would end up causing the teachers to be over cautious about their use of multimodal sources. While I did not want to cause them to breach copyright laws or data protection protocols, neither did I want to inhibit their artistic exploration. Therefore, I resolved to emphasise to them that the final responsibility in terms of sources they worked with ethically lay with them.

### Session 5

This session sought to provide the participants opportunities to share and discuss the intentions behind their final narratives[31]. It was also aimed at opening up a space in which the teachers could comment on their experiences on the study. I intended to use this final session to discuss some of my own observations, particularly the extent to which I perceived that they were willing to construct alternative narratives. I probed the potential value the teachers believed there was in pursing the pedagogic principle of narrative disruption to perceive their lived realties differently.

In asking the teachers to share their final narratives and reasons for their construction, I wanted to give the them an opportunity to take ownership of their work. This was to ensure that I represented their authorial intentions accurately (Wallace, 2010). I also saw the sharing of their narratives as a way of drawing all the fragments of study together to act as a final trigger with which to explore their perceptions of who they were becoming as teachers (Haw and Hadfield, 2011).

## Conclusion

Planning the sessions as I did, provided me with a sense of reassurance and security. I never intended working prescriptively to plan, nor did I expect to. Throughout the sessions, I was committed to allowing the teachers to have a say in how we progressed. This was my way of living my values as a researcher who believes participants should be worked with and not on. My approach illustrated to the participants how I valued them as ends in themselves and not just the means to an end which brought me rewards.

[31] The teachers' final narratives can be accessed here http://bit.ly/CJJDavisEdD

# Chapter 5: Reflective Analysis

By including my own responses to the teachers' actions and comments in this chapter, I provide a reflective commentary on the data I generated (see Chapter 3 for the data generation methods [Table 3.2] and analytic processes [pages, 78-91), aimed at locating my own voice in the analysis. This approach moves beyond descriptive reporting, transforming data into evidence through personal interpretations of what I observed and what the teachers told me (Hertz, 1997 and McNiff, 2016). Drawing on this evidence, in Chapter 6 I elaborate how I intend revising the inquiry process for mobilisation with other social groups. This chapter is structured by the following research questions:

1a. How do primary school teachers respond when asked to construct alternative narratives about their everyday lived experiences as teachers?
1b. What influences can be seen in the narratives the teachers construct?
1c. How successful were the narrative pedagogic principles as implemented in encouraging the teachers to construct alternative narratives about their lived experiences?

The chapter begins with a discussion of how the teachers responded when asked to consider creating alternative narratives about their lived experiences. I highlight that while the teachers valued having a space to talk about their everyday lives, they eschewed opportunities to pursue a pedagogic principle of narrative disruption. As part of this discussion, I reflect on the role of the trigger resources as part of the pedagogic process. In some cases, the triggers reinforced dominant narratives of teachers as stoical, humanistic individuals, vocationally called to teaching, rather than disrupt them.

In the second section, I reflect on how influences within and outside the inquiry space shaped the final narratives the teachers produced. Through an analysis of the teachers' final narratives[32], I reason why the teachers constructed them as they did. The final section discusses the teachers' experiences of the pedagogic principles in an effort to discern the degree to which the study was successful in prompting the teachers to construct alternative narratives. I consider the teachers' perspectives and my own when making judgments about the value of the inquiry process. My analysis in this section explains the different ways in

[32] The teachers' final narratives can be accessed here http://bit.ly/CJJDavisEdD

which the social dynamic of the group and everyday events in the School influenced happenings within the inquiry space. I bring the final section to an end by reflecting on how my presence as the researcher influenced the teachers' interactions and narratives. The chapter concludes by drawing together key aspects of the reflective analysis to suggest why the group rejected opportunities to construct alternative narratives.

## Teachers' Responses When Asked to Construct Alternative Narratives

Early in the study, I realised revisiting past events to turn into personal narratives was difficult for some of the teachers because their life histories were too stable to risk disruption. Also, with the exception of Sam, the teachers' individual life histories were closely connected. This close connection made it difficult to risk constructing narratives which could have potentially exposed aspects of the teachers' lives they wanted to keep private. Deborah and Sarah both alluded to the fact how being familiar with one another's lives may have made it difficult for some of the teachers to share certain narratives.

> It was difficult for us, because we know - having worked with these people for a long time - you kind of know them really well already. (PI-Deborah)

> I only meant difficult as in some people might have been a bit reticent about being open and honest. (PI-Sarah)

The group lacked the communal trust needed to facilitate the emotional frankness required to prompt teachers to explore why they constructed their everyday narratives as they did (Shapiro, 2010 and Bell, 2010). This was exacerbated by simmering low-level tensions within the group; tensions which seemed to exist prior to the study's commencement. In the initial stages of the study, I was worried some of the teachers would not find moments to turn into narratives because they were worried about losing face with their colleagues. In the initial stages of the study, these anxieties were confirmed.

> Could you give an example of what you mean? Do you mean taking an incident and making it in a story of fiction? (PSF1)

> Perhaps 'our stories' could be explained better. At the moment, I have nothing to say as it all seems to me as my teaching story seems very dull. (PSF1)

To support the teachers find moments to prompt the construction of personal narratives, I encouraged them to think of a 'problem' or 'dilemma' from their lives. This was to encourage the teachers' to consider a more idealised representation of what they would have liked the

ending to be. As I discuss in Chapter 4, I conceptualised these moments as unresolved incidents. In the early stages of the study, I was made aware some of the teachers were struggling with the concept of the unresolved incident.

> I'm still struggling with the story - the brief is very tight with the ending being an unresolved issue. But working on it. (PSF2)

In Session 5, Cynthia remarked how trying to find an unresolved incident was more discomforting than any narrative she was likely to find. This had been a recurrent concern of hers throughout the study. In her interview, Cynthia remarked how her inability to find an unresolved incident led her to cause low-level trouble at different points of the inquiry.

> I [Cynthia] was a pain. An absolute pain cos I couldn't do it [construct a narrative]. (PI-Cynthia)

Worryingly, Cynthia remarked how the unresolved incident theme led her to feel like she had failed.

> I felt an absolute failure and it wasn't anything to do with you. It's cos I let it (Charlie -God. Because of the process?) No because of the end product (Charlie - the actual story?) Yeah. (PI-Cynthia)

While I had had to deal with moments of Cynthia's disruption during the sessions, I had not contemplated it was due to her feeling a failure. This was not an impression I got from her. On reflection, I could have done more to speak to her and find out why she was being distracting. However, I avoided probing too deeply when there were moments of distracting behaviour because I worried it would be interpreted as an attempt to counsel the teachers. I did not have a warrant to counsel or coach the participants, nor did I see myself as being capable of doing this.

By Session 2, I realised the teachers were having problems with the concept of the unresolved incident. Therefore, I jettisoned the idea; a decision hastened by comments in the post-session feedback questionnaire and murmurings of discontent I heard during Session 2. Drawing on my observations, I reflected that persisting with this particular trigger endangered the completion of the study. I was certain some of the teachers would drop out, which was confirmed in the interviews.

> I think if you'd have insisted on that [working with an unresolved incident], it would have been really difficult and in fact, I don't think I could've done it … I know other people were struggling as well. (PI-Deborah)

> Yeah. I think I would've [dropped out], if you'd had to pursue, if you'd had to pursue that [working with an unresolved incident]. I, I would've [dropped out]. (PI-Cynthia)

While some of the teachers had reservations about unsettling incidents from their pasts, others found it less of a problem. There was the allusion to generational differences influencing how willing and easy the teachers found it to work with unresolved incidents.

> I think as it [the study] came on I probably felt more comfortable, I guess, I think some probably found it a bit more difficult to delve up the past. (PI-Sam)

> Maybe, cos I haven't been teaching as long [as the others], so it's all a bit more fresh for me. (PI-Margaret).

The generational issue, that is the length of time the teachers had been teaching, would prove to be a recurring theme throughout the study. For the more experienced teachers, there was a correlation between 'years in the job' and the resilience to cope stoically with adversity: an almost 'keep-calm-and-carry-on' mindset seemed to exist.

> Yeah, yeah, I think once you've been in teaching a few years, you just have to let things go. You just have to put it down to experience and just say you can't worry about things. (PI-Sarah)

> Erm, because we don't tend to have unresolved issues, as such, cos we move on and forget them. So, it's hard to bring them up again. (PI-Cynthia)

> All the deep thinking in the world about it is not going to change it, it's not going to make you feel any better and sometimes you just have to get on with what's happened and move on to the next day. (PI-Deborah)

Suggestions of levels of resilience directly linked to years in teaching were reinforced in Session 5 when discussing issues with finding an unresolved incident to turn into a narrative. Generally, the approach was seen as being better suited to newly qualified teachers (NQTs), who did not have the resilience needed to cope with the emotional complexities of the job *(FN5);*a suggestion I found difficult to disagree with.

There was also a claim that generational entry points into teaching influenced some of the teachers' perceptions of reflection as well as their ability to reflect. This was seen as a barrier inhibiting some of the teachers' willingness to unsettle moments from their pasts. Deborah claimed that unlike teacher training in more recent times, past generations of teachers received no guidance on how to develop as reflective practitioners.

> If you started as an NQT 30 to 40 years ago, you walked into the classroom with your notebook and that was it. (PI-Deborah)

To provide a contrast, Deborah drew on her personal experiences to suggest teacher education programmes in the 2000s were more focused on developing teachers as reflective thinkers. Sam gave credence to these claims when suggesting his training prepared him to be a reflective thinker.

> I guess that I found that during my training year and my NQT year, two years ago, you kind of became resilient to reflecting and things that were critical of you. (PI-Sam)

While I did not set the study up to develop reflective practices, I was still asking the teachers to be critically reflective. My own observations led me to similar conclusions to those of Deborah and Sam. Throughout the study, I noticed on more than one occasion how attitudes to reflective activities seemed to be affected by generational variables.

In analysing the teachers' responses to being asked to construct alternative narratives, several significant factors emerged. There was a sense that for some of the teachers the approach represented an invitation to go 'through the looking glass' to a realm full of discomforting realties. Revisiting the past in search of problematic or dilemmic moments to turn into alternative narratives was not an option for some of the teachers, particularly those who were more experienced. It was as though it was perceived to have posed a destabilising risk to relationships of power within the group. There also appeared to be an assumption that to develop as an emotionally strong teacher, you had to learn to take the metaphorical punches and move on. Such perceptions militated against the pedagogic principle of narrative disruption being fully operationalised.

For some of the teachers, certain behaviours, beliefs and opinions seemed to have become fossilised, which made it difficult to leverage any attempts to problematise narratives representing teachers as stoical, caring and embattled. The implications of this were, that I was faced with a very stark choice; continue to press the teachers to look for unresolved

incidents and risk losing them or let them construct whatever narratives they wanted to. In the end, I chose the latter option because I believed it increased the likelihood of the study being seen through to completion.

### How the teachers responded to trigger resources

As I discuss in Chapter 4, finding moments to turn into narratives can be difficult (see Griffin, 2003 and Wallace, 2010). Anticipating the teachers would have problems finding moments to prompt the construction of personal narratives, I created a range of trigger resources, which I discuss in Chapter 4. I have devoted a section to the topic of the trigger resources because they both prompted and shut down critical dialogues aimed at developing alternative narratives.

Some of the trigger materials, such as A Ghostly Encounter[33] intensified narrative tropes of adversity, fortitude and resilience. The story was about a teacher called Jonas, who was visited at night by his ghostly self, angry with Jonas for not dealing assertively with a student judged to have insulted him earlier in the day. When asked to provide the story with an alternative ending, there was sense that while some teachers had sympathy for Jonas, most believed he needed to toughen up. Deborah jokingly urged him to "remember his vocation" (FN1). Jonas was also advised to "grow up and shake it off" (Appendix 11, MM1b-Deborah, Sarah and Margaret). During the discussions, the sentiment of 'what does not kill you will make you stronger' was alluded to. However, Jonas was also encouraged to ignore the ghost and "move on, i.e. deal with the negative by focusing on positive (sic)" (Appendix11, MM1b-Dorothy, Sam, Cynthia and Roberta). This showed a degree of compassion and support for Jonas' plight and also highlighted differences of opinion as to how teachers should respond emotionally to eveyday events.

A Ghostly Encounter gave the teachers a model of what I expected the form of their final narratives to look like. However, in terms of content, it misled some of the teachers, causing them concerns about their abilities to create similar narratives. The account of Jonas' incident made the process look complex and complicated.

> Well, it made me think of Radio 4 and a story on Radio 4. (PI-Cynthia).

[33] A Ghostly Encounter can be accessed here http://bit.ly/CJJDavisEdD

> But then it made everybody think 'Oh, my God, I have to think of a story like that'. But like I say, it then evolved that we didn't and the stories you got in the end were all completely different. (PI-Deborah).

When considering my own presence in the inquiry space, I recall the experience of watching A Ghostly Encounter with the teachers as a very uncomfortable one. I was emotionally exposed because I shared a personal event with the teachers. Even though the narrative made no reference to me or the actual situation I created it from, it was still my autobiographical account. Telling the incident through the character of Jonas did not provide me with the anonymity that Winter et al (1999) suggest fictionalised autobiographical accounts bring. I was too close to the end narrative and it was difficult for me to develop any sort of emotional objectivity which would have made it less of an exposing event. This incident made me aware of how difficult such an undertaking might have been for some of the teachers.

A few of the triggers proved to be quite incendiary. In Session 2, the teachers were asked to respond to one of the journalistic triggers, Six Steps to Master Teaching: Becoming a Reflective Practitioner (See Table 4.4). Some of the group did not appreciate outside experts telling them how to do their jobs, particularly those deemed to have no or little teaching experience (FN2). The ensuing lively discussion did little to challenge negative stereotypes of outside interference from so-called experts.

While on the whole the triggers led to the reproduction of dominant narratives, I observed glimpses of alternative narratives emerging during discussions. In Session 3, the teachers listened to the trigger resources created from the ITE tutor's anecdotal accounts of memorable moments from their teaching (see Table 4.5). While the vignettes caused some of the teachers to nostalgically reminisce about an imagined Golden Age of teaching, there were also admissions that not everything about the past was good. However, when these admissions looked to be justifying unpopular policy reforms, hastily mobilised folk psychologies ensured the Golden Age myth sustained its hegemonic position. While I tried to capitalise on these moments of disruption, my own ethical uncertainties stopped me from playing more of a Devil's Advocate role, which was needed to maintain enough disruption for alternative viewpoints to be explored.

Overall, there was no set pattern to finding a moment to develop into a narrative and it was something some teachers found easier than others. While it was disappointing no obvious alternative narratives emerged, I was pleased I had observed different viewpoints being

considered. Without speaking to the teachers, I will never know whether or not those fleeting moments of disruption had a longer lasting influence on the perceptions they had of who they were and were becoming as teachers.

## Influences on the Teachers' Narratives

Unlike other narrative inquiries, my focus was not on the teachers' narratives as objects of inquiry. I did not seek to gain psychological or sociological insights into aspects of the teachers' lives, and/or their minds through analysing their narratives. Rather, this study focused on understanding how a pedagogic principle of narrative disruption might be used to provide people with opportunities to critically explore the possibilities of seeing their lived experiences in alternative ways. In this section, I analyse the teachers' final narratives to make judgements about the extent to which the inquiry led the teachers to consider seeing their lives from alterative perspectives. I conclude the section with some general observations.

### The teachers' final narratives[34]

### Deborah's narrative

*Hamster Happenings* was an upbeat account of a pupil in Deborah's class who covertly brought her pet hamster to school. The narrative represented the teacher as a caring and fun person; one who did not reprimand or punish the child for bringing the hamster in. Deborah told me her narrative depicted a different time when a hamster coming into the class would have been celebrated and exploited for good. She lamented that now, however,

> Teaching is much more sort of between train tracks […] you're always conscious that you don't want to waste time because there is so much that they have to do and learn. (PI-Deborah).

Deborah's narrative emphasised the ability of teachers to adapt and persevere. Hamster Happenings reinforced a 'keep-calm-and-carry-on' attitude which allows teachers to function in ever changing work environments. Through her narrative, Deborah provided a positive image of teaching, which she maintains was her intention.

> It was just sort of a nice teaching story, because you get fed up with all the doom and gloom … it wasn't based on behaviour, other than it was quite nice behaviour. (PI-Deborah)

[34] The teachers' final narratives can be accessed here http://bit.ly/CJJDavisEdD

I enjoyed Deborah's narrative because it reminded me of a Story at Bedtime, a programme on CBeebies[35] I occasionally watch with my daughters. Through Deborah's narrative, I could hear she was passionate about storytelling as both a form of entertainment and a pedagogic approach.

### Cynthia's narrative

*Mrs Oops* was about a hapless accident-prone teacher whose heart was in the right place. She was adored by the children because of her calamitous exploits. Mrs Oops relied on refrain and repetition to create a composite narrative of the protagonist disastrously bumping through life. It was an autobiographical account, drawing on episodes from Cynthia's teaching experiences. Mrs Oops adapted personality traits of characters like Little Miss Whoops and Little Miss Scatterbrain from Roger Hargreaves' Mr Men and Little Miss series. Cynthia worked with these characters because the Mr Men and Little Miss books were familiar and had little content in them. She discussed how her main motivation seemed to be creating something simple, which did not involve a lot of work.

> There's not much content in those [the Mr Men and Little Miss books] and I can certainly do that. (PI-Cynthia)

During the interview, she claimed the she was happy with her final narrative but not overly so.

> [The narrative was] very basic, which wasn't very satisfying…there was a sense of accomplishment but it wasn't elation. (PI-Cynthia)

In many ways, Mrs Oops' self-deprecation mirrored that of Cynthia's during the study. It was an emotional mechanism I perceived Cynthia used to avoid looking weak in front of the other teachers. Throughout the sessions, she sought to promote an image of herself as tough and resilient. However, this contrasted with admissions of vulnerability she shared with me during the interviews. I never gained a true sense of her motivations for participating in the study.

### Margaret's narrative

*Don't rain on my parade* was a dramatic and humorous account of a mock-Ofsted observation, which descended into chaos as a torrential downpour flooded the playground outside Margaret's class. Margaret adapted techniques she had been using with the children

[35] CBeebies is a pre-school television channel I often watch with my daughters. A Story at Bedtime sees celebrities reading children's books in a manner reminiscent of Jackanory, a similar type of programme from my youth.

to create sound effects for her narrative. For example, she reflected on how she used drum rolls to represent the rain in an effort to "make it [the narrative] a bit dramatic." (PI-Margaret).

The incident Margaret chose to turn into a narrative was a painful one for her. However, she remarks how creating the final narrative made her feel better about the incident.

> It was just quite funny ... so actually to look back on it made me feel better about it. (PI-Margaret)

While the inquiry process gave Margaret an opportunity to re-imagine the incident with a more satisfactory outcome, it was also probable that the short two-year period between the event and the study made it an easier episode to revisit. This contrasts with some of the more experienced teachers who saw time as a protective barrier needed to avoid reopening potentially painful memories.

### Sarah' narrative

*Snow Joke* was an angry narrative about a heroic teacher, indignant she had to come to school on a day when it was snowing. It was an autobiographical account and expressed in rhyming couplets, a narrative device Sarah was comfortable with because she was a poet. The overly officious Head in narrative would not close the school during heavy snow, which Sarah saw as an injustice. Sarah reiterated during the interview that she chose the theme because the sense of unfairness made it stick in her memory.

> "It was just the injustice of the situation [slaps table mockingly]. That's what made me pick that story. (PI-Sarah)

What made this particular storyline remarkable was the respect Sarah showed throughout the study for the Head, who in her final narrative was the source of antagonism.

> She was a brilliant Head, she really was, but she wouldn't ... you know snow meant nothing to her. (PI-Sarah)

At times during the study, it seemed as though Sarah's sense of stoically enduring hardship was a trait she developed under the tutelage of the Head. Sarah's sense of what it was to teach appeared to have been formed in those early moments of her career.

### Sam's narrative

*The Great Escape* started out as a pastiche of the 1963 World War Two film of the same name. However, it developed into an escape narrative representing Sam's experience at his previous school with a boy who ran out of the classroom. As a result of the boy running out of the classroom, Sam and a colleague had to chase after him. Although this had been at another school, during Session 3, Sam and Margaret discovered they had both taught this pupil (FN3).

Sam's narrative was quite forlorn, reinforcing myths about the embattled teacher. It reproduced negative tropes about behaviour, which the media often seems to be saturated with. In his interview, Sam remarked that he regretted using the prison break metaphor because it gave the wrong idea about the children. On reflection, he felt it would have been better to construct a narrative about a farmyard escape. He thought he could better convey how most of the children worked without incident; this one boy being the exception.

> There was a flock of sheep and they all doing as they were told and getting on and then one escapes and runs and runs and runs. (PI-Sam)

Sam's final narrative was the exception within the group because it did not shy away from portraying negative aspects of the job. He seemed less worried about exposing traits some of the other teachers may have perceived as vulnerabilities. Of all the teachers, Sam was the one who appeared most willing to explore the notions of constructing alternative narratives. I considered Sam to be more willing because he had only been at Midview for a couple of months prior to the study. His lack of shared history with the teachers may have made him less inhibited to construct narratives from unresolved incidents.

When the teachers shared their final narratives in Session 5, there was a lot of debate around why the teachers had chosen the themes and storylines they had. Much emphasis was placed on how the narratives sought to avoid anything alternative and/or "deep and meaningful" (FN5). Sarah stated that she did not want to come to an after-school event to talk about things in the press and the media, such as the topics in the journalistic trigger materials (see Table 4.4). The media were believed to only ever portray teaching in tones of doom and gloom, which was something the teachers wanted to avoid (FN5). Deborah discussed how the media always seemed to ask people at Union conferences about the state of teaching. The result being that the only stories people told were about negative incidents and imagined Golden Ages of teaching when everything was great (FN5). She claimed that these stories shut down other accounts of teachers' lives.

Deborah, Margaret and Sarah challenged the dominant doom and gloom tales they believed the media used to represent teachers. On one level, these defiant narratives represented alternative tales of teachers' lives. However, on another level, these stories, and those of Sam and Cynthia, reproduced non-contradictory plot-lines, negating complexities of what it is to become a teacher. The final narratives reproduced themes of resilience, stoicism and perseverance; all qualities associated with the "The charismatic teacher – teacher as saviour" myth/discourse (see Table 4.4). This outcome suggested I had not been very successful in prompting the teachers to tell alternative stories. In the next section, I propose reasons for this perceived lack of success, from the point of teachers and also my own point of view.

