



Listening to the Career Life Stories of Teachers

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Listening to the Career Life Stories of Teachers

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Abstract

The issue of teacher retention attracts worldwide attention as governments, administrators and researchers look for strategies to keep their quality teachers. However, much of the research to date adopts a deficit approach by considering the systemic, procedural and policy changes needed to improve teaching conditions. Less often considered are individual factors within teachers' control that contribute to personal satisfaction and success. Therefore, this qualitative study used narrative inquiry to address a gap and listened to the stories of late career teachers to discover how they sustain their careers over time.

Using a phenomenological approach to examine the life and career of three Australian secondary school teachers who have been teaching for more than eighteen years, the study recognised individual teachers' continuity of experience and relationships, across time and within the various geographic, professional and social places that teaching occurs. Late career teachers were the focus of this study because they have the ability to reflect on past teaching experiences in the context of current positions with a view to future teaching expectations. They have also navigated their teaching career in conjunction with living a life outside of school. Life story interviews were used to access stories about teaching in the context of life as it was lived and attention given to what was working for individual teachers. As teachers re-storied their experiences, they created a teaching narrative. Exploring this narrative, in the context of broader life experiences, provided an opportunity to examine different perceptions of teaching and notice when perceptions changed for the individual at different times throughout a career. The aim was to discover factors contributing to individual teachers' enjoyment of and commitment to, their profession.

The findings confirmed previous research that highlighted the importance of intrinsic and altruistic motivations and added a nuanced understanding to the relationship between the choices an individual teacher makes throughout their career and their individual motivations, values, beliefs, and perceptions of identity. In particular, passion for particular aspects of teaching, the opportunity to fulfil a personal purpose and, stimulating relationships with students and colleagues, were identified as energising, motivational and key to sustaining a rewarding teaching career. However, each participant had different needs in terms of

fulfilling their passion, achieving their purpose and measuring what constituted a stimulating relationship. As teachers re-storied their career they noticed where, when and how their specific passion, individual sense of purpose and valued relationships helped sustain their career. Deliberate attention to their own stories helped the teachers in this study focus on how they could consciously craft a successful, self-sustaining career. Therefore, results of this research may contribute to a greater understanding of how individual teachers can manage their teaching experience across their career and offer valuable insights into teacher retention.

Statement of originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Nicole Feledy

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From my earliest days as a teacher I realised teaching is a journey through relationships. I learnt the same lesson as a researcher. My path through this project would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of those around me and it is to them I offer the sincerest thank you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This document reports on a qualitative study designed to investigate the lived experiences of 'late career teachers'. Here, the term late career teachers is used to identify teachers who had been teaching in the classroom for more than sixteen years (Day et al., 2007). The investigation sought to discover more about how teachers sustain a teaching career over a long period of time and used a phenomenological approach to recognise the value of teachers' lived life experience. Teaching has been recognised as a challenging profession with high cognitive and emotional demands wedged within an intense work schedule (Hargraves, 1998). Yet, despite more than thirty years of research into teacher attrition and retention (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Buchanan et al., 2013; Huberman, 1989; Ingersoll, 2001; Kelly et al., 2019; Mason & Poyatos Matas, 2015; Weldon 2018), little has changed in terms of identifying the challenges teachers face or in proposing solutions to meet those challenges. Most research has taken a deficit approach, seeking to understand problems experienced by teachers. Similarly, solutions often relied on environmental, systemic and structural change at a school, government and societal level with greater focus given to factors within schools than the life, motivations, values and beliefs of the individual teacher. While some research into teacher retention considered what teachers enjoy about teaching (Chiong et al., 2017; Lowe et al., 2019), rarely does a study focus on how individual teachers manage their own workplace experience. However, there is value in asking positively engaged late career teachers to share their experiences. The stories a teacher tells have the potential to identify subjective, individualised ideas about what contributed to a flourishing career. These individual stories offer context to big data studies such as the Australian Teacher Workforce Data survey (ATWD) and may help to provide insight into some of the inconsistencies in teacher retention research (Weldon, 2018). When so much of a teacher's work life is out of their direct control (Gu, 2018), looking forward to what is working for individual teachers may help other teachers support their own professional needs.

Background

Teaching is tough; it is emotional work (Hargraves & Fullan, 2012) and fewer high performing students are choosing teaching as a career (Goss et al., 2019). With the Australian teaching population aging, (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015) increasing concerns are raised about the attrition and retention of Australian Teachers (Buchanan et al., 2013; Goss et al., 2019; Weldon, 2018). Weldon (2018), while acknowledging teacher attrition statistics have lacked national cohesion and research into causes and solutions have produced inconsistent results, found that Australian early career attrition was perceived as “worryingly high” (p. 61). Similarly, Buchanan et al. (2013) found that despite the lack of consistent exit data in Australia, there were concerns about the loss of experience and knowledge which accompanies quality teachers’ attrition. Looking beyond Australia, Borman and Dowling (2008) found attrition from the teaching profession was not “healthy attrition” (p. 396) and Kelchtermans (2017) proposed valuable teaching experience was lost when “good teachers leave for the wrong reasons” (p. 967).

High teacher turnover is expensive. The cost of teacher attrition has been noted in academic, social and economic terms (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Buchanan, 2012). In Australia, Goss et al. (2019) suggested “great teachers are the key to better student performance” (p. 3). The Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) survey was commissioned in 2019 to build a national picture of Australian teaching. It had the explicit aim of understanding the experience of Australian teachers and their impact on student outcomes. The ATWD survey was the first ever nation-wide study of Australian teachers and is likely to address the problem identified by Weldon (2018) and Buchanan et al. (2013) about a lack of consistent data for the Australian teaching population. However, the ATWD study adopted a big data approach to focus on systemic issues. Studies such as this may miss the in-depth, meaning making stories of what is working for the individual (Atkinson, 1998; Bruner, 2002) which is problematic because individual stories help researchers understand the day to day experiences of life as a teacher. Considering the individual life stories of teachers is important because factors external to school (e.g., life events and family commitments) and factors internal to a teacher (e.g., values, beliefs and motivations) impact different teachers differently.

These internal and external factors affect how an individual perceives their teaching experience. These perceptions influence a teacher's attitude toward teaching and ultimately, their career decisions (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Buchanan et al., 2013; Day et al., 2007; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019). Therefore, with teacher attrition and retention being identified as areas of concern, more research into practices that sustain a teaching career over the long term is required.

Teacher retention and attrition literature often focused on why teachers leave, if they plan on leaving and what needs to change (Borman & Dowling 2008; Ingersoll, 2001; Mason & Poyatos Matas, 2015; Weldon, 2018). A less often asked question was the positively framed, 'Why do you stay?' (Chiong et al., 2017; Lowe et al., 2019). When attention focuses on what is failing in education organisations, what is working for the individual teacher may be overlooked. Privileging the positive stories that a teacher tells about their work may address Mason and Poyatos Matas' (2015) call for more research into the elements which foster positive engagement and wellbeing in a teaching role. However, thinking positively about what is working for individual teachers does not seem to have been applied to the field of teacher retention research in Australia. This study seeks to go some way towards redressing this imbalance.

Since many teachers chose to become teachers to meet altruistic and intrinsic goals (Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019), consideration of the positive experience of individual teachers can reveal what motivates teachers to stay in teaching and what sustains their practice as teachers. Manuel, Carter and Dutton (2018) and Manuel, Dutton and Carter (2019) significant and recent studies have identified connections between teacher's intrinsic and altruistic motivations and a teachers' career decisions. Therefore, their studies of the experience of Australian English teachers provided a foundation for this project. Studies by Manuel, Carter and Dutton (2018) and Manuel, Dutton and Carter (2019) offered an Australian context and identified the complex dynamic between values (Hadar & Benish-Weisman, 2019; Kelchtermans, 2017), beliefs (Biesta et al., 2015; Kelchtermans, 2009), identity (McAdams, 1993; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019) and, a teacher's career decisions. Understanding the complex relationship between values, beliefs, identity and career-based motivations is important because a sense

of moral purpose (values and beliefs) was found to affect teacher agency (Day, 2017); resilience (Gu, 2018) and collectively, impacted career-based decisions (Glazer, 2018a; Kelchtermans, 2009; 2017).

The terms, values, beliefs, motivations, identity, agency and resilience as understood in a teaching context and used in this study, have been explained below.

Values Are understood to be “abstract motivations guiding behaviour and the evaluation of the self and others” (Hadar & Benish-Weisman, 2019, p. 139).

Beliefs Refer to “person-based, idiosyncratic convictions, built up through different career experiences” (Kelchtermans, 2009).

Motivations Include the intrinsic and altruistic decisions made by teachers in relation to teaching and learning. Intrinsic motivations include: passion for subject area; fulfilling a personal dream and; the enjoyment to be derived from school-based relationships with colleagues and students (Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019). Altruistic motivations include an opportunity to inspire learning and a desire “to make a difference in people’s lives” (Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019, p. 17).

Identity Is seen to be an aspect of personality that represents how a person defines themselves (McAdams, 1993). Since identity is a “collaboration between the person and the social world” (McAdams, 1993, p. 95), teachers have both personal and professional identities which are “shaped by the contexts in which teachers live and work” (Schaefer & Clandinin 2019, p. 62).

Agency May be described as a teacher's "assertion of their professional responsibility and competence to exercise autonomy through their exercise of discretionary judgements in classroom decision-making" (Day, 2017, p. 36).

Resilience 'Is understood to reflect the "capacity to manage the unavoidable uncertainties inherent in the realities of teaching" (Gu, 2018, p. 24). Teachers resilience is seen as "contextual and can fluctuate" (Gu, 2018, p. 29) according to workplace contexts, opportunities, resources and conditions (Gu, 2018).

Recognising a teacher's intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in terms of their beliefs, values and identity can provide insight into the positive teaching experiences that contribute to agency and resilience and sustain teachers throughout their career. This connection between motivations, values, beliefs and identity and experienced teachers' professional journeys, was explored in this study.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover what can be learnt from late-career teachers' stories about: attitudes toward teaching; motivations in teaching and; sustaining a teaching career. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested, "people live storied lives, and in the telling of these stories, reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones" (p. xxvi). Therefore, this study used narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to explore the stories late career teachers told to make sense of their teaching experience (Bruner, 2002). The aim was to identify internal and external factors contributing to a teacher's perception of their role and note how that perception influenced career-based decisions. Teachers were asked to reflect back on past practice, forward to career aspirations, inward to perceptions of self and outward to life and relationships. Attention was given to how attitudes and perceptions of teaching varied across a teaching career. Whilst teachers were encouraged to self-sort for their most significant stories (Atkinson, 1998), the analysis process privileged teachers' positive stories to identify what was working and noticed if and how positive experiences helped individual teachers sustain their career.

The motivation for this study came from my own experiences as an English teacher. I was curious about the stories other teachers were telling about their role as a teacher and why, despite tensions in teaching, they stayed in the profession. I was also interested in the process of re-storying and curious to see if re-storying impacted the way the teachers perceived their role as a teacher (Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019).

The study addresses the following research question:

What can we learn from stories of late career teachers in terms of attitudes toward teaching, motivations in teaching and sustaining a teaching career?

Significance of the Study

Attracting and retaining quality teachers is a priority in Australian education (Goss et al., 2019). However, there is a gap in the literature in terms of why, despite life and career challenges, teachers stay. In listening to the stories of teachers who have been teaching for a long time and are still positive toward teaching, this study will contribute to a better understanding of why teachers stay in the classroom. Despite being a small-scale, subjective study that does not represent the perspective of all teachers, putting individual teachers and their lives at the centre of the phenomenon 'teacher retention' gave individual teachers a voice in teacher retention research.

As the teachers in this study shared their stories, their process of meaning making became visible (Atkinson, 1998; Bruner, 2002). Therefore, this study offered an opportunity to witness both the reflective and reflexive processes of individuals. Teacher participants thought through the factors contributing to their attitudes toward teaching and noticed which experiences sustained their commitment to their career. Participants' stories also illustrated the impact of their personal values, beliefs and motivations. In doing so, these stories inform teacher retention literature by showing why individual teachers stay, how they sustain their motivation to teaching and what contributed to career decision making. At a personal level, participant teachers were able to identify how the stories they told affected their attitude toward their

career and in turn impacted career-based decisions. Therefore, this study of teacher narratives can inform further discussions of teacher retention and provide individual teachers with strategies to support their own professional needs.

Signposting the Thesis

This chapter has identified the background, purpose and significance of the study, and stated the overarching research focus and question. Chapter Two provides a review of the relevant literature. In Chapter Three I outline the conceptual framework used to inform the study. This conceptual framework emerges from the literature review and shows how key concepts are interwoven with the methodological approach. Chapter Four discusses the methodology including an explanation for the selection of narrative inquiry as a research methodology. Chapter Five offers analysis and discussion of participant stories and shares emerging findings. In conclusion, Chapter Six includes the study's findings, limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The social, psychological and economic cost of teacher attrition has prompted the search for more effective strategies to promote teacher retention (Heffernan et al., 2019). Within this field, there is growing interest in the individual experience of teachers, especially in terms of how teachers can be placed at the center of the teaching experience rather than the rim of educational policy and procedures (Allen et al., 2019; Biesta 2013; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018; Oolbekink et al., 2017; Rowe & Skourdumbis, 2019).

The following literature review considers:

- Why teachers leave
- Why teachers stay
- The individual teacher experience.

Why Teachers Leave

The factors contributing to teacher attrition are as much personal as they are systemic and the experience of being a teacher varies across a career. A career in teaching has been seen as an emotionally intensive experience, punctuated with high levels of burnout and disillusionment (Clandinin et al., 2015; Hargraves, 2005). Many teachers feel unsupported, unrecognised and tired (Buchanan, 2012; Huberman, 1989; Kelchtermans, 2017). A recent study by Monash University into perceptions of teaching in Australia found an increased workload and a diminished sense of wellbeing led teachers to question the viability of remaining a teacher (Heffernan et al., 2019). However, the decision to leave teaching was complicated and involved a complex combination of individual and external factors (Glazer, 2018a; Kelchtermans, 2017). Glazer (2018a) labelled external factors as those outside a teacher's immediate control such as workplace conditions, education policy and State-wide curriculum. He separated individual factors into personal considerations (family life, career aspirations) and individual characteristics (resilience, self-efficacy, values and beliefs). Investigating these external and individual factors becomes even more complex when taking into consideration the different experiences of teachers across different career stages because, not only do

individual teachers live different lives, they experience tensions in their role differently at different times in their career (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Day et al., 2007; Hargraves & Fullan 2012; Huberman, 1989).

Workplace conditions, education policy, curriculum

Teachers' workplace experiences are impacted by external factors such as education policy and curriculums (National, State and school-based) as well as external factors within schools that include the quality of relationships and effectiveness of leadership. Complicating the workplace experience for teachers is, that as Kelchtermans (2017) suggested, teachers "have no or very little control over crucial working conditions, that deeply affect their practices" (p. 970). This lack of control became demotivating when teacher quality was considered commensurate with results from high stakes testing and little recognition was given to teachers' interaction with students (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Sullivan et al., 2020). Other researchers found that increasing curriculum demands, educational policy directives and a sense of being under constant scrutiny undermined teachers' sense of creativity and professionalism (Day, 2007; Glazer 2018b; Kelchtermans, 2017). Sullivan et al. (2020) found early career teachers in South Australia felt as though they needed to compromise their beliefs about teaching to meet performance and accountability standards. Compounding these systemic challenges were school based tensions arising from poor workplace relationships, ineffective leadership and negative culture (Arnup & Bowles, 2016; Boyd et al., 2011; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Buchanan, 2012; Ingersoll 2001; Mason & Poyatos Matas, 2015). These externally derived tensions reduced teachers' cognitive and emotional wellbeing and contributed to low job satisfaction (Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018).

Increased workload

One external factor that was frequently cited as a reason for leaving the profession was increased workload (Buchanan, 2012; Day et al., 2007; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Huberman, 1989; Schaefer, Long & Clandinin, 2012; Weldon, 2018). Adding to teacher frustration was that much of the

additional work was administrative and did not contribute to student learning. As a result, teachers felt as though they were being pulled from the aspects of their career they loved most (Glazer 2018a; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019). The Manuel, Carter and Dutton (2018) phenomenological study of 211 English teachers in NSW found the sheer volume of work was an impediment to being a focused and engaged teacher. Despite being passionate about their role, the teachers in the Manuel, Carter and Dutton (2018) study, were concerned about sustaining their current work practices. They reported average working weeks of 58 hours with many respondents working long hours on the weekend. Given that the standard working week in Australia is 38 hours (Fair Work Ombudsman, n.d.) this study suggests that teachers are working well above national averages. Manuel, Carter and Dutton's (2018) findings were supported by a Monash University study that found only 2% of teachers "strongly agreed" their workload was manageable" (Heffernan et al., 2019 p.10). Rather, most of the 2444 Australian teachers participating in the survey "either disagreed (47%) or strongly disagreed (28%) that they found their current workload manageable" (Heffernan et al., 2019 p.10). Heffernan et al., (2019) found 62% of teachers said workload was the factor most likely to push them out of teaching.

Diminished wellbeing and poor work-life balance

Excessive workloads had a negative impact on teachers' work life balance and compromised teachers' wellbeing. Many teachers reported high levels of fatigue and burnout (Buchanan, 2012; Hargreaves, 2005; Ingersoll, 2001; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018). These emotionally tired teachers struggled to maintain the energy required in busy classrooms (Hargreaves, 1998; Huberman, 1989). Whilst the Hargreaves and Huberman study reflected conditions twenty to thirty years ago, recent studies suggest little has changed. For example, Manuel, Dutton and Carter (2019) found the emotional cost of teaching was often too high for teachers who, despite still loving teaching, found their motivation waning under "emotions of alienation, disenchantment, anger, frustration, and sadness" (p. 16). Similarly, teachers in Heffernan et. al.'s (2019) study expressed concerns about the impact of ongoing stress and emotional strain

on their health and wellbeing. Stapleton et al. (2020) found, teachers suffer higher levels of stress and psychological health problems than the general population. Of the 166 Australian teachers who participated in Stapleton et al.'s study, "62% met criteria for moderate to severe anxiety" (p. 138).

These high levels of workplace stress are compounded by feelings of guilt when heavy workloads impinge on teachers' time with their own family (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019). The inability to find a balance between time spent at school and at home, leads to compromised resilience, waning motivation and even "ambivalence" (Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018, p. 16) toward teaching. For example, one participant in the Schaefer & Clandinin (2019) study said in her opinion it was "impossible" (p. 60) to be "decent at your job" (p. 60) and have a "healthy home life" (p. 60). Schaefer and Clandinin's (2019) study found early career teachers often struggled to find coherence between their work and home life. Not only did teachers in Schaefer and Clandinin's study struggle to find work-life balance, they experienced dissonance between personal and professional values as they tried to be both a 'good' teacher and a 'good' parent. The challenge of meeting these conflicting needs left the early career teachers in the Schaefer and Clandinin study feeling emotionally, cognitively and physically exhausted. These teachers felt as though their personal identity was being "erased by who they are as teachers" (p.60) and knew the situation was unsustainable. Schaefer and Clandinin suggested teachers who were unable to find personal and professional cohesion between their story of 'who' they were as people and 'who' they were as teachers, choose to leave. Since attrition is high in the first five years of teaching, these early career teaching experiences must be of concern within the profession. Schaefer and Clandinin's findings were echoed by studies of mid-career and late career teachers (Glazer 2018a; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018).

Compromised values and a lack of agency

While research into teacher attrition often focuses on the external factors mentioned above, there is a growing interest in the personal experiences of teachers. Teachers with low job satisfaction became

less resilient (Arnup & Bowles, 2016) and these lower levels of resilience were exacerbated by externally imposed teaching practices mentioned previously. Teachers felt as though they were being forced to make choices that compromised their values and diminished their sense of agency (Kelchtermans, 2017; Manuel & Carter, 2016). Manuel and Carter (2016) found the demands of curriculum and policy interfered with teachers' intrinsic and altruistic goals. In particular the curriculum constrained teachers' opportunity to develop student agency and inspire a love of literature, while high stakes testing interfered with teachers' ability to teach effectively (Manuel & Carter, 2016). Similarly, Glazer (2018a), who studied the exit decisions of teachers from various career stages, found teachers chose to leave when they could not be the teacher they wanted to be. These teachers felt betrayed because they could not do what they needed to do to feel successful. The teachers in Glazer's study were experienced teachers who had been confident in their teaching skills and did not feel overwhelmed. Nor were they dissatisfied with the work. Rather, these teachers left teaching because they felt a lack of agency. Despite having a clear personal sense of what being a 'good teacher' looked like, the teachers in Glazer's study were internally frustrated by external restrictions that left them feeling less competent because they could not use their skills. The result was diminishing motivation for a role they once loved (Glazer, 2018a). Manuel, Carter & Dutton's (2018) study which, like Glazer's study considered teachers at various career stages, also found teachers were frustrated by a lack of control over what and how they taught. These frustrations were intensified when added workload drew teachers away from what they valued as "the core business" (Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018, p. 15) of teaching. Therefore, regardless of proficiency or career stage, the impact of compromised beliefs had a negative impact on agency and, when teachers' low job satisfaction contributed to low resilience, teachers were more likely to leave.

Career movement and career stage

However, not all teacher attrition is negative (Ingersoll, 2001) and a teacher's experience of teaching changes across a career. Weldon (2018) found much of the research into teacher attrition failed

to consider the difference between a teacher who 'moves' for reasons such as short term contracts, family commitments or to transfer between education systems, and those who 'leave' for new careers. Therefore, as Ingersoll (2001) suggested, the problem is not necessarily that teachers leave, but rather who leaves, who stays at what stage and from where they leave or stay.

In an effort to better understand the complex factors leading to a teacher's choice to leave the classroom, some research into teacher attrition moved beyond external and individual factors to consider the impact of career stage. Not only do teachers at different stages of their career have different internal and external motivators, but also teachers have different experiences that influence their perceptions as they progress through their career. It is these multiple experiences, perceptions and factors that contribute to the complexity of any study of teacher attrition. Day et al. (2007) studied how teacher role perception and career attitudes shifted over the years and noted individual characteristics of teachers varied within each phase. They found that teachers living through different life stages were likely to manage the tensions in their career stage differently because the factors influencing the way a teacher conducted their role extended beyond the classroom. Of particular interest to this study were teachers in the latter phases of both career and life stage. Day et al. (2007) found teachers in the 16 - 23 phase of their professional life managed multiple tensions relating to career progression, student results, workload and competing work /life responsibilities. These tensions had an impact on a teacher's motivation, commitment and effectiveness. In terms of a decision to leave teaching, Harris and Adams (2007) noted teacher turnover was higher in the earlier and later stages of a teaching career than was seen in other professions. This finding of higher attrition levels at the earlier and latter stages of a teacher's career was consistent in the research (Boyd et al., 2008; Buchanan, 2012; Buchanan et al., 2013; Clandinin et al., 2015; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019; Weldon, 2018). For example, a Queensland College of Teachers (2019) report found overall 14.27% of teachers granted registration in Queensland between 2009 - 2013 "were removed from the QCT Register within four years" (p. 3). Figure 1: Queensland graduate teachers initially granted provisional registration in 2009 – 2013 and removed from the Register within four years, by age when initially granted provisional

registration, shows how these attrition rates vary according to the age of graduates with those in the 25 – 34, 45 - 54 and over 55 age brackets more likely to leave the teaching profession in the first 4 years. Similar to Day et al. (2007), the Queensland College of Teachers (2019) report suggested personal factors such as child rearing, travel, pursuit of a different career or to teach elsewhere, may have contributed to the decision to leave within the first four years of becoming a teacher.



Figure 1: Queensland graduate teachers initially granted provisional registration in 2009 – 2013 and removed from the Register within four years, by age when initially granted provisional registration. (Reprinted from *The Attrition of Queensland Graduate Teachers 2019 Report*, 2019, p. 12)

However, it was not only life situations that impacted teachers at various career stages. Where early career teachers felt overwhelmed by the demands of teaching (Buchanan 2012; Buchanan et al., 2013; Clandinin et al., 2015; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019), teachers in the middle career phases reported feeling buoyed by reaching peak performance levels (Hargraves & Fullan, 2012; Huberman, 1989). However, teachers who had been teaching for more than twenty years sometimes felt generationally distant from their students and found themselves with less energy and less patience (Glazer 2018b; Hargraves & Fullan, 2012). Huberman (1989), used the terms negative focusing and positive focusing to distinguish between the different responses to teaching relationships and school environments by teachers in the latter stages of their career. Huberman suggested the career development process will be linear for some while others experience “plateaus, regressions, dead ends, spurts and discontinuities” (p. 32). Huberman’s research

remains relevant because it offers a longitudinal model for viewing teacher attitudes across a teacher career life cycle. Huberman (1989) noted how some late career teachers reported feeling 'worn down' by less motivated students, excessive paperwork and political interference; however other late career teachers found "greater serenity" (p. 52) and were more "relaxed, and at ease later in the career" (p. 52). These teachers who remained positive and engaged despite the challenges identified are the focus of this current study because they offer an alternative perspective for studies of teacher retention.

Why Teachers Stay

Teachers stay when there is coherence between their personal and professional values, beliefs and identity. Where research into teacher attrition sought to identify the problem, research into teacher retention sought strategies to address the issues identified. However, even though issues associated with attrition and retention are related, simply addressing problems may not provide the best solutions because, as mentioned earlier, teachers' beliefs and values influence their decision-making process and, that which pushed some teachers to leave, may not be the same as that which encouraged others to stay (Borman & Dowling 2008; Weldon, 2018). In terms of a personal commitment to keep teaching, conditions such as a clear sense of professional autonomy, personal efficacy and optimism toward collegiate and student relationships were identified as important (Admiraal et al., 2019; Arnup & Bowles, 2016; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Glazer, 2018b; Troesch & Bauer, 2017). Higher levels of teacher well-being and passion were associated with effective relationships, increased autonomy and a sense of self-efficacy. Equally, when there was alignment between a teacher's beliefs, values and the work they completed, teachers experienced higher levels of resilience (Gu, 2018).

Relationships

Supportive relationships contribute to a teacher's wellbeing in schools. In a project that sought to encourage school leaders to implement school wide wellbeing practices, Lester et al. (2020) found teacher

wellbeing could be enhanced by providing “designated areas to socialise and connect with other staff” (p. 8). Similarly, Kelly et al.’s (2019) study of early career teachers linked higher levels of collegiate support with higher levels of job satisfaction. However, it was not just connection with colleagues that motivated teachers. Turner and Thielking’s (2019) study of five primary teachers in Victoria also found that teachers valued having a positive impact on their students’ lives both within and beyond the classroom. The teachers in Turner and Thielking’s (2019) study said they found more enjoyment in seeing their students enjoying learning, having choice and feeling valued than, “ticking off” the curriculum requirements” (p.84). These positive student relationships were so important that Kelchtermans (2017) found teachers were more inclined to leave if they felt they were not making a difference in their students’ lives. He suggested teachers draw self-esteem from their connection with students because the teacher-student relationship gives teachers a sense of fulfilment and recognition. Therefore, teachers who felt they had autonomy in the classroom experienced greater job satisfaction because they were fulfilling a need to build effective teacher-student relationships.

Agency and self efficacy

A sense of agency and autonomy contributed positively to a teacher’s decision to remain in the classroom. Teachers who had agency and autonomy were more likely to remain in teaching because they experienced greater self-efficacy. More than thirty years ago, Huberman (1989) noted teachers who ‘tinkered’ with innovations within their classroom, rather than becoming embroiled in school wide or systemic projects, were more likely to be positive about their career, particularly as they entered the latter phases of teaching. More than twenty years ago, Ingersoll (2001) suggested, teachers who felt they had a voice, career security and were recognised as professionals, were more likely to remain in teaching. More recently, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) found teachers were motivated to remain in teaching when they experienced higher levels of self-efficacy and job satisfaction. In particular, Skaalvik and Skaalvik discovered school cultures which prioritised learning over performance gave teachers more control over the

instruments for teaching success and were therefore, more likely to meet teachers' self-efficacy needs. This desire to manage the learning process was a common theme because teachers valued learning and perceived the learning process as critical to the role of being a teacher (Gu, 2018; Glazer, 2018a; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018; Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019).