## Experiences of the Pedagogic Principles

This section answers the research question: (1d.) How successful were the narrative pedagogic principles as implemented in encouraging the teachers to construct alternative narratives about their lived experiences? The study did not lead to the construction of alternative narratives challenging the hegemonic position of cultural myths such as the "The charismatic teacher – teacher as saviour" (see Table 4.4). Rather, the space became one where such myths were reproduced to counter doom and gloom accounts the teachers believed the media perpetuated about them. Despite this lack of alternative narratives, I want to argue that there is value in pursuing a pedagogic principle of narrative disruption. I provided the teachers with a space which was theirs to share narratives about their lives on their terms, something they valued. These are themes I reflect on more fully in Chapter 6 when discussing the implications the study outcomes for future inquiries.

To advance this argument, this section has three subsections: the first discusses the teachers' experiences; the second highlights and discusses the challenges I encountered; and the third looks in depth at my own role as facilitator.

### The teachers' experience of the pedagogic principles

The inquiry space became a place for the teachers to talk about being teachers in a common vernacular they did not have to adapt to ensure others understood them. It became their space in which they had a stake in how events developed. The teachers valued having a conversational clearing closed to 'non-teachers'.

> Actually, spending an hour and a half talking about things in that little group, that little school group. So it wasn't like when we go off to meetings and you go off to

> a conference where there are lots of other people, from lots of other places (PI-Deborah)
>
> I guess I find it interesting to talk about with the […], sat round with a table of teachers because more often than not you see those stories and you're sat either talking to somebody or most people that aren't teachers (PI- Sam)
>
> We were talking about things, where things go wrong and because we've been teaching for a while. It's nice to hear other people have these things as well. (PI-Margaret).
>
> Just interesting to hear different teachers' views to [what it is to be] a "good teacher" (PSF1)

However, the space became an echo chamber where certain beliefs, attitudes and rituals were reproduced through the teachers' discussions. This militated against the rigorous pursuit of the pedagogic principle of narrative disruption, stifling any attempts at fostering critical dialogue. While not hearing alternative narratives was disappointing, being told the space provided some of the teachers with sense of comfort and surety was pleasing.

> It was nice to discuss the teacher's role, in theory and in practice. It was good to find out I'm not that different from anyone else. (PSF1)
>
> Good open conversations. useful listening to other teachers' example stories. Good to bounce own story ideas off other colleagues. (PSF3).

It was also reassuring to hear that some teachers left the inquiry space with a change in perspective with regards to what they gained from participating.

> But *actually* when we went in there it was all very different and actually led to lots of discussion. (PI-Deborah).

I observed how the teachers seemed more at ease with sharing their narratives by the end of the study. They had, to a certain degree, formed into a more cohesive, trusting group. As some of the teachers remarked at the end of Session 5, they appreciated hearing each other's narratives and understanding why they constructed them as they had (FN5).

> The after-story discussions were very illuminating. It was interesting to see how and why people chose their stories and the way in which they were presented. (PSF5).

> Good to share each other's stories and discuss them. Interesting to hear the different story ideas. (PSF5).

> I mean the discussion we had at the end when everybody's story was slightly different was still I think as good as if it had been about all stories about unresolved issues. (PI-Deborah).

During Session 2, the teachers remarked how there were no spaces for them to talk about themselves because they always ended up talking about the needs of the curriculum, parents, children and other people (FN2). There was a great emphasis placed on how teachers' talk was never their own. It was always focused on how to narrow attainment gaps, improve teaching excellence or avoid bad standard assessment tasks (SATs) grades (FN2). Teachers like Margaret welcomed how the study provided them with a place they could get away from feeling under pressure to conform to some idealised notion of the good teacher.

> We weren't talking about what we should be doing; what was a good teacher. (PI-Margaret).

Some of the group perceived worth in what they did as it deviated from the usual formats of In Service Training (INSET) days they had to attend for continuing professional development (CPD) purposes. Often, these sessions were viewed as a form of development that was done to the teachers: some of the events were not of their choosing, nor could they control the format they took.

> Which is what you get on INSET days. Well, not so much a teacher but, I stand at the front, I say, you listen, Whereas, it [the study] wasn't. It was just like an extended conversation. (PI-Deborah)

> Cos, you were giving us the tools, and giving us the direction but you weren't enforcing erm, a checklist that we had to go down and it's not as if we do that all the time in teaching, but you do a lot. (PI-Cynthia).

The teachers valued the opportunity to develop their technology skills and knowledge in relation to using the iPads to facilitate narrative activities. The approach we took and the App we used, Book Creator[36] was perceived as usable and accessible as part of the teachers' practices.

[36] www.bookcreator.com

> Can see lots of possibilities for our class work (PSF5).

> I actually quite liked the App and I can use it with my children because they find it really hard to write things down … (PI-Margaret).

> Good to use Book Creator and to think of benefits of using it in the classroom. (PSF5)

> Knowing how easy book creator is to operate, I am going to try this with my children. (PSF4)

My strategy of foregrounding the pedagogic approach over the technology, which I discuss in Chapter 4, was appreciated. Sam suggested emphasising the construction of the teachers' narratives over the technology avoided unnecessary distractions.

> Erm, yeah it was probably best actually. Otherwise, we'd have been thinking about using the iPad all the time as opposed to thinking about the ideas and stuff involved. (PI-Sam).

The study prompted some of the teachers to consider how they could transfer aspects of the pedagogic approach, not just the technologies, into their own classrooms.

> I'd certainly use the whole technique either to show something or to ask them to help or make something, present something like that, definitely. (PI-Sarah)

> The discussion led to some ideas of how this format could be implemented within the classroom, albeit with a few modifications depending on age-group. (PSF5)

Within the group, there was a general consensus that the study had made the teachers more sensitive to the challenges some of their pupils faced when constructing narratives as part of their literacy activities.

> […] reminds you that actually it's quite hard to do that [construct narratives]. So, from that point of view it was quite a good reminder really that perhaps you should be a bit more understanding of their [the pupils'] feelings sometimes, instead of just expecting them to do it. (PI-Sarah)

> No it was good, because it did remind me of what the children go through and things like that … (PI-Margaret)

> I think it's a valuable lesson to learn to be honest, because, erm, if I felt like that, how many of these [children] are feeling like that (PI-Cynthia).

While the teachers saw potential benefits they could take from the study, I was also reminded how perceived notions of everyday practices can thwart the mobilisation of idealised pedagogic principles. During Sarah's interview, she told me that the ideas she had for using the approaches in class were unlikely to happen due to the prescriptive nature of the curriculum and a lack of time.

> There's such a lot to get through in terms of the curriculum. I don't think the time's always there to do that, which is a shame, but there you go (PI-Sarah).

In this one statement, I perceived a person who believed she was "valued for [her] productivity alone." (Ball, 2003:224). When I reflected on this admission, I was angry for two reasons. Firstly, Sarah seemed to embody fears that in a performative culture, teachers were accountable for the success and failings of their pupils and schools (Woods and Jeffery, 2002 and Ball and Olmedo, 2013). Secondly, I was annoyed because Sarah seemed to be admitting that while she was aware her practices had become somewhat fossilised, she was unwilling to change. This caused me concern because I worried about how many other teachers acted like this and how their actions affected the lives of their pupils. My reflections illustrate the difficulties in the bracketing oneself off from the inquiry space (Gibbs, 2007 and Denscombe, 2007).

Within the parameters of this study it was not possible to return to Midview to ask how many, if any, teachers put into practice what we did. I believe it is more than likely that it did not happen because the School lacked the follow-up support and resources needed to sustain work of this nature. Overall, however, the inquiry reiterated the value I perceived in providing the teachers with a space to consider constructing alternative narratives about their everyday experiences. I observed during the study how the group came together to create an inquiry space where the teachers were comfortable sharing their narratives. A measure of success was the fact that each of the five teachers who started, saw the inquiry through to the end.

From the teachers' perspectives, the study was successful as they gained new practices they could take into the classroom. They seemed to value having the opportunity to have some control over their own personal development. This was in contrast to INSET days, which some of the group perceived as events they had no control over. The teachers also saw worth

in the study as they had a space which was theirs, and only theirs. However, as I discuss in the following section, there were also substantial challenges.

### Highlighting the challenges in creating a space to tell alternative narratives

The inquiry space was a complex shared location where individuals' life histories converged and collided. If not contradictory, I observed a hidden hierarchy affecting the social dynamic of the group and by association the teachers' stories. At the top of the hierarchy were the teachers who had been teaching the longest. Some of the more-experienced teachers dictated the pace, focus and content of sessions. Their voices were often the strongest and most powerful ones. However, they were not a unified sub-group: low-level tensions pre-dating the inquiry often manifested themselves in the form of disagreements among the more-experienced teachers.

I had anticipated there would be tensions and alliances in the group. My assumptions were given credence by Gwen. She identified some groupings which were more likely to be challenging than others. This was something the teachers also alerted me to through the Session 1 post-session feedback questionnaire.

> Thinking of next week, where we will start to discuss our stories, I think being in pairs may prove problematic depending on who is with whom. It might be worth having a word with Gwen as to which personalities will gel better than others! (PSF1)

> I hope the grouping will change throughout the weeks. (PSF1)

I was not overly worried about potential tensions, because a certain degree of disagreement is probable within social groups as individuals establish intersubjective norms and rituals (Breakwell, 1986). I did not shy away from moments of friction because a level of discomfort and contestation is a vital part of any narrative encounter aimed at prompting alternative ways of perceiving shared and individual lived realties to emerge (Goodson and Gill, 2011). I viewed a certain degree of antagonism as necessary in order to open up discussions.

On occasions, however, discussions went so far off topic it was hard to regain any sort of order in the sessions. This was partly due to my uncertainties over how to manage interactions and behaviour in the group. On one occasion in Session 2, group discussions about the journalistic triggers (see Table 4.4) descended into a heated discussion about the social-class categorisations of Guardian and Daily Mail readers. (FN2). The debate which ensued, while informative, nevertheless brought simmering tensions bubbling to the surface. In response, I

drew events to a close because it was one of three incidents during the session, which when taken together, created an energy of malcontent within the group. Had I been more confident, I would have used this debate to explore the teachers' thoughts on whether or not different social classes have diverse views of teachers and how this influences narratives about teachers.

Often, there was a sense in the inquiry space that tensions were generational, or to be more specific, related to the historical point at which certain individuals entered teaching. In one incident in Session 3, I asked the teachers to consider the extent to which their perceptions of what it was to teach had changed between them beginning as teachers and the present. This was a lead-in activity to establish a wider context for considering different narratives which existed about teachers. As part of this activity, Cynthia and Sarah created a mind-map, which was mostly negative (Appendix 11, MM2a-Cynthia and Sarah). Cynthia and Sarah worked on their respective halves of the mind-map, venting their frustrations at the perceived destructive influence of outsiders, such as managers, parents and policy makers. I observed how they approached their task with a silent verve and intensity which communicated to me a deep unhappiness at the passing of an imagined Golden Age of teaching. I perceived this to be a coping strategy mobilised to deal with the unsettling encroachments of performative cultures (Hargreaves, 2005).

Characterisations of a Golden Age of teaching was ever present in the group. It was particularly prevalent in the narratives, views and opinions of Sarah and Cynthia, who were two of the more-experienced teachers. Idealised visions of a halcyon era of teaching reinforced what educational researchers Woods and Jeffery (2002:7) refer to as the "Plowden self-identity". The authors claim that it is a characterisation of identity "based on two major sets of values – humanism and vocationalism", which underpin the child-centred humanistic policies of the Plowden Report (CACE, 1967). Although it is an identity many teachers embrace, Woods and Jeffery (2002) claim its presence is strongest among teachers who began their careers in the 1970s and 1980s. Among the teachers in the study, representations of the Plowden self-identity acted as folk psychologies repairing narrative breaches contesting the canonicity of teaching as a humanistic and vocational endeavour.

Narratives about stoical figures couched in Churchillian tones were ubiquitous throughout the sessions. There was much reverence for teachers who battled against adversity to holistically nurture every aspect of the child. These narratives venerated teachers who followed a discourse of emotional neutrality, that is teachers who stayed stiff upper lipped in the face of

adversity (Zembylas, 2005). This sense of resilience and fortitude was enacted in some of the teachers' narratives throughout the study. When I spoke to Margaret about her final narrative, she remarked how she had tried to repress what she referred to as her natural dramatic tendencies, lest it be looked upon unfavourably.

> I try not to be too [dramatic] much at school, because I don't think they would tolerate it ... I think they'd [other teachers] be just like get over it, so I try to. (PI-Margaret)

Margaret's experience demonstrated how the voices of the more-experienced teachers in the inquiry space did much to perpetuate powerful values of resilience and endurance within the group

The dominance of narratives extolling the virtues of a past Golden Age of teaching illustrated how difficult it was for other narratives to emerge. Facilitating any discussions which challenged their sanctity was difficult because the most powerful teachers resisted attempts to force an "*assigned* social identity" onto teachers; one which embodied free-market performative principles attacking the humanistic and vocational values of the Plowden self-identity (Woods and Jeffery, 2002:10). While I saw this as perfectly legitimate, I also had concerns that it was reducing teaching to a series of simplistic binaries which denied the complexities and contradictions of everyday practice (Britzman, 1991). In short, it was saying to people, these are the narratives you can share and these are the ones which are off limits. It also positioned certain people as either fellow travellers, or undesirable Others to be wary of.

The teachers' discussions were often full of characterisations of villainous, officiously incompetent, interloping Others. These were mostly outsiders who had never, or rarely taught. Some of the teachers viewed academics with suspicion. Academics were an amorphous collective of university lecturers, PhD candidates and individuals who wrote articles such as the journalistic trigger I used to represent the reflective practitioner (see Table 4.4). In Session 2, when I challenged claims some of the teachers made that academics could not teach, it was acknowledged some could. However, to counter my claims, Cynthia shared an anecdote of the PhD student she had met who was incapable of teaching, even with a plan (FN2).

Differences between academics and teachers were grounded in dichotomous binaries pitching theory-based knowledge against practice-based knowledge. The former was knowledge produced in remote cloistered halls where donnish figures roamed. The latter was a craft knowledge generated by teachers through their daily teaching rituals and routines (Tripp,

2012). While no one openly contested the existence of this perceived dichotomy, some of the teachers were less critical of 'outsiders', particularly academics. For Sam, he made clear he had no issue with academics, particularly those like me who were involved in teaching. His frustrations, which he believed he shared with other teachers, were with politicians. He viewed their interference as unwelcome.

> Because they've never been a teacher, they've never spent a year, a whole year in a school and whatever... (PI-Sam).

The presence of Others also existed within the teachers' immediate social worlds. One such example was Dorothy, the Head. I invited her to participate because I believed her contributions would bring an interesting dimension to the study. However, in Session 1, and after it, I realised her presence was problematic in terms of the group social dynamic. In short, her presence made it difficult for the teachers to talk freely.

In the introduction to Session 1, Dorothy's questions about the benefits to Midview and the teachers in terms of accreditations and points towards Masters' degrees, positioned her as a performative Other. With her questions, she contradicted my claims that the inquiry space was one free of judgement, evaluation or appraisal (FN1). I observed early in the session a hesitancy by some of the teachers to speak, particularly those is the same group as Dorothy. My suspicions were given validity in the post-session feedback forms.

> A lot of discussion took place which was good, but may be different if grouping was made differently. Be aware if you want partners next week! (PSF1)

Reflecting on my observations, I concluded that Dorothy's presence as part of the inquiry space was untenable. I was concerned her involvement would lead the teachers to be fearful of saying certain things. I was also worried that some of the other teachers would drop out. Furthermore, I had concerns Dorothy would be distress by the experience too. After talking the matter over with my supervisor, I resolved to ask Dorothy to leave the study. I spoke to her prior to Session 2 and she agreed to leave the study, seeming relieved at being given the opportunity to do so.

Session 2 seemed more relaxed with a level of candour I had not observed in Session 1 (FN2). This could have been for any of number of reasons, but I believe it was in large part due to Dorothy not being there. In the post-session feedback and interviews, the teachers remarked:

> It [session two] was very enjoyable. Having different and smaller groupings and the Head teacher not being there allowed conversation to be more free/less guarded. (PSF2)

> Well, I think the hierarchy being there [The Head] I think was a bit too much for me. I didn't feel like I could speak. (PI-Cynthia)

> […] with Dorothy there it was sort of I don't know if this is going to work or not. And then after Dorothy left it was a lot freer. (PI-Deborah)

After session two, I reflected on how sorry I felt for Dorothy. I also noted, however, my relief she decided to leave because I feared her continuation would have led others to drop out (PSR2). I was reminded of the tensions between the methodological focus of the study and my ethical responsibilities to the participants and Midview. It made me realise the value in my own reflexivity as an ethical position prompting me to consider the emotional cost of the inquiry to the participants (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004).

Characterisations of imagined Others emphasised how cultural myths were often used to promote stereotypes which shut down critical discussions about the complexities of social life (Britzman, 1991). The way such persistent binaries were mobilised illustrated how difficult it was to develop within the inquiry space a lens of critique aimed at understanding why some narratives were elevated to canonical positions while others were marginalised. Maintaining a binary of Us and Them provided some within the group with a level of ontological stability. It sustained the notion of the teacher as born, that is, an individual vocationally called to the teaching (Britzman, 1991). In some ways, focusing on Others to blame positioned some of the teachers as protagonists in a "victimic plot"; one where they had little control over their own lives (Polkinghorne, 1996:301). I perceived this as a coping mechanism some of the teachers mobilised to counter the perceived stresses associated with their roles.

In addition to the participants' pre-exiting relationships affecting the social dynamic in the inquiry space, the physical location of the study influenced the teachers' narratives. The actual inquiry space (Appendix 4) made it difficult for the teachers to leave their everyday lives outside the study. It was not only the location of inquiry space in the Midview which affected the teachers' involvement. The way I physically arranged the room influenced perceptions of what my intentions were.

> Also, perhaps not having us grouped around tables to begin with - it was a bit like sitting in school waiting for the teacher to begin. (PSF1)

This particular comment made me realise how important and difficult it would be to create a sense of distance between the teachers' work space and the inquiry space. Prior to the study, I anticipated how residual traces of the working day could influence events within the sessions. Therefore, as I discuss in Chapter 4, I factored in time for the teachers to discuss the day's happenings at the beginning of each session. Deborah pointed out how she valued the settling in time and relaxed nature of the sessions.

> So this was like the end of the day when you usually unwind and you're doing stuff in the classroom and then ... yeah, I think it was very important that it had to be very low-key and relaxed and like I say quite organic, just coming from the discussions that were going on. (PI-Deborah).

However, as I saw in Session 3, I had little control over how happenings from the school day influenced events in the inquiry space (FN3). Session 3 was by far the most difficult session in terms of any work being done. A discussion[37] between a parent and a teacher had left some of the group feeling aggrieved about how their colleague was spoken to and how the matter was handled. I am not suggesting the incident with the parent was entirely responsible for a sense of disengagement by some, but it did exacerbate the situation. Throughout the session, there were repeated instances of unwelcome interruptions in the form of distracting comments and moments where some teachers played on their iPads (FN3).

The incident with the parent also demonstrated how the time of day in which the sessions were held affected the teachers' engagement. The actual episode with the teacher happened at the end of the school day, which was just before the session. Time played an important factor in the study: the time the session took place and the amount of time I asked the teachers to spend on their narratives. I anticipated the teachers would be tired after a day's work and also would not want to spend longer than two hours in the session. I was correct.

> Time - after a whole day at work (I arrived at 7.30) finishing at 5.30 was a bit of a marathon. People were definitely tired! (PSF1)

> Good to finish after an hour and half because think after people go off track & digress. (PSF2)

In the early stages of the study, there was a concern that I was going to ask the teachers to work on their narratives outside of the inquiry space. Cynthia in particular was worried about

[37] For reasons of confidentiality I cannot discuss in detail what this issue was.

the prospect of being asked to work on her narrative in her own time (FN1 and FN2). Sarah also made it clear that the teachers' workload made it impossible to contemplate doing any work in the evenings.

> I'm just going to use the time. If it's not done in the two hours, I'm not doing it outside. That's it. (PI-Sarah)

Surprisingly, however, Sarah did work on her narrative outside of the sessions, albeit during some quite time in her working day. I can only speculate, but I believe this was more out of a sense of pride in her own work - work which the others would see - rather than a commitment to the inquiry.

My field work illustrated how "the social world & educational world is a messy place, full of contradictions, richness, complexity, connectedness, conjunctions and disjunctions" (Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2009:167). The inquiry brought with it quite a few issues and challenges. However, it was the social dynamic of the group, a pervasive folk psychology and the inquiry setting which created the biggest challenges. I observed how existing relationships could create a narrative mood, one which allowed some narratives to be shared and forced others to be concealed.

Narratives which challenged the canonicity of representations depicting teachers as stoical and humanistic were neutralised by a powerful folk psychology. It was a folk psychology which sustained hegemonic characterisations of what it was to be a good teacher in Midview. Disrupting such narratives was possible, but keeping the breach open long enough so consideration was given to the possibilities of alternative representations existing, was difficult. The study illustrated how influential the location of the inquiry space was in facilitating the potential construction of alternative narratives. My observations highlighted how everyday happenings in familiar settings of the School made it challenging for the teachers to step far enough back to look at their experiences differently.

### My role within the inquiry space: neither an insider nor an outsider

In the preceding sections, I discussed how my presence in the inquiry space influenced the teachers' interactions and their eventual narratives. In Chapter 3, I discuss how I occupied a liminal space where I was neither an insider nor an outsider. I both knew the teachers and was known by them, albeit to differing degrees. The only member of the group I had never met before was Sam. While being familiar to the group made it easier for me to communicate with the teachers, it also created difficulties, particularly around the levels of disruption I was

willing to facilitate. In the remainder of this section, I reflect on how my ethical conduct was critical when considering the teachers' experiences.

My closeness to the group was a constant source of anxiety for me. I had concerns about causing distress, particularly any which could have adversely affected the teachers and Midview after I left the inquiry space. While this made me mindful of my ethical obligations to the teachers, it also inhibited my efforts to facilitate levels of disruption needed to prompt the teachers to construct alternatives narratives. I worried too much about my closeness to the teachers and the ethical responsibilities this familiarity brought. At times, my reflexivity led me to become stuck in a "morass of my own positioning" (Patai, 1994:64). Rather than support me, my reflections on how I was affecting the inquiry space became somewhat debilitating. My preoccupations about my ethical responsibilities were due to my inexperience as a researcher.