Beliefs, values and internal coherence

When a teacher felt coherence between their values, beliefs and their teaching, they were more likely to enjoy teaching. Biesta et al. (2015) found teachers' beliefs informed their "perceptions, judgements and decision-making" (p. 624). These beliefs then motivated a teachers' behaviours (Biesta et al., 2015). Teachers whose beliefs and values were in alignment with their work were more likely to experience workplace satisfaction (Oolbekkink-Marchand et al., 2017). This complex relationship between beliefs and values and the work a teacher carried out was important because it impacted teachers' perception of their role. Gu (2018) suggested the teachers who remained in teaching tend to be "passionate and committed lifelong learners, who stay in teaching to share their passion for learning with children and young people" (p. 28). She highlighted the role of intrinsic motivation suggesting "what keeps many teachers going in a new era of accountability and standardisation has to be something that is greater than 'just a job'" (p. 21). Gu believed it was important to understand the complex relationship between values, beliefs and the choices teachers make in and about their work. She suggested teachers who are called to make a difference in the lives of others were not put off by hard work but rather struggled when they could not see meaning in their work. Therefore, studies into why teachers stay must take into account more than the tensions complicating a teacher's workplace.

Resilience

Some research into teacher retention suggested studying teacher resilience may offer a clearer sense of what motivates teachers to stay, despite role-based challenges (Clarà, 2017; Gu, 2018). Teacher

resilience has been described in terms of (1) how teachers positively adapt to consistent tensions in the workplace and (2) how well teachers sustain their wellbeing and commitment to teaching, in spite of career-based tensions (Clarà 2017; Gu 2018). Teachers with higher levels of resilience are better equipped to manage workplace challenges (Arnup & Bowles, p. 239). Beutel et al., (2019) studied the experiences of career change preservice teachers in Australia to understand perceptions of, and strategies for, resilience. Beutel et al., noted that resilient teachers were able to manage workload, navigate difficult school-based relationships and meet the consistently high cognitive and emotional demands of teaching by “seeking support” (p. 612), “de-personalising the situation” (p. 613) and using positive “self-talk” (p. 613). However, Gu (2018) who studied teacher resilience from a social-ecological lens, noted teacher resilience was influenced by the teaching environment. She suggested understanding how a teacher navigated the complexities of their role required more than a consideration of a teacher’s internal traits. Rather, Gu highlighted the link between a teacher’s ability to be resilient and the extent to which classroom and school contexts aligned with a teachers’ sense of identity, feelings of purpose and existing values and beliefs. Gu proposed “resilience in teachers needs to be perceived as being closely allied to their everyday capacity to sustain their educational purposes and successfully manage the unavoidable uncertainties inherent in their world of work” (p. 14). She found both “purpose and pride in being a teacher” (p. 25) gave dedicated teachers “the inner drive, strength and optimism to help every child learn, grow and achieve” (p. 25). Therefore, as Gu suggested, teacher resilience was not a matter of finding a way through challenging times but rather aligning a sense of values and purpose with the work being carried out.

Passion for teaching

Teachers with a passion for teaching have a high intrinsic motivation derived from a ‘love’ of their subject area, a commitment to the process of learning, a belief in their ability to teach and an altruistic desire to have a positive impact on the lives of their students (Gu, 2018; Heinz, 2015; Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019; Rinke & Mawhinney, 2017). These intrinsic and altruistic motivations are energising and

identity reaffirming and are the reason many teachers choose teaching as a profession (Heinz, 2015; Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019). In their study of NSW English teachers, Manuel, Dutton and Carter (2019) considered: the impact of teachers' intrinsic and altruistic motivations; the salience of teachers' initial motivations for becoming teachers and; teachers' future career intentions. Despite identifying the challenges in a teaching role, Manuel, Dutton and Carter recognised passion was a factor that not only attracted teachers to the profession but also helped them stay. Manuel, Dutton and Carter found, teachers were intrinsically motivated by a "love" (p. 12) of their subject area and altruistically motivated by a desire to "make a difference in people's lives" (p. 12). Despite tensions caused by workload and overwhelm, the teachers in Manuel, Dutton and Carter's study were passionate about the teaching aspects of their role and maintained those motivations throughout their career. Teachers spoke about how relationships with students, the opportunity to inspire learning, supportive colleagues, effective leadership and the intellectual stimulation within schools, buoyed resilience and enabled them to sustain a career they loved (Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019). It was this passion for teaching that was of particular interest to this study because passion seemed to unite the other aspects contributing to teacher retention discussed previously.

Despite passion being recognised as one of the factors contributing to teachers' motivation for teaching, there seems to be a lack of research into how and why passion sustained teachers across a teaching career. However, in other fields, the role of passion in the workplace has attracted attention. Vallerand et al. (2003) suggested passion can be a motivational force that provides a sense of purpose and increased wellbeing. They defined passion as "a strong inclination toward an activity that people like, that they find important, and in which they invest time and energy" (p. 756). Vallerand et al. proposed a study of passion may answer questions about what contributes to a flourishing life. However, their dualistic model of passion, distinguished between healthy or positive passion, which they labelled 'harmonious passion' and a damaging or negative passion which they referred to as an 'obsessive passion'. According to Vallerand et al. an activity associated with a harmonious passion is motivational because it represents an enjoyable, internalised, autonomous action. Vallerand et al. found that activities associated with a harmonious

passion are intrinsically important to an individual and, while the activity becomes part of a person's identity, it does not overpower their life. In contrast, they explained that an obsessive passion is typified by an unyielding compulsion to engage in an activity despite negative consequences. While obsessive passion can also become part of a person's identity, Vallerand et al. found a person with an obsessive passion had difficulty controlling their passion, often to the detriment of other areas of a person's life.

Building on Vallerand et al.'s study, Forest et al. (2012) considered the relationship between harmonious passion, a person's use of their strengths at work and increased wellbeing. Forest et al. defined a strength as "a distinctive characteristic that energises and motivates people to develop and function optimally" (p. 1234). Forest et al. found education professionals in Australia and China who focused on using their strengths at work, felt harmonious passion toward workplace activities and contributed to workplace satisfaction, higher energy levels and increased wellbeing. As a result, Forest et al. proposed more attention be given to designing workplaces where staff can use their strengths because, when a person felt as though they could work to their full potential, they were more likely to find coherence between their role at work and their sense of self. This internalising of workplace identity was significant for this study because, as has been shown previously in the research into teacher retention, teachers who experience internal cohesion between their workplace activities and their values, beliefs and perception of identity, are more likely to stay. Also of relevance was a recent study by Scales and Brown (2020) who examined the relationship between harmonious passion and workplace satisfaction in American social workers. Scales and Brown suggested worker morale could be increased by increasing harmonious passion. The findings of these studies into the impact of harmonious passion in the workplace have relevance to teacher retention because they offer an alternative perspective as to why some teachers maintain their internal motivation to teach, despite the external challenges.

Vallerand (2012) emphasised the connection between harmonious passion and identity suggesting that engaging in activities associated with a harmonious passion were important for sustained wellbeing. Vallerand explained "passionate activities come to be so self-defining that they represent central features

of one's identity" (p.3). However, despite the motivational pull of harmonious passion if the activity becomes detrimental, a person who experiences harmonious passion has the internal strength to reduce or stop doing the activity (Vallerand et al., 2003). Therefore, the link between harmonious passion and identity offers context to Manuel, Dutton and Carter's (2019) suggestion that being intrinsically and altruistically motivated to teach can mitigate the impact of systemic, administrative and other workplace tensions. However, as Manuel, Dutton and Carter found, passionate teachers could still leave if teaching became harmful to their sense of wellbeing or self-esteem.

A positive view of teaching

Alongside the lack of studies that considered the impact of passion on teacher retention, there seem to be few studies that focus specifically on how teachers sustain their enjoyment of teaching. Clandinin et al. (2015) noted there was a difference between recognising factors that retain teachers and those which sustain them, yet few studies of teacher retention focused on where, when and how teachers thrive across a career. As has been noted previously, teachers are energised by their intrinsic and altruistic motivations and activities associated with those motivations increase resilience, wellbeing and workplace satisfaction (Forest et al., 2012; Gu 2018; Heinz, 2015; Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019). These motivations can sustain a teacher's commitment to teaching (Heinz, 2015; Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019).

Hargraves (1998) suggested building on successful practice was more effective than turning from failures. Chiong et al.'s (2017) mixed method study focused on the positive reasons late career teachers kept teaching. Similar to studies already addressed in this review, Chiong et al. found that teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations fluctuated over a career and with these fluctuations came changes to teachers' attitude toward their role. Equally, Chiong et al. discovered that experienced teachers were more likely to remain teaching for altruistic reasons and when their "professional mastery" (p. 1083) had value. These findings were consistent with Manuel, Dutton and Carter's (2019) study that recognised the role of intrinsic and altruistic goals in maintaining a teacher's passion and sustaining a desire to remain a teacher. A second

study that looked at positively focused late career teachers was conducted by Lowe et al. (2019). Lowe et al. wanted to develop a measure for identifying positively engaged teachers and offered strategies for re-engaging disengaged teachers by helping teachers “rediscover a passion for teaching” (p. 430). Lowe et al.’s study, like Chiong et al.’s (2017) study, recognised a connection between passion for teaching and being positively engaged as a teacher and suggested a need for more research into the positive experiences of teachers.

The Value of Studying Teachers’ Stories

Teachers’ stories reflect their internal perception of external experiences. Each teacher has an individual story, founded upon their own value systems and beliefs, that guides their career decisions (Glazer, 2018a). However, sometimes a teacher’s story becomes enmeshed in systemic, societal or historic narratives that interfere with internal coherence. At these times, teachers experienced dissonance and questioned if teaching was the right career for them. Nevertheless, even though adopting a positive focus to the study of teacher retention was uncommon, there were numerous studies that supported using teacher narratives as a proactive strategy for focusing teacher attention on the positive aspects of their role. These studies showed how teachers may re-story their experience and increase their own wellbeing.

The impact of externally imposed stories

There is a recognisable difference between the stories that a teacher tells about themselves and their teaching and the stories about teaching imposed by systemic or social forces (Bien & Selland 2018; Selland, 2017; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019). However, Selland (2017) found a teacher’s sense of what constituted an effective teacher was often based on societal or historic images of effective teaching. According to Bien and Selland (2018), these “grand narratives of the profession” (p. 88) were constraining and when the story a teacher constructed to fulfil their image of successful teaching came into conflict with the practices a teacher was required to follow, anxiety and career dissonance were common. Similarly,

Schaefer and Clandinin (2019) found early career teachers experienced tension when their “stories to live by” (p.54) contradicted the stories they told themselves about their actual teaching practice. These examples of teachers experiencing dissonance between their career and personal stories are supported by previous studies, mentioned earlier in this review, of teachers feeling frustrated when work practices were out of alignment with beliefs, values and perception of identity.

The impact of re-storying

Selland (2017) and Schaefer and Clandinin (2019) proposed giving teachers the space to consciously consider their professional identity narrative. Stories allow teachers to make sense of their experience (Bruner, 2002). More specifically, when a teacher gives deliberate attention to the sense making aspects of stories and purposefully re-stories their experience they can find internal coherence (McAdams, 1993). Therefore, being consciously alert to the story being told can help a teacher sustain their commitment to teaching. For example, Selland (2017), proposed “certain kinds of storytelling can provide rich opportunities to resist simplified narratives of teaching and learning” (p. 247). Selland suggested narratives that allowed for the “messiness” of teaching helped teachers recognise a space where “failure and success were not always seen as dichotomies but rather natural parts of every teaching experience” (p. 258). Therefore, Bien and Selland (2018) proposed that early career teachers could expand their storying to take into account the multidimensional aspects of teaching. As previously mentioned, Schaefer and Clandinin (2019), found teachers were more likely to stay when there was coherence between personal and professional identities. Like Selland, Schaefer and Clandinin (2019) wondered what would happen if early career teachers composed forward-looking stories. Therefore, rather than seeking to ‘fix’ the challenges teachers face Schaefer and Clandinin suggested addressing retention from the earliest stages of a teacher’s career by “allowing beginning teachers to better understand what conditions need to be in place to sustain them as people who teach” (p. 65). This positive approach to workplace re-storying was identified in other studies. Clarà (2017) noted that when teachers reframed the way they perceived a negative aspect of teaching they

were able to change the way they felt about their role. Similarly, Turner and Thielking (2019) found when teachers were encouraged to deliberately focus on activities that brought meaning to their role as a teacher, they began to ‘craft’ their job and experience higher levels of agency (p. 81). Rinke and Mawhinney (2017) noted that passion featured strongly when teacher leavers told stories about how their love for their subject, students and making a difference, pulled and pushed them throughout their career. Therefore, Rinke and Mawhinney suggested retention strategies should increase a teacher’s opportunity to “experience the intrinsic rewards of teaching” (p. 371). As former teachers who made the move into research Rinke and Mawhinney drew upon their own experiences to suggest that rather than being passive instruments of an education system, teachers may actively construct a career path that meets their personal and professional needs. This notion that a person can construct their own career path has been explored in other studies of career development (Del Corso & Rehfus 2011; Dix, 2020; Savickas et al., 2009) however, was rarely mentioned in studies of teacher retention.

A Story That Puts the Teacher at the Centre of Research into Teacher Retention

Recognition of the proactive role teachers may play in their own career development offers an alternative lens to the study of teacher retention. Allen et al. (2019) commented on a parliamentary inquiry into the status of teaching in Australia and noted how government focus “has moved from the outside in” (p. 99). It is within the context of this shift to understand how individual teachers negotiate their career that this study of the stories late career teachers tell about being a teacher, falls. Analysis of the literature suggested that despite more than thirty years of research little has changed either in terms of identifying the challenges teachers experience while performing their role or in proposing solutions to meet those challenges. As we have seen, much of the research into teacher attrition adopts a deficit approach by focusing on what was problematic within or absent from a teacher’s experience. Much of the research into teacher retention sought to identify specific problems and offer solutions. Few studies adopted a positive approach to teacher retention by considering what teachers *enjoy* about teaching. Despite increased

attention to the work of the individual and the study of teachers' stories (Bien & Selland, 2018; Glazer 2018a; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019; Selland 2017) individual factors leading to retention such as teacher resilience and agency (Beutel, Crosswell, & Broadley, 2019; Biesta, Priestley & Robinson, 2015; Clarà, 2017; Gu, 2018; Oolbekink et al., 2017; Sullivan et al., 2020) often focus on the experience of beginning and early career teachers. Only a few studies could be found that focused on the individual stories of teachers who remained engaged *across* a career (Chiong et al., 2017; Lowe et al., 2019). As a result, a gap in the literature was identified in terms of understanding why, and how, teachers sustain their commitment to teaching over time.

Focusing on the stories of late career teachers who have sustained their career motivation can provide an alternative perspective to the study of teacher retention. With increased attention in teacher wellbeing there is growing interest in the factors which contribute to a thriving career. As the literature revealed, the question of how to retain teachers is different to considering why teachers stay. The first question considers systemic and social changes that need to occur across the teaching profession. Responsibility is generally given to policy, government and institutions. However, asking individual teachers why they stayed considers the choices made by teachers, and in doing so gives power to the individual. Focusing on the career choices made by individual teachers recognises that teachers are in control of their career development and may craft a career story that meets individualised needs and aligns with personal goals, beliefs, values and perception of identity. Therefore, rather than focusing on generalised characteristics, research into teacher retention could consider how a teacher's internal perceptions align to external experiences. It is this focus on the internal and personal experience of individual teachers that lends itself to a narrative study that considers the life and career narratives of late career teachers.

This literature review has uncovered the following key factors that contribute to teachers' motivation and commitment to their profession: school-based relationships; a sense of agency in the workplace; resilience; and an alignment of work place activities with beliefs, values and perceptions of identity. It is suggested that the qualities that sustain engagement over a teaching career are similarly:

passion for subject area; desire for intellectual stimulation and commitment to students and their learning. However, few studies have considered late career teachers' perspectives or taken a positive approach to the issue of teacher retention by considering what sustains a teacher across a career. The next chapter outlines the conceptual framework used to inform this study.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study will draw upon the stories of late career teachers. Of key interest is how a teacher interprets their experiences and relationships with focus given to the sustaining elements of teaching. Teachers' experiences are placed at the centre of the research puzzle (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in an attempt to actualise the relationship between a personal experience of teaching, the contexts in which teaching occurs, intrinsic and altruistic motivations, beliefs, values and perceptions of identity and, sustaining a teaching career.

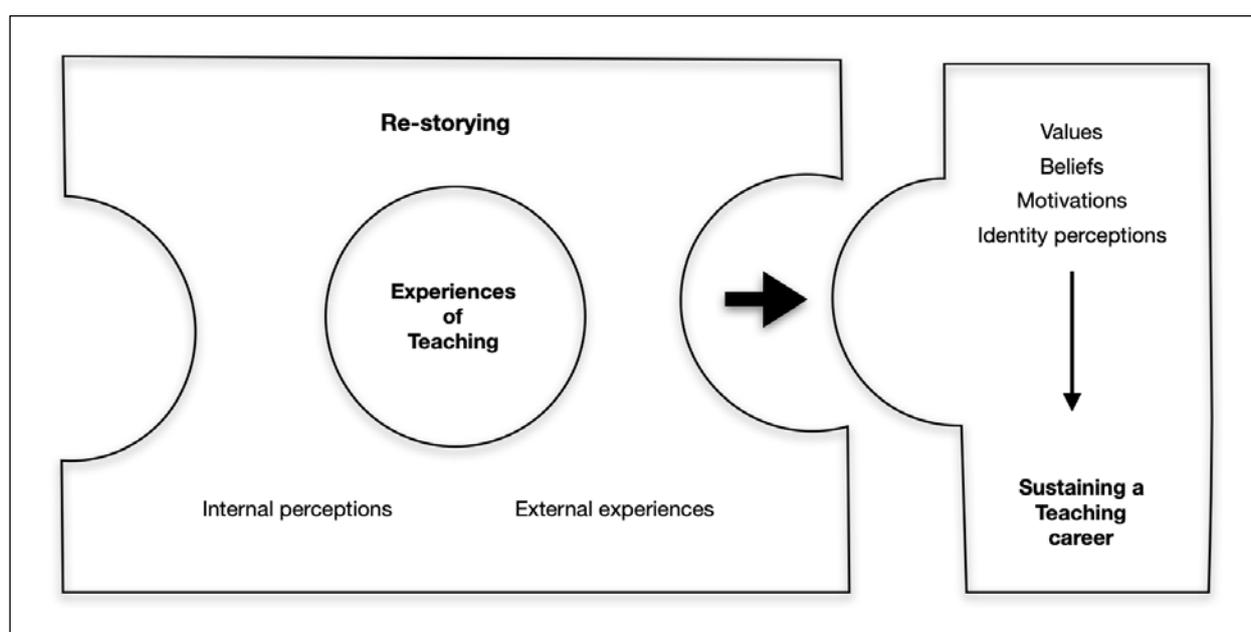


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework, illustrates how the process of re-storying created a platform for examining teachers' experiences. Presented as a puzzle piece, individual teacher experiences are placed at the centre of the research puzzle while the process of re-storying provided a base for understanding how teachers perceived their career over time. Attention is given to internal perceptions of external experiences. These perceptions are linked to individual values, beliefs, motivations and perceptions of identity, depicted within a second, connecting puzzle piece. McAdams (2001, 2018) found that as a person stories and re-stories their life they choose defining memories and fashion them into a narrative pattern

that makes sense in terms of how they see themselves – both in that moment and where they want be in the future. In sharing their stories, teachers reveal not only how they see themselves but the motivations, values and beliefs linked to those perceptions. Therefore, rather than stories being seen as frozen moments in time, they are considered as interconnected milieus of experience that, when taken as a whole, reflect a teacher’s perception of how being a teacher fits within a broader experience of life. When a person reframes a story over time, they re-consider their experiences from a different, and often deeper, perspective (Atkinson 2007; Bruner, 2002). This sense making aspect of storytelling can provide insight into what sustains a teacher throughout their career.

The following chapter describes the methodological approach that has been chosen to assist in answering the question: What can we learn from stories of late career teachers in terms of attitudes toward teaching, motivations in teaching and sustaining a teaching career?

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This study takes a phenomenological approach valuing and focusing on teachers' experiences as they report them. The overarching methodology is narrative inquiry as I seek to investigate what we can learn from the stories of late career teachers in terms of attitudes toward teaching, motivations in teaching and sustaining a teaching career. In this chapter I provide a justification for the methodological choice, explain the research process and delineate the data sets. This chapter authenticates the research approach for the context of this study and explains my decisions as the researcher.

Research Approach

Even though there has been much research into the challenges teachers face, there is less research into what sustains a teacher throughout their career. In particular, few studies of teacher retention focus on the individual teachers who sustain a positive and passionate approach to teaching. Therefore, a gap in the literature was identified. This study seeks to uncover a better understanding of individual teachers' perspectives across a career. Since previous research into teacher retention identified a need for cohesion between personal and professional identities (Gu, 2018; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019) and, an alignment of beliefs, values and teaching practice (Glazer, 2018a; Kelchtermans, 2017; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018; Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019), it is important to look beyond what teachers said about their careers. Rather the aim of this study is to critically consider the complex dynamic between a teacher's attitude toward teaching, their experiences of being a teacher and their personal experiences, beliefs, values and perceptions of identity. Therefore, a methodology which gave participants an opportunity to self-sort and choose which stories, thoughts, feelings and opinions to share, was necessary. Thus, the methodology incorporates narratives based on teachers' recounts and reflections on their personal experiences as educators over time. It values and includes emotional responses and expressions of belief and values as inherent to understanding the complexity of each teacher's individual experiences.

Why Narrative?

I have always valued stories and, as an English teacher, have seen the capacity for stories to inspire reflective thought. It was this fascination that led me to Masters research. I was curious about how stories affected teacher wellbeing. However, I wanted to use a methodological approach that took advantage of human beings' innate capacity to create narratives out of their experience. Bruner (2002) suggested that a person constructs meaning and creates a sense of self through the creation and sharing of stories. According to Bruner (2002) "we create our self-defining stories to meet the situations where we will go on living" (p. 100). Even though personal narratives "are a version of reality" (Bruner, 1991, p. 4), a person's framed and reframed stories reflect their interpretation of the events, relationships and occurrences around them (Bruner, 1991). Bruner (2004) believed stories were not only a way of organising memory but in telling stories, a person shaped other aspects of their life. This framing, sorting and sense-making element of storytelling provided a foundation for a deeper appreciation of factors contributing to the teaching experience. For instance, McAdams (2001) suggested a person gains internal coherence by incorporating experiences of the past, in terms of their present with a view to their future. He also proposed when a person selected which story to share about their life, they chose to recount events and experiences that defined how they saw themselves. Importantly, McAdams (1993) believed these stories connected a person to their community. According to McAdams one person's stories can influence other people's stories and the interconnecting storylines contribute to both personal and communal identity. McAdams' premise has significance for this study because teachers exist as individuals within a wider system and, within that system are as much influenced by their relationships and environment as they are influencers of their relationships and environment. When teachers frame and reframe their stories, they are not only recounting their experience, they are shaping their experience. This narrative premise of sense making and connection to community through storying and re-storying informed the design of this study. The collection of teacher stories, based on the recollection of key events, allows for a re-thinking of those events and consideration of why particular events might have had specific relevance for a study of teachers'

experiences. Therefore, it is logical that this research process adopts a narrative inquiry methodology and privileges stories and re-storying in the collection, analysis and reporting of data.

Narrative Inquiry

Unlike paradigmatic modes of thinking which seek abstraction and the systematic categorisation of ideas, the narrative mode “strives to put timeless miracles into the particulars of experience and to locate the experience in time and place” (Bruner, 1986, p.13). This recognition of human experience being located in place and time represented an intersection between narrative and narrative inquiry methodology. Connelly and Clandinin (2006), like Bruner, suggested that “people live storied lives” (p. 477). They described story as “a portal through which a person enters the world and by which his or her experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful” (p. 477). Therefore, narrative inquiry provided the opportunity to study personal and social experiences as they occurred in various places over time (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).

From the initial research focus, what can we learn from stories of late career teachers in terms of attitudes toward teaching, motivations in teaching and sustaining a teaching career, four lines of inquiry emerged:

- The impact of individual perspectives, beliefs and values on external behaviours
- Why stay (what motivates a teacher)
- Why question (what frustrates a teacher)
- Why persevere (what sustains a teacher).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe narrative inquiry as a “a way of understanding experience” (p. 20) where researcher and participants collaborate “over time, in a place or series of places, and in interaction with milieus” (p. 20). Since the stories a teacher tells are seen as expressions of their behaviours (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), narrative inquiry provides a process for a dynamic, in-depth analysis of

teachers' experiences of teaching. Importantly, teachers are viewed as co-contributors to the project and data are collected in the form of field texts that privilege experience and the voice of participants. The researcher works within the field interacting with participants to create field texts comprising of,

teacher stories; autobiographical writing; journal writing; field notes; letters; conversation; research interviews; family stories; documents; photographs; memory boxes and other personal-family-social artifacts and; life experiences. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 93)

As a researcher moves from "field text to field text, and from field text to research text" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 60) the work-in-progress is shared with participants and feedback invited. Throughout the process, researchers are part of the project rather than being outside observers (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As a result, the narrative inquirer often needs to confront their own stories and be alert to their own vulnerabilities as well as being aware of the boundary between participants' stories and their own. Therefore, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest, "it is impossible (or if not impossible, then deliberately self-deceptive) as a researcher to stay silent or to present a kind of perfect, idealised, inquiring, moralising self" (p. 62).

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) explain that the inquiry space is both dynamic, and multidimensional. They remind narrative inquirers to be "self-consciously aware of everything happening within that space" (p. 481). It is important to recognise that stories develop across the research project and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) provide a model for studying stories in perpetual motion. They describe how a narrative inquiry occurs along a four directional axis whereby analysis moves forward and backward, inward and outward (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). For example, rather than considering a story as a frozen moment, it is analysed in terms of past and future influences and internal and external perspectives. These four directions of inquiry give a narrative study fluidity and are essential to gaining a deeper understanding of participant experiences. For example, participants in this study told stories that moved back in time to provide life history context and forward in time to consider future career goals. Equally, participants reflected inward as they shared their thoughts and emotions toward teaching and projected outward when

Giving specific attention to each of the common places is important because it provides an analytical frame for recognising the connection between a teacher’s internal representations (beliefs values and perceptions of identity) and external presentations (choices and behaviours). As stated previously, analysing this connection is important because previous studies have identified a direct correlation between teachers’ perceptions of identity (Gu, 2018; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019), an ability to work in accordance with beliefs and values (Kelchtermans, 2017; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018; Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019) and, a decision to remain a teacher.

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) use the term life space to describe the multidirectional, dynamic space where “topics, participants, and puzzles” (p. 481) are considered in terms of the common places. When the four directions of narrative inquiry are considered alongside the three common places, a study has a theoretical and structural foundation

upon which to consider the milieu of teacher experiences. Figure 3: The dynamic life space of a narrative inquiry, (based on the work of Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), depicts how the common places interweave to create a life space whereby the fluid nature of the teaching experience may be examined. The three common places, sociality, place and temporality

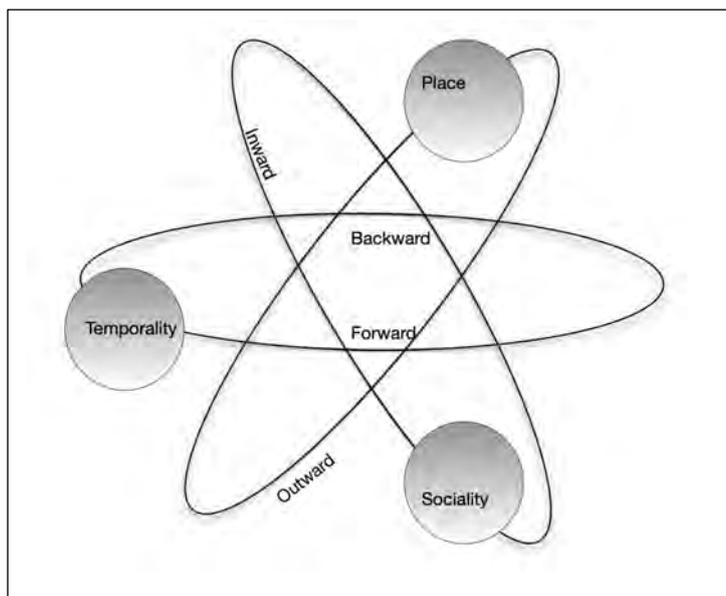


Figure 3: The dynamic life space of a narrative inquiry, (based on the work of Clandinin & Connelly, 2000)

move within a four directional axis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) following orbital lines in a perpetual forward and backward, inward and outward motion. This perpetual motion of the common places is important to this study because a teacher’s stories shift and evolve to take into consideration their experience and are seen as being as much a part of the person, as they are a part of the way a teacher views their life as a teacher (Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019).