However, my position as someone the teachers knew was less of a concern for some of the group than it was for me. In the end, their worries about outside intrusions were more localised, with Dorothy's presence judged to have been more problematic.

> Possibly, but I don't think so. I think what made a huge difference was when Dorothy didn't come anymore. (PI-Sarah)

> I think by the first and second session we were still a bit "it's Charlie" but I think, once Dorothy wasn't there that made a big difference cos a lot of people weren't going to say things because she is the boss, their boss (PI-Deborah)

In Margaret's case, whether or not the other teachers were participating, was more of a concern than my presence.

> I don't think it would have mattered if it had been you or anybody else. It would have depended if I had been all by myself or there was other people. (PI-Margaret).

I worried about how I could create an inquiry space where the teachers not only trusted one another but trusted me. From the outset of the study, I sought to establish a rapport with the teachers, which positioned me as someone they could trust. I wanted the teachers to feel comfortable in the space and around me, which I believe I achieved. When speaking to the teachers, I got the sense I was perceived of as a kind, responsive facilitator.

> Would I do a similar thing [the study] again? Probably not. (Charlie-why not?) Well it wouldn't be you to start with, which is fine, because you have this gentleness. There you are. (PI-Cynthia)
>
> You didn't interfere too much. I mean you asked us to talk about things and when you asked for our opinions, you didn't sort of jump in and say "oh, but, but... (PI-Deborah)
>
> I think you were very good. Whenever anyone had a problem, you explained it. (PI-Margaret)

To some of the teachers I was seen as a fellow traveller, a perception of me which enhanced my credibility as a trustworthy researcher.

> But you're not an outsider to education either. (PI-Deborah).
>
> I bet you're a bit like my husband and you take your wife's[38] side all the time. (PI-Cynthia)

The rapport I created with the group was in part due to my ethical commitment to treating the participants as ends in themselves. However, my perceived gentleness and fairness, as well as my familiarity, may have led some of the teachers to be more concerned about my needs than their own. Some of the group wanted to make sure I left the inquiry space with what they thought I had come into it looking for.

> It was more they [the teachers] thought as to what you were going to get out of what we were doing. And how can this sort of inform, well not so much education theory but how can this inform something else that you could use. (PI-Deborah).
>
> I just think. I just hope that some of it has been some help because that's been the main issue. I just wanted to do something that you could use. (PI-Cynthia).

These suggestions that some of the teachers wanted to make sure I got what I wanted concerned me. It represented a researcher-participant relationship which was more transactional rather than interactional; with me benefitting most. This was antithetical to the notion of a participatory inquiry space I sought to promote. I recognised that I had very little control over this situation because I could not dictate how the teachers thought of me or

[38] My wife is a teacher.

perceived me. The only thing I could do was be open with them about what my intentions were.

Although I was transparent about what I sought to do and why, I did not overly emphasise the notion of disruption because I feared it would be seen as synonymous with a form of therapy. I worried if the teachers saw the study as some form of regression therapy, they would either drop out or not commit fully to it. Therefore, I couched my explanations about my intentions in terms which emphasised the notion of constructing alternative narratives. However, this did not stop what I was doing as being perceived as a therapeutic exercise. During the introduction to Session 1, Sam quizzically remarked how the study seemed to be like a "sort of counselling space" (FN1). I had to clarify that the study was not intended to be a form of counselling or coaching.

In the first session, I tried to explain to the teachers what I wanted to do without frightening them off, while also ensuring I was being transparent about my intentions. In the end, my attempts to find a balance led to the beginning of the session being drawn out and laboured. I established the wrong tone and pace for the study, which was picked up on by one of the teachers in the post-session feedback questionnaire.

> Shorten the initial explanation to move onto the group work quicker. (PSF1)

Being told to shorten the beginning was like being urged to get to the point. This suggestion intimated to me the importance of ensuring the sessions emphasised an experiential approach to learning. In other words, I perceived this piece of feedback to be saying "we do not have a lot of time to spare, so less talking, more doing." I reflected that the teachers were more concerned about their time being wasted than being absolutely clear about what I wanted.

In some ways, a degree of uncertainty as to my intentions was seen as beneficial. For Deborah, not knowing exactly what I wanted was seen as a benefit because it created a more interesting study.

> Yeah, if it was very structured and we had, and we knew exactly what sort of things you were looking for, and exactly what sort of approach you wanted, then you do. Human nature is to please and try and follow that path, which would probably not have made it as interesting. (PI-Deborah)

In the case of Sarah, she seemed indifferent to whether or not she knew fully what my intentions had been.

> So I just glanced through any information, all the information, quickly glossed through me, you know? and thought 'oh well, I've got that wrong. Never mind'. (PI-Sarah)

When reflecting on the lack of understanding the teachers had about my intentions, I perceived a lack of experience to have led me to contrive overcomplicated explanations. This lack of experience also made me uncertain of how to deal with tensions within the group, which sometimes manifested themselves as distracting behaviour. The unwanted interruptions and my perceived inability to sanction the teachers was remarked upon.

> Felt like I was managing naughty children! Feel free next time to remind them why they are attending these sessions & to take them seriously - I, for one, will back you! (PSF3)

> I think you need to be a bit meaner sometimes … Because I think some of the people ... some of the times I thought some people were really rude. (PI-Deborah)

During the study, I was committed to creating a flat hierarchy in the room, which is a principle of narrative pedagogic approaches (Diekelmann, 2001). I avoided being seen as didactic and authoritative because this was not participatory. However, I did not deal adequately enough with some of the unwanted interruptions, which made me look indecisive. I reflected that this indecisiveness led some of the teachers to see my behaviour management abilities as weak: they were looking at me to take control, using their own beliefs about classroom management to judge how capable I was at doing so.

Persistent episodes of disruptive behaviour also left me questioning my own natural sympathies for teachers. After Session 3, which I called a halt to early because of constant unwelcome interruptions, I had to grapple with my own emotional dissonance. I was frustrated at the constant stoppages and also a lack of respect some of the teachers seemed to show towards colleagues when they were talking. I was also growing weary of how some of the teachers eulogised an imagined Golden Age of teaching. The imagining of this mythical past and the intermittent disruptions was making it difficult to create and maintain a discursive rhythm which facilitated meaningful discussion. In my fieldnotes at the beginning of session four, I reflected on how I was starting to question my own loyalties.

> I was not really looking forward to the session as the previous week had not gone well. It had left me asking myself some pretty major questions about how I felt about the teachers and the profession in general. (FN4).

My waning sympathies for some of the teachers highlighted how, researchers in participatory contexts are not emotionally immune to happenings within the inquiry space (Bridges, 2001).

During the study, I struggled to find a position which comfortably accommodated the fluidity of being a researcher, who was part of the teachers' world, yet outside it. In analysis, my presence showed how the dividing line between insider and outsider is a shifting and nuanced one (Zempi, 2017). Every now and again, I was reminded not to be complacent in thinking I had found a place of positional neutrality. In Session 5, when I asked if the teachers would do the study again with people in their Academy trust, Cynthia replied, quite sardonically, "this one's got a real thing about the Trust." (FN5). In that moment of embarrassment, the precariousness of the liminal position I occupied as an outsider with inside knowledge became apparent to me. On this occasion, I was trying too hard to be seen as authentic and someone took advantage of my attempts to remind me of my outsider status. As Deborah pointed out in her interview, being an outsider with no insider knowledge may have been a better position for me to have been in.

> I think it might have been easier for you to have been a complete outsider (PI-Deborah)

## Conclusion

Taken together, the teachers responses, their narratives and my reflections led me to the following conclusions. Overall, while alternative narratives did not emerge, the teachers did appreciate having a space where they could talk about their lives as teachers. In this respect, the final outcome of the study was satisfactory. I underestimated how influential the role of audience and setting would be in shaping the teachers' narratives. The audience determined the types of narratives which would be regarded as legitimate representations of what it was to teach. Within the group there were strong voices which acted as guardians of a folk psychology which sustained the canonicity of idealised representations of teachers' as stoical, caring and humanistic beings. Having such a powerful presence made it difficult to create enough narrative disruption to allow alternative narratives to emerge. The reluctance of some of the teachers to disrupt their familiar personal narratives maintained an epistemological and ontological stability in a profession defined by change. Many of the narratives venerated

storylines representing teachers as heroic underdogs battling tyrannical performative bodies, auditing teaching from afar into to a state of professional non-existence. Ironically, as a result, the inquiry space became a performative one in its own right; a place where narratives countering a discourse of performativity were venerated over all others.

One of the most challenging aspects of the study was the location of the inquiry space and how this affected the sessions. The room we worked in made it difficult to create a sense of reflexive distance with which to look upon past experiences to see them anew, or consider alternative ways of interpreting them. Everyday objects and happenings acted as emotional triggers strengthening some of the teachers' roots in their established subject positions. In other words, it reconfirmed their beliefs and opinions about what their role as teacher in Midview was.

When considering my own role as part of the inquiry space, I was unprepared for how emotionally demanding the experience would be. A considerable amount of disruption was caused to my own cherished beliefs about the role of teachers. During the study, I had moments where the behaviour of some individuals challenged my natural sympathies for teachers. This was not an easy process and one which highlights how the researcher both affects and is affected by the inquiry space. Through my own reflexivity as an ethical dimension of the study, I ensured I did my utmost to avoid causing the teachers distress. However, a heightened sense of my ethical responsibilities was debilitating because it inhibited my willingness to cause too much disruption. My ethical concerns highlighted tensions between a need not to cause distress and a methodological desire to have one's research seen as credible and rigorous.

In Chapter 6, I draw together observations and reflections from this chapter and the others to consider what the implications of this study were in terms of contributions of knowledge and implications for future inquiries.

# Chapter 6: Conclusion

## Purpose of chapter

This chapter draws together what I have learned and applies it to future research and professional practice. It also clarifies the contributions to knowledge my study has made. In this chapter, I consider the value in pursuing a pedagogic principle of narrative disruption to prompt people construct alternative narratives about their lived experiences. I also addresses the main research question: What narrative pedagogic principles can support people in groups to consider constructing alternative narratives about their lived experiences?

I begin the chapter with a discussion of the study's limitations and the implications of these for future work. I represent these implications in the form of a commentary and a revised pedagogic process. Drawing on the study outcomes, I consider the potential of carrying out a similar study in a Northern Irish context. This speculative account takes the form of two narratives: one imagining the possible consequences if the original study process were followed and the other if the revised study process, which I highlight below, were used. Following this section, I reflect on how I have drawn on aspects of the study to inform my current practices as an academic developer. As part of this discussion, I also identify future inquiries I intend carrying out in the next few years. The chapter concludes with a reflection on how the Doctoral process has influenced my thinking as an emerging narrative inquirer, and educator.

### Limitations of the study with the teachers

This study sought to judge the value in pursuing a pedagogic principle of narrative disruption to prompt people to consider alternative ways of narrativising their lived experiences. I created an inquiry space where the teachers could consider how their personal narratives were constrained an enabled by dominant representations of what it was to teach. The outcomes from my study suggest that, while there is value in pursuing a principle of narrative disruption, it is difficult to follow because there are complex and subtle variables at play. Some of these variables included my presence as an outsider with an inside knowledge of the teachers as well as forms of resistance the teachers mobilised to sustain a sense of ontological stability. Other variables included the shared lived experiences of the teachers, which shaped the social dynamic within the inquiry space.

The inquiry illustrated how studies discussing pedagogic interventions aimed at facilitating the construction of alternative narratives can be idealised and do not always transfer to other fields of practice. I drew on studies advocating the mobilisation of pedagogic approaches to challenge perceived social injustices (see Boler, 1999; Griffiths, 2003; Bell, 2010 and Zembylas and McGlynn, 2012). These sources discussed how pedagogic approaches can make visible the ways cultures use dominant narratives to enable and constrain individual forms of agency. In this work, I was presented with a methodological and pedagogic grounding in which to base my study. Unlike some of these studies, I found rather than disrupt the dominant narratives I presented, my pedagogic approach reproduced them. I concluded that this act of reproduction was a form of resistance. Dominant narratives portraying teachers as stoical, caring and humanistic countered doom, gloom and performativity narratives the teachers claimed were used to characterise their lives. The narratives of stoical resilience and resistance provided the teachers with a sense of epistemological and emotional stability. Therefore, a major limitation of my study was my assumption that the teachers would want to disrupt such comforting and familiar narratives.

The concept of the 'unresolved' incident was a confusing one for the teachers and illustrated how by working with too many concepts of narrative I overcomplicated the process. The notion of the unresolved incident was distracting and potentially too discomforting. As I discuss in Chapter 5, the unresolved theme gave the study a therapeutic feel, which was not my intention. I worked with the concept of the unresolved incident because I needed to prompt the teachers to consider a moment of dilemma they could use to drive their narratives forward in search of resolution. I concluded that rather than prompt the teachers to look for unresolved moments, I should have linked the notion of a catalytic dilemma to emotions such as anger, love and frustration. Referring to emotions would have been less traumatic than being urged to find an unresolved incident because it offer a range of negative and positive possibilities.

My lack of warrant to facilitate the construction of alternative narratives was a major challenge in terms of pursing a pedagogic principle of narrative disruption. Within Midview, there was no 'obvious' sense of trouble or crisis; at least not one the group wanted to acknowledge as needing repair. The situation was unlike Northern Ireland where cultural geographies such as Belfast's infamous Peace Lines, a mainly segregated school system, Loyalist marches or continued dissident Republican activity are testament to the existence of sectarian division. In the case of the Midview teachers, they came voluntarily to the study as

part of their continuing professional development (CPD). For some it was to learn how to develop their digital skills; for others, participation was motivated by a desire to explore their own perceptions of who they were and were becoming as teachers as well as using the iPads.

In my role as researcher, I had no right to tell the teachers their lives were troubled, nor did I have the right to make them construct alternative narratives, assuming I could have made them do so. Trying to make the teachers do what I wanted would have positioned me as a powerful Other. I would have been guilty of using an emancipatory narrative to implore the teachers to represent their lives in ways that they may have felt uncomfortable with, thus entrapping them in an oppressive narrative of my making (Holland et al, 2001). This was not in the participatory spirit of the pedagogic process I operationalised with the teachers.

My liminal position as neither an inside presence nor an outside one, brought limitations as well as benefits; the dividing line between the two often being blurry. Knowing the teachers, and them knowing me, made me acutely aware of my ethical responsibilities. In many ways, this became a priority of the study because I sought to ensure I left no residual traces of distress. However, my proximity to the teachers made it difficult for me to engender the levels of disruption needed to prompt them to consider seeing alternative perspectives. Ironically, the position of the disinterested observer I have always contested is impossible to take in a social inquiry, was one I wished I could have adopted. More distance would have allowed me to temper dominant voices which established and controlled the narrative vernacular of the inquiry space. I was constantly reminded how fickle the social dynamics of groups can be and how they can shape pedagogic outcomes.

Familiarity with the teachers made it difficult to create a flat hierarchy within the inquiry space. The group had a hidden hierarchy which often dictated the interactions between the teachers. The ‘loudest voices’ acted as the guardians of Midview’s cultural tool kits; restricting and enabling access to symbolic resources the teachers could use to construct their narratives. A folk psychology saw off challenges to the canonicity of narratives representing teachers as stoical, caring, humanistic and vocationally called. This same folk psychology also ensured that visions of an imagined Golden Age of teaching, long since passed, were maintained to protect the teachers from perceived performative threats. Threats to the teachers’ autonomy existed in the form of curricular reforms and auditing bodies, such as Ofsted.

Being situated in Midview brought the teachers benefits: it was close to home, close to their classrooms and they were in familiar settings. However, these benefits were also some of the biggest disadvantages. The physical space of the School was cluttered with memory triggers. Rooms, corridors, resources and room layouts all connected the teachers with past happenings; good and bad. There were also the residual traces of the working day, which were often hard to leave outside the clearing that was the inquiry space. Being surrounded by so many memories, made it difficult for the teachers to take the reflexive step back needed to construct alternative narratives.

### Implications for the processes of future studies

The evidence from my research leads me to see worth in pursuing similar studies, but only when individuals are aware of what is expected of them. Many of the limitations I have just identified could have been lessened or negated by establishing the teachers' expectations of the study from the outset: including what they expected to gain from the study; their expectations of my role as the researcher; their expectations of each other, particularly when establishing a narrative etiquette within the group; and, what they perceived me to expect from them. In other pedagogic contexts as a teacher and as an academic developer, I have witnessed how an expectations-establishing activity can be used to engender behavioural and discursive norms. It does not guarantee a harmonious existence, but it does provide people with a democratic reference point to return to when they believe their contributions to the group to be less than equitable. This activity is a foundational starting point when seeking to create a trusting environment.

The study illustrated the value in working with people to create the inquiry space rather than constructing it for them. In future studies, I would like to, where possible and appropriate, extend the participatory ethos to every stage of the inquiry, rather than simply within the confines of the inquiry space. In other words, I would involve the participants in developing the research questions and focus; the methodology; the data generation and analytic methods and the eventual write-up. Such an approach is aligned with Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodologies which work with people to empower them to develop knowledge about their lives so as to change and/or develop aspects of their communities (Reason, 1994; McArdle, 2013; McArdle et al, 2015 and McNff, 2016). Working with the groups in this manner gives something back to them: it provides them with the skills and knowledge to go on inquiring into their everyday lives, if they chose to do so (Cain and Harris, 2013). I would

only endeavour such approaches where there was willingness to do so on the behalf of the participants and where there was a warrant to carry out the intended inquiry.

Considering how I represented the study to the teachers in the initial stages, I should have been more explicit about my intentions being more sociological than psychoanalytical. I was unclear about the process being one aimed at supporting the teachers explore their social and cultural worlds; not one aimed at helping them to awaken a hidden or repressed self. During the study, particularly in the early stages, I over emphasised personal narratives. This accentuated the notion of looking inside for an inner voice, rather than looking out to consider how cultural variables, such as a society's laws, belief systems and educational curricula shape individual perceptions of subjectivity. In future, I would make more of the cultural aspect of what I seek to do, that is, I would support the participants to explore in more depth how a culture's canons shape and are shaped by their personal narratives. This would involve drawing more on life history approaches aimed at gaining "insights into the way in which, over time, individuals come to terms with the constraints and conditions in which they work, and how these relate to the wider social structures" (Goodson, 2008:34-35).

Rather than urge the participants to identify an unresolved incident to prompt alternative narratives, I would provide opportunities to explore the same accounts through different conceptual lenses. For example, if I were exploring themes of sectarian difference, I would ask people to analyse and reformulate their narratives using a class-based interpretative lens. This activity would involve a "hermeneutics of demystification" (Josselson, 2004:14) to analyse what hidden meanings emerge when narratives are constructed from different perspectives. As the article about the two Derry-Londonderry schoolgirls (Vulliamy, 2014) shows, when people are given opportunities to explore their everyday narratives from alternative interpretative perspectives, taken-for-granted truths can be disrupted to allow other narratives to emerge.

My study showed the value in carrying out an inquiry with people in their own social settings. However, it also demonstrated the limitations of this approach, particularly with regards to how familiar settings and everyday happenings can trigger memories which impede the participants willingness to see their lived experiences from alternative viewpoints. For future studies, I would, where possible, seek to locate the inquiry space in a neutral venue. I recognise that this alone may not lead to the emergence of a critical space. However, not being in a setting where memories are tangible, may lead to a sense of disconnection which can facilitate more critical dialogue (Orchard, Heilbronn and Winstanley, 2016). It also

provides people with an opportunity to walk out of their familiar social settings, shutting physical and figurative doors behind them.

## Revised inquiry process for use in educational settings

In this section, I discuss the operational changes I would make to any future studies based on my analytical reflections. When using the term 'educational settings', I refer to both formal educational settings, such as university-based contexts and informal settings such as community-based contexts.

### Pre-study

The purpose of the pre-session data generation is to develop a sense of the demographic make-up of the group. It is also to gain insights into the participants early expectations in terms of what they hope to gain from participating in the study.

Prior to the study, I would ask the participants to complete the questionnaire eliciting biographical information (Appendix 6). Depending on the group I am working with, I would alter the questions to reflect the focus of the study and the participants' social context. As part of the pre-session stage, I would also provide participant information (Appendix 2) and participant consent forms (Appendix 3).

### Session 1

The purpose of this session is to introduce the participants to each other. The session also provides an opportunity to establish group norms and values within the inquiry space. This is with an aim to creating a trusting space where the participants feel comfortable sharing their narratives. The session also aims to start the participants thinking about their narratives as both products of and producers of culture.

In the initial part of the session, I would facilitate an ice-breaker to help people get to know one another, even in situations where individuals are familiar to one another. I would keep this simple and light-hearted to help put people at ease with one another. For example, I would use a 'Find Someone Who …' activity which encourages the participants to speak to as many people in the group as possible. This is a technique I have used in the past and it normally generates a lot of discussion.

After the ice-breaker, I would work with the participants to identify their expectations of the study. This would include clarifying aspects of the inquiry which are unfamiliar to them and

establishing a communicational etiquette aimed at facilitating a trusting and supportive inquiry space.

The setting-expectations activity would be followed by an exercise aimed at giving the participants an opportunity to share their conceptual awareness of what a narrative is. I would do this by asking them to identify:

- what makes a narrative a narrative
- why people construct and share narratives
- what narratives representing their lived realities the participants like and dislike; giving reasons why

I would ask the participants to consider the work narratives do in shaping perceptions of social group(s) the participants belong to. Through this work, I would then draw on theories of representation and narrative to discuss how narratives forms such as cultural myths produce and are produced by culture.

This section of the session would allow me to emphasis the different elements of Todorov's Narrative Structure (see Table 4.3), particularly the notion of dilemma or trouble as a prompt to seek resolution. At this point, I would invite the participants to identify narratives representing their social group(s), discussing how they make them feel and why. I would then ask the participants to map the narratives to the Todorov's Narrative Structure to illustrate the different narrative elements. Part of this work would also involve identifying the characters and their roles in the narrative. This would reify the concepts of narrative and narrative structure through the concreate examples the participants discuss. I would keep these narratives for use in Session 2 as trigger resources.

Following on from this activity, I would introduce different audio triggers, created from life experiences of people in the same, or similar, social group as the participants. These would be similar to the initial teacher education (ITE) tutor's vignettes I used in the study (see Table 4.5). I would edit these so the participants only heard them as far as the point of dilemma. At this point, I would invite the participants to seek a resolution aimed at facilitating a particular ending. As a group, the participants would share their endings and reasons why they had chosen to construct their narratives. To complete this activity, I would play the complete versions of the original vignettes to consider reasons for any similarities and differences. I would use this discussion to prompt the participants to critically reflect on how personal and public realties connect through narratives.