When individual teachers choose which story to tell, they self-sort for their most significant stories. This self-sorting and re-telling element of narrative (Atkinson, 2007; Bruner, 2002; McAdams 2001, 2018) is significant to a study of teacher retention because as Schaefer and Clandinin (2019) suggested, “stories to live by” (p. 56) have the potential to become stories to leave by or, stories to sustain. Schaefer and Clandinin found teachers were more likely to stay in teaching when they had an opportunity to actively consider the stories they live by, in relation to the stories they taught by. This study prioritises teachers’ stories because stories offer an opportunity to hear a person making sense of their world. When a person shares stories about their life and career, they choose the events they found significant and offer a personal interpretation.

Re-storing Teacher Experiences

This study considered what was working for individual teachers with attention given to aspects of teaching that sustained a teacher’s motivation to teach. Figure 4: Using the restoring process within the life space of a narrative inquiry, attempts to show the relationship between the narrative inquiry life space, teachers’ stories and the process

of re-storing teacher experience. Analysis occurred by making multidirectional passes through the common places while puzzling through the beliefs, values, motivations, and perspectives emerging from the re-storing process. The aim was

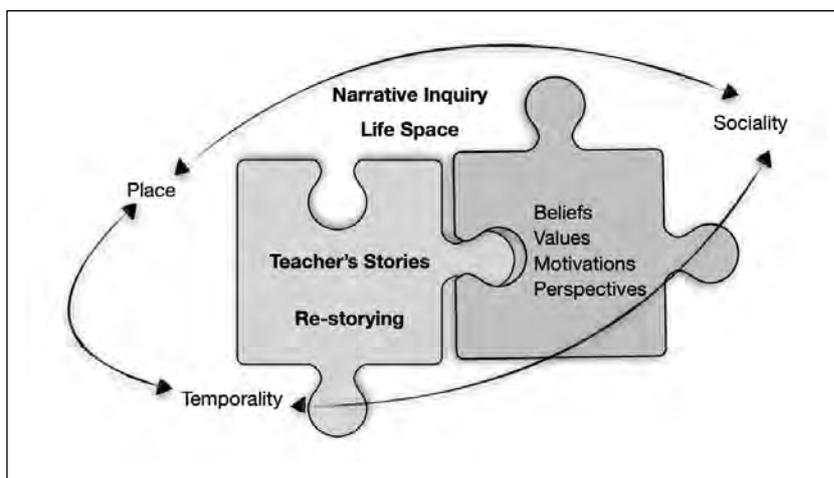


Figure 4: Using the re-storing process within the life space of a narrative inquiry

to sort for aspects within participants’ stories that were most relevant to the initial aims of the research question and identify the motivations, beliefs, values and perceptions of identity that contributed to a

positive teaching experience. It was this positive internalisation of the *act* of teaching that was a core interest in this study because earlier research into teacher attrition noted that teachers leave when they cannot find coherence between a personal and professional identity (Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019) and when their role did not align with personal values, beliefs and motivations (Glazer, 2018a; Kelchtermans 2017; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018). Of equal interest were suggestions that teachers' frustrations often centred around the elements of their role they could not control such as policy and curriculum (Kelchtermans, 2017; Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019). Listening to how teachers re-story career accomplishments provided insight into how teachers make sense of their career decisions.

Research Context

This study took place in an independent school in Queensland, Australia. The school is well resourced and teachers who work there are generally appreciative of the school's culture and supportive leadership. The school caters to both day students and boarders and actively fosters respectful, positive relationships among students, across staff and, between students and staff. Pastoral care is prioritised through an active wellbeing program with sporting ability and academic achievement attracting equal attention. I, the researcher, was employed at the school on a one-year English teaching contract. As soon as I began working at the school, I noted a distinct sense of loyalty from both students and teachers. It was a pleasant place to be. At the time, I was one third of the way through my Masters program and soon to embark upon the research phase of my study. Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) description of narrative inquiry as "people in relation studying with people in relation" (p.189) resonated strongly. Therefore, I wanted to recruit participants from this school, a school where teachers were thriving, and where I could work alongside the participants. I was, therefore, an actively practicing teacher, who was also a researcher, listening as participant teachers expressed what *they* felt, what *they* experienced and how *they* perceived their life as a teacher. This shared experience was important because it established deep trust and

contributed to empathetic awareness of participant experience. However, I also realised there were ethical and relational issues that needed to be addressed.

Position of Researcher and Ethical Considerations

One of my initial motivations for conducting this Masters study was, somewhat selfishly, to explore, albeit vicariously, my own experience of being a teacher. I loved being a teacher but, after fifteen years of teaching and being confronted with a series of personal and professional challenges, I questioned the extensive emotional demands. I was cognitively and emotionally exhausted and left teaching to pursue other interests. However, my non-teaching jobs were not fulfilling. Upon reflection, I realised it was not the teaching or pastoral care elements that drained me but rather the expectations to comply with pedagogical beliefs or workplace values that were not my own. I also realised I had allowed my teaching experience to be influenced by interactions with disengaged teachers. These reflections led me to question if there was a more proactive way to study the experience of teachers – a study that focused on why teachers enjoyed being a teacher. It was this thought that led me to a narrative inquiry of teacher retention. Even though I anticipated hearing about the tensions a teacher experienced, I wanted to consider the success, optimism and triumph within teachers' stories. Once I began studying research methodologies as part of my Masters degree, I came to see that using narrative inquiry would allow me to see and hear positive experiences through a multidirectional conceptual frame. As an active teacher, I immersed myself in the life space of narrative inquiry and, as I listened objectively to teachers' stories, I noticed how their words reflected an internal perception of an external experience. By focusing on the teachers' own words, I could separate my impression of an event from theirs and witness the experience from different perspectives. It was this deliberate, active listening that offered a mechanism for a critically reflective analysis of teachers' stories.

However, even though the emic nature of this project offered an insider view of the participants' lives and careers, there were challenges to overcome. First, I needed to recognise my place as a teacher researcher who had a professional working relationship with the participants. There were many similarities

between the participants' stories and my own and I needed to be mindful of not assigning my internal representations on participants' external behaviours. To ensure a clear distinction between my story as a teacher and those of participants, I used a systematic process of analysing participants' stories using the sociality common place as a starting point. By considering each participant separately and focusing on their personal conditions before moving to social conditions and then, elements of place and temporality, I was able to focus on the individual teacher's beliefs, values, perceptions of identity and motivations. In an attempt to respect the stories of participants, I kept field memos in two journals, a data collection journal and a data reflection journal. I used these journals to record my thoughts separately to those of participants. For me, this was a valuable part of the research process. I found keeping these notes, which were not intended to be included in the final research text, helped keep my stories and storying separate to those of participants.

A second challenge arose in the developing friendship that occurred during the data gathering process and extended throughout the analysis and writing of the research document. In addition to being colleagues, the participants became my friends at school and I learnt more about who they were as people the more our friendships developed. I knew, when I began analysing the data, I needed to be disciplined and focus on the materials in front of me. I found that thinking of the participants by their pseudonyms rather than their real names helped maintain a researcher's distance. This was another area of the research where it was important for me as the researcher to be meticulous about respecting the individual voices of the participants and to avoid interspersing or overlaying my own voice. Equally helpful were questions from my supervisors whose external perusal of transcripts and early analysis highlighted when I was in danger of imposing my world view or was reading through the lens of my close relationship with participants. These discussions with supervisors helped me maintain the authenticity of participant voices and assisted in retaining the essential critical stance of my role as researcher.

A third challenge arising specifically from the 'insiderness' or emic nature of the study was my growing loyalty toward participants. Cole suggested there "is a heavy responsibility to research from the

inside” (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 169). As an insider who had already built professional trust, I noticed participants were willing to share deeply personal stories. There was a strong empathetic connection between participants and me because they knew I understood what they were talking about. I had quite literally, walked the same path and experienced the same tensions and joys. As a result of this trust and shared experience, participants were open, earnest and forthright in their narrative. Their words were uncensored because they knew I was actively listening and genuinely interested in their story. For example, one participant spoke about very personal challenges in their teenage life. Another participant shared stories about early childhood and young adult tensions not spoken about in a very long time. After reading their transcripts, participants expressed surprise at how much they shared, much of which they could not remember saying. One participant explained how recalling events in early teaching experiences and comparing them to current teaching experiences led them to understandings they had not seen at the time. Therefore, I felt an overwhelming sense of responsibility to tell the story ‘right’. Challenges arose as I tried to honour each participant’s story while preserving their anonymity. I was compelled to be authentic in the presentation of each participant’s voice (Atkinson, 1998; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and yet also alert to the ethical need to ensure ‘no harm’ came to their career, position within the school or their professional reputation. I found myself juggling specific recounts and sifting and sorting to share elements of narrative that would not compromise privacy while still providing a clear sense of the teacher’s experiences and motivations. In the end, using a positive lens proved helpful in choosing how to present the data in an honest and authentic manner. I realised, even though I may identify teachers’ frustrations, the focus was on how teachers overcame those frustrations and thrived, despite any career-based tensions. Engaging in narrative inquiry provided the space to deeply explore individual teachers’ experiences but to do so in the context of a wider social-psychological and theoretical frame. All of the teachers in the study were highly professional, masters of their subject areas with vast experience in building effective relationships with students and colleagues. They loved being a teacher and, given this was a study that focused on why teachers stay in teaching, it was that passion for their career that drew my attention.

Research Stages

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described the narrative inquiry process as being similar to piecing together a puzzle. This study was completed in four stages as represented in Figure 5: Puzzling though the research process. The model uses puzzle pieces to illustrate how the four stages of the study connected to

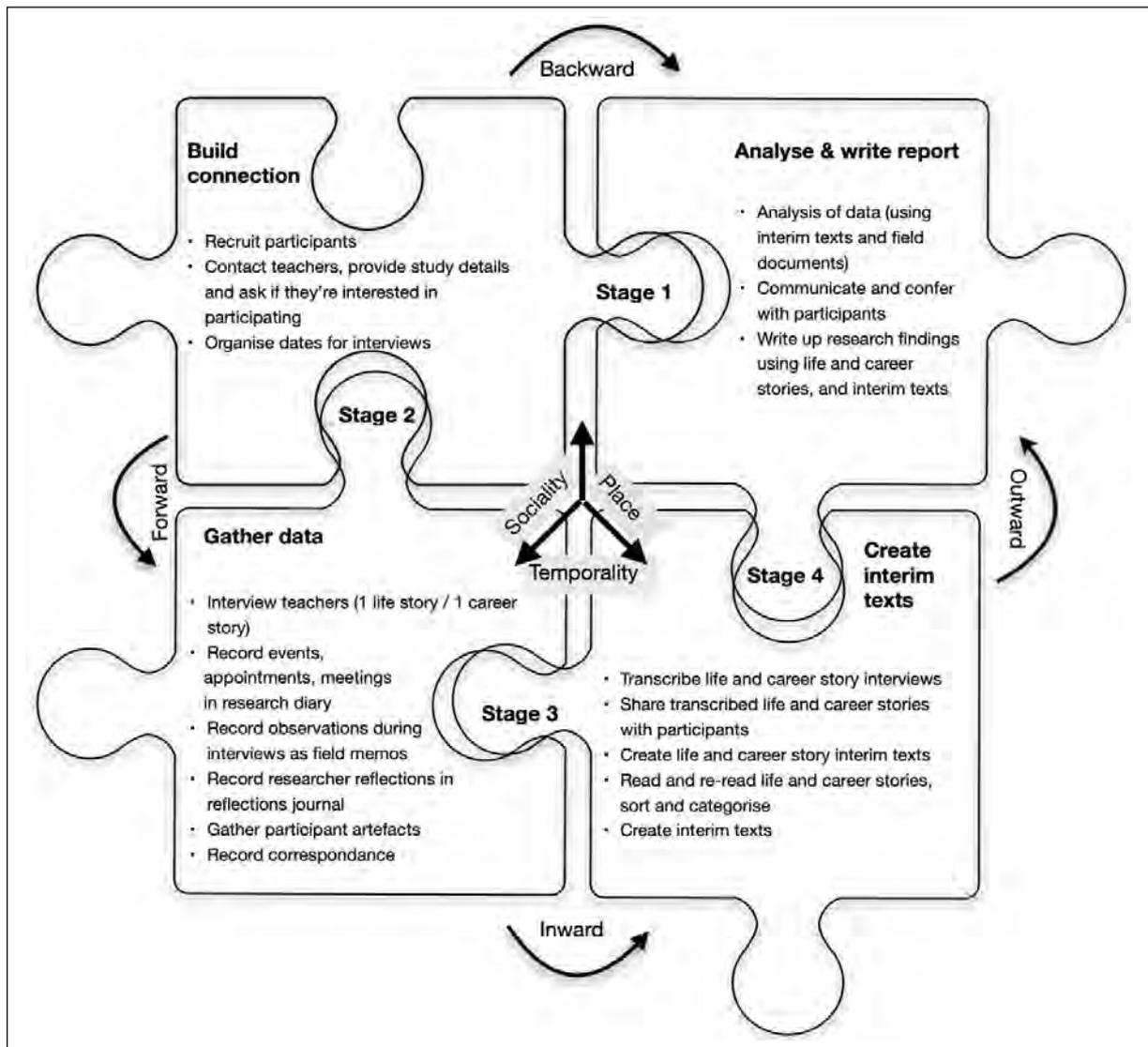


Figure 5: Puzzling though the research process

form an interconnected process where field work, data collection and the creation of interim texts extended beyond the collection of life story interviews. Concurrent within all stages was a connection between researcher and participant as data were collected, reflected upon, checked and analysed. At all stages of

the study, the common places; sociality, place and temporality provided directional cues as analysis moved in a continual back and forth, inward and outward motion. Data sets included:

- Interview transcripts
- Field notes / researcher journals
- Interim texts.

Each of the research stages is described in more detail in what follows of this chapter. However, the following brief overview of the research timeline may be useful:

Step 1 – April – June 2020 recruit participants: 3 participants (convenience and purposive sampling)

Step 2 – May – June 2020 interviews: 2 x 33min – 150min (life story interview; career interview)

Step 3 – May 2020 – Dec 2020 analysis: iterative process including construction of interim texts

Step 4 – Dec 2020 – June 2021 report writing: drafting and redrafting.

The discussion that follows provides details of each of the above aspects.

Recruiting Participants and Conducting Interviews

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, access to the school faculty was restricted and mass emails to staff were discouraged by school leadership. Therefore, I used convenience sampling and approached teachers I regularly saw in the staffroom during this time. Cohen et al. (2017) describe convenience sampling as a process of recruiting participants who “happen to be available and accessible at the time” (p. 218) and suggest care must be taken to acknowledge the low level of generalisability using such a method. Whilst my recruiting of participants was based on ease of access, I was deliberate in who I approached. Specifically, I wanted to recruit late career teachers who I knew, from casual conversations in the staff common room, were happy at work. Therefore, even though recruitment was by convenience, it was to some extent, purposive. Cohen et al. (2017) describe purposive sampling as the deliberate choice of participants based on a researcher’s belief that they have the “characteristic(s) being sought” (p.218). Cohen et al. suggest purposive sampling may be used when researchers require the thoughts and opinion of a particular group

and, whilst not representative of a wider population, can provide “in-depth information from those who are in a position to give it” (p. 219). Since the aim of my study was to learn from the stories of teachers who maintained a passion for teaching across a career, it was important to choose teachers who gave the impression they enjoyed being a teacher. In all, three participants were recruited. Once participants gave verbal assent, they were sent an email to provide details of the project, confirm interest and gain informed consent in line with university guidelines. The study received approval from the Griffith University HREC: approval number – 2020/081. In order to maintain participant privacy and preserve anonymity, participants were asked, via email, to nominate a pseudonym or to give permission for one to be randomly assigned. Participant 1 chose to become Frank. Participant 2 did not respond to my email but verbally said she was fine with the name assigned, Peta. Participant 3 elected to use the name assigned, Mary.

Each participant participated in two individual interviews at times and locations of their choosing. In the first interview participants shared aspects of their life story and the second, their career story. Two participants, Peta and Frank, chose to complete both interviews in their own homes. The third participant, Mary, chose to complete her first interview at school and the second in her home. Frank’s first interview was conducted during term two, on the weekend and his second interview, four weeks later, was also conducted on the weekend. Peta’s first interview was conducted on the weekend during term two, and her second, two and half weeks later, after school. Mary’s first interview was conducted during term two, after school. Her second interview was conducted, a week later during the school holidays. Primarily, the interviews were spaced to facilitate teachers’ busy schedules. The varying length between participant interviews was largely due to different teachers having different responsibilities at school and different family commitments. However, a minimum space of a week was required to give participants time to reflect upon their experience and prepare for the next interview. Similarly, the time between interviews was important because it gave me as researcher, an opportunity to re-listen to the interview and reflect upon the life space by considering each of the common places; sociality, temporality and place. I was able to use those reflections to inform questions in the second interview.

Introducing the Participants

In the following vignettes, each story uses the pseudonym approved by the participants.

Frank

Frank is a secondary school teacher currently working as a History and Drama teacher. However, over the course of his career he has also taught English, French and Geography. Frank spent most of his teaching career in South Africa where he rose to the level of Principal. At the time of this study, he had been teaching for 22 years, the last four being in Australia. Frank described himself as having “a mouth” and being the “class clown”. He appreciated discipline and order as long as it created opportunity and was not used as a means of subversion. He valued his independence and did not like being constrained or kept from doing the job he knew he was capable of doing. Frank had a deep appreciation for effective relationships, placed a high value on friendship and loved being outdoors. Frank did not intend to become a teacher. Upon completing high school, Frank completed a year of compulsory military service and, when his time was finished, knew he wanted to study at university but did not know what he wanted to do with his life. While academically capable, he favoured socialising with friends and indulging his love of theatre over study. However, after deferring university for a sabbatical to Europe, Frank discovered not only that he could be successful in a teaching role, he thoroughly enjoyed it. Frank taught English to French students and described the experience as like “being bitten by a bug”. He returned to South Africa to study teaching. Whilst Frank did take a brief sabbatical from teaching to pursue his love of theatre, he soon realised the remuneration was neither sufficient nor reliable enough to meet his needs. He returned to teaching and followed a career path that led from teacher to Head of Department to Acting Deputy, Deputy and finally Principal. However, due to conditions in South Africa, Frank and his family moved to Australia. Once settled, Frank went about securing employment as a teacher and completed a number of short-term contracts before being given a full-time role at the school where he currently teaches.

Peta

Peta is a secondary school teacher who currently teaches History and holds leadership positions. Over the course of her career she has also taught Drama, ESL English and International Baccalaureate. Peta described herself as an active person who appreciates people and academic rigour. Service and service learning were important to her and travel remained a driving passion. Peta actively pursued new adventures and like Frank, loved being outdoors. She felt compelled to stay busy but wondered if she was pushing herself too hard. Originally from Canada, at the time of this study Peta had been teaching for 19 years. Peta said she did not intend to become a teacher. Rather she studied Fine Arts and Theatre with some additional History courses. However, after realising the 'casting couch' was a very real facet of the acting industry, she changed career direction. Working with special needs children and later young adults, inspired her to study teaching. She soon realised a teaching degree allowed her to pursue her passion for travel while 'dabbling' in theatre work. Peta chose to study in Melbourne and came to Australia with vague plans to use a teaching degree as an "adult reason to travel". After completing her study Peta and her husband spent the next 13 years traveling and teaching. Although twice questioning if she would remain in teaching, once after two years then again after ten, Peta maintained her teaching status. Nevertheless, she completed an Interior Design degree part time and had plans to transition from teaching to a Design role. However, in 2015 after the dissolution of her marriage, Peta decided to focus on her teaching career and began actively seeking roles that gave her more responsibility.

Mary

Mary is a secondary school teacher currently working as a French teacher. However, she defined her teaching area as middle school generalist. Over the course of her career, she has taught English, Maths and Science and has been a middle school coordinator. At the time of this study, she had been teaching for 22 years. Mary described herself as a "people person". She said "If I enjoy the people, I'll enjoy what I'm doing". Like Peta, Mary preferred being busy, liked to be moving and had a passion for travel. Originally

from Sydney, as a child Mary lived in England, Iran and Canada attending thirteen different schools before returning to complete her secondary education in Sydney. Like Frank and Peta, Mary did not intend to become a teacher. Rather she completed a Bachelor of Arts in French (Linguistics). After working in roles that did not inspire her, Mary returned to university to study a Graduate Diploma in Linguistics. It was during this time she realised if she enjoyed studying languages, she may enjoy teaching them. So, she completed a teaching degree and, at the same time, enlisted in the Army Reserves. During her first six years of teaching, Mary was a teacher during term time and an army reservist during weekends and term breaks. Mary said she “loved teaching” but needed the army to indulge her love of “active adventure stuff”. After a particularly challenging teaching assignment, Mary said she became “a statistic” and left teaching for a full-time role in the Army. However, during her nine months working as a recruiter for the army, Mary did not receive the intellectual stimulation she required to thrive. She said she was “bored” so, when an opportunity came to resume teaching, she took it and has been teaching ever since.

Data

Data were collected over a period of six months. Details and explanations follow.

Data Sources

Data sources included a mixture of field texts and interim texts (see Table 1: Data sources). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) define interim texts as “texts situated in the spaces between field texts and final published research texts” (p. 133). Since interim texts were derived from field texts, preliminary analysis occurred as I sifted, sorted, classified and reflected on the data sets in front of me.

Table 1: Data sources

Data source	Type of text
Life and career story interviews	2 x interviews with each participant. In the first interview, participants shared life stories and in the second, career stories. Interviews varied in length from 33 minutes to 2.5 hours. Frank: 1st 137 mins and 2nd 153 mins

	<p>Peta: 1st 50mins and 2nd 62mins Mary: 1st 33mins and 2nd 59 mins</p>
Participant artifacts	<p>Career map: participants' hand drawn diagrams that symbolise their career.</p> <p>Meaningful images: photographs of, i) a painting that symbolised Mary's, experience of on-line teaching during covid-19 lockdown. ii) letters of student appreciation from Frank's students in South Africa and records of results during his Principalship in South Africa</p>
Correspondence	Emails and journal notes of casual staff room conversations
Research diary	A hand written record of dates, locations and times of data collection.
Data collection journal	Field memos to record reflection-in-action. A hand written journal used to record reflections during the interviews.
Data reflection journal	Data analysis memos – reflection-on-action. A hand written journal to record reflections after the interviews and during the analysis process.
Interim texts	<p>Participant data summary sheets: a summary page of archival information created as a separate document for each participant.</p> <p>Transcribed life and career story interviews: participant interviews organised without researcher questions and in paragraphs to provide narrative flow. Each participant was represented by one life story text and one career story text.</p> <p>Word maps: Four hand drawn diagrams used to create a visual representation of the life space by organising data using the common places; sociality, place and temporality.</p> <p>Category summary sheets: Five word processed documents used to identify, sift, sort and combine categories identified in the data into thematic groupings.</p> <p>Common place analysis tables: tabulated organisation of data using the common places as organisational headings. A separate table was created for each participant.</p>

The following section explains how each data component was managed.

Interviews

Atkinson (2007) described the life story interview as a “method for gathering information on the subjective essence of one person’s entire life” (p. 225). I chose life story interview as a data collection method both from an epistemological frame because I wanted to understand how each participant perceived their life experiences within a social context and, to meet the initial aims of the study: discovering what can be learnt from late-career teachers’ stories about attitudes toward teaching, motivations in teaching and sustaining a teaching career. Participants self-selected their stories and had agency over the stories told. As a result, the data reflected what participants felt and thought about their teaching career, at the time of the interview. One of the features of life story as a means of data collection was that it allowed for the positioning of each person’s unique story within a wider social and historical frame (Atkinson, 1998; Goodson & Gill, 2011). Life story interviews gave access to each teacher’s life-as-a-whole while also providing insight into how that teacher interacted with others within systems. This broader understanding was important to this project because, as was highlighted in the literature, a teacher’s experience of being a teacher is impacted by factors beyond what is happening in school at a particular moment in time.

Interviews were recorded digitally and hand written notes recorded in a data collection journal. Goodson and Gill (2011) suggested researchers choose “a vow of silence” (p. 39) and give participants the opportunity to structure their stories in their own way. A feature of allowing participants to direct the flow of conversation was witnessing how participants sequenced various events in their life and where they perceived connections between actions and consequences. I wanted to allow stories to unfold naturally and give participants the opportunity to self-sort for their defining memories. The aim was to give participants the space to structure their stories into a narrative pattern that made sense in terms of how they saw themselves (McAdams, 2001). Even though core questions were asked to achieve some consistency between interviews, questions were mainly used as prompts to encourage stories. Therefore, interviews were loosely structured and varied in length. Each participant participated in two interviews, a life story, hereafter referred to as LS and a career story, hereafter referred to as CS. During the first

interview, the LS, participants were asked to share stories relating to major life themes: growing up; early influences; schooling; significant life events and inner awareness (see Appendix D: Life story interview questions). During the second interview, the CS, participants were encouraged to talk about: memorable teaching moments; moments of feeling strong or successful as a teacher; moments of joy in teaching; why they stay in teaching; and the factors that sustain them as a teacher (see Appendix E: Career story interview questions).

Even though I did not begin transcribing data until after the second interviews had been completed, I listened to the recording of each participant's first interview - LS, to identify emerging ideas and themes that could inform questions in the second interview- CS. When listening to the LS, I noted aspects of career, areas of tension, significant experiences and influential people. With these in mind I created a set of thematically based guiding questions to help participants think about their career experiences and attitudes toward teaching. These questions were emailed to participants ahead of the second interview so they had time to reflect upon which stories they may choose to share. Participants were also invited to construct a thematic or symbolic career map to use as an organisational tool during the second interview. These, along with the other memorabilia became participant artifacts (described in more detail below).

Participant artifacts

Participants were encouraged to use symbols or metaphors to represent stages in their career. The aim was to focus attention on how participants perceived their career at different career times. I was also curious to see if preparing for the interview gave participants a fresh perspective of their career that illustrated how re-storing (Bruner, 2001; McAdams 2001, 2018; McAdams & McLean, 2013) impacted their attitude toward their career. Frank sketched a career map that metaphorically represented his teaching journey as an aquatic adventure. This adventure began in a pond where he peddled furiously in a pedallo and ended in wide open ocean where he was the captain of an ocean liner. Frank also took the time to locate mementoes from his teaching career: speeches he wrote for school events; graphs showing the

highly successful exam results students achieved under his principalship; and cards of appreciation from former students. He explained the significance of this memorabilia during his CS interview. Peta found diagrammatically mapping out her career difficult and solved her dilemma using her history teaching skills to create a career timeline. Then she chose symbols for each defining stage in her career. Mary, who did not draw a map, supplied a teaching metaphor, a painting of a barren mountain landscape. The painting represented how she felt when teaching moved on-line during Covid-19 lockdowns.