Following the session, I would ask the participants to complete the post-session feedback forms. See below for details.

### Session 2

The purpose of this session is to prompt the participants to start exploring how narratives about them potentially enable and constrain their own narratives about their lived experiences. The aim is to encourage the participants to problematise the narratives they take for granted in order to think about how they lionise certain social groups and marginalise others.

Similar to the journalistic triggers I used with the teachers (see Table 4.4), I would utilise sources representing people from the participants' social groups in different ways. I would seek out comparative examples to emphasise how alternative perspectives can exist. Using these triggers, I would encourage the participants to consider:

- How the narratives make them feel
- Which versions, or elements of these versions, they are more drawn to and why
- What role the narratives play in shaping perceptions of the social group(s) the participants belong to
- The extent to which the narratives in the triggers lionise some social groups and marginalise others
- The extent to which the narratives in the triggers connect with the participants' own personal narratives

Using these discussions, I would develop an interrogative space where the participants could start sharing narratives about their lived experiences. Through the participant dialogues, I would establish the idea of alternative narratives. I would do this by encouraging the participants to consider how their personal accounts of their lived experiences connected with dominant representations about them. I would then invite the participants to start sharing ideas about potential alternative narratives they could construct, providing they are willing to construct alternative narratives. Where they are not, I would explore why not.

Following the session, I would ask the participants to complete the post-session feedback forms. See below for details.

## Session 3

The purpose of this session is to provide the participants with an opportunity to share their narratives and support each other consider how they might turn them into alternative versions. I also aim to create a space where the participants can start reflecting on why they have constructed the narratives they have.

As with the Derry-Londonderry example (Vulliamy, 2014) I discussed in Chapter 1, I would encourage the participants to put themselves into positions which asked them to see their everyday narratives from a different perspective. In the Derry-Londonderry example, the girls swapped uniforms, using this as a prompt to explore linguistic, class-based and gender-based similarities and differences. If the participants' narratives represented lived experiences framed by race and ethnicity, I would ask them to consider interpreting them through other critical lenses, for example, class or gender. I would use this experience to prompt the participants to start considering how cultural canons come to exist and the manner in which they can obscure other narratives perspectives.

The end of the session would provide the participants with an opportunity to start planning their final narratives using storyboard techniques (Appendix, 33). This activity would involve instances of peer feedback to support the participants develop coherent storylines. I would limit the narratives to three minutes, which while seeming like a short amount of time, actually requires quite a bit of work. During this part of the session, I would introduce the participants to copyright cleared resources via sites such as Creative Commons Search[39].

Following the session, I would ask the participants to complete the post-session feedback forms. See below for details.

## Session 4

The purpose of this session is to provide the participants with a space in which to create their final narratives. I also aim to offer the participants opportunities to revisit their storyboards, to revise their storylines or augment them.

The session would begin by providing the participants with opportunities to discuss, revise and augment aspects of their narratives with peers. I would then give them time to start creating their final pieces of work. This part of the session would involve an expository demo of how to create their narratives using digital resources. For those participants confident

[39] www.search.creativecommons.org.uk

enough to do so, I would offer them the opportunity to create their narratives using digital resource of their choosing. Otherwise, I would model the use of specific digital resources which were accessible to the whole groups. Throughout the session, I would be available to give one-to-one support as the participants create their narratives.

Following the session, I would ask the participants to complete the post-session feedback forms. See below for details.

### Session 5

The purpose of this session is to provide the participants with a space in which to share their narratives and discuss their feelings about them. Through the discussions, I would seek to provide the participants with opportunities to critically scrutinise their reasons for creating the narratives as they did. This session would also serve as a chance for the participants to feed back on their experiences of the study.

The session would begin with time to finish creating final narratives. After this, I would turn the session into a discussion forum with the participants' narratives acting as triggers with which to explore their storylines and why they chose them. I would pay particular attention to the extent to which the participants considered their narratives to subvert or reproduce dominant representations of their lives. This session would draw to a close with the participants invited to reflect on the value, if any, they perceived the pedagogic process to have had and why.

Following the session, I would ask the participants to complete the post-session feedback forms. See below for details.

### Post-session feedback forms

After each session, I would provide the participants with a post-session questionnaire so I could adapt the next session if warranted and/or respond to the participants needs. The questions would be based on those I circulated during the study (Appendix 10):

- What, if anything, worked well about the session? Explain briefly.
- What could have been better about the session? Explain briefly.
- What value, if any, might the session have for your practices/life etc.? Explain briefly.

### Post-study interviews

The interviews would provide me with opportunities to discuss what the teachers believe worked well about the study, if anything, and what they would do differently, if anything. Drawing on my observations throughout the study, I would use the interviews as an opportunity to inform decisions related to how I would carry out future inquiries.

In the following section, I illustrate the potential outcomes of this revised study through an imagining of its implementation in a Northern Irish cross-community context. I contrast this with an imagining of the operationalisation of the original pedagogic process, which I used with the teachers.

### Imagined inquiries in a Northern Irish context

In Chapters 1 and 3, I discussed the motivations behind this study as being rooted in my own experiences growing up in Northern Ireland, a place I left in 1999. I was unable to carry this work out 'back home', so I worked with the teachers to gain an understanding of how the pedagogic principle of narrative disruption functioned when operationalised. In the section which follows, I imagine what might happen were I to conduct a similar study in a Northern Irish context. For a more detailed rationale of why I chose to take this imagined approach, see Chapter 3.

### A narrative about someone on a study using the revised process

In this narrative, Davey, the main protagonist, recalls how initially he was surprised at how enjoyable the study was, given he had not expected it to be. He welcomed seeing all the people who showed up, particularly as some of them had narratives to share which took him by surprise. Davey positively met the outside gaze of the researcher because it provided people with the opportunities to discuss their lived experiences in themes other than sectarian difference. The presence of the researcher was seen as a welcome one because it brought a different perspective to age-old sectarian narratives. Davey saw the study as a chance to construct future narratives not couched in nihilistic, sectarian tones. While he enjoyed the experience, Davey reflects on how the past has a pernicious influence on the present-day narratives people share. He laments how there still remain a lot of challenges to overcome before any discernible change can be made in Northern Ireland.

### A narrative about someone on a study using the original process

In this narrative, Davey's view is that while the study was not disappointing, it was never going to result in alternative accounts of everyday life. He begins by reflecting on how the

study was good, initially, because it brought people out of their houses. It brought back a sense of community; just like in the old days. Davey also remarks how it was good to see some new faces too, which added to the fun of the study. He reflects that everything was going well until the researcher asked the group to find unresolved incidents. He recalls how this call for unresolved incidents did not go down well because it was exposing and invited unwanted glares, which had the potential to last long after the study was over. Davey dismisses some of the tensions which existed between people as 'playground stuff' of little consequence. He points out that the researcher's model narrative was too 'touchy feely' and put people off; a point he made to the researcher as he urged him to change his plans. The fact that the researcher changed his plans impressed Davey. Even though the researcher was from the same place as Davey, he no longer lived there, making him an outsider who had little awareness of what life was like in Davey's social settings. Davey was pleased to be given the chance to work with the technology as it would help his children. In his narrative, Davey sees the past as an impossible place to escape while age old divisive sectarian binaries persist. He points out that while tribalism sustains hate and division, it brings a comforting sense of familiarity because it keeps you close to 'your own'.

## Present and Future Professional Work

The applications of this work are wide-ranging. For example, in my role as an academic developer, I play a substantial role in the development and facilitation of a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) in my place of work. I have drawn from aspects of this work to inform my practices in two different areas of the course. The first is an induction session where I invite the participants to consider how their life histories, epistemological beliefs, departmental folk pedagogies and institutional strategies shape their academic practices and why. Discussions are triggered using audio vignettes created from short interviews with three academic practitioners[40]. These are fictional characters espousing the stereotypical values and characteristics associated with notions of the academic as: teacher, researcher and practitioner. I ask the participants to consider which character, or characteristics, if any, they most identify with and why. Along with colleagues, I act as Devil's Advocate to challenge the participants' beliefs and opinions. From small-group discussions, we seek to encourage the participants to see their role as an academic as a "reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives" (Giddens, 1991:5). Our role is to prompt the participants to

[40] These audio triggers can be accessed here http://bit.ly/CJJDavisEdD

problematise their perceptions of who they are becoming; not to enforce upon them an idealised vision of what it is to be an academic practitioner.

The second area of practice where I have used knowledge gained on this study is on the PGCAP module aimed at developing the participants as practitioner researchers. On this module, which I lead with a colleague, practitioner research is conceptualised as a form of inquiry aimed at exploring personal practices to develop a deeper understanding of the complex nature of higher education (Foreman-Peck and Winch, 2010). We encourage participants to adopt action-orientated approaches to develop, build on or change an aspect of their practice. This could be in relation to classroom practice, quality issues or even relationships with colleagues. Participants' research experiences vary; some have none, some have very little and some are established researchers in their own disciplinary fields.

This module can be hugely discomforting for some colleagues because it positions them as researchers working with people they know in a participatory capacity. For some colleagues, it is the first time they have been asked to work with non-human subjects. This can lead to discomfort when the ethical aspects of carrying out practitioner research with participants is considered. For some people on the course, they have little or no experience of ethical conduct when working with people. In one activity, I present them with four different ethical scenarios demonstrating how even with ethical clearance, situations arise which they may be unprepared for. The scenarios take the form of trigger resources generated from my own experiences and those of a colleague; I ask the participants to make a decision about how they will respond to the situations. When we have done this, it causes some discomfort for people as it challenges deep-seated disciplinary beliefs about what is ethical and what is not. This discomfort is used to generate discussions around the notion of procedural ethics and ethics in practice, particularly in relation to the colleagues obligations when researching their practices.

After completing my doctorate, I am committed to pursuing inquiry-led pedagogic approaches to support people to generate knowledge about their own lived experiences. I intend to inquire in educational contexts where a narrative pedagogy can support people to explore their life histories. As part of this, I see myself moving into a more sociological space where I encourage people to develop a sociologically curious gaze. By this I mean, problematising what they take for granted to understand how their personal agency is constrained and enabled by the social and cultural structures they exist within. I also intend exploring the use of more multimodal methods of data generation such as Photo Voice, which

encourages participants to take pictures of their everyday lives, describing them with written or audio commentaries.

In the next sections, I outline four projects realisable in my professional life and personal life. While the studies depart from explicitly encouraging people to construct alternatives narratives about their lived experiences, they still pursue a pedagogic principle of narrative disruption. The inquiries build on this study as they seek to facilitate degrees of epistemological discomfort to prompt participants to consider why they are emotionally attached to the beliefs, opinions and views they hold about the areas of inquiry I will focus on. By doing this, I intend using this discomfort to prompt the participants to learn about their lives through narratives they construct and narratives constructed about them by others. I see these studies taking place over the next three to four years.

## Future projects

I intend exploring elements of the Widening Participation (WP) discourse through the eyes of academics who might themselves be categorised as belonging to or coming from WP groups. My aim is to provide academics with opportunities to share their narratives of how they came to their roles, and how their experiences have influenced their perceptions of what academia is and who they are becoming as academics. This is an under-researched area and narratives which emerge from this study might give an alternative picture of academic identity and work. As part of this study, I intend exploring how the participants' contributions can be turned into multimodal artefacts which can be shared to make public the different paths academic practitioners take in life. For example, how interview extracts can be transformed into digital artefacts such as videos or audio vignettes to share knowledge generated during the inquiry.

There are knowledge gaps in areas exploring how parents and guardians of people labelled 'first-in-family' vicariously experience higher education (HE). A participatory approach will seek to develop a group of parents/guardians as inquirers. I will support them explore the experiences of people whose family members are, or were, labelled as first-in-family HE students. The aim of the study is to capture their perceptions of what being a first-in-family student involves. I will seek to support the inquirers explore the experiences of a cross-generational sample, that is people who had close familial connections with a first-in-family student in the past 20-30 years. In doing this, I seek to explore how the narratives people construct about their experiences are shaped by historically located social discourses. These

are perspectives which are seldom researched and need to be heard to contribute to discussions around widening participation.

Working with the teachers at Midview, I hope to carry out an inquiry with the children to develop them as participatory action researchers. Through this work, I seek to support the children construct narratives about the life history of their local community, embedding their own life histories within it. I will work with the children to identify the focus of their inquiries, the questions they want to ask; the methods of data generation and analysis they wish to use; their ethical responsibilities and how they will share their study outcomes. I also see this as an opportunity to involve parents to support the children and also become involved in the operationalisation of the study. Allowing the children to develop this knowledge about their lives, illustrates to them that inquiry and learning are not separate things. It also disrupts the narrative hegemony of studies which represent children's lives without involving them, and/or their parents.

A final project, which is a personal one, plans to explore the experiences of childbirth from a father's perspective. I became a father for the first time in 2012 and then again in 2015. Both experiences were different. My first daughter's birth was complicated and it left me traumatised and confused. The birth of my second daughter while being less traumatic, was nevertheless an anxious experience because of my first daughter's birth. The birth of my first daughter countered the seemingly idealised visions of birth and parenthood circulated as part of the National Childbirth Trust (NCT) pre-natal classes my wife and I attended. I would like to use Oral History approaches with a group of fathers to create a website containing a variety of narratives about the emotional work of becoming a father. Through the inquiry, I would provide people with opportunities to consider how their narratives are shaped by their social and cultural settings.

## Contribution to Knowledge

Through my work, I sought to build on studies exploring the methodological processes involved in carrying out pedagogic narrative inquiries. In particular, I saw my work building on empirical studies using narrative as a means of inquiry and product of inquiry in studies aimed at subverting dominant narratives representing some social groups as marginalised. The literature which deals with this knowledge is comparatively small, and foucuses on studies with groups who self-identify as marginalised or are characteristed as troubled in some way. It follows that the contribution to knowledge this study makes is mainly about

these processes, that is, knowledge about how to operationalise a pedagogic process aimed at supporting people construct narratives about their everyday lives from alternative viewpoints.

I outline where I have made a contribution to knowledge in the following areas: in relation to working with groups who resist the notion of being marginalised; how social dynamics influence the participants' narratives and the ethical dimensions of being a researcher as outsider with a degree of inside knowledge.

Most of the empirical studies I worked with focused on marginalised groups suffering different forms of social injustice. These included: themes of race and ethnicity (Bell, 2010; Shain, 2011 and Vassadis, Karimshah, Harris and Youssef, 2015); Australian aboriginal people (Quayle, Sonn and Kasat, 2015; McGloin, 2015); Canadian First Nations' peoples (Tafoya, 1995 and Qwul'sih'yah'maht and Robina Anne Thomas, 2005); forms of social inequalities on council estates (Haw, 2010 and Jones, Hall, Barrett and Hanby, 2013) and issues of gender (Haw, 1996, Lenette, Cox and Brough, 2013 and Smyth and McKnight, 2013). In all these studies, it was established there were "antagonistic meanings" (Britzman, 1991:57) affecting the everyday lived realities of people within the social groups under inquiry. The researchers used the presence of epistemological antagonisms to justify pursuing pedagogic principles of discomfort and disruption to provide the participants with opportunities to challenge dominant narratives perceived to represent them as marginalised.

My study explored the narratives of a group of teachers who did not identify as marginalised, troubled or in need of opportunities to be heard. I showed that without such an identification, resistance might occur. making it difficult for alternative narratives to emerge. The teachers valued having a space to develop narratives, but I hypothesise they resisted disrupting dominant narratives about their lived realities because the dominant narrative I asked them to unsettle provided ontological security. The teachers needed to believe in narratives which represented them as stoical, embattled humanists because they countered narratives of performativity they perceived to be eroding their sense of professionalism. Although I aimed to generate alternative, or counter narratives, I have shown that there probably needs to be a shared sense within the group of being affected by forms of social injustice for this to happen. The literature I worked with illustrated that a sense of social injustice provided a warrant for mobilising a narrative pedagogy seeking to produce alternative versions of everyday shared realities. Therefore, through my contribution to knowledge in this area, I have revealed that a disruptive narrative pedagogy seeking to encourage people to construct alternatives narratives will be more productive were a warrant to challenge forms of social injustice exists.

The second area my study contributed knowledge to was to discussions concerning the role of group social dynamics in inquiries pursing a pedagogic principle of narrative disruption. In nursing education contexts a strong sense of trust is seen as necessary in order to establish principles of inclusivity and democracy needed for narrative learning to occur (Brown et al, 2008; Gazarian, 2010 and Crow & Bailey, 2015). The establishment of these principles are conducive to the creation of learning conditions which foster dialogue, critical reflection and openness; all features of a disruptive narrative pedagogy (Diekelmann, 2001 and Goodson and Gill, 2011; 2014). My study added knowledge to this area by illustrating that even when pedagogic measures are put in place to facilitate trust, dialogue, critical reflection and openness, it is not guaranteed narrative disruption will occur. Where I believe I contributed knowledge was in illustrating that where the social dynamic of a group is shaped by relationships formed prior to the commencement of the inquiry, there is less likelihood of trust, dialogue, critical reflection and openness emerging. As my study demonstrated, the hierarchical relationship between the teachers, which pre-existed the study, made it difficult for individuals to disrupt dominant narratives. As some of the teachers told me, working with groups of people who they had not known would have made facilitating narrative disruption easier.

The third area where I believe my study contributes knowledge is to discussions around the role of outside researchers with inside knowledge, particularly in relation to reflexivity as an ethical dimension of an inquiry (Tickle. 2001 and Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). Although much of the empirical literature I worked with does deal with the ethical responsibilities of the researcher, it does so by referencing universal principles, such as “minimising harm, respecting anonymity, protecting privacy, offering reciprocity and treating people equitably” (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012:3). There is little in-depth discussion on the ethical tensions which emerge in-situ as researchers facilitate their studies. In particular, in the empirical literature discussing counter narratives, little focus, if any, is given to the ethical exigencies placed on researchers who occupy liminal spaces where they are neither complete outsiders or insiders.

I add knowledge to areas focusing on the ethical conduct of researchers in contexts where the boundaries between outsider and insider are blurred owing to emotional connections with the participants (Bridges, 2001) or working as an activist addressing perceived instances of social injustice (Tickle, 2001, Hemelsoet, 2014 and Zempi, 2017; Zempi and Awan, 2017). My work illustrated how being impartial in contexts where you make known your activist values

when working with people is very difficult. Through my experiences, I highlighted how when pursing narrative disruption, there needs to be a sense of personal distance between the researcher and the participants. I was acutely aware of the closeness of my relationship to the teachers, which made me cautious about taking risks as I feared causing potentially long-lasting amounts of distress.

My study illustrated the ethical attentiveness which needs to be paid to power differentials between the researcher and participants when pursuing a principle of narrative disruption. I saw the teachers as marginalised, a perception of them they rejected. Instead, they drew strength from the perpetuation of narratives representing them as embattled stoics. In their refusal to contest and disrupt narratives portraying them in a stoical light, they compromised the pedagogical aim of the study.

As I discuss in Chapter 3, I sought to resolve ethical tensions which positioned the teachers as ends in themselves by responding to their desires to cease pursuing unresolved incidents as the prompts for the creation of alternatives narratives. While this went some way to recognising the teachers as ends in themselves, it compromised the methodological objective of the study. I was scared of upsetting the teachers because I knew them.

## Conclusion

My experiences as an academic developer lead me to believe that disruptive narrative pedagogies are needed at a time when market forces are technicising teaching practices across the educational landscape (McLean and Ashwin, 2016). I grow increasingly alarmed how in higher education and other educational areas, performative discourses seem to sustain outcomes-based pedagogic approaches, which seek to identify correlations between attainment and value for money (Nussbaum, 2010, Ball, 2015 and McLean and Ashwin, 2016). In ever more audited and metrified educational landscapes, mobilising a pedagogic principle of narrative disruption is needed if we are to encourage educators and learners alike to “read, think and doubt” (Back, 2016:24). In doing this, educators can engender “communities of dissensus” where multivocal forms of knowledge can emerge and exist (Readings, 1995:180).

Going forward, a challenge I face is learning not to overcomplicate my approaches by working with too many concepts of narrative. This is something I did in this study and it took me down unhelpful and confusing paths. On reflection, this had much to do with my inexperience and my attempts to understand my own positionality as a narrative inquirer. I

will continue to pursue pedagogic principles which disrupt seemingly homogenous truths, particularly where they sustain social structures benefiting certain social groups.

As an individual, I am committed to inquiry approaches which guard against the "immutability of absolutism or the nihilism of relativism" seeming like the only choices researchers have (Haw, 1996:323). This is not a heroic humble brag. Rather, it is a response to aspects of my own life history where culture has sought to position me in imagined worlds full of monochromatic certainties. I want my contribution to education to be one which supports people to notice culture's "guiding influences and creatively adopt those that are fruitful while weeding out those that cripple our thinking" (Zimmermann, 2015:45). This is a risky business but education needs to be risky if it is to engender imaginative possibilities (Bruner, 1996).

## A short reprise to my daughters

I write this final piece on the eve before Eineen begins school for the first time and I enter the final stages of the period known as the Doctorate: one journey begins as another ends. My heart is full of joy, sadness and expectation as you, Eineen, take your first tentative steps into unknown social and cultural worlds, where competing beliefs, opinions and intentions will seek to influence you. I am happy because you are excited and sad because you're growing up so quickly. I worry because I'm concerned that material greed and profit are narrowing the possibilities education should bring. However, I remain hopeful that defiant voices can challenge dark narratives we currently find ourselves sharing about education. Learning should be fun, hard, discomforting, disruptive and enlightening. There should be room for all voices, even the ones we do not want to listen to sometimes. When we shut down spaces for voices to be heard, we drive less desirable ideas into dark corners where they are echoed and emboldened. That is why, as I said in the initial letter, I implore you to always question everything, particularly the ideas which are presented to you as absolute certainties. There is much value in difference and neither of you should ever feel tied to being one thing, or thinking in one way only. Through learning you can visit so many places in your mind, using those wonderful imaginations you have to explore a multitude of possibilities. So, I look forward to the journeys you both take. As for what lies ahead in my own educational journey, that is a chapter in my life yet to be written.

Love, Daddy

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 - Question schedule for ITE tutors and teachers

1. What are the biggest challenges currently facing teachers in terms of their everyday work practices?
2. What have been the biggest changes in primary education in the last 5 to 10 years and how are they impacting on:
    a. teachers everyday work practices
    b. initial teacher education
3. How would you say the NQT period differs now, if at all, from when you experienced it?
4. What are the biggest changes you see on the horizon for:
    a. primary education in general
    b. initial teacher training
5. What do you feel should be the priorities in terms of equipping:
    a. trainees for their transition to teaching full-time?
    b. teachers for a prolonged career in teaching?
6. What's good about teaching, if anything, at this current point in history?
7. What's bad about teaching, if anything, at this current point in history?