Transcribing the Interviews and Creating Interim Texts

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) direct narrative inquirers to begin early-stage analysis during the data collection process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) so analysis occurred concurrently with data collection as interim texts were created. Figure 6: Refining the Interview Data, illustrates the iterative process of moving from interview to LS and CS interim text. What follows is a description of the steps taken to create

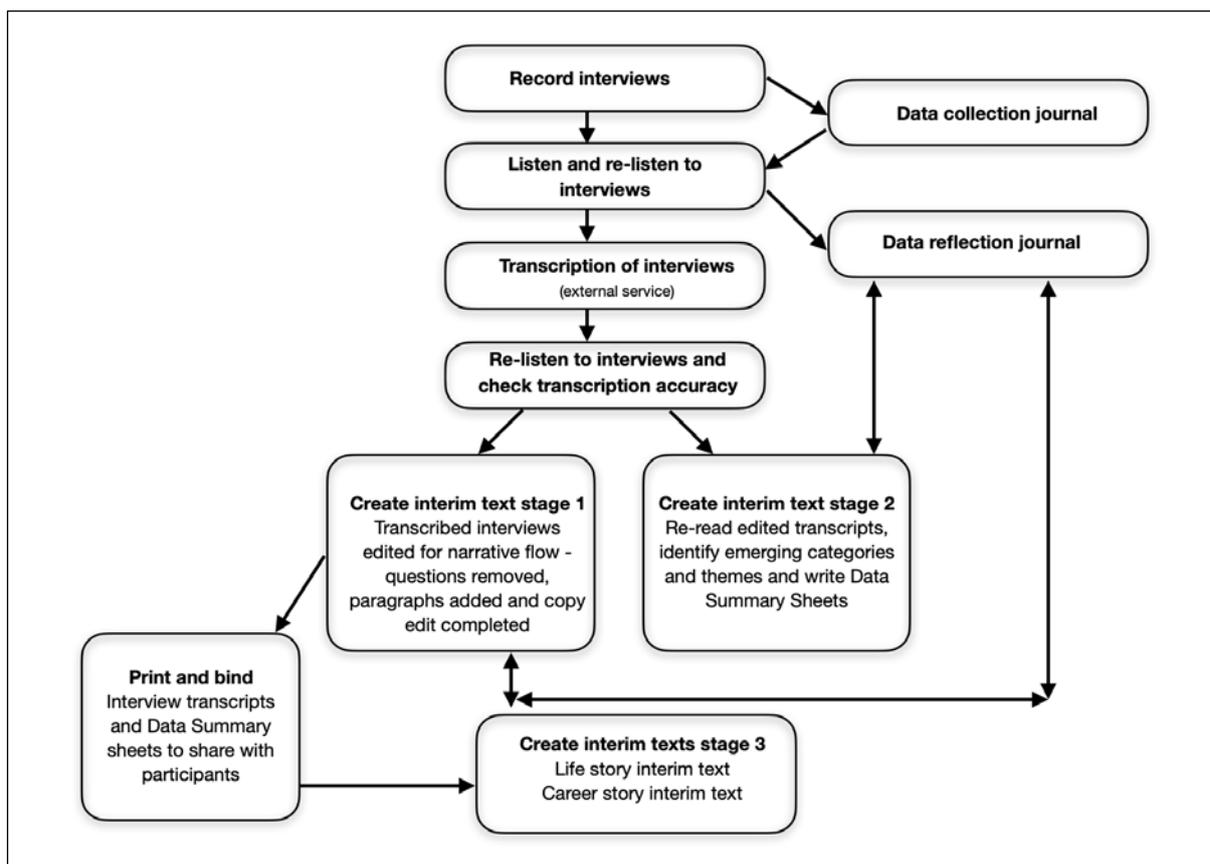


Figure 6: Refining the interview data

interim texts from the interview recordings. Further details of the analysis taken throughout this process have been included in the analysis section of this chapter.

The first step was transcribing the interviews. After transcribing Frank's first interview and realising how long the process took, the other five interviews (Frank's 2nd, Peta's 1st and 2nd, Mary's 1st and 2nd) were sent to an external transcription service. Once the transcriptions were returned, I re-listened to each interview while reading the transcription to check for accuracy and add notes about tone and gestures. Then, I re-read the transcripts and completed a copy edit for narrative fluency while keeping the voice of participants intact. After the transcriptions were edited, I used Atkinson's (1998) cover sheet as a model and created participant data summary sheets as cover pages for each participant's transcribed interviews.

The second step was creating the LS and CS interim texts to be shared with participants. Details of this step have been outlined later in this section.

Correspondence

After participants had time to read and reflect upon their life and career stories, I sent emails asking them to reflect upon their experience and to define what teaching meant to them. Only Mary and Frank responded in a return email. Peta chose to offer comments during a casual conversation in the staff room. Each participant expressed gratitude saying they enjoyed the experience, had found it valuable in terms of reflecting upon their practice and appreciated being able to talk about their teaching. At various other times throughout the study, each of the participants inquired about the progress of the study or discussed their teaching experiences and philosophies. I took mental note of these conversations and then recorded my reflections later in my data reflection journal (described below). My aim was to observe real time influences, actions and perceptions of participants and compare them to the stories shared during the interview. However, I knew I needed to create a boundary (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) otherwise the research project could extend beyond the parameters of the project. I was mindful of the need to move beyond data collection and start detailed analysis of the data that had already been collected. I also knew, as mentioned

previously, the emic nature of the project meant the closer my relationship became with participants, the more difficult it would become to critically evaluate what had been said during interviews without making additional assumptions based on later conversations. These assumptions would be unhelpful because they would be out of context and may reflect my impression of what was meant rather than what was actually said. Therefore, I wanted to create a hard line, end point for the data collection and, once I moved from data collection and analysis to the writing of the research project, I stopped making reflective notes about casual conversations.

Research diary

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested field texts should provide context for a later interpretation of results. Since an in-the-moment written record is more reliable than memory, I kept a research diary to record the dates, times and happenings of meetings, interviews and events. These notes were helpful for sequencing conversations and interviews. For example, I made dated notations about when I recruited participants and the conversation we had. I also recorded the date, time and location of interviews and details about the location. When I started transcribing, I noted dates and times and recorded my thoughts and feelings.

Data collection journal – reflection-in-action

I kept a separate research journal to record my observations and reflections during the interview. These reflections-in-action took place in the moment of the event (Taylor, 1996) and traced my thoughts while the participant was speaking. Included were comments about the location, what took place during the interview and my feelings at the time. The aim was to keep my thoughts and feelings separate from participants' ideas and stories. I used the journal during the transcription phase to match participant tonal changes with body language cues and during the analysis phase to ensure separation between the personal

conditions of participants and my perceptions of how those personal and social conditions were reflected in participant actions.

Data reflection journal – reflection-on-action

After the interviews were complete, I continued writing reflectively. However, this time I was conducting reflection-on-action by recording my thoughts after the event (Taylor, 1996). Taylor (1996) describes this form of reflection as a metacognitive process requiring thinking about what has taken place. The aim of keeping a data reflection journal was twofold. Firstly, I used my musings to identify patterns emerging within and between, individual stories. Those emerging patterns became themes and categories used for further analysis. Secondly, I used the data reflection journal for clarity and organisation when writing the final research text (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The notes were helpful for moving inward and outward, forwards and backwards through the narrative inquiry process and to keep my beliefs, values and perceptions separate from participants.

Interim texts – Participant data summary sheets

Atkinson (1998) recommended the use of cover sheets to record interview highlights and to assist in the archival process. These summaries noted aspects of character, setting, relationships, defining moments, events and experiences, tensions and resolutions. I used these cover sheets when categorising the data. Each data summary page used the same headings (see Appendix F) so I was able cross reference the interviews and notice trends across participant data. Headings included: Major Life Themes; Transitions and Life Changes; Accomplishments and Achievements (Life and Teaching); Transitions and Changes Teaching; Teaching Themes; Attitude Towards Teaching (greatest joy; what keeps you in the profession; what fuels you through the difficulty days; happiest, strongest or most successful when).

Interim texts – Transcribed life and career stories

Transcribed interviews were converted into LS and CS interim texts. All researcher questions were removed and paragraphing added for readability and narrative flow (Atkinson, 1998). Minor grammatical adjustments were also made and punctuation added. Superfluous words such as 'like' and 'um' were deleted; however hesitations, pauses and comments showing gestures and tone, were kept. To maintain participant anonymity, individual, school and place names were deleted. Time stamps were kept as headings so I could re-listen to core parts of the story should the need be. Next, I referred to the participant data summary sheets to choose headings that may be positioned as signposts to key events and experiences. These headings provide organisational cues for me as researcher and increased readability by segmenting the data. The aim of all the deletions, additions and editing was to maintain the integrity of the data while creating an easy-to-read narrative that could be shared with participants (Atkinson, 1998).

Once completed interim texts were printed and bound into individual booklets containing a data summary sheet, LS and CS. Booklets were shared with participants along with a request to make any comments, additions or deletions required. First, I wanted to ensure participants were collaborators in the project and provide evidence that they could be confident of being represented authentically (Atkinson, 1998; Cole & Knowles, 2001; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Secondly, I wanted to gauge any impact of the re-storying process and see if participants made any fresh insights (Atkinson, 1998). Peta noted two errors in the summary page (spelling of UAE and her place of birth) which were corrected. She made no comment about the rest of her story except to say she hadn't realised she'd shared as much as she had. Frank apologised for his use of profanities, also saying he did not remember sharing as much as he had. Mary thanked me for the experience but did not have comments about her story. Given that none of the participants asked for changes to their stories, these LS and CS interim texts, along with my research diary, my data collection journal and my data reflection journal became the primary data sources.

Interim texts – Category summary sheets

The next phase of data collection was organisational. The LS and CS narrative interim texts were lengthy and I needed a systematic way of categorising the material. Rather than following a rigid classification system, I chose to sort the data manually (Cole & Knowles, 2001) and use emergent coding to identify themes and manage categories. The aim was to consider the data as a whole while noticing trends, patterns and overlap. Four lines of inquiry emerged from this continual sifting and refining and I used these lines of inquiry as a compass to navigate the life space. This process has been summarised in the table below (Table 2: Creation of category summary sheets) and then described in detail as a series of five steps.

Table 2: Creation of category summary sheets

Category document	summary	Contents
1. Initial themes		Collation of the narrative and thematic points from participant data summary sheets, listed as themes on one document.
2. Life Story		Grouped thematic patterns in the participant life stories to create categories and main ideas relating to life outside school
3. Career narratives		Grouped thematic patterns in the participant career stories to create categories and main ideas relating to teaching and being a teacher
4. Attitudes to teaching		Grouped participant responses to direct questions relating to the aspects of teacher retention
5. Lines of inquiry		Refined, sorted and summarised into four main categories that became lines of inquiry; the individual, why stayed, why questioned, why persevered. The lines of inquiry are used to structure the analysis chapter.

Process used to create category summary sheets

Step 1. First, I consulted the data summary sheets for each participant and collated the themes on one document using the same headings as those on the data summary sheets: major life themes; transitions and life changes; accomplishments and achievements. Each participant was assigned a colour (Frank = Green, Peta = Blue and Mary = purple) to distinguish individual themes while looking for patterns across collective experiences.

Step 2. Then I created a LS category summary document which grouped and synthesised the themes from the data summary sheet relating to participants life. These included: interests and hobbies; relationships; family; school; university; work ethic; and personal attributes, values and beliefs.

Step 3. A different synthesised category summary document was created for CS. Categories emerged from the sifting, sorting and combining of the three participant data summary sheets. I also sorted for the common places; sociality, place and temporality. The narrative and thematic topics were grouped under the headings and subheadings as listed below.

Individual

Inner representations - beliefs, values and motivators

Outer presentations - attitudes toward teaching and learning; attitudes toward administration

Social / Relational - relationships with colleagues, relationships with students

Across Time - career stages, career breaks / questioning

In Place - teaching environment

Step 4. I then created a separate category summary sheet based on participant responses to direct questions involving the phenomenon of teacher retention. These were based on the themes listed on the data summary sheets that focused on attitudes toward teaching: important in work as a teacher; greatest joy; what keeps you in the profession; what fuels you through the difficult days; happiest, strongest or most successful.

Step 5. A fifth and final category summary sheet was created from refining the previous category summary sheets and the creation of word maps (see below). These categories became four lines of inquiry that were used as a guide for subsequent analysis of the data set.

All of the forward and backward, inward and outward, sifting and sorting helped create an organisational archive of the data.

Interim texts – Life space word maps

As mentioned previously, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) suggested the life space be seen as both multidimensional and multidirectional so that the connections between common places and themes may be revealed. However, when working on the category summary sheets, I found it challenging to see how the growing lists of worded themes and categories fit into one complete life space. Cole and Knowles (2001) suggested “creating a memory or cognitive map where the explicit purpose is to show the relationship between each element of the life and the gathered, context informing material” (p. 97). Therefore, while creating the category sheets, I began sketching ideas as a brainstorm. The aim was to provide a visual picture that depicted the life space and summarised the data in the Category Summary Sheets. It was during the process of drawing words on the centre of the page, and moving ideas around on sticky notes, that the four lines of inquiry began to take shape. These brainstorms became four separate word maps, one for each line of inquiry. Word maps were hand drawn on separate pages with a specific line of inquiry positioned in the middle of the page (an image of these word maps has been included in the analysis section of this chapter: Figure 9). Each word map included the common places; sociality, place and temporality. I then spread across the page using variant phrases of the common places as subheadings: individual (inner and outer representations); social/ relational; across time; in place. Core thematic ideas were recorded under these headings.

Interim texts – Common place analysis tables

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) describe “defining and balancing the common places [as] primarily an analytical task” (p. 482). They warn novice narrative inquirers that it can be challenging to consider the whole life space while specifying, examining, describing the common places. This challenge arises from the need to keep “an imaginary changing whole in mind ... while analysing it into researchable components” (p.

481). Therefore, to create analytical structure while maintaining the integrity of the narrative, I created common place summary tables for each participant (an image of these common place summary tables has been included in the analysis section of this chapter: Figure 10). The tables were divided into two columns, one column for extracts (labelled quotes) from participants LS and CS and the other column to record the categories identified in the category summary sheet (labelled theme). I separated each participant's table into three parts – one for each of the common places, and highlighted specific examples of the common places using a colour coding system – yellow for sociality, blue for place and green for temporality. At the same time, pink highlights were made to indicate verbal and kinaesthetic factors such as tone, body movement and facial expression as well as figurative expressions. The creation of the table allowed me to identify aspects of sociality, place and temporality as they occurred across each interview and to build a picture of each common place while keeping narrative flow.

Analysis - a Non-Linear Process

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) warn there is “no smooth transition” (p. 132) between data collection and data analysis when conducting a narrative inquiry. The boundary between data collection, data processing and data analysis were blurry (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested the plotlines of field texts should be continually reviewed as multiple field texts are layered and interwoven. I wanted to allow lines of inquiry to emerge organically from the data. Importantly, I wanted to see how and where those lines emerged so I could understand the relationship between an individual teacher's experience, teachers' stories and teacher retention. I wanted to stay closely connected to participant stories and observe the richness of relationships and experience in the context they occurred because, as Goodson and Gill (2011) suggested, life stories are not a one-dimensional rendering of a person's life. Therefore, early analysis occurred throughout the data sorting process as I became intimately familiar with each participant's story, and then, formal or structured analysis took place.

Since the sheer weight of data can become overwhelming, Cole and Knowles (2001) recommended the earlier phase of analysis be seen as being “similar to that of an archivist” (p. 95). As described earlier, for me this involved the narratively focused listening and re-listening, reading and re-reading of field texts (interviews and field memos) and the creation of interim texts (LS and CS, participant data summary sheets, category summary sheets, common place analysis tables and word maps). I wanted to find directional data and establish specific lines of inquiry. The aim was to identify patterns, tensions, intersections and similarities and come to an understanding of each participant’s teaching career in the context of their life and the wider social-psychological context. In addition to biographical, chronological and plot-based information, I wanted to establish categories and distinguish themes related to character, setting, events and emerging tensions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). These categories and themes related specifically to aspects of a teacher’s life and career including: beliefs; values; motivations; perceptions of identity and patterns of behaviour, that occurred with frequency throughout the narrative. I also used categories derived from interview questions that encouraged teachers to share stories about what they enjoyed most about teaching. These included; important work as a teacher, happiest and strongest moments as a teacher, greatest joy as a teacher, staying in the profession, fuel through the difficult days and career outlook. I also took note of where participant stories intersected with ideas presented in the literature – specifically the alignment of beliefs, values and perceptions of identity (Glazer, 2018a; Gu, 2018; Kelchtermans 2017; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019), intrinsic and altruistic motivations (Kelchtermans 2009; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018; Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019; Rinke & Mawhinney, 2017; Turner & Thielking, 2019), the experience of harmonious passion (Vallerand et al. 2003) and teacher perceptions at various career stages (Day et. al., 2007; Huberman 1989). I will discuss these connections further in the Analysis and Discussion chapter.

The interwoven process of data collection and data analysis is represented in Figure 7: Steps in data collection, processing and analysis. Analysis occurred in a cyclic back and forward movement between data collection, data organisation and data analysis. The process of transcribing sat beside the iterative process

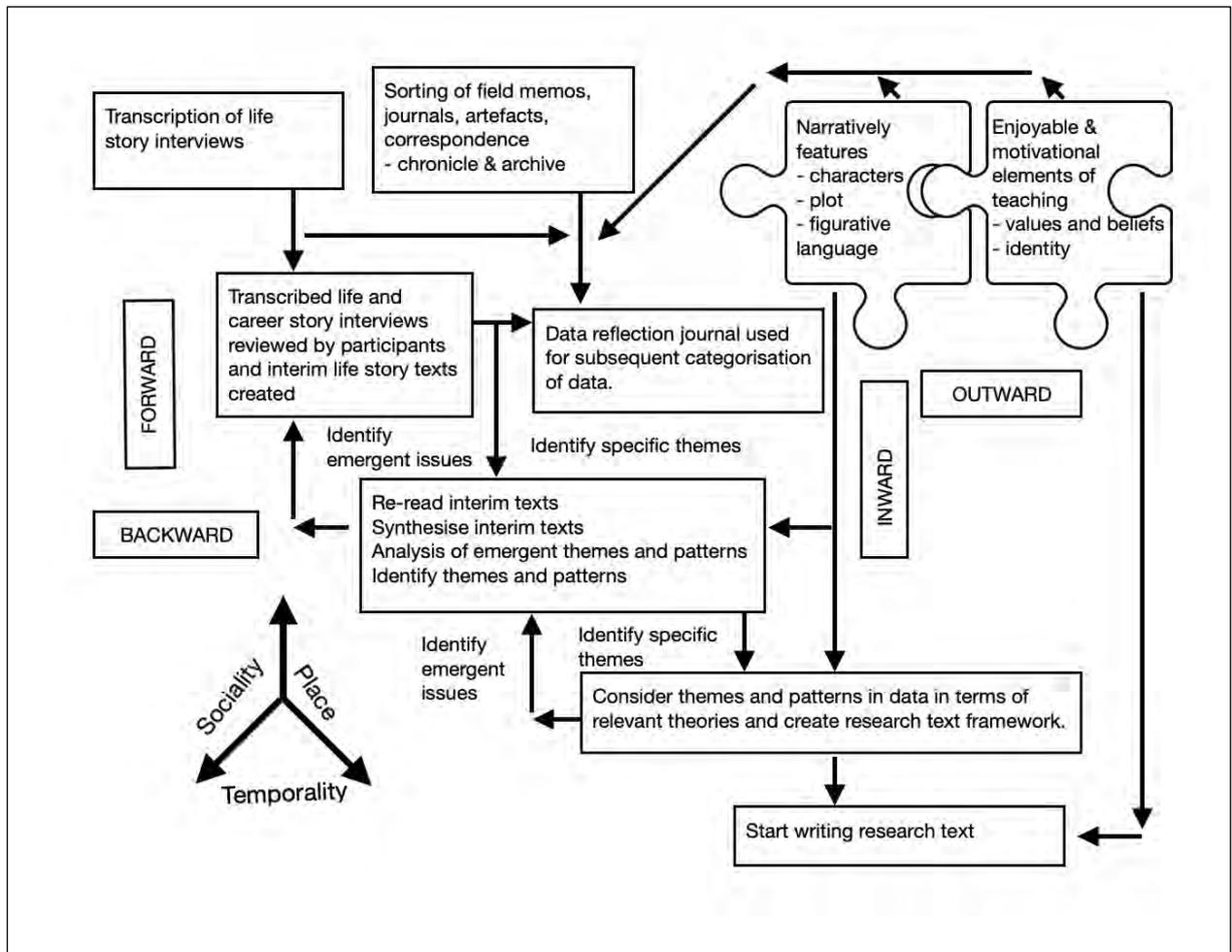


Figure 7: Steps in data collection, processing and analysis

of sifting, sorting, chronicling and archiving, and corresponded with thematic coding as data sets were read, re-read and synthesised. Each time a data set was analysed the emerging themes were recorded and informed subsequent readings and readings. These analytical activities are positioned alongside two puzzle pieces which focused the study: the narrative features of teachers' stories (such as figurative language, character and elements of plot); and recognition of the enjoyable or motivating elements of a teacher's role. The arrows linking each analytical activity illustrate the dynamic nature of the analysis process and represent the forward and backward, inward and outward movement through the data. The common places are represented as multidirectional arrows in the lower left corner to signify how they were used as a compass to guide me through each stage of analysis.

Cole and Knowles (2001) suggested life history analysis can be messy and chaotic, which was certainly my experience. Nevertheless, manual sorting provided a sense of the person within the data – hearing their voice, appreciating their story and witnessing the emerging intersection between: external life events; internal beliefs, values, motivations, perceptions of identity; and the experience of being a teacher. With each re-listening and re-reading, I learnt more about the individual. However, I knew I also needed to keep the research goal in mind, particularly given the volume of data being collected (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Therefore, in addition to recognising the individualised nature of each teacher's story, I also sorted for broader social-psychological elements to see where each teacher's individual stories fit within the wider phenomenon of teacher retention. The aim was to recognise both the individual and the individual within a system. What follows below is a description of the steps taken during the analysis process.

Description of Analysis

Each participant's story was considered narratively using a multidimensional and multidirectional approach that took into account the life space of the inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). However, as I assembled interim texts from field texts and saw a vast expanse of data in front of me, I realised I needed to be both flexible and systematic in my approach to analysis. The analysis needed to simultaneously traverse each of the common places; sociality, place and temporality and, and move forward and backward, inward and outward. I was also mindful of distinguishing my perspective from participants'. As mentioned previously, given the emic nature of this study it was important to separate my voice and experience as researcher, from that of participants. Analysing the data based on the common places helped maintain that distance. I used the common places as headings and continually sifted and sorted through the data to notice areas of overlap, connection and sequence of events. The aim was to detect patterns and anomalies that could inform the creation of themes and categories. This iterative process revealed the four distinct lines of inquiry: (1) the impact of individual perspectives, beliefs and values on external behaviours; (2) why stay

(what motivates a teacher); (3) why question (what frustrates a teacher); (4) why persevere (what sustains a teacher). These four lines of inquiry then guided deeper analysis. However, since the data gathering and data analysis phases were so intertwined, I found writing about the analysis process challenging. Frequent discussion and guidance from supervisors were needed as I tried to describe a cyclic process in a linear document. As the final research document took shape, I tried to reconcile my dilemma by thinking about analysis in three stages: a description of what the methodology required; a methodological recount of the processes I followed; and an explanation showing the analysis that occurred. I have already provided a methodological description. What follows in this section is the second stage, the methodological processes followed. Then, in the next chapter, Results and Discussion, I offer the third stage; showing analysis.

Data Analysis 1 – exploring transcripts

The first full analysis of the data involved listening to the recordings while reading the transcript. This project applied a narrative mode of thinking and drew upon the notion that meaning is constructed and reconstructed narratively, through relationships, environment and experiences (Dewey, 1938; Bruner 1991, 2002; McAdams 2001, 2018). From a narrative perspective it was helpful to recognise both the structural elements of a story, the plot line with its orientation, complication and resolution, and use those narrative features to gain a sense of how elements of a person's story fit within a larger whole. Therefore, while listening back to check the accuracy of transcriptions, each participant was seen as the protagonist in their own story and I was alert to significant relationships, defining moments, tensions and resolutions. Reflections were recorded as notes in my data reflection journal. As mentioned earlier in the data collection section, the aim was to record initial thoughts and impressions while listening to and reading participant stories. Individual characteristics, values and beliefs were noted and as well as any changes in pitch, pace and volume that signified moments of emotion or tension. At these times I consulted field text memos written in my data collection journal because these field memos contained detailed notes that recognised nuances in speech, body language and facial expressions. Specifically noted were times of high vocal and

kinaesthetic energy when participants recounted tension, joy, or a sense of accomplishment. Moments of high emotions were important because as McAdams (2001) suggested, emotional memories are often linked to self-defining memories. McAdams referred to Singer's explanation when he defined self-defining memories as strong memories which are linked to other memories that have significance in a person's life and may reflect unresolved or recurring personal themes. Therefore, I also recognised gestures that signified high emotion. These descriptive elements were added into the transcript so the document would more accurately reflect the experience of participants telling their story. For instance, in moments of high passion, Frank would leap out of his chair and start acting out particular elements of the story. Much of the interview was in and of itself, a performance. The performance element seemed important because it appeared Frank appreciated having an audience to entertain. Each time Peta felt particularly passionate about what she was saying, her voice would speed up and she would start using her hands to support her words. By recognising pace and hand gestures, the subtext in Peta's story became visible and patterns that distinguished what she did to please others and what she did out of passion for her work, emerged. Mary, while less demonstrative in terms of hand gestures, would also speak quickly and smiled as if to reassure me of the truth of what was being said. Given that much of her story was delivered in direct, measured and punctuated sentences, these moments where Mary relaxed into the story seemed significant. It seemed the speeding up in verbal pace signified moments of passion for her work as a teacher. While recording these reflective impressions in a data reflection journal, I also archived on data summary sheets (detailed earlier in the description of data collection).

Data analysis 2: transcripts become life and career interim texts.

The second phase of analysis began while creating the LS and CS interim texts from the interview transcripts. As I edited for narrative flow (as described earlier) I recorded my thoughts in the data reflection journal. Any new narrative or thematic topics emerging from re-reading the transcripts to create LS and CS interim texts were added to the data summary sheets. In particular I was alert to conceptual categories that

related to the initial research focus: learning from the stories of late career teachers about attitudes toward teaching; motivations in teaching and sustaining a teaching career; and the phenomena of teacher retention. These LS and CS interim texts were shared with participants.

Data analysis 3 – exploring life and career interim texts

The third phase of the analysis process occurred after participants approved their LS and CS interim texts. Bruner (2002) suggested “stories impose a structure, a compelling reality on what we experience, even a philosophical stance” (p. 89). So, once a copy of each participant’s LS and CS were approved by participants I printed and bound my own copies as three separate booklets. Then, I re-read each booklet with a thematic focus making marginal notes that pertained to character, setting, tension and relationships. My focus was elements of character (the protagonist’s traits), settings, tensions, experiences and events that related to teacher retention and the literature. Also considered were plot features such as initiating events, tensions, complications and resolutions. I noted how tensions were resolved and how the protagonist negotiated complications at various times and in specific places. Being a narrative inquiry, it was also important to use the common places: sociality; place; and temporality as signposts to guide the analysis (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Therefore, I wanted to identify where and when earlier family life, significant life events and relationships impacted not only the events in the teaching story, but how the participant perceived those experiences. As I immersed myself in the lives of each participant, I noticed how recounts of events and experiences reflected internal perspectives. Core themes began emerging in terms of participant motivations, beliefs, values, and perceptions of identity. For instance, two participants spoke about their turbulent family life and the impact on their schooling. One participant explained how academic struggle in earlier years of schooling impacted how they viewed themselves as a learner. What became apparent while moving forward and backward, inward and outward through the common places (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), was a clear repetition of values, beliefs, motivations and perceptions of identity. The

stories shared about significant events, relationships and personal life had a direct connection to stories participants later shared about teaching practice and perspectives toward being a teacher.

In addition to the common places, plot and character-based annotations, marginal notes were made to identify literary narrative features such as metaphor, flashbacks and symbols. Atkinson (1998) suggested these narrative techniques can be used to analytically gain an impression of a person's individual sense making (p. 68). I found the figurative expressions used by participants were helpful in highlighting perceptions of identity. For instance, Frank used maritime metaphors to illustrate his career path. Peta used symbols such as a bee to represent the busy life of a working mum and the symbol of a woman to represent the 'girl power' she felt when working in an independent girls' school. Mary used a painting of a barren mountain landscape to illustrate her emotional state when teaching on-line due to Covid-19 restrictions. What I found most intriguing was how an external action can seem similar to an onlooker but represented different motivations to the person experiencing the situation or event. These metaphors and symbols will be discussed in more detail in the Analysis and Discussion chapter.

Data Analysis 4 – creating category sheets and word maps

The fourth phase of analysis became one of sifting, sorting and categorising. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested sorting and coding material was an opportunity to become familiar with the data. Therefore, I used a cyclic back and forward movement to move between data organisation and data analysis. There were two parts to this stage of analysis which occurred concurrently, the creation of five category summary sheets and four hand written word maps. First, I considered the themes emerging from each re-reading of participants' LS and CS and adopted a process of segmenting ideas and clustering into categories. Figure 8: Excerpt of category summary sheets, shows how the development of each category sheet was an iterative process of refining the data. However, since Clandinin and Connelly (2000) warned narrative inquirers that the plotlines of their field texts should be continually reviewed as multiple field texts were layered and interwoven, I also sketched the emerging themes as a brainstorm. Figure 9: Word

map sketches, shows how brainstormed sketches were used as graphic organisers of the data. Again, this was an iterative process that involved clustering categories. However, this time as the four lines of inquiry developed, I built connections using the common places to notice when and how themes and categories intersected. The use of this manual sorting system meant I could remain close to the data and personally experience participant stories in a meaningful way (Cole & Knowles, 2001).