## Appendix 2– Participation information sheet

### Exploring everyday lives through storytelling: a research collaboration with primary school teachers

#### What the study is about

This is a study offering you, as a primary teacher, opportunities to learn new skills using technologies to create digital stories which tell *your* stories about *your* experiences as teachers. The study provides you with space to work with other teachers as you share your experiences. It is a study which offers you the chance to learn from others in a relaxed space free of worries about being graded or assessed. Taking part in this study will provide you with opportunities to put into practice, in your own teaching contexts, what you learn through your participation.

#### What you will gain

This is a great opportunity to develop a range of skills and new knowledge as part of your continuing professional development (CPD). By the end of this study, you will have had the opportunity to:

- gain new skills using a range of digital resources and technologies as you create and tell your stories;
- develop a sense of how similar (digital)storytelling practices such as those you engage with can be used in your own classrooms across a range of subject areas;
- access resources which will be available to you beyond the project;
- share your experiences as a teacher with others and learn from their experiences;
- take part in a participatory research project you are actively involved in, rather than being the subject in a study carried out by somebody else.

#### What is asked of you

You will be part of a group meeting six times at Midview to prepare and create digital stories representing your experiences as a teacher. The study will take 11.15 hours in total. A table containing information about anticipated dates, times and the nature of the sessions can be found on page 2. The sessions will be arranged at times which suit the group and cause as little inconvenience as possible to individuals. You do not need to have any technical skills to take part as you will be given training on how to use different technologies as part of the study.

## Ethical considerations

Your identity will be anonymised and you will not be asked to do anything which may distress or harm you. I hope you will enjoy taking part in the study and find it useful. However, you can stop participating if you find you no longer wish to. Aspects of each session will be recorded using audio and/or video devices. Data generated during the study will be stored on my password-protected computer, accessible only by me. If you want copies of any transcripts made from recordings, I will provide these. Should I seek to use any of the data generated as part of any write-ups, other than my thesis, and/or as part of conferences I will seek your permission.

**Further information and details about this study**

If you require further information about this study you can contact me, Charles Davis, at ttxcd15@nottingham.ac.uk. If you wish to contact my supervisor, Prof. Monica McLean, you can do so at monica.mclean@nottingham.ac.uk. Any ethical queries you have, can be addressed by contacting the ethics committee at educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk.

**Study schedule – 11.15 Hours in total**

| Stage | Activity | Location | Date | Duration |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Completion of electronic form providing basic biographical information, e.g. name and DOB. | This is done in your own time in a location of your choice | Mon 1st Sept 2014 | 15 mins |
| 2. | Discussing the aims of the study and participant involvement.<br>Small group activity: Exploring the storytelling process: thinking about narrative, reflexivity, disruption and representation. | Midview | Wed 10th Sept 2014 | 1530-1730<br>2 hours |
| 3. | Small group activity: Storying an incident from practice that prompted you to think about your role as a teacher.<br>Thinking about, creating and telling personal stories in small groups | Midview | Wed 17th Sept 2014 | 1530-1730<br>2 hours |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Listening to other participants' stories and discussing the story form and content | | | |
| 4. | Preparing our digital stories: Storyboarding and deciding on resources<br>Small group activity: providing critical feedback on other participants' story designs | Midview | Wed 24th Sept 2014 | 1530-1730<br>2 hours |
| 5. | Using Book Creator on the iPad: becoming familiar with the technology<br>Starting to create the stories using Book Creator | Midview | Wed 1st Oct 2014 | 1530-1730<br>2 hours |
| 6. | Finishing the stories using Book Creator<br>Sharing stories with the group and discussing participation in the process | Midview | Wed 8th Oct 2014 | 1530-1730<br>2 hours |
| 7. | Focus group to reflect on your participation on the study and how, if at all, the process might be changed.<br>Consider how, if at all the process might be used with children in teaching contexts. | Midview | Times and dates tbc | 1530-1630<br>1 hour |

***Please note that dates and times are provisional. They can and will be changed to meet the needs of everyone involved.***

## Appendix 3 – Participant consent form

| | |
|---|---|
| **Project title:** | Exploring everyday lives through storytelling: a research collaboration with primary school teachers |
| **Researcher's name:** | Charles Davis |

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the study has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.

I understand the purpose of the study and my involvement in it.

I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.

I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified. My personal contributions will remain confidential unless I give permission for them to be used in any published findings.

I understand that any video and/or audio data containing my image and/or voice will remain confidential unless I give permission for them to be used for other purposes.

I understand that I will be recorded using video and audio technologies during the sessions I attend with Charles Davis and the other participants.

I understand that data generated during the study will be stored in a secure location within the home of Charles Davis. I am aware that all digital content will be stored under password protected conditions on the personal PC of Charles Davis.

I am aware that should transcripts be made from any of any of session recordings containing my voice, I can request to have a copy.

I understand that the video content I create as part of this study will be stored on a password protected site only I, the researcher and the other participants will be able to access.

Signed …… (participant)

Print name ……

Date ……

**Contact details**

Researcher - Charles Davis: ttxcd15@nottingham.ac.uk

1st Supervisor – Prof. Monica McLean: monica.mclean@nottingham.ac.uk

## Appendix 4– The inquiry space at Midview

# Appendix 5 – Ethical clearance

2013/76 /JG

**School of Education – Research Ethics Approval Form**

The University of Nottingham

| | |
|---|---|
| Name | Charles Davies |
| Main Supervisor | Monica McLean / Kaye Haw |
| Course of Study | EdD |
| Title of Research Project: | Responding to representations of crisis: a research collaboration with newly qualified primary school teachers |

Is this a resubmission? ~~Yes~~ / No  Date statement of research ethics received by PGR Office: 13/12/13

Research Ethics Coordinator Comments:

I have seen all the documents accompanying this submission and I am satisfied they meet the criteria for ethical approval as long as the comment below is observed.

Comment:
In the Participant Information Sheet please clearly state the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time and without any consequences as you've done in the Participant Consent Form.

I consider this research to be above minimum risk ☐

*Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you and your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the University Research Ethics Committee.*
http://www/educationstudentintranet/researchethics/index.aspx http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/Ethical%20Guidelines *If you have any concerns during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice and refer again to the School of Education's Research Ethics Committee.*

*Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site. Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.*

Outcome:

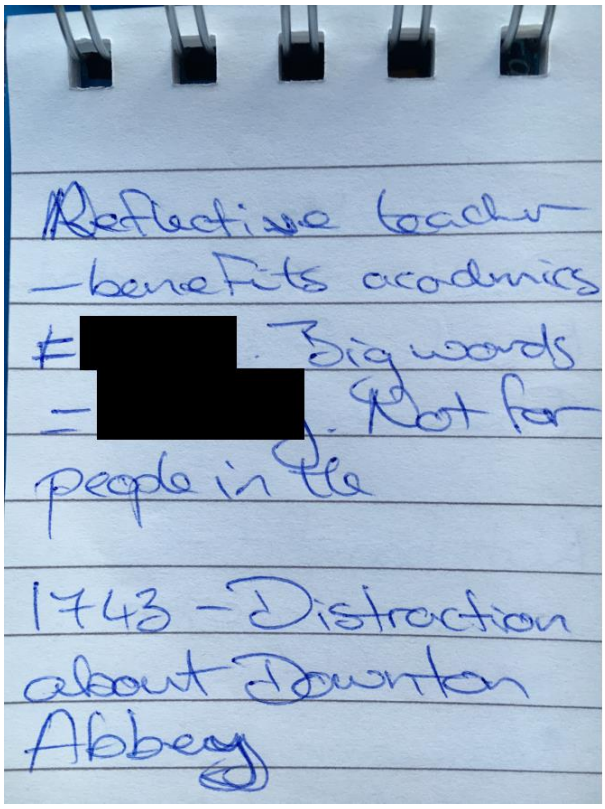
Approved ☑  Revise and Resubmit ☐

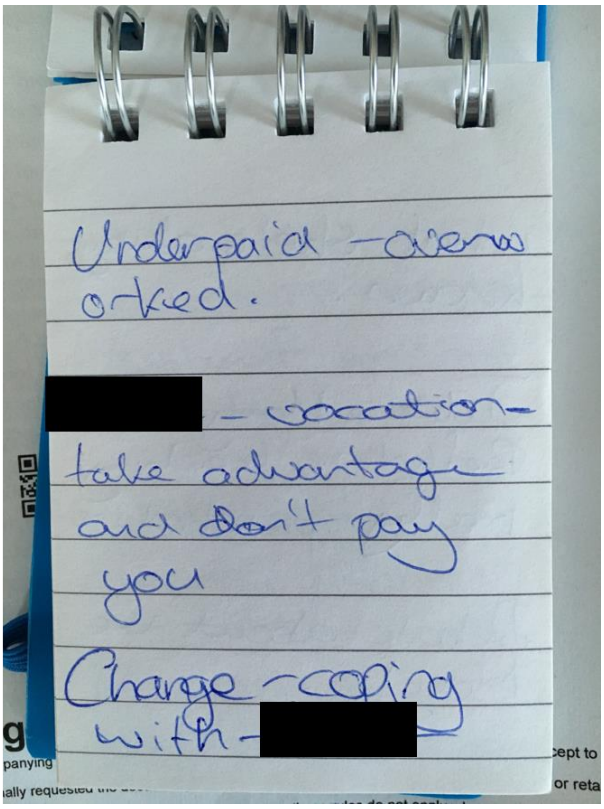
Signed:  Name: Dr J. Gimenez (Research Ethics Coordinator)  Date: 15.01.2014.

## Appendix 6 – Biographical data questionnaire

1. Name
2. Date of birth
3. Which year group(s) do you teach?
4. Which subject areas, if any, do you have responsibility for?
5. How long have been a primary teacher?
6. How long have you been teaching at Midview?
7. Have you ever created digital stories, audio or video content before?
    a. If you answered yes to the previous question, please indicate: what type of artefact(s) you created where you created your artefact(s) why you created your artefacts who you created your artefact(s) for
8. Why did you choose to take part in the study?
9. What do you hope to gain from the study?
10. What makes a good teacher?
11. How would you describe who you are as a teacher?

## Appendix 7– Scratch notes



## Appendix 8– Expanded fieldnotes (Session 3)

### Playing the ITE tutors' teaching incidents

I told them about my incidents on the sheets, but did not go into any great detail about this. I discussed these issues later when highlighting how one incident could have been turned into a war story.

Cynthia gave her approval to the actions of the Teaching Assistant in the first story. She appreciated her disregard for the rules and her 'devil may care' attitude. Sarah, when prompted, said the stories made her feel nostalgic for a time when there were less constraints on teachers. I asked that was there not a need for more guidelines because in times gone by people could have taught what they wanted, and the 'bad teachers' they referred to would have gotten away with anything. Cynthia argues that even a plan being in place did not mean that a bad teacher could do his/her job better. Sarah made the point that you do not teach plans and that good teachers can go off on tangents like the teachers in the incidents and bring the lessons back. Margaret said that she did not know anything different and the older teachers said that was because this was how things were for her.

The third incident when first played saw faces being pulled by Cynthia which mimicked poshness and Sam mentioned BBC English. Nadia, the narrator, has a very strong RP accent. Later Sarah said that she just thought those were the type of people I worked with.

Deborah liked the third story as did Sarah. Told a story. Cynthia liked it because it showed the teacher was not scared to deviate from the plan. Deborah also mentioned that the story was well told and had a beginning, middle and end. Margaret liked the second one, which the others were not so keen on because it was not a story, because it sounded like the narrator was speaking to the listener: very informal.

Cynthia said that she was still finding it difficult and that she understood how pupils felt when they had to write stories. Sarah said that she would help her and that sometimes it helped to talk things over to get an idea. I told them to think about what they do in their own sessions to get ideas for how they might go about telling their own stories.

I asked the group if they had any incidents. Cynthia maintained that she still had problems thinking of an incident. Sarah reassured her that it would come to her once they started talking about. Sarah shared an incident about a snowy day some years ago when the old head made them all come in. I said that the teacher in the story reminded me of Mrs Trunchbull from Matilda. I used this as an opportunity to highlight the examples of teachers and

pupils/children I had provided them with. Sarah and Cynthia said the head was not like Miss Truchbull and I used this to highlight the importance of thinking about the audience when creating their stories. I used the opportunity to refer to representation and how the audience formed part of the representational systems which communicated meaning. I alluded to the subjectivity of meaning and how what one person thought s/he was communicating was not always how others saw it. I mentioned the idea that the eventual story is written in the mind of the reader. Cynthia told a story about seeing a girl walking down the road who looked like Miss Trunchbull. She did the actions as well.

## Appendix 9- Post session reflections (Session 3)

The session ran rather slowly, I thought. They seemed fatigued and something had obviously happened in the school. I gathered later than a parent had come in and questioned, in a rather abrupt way, the manner in which her son had been dealt with after an injury he sustained in the playground. It was only a minor injury and from what I heard all the procedures for such incidents were followed according the LA guidelines.

Sarah is really easily distracted and disrupts the others with her when not fully engaged. Yesterday, it was playing games on the iPad and also talking about what had happened in the school. There was an incident with a box of tissues Cynthia had left on the radiator. There was quite a bit of commotion about this and Cynthia looked worried/irritated. Sarah said she would go and sort it out which she did. I got the impression that this was a health and safety issue. Later they were discussing the issue and I got the distinct feeling that the issue had something to do with Dorothy as they were, I believe, talking about her. I am not sure that they were talking about her in glowing terms. It is interesting that the longer I am with them, the less guarded they are about talking about particular things.

It was quite interesting that they were talking about sensitive things in front of me and also being aware that the recorders were on. I will have to reiterate at the end that all recordings will be deleted when the study finishes.

### Theory in the back door

Britzman (2003) talks about theory in the back door and I can see a lot of this going on in the sessions. There are a lot of folk theories being discussed that represent not just ideas about how things are done in the school, but at particular generational points. There is, as Sarah said, a lot of nostalgia for a time that has passed: a simpler time free of the constraints of red tape and procedure. There is a real sense that their views and 'folk pedagogies' are not always disrupted: certainly not in the staff room.

I told them that I was an 'outsider' and I feel it was a bad thing to do as the word carries with it a very negative connotation. It is reinforcing the differences that may be perceived between us. There are differences, but if, as Goodson (1995) advocates, researchers are to work with teachers to research their worlds, this difference, while real, should not be accentuated. Also, the methodological approach I am taking is one of co-construction and this lessens the validity of that approach. However, as Haw (1996) points out, I also have to acknowledge that ultimately I have more power over the manner in which their lives are represented in the thesis. With this resides great ethical responsibility.

## Appendix 10 – Post-session questionnaires (Session 1)

### Participant 2

| | |
|---|---|
| What, if anything, worked well about the session? Explain briefly. | a lot of discussion took place which was good, but may be different if grouping was made differently. be aware if you want partners next week! |
| What could have been better about the session? Explain briefly. | Can't think of anything. |
| What value, if any, might the session have for your teaching? Explain briefly. | perhaps think about how i tell a story and perhaps the questions i would ask at the end. |

### Participant 3

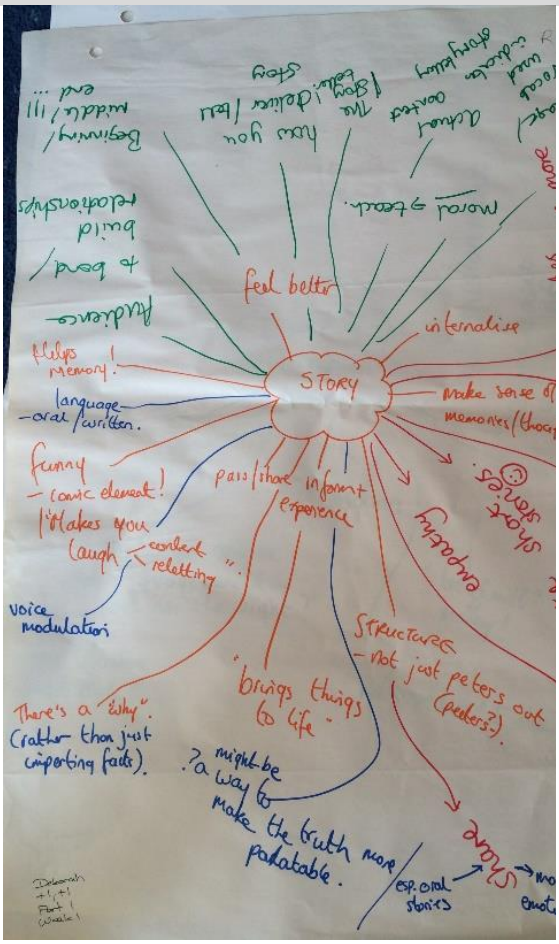
| | |
|---|---|
| What, if anything, worked well about the session? Explain briefly. | everybody contributed. thought provoking session. |
| What could have been better about the session? Explain briefly. | nothing really, good introduction and everybody contributed and shared ideas |
| What value, if any, might the session have for your teaching? Explain briefly. | ideas for story telling using ipads. thought that in teaching we are very restrictive on the format of stories that we ask the children to write. |

### Participant 5

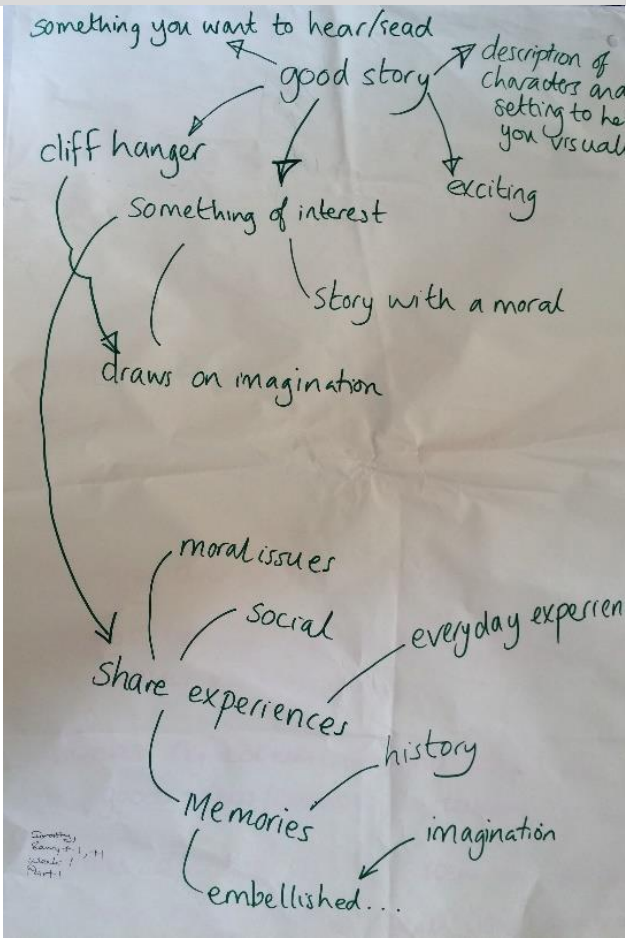
| | |
|---|---|
| What, if anything, worked well about the session? Explain briefly. | It was non-threatening - no one was put on the spot - so that's a plus. Although it would be interesting, though unlikely, to know what you heard! |
| What could have been better about the session? Explain briefly. | I hope the grouping will change throughout the weeks. Perhaps 'our stories' could be explained better at the moment I have nothing to say as it all seems to me as my teaching story seems very dull. Could you give an example of what you mean? Do you mean taking an incident and making it in a story of fiction? |
| What value, if any, might the session have for your teaching? Explain briefly. | Difficult to say but I now know of more possible apps to use. |

## Appendix 11– Mind maps

Session 1a- What is a story?