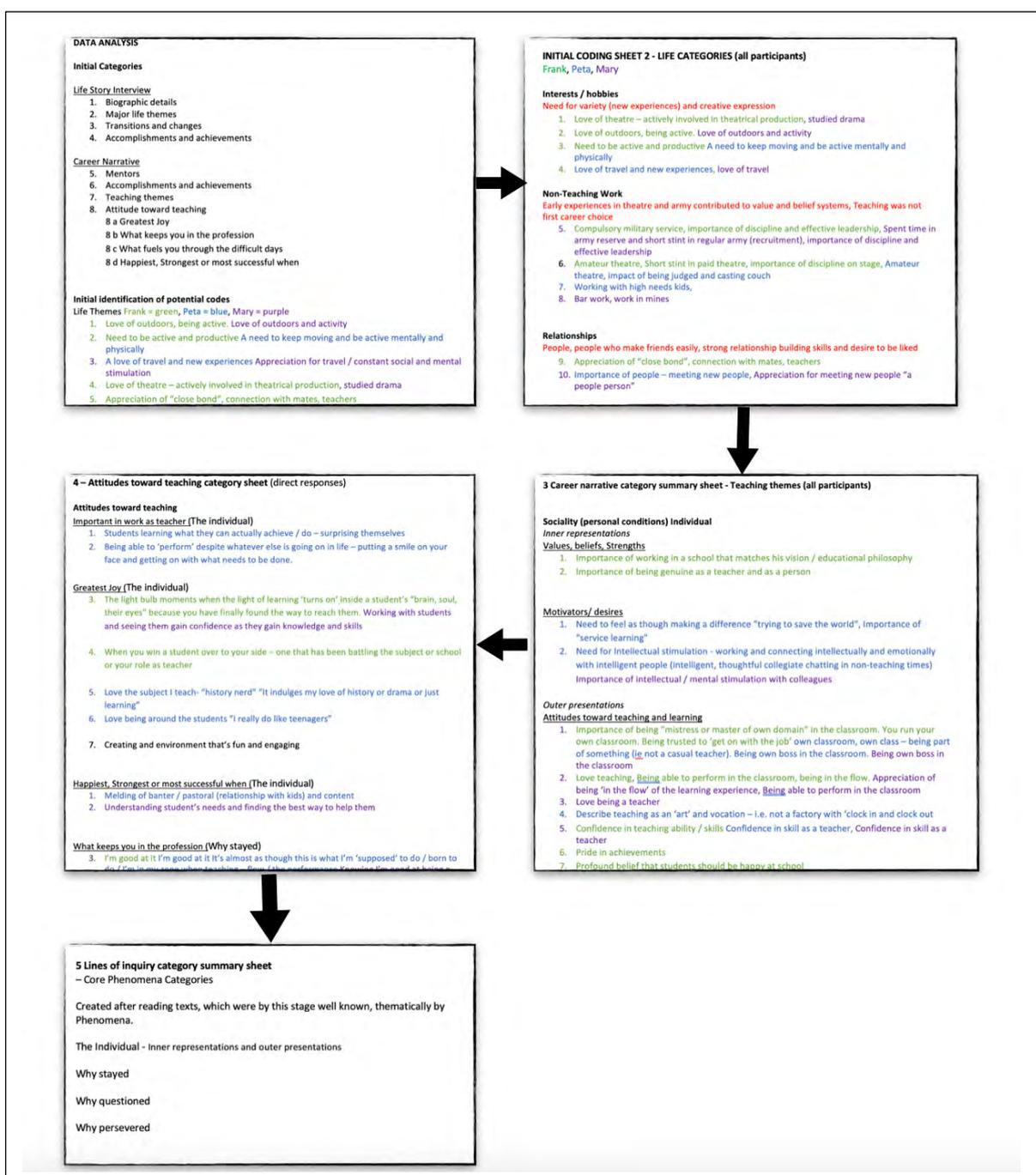


Figure 8: Excerpt of category summary sheets

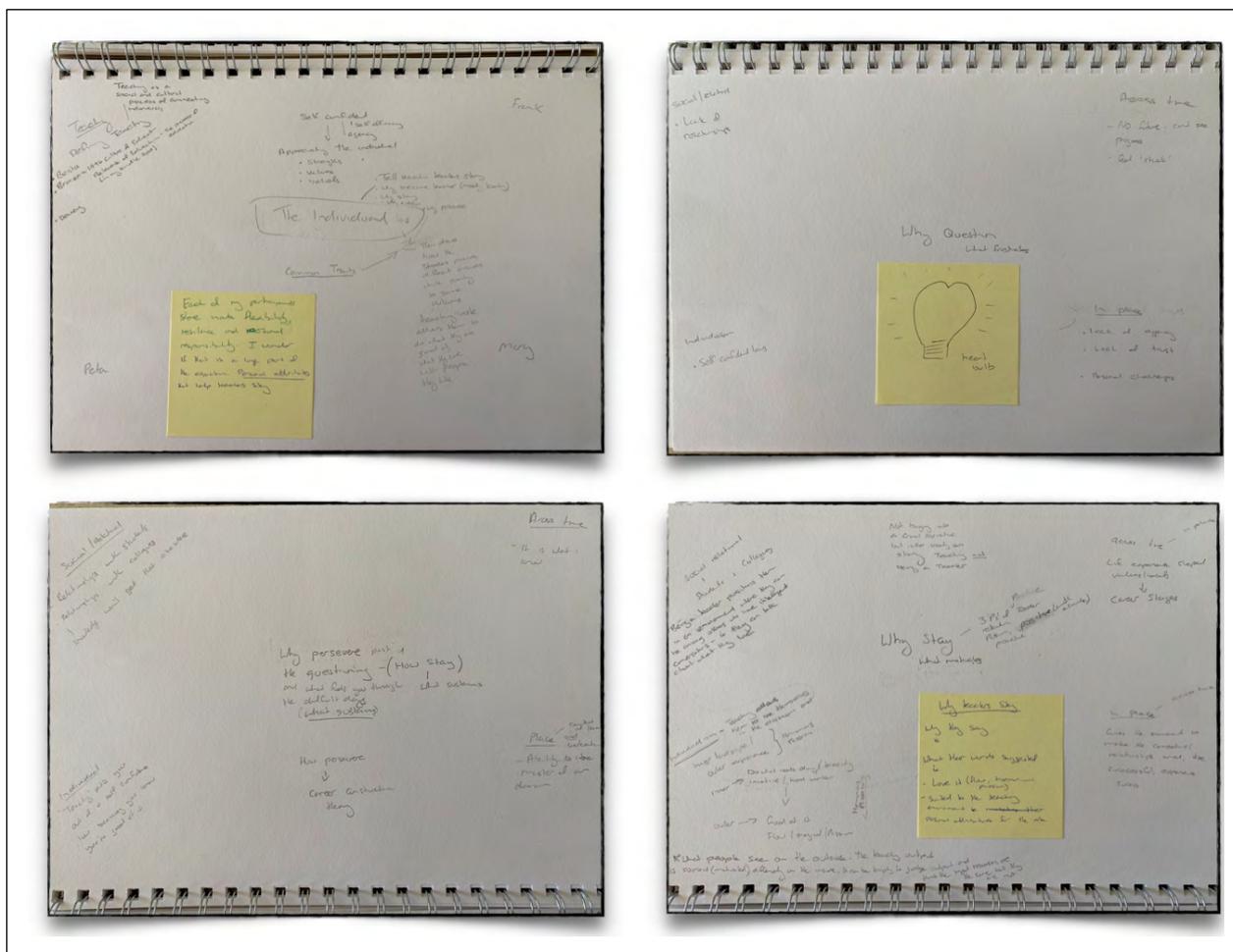


Figure 9: Word map sketches

Data Analysis 5 – creating common place summary tables

The fifth phase of analysis combined sifting and sorting with focused preliminary analysis, using the common places as table headings. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) suggested using the common places as a “scaffold for analysis and interpretation” (p. 28). I wanted a framework for moving forward and backward, inward and outward through the participants’ stories. Therefore, I went back to each participant’s interim LS and CS to extract key quotes and recounts. Figure 10: Excerpt of common place life tables, shows an extract from each participant’s table and depicts each of the common places. Each table had two columns, one for the LS or CS extract and one that recognised category, theme and preliminary analysis. To populate the table, I read through the annotated LS and CS interim texts and noted previously highlighted parts of

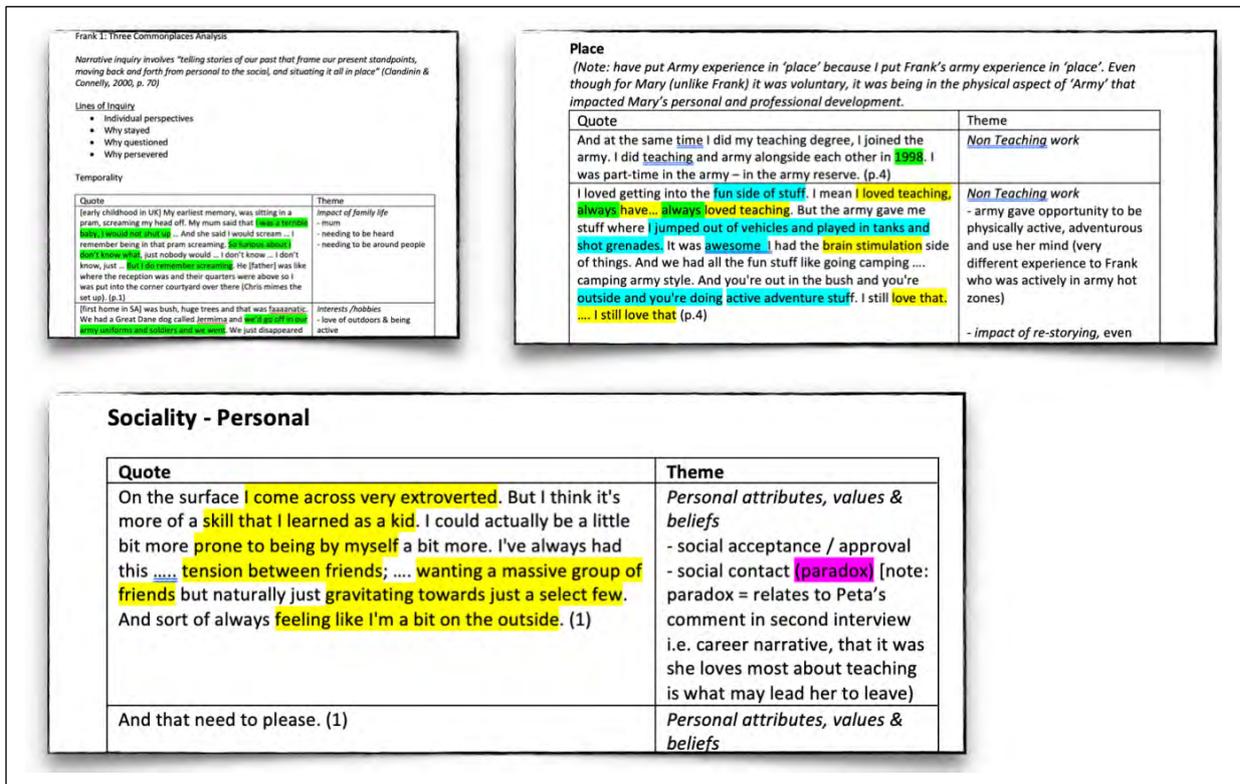


Figure 10: Excerpt of common place life tables

each participant's story. I reflected upon which of the common places was present in the highlighted spaces and referred to my digital copy. Next, I copied and pasted the extract into the relevant common places column on participants' common place summary table. Then, I consulted my category summary sheets to see which category and theme best matched the extract and added notes to the theme column. Finally, I reflected on my lines of inquiry and added additional notes to the theme column. However, as I began moving the data out of the narrative flow of the *life and career story* interim texts, I noted how many of the extracts related to more than one common place. To address this concern, as mentioned in the description of the data set, I began highlighting parts of the extract to reflect specific common places. The creation of the tables became a regulatory exercise that helped evaluate the impact of time and place while noticing the difference between personal and social conditions. I was able to consider each common place as an entity within itself while also seeing how, despite extracting elements of a story for a particular purpose, the story fragment remained part of the narrative whole.

Data Analysis 6 – writing a narratively framed synthesis of analysis

During the sixth phase of analysis, I began to synthesise and write evaluatively. However, looking across the data collected, I was haunted by a familiar sense of writer's block. The task seemed daunting. I had been reading and re-reading, reflecting, sifting and sorting for so long the data had grown around me and I could not see where I, as the researcher was, in relation to the data. I needed to find a place to start. To solve the dilemma, I returned to the methodology and my own experience as an English teacher. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) remind narrative inquiry researchers to use the common places as focal checkpoints. However, Connelly and Clandinin were equally insistent that "a narrative inquiry is the simultaneous exploration of all three" (p. 479). As an English teacher guiding students through tentative steps of narrative composition, I suggest finding a moment of tension, a problem for the protagonist to solve. Then, as the students work back to establish the events which led up to the problem, they can identify catalytic moments while being alert to where the experiences took place. Equally, the student can project forward to determine how the problem will be solved and, in the process, identify the values, beliefs and strengths that help their protagonist succeed. This starting in the middle process helps students avoid the 'I don't know where to begin' hurdle. There was synergy between what I ask the students to do and what I needed to do. I wanted to find a place in the middle, a tension that would allow for simultaneous movement forward and backward, inward and outward, through the life space. So, I began writing a narratively framed synthesis of the data for each participant and started with a tension.

To find tension I considered how Clandinin and Connelly (2000) position narrative inquiry within a Deweyan frame reminding narrative inquiry researchers that, "experience is both personal and social" (p.2). In an education research context, positioning inquiry within a Deweyan understanding of experience allows a researcher to "move back and forth between the personal and the social, simultaneously thinking about the past, present and future ... in ever expanding social milieus" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 2-3). From this perspective, I noted how, as each teacher re-storied their teaching career, they seemed to navigate the tensions of place and sociality in terms of their personal beliefs, values, motivations and perceptions of

identity. Therefore, I positioned the initial synthesis of analysis by looking at tensions within the participants' personal conditions. I followed the trail as these tensions radiated into social conditions, occurring within places, and forward and backward across time. The result was a complex map of storied lives. I found, just as my students do, following the tensions allowed me to see resolutions. I wondered if focusing on *how* these tensions were resolved would offer greatest value for researchers wanting a positive and proactive understanding of teacher retention. So, I returned to my four lines of inquiry:

- The impact of individual perspectives, beliefs and values on external behaviours
- Why stay (what motivates a teacher)
- Why question (what frustrates a teacher)
- Why persevere (what sustains a teacher).

These four lines of inquiry, along with narrative inquiry's common places (sociality, place and temporality) formed the basis of the final stage of the analysis process. In considering the 'why' and 'what', I wanted to see if it was possible to discern a 'how' – how can teachers, as individuals, have greater agency in their career by identifying what had sustained them across their career. In the following chapter, Analysis and Discussion, the third stage, that demonstrates the analysis, will be provided.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion

Analysis began in the sociality common place because examining teachers' stories through their personal and social conditions made it possible to witness how hopes, desires and moral dispositions were both a product of and motivation for responses to people, situations and environment (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Figure 11: Analysis of four lines of inquiry using the three common places, illustrates how the writing of this final stage of analysis moved in a circular motion, as the four lines of inquiry: (1) the impact of individual perspectives, beliefs and values on external behaviours; (2) why stay (what motivates a teacher); (3) why question (what frustrates a teacher); and (4) why persevere (what sustains a teacher), were

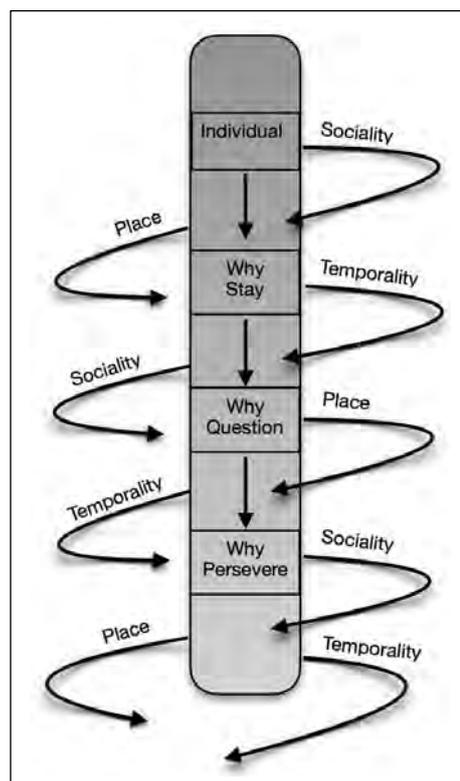


Figure 11: Analysis of four lines of inquiry using the three common places

considered in terms of the common places. What follows is an exploration of how three teachers were guided by their personal beliefs, values and perceptions of identity and relationships (sociality) as they moved across time (temporality) in their career (places taught).

Impact of Individual, Perspectives, Beliefs and Values on External Behaviours

Leavy (2013) suggested social researchers find their way into the inner life of people and “try to shed light on what people do and why, on how they feel and act” (p. 44). Therefore, in this first section I access participant sociality common place to offer a description of the individual perspectives, beliefs, and values that impacted participants' experience of being a teacher – both in terms of their approach to teaching and their decision to stay. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) explained a person's “stories are the result of a confluence of social influences on a person's inner life, social influences on their environment, and their

unique personal history” (p. 7). Therefore, in terms of the common places, I wanted to base the analysis in sociality, while noticing the impact of factors within place and temporality. The aim was to provide a sketch of participant personal conditions - feelings, motivations, values and beliefs, so that the social conditions in which participants lived and worked may be more clearly understood. I began with an examination of each participant’s teaching metaphor because metaphors provided a visual representation of participants’ internal perceptions. I then examined the teaching metaphor in the context of what participants said about their teaching practice across their career. What was interesting was that despite having a similar passion for teaching, each participant viewed their experience differently. In the analysis that follows I have varied participant order to accommodate for the similarities and differences emerging from their stories. For each line of inquiry, Frank is considered first, then Mary and finally Peta.

Frank metaphor for teaching

Frank depicted his career using a maritime metaphor (see Figure: 12: Frank’s career path metaphor). Early teaching experiences were compared to being on a pond, peddling furiously on a pedallo; however, as he progressed through his career, he spoke about sailing on the lagoon until finally, he was the captain of a ship on the ocean. Frank’s metaphor was particularly helpful in understanding how he perceived each stage of his

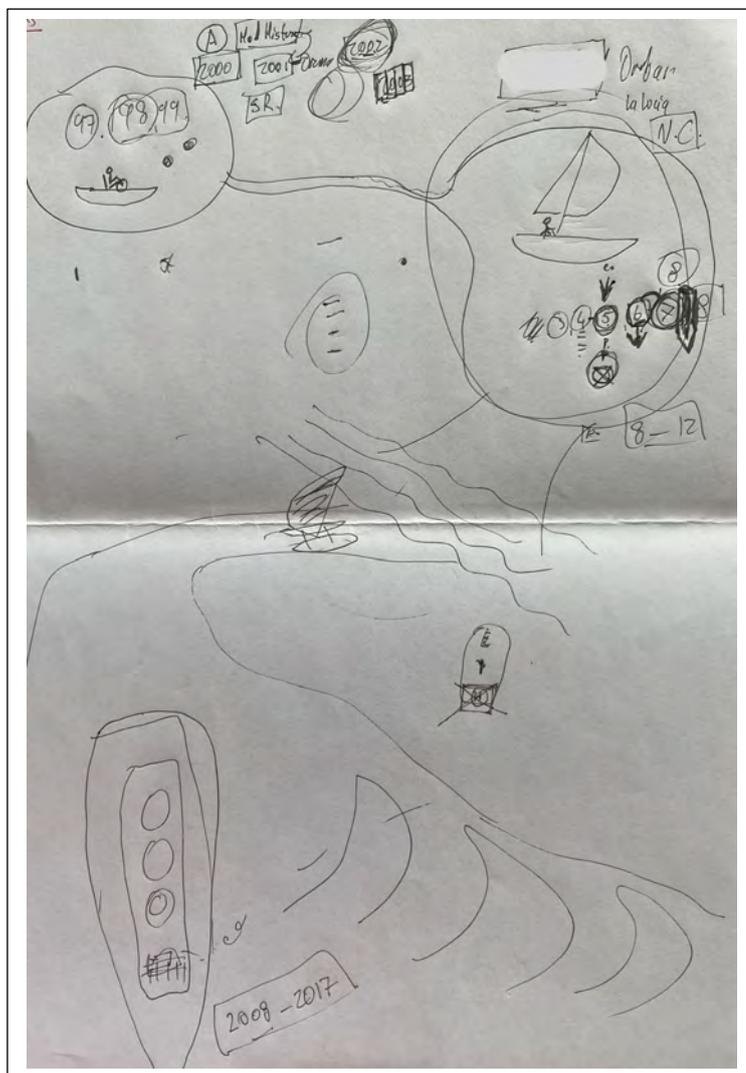


Figure 12: Frank’s career path metaphor

teaching career and seemed to support earlier research that suggested teachers who survive the early challenges in their career often find the middle stage provides a sense of mastery and career contentment (Day et al., 2007; Hargraves & Fullan, 2012; Huberman, 1989). I found it interesting that the middle phase of Frank's career was represented as sailing in a lagoon because it seemed to suggest Frank felt relaxed and confident. Frank's verbal descriptions of this time in his career were very positive. Frank said he was "as happy as Larry". He had the freedom to teach 'his way' because the school's pedagogical philosophies matched his own.

Frank described his first impression of the school, an impression formed when he was interviewed for a teaching position:

There's a real *vibe* to this place, especially with the kids and with the teachers.

There's a real energy to this place. I'm not sure what it is, (Frank relives his thoughts upon entering the school) but it's nice.

Frank was equally positive after he joined the teaching faculty and saw what contributed to this vibe. He described teaching in that school as, "cool and groovy". Frank was animated in his tone as he said "I liked it. I *liked* it. I *liked* it!". Given the level of emotion in Frank's tone, it seemed we were encountering a defining memory. As mentioned earlier, I gave particular attention to the times participants showed great emotion because McAdams (2001) suggested emotions and goals may be key factors in determining how a person chooses their self-defining memories. According to McAdam's, when sharing life stories, a person is more likely to choose memories that: have higher emotional resonance; align to how they see themselves; and what they want (or wanted) to do with their life. Therefore, when Frank spoke emotively about the features of the school he most appreciated, I realised these features were visible evidence of what Frank required for an alignment of personal values and beliefs with teaching practice and a coherent personal and professional identity.

Frank described how individuality was valued at the school:

And so, they were happy. They had a multi-form (pauses). All different items that you could mix and match according to your personality. Boys, you could have long hair, and the girls are allowed makeup. Who wouldn't want to go to [name of school]? Because it's like, 'wow, okay. This is cool.' And they're very relaxed in the classroom, and so on. Okay, cool and groovy. I thought 'I like this.' I got on well with everybody. Everything's cool and groovy.

Frank's comments suggested he appreciated working in a school that recognised personal freedoms while valuing the individual as part of a community. For example, Frank was positive about school uniforms which could be styled to match each student's personality. Frank also spoke favourably about the physical location of the school and the fact that he was close to his friendship groups. He said:

I'm very happy here. They were paying me two and a half times what these people were paying me here. And I liked Durban, Durban was groovy. I liked it. I liked it. I've got friends, all my actor friends still... Cool, okay. So now I'm happy, happy, happy.

While the higher salary was a motivating factor, it seemed it was the people who gave Frank most joy. His repetition of the word "happy" implied friendships were important to him.

The more I considered Frank's stories, the more I noticed how, throughout his entire career, in each school Frank taught, Frank's firm beliefs about relationships and recognising the person impacted his perspective of teaching and teachers. For example, Frank recounted a story about his early experiences as a beginning teacher and mentioned why he admired some of his more experienced colleagues.

There's just a genuineness about them. And they really, really cared about the girls. That was apparent. When you (pauses) You can see when the kids are talking to the teacher, the teacher's giving instruction and so on in the classroom. Well, yeah - but it's when you're not actually teaching them and you're busy having a

conversation with them and so on - *that's* really when it's happening. You can establish - yeah, the relationship within the classroom (pauses). But the relationship with the kid outside the classroom, then you can bring that relationship into the classroom. Then it becomes so much easier for your classroom to be managed and for the kid to learn.

Clearly, relationships were at the centre of what Frank saw as effective teaching practice and, those relationships extended beyond the walls of the classroom. It seemed effective relationships were, from Frank's perspective, the corner stone to effective classroom management and, importantly, effective learning. This privileging of the teacher student relationship was consistent in other studies of what teachers find meaningful about teaching (Glazer, 2018a; Kelchtermans, 2017; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018; Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019; Turner & Thielking, 2019). Frank wanted to know his students outside of the classroom so he could best support them in class. Equally, he wanted to give students the space to be themselves and was critical of school environments that stifled creativity and free thought. He explained:

Because the whole thing about school is (pauses) Well, this is not right, this is an artificial situation. We're taking these free thinkers and shoving them into a box. And you *will* learn this and you *will* learn that and you *will* learn this and I'll stifle your creativity and (pauses) Don't (pauses) And I'll get you now to think the way that I want you to think and so on. And then everybody tells you, 'well, schools are fucked up'. Don't they? And so many kids, boys, particularly go, "I don't want to be here and I don't want to have to do this and I don't want to do this." (Frank uses the tone of a petulant child).

Frank was passionate as he spoke about recognising student individuality and creativity. He dramatized this story fragment taking on the persona of a student who was forced to conform. As I reflected on why Frank may have switched from talking as an adult sharing his beliefs about effective schools to mimicking the voice of a child, I recalled Frank's comments about his own childhood. During his life story interview, Frank

described how, as a teenager he valued his independence and actively sought ways to escape any situation he found confining. He loved his extra-curricular activities because they gave him a place to be away from home and, he was among friends. He said:

I was doing cycling and triathlons and that was another excuse to get out. I would get out on my bike and I would disappear for the whole bloody day. I would ride 200km or whatever the hell it was. Not even necessarily with a friend of mine or anything like that – I would just go. And then if obviously if there were plays - if there was a house play, if there was a this or a that I was there because it also meant (pauses) And oh my god if there was rehearsing at night (pauses) Awesome. And as you're getting older, awesome because now the girls are there - that's awesome, awesome, awesome, awesome. All that nonsense. And directing plays and being in plays.

Therefore, as the above extracts from Frank's career and life narratives show, Frank valued independence and believed it was important to recognise a person's individuality. He also valued friendship. These aspects of Frank's personal and social conditions will be discussed in more detail when considering why Frank stayed a teacher, what frustrated him and what sustained him as a teacher.

Mary metaphor for teaching

Mary chose not to create a career map and instead spoke about the phases in her career during the interview. However, she did present a teaching metaphor. Mary's metaphor for teaching was a painting hanging in a spare bedroom at home (see Figure 13: Mary's teaching metaphor). However rather than representing



Figure 13: Mary's teaching metaphor

what Mary loved about teaching, this image represented how she felt when she was *not* teaching in a classroom. She used the painting to explain how she felt when she was forced to teach on-line due to Covid-19 restrictions. She said she “was dying” without the classroom interaction. The metaphor was helpful because it provided a tangible illustration of Mary’s internal perception of teaching. It suggested that Mary saw a lack of physical classroom interaction as a bleak, forsaken and desolate experience. The dull brown tones of the painting and complete lack of life presented a landscape with no hope, no joy and no future. Mary’s metaphor was intriguing, especially in terms of previous research that suggested teachers value close connections with their students (Glazer, 2018a; Kelchtermans, 2017; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018; Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019; Turner & Thielking, 2019). Mary explained she kept the painting as a reminder of what awaited her if she was not teaching. This decision to keep the painting seemed important. Mary had previously described herself as a visual person who needed movement, colour and vibrancy. During her life story interview, she spoke of her love of the outdoors. Mary said, “If I can stand at the top of a mountain once a year, then I’m a pretty happy person”. She described being in nature as “beautiful” and spoke about her appreciation for “fresh air” and “being around the trees”. Therefore, Mary’s metaphoric image for on-line learning was revealing. The barren mountain landscape seemed to be the antithesis of what she needed to feel joy.

Equally relevant were Mary’s comments about the physical classroom environment. Mary believed the classroom environment was linked to learning saying, “I think if you create a good environment for the boys, you’re going to bring the best out of them”. She spoke with an almost reverent tone about the classroom environments she created:

I love creating an environment that’s fun and engaging and stimulating. I like creating that space and working within that space and I hate working in other people’s classrooms.

And

I have ottomans to sit on and cushions, and the notion that you don't have to sit at a desk. I've got tall seats and short seats and I've had pit balls in the class before.