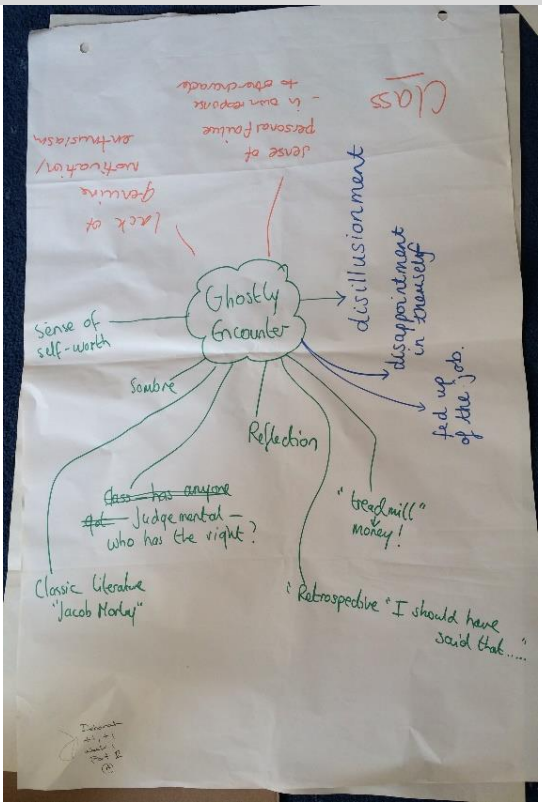



MM1a-Deborah, Sarah and Margaret

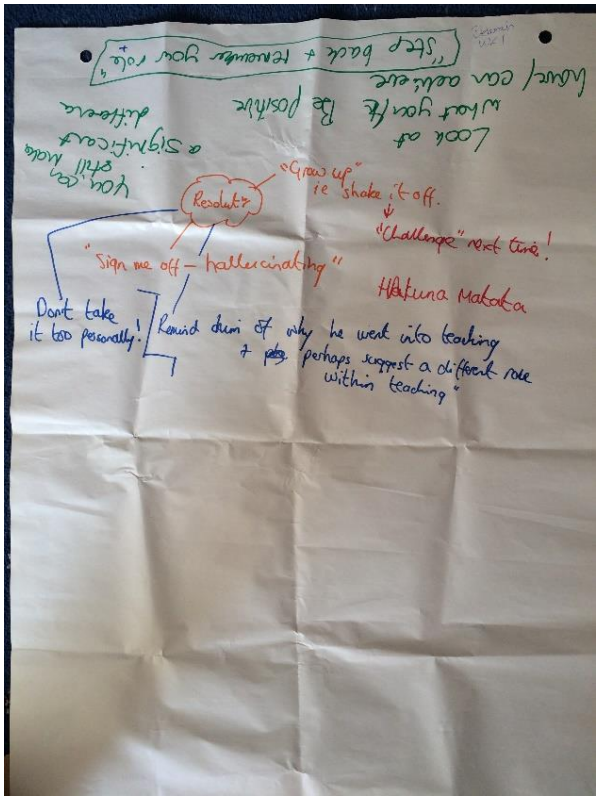



MM1a-Dorothy, Sam, Cynthia and Roberta

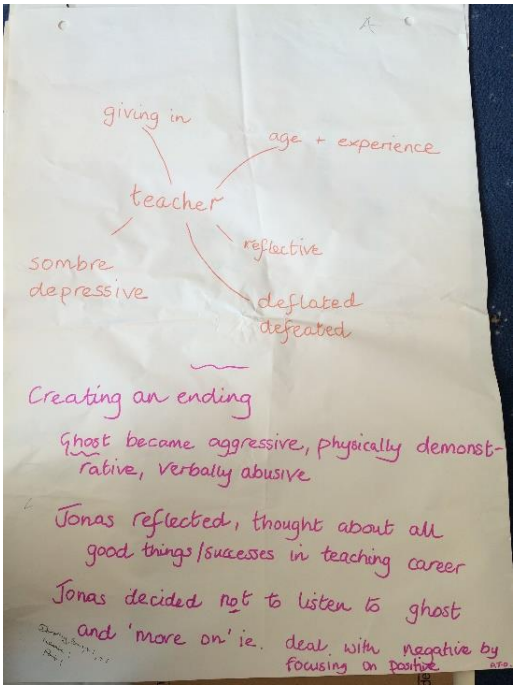
Session 1b-Creating an ending for the trigger story




MM1b-Deborah, Sarah and Margaret (pt1)

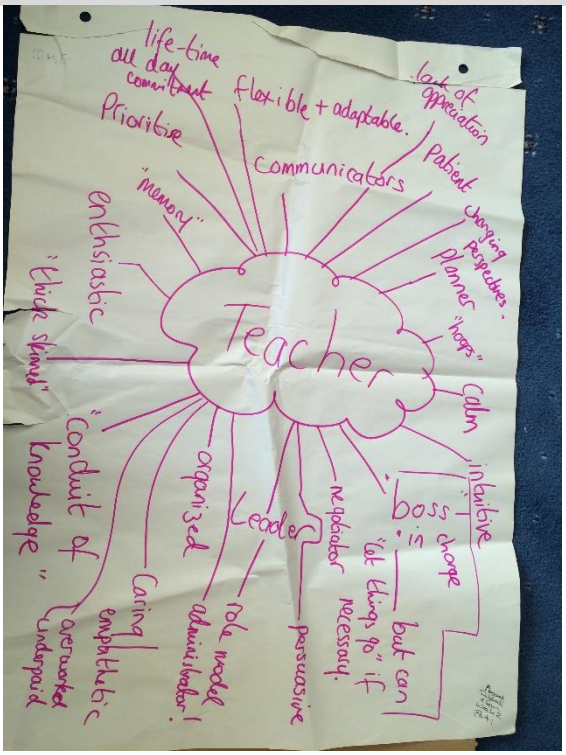



MM1b-Deborah, Sarah and Margaret (pt2)

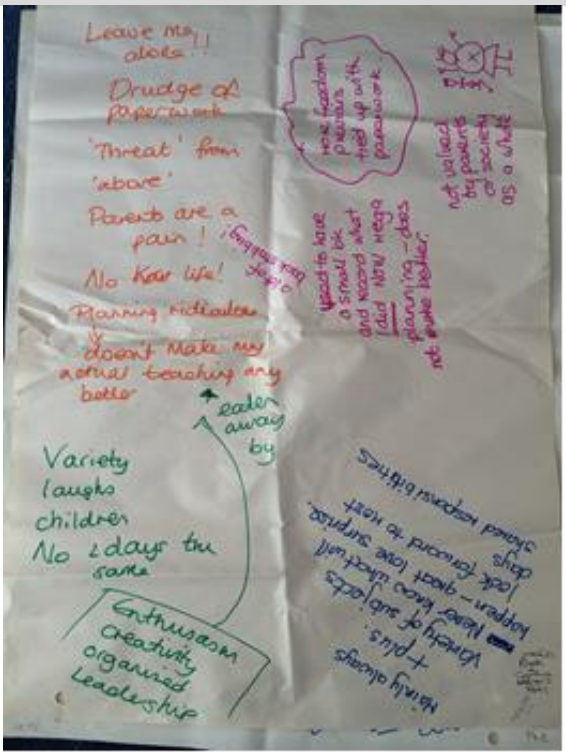



MM1b-Dorothy, Sam, Cynthia and Roberta

Session 2a-What stories exist about teachers?

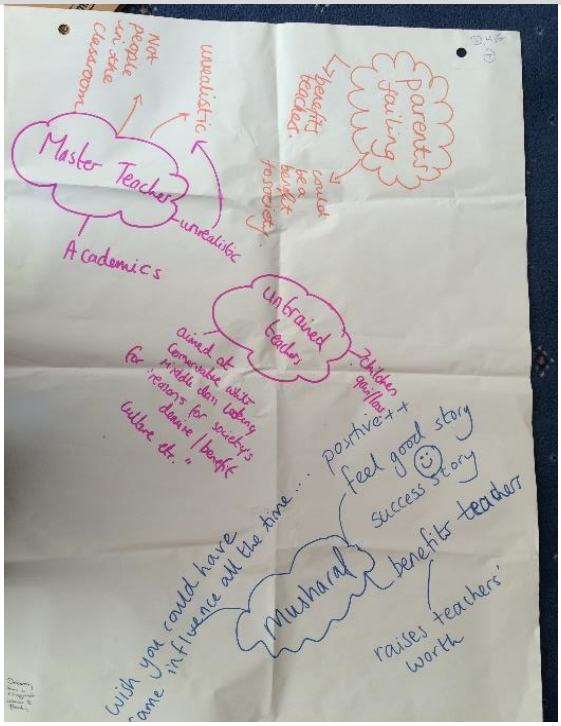



MM2a-Deborah, Sam and Margaret

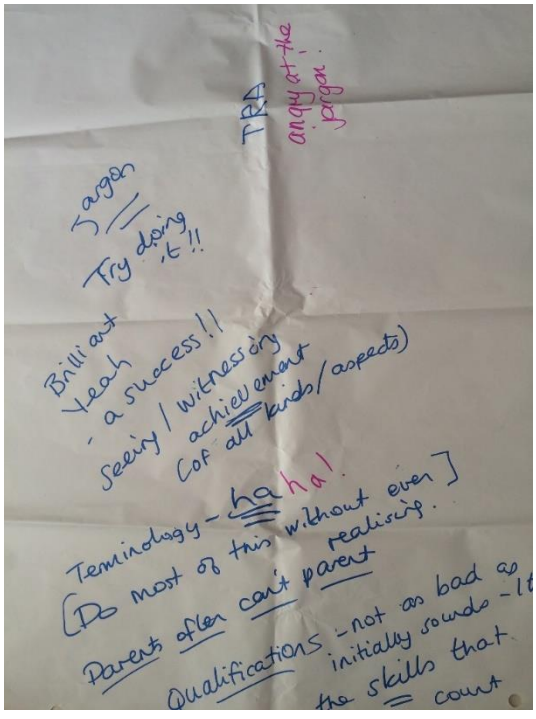



MM2a-Cynthia and Sarah

Session 2b-Responding to dominant narratives

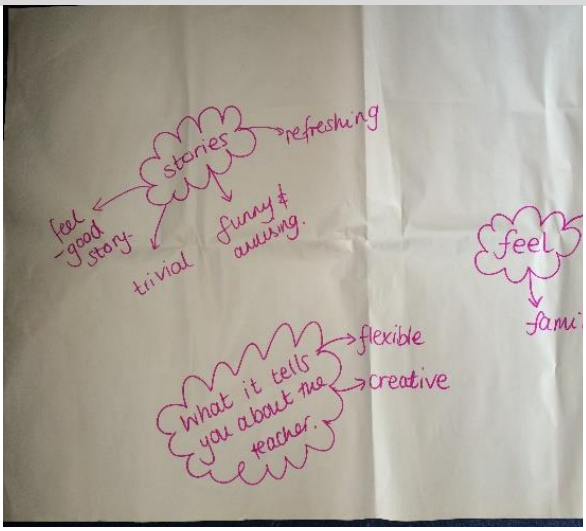



MM2b-Deborah, Sam and Margaret

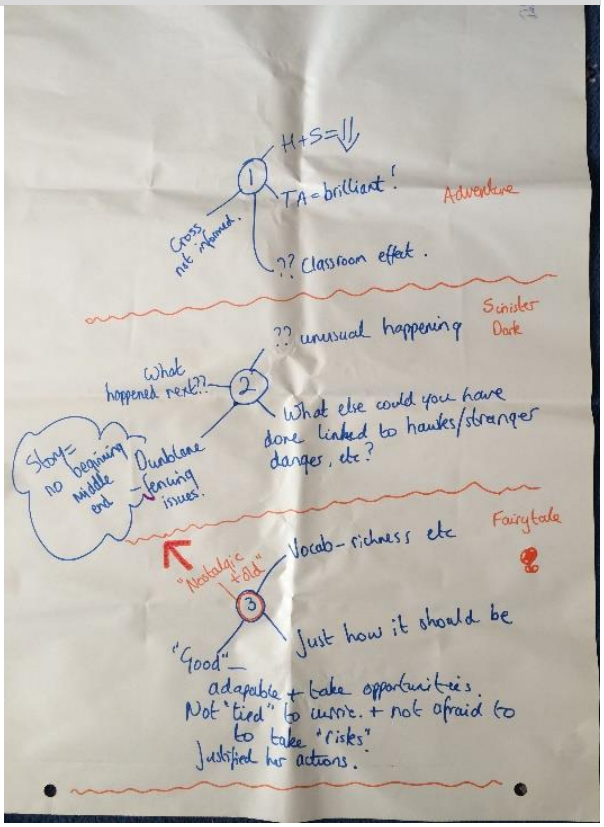



MM2b-Cynthia and Sarah

Session 3 - Responding to ITE tutors' anecdotes




MM3-MargaretandSam




MM3-Sarah, Deborah and Cynthia

## Appendix 12- End-of-study interview schedule

Discussion about my, Charlie's performance

1. Why did you take part in the sessions?
2. What were your expectations of the sessions?
    a. *Prompt*: Did the sessions live up to your expectations? Why/why not?
3. What changes, if any, would you make to the sessions?
4. How did my presence impact on the sessions? (Would you have come if it had been anyone else)

Discussion about the experience of the participants

1. What effect did the sessions have on you? Why do you think they had these effects?
    a. *Prompt*: as a teacher (or as a person)
    b. Prompt What did you learn?
    c. *Prompt*: Are you pleased about that?
    d. Was there anything you found difficult/uncomfortable? Why do you think that was?
2. Was there anything you found particularly worthwhile?
3. Did the other people taking part have any influence of the stories you created?
4. What will you 'take away' from these sessions?

Discussion about the stories produced by the participants

1. How did you decide on your story?
2. What did you feel about it as you were creating it?
    a. And now?
3. Do you think you story says anything about how you see yourself as a teacher?
    a. What?
    b. Do you think your story says anything about what it's like to teach these days in the UK? What?
4. Is there anything you'd change about your story now?

Other questions

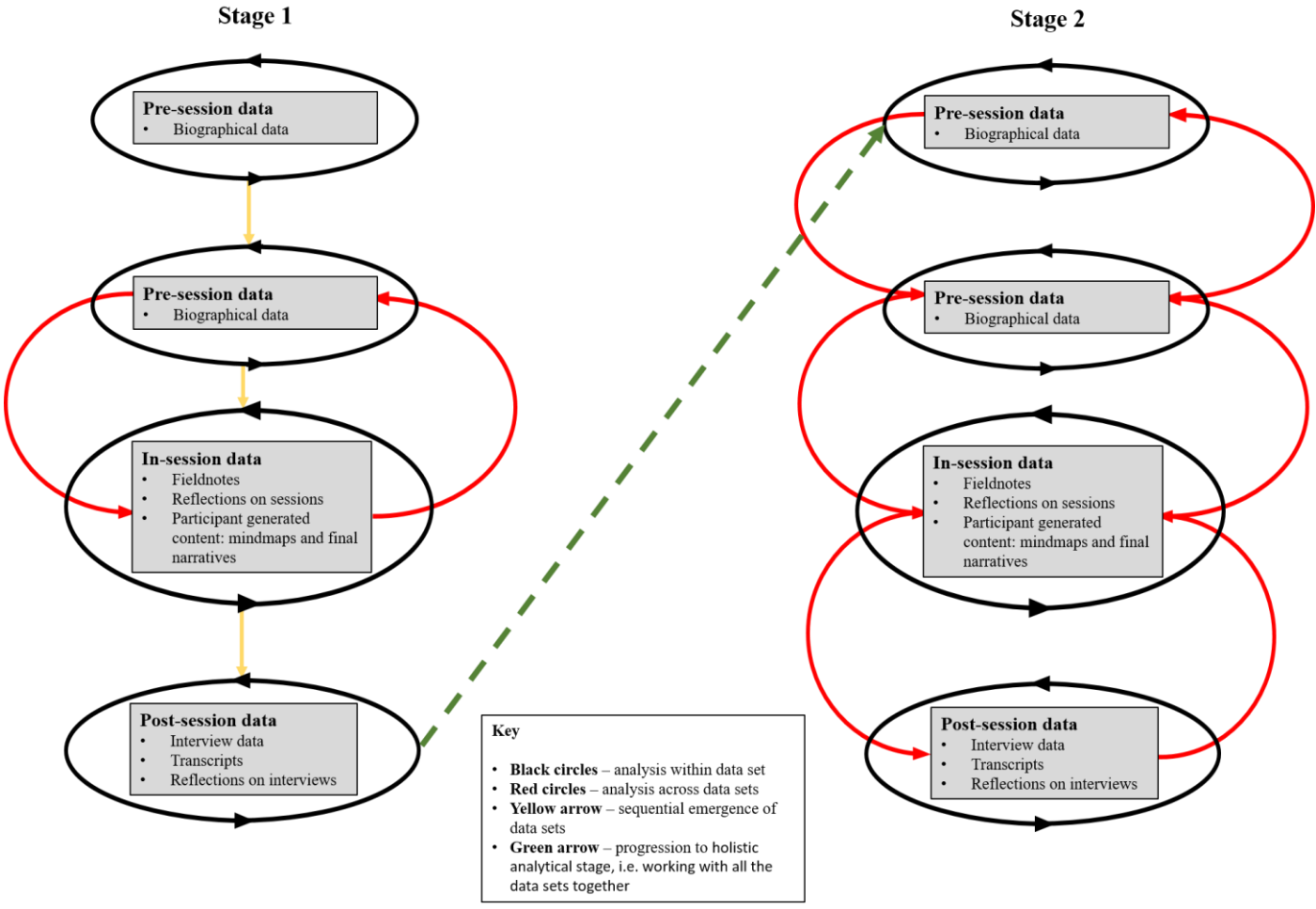
1. Did you use the resource site?
    a. Why/why not?
2. Did the discussions you had during the sessions feel similar or different to the types of discussions you'd have in the staff room

## Appendix 13 – Reflections on participant interviews (Sam)

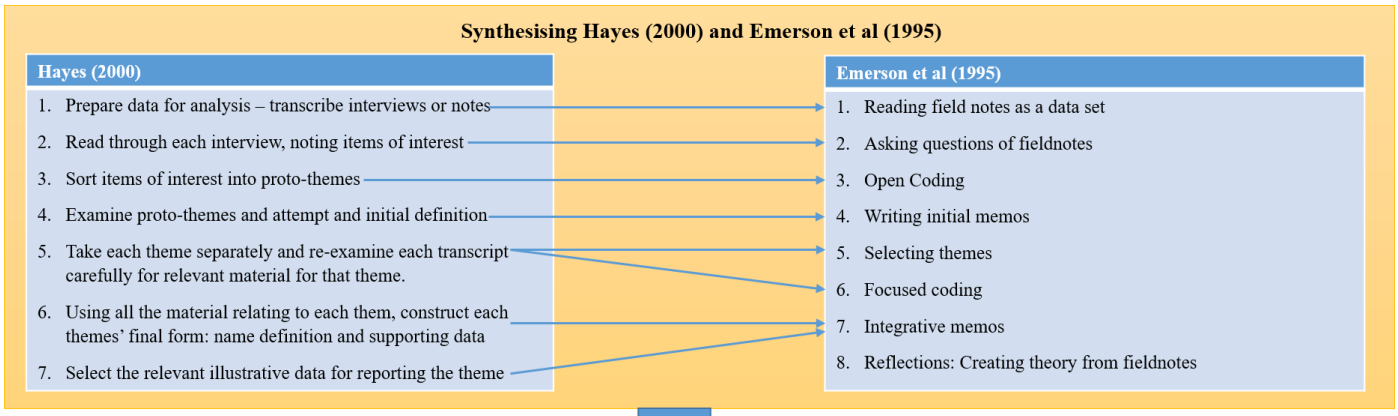
It is going to be very difficult to keep people anonymous and also to ensure that stories are not misinterpreted. This is particularly important to observe for Sam as he is new in the school and at the beginning of his career. It was really awkward doing the interview as people kept coming in and out. It is a school and this is unavoidable. I realise just how much they are giving me in terms of their time. Sam didn't talk as much about time as the others. He was quite nervous I felt as he ripped the plastic off a whiteboard pen. I feel that I'd have been better doing this over a pint. However, it may have been too "cathartic". I'm not sure I could even put the thesis in EtHOS. There are still questions around who owns the digital stories and what rights I have with regards to showing and using them. I would still argue that I needed to ask the people to use them. It was interesting that SM had not issue with the reflection. This links to what Deborah said about the older teachers not having to do this: there's no conceptual foundation to make sense of the strategic and organised manner in which reflection is approached in QTS or NQT. It was interesting that Sam said that the session allowed him to get to know the others better. This was similar to what the man said at the Away Day about reconfiguring groups when new people come in. Once you get beyond the vomit-inducing nonsense about high performing teams it actually might make sense.

Twice during the interview we were interrupted with people coming into the classroom. I was reminded again how this is a working environment and life goes on regardless. It also highlighted how interviews of this nature should be carried out in a quiet area away from interference. However, how realistic is this when you are working under constraints I was? It may play out this way in a lab but not in a school like Midview. It was quite surreal having the conversation with one of the TAs about her husband’s heart condition in the middle of the interview, particularly as her child was with her. I was really concerned about the tape recorder being on and whether I should have told them or not.

## Appendix 14 – Different stages of the analytical process



# Appendix 15 – Synthesising Hayes (2000) and Emerson et al (1995)




| Final synthesised analytical approach | |
|---|---|
| Stage 1 | Preparing sources for analysis: writing up field notes; transcriptions and preparation of participant generated content. |
| Stage 2 | Initial scanning of data looking for potential themes. |
| Stage 3 | Identifying early themes through open coding. |
| Stage 4 | Consolidating early themes into proto-themes. |
| Stage 5 | Revisiting the data sources to test themes and reinterpret, where necessary. |
| Stage 6 | Creating distillations of the data sets to consolidate themes and associated meanings. |
| Stage 7 | Refine the final themes, identifying content for excerpt commentary units. |
| Stage 8 | Organising final themes into claims and conclusions (constructing the thesis narrative). |

## Appendix 16 – Early themes emerging from biographical data

| Early-theme | Example of content |
|---|---|
| **Age** | • A range of ages from teachers in their 60s to a teacher in her mid-20s. |
| **Varying levels of teaching experience** | • Level of teaching experience range from 40 years to two years. |
| **A product of Midview** | • All the teachers with the exception of Sam have spent their teaching careers at Midview. This would suggest that the teachers' life histories are strongly connected with each other's and the School's. |
| **Limited experience with digital tools to create digital narratives** | • Sam is the person in the group with the most experience using digital tools to create narratives. He used Book Creator in a previous school. |
| **Gaining new technical skills** | • Most of the teachers took part to gain new skills using digital tools. |
| **Teacher as saviour** | • The dominant narrative around what makes a good teacher is of someone steeped in a humanistic desire to develop the whole child. |
| **A challenging profession** | • There is a sense that the job is one fraught with challenges as dedication is needed as well as patience. |

## Appendix 17 – Early themes emerging from the interview data

| Emergent theme | Example of content |
|---|---|
| Inquiry space as narrative firebreak | • The inquiry space was a space for the teachers to talk about being a teacher on their terms<br>• A different and welcome approach when compared with INSET days, which were seen as done to the teachers |
| A need to work in the sessions | • The teachers were generally not keen on working outside the sessions<br>• The resource site was not used |
| A shift in control | • The teachers rejected the unresolved incident, making their autonomy known |
| Findings stories to tell is difficult | • Acknowledgement that finding incidents to create narratives from was difficult |
| Different degrees of critical reflection | • Generational factors relating to initial teacher education experiences influence perceptions of affordance attributed to refection |
| Power structures influencing dialogue | • There is a hidden hierarchy in the group which influences the teachers' willingness to tell certain stories |
| My position as neither insider or outside | • Initially I was seen as being too close, then I was seen by some as a fellow traveller owing to my professional background. |
| Unwelcome outsiders | • Dorothy was seen as a threat<br>• External bodies such as Ofsted seen as agencies seeking to deprofessionalise teaching |
| Triggers provoke divergent opinions | • The Ghostly Encounter made some teachers feel under pressure to create something similar, while others (Deborah) felt I was right to include is as it was my story. |