And

I had breakout rooms - it's just that flexibility that works so beautifully with boys.

You can spread them apart and group them together. And the movement, you can get them up and moving.

Obvious in each of these extracts about her classroom was Mary's belief in the importance of a physical space that supported learning. Equally apparent was a desire for control over her own teaching space. As she said, "I hate teaching in other people's classrooms". Mary used the physical space of her classroom to create an environment where she could connect with her students.

Mary also believed it was important to be moving around and actively teaching. She explained:

Drives me nuts when I walk into a classroom and someone is sitting behind a desk.

Drives me insane! I hate it, it's lazy. I understand at high levels, but if I see someone in a year 7, year 8 or year 9 classroom sitting behind a desk - not as a one off but as if that's their teaching style, I go 'why are you here?'. So, I'm always on my feet because I can't sit down. I just can't help it (pauses) and having a chat and seeing how they're going (pauses) I've got a class of boys (pauses) I had them in year 7 and I've got some of them in year 8 Maths *and* French. And I'm so going to miss them. You just get to know them really well. I've got a joke with one of them - because he once turned around and called me (pauses)

He said, "is that lazy?"

And I went, "did you just call lazy?"

And the whole class went "whooo" (Mary re-acts the shocked gasped that rippled through the class)

Because when you get to know them you can have a really good laugh and a joke. So that's been a joke for at least a year.

As the earlier parts of the above extract show, Mary abhorred laziness and it appeared, her students knew her well. There was obvious emotion in her tone as the phrases “drives me nuts”, “drives me insane” and “I hate it”, show. The level of emotion suggested Mary was expressing a defining memory and thus, this story fragment illustrated some of Mary's core beliefs about teaching and being a teacher. Mary's comments about being able to “have a really good laugh” when “you get to know them”, when considered alongside her student's question about being lazy, show she appreciated the banter that exists in the classroom when a teacher and student understand each other as individuals. The fact a student used his understanding of Mary's intense dislike of laziness to create a joke implied a close student teacher connection that facilitated banter. Interestingly the start of this story fragment revealed a tension, Mary's frustration with teachers who ‘sit behind a desk’. However, she quickly flipped the tension into a positive memory of an interaction with students. While more research would be required to better understand the impact of positively re-framing a negative memory, it seemed, in the re-storying of situations in her career, Mary focused more attention on the moments of joy. These moments of joy were allied to her moments with students in the classroom.

Therefore, when Mary's teaching metaphor is considered alongside extracts from her interviews, it seemed clear she valued interacting with students in her own classroom. Mary believed it was important to be active in the classroom. She also liked having autonomy in the classroom because it gave her the freedom to adapt to the needs of students and, meeting their needs gave her a sense of fulfillment. These features of Mary's personal and social conditions will be discussed in more detail when considering why she stayed a teacher, what frustrated her and what sustained her.

Peta's metaphor for teaching

Peta chose to represent her career as a time line punctuated by representative symbols (see Figure 14: Peta's career path metaphor). Each of these symbols was a subtextual illustration of Peta's thoughts and feelings towards teaching - both at the time of the memory and, later as she re-storied her career. Her first symbol, a question mark, revealed her uncertainty. The hand written annotation, "Is this for me?" where 'me' was capitalised and underlined hinted at Peta's need to align her

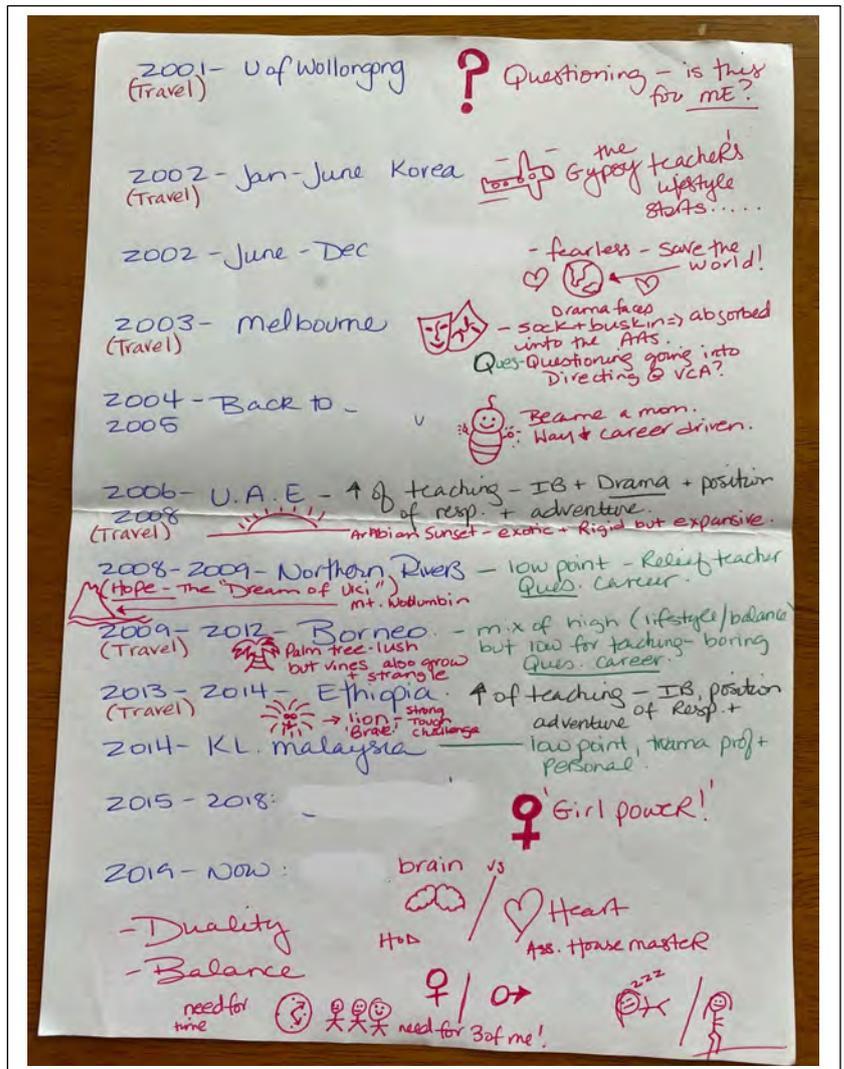


Figure 14: Peta's career path metaphor

teaching with how she saw herself as a person. Peta's latter symbols continued this reflective process by exploring what Peta termed a "duality" of experience. Peta seemed to question her own beliefs and motivations as she realised there were times she felt simultaneously positive and frustrated in her career.

Peta's career map revealed many of the tensions mentioned in previous studies of teacher attrition and retention particularly in terms of work life balance and the responsibilities a teacher has outside of school. Day et al. (2007) noted how teachers perceived their career differently according to which life stage they were in, and a Queensland College of Teachers report (2019) suggested personal motivators such as travel or child rearing can impact a teacher's choice to stay in teaching. Peta's stories demonstrated her

passion for teaching; however elements in her home life, such as juggling career and family responsibilities in her 4th and 5th year of teaching (represented by a busy bee), affected her overall life satisfaction. More significantly, in her later years, Peta's symbols expressed a duality of experienced as she tried to balance various aspects of her life. The symbol of a clock and three people highlighting how she felt a need for "three of me", suggested Peta experienced the same pressure of intense workloads found in previous teacher attrition research (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019). The final symbol, drawn in the bottom right-hand corner of the page, depicted the battle Peta felt when her need for sleep was weighed against her need for exercise. The positioning of this last symbol was important because, being the final place in Peta's figurative career journey, it seemed to represent how she was feeling in the moment she drew the map. The inclusion of five symbols to depict her current position, rather than following the pattern of a single symbol, may have reflected the intensity of Peta's feelings at that time. Peta explained that after creating the map, she "was in a slight funk" and needed to process what she had written while doing a yoga session. Peta said she realised she was "struggling with balance" but the struggle "did not represent a low point". Peta's realisation that the struggle to maintain a work-life balance did not, for her at least, represent a career low point was significant in terms of a study of teacher retention, especially when work life balance has been identified as a contributor to teacher attrition (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019). Instead of being deterred by the busyness of school life, Peta enjoyed being active. That Peta valued being busy and thrived on constant movement was evident in LS interview. She said, "I'm always busy and I don't feel like I'm busy for busy sake. It's just I like to be moving".

Peta's need for stimulating activity was also evident in the way she prioritised professional and intellectual growth and her preference for academically rigorous environments. For example, in her CS, Peta spoke in a warm and grateful tone when she described how a previous head of department (who Peta saw as "next level intelligent"), recognised that Peta was "going further" than classroom teacher. Peta valued the intellectually stimulating conversations and appreciated the mentorship provided by this

supportive head of department. These findings that show the importance of colleagues and managers support previous research into teacher retention (Kelly et al, 2019; Lester et al., 2020).

During her CS interview, Peta explained, why teaching in an academically rigorous school was important to her:

So for me, at least being at (current school) or (previous school) (pauses) and (pauses) it could be ego? (pauses) but that idea that I am teaching to a higher level in my classes, especially the seniors, than I would be if I was at (Sydney school) again. Because they just have so many issues (pauses). Or even a good public school (pauses) you're dealing with 32 kids, whereas here I'm dealing with 20. So (pauses) it's just that academic rigor. And even being at (current school), there's times where I think, will I end up somewhere like (names a school in Brisbane), to chase that even more? And then just that thing of (pauses) I was tired of being society's dumping ground. Once you become a mum (pauses) I used to come home from (Sydney school) and have a nap. Four o'clock, we would both have a nap for half an hour, and just shake ourselves off and go, okay, good for another day. Whereas when you have kids, you've got to come home and be able to switch gears, not know that some kid had a freak attack and tried to hold a woman against the wall with a drill (pauses) you know what I mean? This is heavy stuff. So I really was adamant that I would go back into the private sector, and so I ended up getting (previous school).

In addition to illustrating Peta's desire to teach academically rigorous classes, the above story fragment gave insight into Peta's perspective of teaching in State schools. The school in Sydney presented multiple behavioural challenges. Peta raised the issue of work-life balance describing how she used to manage the emotional exhaustion of challenging classes (Hargraves, 1998) by having a nap after school - something she could not do after having her own children. However, when Peta spoke about leaving the State system to

teach in more academically rigorous schools, she focused on wanting to teach classes that gave her an opportunity to teach “to a higher level” rather than the difficulty of previous classes. Interestingly, when a positive lens is applied to Peta’s comments, it seemed her strategy for remaining a teacher was to seek schools that matched her values and beliefs. Peta valued academically rigorous classes and believed in challenging herself, therefore she sought a school that gave her an opportunity to teach the way she liked to teach.

When Peta did note career low points on her map, they were generally associated with not meeting a career need or not fulfilling a personal value or belief. For example, Peta chose a mountain to represent the middle phase of her career when she worked as a teacher in Northern Rivers district of NSW. In addition to reflecting the physical location, the mountain figuratively illustrated her experience as she tried to climb professionally whilst living in a desired location. Despite loving ‘where’ she lived, Peta was frustrated by the work of a casual teacher. She “hated” not having her own classes, “hated” not having her own classroom and “hated” not having a connection to the school and community. As I reflected upon Peta’s words, I noted how place (both geographic and classroom) impacted her social conditions. Peta wanted to live in a town that gave her an opportunity to live a lifestyle that matched her interests. She needed her own classes, because she valued the teacher-student relationship and wanted her own classroom because it was a tangible recognition that she had a location within the school community. She suffered because her colleagues did not know her and she did not know what was expected of her. Importantly in terms of why teachers stay, question and ultimately persevere in their teaching role, was that in this instance, Peta was willing to remain in teaching; however she wanted a permanent place that met her personal and professional needs.

Throughout the re-storying process, Peta was highly reflexive as she made connections between how she felt toward teaching in the interview, how she had felt toward teaching when creating the career map and, how she felt at specific moments of her career. Peta explained that drawing the career map gave her an opportunity to reflect on her career and changed her perspective of her overall teaching experience.

This potential for career re-storying to impact a teacher's impression of their career was of particular interest to this study. Peta said:

(pauses) it [creating the career map] actually brought up students and things that had happened. And I was interested to see that I did have low points, whereas, because the past couple of years, I felt pretty grateful. I've been like oh, I kind of always loved my career. And then I started tracking, I was like oh no, there was a core time when I went and did an interior design degree, to get the fuck out of teaching. Do you know what I mean?

Peta's comments suggest that despite acknowledging low points or tensions in their career, a teacher may, to some extent, forget them - particularly when they are teaching in a school they liked.

Therefore, Peta's comments illustrated how a teacher's attitude toward their career may vary in relation to their current situation. These perspectives may vary day to day or even hour to hour depending on what a teacher experienced prior to answering a question about their career. This multiplicity within an individual perspective warrants further investigation because Bruner (2004) suggested a person shapes their life according to the stories they tell about their life and equally, shapes their story according to the life they want to live. He proposed "life is not 'how it was' but how it is interpreted, reinterpreted, told and retold" (p. 708). Therefore, as Peta shared her experience of thinking about the stages in her career, she was both shaping her thoughts about being a teacher and, reflecting her thoughts of being a teacher. Perhaps the duality of experience Peta mentioned was an illustration of this shaping and being shaped. When viewed through the lens of Peta's personal conditions, it was clear Peta valued the challenge of academic rigour and the connections to be found in positive school-based relationships. She liked being active. However, she acknowledged the physical, emotional and cognitive toll could be draining. This duality will be explored in greater detail in the next section when considering why Peta stayed in teaching, what frustrated her and what sustained her.

Piecing together the puzzle

Close consideration of each participant's teaching metaphor revealed a range of similarities and differences in each teacher's expressed values, beliefs and perspectives. Similar to previous studies of teacher retention, teachers' experiences are different at different times in their career and, the experience of individual teachers varies according to their personal and social conditions (Day et al., 2007; Hubermann, 1989). For instance, the middle phase of Frank's career was represented as sailing in the lagoon and Frank described himself "as happy as Larry". The middle phase of Peta's career was represented by dichotomised symbols that represented a duality of experience. There were tensions but equally there were joys, and significantly Peta acknowledged she had felt grateful in her later years of her teaching. As a result, Peta believed she 'always loved her career' and hadn't remembered the low points until she drew upon past memories when creating the career map. Peta's middle years of teaching seemed different to Frank's both because of their differing personal situations and their different passions outside of school. Frank wanted to be close to his friends and acting contacts. It was important to him to be part of a school community that recognised individuality and facilitated close relationships between students and staff. Frank used words and phrases such as "vibe" and "cool and groovy". He sought friendship whereas Peta juggled the needs of raising a family with a desire to build her career. She wanted the intellectual stimulation provided by senior classes and academically rigorous courses. Nevertheless, relationships were also important to Peta and, like Frank, she valued being part of a community who knew her and, she knew them. Mary too valued knowing and being known, particularly by students. Mary's teaching metaphor represented the later phase of her career but suggested she had a clear image of how she felt when not in a classroom. Mary's comments during the interview demonstrated the emphasis Mary placed on creating inviting, inspiring and learning centred classrooms that facilitated collaborative relationships between student and teacher. Mary, like Frank and Peta, valued the connection with her students; however she also gave specific importance to the physical environment of the classroom. She created learning spaces to evoke an atmosphere that fostered a learning-based teacher/student connection. Whereas Frank, who also valued a connection with students,

seemed to prioritise recognising the individual as means to create a 'vibe' that facilitated learning. Both Mary and Peta liked being active; however Mary was active because she abhorred laziness and Peta was active because she liked to move and improve. These subtle yet noticeably different ways of aligning values and beliefs to teaching practice seemed important because they suggested even though a teacher's expression of what they value about teaching, such as effective teacher student relationships, being part of a community and feeling heard and recognised as an individual are the same, the environmental needs and actions a teacher takes to realise that value may be motivated by different beliefs, such as being able to know the whole child, creating inviting learning spaces and a need to be challenged. Therefore, it was with these thoughts about how personal and social conditions contribute to individual teachers' different impressions of the teaching experience, I considered why teachers stay.

Why Stay (what motivates a teacher)

The previous section established a connection between participants personal and social conditions and, their impression of teaching. This section considers the relationship between impressions of teaching and values, beliefs and experiences of being, a teacher. First, I analysed teacher's stories to learn more about what brought participants joy in teaching and then I focused on the relationship between what brought a teacher joy and, why they chose to stay in teaching across a career.

Frank's passion for teaching

The exploration of Frank's teaching metaphor revealed a teacher who valued independence and believed it was important to recognise a person's individuality. He also placed a high importance on friendships and an atmosphere that fostered connection between individuals, both students and staff. Frank appreciated being part of a community; however, within that community wanted the freedom to be himself. As I examined Frank's stories it seemed his greatest enjoyment in teaching came from when he aligned the social experience of teaching to these personal beliefs and values. This need to align beliefs and

values was consistent with Oolbekkink-Marchand et al.'s (2017) and Gu's (2018) studies that found, alignment of teacher's beliefs with their practice of being a teacher, was important in terms of achieving agency. Having agency was important to Frank and he was proud of the successes he achieved as a teacher.

Frank's career story interview lasted for 2½ hours and he was thoroughly prepared. Prior to the interview, he searched through old files and storage boxes to locate mementoes from his teaching career in South Africa (See Figure 15: Frank's teaching mementoes). These mementoes included: cards of

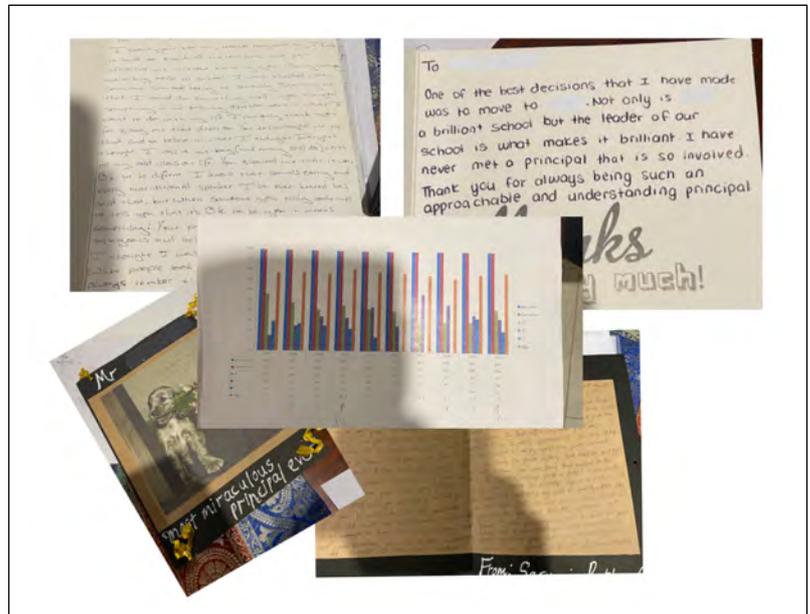


Figure 15: Frank's teaching mementoes

appreciation from former students; speeches he wrote for school events; and graphs showing the highly successful exam results students achieved under his principalship. All were laid out on the table, ready to show. The time and effort devoted to preparing for the interview suggested Frank appreciated the opportunity to speak about his teaching history prior to coming to Australia. I was listening to experiences he rarely had a chance to share and he spoke with great energy and emotion. Despite having taught for more than 22 years, Frank was in the early stages of his career in Australia and still trying to establish himself. Interestingly, when Frank drew his career map, he did not include his most recent teaching experiences in Australia. As he shared his stories, Frank frequently intertwined his recounts of teaching in Australia with teaching in South Africa. Since McAdams (2018) suggested studying a life narratively is helpful in understanding how a person values and gives meaning to specific memories, I gave attention to this intertwining of stories. As Frank recounted a story about a particular situation or incident, he triggered a memory of another time and the melding of these stories offered insight into why Frank stayed a teacher.

When I asked Frank what brought him joy in teaching he said:

It's the light bulb moment when the light goes on in that kid's brain or the soul, their eyes, whatever. And it doesn't, it's not necessarily where you're like (pauses) finally, after the 20th time, the 200 millionth time of me *explaining*, that is the hypotenuse - X plus Y equals Z. Ahhhhhh. And the penny drops. But it's really the moment where there's a light that turns on inside of them, for whatever it is that you've done, whatever the (pauses) what you did explain, or you explained it from a different way, but you've (pauses) and they've (pauses) and you know that they're not getting it and now they get it. And the understanding is there.

The above extract seemed to link Frank's joy in teaching to the learning experience. It appeared, for Frank, teaching fulfilled a need to connect and have a positive effect on a student. Frank took satisfaction knowing his words had "reached" a student and given the "light" of understanding. However, what equally gave Frank joy was the ability to influence a student and win them over. He explained:

But there are also times where you, where you're teaching the kid and (pauses) They're battling against school and battling against this subject, and they battling against you, simply because you're the teacher, you're preventing them from doing what they want to do. And, you finally managed to win them over to your side and you can see that. That's good. That's good.

As I reflected upon Frank's description of what brought him joy in the classroom, I noticed he enjoyed seeing how his teaching influenced a student's thoughts and actions. Frank genuinely wanted to see his students succeed at life and I knew, from stories Frank told in his life story interview, that he felt an emotional connection to the exchange that happened during a teaching moment.

During his life story interview, Frank recounted a story about sharing his skills and knowledge with a sergeant during compulsory military service. Frank was a Private and thus shocked when a Sergeant approached him for coaching.

So, I said to him “Yer sure (pauses) I’m awake (pauses) Alright” (pauses) And I taught him. (Frank punctuates the words by tapping on the table). I taught him for about an hour and he asked questions and I taught him and by the end of the hour – because I just gave him my undivided attention. And at the end of it when he (pauses for effect) When I asked him questions (pauses) So ok (pauses for effect) “Do you understand this” (pauses for effect) and “can you” (pauses for effect) “so tell me how you would do this” and whatever, whatever (pauses) So you demonstrate your understanding of this thing. And he did.

And when he stood up and he said “thank you very much” (Frank gestures nodding with a bemused expression – as in what just happened).

And I realised that there were other people and they were also (pauses). Because they had their books out and they were listening to what the hell was going on here.

I felt the emotion in Frank’s words that reflected a defining memory. As Frank recounted this incident, he used a slow pace, drew out his words and spoke in a low tone. He used his finger to punctuate the table as if to emphasise the meaning in his words. It became clear that the experience of teaching the sergeant was a profound moment. Frank had not recognised the other soldiers in the barracks who were also learning because teaching the sergeant held Frank’s complete attention.

A second teaching moment Frank described during his life story interview occurred in France. Frank was not sure what he wanted to do with his life and had been studying a variety of subjects, all with little interest. He took a sabbatical from university to embark upon a working holiday through Europe. One job involved teaching English to French students. As he described this teaching experience the passion in Frank’s tone and choice of words was obvious. Frank said, “They were eating out of the palm of my hand within 5 minutes”. He spoke with pride about how he won the students over and built relationships for learning.

I enjoyed *helping* these kids. I really enjoyed - establishing and sort of building the relationship with these kids and seeing that they actually (pauses). Because (Frank acts out the scene of French students moving from a space of complaining about school. He uses a French accent)

“I hate school, I hate English and I hate my English teacher She’s just boring this and that and the next thing.

“Now we love English, it’s fantastic, I want Mr Frank and to go to England to go to learn more English. You my friend have made me enjoy English for first time ever. Thank you (pauses for effect) Thank you!” (Frank puts emphasis on the second thank you).

Awesome! So, I thought really, this is it (pauses). This is like being bitten by a bug.

Frank’s inclusion of the word “friend” was significant, as were his comments about reversing student attitudes towards school and studying. It seemed Frank’s passion for teaching was influenced by his realisation that he felt successful when he built relationships *and* inspired a change of behaviour. In the extract above, Frank described how he was “bitten by a bug” when students called him “friend” and said he had “made [them] enjoy English for the first time ever”. It seemed Frank felt happiest when he knew he had a positive influence on those around him. Therefore, Frank’s joy as a teacher came from feeling successful through the relationships he built while teaching.

As I reflected on how Frank’s early experiences of teaching related to the stories he told about teaching in Australia, I could hear the same determination to connect with, and influence, students. For example, Frank spoke about how he had been called in for a short teaching contract and, because he was able to win over a difficult class, his contract was extended into the new teaching year. Frank said the class was “that class”, the one “nobody wanted”. However, Frank engaged the students and they sent an email to the deputy asking if Frank could be their teacher the following year. Frank recalled his conversation with one of the students:

Student: And we want you (pauses). You're coming in. And you're going to take us next year, because we're sick of this. We're sick of it.

Frank: This person didn't like them. And that person who just didn't teach us.

Student: And for the first time you actually fucking teaching us, and we're actually doing it. And we quite like you, so you're coming back.

As was evident in earlier extracts, this positive teaching moment illustrated Frank's habit of building upon the relationships he formed in the classroom. Frank expected the students to work, he brought academic rigour to the classroom. However, he also wanted the students to know that he saw them as people and 'liked them'.

Therefore, similar to findings in previous research (Kelchtermans, 2017; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018; Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019; Turner & Thielking, 2019), Frank's stories implied a direct correlation between his altruistic and intrinsic values and remaining a teacher. Frank stayed in teaching because he enjoyed the connection and success he experienced when he had a positive influence on his students.

Mary

Examination of Mary's teaching metaphor highlighted the extent to which Mary, like Frank, valued a connection with students. Mary found enjoyment and a sense of fulfillment through classroom interactions. She appreciated having autonomy in the classroom because she liked creating an interactive space for learning that catered to the needs of individual students. Equally, Mary needed to be active and moving. As I explored Mary's stories and noticed where she found most joy in teaching I noted, as I had with Frank, that Mary stayed in teaching because she found ways to align her values and beliefs with her teaching practice.

Mary described herself as "passionate about what I do" and used the word "love" repeatedly to describe her connection to the *act* of teaching. This passion for being a teacher reflected Manuel, Dutton and Carter's (2019) findings that teachers sustained their motivation for teaching because they loved

inspiring students and contributing to their growth. Teaching was where Mary found her greatest success and she took pleasure in knowing she was a 'good' teacher.

I've always been confident in my teaching and I love what I do. I've always loved what I do. It would devastate me not to [teach].

The use of emotionally laden words such as "loved" and "devasted" demonstrated the depth of Mary's feelings. It seemed when Mary spoke about what she enjoyed about teaching, she was both re-storying her career in a way that reflected how she wanted to teach and, demonstrating how her teaching experiences shaped her impression of being a teacher (Bruner, 2004). Mary often spoke in a direct measured tone; however each time her story included references to her students, she smiled and nodded her head as if to stress the importance of her words.

When I asked Mary what brought her most joy in the classroom she said, "I just enjoying being with them [students]. Giving them confidence and helping them feel like they're making progress". Therefore, similar to the participants in Turner and Thielking's (2019) study who reported finding meaning in their work through relationships with students, Mary found her relationship with students gave a sense of fulfilment. So much so that the relationships she built with her students offered solace during difficult times in her personal life. She said:

I had a group of kids once at (first school in WA) and I think it's why I loved them so much (pauses) I'd split up with my fiancé. I'd lost heaps of weight and I'd cut off all my hair - did all that stuff like you do. And they knew something was wrong. And without me actually (pauses) they just (pauses). They were *so* good to me. And when I left they (pauses) They took me out to lunch. And they bought me a little Swarovski globe – because they knew I loved to travel. So, they knew me really well. And it was nothing that you did, it was just (pauses) They (pauses) They helped me through it. They were amazing, just amazing. And I was 30 when that happened. They were just incredible. So, I'm very grateful.

It was clear, as mentioned earlier when considering Mary's teaching metaphor, that Mary fostered close reciprocal relationships with students. For example, the students were aware of Mary's love of travel and chose a gift that was personally relevant. As the frequent pauses in this story fragment revealed, this was an emotionally laden memory and thus, significant. It recalled a difficult time in Mary's personal life and yet, where previous research into teacher attrition found tensions in teaching could bring tensions to home life (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019), Mary's story illustrated how teaching could also provide a buffer against difficult times outside of school particularly when there was a close relationship between teacher and class.

Mary repeatedly said it was the students and her ability to be autonomous or have agency at work that kept her in the classroom. She said:

But even in the schools I've hated working in, I've still loved the kids. So, I've loved being in my world. As soon as you walk through the door it's your world. I've loved my world.

As the above extract shows, even when factors outside of the classroom were frustrating, disappointing or difficult, it was the relationships, physical space and activity of the classroom that gave Mary joy. In the classroom Mary was the master of her domain and could build the close learning relationships with students that fuelled intellectual and creative needs. Mary explained:

I looooved it when we got the kids back [after Covid-19 restrictions]. Just sitting and having a chat. And I'm a bit of a performer. I love that whole performance aspect of teaching as well. You know, when you just get into a flow and can do the whole (Mary is animated as she acts out being 'on' in the classroom) When you're on a roll about something and you go, 'oh there's a great idea' (pauses) and how to do it (pauses) And I'm very visual so I'm all over the board. And I work fast.

As I considered Mary's words and noted the animation in her voice, it seemed this was another pivotal story fragment that reflected a defining memory. Being physically active in the classroom allowed Mary to align

her values and beliefs with her work practice – she built relationships with students by actively teaching. I found Mary’s comments about being fast, on a roll and in “flow” when teaching interesting, especially in light of Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) description of flow from a positive psychology perspective and Vallerand et al.’s (2003) research into harmonious passion. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi suggested flow represented a state of present happiness, the experience of which could buffer against mental illness. Vallerand et al. (2003) suggested activities associated with a harmonious passion are intrinsically motivating - a person feels a “motivational force to engage in the activity willingly and engenders a sense of volition and personal endorsement about pursuing the activity” (p. 757). In this story fragment, Mary’s emotions reflected happiness and positivity toward specific workplace activities. She said she “love[d] the whole performance aspect of teaching” and was clearly energised as she reflected upon her experience. It seemed Mary’s passion for teaching was internally motivated because, physically teaching in the classroom both empowered and sustained her. She was actively connecting with students, always moving and disseminating ideas and, there was no chance of being idle.

Therefore, similar to Frank and the findings in previous research (Kelchtermans, 2017; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018; Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019; Turner & Thielking, 2019), Mary stayed in teaching because being a teacher aligned with how she saw herself as a person and met her altruistic and intrinsic values. Teaching gave Mary an opportunity to meet the strict work standards she set for herself and to interact positively with students.

Peta

Analysis of Peta’s teaching metaphor revealed the duality in a teacher’s experience and illustrated the somewhat contradictory feelings a teacher may have toward their role. From a career perspective, Peta enjoyed the academic rigour and intellectual connections she encountered when working in schools. She liked the way the work challenged her. However, she also acknowledged, from a personal perspective, the physical, emotional and cognitive toll could be draining. Nevertheless, despite this ‘struggle with balance’,

Peta 'loved' being a teacher and, like Frank and Mary, stayed a teacher because teaching aligned with her values and beliefs and, was coherent with how she saw herself.

When I asked Peta about where she found joy in teaching, she spoke about her passion for teaching History and the intellectual relationships she formed as a teacher. Peta said she "loved" History and even described going into the classroom to teach it as a "kind of little sugar hit". Similar to Mary, this emotional description had interesting connotations in terms of research into the impact of harmonious passion at work. Numerous studies found being engaged in a passionate activity increased worker wellbeing, morale and motivation (Forest et al. 2012; Scales & Brown, 2020; Vallerand et. al., 2003). Vallerand (2012) explained "passionate activities come to be so self- defining that they represent central features of one's identity" (p.3) and this explanation seemed applicable to Peta's comments about teaching History. Peta said:

Honestly, I love my subject. They call me a nerd all the time. Right now, we're doing the Cold War and I actually get illogically giddy, just talking about the content. And again, that's probably that professorship sort of idea of the academic (pauses). I don't know, this is going to sound silly, but sometimes I'm actually like 'far out did that just come out of my brain?' And I'll actually stop and say to the boys, and they just look at me like, you're so lame. I'll go, "did you actually just hear that? I evaluated that, how good is that?"

"Aw, mam" (Peta re-enacts the boy's response).

When Peta was speaking the excitement was palpable. It was a defining memory. She sat forward in her seat, her speech quickened and took on a higher pitch. She smiled brightly and used frequent hand gestures. It was clear her experience of teaching went beyond a cognitive exchange and was an emotionally joyful experience. Peta said:

But I think (pauses) that to watch me when I'm actually in flight and things are clicking along and the class is (pauses). It's that performance that I talked about - that I do get so excited the boys make fun of me.

When Peta described being "in full flight" she seemed to be describing a state of flow. Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2009) described flow as occurring when a person's attention is "completely absorbed in the challenge at hand" (p. 197) and "feelings, wishes, and action are in harmony" (p. 197). Interestingly, Peta, like Mary, found flow in the action of teaching. While detailed analysis of flow and its implications was beyond the scope of this study, Peta's comments suggest that for her, teaching was an energising experience. This potential for the act of teaching to be energising because it induces flow has interesting implications for future studies of teacher retention, particularly when combined with harmonious passion.

Peta found energy, fulfilment and success in teaching and this melding of her passion for history and ability to be successful at work seemed to be a key factor in why Peta remain a teacher. She explained:

As I get older and more experienced, is that acquisition of knowledge, where you're able to transfer it. I remember watching my history teachers or professors do this, where they'd be talking about something happening in 1963 in America, and then quickly, they go to the Banana Republic in Central America, and then they scoot over to South Africa. And you're like, 'how do you know?' And I'm finding now I can do that, and so I find that a lot of joy, even within myself. If nothing else about teaching, the one thing I absolutely love, just for my own selfishness, is that it indulges my love of history or drama or just learning. Whereas if I worked at (pauses) motor and transport, would I realistically have the time to (pauses) to read about history? Whereas now I have to.

As the above extract illustrated, Peta appreciated the way teaching gave her a platform to explore her love of history, something she would not find in other careers. Significantly in terms of teacher retention, it may be the combination of knowing she was a successful teacher and feeling accomplished, accepted and valued

for her knowledge and skills, that motivated Peta's on-going commitment to teaching. Peta explained, "I've often said to the boys, the only thing I'm good at is history and teaching". When I had asked Peta what kept her in the profession, she said she knew she was good at it.

This is what I know'. And I know I'm good at it. That's the other thing is. You can struggle against it. I know I'm good at it.

Peta's embedding of the phrase "struggle against it" between her comments about being a "good" teacher were interesting because they hinted at the duality she experienced when thinking about her career. As much as Peta stayed in teaching because she was passionate about teaching in her subject area and knew she could achieve success as a teacher, she was also mindful of the challenges. Interestingly in terms of Peta's comments about balance and, previous research into teacher attrition which found teachers often struggle with the busyness of the school day (Buchanan, 2012; Day et al., 2007, Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Weldon 2018), Peta said she appreciated the rapid pace of the school year. She said:

I actually really like the fact that it's super intense. If I was a nurse, I would probably be a triage nurse, just insane, go, go, go, go, go, and then we have time off. So that idea (pauses) And I love the fact that we have a new year or a *new* class or a *new* term. There's always this restart button that I love. I couldn't imagine just working at the department of motor vehicles, and every year just clicks over. Nothing (pauses) Nothing cuts your life into bits. I really like that.

As the above extract shows, Peta, like Mary, wanted to stay active. However, unlike Mary for whom being active meant not being idle, Peta appreciated the constant reset. She liked the way teaching involved bursts of activity followed by times of rest before going back into activity. Peta recognised other roles were unlikely to meet that need for definite start and finish points.

Equally as was the case with Mary and Frank, Peta appreciated the autonomy and agency to be found in the classroom. She said:

I like working with teenagers. And you kind of get to be your own boss. Even though you have principals and stuff, when you shut that door, you're the boss (pauses). Not the 'boss' or 'authority figure' (pauses) but you're the one in control of how you're going to deliver it. How they're going to respond. And I do like that kind of autonomy.

Peta liked the fact that the classroom was *her* domain. Interestingly, she was quick to point out she did not want to be an 'authority figure' but rather the one in control of the learning. Her comments about not wanting to impose authority seemed similar to those made by Frank about wanting to give students space to be individuals. Equally, Peta's comments about wanting to control the delivery of learning were similar to Mary's comments about wanting to be in charge of the learning space. When considered collectively, the comments made by Frank, Mary and Peta reflected previous research which suggested teachers want autonomy and agency so they can teach in a way that aligns with their values and beliefs. The teachers in this study wanted to teach in ways that were consistent with their perspective of best teaching practice because they wanted to meet the needs of their students (Glazer 2018a; Kelchtermans 2017; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018; Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019).

Peta also spoke positively about how teaching gave her an opportunity to work with teenagers. She said she appreciated the banter she had with her students - such as when they refer to her as a "nerd". Peta said she found joy in her students' "no bullshit attitude" and how they "just say things without even filtering it. And then they'll kind of accept you doing that as well". She valued authentic learning relationships. Peta explained:

And that they walk in and without even thinking, they smile and say, "hey, ma'am, how was your night last night?"

And it's not just the kind of off-handed (pauses) they actually want (pauses)

"Oh, I watched this movie."

"Oh, what movie did you watch?"

So that connection keeps you (pauses). I have so many of those stories because they happen almost every day. So, it's that, (pauses), like I told my year 12s the other day, my two year 12 classes, I said, "I'm just going to warn you, I'm probably going to cry." And I'm not a crier. As I just said, I'm going to struggle with them leaving. And I've taught for 20 years. I'm with them every day, and then they're just going to disappear. And you'll sort of hear from them, but not really. But they've impacted on my life.

What was clear, as had been the case with Frank and Mary, Peta built close relationships with her students and valued them as people who had lives outside of school. She also appreciated the way her students recognised her as a person. These relationships "impacted" her life and it seemed, as was the case when Peta spoke about her love of history, the connection and banter Peta could have with her senior students was important to her. So much so that Peta, like Mary, found at various low points in her life, teaching offered solace. Peta said:

I've had some real knocks in the past year and a half. And there's times where I've walked into that classroom, barely holding it together for myself. And by the end of the 45 minutes, the boys have me laughing.

And

There are times where, particularly right now, with some stuff [personal life] that was happening last year (pauses) where I actually think that my career kept me going. The fact that I was accountable for them.

This notion that teaching could be soothing seemed important, especially since both Peta and Mary spoke about using teaching as a lifeline during particularly difficult personal experiences. Peta and Mary's experiences suggested teachers who built close relationships with students and who had a passion for teaching, could draw upon the emotional reserves they built through pursuing their passion at work to help them through difficult personal times. This potential for teaching to a source of wellbeing had interesting

implications, especially in relation to research into the impact of harmonious passion at work and, warrants further investigation. Peta stayed in teaching because it gave her an opportunity to do what she loved, what she believed she was good at, and to build meaningful relationships.

Piecing together the puzzle

The stories told by each participant illustrated the importance of an alignment between intrinsic motivations (love of subject area; appreciation for intellectual stimulation and; interaction with students and colleagues) and altruistic motivations (opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others) and a teacher's values (relationships) and beliefs (learning environment). Each of the teachers in this study stayed in teaching because they enjoyed being teachers. Being a teacher was coherent with how they saw themselves as individuals and, as teachers (Glazer, 2018a; Gu 2018; Kelchtermans, 2017; Oolbekkink-Marchand et al., 2017). Peta, Mary and Frank, appreciated the relationships they had with their students and colleagues and, enjoyed the intellectual and emotional process of sharing knowledge and understanding. Teaching was a way to connect with others in a purposeful manner. However, despite appreciating similar aspects of teaching, there were nuanced differences in why each participant enjoyed teaching. For example, Frank enjoyed the connection with students because he experienced a feeling of success when he knew he had a positive influence on his students. Mary's joy when connecting with students came from knowing her students knew her as much as she knew them and knowing that mutual awareness built a trusting foundation upon which Mary could have a positive influence on student learning. Similarly, Peta enjoyed the connection to be found from understanding students as individuals and they recognising the individuality of their teacher. Peta also valued the opportunity to engage in lively intellectual banter related to her subject area. It was this nuanced difference in teachers' perception of what brought joy in teaching, visible through the varying personal and social conditions of participants, that offered core insights into the complexity of the teacher retention puzzle.

Why Question (what frustrates a teacher)

Nevertheless, teaching was not without its frustrations, and as much as each of the participants expressed joy in being a teacher, they also acknowledged tensions. Each teacher expressed a passion toward the act of teaching and having an impact on the lives of students. However, despite loving being in the classroom, each participant was less positive about other aspects of teaching, especially when values or beliefs were in conflict with what was happening around them. Nevertheless, rather than adopting the deficit approach common to other studies of teacher attrition and seeking solutions to these problems, this study noted how participants were alert to tensions in their role but re-storied their experience or, moved to places that better matched their beliefs, values, motivations and perceptions of identity.

Personal tensions in teaching were often the result of teachers feeling a disconnect between what they wanted to do as teachers and what they were doing as teachers. Previous studies have shown teachers often have a clear impression of what, in their opinion, a good teacher does and these perceptions may or may not coincide with policy or social attitudes (Glazer, 2018a; Hargreaves 1998; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018; Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019; Schafer & Clandinin, 2019). The same was true of teachers in this study. These perceptions of what it meant to be a good teacher influenced Frank, Mary and Peta's teaching and impacted their impression of the school and people with whom they were teaching. For Frank and Mary, most of the tensions in teaching related to working in situations or with people who did not meet their perspective of effective teaching and management. These were places where Frank and Mary felt a lack of agency and connection. Peta's tensions were largely related to work-life balance.

Frank

Frank had three core tensions; working with lazy teachers, being mismanaged and unworkable administrative demands. Even though each of these frustrations is considered separately below, they are interconnected and have a cumulative effect on Frank's ability to build the classroom connections he valued.

Frank believed teachers should work collaboratively for the greater good and expressed derision for teachers he saw as lazy and disorganised. For example, Frank spoke with contempt about a teacher he encountered in one of his early teaching contracts in Australia. Frank said:

He was big mouth, no fucking action guy. And he was going off on long leave. So, he *knew* he was going. Now, if you *know* that you're going, you got your year 12s and you got all of this. You would go to the Head of Learning or you go to your Head of Department and you would say, "right (Frank thumps the table), where's the replacement". Because I want to have a good handover because I'm coming back to this job. I don't want my little boat to be on the rocks and people drowned, and (pauses) oh Jesus. I want (pauses) We're still going. And we're heading towards, thank you very much. And you, cheers, bye. And off we go again.

In the above extract, Frank demonstrated his own work ethic and his frustration toward a teacher who did not share the same commitment to teaching. At the last minute, Frank was offered a contract renewal that would have seen him taking over this colleague's classes but Frank refused the contract, choosing instead to work in a different school. Frank recounted a conversation with another colleague, who said:

Jesus. You dodged a bullet, you dodged a bullet. He left all his year 12 marking. The first thing that we had to do was, we had to do all his year 12 marking.

Frank was appalled saying:

He left it off. There were no lesson plans. There was nothing. There was nothing.

It's fucking chaos. It's chaos, it's appalling.

Frank was emotive in his delivery of this story fragment and very definite about what he thought should have happened. It was in moments like this, when Frank thumped the table and used an authoritative tone that his strong beliefs about effective teaching practice were most apparent. Frank believed teachers should be proactive, organised and plan for the future. Importantly he believed teachers should consider their students. Frank's return to a maritime metaphor, "my little boat" was also revealing. The use of the

pronoun, “my” suggested as a teacher, Frank felt a sense of ownership over his classes and their welfare. Frank did not want his classes “to be on the rocks and people drowned”. The reference to a “little boat” may have signified Frank was thinking about the “happy” times he was ‘sailing around the lagoon’ and having a wonderful time with his classes. Therefore, Frank’s description of the teacher as a “big mouth, no fucking action guy” indicated the extent of Frank’s scorn for a teacher who did not take responsibility for his classes. Frank was frustrated by the teacher’s attitude and actions toward teaching.

A second tension Frank encountered in his teaching related to being mismanaged. This frustration with a lack of effective leadership, especially when that leadership impeded a teacher’s ability to be the teacher they wanted to be (Glazer, 2018a), was similar to findings in previous studies of teacher attrition (Arnup & Bowles, 2016; Boyd et al., 2011; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Buchanan, 2010; Ingersoll 2001; Mason & Poyatos Matas 2015). Frank said:

How does (pauses) This is not (pauses) This is crazy. There's no management going on here. The HODs are not doing their jobs because the teachers don't know what the fuck it is that they're supposed to do (Frank taps the table to punctuate his words). If the teacher doesn't *know* what they're supposed to do. The kids know straight away that you don't have a clue. And then there's no lesson plan and there's no material. ‘We’re not doing anything you want us to do’ (Frank mimes a petulant child).

The extract above, which outlined Frank’s experience as a contract teacher in a South East Queensland State school, illustrated his frustration with mismanagement. Frank was frustrated because he could not teach the way he wanted to teach and as a result, could not be what he saw as an effective teacher. He could not be organised because he did not know what was expected of him and, he could not build relationships with the students. Interestingly, despite being a very experienced teacher, the above extract suggested, as Frank began teaching in Australia, he experienced many of the tensions felt by early stage or beginning teachers. Frank was not familiar with the QLD curriculum and relied on HODs and colleagues for guidance. When that

guidance was not forthcoming, he felt incompetent and these feelings of incompetence were perhaps exacerbated by the knowledge he had the teaching skills and he knew what effective management should, in his opinion, look like. Frank's previous experience as a school principal pervaded many of his stories. Frank tended to consider the big picture. For example, in terms of the common places (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), the above extract Frank highlighted defects in social conditions such as poor administration and then moved to personal conditions such as a teacher's need for direction and then to wider implication connecting social conditions to personal conditions, such as the learning relationship between student and teacher. As mentioned earlier when discussing Frank's teaching metaphor and why he remained a teacher, Frank believed teaching was something that extended beyond the walls of the classroom. He drew upon his beliefs about teaching and how the actions of people impacted others within the school community and, shared his ideas using inclusive language. For example, as Frank recounted a different story of mismanagement, he used language to simultaneously imply the impact on himself and the effect on his teaching colleagues.

So again, you're working double time, because you trying to figure out what it is that you *are* supposed to be doing. Trying to figure that out. Now, I've not done your syllabus or your curriculum before. So, I'm trying to figure that out. And then trying to get resources, trying to figure out (pauses). To be able to get lesson plans together, to get materials, to *teach* this thing for you.

Frank used the words 'I' and 'you' interchangeably as if he was describing a situation that effected not only himself, but 'me' as the audience. However, when Frank used the word 'you', I felt he was not only referring to 'me' - his audience at the time, but also the wider teacher experience. It seemed the tension Frank felt extended beyond what *he* experienced, to how mismanagement impacted those around him. Frank had firm beliefs about school management and how teachers should be supported. He was frustrated when those conditions were not met.

A third source of tension were the unworkable administrative demands in teaching. The frustrations Frank raised were similar to those previously found in teacher attrition literature (Kelchtermans 2017; Glazer, 2018a; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019). Frank was critical of the time taken away from lesson preparation. He said:

Oh my god. And then they have (pauses). Then they want to have fucking staff meetings for an hour on a Wednesday afternoon or something like that. Where you're doing the most pointless bloody, ridiculous administrative *bullshit*.

Frank provided an enactment of his conversation with colleagues.

Frank: You know what, I'm sorry, I don't mean to be funny, but really (pauses). I actually don't give a fuck because I'm on contract and don't care (pauses). But this is a big waste of time. Really what we should be doing is we should be sitting in our faculties with our bloody course coordinators and our bloody heads of department and actually finding out what the fuck we're supposed to teach because that's what a school is actually about (Frank mimes the head nodding of his colleagues and then, continues to act out the conversation).

Colleague: Yeah, stick it to them, stick it to them.

Frank: Because, really that's what you're supposed to be doing.

Colleague: Well, how the fuck do you know?

Frank: Because, I used to run a fucking school. So shut up.

Frank's enactment of this conversation illustrated his willingness to be a mouthpiece and speak out about what he perceived as flaws in a system. Frank's use of profanities highlighted his feelings of frustration when administrative burdens stymied effective practice. Frank's frustration was amplified because as a former school principal he knew that effective organisation would better fulfil the needs of the teaching community. Like teachers in previous studies of teacher attrition (Borman & Dowling 2008; Mason &

Poyatos Matas, 2015; Weldon, 2018), Frank wanted clear communication, effective direction and the learning resources required to be an effective teacher.

When considered as interrelated factors, working with non-committed teachers, ineffective management and unworkable administrative demands, impacted Frank's ability to do what he most valued as a teacher, connect with students. Frank described how he tried to "get the interest of these kids" and "engage with the kids". He created lessons which he thought "would be awesome" but found himself just "trying to get through the day" because there were "no plans" and "no materials". Adding to the tension were the disruptive students. Frank described being "so busy having to manage this little shit over there in the back seat, and that one and this one and that one" that rather than teaching, he was conducting "a glorified babysitting session". However, despite the obvious negativity in Frank's use of the phrase "little shit" and the disconnected relationship evident when he referred to "these kids" and "that one and this one", I realised he cared about the students. Frank spoke with sympathy for the wider implications of mismanaged schools when recounting the connection he made with one year 9 class.

"It's him. It's him. It's him, It's him. It's him. It's him"

(Frank returns to his story about the students recognising him and his professional dress, giving words to what he perceived students were thinking). There's something going on in the lesson. And he actually was speaking to me and actually listened to what I said and actually is writing stuff on the board and actually gave us something. And we wrote. And we were doing something. We were learning.

(Frank's tone drops and then switches to one of incredulity) Get the fuck out! Isn't that what's always supposed to happen? He smiled at us. So, shame.

When I had the last day and it's, "Oh, will we see you next term, sir?"

And I said, "No, my contract is finished here. I'm sorry."

"Where are you going, sir?"

"I don't know (Frank mouths words he would never say to the students) and I'm sorry for you."

"We're going to miss you. You're the best teacher we've ever had."

Yeah, you've been nice – but it might be fucking true.

The reaction from the students in the above extract - saying they will “miss” him and that he’d been the “best teacher”, suggested Frank had built a relationship with the class. Equally apparent was the care Frank had taken to ensure a degree of academic rigour in the classroom – he “wrote on the board” and there were “things going on in the lesson”. However, the obvious sarcasm in Frank’s tone as he recounted the story demonstrated his disdain for a school culture that was, from Frank’s perspective, the result of non-committed teachers, ineffective management and administrative demands.

The tension Frank experienced as a teacher emanated from a belief that he could not do the job he wanted to do or build the relationships he wanted to build. He was not given the tools or environment to be the teacher he wanted to be. The tension was so significant that he contemplated leaving teaching. He told his wife he might “become a tradie” because, in his eyes, the work he was doing in that particular school was “not teaching”. He even considered becoming a policeman.

At least you, with the amount of stress - maybe it will be same amount of stress, at least I'll have a gun. A taser, fucking pepper spray. And the law, the authority (pauses) to fucking give you one. Because I can't over here (Frank refers to his experience in State school). God knows you want to.

As Frank spoke about his experience, I was struck by the acute emotional response evident in word choice and tone. Yet, Frank did not focus on workplace stress or workload – he realised being a policeman could also be stressful. Rather Frank directed his frustration to lack of authority, lack of agency and lack of opportunity to be the teacher he wanted to be. These reasons for questioning a career in teaching were the same as have been raised in previous teacher attrition literature (Glazer, 2018a; Kelchtermans, 2017; Manuel & Carter 2016; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018). As Frank re-

storied the latter stages of his career it became clear that mis-management and unworkable administrative burdens effected his ability to build the strong classroom connections he valued and without those connections, Frank did not feel as though he was making a difference. In Frank's eyes the work he was doing was not teaching so he may as well 'not be a teacher' somewhere else. However, despite these tensions, Frank chose to stay, albeit in a different school.

Mary

Mary raised similar concerns to Frank. Like Frank she was frustrated by teachers she saw as lazy or not committed to their role as a teacher. Mary was equally frustrated by ineffective leadership and resented administrative tasks that took up her time and quashed her creativity. As was mentioned previously in the sections that considered Mary's teaching metaphor and why she remained a teacher, Mary had specific beliefs about what effective teaching looked like and experienced tension when she could not perform to the standards she set herself. These tensions were similar to the tensions expressed elsewhere in research into teacher retention and attrition (Gazer, 2018a; Kelchtermans, 2017; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018).

Mary held a strong work ethic and deep sense of personal and social responsibility, particularly in terms of her students. She was a self-confessed workaholic saying "I work through lunch. I have to consciously go 'I am not working now'". For her, being busy was important because inactivity equated to laziness and she could not tolerate being idle. Mary repeatedly said "I hate sitting down" and "I have a key philosophy that goes if you have time to sit down, you have time to help". Mary believed teachers should prioritise student learning and actively teach. Her personal values and beliefs sometimes led to tensions in the work place, particularly when Mary perceived colleagues were not doing their fair share or not taking their role as a teacher seriously. She felt frustrated by teachers who had lost their passion for teaching. Mary said:

If you've lost your passion, get out, because the kids deserve more. They deserve to have 100%, not just I'm doing this until retirement or because I don't know,

because I want to be a presenter of whatever. You need to be passionate about what you do.

Equally Mary was agitated by ineffective management or lack of team spirit. Her commanding tone was reflective of her hard-line attitude toward leadership when she said, “If you’re going to lead me, you lead me” and “if you’re going to be my boss, then you need to be good at what you do”. This need for effective leadership and organised systems correlated to what has been previously found in teacher retention research (Buchanan, 2010; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). Mary also believed teaching was a team experience. She said:

How could you not get that teaching is a collaborative effort? It's not about who can be better than each other. It's not about that at all. Hopefully everybody is good at what they do. They're the staff rooms that haven't worked. The pettiness and the, “she got this” (Mary uses the tone of a petulant child) and you know.

As I reflected upon Mary’s words, and the tone in which they were delivered, it appeared as though these statements about effective leadership and teamwork were core beliefs. They were delivered emotively and related to comments Mary made previously during her LS Interview. Mary said:

I’ve been raised that way. I don’t have parents who give me things and stuff like that (pauses) I’ve got nothing to inherit. And if I get myself in trouble, I’m the only way out. And that’s been the case since I was 15. So, I’ve had to (pauses) find my own way and I’ve had to make it on my own (pauses). Everything I have in my life is because I’ve worked hard for it.

These personal beliefs about showing initiative, being proactive and self-reliant, were transferred to her attitude toward teaching. Mary wanted to work hard, show initiative and have independence in the classroom. In terms of the common places (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), Mary experienced tension when factors of place (such as the school environment) or sociality (such as administration or community) prevented her from those goals.

Like Frank, Mary was equally frustrated by systems, processes and administration demands that were unwieldy, disorganised and did not prioritise learning. She spoke derisively about her first teaching contract in South East Queensland.

I had a six-month contract to start and, at six months we mutually agreed that it wasn't the school for me. I was basically going 'if this is Queensland education I'm going to work in Coles'. The way they treated their teachers was appalling. That desk downstairs (Mary points to a desk in the living area), my husband built me that desk so he could see me. Because I was working until 11:00pm every night. It was ridiculous. Not on important stuff. I taught the bottom class of 15 year seven classes (pauses) I was teaching English and HaSS. You'd have three meetings a week on every subject. I've never been to so many meetings in my life. You'd have lunchtime meetings, after-school meetings, compulsory weekly PD, compulsory weekly staff meetings. They had a lot of really great PD but it was ridiculous.

Mary was impassioned when she spoke and despite being more than five years ago, the experience still held great emotional resonance. Given Mary's need to work in intellectually stimulating environments, her comment that a job in Coles would be preferable to continuing to teach in that school was significant. Like Frank, it seemed if she could not be the teacher she wanted to be, she would rather not teach. Mary's reasons for seeing the situation so negatively; the treatment of teachers, the long hours, excessive meetings, time away from family and time devoted to 'unimportant' activities, have been commonly raised in previous studies of teacher attrition (Glazer, 2018a; Kelchtermans, 2017; Manuel & Carter 2016; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018). I noted how, even though Mary was busy, "working until 11.00 every night", she did not perceive the activity as relevant for learning outcomes and described herself as "miserable". Mary used the strong emotive language of a defining memory saying, "I hated it. Absolutely hated it".

Mary was also upset by the administration processes that monitored her every move and took away her sense of agency.

In English you'd have a meeting to plan the assessment. And then you'd have a meeting with the drafts. And then you'd have a meeting to go over the final copies - which is fine. But you'd also have that in HaSS. Meanwhile, because I did a bit of the numeracy stuff as well, I'd have a meeting with them. Then they had a reading program (pauses) and you had to actually fill in a spreadsheet of when you're going to be doing which particular comprehension at what particular period of the week (pauses). For every day - and they would come in check. And if you weren't doing the right thing that you said on the right day you'd be spoken to.