## Appendix 18 – An example of open coding of fieldnotes

### Observations – Midview Wednesday 10th September 2014 (Open code)

| | |
|---|---|
| | **Arriving at the school** |
| Following child safety protocol.<br><br>A busy time in the school<br><br>Welcoming me to familiar surroundings | I arrived at the school, signed in and had a chat with the secretary. As always, I was stuck by the warm and friendly atmosphere in the school. There were lots of parents and children in the main hall taking part in an activity of some sort. There was a lot of noise and activity. I also met the Head who was asking about my life in general and my daughter, who was ill. We had a short chat and she took me to the room. I told her I needed a projector and AVG lead (adapter to connect to the projector and iPad). She told me David, the caretaker, would get me sorted with anything I needed. She said farewell and headed off into the school somewhere. |
| | **Getting into the room** |
| David sorted me out<br><br>Back to running the school<br><br>The room wasn't set up | When I got to the room, it was not organised and I had to start taking tables down and reorganising the room, which was the music studio. It was very small and it was difficult to see how I was going to configure the room in such a way that I would be able to observe two small groups. I also did not have a screen to project onto. Roberta, the Foundation Stage teacher taking part, walked past the room, said hello and joked about me being ready for them. I laughed and said I had no idea what I was doing. She said, she hoped I had which I replied of course I did. David, the caretaker, kindly got me an AVG lead and a projector, which was not working. When he was getting me the projector he mumbled something like 'the projector, like most stuff in the school, probably doesn't work.' It actually did not work and he had to get me the main projector which was being used in the main hall for what I believe was a parent and pupil storytelling activity. In the middle of setting the room up Dorothy, the Head, came to see me again. This time she was asking about what I was |

| | |
|---|---|
| Room wasn't ideal for observing 2 groups<br><br>Missing projector screen<br><br>I'm a familiar face in the school<br><br>I have anxieties and worries – joke with Roberta<br><br>Equipment not working<br><br>Caretaker's complaint suggest School's equipment not of a good standard<br><br>Questions from Dorothy about the study | doing with regards to the day and the study. I did not want to say too much before the others arrived so I concentrated in telling her the study was with the teachers and not on them. I told her how I felt the study could give something back to the school and how in the past when I did studies with participants I always felt I got more out of it than they did. She agreed and nodded as I told her how the project would get the staff using the iPads. Interestingly, when mentioned the 'co-construction' focus of the study and how it was something which could benefit the staff, she asked if the TAs could do it. At that point my daughter came bursting into the room and jumped into my arms. She was there with Gwen dropping off biscuits for the session. As usual, everyone was all about Eineen when they found out she was there. I met a lot of the TAs. Dorothy and Gwen started to discuss a mock Ofsted inspection that had been carried out the previous day by someone training to be an Ofsted inspector. From what I could gather, the inspection went well. Even though it was a 'mock' activity, I know there was a lot of anxiety about it. I got the room arranged and all my bits and bobs lined up, i.e. pens, flip chart paper, MP3 recorders, iPad, with all the relevant pages open in Chrome and slides ready. I deliberated over whether or not to have the tape recorders on the tables before the participants arrived. In the end I decided not to as I felt it looked a little too intimidating. I also decided to sit in the chair in front of them rather than stand as I felt this made me seem too much like a teacher, reinforcing that they were there to learn something through direct instruction. Bizarrely, I started to tell myself not to sit on the table, remembering derisory comments made about a colleague who was a 'table sitter'. I was nervous; nervous because I knew them, nervous because of the false starts and I needed this to be seen through; nervous because of my closeness to the school; nervous because I had very little notion of what it meant to observe and nervous because I did not know what to expect.<br><br>**The participants arrive** |

| | |
|---|---|
| Not saying too much before the others arrive<br><br>CPD opportunities<br><br>My emphasis on a study with people not on them | The participants arrived and sat down. It took about ten minutes for things to settle and they were discussing a cake that Cynthia, Year 3 teacher, had baked them. I believe it was bread cake or something like that. Sam, the new Year 4 teacher, was the only man in the group. It was the first time I'd met him. He is the ICT coordinator and used Book Creator and iMovie before, so his help will be good. The next to arrive was Deborah, the Year 1 teacher; then Margaret, the Year 2 teacher and Roberta, the Foundation stage teacher. Margaret. Dorothy, the Head, arrived with Sarah, the Year 6 teacher. The last to arrive, and make an entrance, was Cynthia, the Year 3 teacher. She commented on the highlighters and made a sarcastic remark about how these were new in the school and they never had them. I chose to ignore it. Some people asked if they had to take notes and I replied that they could if they wanted to. I told them that they could take notes throughout if they thought it would be helpful or of use. Most of them went away and came back with paper and pens. Throughout the whole session, the only people I noticed taking notes were Dorothy and Deborah. |

## Appendix 19– An example of open coding on Cynthia's transcript

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 00:09:58.7 | 00:09:58.8 | Do you think you could ... did you ever feel you couldn't ask me to stop and explain things, or ... | Ch | |
| 00:10:04.2 | 00:10:04.3 | No, not at all, not at all. No definitely not. I could've done. I might have been a little bit embarrassed with my colleagues there, but as I said most of them know what I'm like, anyway. | C | Felt safe to ask for explanations<br><br>The space provided safety |
| 00:10:16.9 | 00:10:17.0 | If we just go back again to think about the expectations you had, what were they in terms of, if you had any at all of the sessions? | Ch | |
| 00:10:27.1 | 00:10:27.2 | I thought I might learn something and I did (Ch- What did you learn?) (Laughs) I learnt that there was another app I could get to use with the children. I could use that with the children but I'd use it simply. Obviously at that this age. | C | Becoming familiar with a new technology |
| 00:10:41.9 | 00:10:42.0 | We talked about that last week. have you thought about how you might use it? | Ch | |
| 00:10:46.3 | 00:10:46.4 | I think I might start by erm, by us making a erm, they might want to make a page for themselves. You know? We're putting it into a book sort of thing. They might find something that interests them or we might use one of the topics. You know. | C | A sense of how Book Creator might be used with the children |
| 00:11:01.8 | 00:11:01.9 | Erm, I mean is there anything, if you think about the whole process and the sessions as they went along, what would you change about them if anything? | Ch | |
| 00:11:13.7 | 00:11:13.8 | ... I don't really know cos i don't really know what the alternative is, do I? Cos, I'm not, I don't know what I'm ... to be perfectly honest, I don't really know ... I do know that you erm, erm, giving us some more tools sort of thing but I don't know what your main aim of it was. | C | Not sure what the aim was[41] |
| 00:11:41.7 | 00:11:41.8 | Right, well as I said at the beginning it was ... it's (C - can I drink my coffee?) aye, aye, aye, work away. Erm, it was basically to work with you to look at that process and as you were going along it was how you were working in the process. My head was thinking that's working, that's not working, I need to change that and it's because of this reason. But it was also seeing how you worked with ahh that process. How you worked in the groups, how you worked in the software and to see whether or not it opened up a space for you that you felt you come into and use storytelling to thing about aspects of your teaching. And initially that was thinking about something that was unresolved but we | Ch | |

[41] Second reflection - I need to find out who discusses giving participants too much information. I think in this instance it went in my favour, but that was just good luck. I was still trying to work it out.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | found out quite quickly that just wasn't going to work if we perused that, which was part of the reason why I was doing what I was doing. | | |

## Appendix 20 – Initial reflective memos from open codes

Initial memo – Observations form session 1 (Wednesday 10th September 2014)

# Arriving at the School

### Warm and friendly school

As always, I was struck by how friendly and welcoming the staff were in the School. There were parents milling around with their children, with Dorothy standing at the entrance, almost guarding the School. Her presence suggested that this was something of a ritual. In fact, I observed throughout the study that she seemed to do this a lot. It was strangely paternal, suggesting she was keeping an eye on how the school was ticking over.

### Day-to-day activities impacting upon the sessions

This is a working school and the hive of activity which was happening around me at the time the sessions took place reinforced that. It was home time and there was a lot of toing and froing among teachers, children and parents. This definitely impacted on the amount of time it took the participants to settle during the sessions. It may be worth considering this timetabling aspect when implementing the framework in other contexts: though needs to be given to how the daily activities of individuals could potentially impact upon the sessions.

### Getting into the room

The room was not set up for me and in hindsight I should have specified what I wanted in advance. I needed to be more prepared as the first engagement with staff shows I was anxious. Ideally, I would have had my own equipment rather than work with the School's. Also, I should have gone to the school beforehand to do a recce. What this incident shows is that carrying out this sort of work in locations outside of those available leaves you in the laps of the Gods with regards to the spaces you have and the equipment. This is important to consider if this work is being done in community locations. Also, as transpired in the post-session evaluations, the space and how it is configured can influence attitudes to and perceptions of the study.

### David's presence

David, the caretaker, took me to the room and helped me get the room set up. The first projector did not work so he got me another one. He made some comment about the fact the first one did not work was not unusual as nothing worked in the School. Was this an example of sour grapes or is it a true reflection of the state of the resources in the School? As mentioned previously, it does call for awareness of what equipment is available to you and the state it is in. It also demonstrates the disparities which exist across schools in terms of the

digital equipment available to staff. This needs to be considered when implementing the framework. It also brings into question how digitally literate the participants are to engage with the technologies and the processes. This has huge implications on the design factors and also the time to teach participants to use the technology. You cannot become too distracted by this otherwise it becomes all about the technology.

### The discussion with Dorothy – what's in it for the School?

Dorothy was keen to find out what I was doing, which is her wont given she is the Head. However, the line of questioning felt like she was probing to see what the benefits of the study would be to the School rather than the individual participants. In my initial reflections I wondered if this 'value-added' sensibility was a result of the School becoming an academy. How relevant this is, I cannot be sure about without further questions being asked.

## Appendix 21 – Initial memo of Cynthia's transcript

| | |
|---|---|
| Did the study because Gwen asked<br><br>Did not feel obligated to take part: thought it would be fun<br><br>Contemplated dropping out after week 1 owing to Dorothy<br><br>Dorothy made her feel like she was being judged<br><br>Felt more relaxed when Dorothy did not return<br><br>The structures and hierarchy shape relationships<br><br>Not as informal with Dorothy there<br><br>There is a sense of us and them<br><br>Dorothy acknowledges it was their space[42]<br><br>A perception of me as nice: she does not know me<br><br>No obligation to take part owning to Gwen asking | 00.54- **Did the study because Gwen asked -** Cynthia makes the point that she did the study because Gwen asked her to, but she in no way felt obligated to. She also said that she thought it would be fun.<br><br>01.17 - **Contemplated dropping out -** Due to the group dynamic, C said that she felt like dropping out after the first week. She said that the group felt wrong, which it turned out was more to do with having Dorothy present than anything else. She said that her presence made it feel like she was being judged. She said she was relieved when the Head didn't come back, intimating that she felt less judged. She says she didn't feel she could relax the first week.<br><br>02.20 - ***Different plains of professionalism / our space*** - C makes the point that she works well with the Head in a professional capacity, but that did not extend to the sessions. She thought these would be more relaxed and professional in a different way. I get the sense that the Head is part of the disembodied voice Sally feels exists with teaching - the Performative presence. There is a real sense here of an us and them situation with Dorothy representing the performative them. She even says she felt it would be more for them with them being the teachers. I could never truly have been their space if Dorothy had stayed the distance. In the end, I think she was as relieved as C to not be returning.<br><br>02.57 - **Your normal nice self -** C says about me being my normal nice self. I find this incredible, given that I don't know her. Games!? I had never had anything to do with her before these sessions. |

[42] Second reflection - This shows that she picked up on it during the first session. There are histories in the School which came into the sessions. This is part of everyday life.

| | |
|---|---|
| Acknowledging she was a disruptive influence<br><br>Playing the victim<br><br>Dropping the unresolved issues was a good thing to do<br><br>Everything is resolved no matter what the outcome<br><br>Letting sleeping dogs lie and getting on with things<br><br>Not wanting to lose face | 03.46 - ***I was a bit of a pain** - C never felt after the initial session that she was obligated to Gwen to continue, although I get the sense that she did at some stage. Like the others, I wonder what her motivation with regards to doing it because Gwen asked was. Here, she claims that she was a pain during the sessions because she found them difficult. I always felt that she made them more difficult than they needed to be. It was frustrating to be interrupted by her constant messing and chit chatting with Sarah[43]. She perceived herself to be viewed as a thorn in the side of the process. She also says that it is nobody's fault as it is self-inflicted.[44] |

[43] Second reflection - You can sense here that I was less than sympathetic. She may have found it difficult but she did little to help herself.
[44] Second reflection - I wonder if she actually takes some sort of satisfaction from this.

## Appendix 22 –Proto themes emerging from open coding

| Proto-theme | Example of proto-theme |
|---|---|
| **Performative gaze** | • Dorothy's presence<br>• Curriculum (prescriptive adherence to it) |
| **Dorothy** | • What was in it for the School<br>  ○ Contradicted my rationale<br>• The focus of complaints<br>  ○ she was not there but she was there |
| **Behaviour management** | • Individual called for disruptive participants to be reprimanded<br>• Group dynamics |
| **Fossilised attitudes** | • reassurance in familiarity of everyday beliefs<br>• pyrrhic resistance<br>  ○ self-muting and self-destructive |
| **Folklore-folk culture** | • Clear pecking order – generational sense of entitlement owing to years in the job<br>• Tough teachers – this was a very powerful folk psychology which was used to square breaches and stop people from digging too much or going too far |
| **A golden age of teaching** | • Old Head – Sarah and Cynthia<br>• More respect for teachers |
| **Coping with (ontological and epistemological) threats** | • using the myths to cope with perceived threats emerging from dialogic/interrogative process<br>• No agentic control or responsibility– it's the system's fault Victimic plot (teacher) identity - Polkinghorne (1996) |
| **Giving something of myself (the researcher)** | • staying distant<br>• my story was uncomfortable |
| **My outsider insider status** | • Professionally on the outside<br>• Part of the School community (use community loosely |
| **Their space or mine?** | • My ideas were disrupted<br>• I responded to some of their requests |

| | |
|---|---|
| | ○ It was not out of altruism – out of fear of the process grinding to a halt |
| **My ethical positionality** | • Tensions between ends to a means or ends in themselves – ethical methodological tensions - power<br>• How far to push with themes of discomfort<br>○ Impact on their practice |
| **My role** | • Insider – outsider<br>• Friend – interloper |
| **Gwen – the gatekeeper** | • Critical friend – checks tone, register and appropriacy<br>• Inside knowledge<br>○ Putting people together |
| **The physical research space** | • Cluttered and difficult to work in<br>• Working with what you have – community based |
| **Time** | • Constant complaint: not enough time to do anything<br>• They always arrived late |
| **Location** | • Sessions were too close to the School (action)<br>• Music room was not the best place for the sessions |
| **The interrogative research space** | • A space for political descent<br>• Gripes and moans<br>○ Managing these – nipping them in the bud but giving time for their airing |
| **Triggers** | • My story set the (wrong) tone<br>• Other teachers' anecdotes |
| **Managing voices** | • Letting everyone be heard – facilitating inclusion<br>• Tempering negativity and dominant voices |
| **Seeing it from the pupil's point of view** | • Disrupting the familiarity of consistency – going through the motions (technicist discourse)<br>• Some will not change – not their fault in their eyes |
| **Organic evolution of design** | • design responded to their feedback and observations<br>○ data informed on-going process (Haw) – not to triangulate but inform design<br>• Participant roles shift on a continuum – evaluators to designers |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Theory in the back door** | • Avoiding similarities with CPD and INSET days<br>• Ameliorates imagined tensions between theory and practice |
| **Copyright and data protection** | • Talked about children using their real names<br>  o needed more focus – possibly?<br>• Flickr was ill-suited – tensions between completing task and copyright adherence |
| **Working with children** | • Anonymity and safe guarding<br>• eSafety |
| **Technical issues** | • admin issues – iPad suitability<br>• keep it uncluttered and straightforward – file sharing etc. |
| **Final stories** | • Embarrassment sharing (for some)<br>• Generated a lot of discussion<br>  o the resurrection of the author – links to comments about Morpurgo |

## Appendix 23 – Focused coding

### My presence as the researcher

| Themes | Incidents |
|---|---|
| An internal outsider | • |
| My presence | • The usual cordial welcome<br>• Backtracking to avoid causing offence? |
| Impact on me | • I was not looking forward to the session<br>• **An overwhelming sense of messiness**<br>• **My frustrations informed my feelings towards teachers** |
| Giving some of myself | • |
| Trying too hard to be a researcher | • |
| Being ethical | • |
| In a living school | •<br>• |
| Being assertive | • |
| Methodological caution | • |
| Conceptual naivety | • **Too many theories competing within the framework** |

### The participants as an established social group with (folk) cultural norms, values and rituals

| | |
|---|---|
| An established social group | • Groups form without me saying |
| The staffroom culture | • Finding *their* common space as teachers |
| Them as people | • |
| A useful insider | • **The importance of having insider knowledge (Gwen)** |
| A helpful friend | • |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Dealing with the residue of the day** | • Back to dealing with the day's events |
| No unresolved issues | • |
| The Alphas set the tone | • |
| Reinforcing dominant myths | • **Seeking sanctuary in myths of vocation and martyrdom** |
| Differences in the group | • Some of them do not listen |
| Comfort in the past | • |

## Working within the physical space with the tools I had

| | |
|---|---|
| The physical enquiry space | • Room set up is familiar now |
| Working with resources and materials | • Mocking up a model story |

## Managing the process (practical implementation – instigating the plan)

| | |
|---|---|
| Pacing the sessions | • |
| Explaining the process | • |
| Adapting the plan | • Abandoning the plan and jumping straight in |
| Managing dynamics | • A sense of responding to chaos<br>• **Potentially bad groupings** |
| (In)appropriate scaffolding | • |
| Being purposefully disruptive | • |
| Working with technology | • Problems with Flickr app<br>• Book Creator was the right choice of tech<br>• Flickr was a major distraction<br>• Badly managed passwords and accounts |
| Getting off to a bad start | • |

| | |
|---|---|
| Responding to the post-session surveys | • Only a couple responded to the post-session evaluations |
| Enthusiasm for the study | • **Study fatigue after week 3** |
| Starting the session late | • Later than usual: enthusiasm waning |
| The right sequence of activities | • A good combination of technology and storytelling |
| Unpredictable outside forces | • **The parental incident affected the atmosphere** |

## Appendix 24 –Distillations of field notes

Below is a distillation of the data from the five sets of observation notes and five sets of reflections I took during my field work. The analytical approach I took draws on elements of the ethnographical analytical process Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) recommend for processing fieldnotes. This process includes:

1. Open coding – reading through the field notes identifying emergent categories and themes.
2. Writing initial memos – reflecting on what is emerging in the fieldnotes in relation to the research aims and questions.
3. Identifying themes – identifying the themes which answer the research questions and considering how these themes weave together to construct the findings in a narrative form.

The fourth and fifth steps, yet to be undertaken, are:

4. Focused coding – going back to the fieldnotes and looking for patterns based on the themes emerging in step 3.
5. Integrative memos -The fifth step involves looking across all the data sets and pulling together all the themes into a coherent set of findings.

Below are the key themes I have identified as emerging from the analysis of the observational field notes.

### The inquiry space

### Firebreak to tell *their* stories as they wanted

The framework opened up a space for the participants to tell *their* stories in a manner that they wanted to tell them. The sessions provided opportunities for participants to talk about *themselves* as teachers: ‘not the children, not parents and not the Curriculum‘.

### Bumping, colliding and merging folk cultures

There were low-level simmering tensions within the group. Beliefs about religion, class, parenting and even newspapers all shaped how participants viewed their role as teachers. There were tensions but also moments of agreement, particularly around themes such as the Ofsted, parental interference and the Media.

### Interference from incidents within the School

Incidents within the School had the potential to derail sessions, as happened in session three when they were more focused on a parent who had challenged their colleague that afternoon. Each session started late as they dealt with the residue of the day.

### An incoherent group

One participant never went into the staffroom. The KS1 (n=2) and KS2 (n=3) teachers rarely saw each other during the day. The notion of the staffroom 'chitter chatter' infiltrating the inquiry space was a myth, of sorts.

### Creating an echo chamber: reinforcing cultural myths about the good teacher

The myth of the 'good teacher' as a stoical hero(ine) sacrificing his/her life for the good of the whole child was really strong in the participants' conversations and stories. When working with trigger materials any stories about the 'good teacher' as a benevolent force were vindicated, while those perceived to attack teachers, such as the reflective practitioner, were vilified.

### A flexible approach which was much appreciated

The participants appreciated that after the first session I was willing to let things take their course, to a degree. It seemed less like an INSET day.

### Theory in the back door

Taking an inductive approach, if I can call it that, to raising awareness of theories and concepts was appreciated. On the couple of occasions I made explicit reference to theories, I was met with silence.

## My presence as the researcher

### Deontological tensions and the fear of causing harm

I was reluctant to push the idea of 'unresolved' stories as I could tell some participants felt it was going to be too unsettling. I was torn between getting the data I wanted but also respecting the participants as ends in themselves. I felt I had no right to cause them distress or to assume that they had indeed unresolved issues. However, I needed them to be more interrogative of their own positions.

## The participants

### Roots and routes into teaching shape the present and future

Two people in the group lamented the passing of a Golden Age of teaching. This particular narrative had a tendency to ebb and flow into almost every discussion the group had.

### Some participants were more reflective than others

There was a sense that for some participants 'reflecting' came easier. They all argued that they reflected but it was clear that some were more critical about their own actions than others. In the interviews some reflected on how this was to do with initial teacher training.

### Past histories, shared and not shared, impact upon group dynamic

The inquiry space was not a 'firebreak' in the sense that it was a clearly boundaried space free from intrusions from surrounding social spaces. Within the group, there were sub-groups comprised of individuals who liked to work with other participants they felt shared their views on education and teaching. On occasion, low-level tensions would manifest themselves within and between groups.

### Loud voices, louder voices and the silent

A group of three set the dialogic tone for much of the study. I moved the groups around, which gave the less vocal participants a chance to speak. The lack of challenging.

## Appendix 25 - Recoding of fieldnotes

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Inquiry space | Inquiry space was theirs<br><br>**IST** | **PSR1**<br><br>As some of them pointed out in the interviews, they talked more about who they were as teachers than they ever do. This disrupts the normal staffroom culture within the School, but it may not disrupt who they see themselves to the extent that it motivates them to change. I think for this to happen I really would have had to ask some difficult questions, which given my role was not going to happen. The outcomes were too unpredictable and the consequences, had it gone wrong, too destructive to even contemplate.<br><br>**PSR2**<br><br>The point at which they decided not to do 'unresolved stories' I was forced to make a decision which saw the distribution of power altered in the inquiry space. Although I ultimately held the majority of it, they had more of a share after making clear they would not do it. An outcome of this decision was that the room became less disruptive, in the narrative sense.<br><br>**PSR2 – compromising what I wanted to meet their needs**<br><br>[comment - The space was more dialogic than transformative. In the end, I had to accept that to continue with the unresolved theme would have caused them to leave. This is what some told me in the interviews. The point was to give them a space to explore their stories while considering those of others; both peers and externally. They had a say over the process trajectory and I ran with it. They got to talk about themselves as 'teachers'. It brought them together in ways they just do not come together normally. As I was told in the interviews, it |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | was different than INSET days as they got to talk about themselves as teachers; not curriculum, not the children and not parents. It was their space and they got to shape it, to a degree.]<br><br>**FN3 – They decided on what stories to tell**<br><br>I said how surprised I was that the incidents were all happy ones, which surprised me slightly as the stories you hear in the media are so often negative. Cynthia pointed out that good stories do not sell copy.<br><br>**PSR5 – children come first in the School**<br><br>I liked this about the School. It is the positive thing about it, which I do not think they make enough of. It is a warm and caring School with a great deal of intimacy. They love the kids and do much to care for them. The children really do come first. Is it that all the effort is put into caring for others that they forget about themselves? **Here I can draw on the performativity aspect and the NUT papers. The School does genuinely focus on the kids but to the detriment of the teachers thinking of themselves. They really valued having the space as theirs.**<br><br>**A space to talk about themselves – focus on themselves**<br><br>**PI-Sarah "**I think it was probably just the same really [as the staffroom]. (C-really?) Obviously, you're a bit more focused on what to talk about, but once we got talking, once the conversation got going, I think as far as I was concerned everyone was being quite natural and as forthcoming as they would be really. |
| | Space was not intrusive | **It was a chance to talk in a way which was not intrusive** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **SWI** | **PI-Sarah "**Your dealing with people who perhaps don't want to be there - not don't want to be there - but, or people who might be difficult or people who might just be trying to please. You know, all different types and I thought this is a good balance between talking and doing things, it's a good chance for us to share - talk amongst ourselves -. I didn't feel it was too intrusive. I was quite happy." |
| | There was trust<br><br>**TWT** | **PSR5 They allowed each other to tell their stories – there was trust**<br><br>Looking back, this trust was necessary even in this group. There was no ridicule or poking of fun at what people said or the stories they created. They were all very respectful of each other. Is it the same in the staffroom? It certainly does not sound like it to me sometimes. I think this shows the need no matter how well people know each other to ensure the group is together. |
| | Became the teachers echo chamber<br><br>**BTEC** | **FN2 – Moaning and lamenting the passing of a golden age [see section below on trigger]**<br><br>**[comment]** It was all starting to get very moany at this point so I moved it on. The bizarre thing was that none of them really answered the question. Should I have asked them to clarify what I meant. I wanted them to think about the differences between how they saw themselves as teachers now and back when they started. They used it as an opportunity to have a gripe about what was bad about teaching now and also to highlight what was good. Cynthia and Sarah were particularly dark, although I did spend too much time with them, I think. I should've moved around more. **There were stories about butterflies coming into classrooms, teachers cycling to work, teachers buying children presents. It was very Golden Age and used to highlight how the performative terrors of modern teaching had reduced their roles to being merely technicist ones. They all agreed about the amount of** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | **red tape making their jobs difficult but Deborah, Sam and Margaret were more resigned to it. Cynthia talked about still having her notebooks and Sarah lamented the passing of a golden age. [comment] Deborah mentioned how she just deals with the paperwork as she has never known anything different.** |

## Appendix 26 – Recoding interview data

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|---|---|---|
| Traces of social, cultural and historical experiences (**Life Histories**) | **Pre-existing relationships** | **Excerpt** |
| | **Pre-existing tensions** | Ah, well yes sometimes because there would be anywhere with any people. And the fact that we all work together and you already know what people are like (laughing) they will be (???) but they weren't really big tensions. I mean no one had any massive falling outs. There was no having a strop, but there are certain people when they get together, you know, they tend to do what they want to do and it's a bit sort of you know… I thought go on Charlie (energetic rising tone) and say, you know like you would do to the kids. But then the next week obviously what we were talking about did interest far more and they had more opinions, therefore they engaged with it. I don't think it was anything to do with you because everybody else was engaged with what you had asked them to do. **The bit about them being more interested the next week shows the importance of managing group dynamics.** |
| | **Pre-existing tensions with Dorothy** | I think it would have been very different and I think you would have had found a lot of people would have dropped out. It might have been different if the head teacher was a different person or the personalities were different. It probably ... if it was a much bigger school. If it was a secondary school, it could all be very different. But I just think in our school's situation and given the nature of, and the animosities between the head teacher and other staff, real or perceived, that I think, you know, that a lot of people wouldn't have been that honest. It wouldn't have ... It wasn't so much about being honest. They just wouldn't have contributed in as much or in the way they did. **The gatekeeper was key in pointing some of this out. I avoided** |

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| | | **it for the most part when arranging groups, expect for the time I was tired and missed it.** |
| | **Generational factors** | I think what you need to remember is that a lot of teachers in this school it's a long long time and when they were NQTs, it was all incredibly different. I mean nowadays, you know what NQTs have to do (Charlie - yeah). And even when I did it 10 or 11 years ago, you had to do a lot of reflection, you did a lot of write-ups, you did a lot of sort of introspective thinking. If you started as an NQT 40 - 30 years ago, you walked into the classroom with your notebook and that was it. There was no one to say - there was no sort of mentoring as such. You know, you might go and ask a colleague something but there wasn't that mentoring that NQTs get now. There wasn't all that structure, there wasn't all that meeting standards, there wasn't all that ... you know you just turned up and you got on with the job. |
| | **A sense of experience-related resilience** | No I think it is just part of teaching. There is so much stuff that happens that 99% you don't remember it. You sort of ... You deal with things as they happen and there's something else straight away and there's something else and you sort of deal with it and move on. |
| | **Issues with reflection** | Well, I think if you're not used to that sort of thing then you sort of think all this belly button gazing. And when you stop being an NQT for many years and you've been in the classroom, you sort of think, well a lot of that you do anyway. Reflect. You don't sit down and reflect as you did as an NQT. You know you had your half an hour after your lesson and you wrote your reflection. You do it like on the hoof. So I think it's like anything else familiarity breeds contempt. Once you sort of think 'I've been |

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| | | doing this job for years. I know ... **I think the reactions were out of fear. Reflection is bound up with the notion of performativity and Margaret picks up on this. There is also the fact is seen as the antithesis of something a stoical, hardened at the chalk face teacher would do. A bit newfangled and wishy washy?** |
| | **Finding a story to tell is not easy** | Erm, no. (laughing) My story was much influenced by try to remember something - what story I thought had the most detail that I could actually remember and turn into something that was about three minutes long. |

## Appendix 27 – Integrative memos

| Meta-theme | Theme | What is says about the study | Implications for other studies | Data set |
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| Traces of social, cultural and historical experiences (**Life Histories**)<br><br>Time, place, people | Generational roots and routes into teaching<br><br>**GRR**<br><br>Generational differences<br><br>Fossilised personal beliefs – Sarah – I acknowledge what I need to change but I am too old to change | When and where the teachers started out is important as it seems to have affected their interpretation of what the job involves. Certainly those who started teaching pre-Education Act view this happing as the point at which teaching sunk to a low and the time before it as a halcyon golden age free from performative bonds. Different stories and characters resonate with the teachers depending on their experience. | This is something which may have to be managed and very explicitly where groups come together with generational differences. **The one thing I did not do, and maybe should have, was identify expectations and ground rules. This may be a place where I address issues such as perceptions of hierarchy within a group.** | FN2<br><br>FN3<br><br>PSR3<br><br>MMS<br><br>MM2-CynthiaandSarah |
| | Hierarchical structures with experience deciding positionality | There was a sense in the group that those with more experience somehow felt this bestowed upon them the | One of the ways I dealt with this was by creating smaller groups. However, there was a sense at times the people did not always want to be with the people they put with. I | |

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| | | responsibility to say what would and would not happen in the study, as well as what topics where legitimate to talk about. | felt Sarah was tired of Cynthia at times. This is a problematic area as these structures exist before the session and pushing to make them visible, or asking people to challenge them, may lead to distress and/or harm. | |
| | Folk pedagogies (cultural differences [School, outside]. Links to Goodson (2013) – stories are social scripts | While there was not real mention made of 'how we do things in this school', it was often intimated. There were certainly stories which were more sacred than others. Often the reference to easier more relaxed times would be invoked. It was interesting that those teachers 'newer' to the profession saw the paper work and bureaucratic side of things as part and parcel of the job. | More exploratory work could be done to make these explicit and pick them apart, where appropriate. Again, this links to the idea of people thinking about the stories existing about them and how they are positioned by them and/or position themselves in relation to them. | |
| | Reflection – willingness to do so – attitudes to it | The group all found the article about how to become a reflective practitioner | Scaffolding can be put in place to support people with this, and also borrowing from | |

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| | (**Margaret – links to the idea of it being something you do after Ofsted – performative – see Phil Race)** | problematic. Deborah pointed out that for Cynthia and Sarah reflecting was not something which came easy. Given the emphasis I placed on reflection, this was a huge part of the study and difficulties with doing this goes some way to explaining why some of the participants struggled. | the ideas of Race, to avoid it becoming heavy. This was the basic mistake I made. | |
| | Pre-existing tensions | These spilled over into the group and affected the dynamic. They made managing the group dynamic something vitally important.<br><br>I was too distracted by the idea of them being a pre-formed cohesive group. I should have known | Finding out about these, as I did with Gwen, was important. However, you cannot factor in for tensions which may emerge as a result of things which occur prior to your arrival. This is where the pre-session expectations and ground rules may help. This is something which Bell (2010). | |

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| | | otherwise and accommodated for it. | | |
| | Residue of the day | The events in the School affected the practical application of the research design. | There is no way of accounting for this and the research design needs to be flexible to allow people to offload this before starting. It has to be managed, though. Otherwise, it becomes a major source of disruption. | |

## Appendix 28 – Session plan section

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| **Intro**<br><br>1530<br><br>1545 | • Introducing myself and reiterating the aims of the study:<br>  ○ Evaluating the methodology as a means with which to provide individuals with opportunities to create stories which explore why they do what they do in the classroom<br>  ○ Providing them with a space in which to reconsider the stories they tell about who they were, are and would like to become as teachers – a space for them to voice their stories their way<br>• Emphasising that while participants will learn new skills they are helping with the study<br>• Make clear the ethical dimension – head/scratch notes taken during sessions to help with write up<br>• Go through the schedule – emphasise that it is revisable – evaluation questions at end of sessions.<br>  ○ Emphasise tech is further along to front end stories.<br>  ○ Complete the first questionnaire and the evaluations – (**Toggle to resource site**)<br>• Provide link to resource site – work in progress<br>• Take questions | • Slides<br>  ○ Link to resource site<br>  ○ Contact details |
| **Lead in**<br><br>1545<br><br>1605 | • Why do we tell stories?<br>• What makes a story a story<br>• What makes a good story?<br>• Feedback<br>  ○ Draw out, if necessary, notions of:<br>  ▪ Plot (Freytag's pyramid/dramatic arc), Story and Narrative – see Cobley<br>  1. Exposition – setting, scene and characters<br>  2. Incident<br>  3. Rising action – related incidents building to the climax<br>  4. Climax | • Slides<br>  ○ Questions<br>  ○ |

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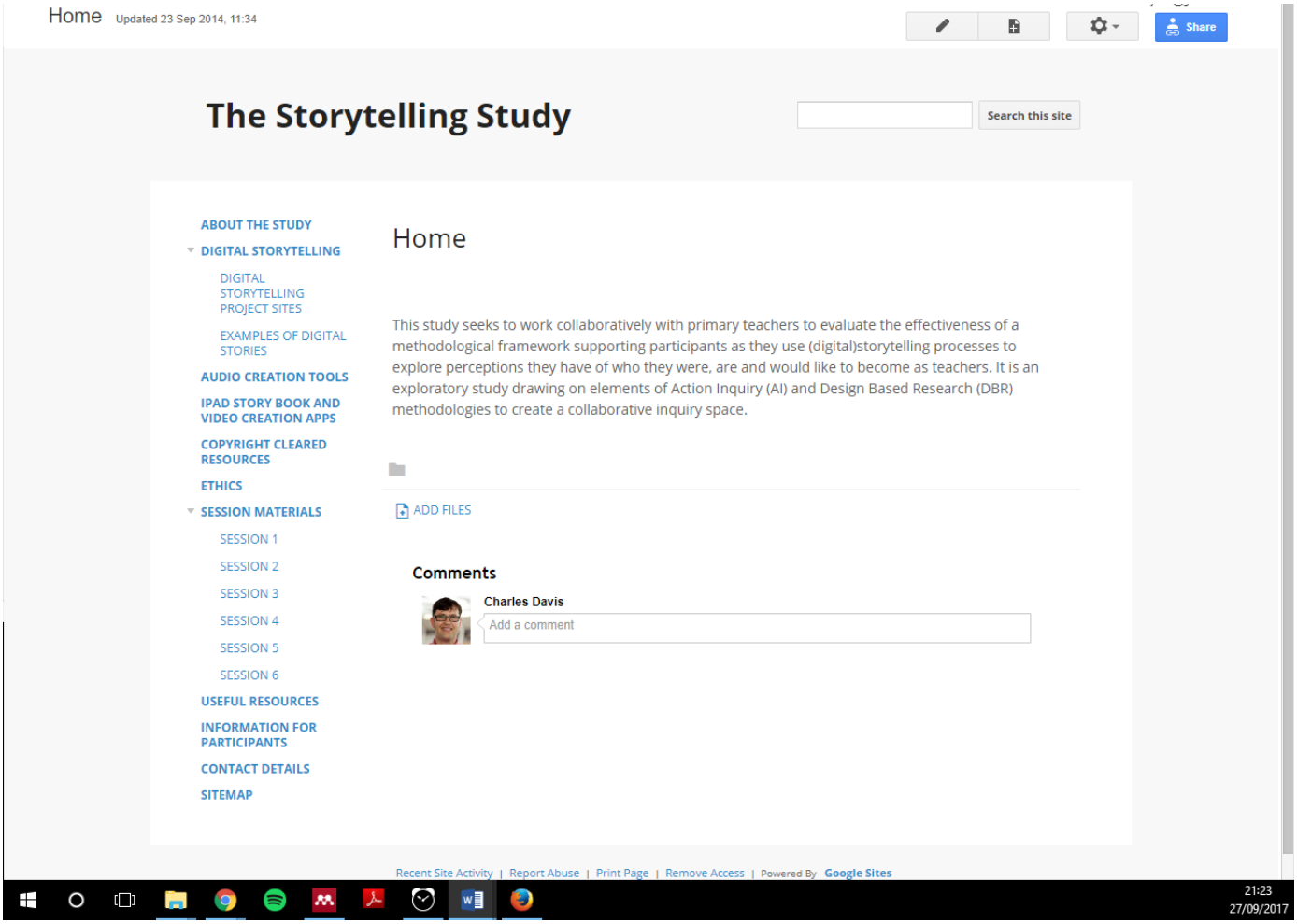
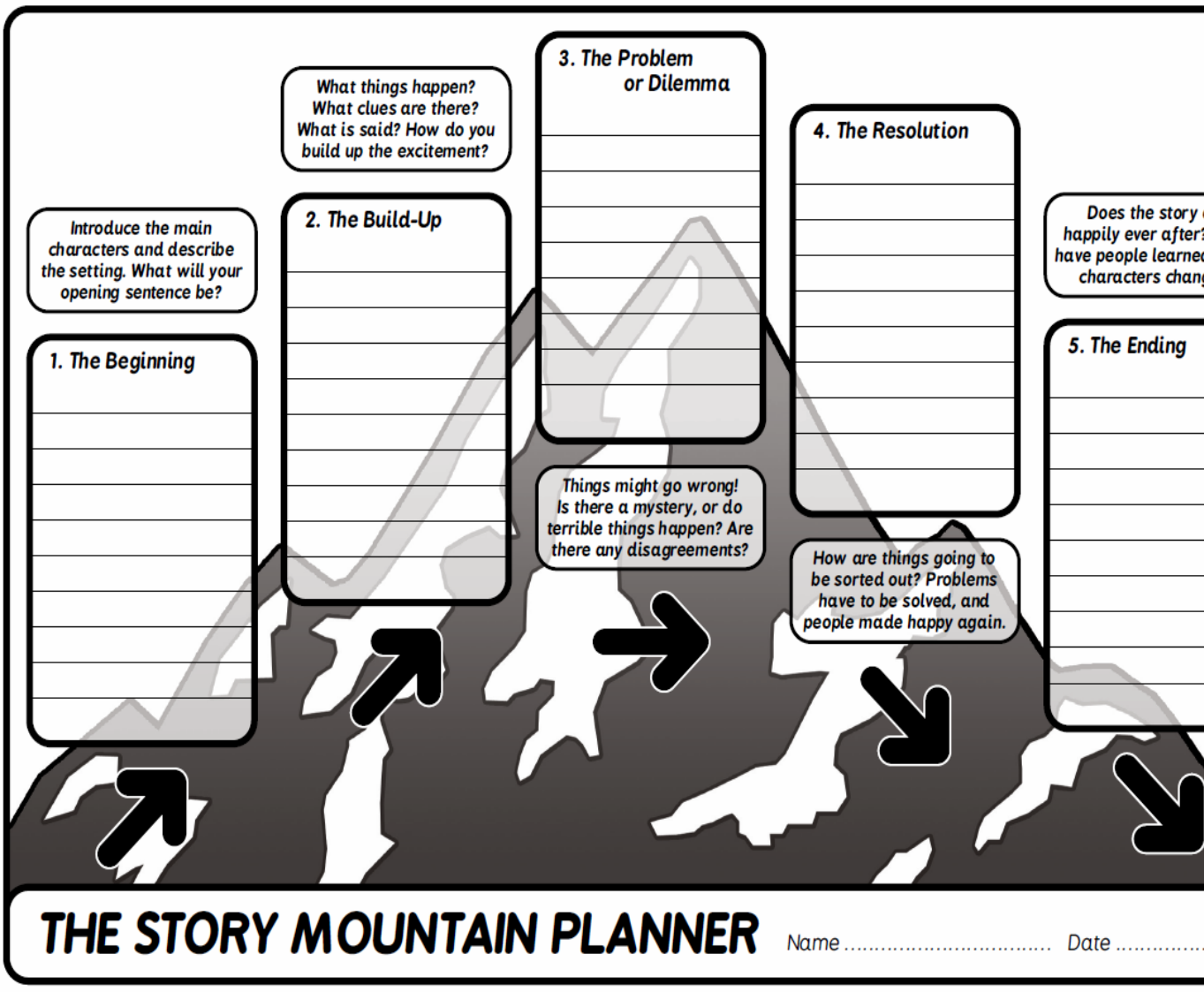
| | 5. Falling action – events happen because of the climax<br>6. Resolution – signalling the end<br>7. Denouement – tidying up loose ends | |

# Appendix 29 – The resource site



## Appendix 30 – The Story Mountain Resource



## Appendix 31- Ideas for narrative types

The following ideas have been adapted to help you consider and think about how you might create your own narratives.

### 1. The Homunculus

The homunculus is a small person that sits inside the head of an individual observing what s/he does. Imagine a little 'you' inside your head that can see everything and hear everything you can without being seen by others. You could create a story were the Homunculus is having a conversation about an incident that recently occurred to you. It could even be constructed as though it were happening in real time.

### 2. Becoming an animal

Think of a recent incident you feel you could have resolved differently or that you simply can't forget. It could be a happy incident, a sad incident or an incident which left you feeling confused. Imagine yourself gradually transforming into an animal based on the emotions you felt. Build up a sense of suspense as you become the animal you feel best represents how you felt as a result of the experience you base your story on.

### 3. A conversation with your ghostly younger self

Think about an incident from your teaching that which you felt was not resolved in a way you would have liked it to have been. Imagine yourself having a conversation with a ghostly incarnation of yourself in which you both discuss what happened and how it left you feeling.

### 4. Yourself and you

Write a story about an incident in which your reflection talks back to you about an incident that happened in your teaching. The voice in the mirror could be explaining to you how they felt about the way in which you dealt with a particular situation. This could be a moment of positivity, negativity, frustration, anger or disbelief.

### 5. Characters representing feelings

Think of an incident from your teaching you felt was not resolved in a way you would have liked it to have been. Consider all the feelings you had and turn them into characters for your story. Create a story in which the feelings take on the roles of particular characters, e.g. like the Mr Men. Using the characters, create a story which represents how you felt about the incident.

### 6. You as the other person

Recall an incident from your teaching which was resolved in a manner which left you feeling there were still questions to answer. Imagine telling the story from the perspective of someone else who was involved so that you are the 'other' person in the story.

### 7. Hobbits, fairies, Prince Charmings and sleeping beauties

Using characters from fantasy genres, create a story about an incident from your teaching you feel was left unresolved. Imagine a fantastical setting in which your story takes place. Create characters and settings which draw on fantasy genres, fairy tales or fables.

* Ideas 1 to 6 are adapted from Hunt and Sampson (2006)

** Idea 7 is adapted from Wallace (2010)

## Appendix 32 –Fictional teachers, pupils and story types

### Teachers in fiction

If you create teachers' characters in your narratives, you may wish to draw on some of the personality traits of fictional characters from literature and film. For example,

- Miss Jean Brodie from the film The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Brodie
- Miss Honey in Roald Dahl's Matilda - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matilda_(1996_film)
- Miss Trunchball in Roald Dahl's Matilda - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miss_Trunchbull
- Yoda in the Star Wars films - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoda
- John Keating (Robin William's character) in Dead Poets Society - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead_Poets_Society
- Mr Chips - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goodbye,_Mr._Chips
- Professor Minerva McGonagall in Harry Potter - http://www.imdb.com/character/ch0001000/bio
- Dumbledore in Harry Potter - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albus_Dumbledore
- Severus Snape - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Severus_Snape

You may also want to draw on the character traits of teachers you have known throughout your life.

### Children and pupils in fiction

If you create children's characters in your stories, you may wish to draw on some of the personality traits of fictional characters from literature and film. For example,

- Dennis the Menace from the Beano - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dennis_the_Menace_and_Gnasher
- Pippi Longstocking - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pippi_Longstocking
- William Brown from Just William - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just_William
- Harry Potter - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just_William
- Ron Weasley - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ron_Weasley
- Hermione Granger - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermione_Granger
- Horrid Henry - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horrid_Henry

- Matilda Wormwood from Roald Dahl's Matilda - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matilda_(1996_film)
- Mary Lennox from the Secret Garden - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Secret_Garden
- Carl Fredricksen from Up - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Up_(2009_film)
- Tom Brown from Tom Brown's School Days - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Brown's_School_Days
- Flashman from Tom Brown's School Days - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Brown's_School_Days
- Billy Bunter - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy_Bunter

You may also want to draw on the character traits of children and pupils you have known throughout your life.

## Appendix 33 – Storyboard