As the extract above shows, Mary was not given an opportunity to use her judgement. Despite being an experienced teacher who held leadership positions in Perth, in this school she found herself continually looking over her shoulder waiting for someone to say she was doing the wrong thing. Even though Mary described tasks that had direct relevance to student learning as “fine”, she found the administrative accountability tasks draining. The whole situation was, in Mary’s words, “untenable”. She did not have agency and was not able to teach to her potential. She could not show initiative, be proactive or self-reliant. Mary prided herself on her passion for teaching and her ability to engage students, two skills she felt powerless to use given excessive standardisation and accountability measures. She explained:

It was *all* teaching by PowerPoint. So, you also had another meeting to decide who would do which PowerPoints for which topic. So, all these different styles are being put together - and I am not a PowerPoint teacher. But seriously! Seriously every single lesson was by PowerPoint. And I'm going, 'that doesn't suit my kids'. Who does that suit? It doesn't suit anybody. But it was based on the Queensland (pauses) You know what I'm talking about? (pauses). But I went 'this is ridiculous. (pauses) It was just (pauses) I was very vocal about that (pauses) I was going 'there are easier ways of doing this, guys'.

However, as I reflected on the ferocity of Mary's disdain of the experience, I also noted her use of inclusive personal language when she spoke about "my kids". It seemed, regardless of the physical situation and the social conditions, Mary's personal values and beliefs around her students remained positive. As alluded to earlier, Mary did not question her role as a teacher because she disliked teaching; quite the contrary, it seemed she *wanted* to teach. However, she wanted to teach *her way*, a way that would meet the needs of *her* students. Mary questioned the systems and processes that, from her perspective, prevented her from being an effective teacher.

Mary had a strong belief that discipline, structure and academic rigour were fundamental to effective teaching practice. Being forced into a position that did not meet her teaching philosophy or teaching style was, for Mary, "a living hell". To illustrate her point, Mary told a story about her experience teaching in a progressive school in Perth that had four teachers, 120 students, one large space and "no walls". Mary said:

I was the behaviour manager for 120 kids. I got wrinkles because I'd stare across the classroom. Because I was the strongest in behaviour management and I don't believe that kids should just be able to run riot. And I actually believe in academic (pauses) what do you call it (pauses) rigor? That it wasn't okay. That medieval module that I did, we did the same module at that school and didn't finish it (pauses). They didn't get through it. I taught math to 60 kids at one time with two aides who had never taught maths before. It was a nightmare. You weren't allowed to leave the community (pauses) you had to do it all there. It didn't suit my style. It was a bit too lax and too free (Mary mimics a frivolous tone).

As the extract above illustrated, Mary appreciated structure and a strong study / work ethic. Interestingly this belief in discipline and confidence in her own skills led her to 'step up' and take a leadership role. As I reflected upon other comments Mary made in both her LS and CS, it seemed that being accountable was important to Mary. She said:

You see something that needs to be done, you jump in. That's been my whole life and I've always been appreciated for it and I've always progressed on my own merits and had people recognise that.

Mary wanted to be seen and appreciated for what she contributed. Her experience teaching in a school with no walls was so demoralising, she spent a year working in Australian Defence. However, the Army did not provide the intellectual stimulation she needed. She was bored and missed the energy of the classroom. So, despite being what Mary called a "six year statistic", she soon returned to the classroom.

Therefore, it seemed, as was the case with Frank, and as had been reflected in previous studies of teacher attrition, the tensions Mary felt were derived from an inability to be the teacher she wanted to be. Mary set high standards for herself, and student learning was her priority. When management systems, administrative demands or interactions with colleagues did not meet the standards Mary believed were important, she felt frustrated, unheard or unappreciated and these tensions had the potential to pull her out of a teaching roll. However, Mary remained passionate about teaching and her students so, rather than leaving teaching, she, like Frank, changed where she taught.

Peta

Peta's perspective was somewhat different to Frank and Mary's. As mentioned previously during the analysis of her teaching metaphor, Peta struggled with what she termed the duality of teaching. This duality occurred as elements within Peta's personal condition came into conflict with aspects of social condition. Her primary concern was work life balance – a factor that had also been raised in previous studies of teacher attrition (Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019). However, she was also struggling to come to terms with what she saw as conflicting needs. Peta wanted to be liked. She wanted to be a supportive, competent manager and a caring, effective teacher. She wanted to be part of a team *while* being recognised as a competent individual. Peta wanted to progress in her career *and* to be a devoted mum. She wanted to be constantly on the move *yet* craved time to do nothing and relax.

One of the most poignant remarks Peta made during her CS interview was “it’s almost like the things that bring me back are the very things that could repel me from the career”. This comment, made in the latter half of the interview seemed to reflect Peta’s attempt to come to terms with her current experiences. Like teachers in previous studies of teacher attrition (Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019), Peta loved teaching but was drained by trying to do everything she wanted to do in order to be the type of teacher she wanted to be and, have the career she wanted to have. As Peta re-storied her experiences of being a teacher it became clear she was trying to make sense of this teaching paradox and her career story interview frequently oscillated between ‘loving teaching’ and ‘hating’ the lack of time to herself. Peta spoke about her struggle to balance her desire for promotion, her need to fulfil her responsibilities to her students and her colleagues, her responsibilities as a mother and, her awareness of the impact being a teacher had on her health. Peta explained:

I think there is so much blending, which is what can burn us out basically. Because not only are you worrying about your family, but now you’re worrying about your boys, you’re worrying about your girls, the students that are in front of you.

The above extract shows how Peta felt about work-life balance. Peta’s use of the word “worrying” illustrated her emotional state. It was similar to the comment discussed previously about ‘struggling against’ the knowledge she was a ‘good teacher’. She cared about her students just as she cared for her family. For Peta, teaching required both an emotional and cognitive commitment. Hargraves (1998) suggested effective teachers were ones who “are emotional, passionate beings who connect with their students and fill their work and their classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy” (p. 835). As Peta strived to be one of those effective teachers, she realised it was draining her. She gave a specific example by sharing a story about taking a mental health day.

And truly, I’ll be honest, on Monday I had a mental health day. Two days ago, I was like, you know what? I worked all weekend in the boarding house. But even beyond that, it was starting to (*pauses*) and I actually took (*pauses*) And this is what’s hard.

I didn't have a mental health day, actually, because a mental health day is when you go off to the movies in the middle of the day. I sat here and worked for six hours. I actually got on top of my emails, I got on top of what my staff needed. And in some ways, that makes me angry because it's like I'm taking a day off work to work. But I felt so much better coming in on Tuesday.

The extract highlighted Peta's internal struggle. She weighed her personal needs against her expectations of what she was required to do as a manager. Peta's use of the personal pronoun in the statement "I got on top of what my staff needed" hints at the relationship she has with her staff. It seems she holds herself accountable for their 'needs' and wanted to ensure they have the tools required to be successful in their role. However, this desire to fulfil *their* needs (and the needs of her teaching role) interfered with *her* need for a day to do something for herself, such as "go off to the movies in the middle of the day". Peta juxtaposed feelings of anger toward taking a day off school to work, with feeling "so much better" because she was organised when she returned to school. She labelled the dilemma "hard", which is a significant word choice in terms of Peta's need for a challenge. It appeared she was experiencing simultaneously opposite feelings, emotions that changed based on the lens through which she viewed the experience. In terms of the common places (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), when Peta's experience was viewed through the lens of social conditions, she felt accomplished because she had met the needs of others. However, through the lens of personal conditions she felt frustrated because she had failed to meet her own needs. This juxtaposition had significance for a study of teacher retention, particularly in terms of McAdams' (1993) assertions that a person creates internal characters who often battle one another in a search for internal coherence where external presentation of self match inner representations of identity. If Peta looked at what she had been able to accomplish, she was positive. However, if she looked at alternatives for her day away from the classroom, she was resentful. These feelings of resentment about the lack of time to complete all that is required within a normal school day are not unusual and have already been reported in studies of teacher attrition. For example, Manuel, Carter and Dutton (2018) found "themes of frustration,

exhaustion, and depleted levels of moral” (p. 16) were commonly cited as contributing to mental health concerns. However, this re-storying of a specific event- where Peta acknowledged dual emotions, had important implications for a study of teacher retention because it demonstrated how, in re-storying, Peta was able to reframe her experience and be positive about what she accomplished.

The internal struggle to meet divergent needs was evident throughout Peta’s stories perhaps suggesting her struggle was as much personal as it was part of her experience of teaching. During her LS interview, Peta explained:

On the surface I come across very extroverted. But I think it's more of a skill that I learned as a kid. I could actually be a little bit more prone to being by myself a bit more. I've always had this (pauses) tension between friends; (pauses) wanting a massive group of friends but naturally just gravitating towards just a select few. And sort of always feeling like I'm a bit on the outside. I don't know why. And I think even as an adult I do - even though probably people looking in would say otherwise.

This paradox in Peta’s personal conditions, wanting to be part of the group yet also needing individual attention, which was evident from an early age and could be tracked across her social interactions in adult life, permeated her comments about being a teacher. As a teacher, Peta spoke a need to be liked that sometimes conflicted with her perception of what was required for effective management.

I know that I can shy away from certain things because I don't want to upset people. I know that as a manager, I can come across kind of flip-floppy because I second guess myself way more in managing people than I do in managing the boys. And of course, I want the boys to like me, but dealing with adults - and particularly teachers, is tricky. It's not like private industry, where you can just say, this is your enterprise agreement. It doesn't work with teachers. You need to have that kind of personal approach.

While the above extract shows Peta's management dilemma, it also highlighted the extent to which she cared about the people around her. Hargraves (1998) pointed out, "Teaching is an emotional practice" (p. 838) and as such requires "emotional understanding" (p. 838). Hargraves suggested this "emotional labour" (p. 40) places teachers in vulnerable positions, particularly when they cannot fulfil what they see as their own moral obligations. Peta described herself as a "teacher's teacher" and took a personal approach with both staff and students. It seemed some of the tension Peta experienced as a teacher was linked to this need to be emotionally present for her staff, her students and, herself.

Interestingly, Peta was well aware of her conflicting needs and as mentioned previously, acknowledged that the elements which could push her away from teaching were the very elements that pulled her back. She said:

I think, part of my personality. We've talked about the strengths before, this idea of the achiever is really, really strong in me. Well, I can achieve so many things in the day that I can physically see in front of me, that I can tick off. So, it's like it feeds this monster that then wants more. And then I sit there, going I'm just going to toss it all in and become a yoga teacher. I want to live on an island with (pauses) but even as I say it, I know that that wouldn't marry my personality because after about a month, I'd be bored. Because there is a part of me that both loves and hates the pacing.

The extract above, is an example of how Peta's re-storied her career to reflect not only her current experience, but how she perceived her future. McAdams suggested people project forward to envision how they would like their story to progress and fashion current understandings of their personal narrative based on those projections (McAdams, 2001). As Peta contemplated her work-life balance, she recognised how teaching aligned with fundamental aspects of how she saw herself. This story fragment also had implications for a study of teacher retention because it highlighted how, in re-storying a situation, a person can consider situations from perspectives that may not have been obvious at the time of the event (Bruner,

2002). When Peta questioned being a teacher because of the emotional cost or work-life balance, she equally realised she had chosen to challenge herself and be busy. I took note of Peta's use of a monster metaphor because it seemed to reflect her perception of her need to be busy. As much as Peta acknowledged the joy she experienced in 'ticking things off a list', she was aware of the damaging impact on her health and relationships and, it worried her. As Peta re-storied her approach to teaching, particularly in terms of her work-life balance, she realised her perspective had changed over time. She said:

Now what questions me is the impact on my health. Whereas in my 30s and 20s, I wouldn't have even thought of that. In your 20s and 30s, you might think of the impact on your family. How is this impacting on me (pauses) and in private systems, you have to work full time? But then you've got the holidays, da da da, da da da. But now in my mid-40s, I'm thinking what is the impact of this constant level of stress on my mental and physical health? Because I've found that I find it really difficult to relax - whereas before, I could. Even though I've been an achiever, I could. I could read a book, and I could not feel frigging guilty about it. All weekend, you go out with friends. Whereas now, if I'm not working, it worries me. And I almost can't enjoy what I'm doing.

Once again, as had been the case when Peta spoke about how creating her career map contradicted her belief that she had "always loved [her] career", the comments in the above story fragment revealed how the lens used at a particular moment in time could impact a teacher's perspective. The cognitive and emotive state Peta was in at the moment of re-storying influenced not only how she saw herself as a teacher today, but how she perceived past and future experiences. The impact of the lens also put Peta's assertion that the elements she loved about teaching were the very elements that could see her choose to leave, into perspective. Peta recognised that her busy work life could interfere with health and yet, was also aware the busy life of a teacher met her desire for constant action and challenge.

Therefore, it seemed the tension Peta experienced in teaching was part of an internal struggle to reconcile different needs in her personal conditions. She wanted to find coherence between her perceptions of herself as a person and her identity (McAdams, 1993) as a teacher. Peta wanted to achieve professional and personal success - she wanted to be a great mum, be an effective teacher and a supportive manager. However, she questioned if she could physically maintain the pace and standards she set herself. Interestingly from the point of view of teacher retention, it was in the process of re-storying her career that Peta found the language to articulate her internal struggle. This ability to articulate her struggle gave Peta a fresh perspective of her career. She could see that the frustrations she experienced were ones she had actively sought – Peta wanted to stay busy and wanted to be emotionally and cognitively connected to students and staff.

Piecing together the puzzle

When considered collectively, a study of the tensions experienced by each participant revealed, as was the case in previous studies of teacher attrition, that teachers became frustrated when circumstances kept them from being the teacher they wanted to be (Glazer, 2018a; Kelchtermans, 2017; Manuel & Carter 2016; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018). Whether the tension occurred in the school environment (place), in school-based relationships or personal struggles (sociality), or over time (temporality), the teachers in this study expressed frustration when their values and beliefs collided with systemic demands, administrative priorities or their colleagues, values and beliefs. Important in terms of a study of teacher retention, despite experiencing similar tensions, the values and beliefs that were misaligned varied for each participant, and depended upon which lens was applied when the participant re-storied their career. For instance, Peta's stories demonstrated how perception of an event, at a moment in time, impacted the way she felt about teaching and, that perception could change depending on what she was experiencing at the moment of storying the experience. This notion that attitudes toward past and future teaching could be impacted by the current situation had important implications for the study of teacher retention because it emphasised

the impact of a teacher's perception. What became apparent as I looped through the sociality, temporality and place dimensions of each participant's stories, was that tensions were personal. Even though the external trigger occurred in social conditions or place or was made evident through temporal (across time) reflection, the tension was experienced in participants' personal conditions. When considered in conjunction with teachers' need for an alignment of beliefs, values and perceptions of identity, and elements of re-storying that suggest people tell stories in an attempt to make sense of their experience and create a coherent identity (Bruner, 2002; McAdams, 1993; 2001), it seemed teachers' stories may provide answers to how individual teachers can have a positive impact on teacher retention. The final section of this discussion will consider how the teachers in this study found ways to sustain their teaching practice and persevere, despite the frustrations experienced.

Why Persevere (what sustains a teacher)

Teaching is cognitively and emotionally demanding (Hargreaves, 1998). Teachers who cannot be the teachers they want to be experience guilt and frustration (Glazer, 2018a) and yet, many teachers, like those in this study have successfully navigated the challenges. The participants in this study remained devoted to their career and moved through tensions by focusing on the aspects of teaching they enjoyed. Peta, Mary and Frank purposefully sought situations that allowed them to be the teachers they wanted to be. I asked each of the participants why they persevered. What follows is an analysis of their response.

Frank

Frank persevered through the challenges he experienced in teaching for two reasons. First, he was confident in his teaching ability and second, he valued the relationships he found in schools. Despite having a six month break from teaching to pursue an interest in theatre during the early stages of his teaching career, Frank enjoyed being a teacher in South Africa and had risen to the level of school principal. So, when

Frank questioned if he would remain a teacher because of the difficult experiences during early teaching contracts in Australia, he reminded himself, “Come on man. This [teaching] is – you’re good at this”.

As Frank spoke about being a teacher in Australia it was clear he was determined to re-establish his career and show he had the skills and experience to be a successful in Australia. When Frank shared stories about being a teacher in Australia he often returned to his experienced in South Africa. As mentioned previously, it seemed as though he was drawing upon his experience of what worked in schools and wanted to replicate the experience. He came to the realisation that he would rather work in a smaller, independent school than a big State school. Frank said in big schools, “You’re just lost, you’re lost, you’re lost, you’re lost”. The repetition in Frank’s words suggested intense feelings. When I reflected back to Frank’s other comments about recognising the individual and being part of a community, it seemed Frank’s preference for smaller schools reflected a need to be part of a school community and to be recognised for what he could bring to the school.

When I asked Frank what sustained him as a teacher, he responded by telling a story about end of school year celebrations that farewelled colleagues who were either retiring or moving to other schools. Those leaving spoke about how much they were going to miss the school and the students. Frank recalled being surprised that none of these teachers mentioned their colleagues. As Frank re-storied the experience, he said he found it interesting because what he loved most about teaching was the people with whom he worked.

What makes me go to school every single day and want to go to school and look forward to going to school and miss it during the holidays, believe it or not? Yeah, the boys - not the fucking juniors. By and large, they're fucking appalling, they really are because they're so stupid. And they not human beings. Not yet. Yes, because you talk to them, rather than "fuck off" (pauses) which the other teachers do.

"Sir, and you tell us funny jokes"

And I send them memes - email them, not over internet (pauses) The Year 10s - doing a semester of business management with them and you *just* are getting to know these kids and how they learn and how they operate and they are gone. And they are gone. And you get a *new* lot in. Oh, fuck it, now you've got to start this all over again. It's like fucking speed dating. Here we go again. "Hi, I'm Mr..." (pauses). Oh, fuck sakes. But with the Year 11s, now you've got them for the full year, now you can start (pauses) And so that's cool, that's nice. So, okay, I get what you're saying about the boys. But you know why, what makes me get up, are my colleagues because they are very cool. I really like them, they're my mates now. They're your friends. You say "Hey", and you shoot the breeze.

The above story fragment was revealing in its emotional intensity and frequent changes in direction. Even though Frank used sarcasm when talking about junior classes calling them “appalling” and not ‘yet human’, his care for his students was evident in the way he took time to build connections – sending them funny memes, telling them joke and actually ‘talking’ to them. Frank was also noticeably frustrated by the lack of opportunity to get to know students in his junior classes because of subject rotations. He likened the process to speed dating which suggested Frank tried to develop relationships but found he was only able to make a superficial connection. Frank preferred senior classes because he taught them over a full year and developed relationships. He described senior teaching as “cool” and “nice”. Therefore, as was evident in other parts of Frank’s CS, the extract above illustrated the extent to which Frank valued the relational aspects of teaching. Frank was frustrated when he could not build connections and be the teacher he wanted to be. However, the revealing aspect in terms of teacher retention was that relationships with colleagues soothed Frank’s frustrations. These relationships were so important that he missed them during school holidays. The fact that Frank looked forward to returning to school to be among his colleagues was significant. Being with other teachers, teachers who Frank saw as friends, ‘pulled’ Frank back to school. Frank’s use of the word “friend” was important, especially since Frank used the term multiple times

throughout his LS and CS to describe times he was happy and fulfilled. Equally the phrase “shoot the breeze” was interesting because it implied Frank enjoyed sharing relaxing, casual banter with his teacher friends. Valuing relationships with colleagues was evident throughout Frank’s career. For example, when Frank was enjoying the middle phases of his career he recalled, “I really like the school, I love the people, I love the kids”. As I reflected on Frank’s use of language, I noticed Frank used the emotionally laden word “love” to describe his connection to the people (staff and students) within the school. It appeared Frank drew emotional energy from the relationships he had built and could use that energy to sustain him through the frustrations inherent within the school day.

Therefore, whilst feeling successful as a teacher did motivate Frank to stay in teaching, it seemed it was quality school relationships that met Frank’s needs and supported his beliefs and values. Frank sustained himself in his role as a teacher by drawing upon those friendships.

Mary

Like Frank, Mary remained in schools because she knew she was an effective teacher and valued the relationships she could build in a school environment. However, Mary was more focused on the connections she built with students as she taught in the classroom she created. Mary loved the act of teaching because it gave her a place for creativity and of constant movement and activity. She said:

And French teaching is completely different to anything else. So, I've had to re-think about the way I teach and develop new strategies and get strategies from [head of department] and (pauses) trial and error, things that work and work on your feet and that sort of stuff. That's kept me really motivated (pauses). I can also see that once we get to an area that we've got things sorted it's like okay, I'll sidestep again (pauses). Just to keep (pauses). Because I love classroom teaching. I love it. And that's what will keep me going until I retire. I'll be old crusty Mrs B (pauses) classroom teaching.

The fact that Mary recognised it was the act of teaching that would sustain her through to retirement was significant, especially in terms of previous studies into the impact of harmonious passion in the workplace. It seemed Mary had found in teaching, as was noted in previous studies of harmonious passion (Forest et al., 2012; Scales & Brown, 2020; Vallerand et al., 2003), a career based passionate activity that aligned sense of identity to sense of purpose. As a result, Mary's passion for teaching fuelled her motivation to remain a teacher because the work she did in the classroom gave her a career that was personally meaningful. Equally relevant, was how the above extract illustrated Mary's ability to focus on what she enjoyed about teaching. Mary focused on how teaching met her need for change and activity. Interestingly, it was this ability to recognise what she enjoyed about teaching and pivot in her career that sustained Mary's passion for teaching. She said:

what I do is I change. It used to be English and HAS then I went into literacy then I did a math degree and now I'm back to teaching French. I keep myself stimulated by changing subjects.

Mary's comments about changing career direction were significant for a study of teacher retention because they illustrated how a teacher could take active management of their own career. Mary had, earlier in her career sought a career outside of teaching. After teaching in a school that did not meet her style of teaching, Mary spent nine months working for the Australian Army and did not enjoy it. She said of that time:

I was bored. I just wasn't intellectually stimulated *at all*. I actually sat on a fit ball. It took me three months to learn how to sit down.

And

I used to have my little shoes - 'I want to go home, I want to go home' (Mary mimics Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz). So (pauses) just before term three holiday I decided I wanted to go home.

Mary's use of the emotionally laden word "home" was significant. Although she was talking about returning to her home city of Perth, there was also a suggestion that Mary wanted to return home to the classroom. Mary's metaphorical use of Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz was revealing in that it may suggest working in Defence was like working in an alternate reality. Mary was bored by the lack of intellectual stimulation and frustrated by the lack of movement. She realised being a teacher in a school was able to meet her needs in a way other career could not. Mary said:

When I did my year in Defence I missed the kids. I missed the kids. I missed the vibrancy. I missed the (pauses) not the excitement but the (pauses). I don't know what the word is. You know that feeling that you get that (pauses) There's so much energy and you're (pauses) really being challenged (pauses). Then you get to challenge the kids and then they throw it back at you. And there's just that (pauses). It's that interaction with the staff. I really missed that (pauses) I've always been confident in my teaching and I love what I do. I've always loved what I do.

As was the case in earlier analysis, the above story fragment illustrated the extent to which Mary valued both the physical exchange in the classroom and the relationships she built with students. The frequent pauses as Mary searched for words to describe the 'feeling' of the classroom emphasised the significance of Mary's memory. Mary knew she needed to work in an environment that kept her intellectually and emotively stimulated. Therefore, Mary focused on what she enjoyed about teaching and persevered as a teacher by pivoting within a school environment. Importantly in terms of teacher retention, in re-storying her career, Mary articulated how she had purposefully managed her career.

Interestingly, as Mary reflected back over her career she realised how her perspective had changed in recent years. Similar to the positive focusers in Huberman's (1989) study who found greater serenity in the later stages of their career, Mary said:

This year is probably the first year that I've actually started looking after me and I think that's made a difference in my attitude towards things. I'm doing a lot of yoga

and I think that's (pauses). Its (pauses) made it easier to accept the things you cannot change. I don't see it (teaching) as a grind. I just don't.

As I reflected on Mary's comment about accepting "the things you cannot change", I was again reminded of Huberman's (1989) study that found teachers who maintained "instructional efficiency" (p. 50) and 'tinkered' with innovations at the classroom level instead of becoming embroiled in systemic reforms and pedagogical trends, were more likely to feel content in the later stages of their career. It seemed Mary fit within Huberman's description of a positive focusing late career stage teacher. Mary persevered in her career because she knew she loved being a classroom teacher and had found ways to focus on the aspects of her career she most enjoyed.

Peta

Like Frank and Mary, Peta remained a teacher because she knew teaching gave her the best opportunity to be successful. She valued the opportunity to be around people who stimulated her intellectually. However, it was the opportunity to develop her skills while indulging her love of History that most sustained her.

Even though Peta had contemplated leaving teaching to become an interior designer and had even devoted five years of part time study to completing an Interior Design degree, Peta persevered with teaching because she knew she was a successful teacher. Interestingly, she acknowledged to some extent, fear kept her in teaching:

Probably just scared to go into something totally different. And like I said, I didn't hate teaching, (pauses) And it wasn't that I wasn't good at it (pauses) So it was kind of like, do I really want to totally change my life? Also, I got divorced, so I became the breadwinner.

As Peta explained why she persevered with a teaching career and reflected upon alternatives she sounded a little flat - her tone lacked the energy it held just a few moments prior when describing a teaching moment

with a year 11 History class. Rather than talking enthusiastically about her love of teaching History, in the above extract Peta said “I didn’t hate [teaching]” and used non-committal phrasing such as “kind of like”. Significant in terms of a study of teacher retention was Peta’s comment that she stayed in teaching because it was what she knew. Manuel, Carter and Dutton (2018) found older teachers remained in teaching because they felt they had limited employment options outside of school and Peta’s tonal change could reflect an element of being resigned to continue teaching. The comment “you do what you know” delivered in a flat tone, was significant because it showed how a teacher’s attitudes could shift, even within the course of a one hour interview. In the moments preceding this comment, Peta had been energetic and enthusiastic about teaching history in the classroom, then when she shifted to talk about a specific challenging time in life that impacted the decisions made in her career, she was melancholy. Again, I was reminded of the paradox in Peta’s comment that the elements she most enjoyed about teaching were the very same elements that could push her to leave. This lack of enthusiasm seemed to reflect both how external forces such as a divorce impacted a teacher’s perception of teaching and, studies of harmonious passion in the workplace that found despite the energising capacity of an identity aligning work place activity, a person with a harmonious passion, would stop doing that activity if it became detrimental (Vallerand et al., 2003).

With these thoughts about the impact of external life events and harmonious passion, I then considered Peta’s comment that she persevered as a teacher because not teaching would “totally change her life”. It seemed teaching was not only a way of earning money, but a way of living. When this perception was considered alongside other comments in Peta’s career narrative it seemed, despite being challenging at times, teaching matched Peta’s perception of herself. As has already been explored in earlier parts of this analysis, Peta loved teaching History and knew she would not have an opportunity to indulge her passion if she worked in other industries. Teaching gave Peta access to the intellectual relationships she enjoyed. She had variety in her day, could stay busy and share her passion for her subject. As Peta came to the end of her CS interview she was again focusing on these positive aspects. Even though Peta

acknowledged the workload was demanding and she was concerned about work life balance, she equally knew being a teacher energised her.

When I asked Peta what sustained her as a teacher she said:

And even when other things are happening in your life that you feel shit about - even being a mother. You can go into that classroom and you know that you've made an impact on some level in that day. So, it's that constant kind of little sugar hit, where you're like, okay. And again, as an achiever, I've achieved that. I've done that.

Peta's comments in the above extract were significant to a study of teacher retention, especially in light of her earlier comments about the impact of work-life balance and the fact that the very things she loved most about teaching were the things that could push her out of teaching. Peta's metaphorical description of classroom teaching as a 'constant sugar hit' suggested it was the act of teaching History and, the exchange of information that has a positive impact on the lives of others, that sustained her. Similar to Mary, Peta's comments about finding energy in the act of teaching had implications to a study of teacher retention because they suggested, teachers can draw upon the aspects they enjoy in teaching to help sustain them through the aspects they find challenging or draining. Although more research is needed to ascertain the relevance of harmonious passion in a school environment, it is possible that helping teachers identify activities associated with a harmonious passion in schools may give teachers their own set of tools to manage personal career wellbeing.

Piecing together the puzzle

Each of the participants in this study were late career teachers who had navigated the tensions of teaching by accessing their passions. Each had experienced moments of doubt and two of them, Mary (at 6 years) and Frank (at five years), even left teaching for brief moments. Even though Peta did not have a break from teaching, she devoted five years part-time study to an interior design degree (at 8 – 12 years).

Yet despite the challenges, each participant persevered with a career in teaching because they realised, other roles did not meet their needs the way a career in teaching did. Similar to findings in Glazer's (2018a) study where teachers spoke about the push and pull factors that impact their decision to leave and return, the participants in this study chose to remain teachers because they realised other careers would not sustain them. Importantly, participants also realised teaching gave them an environment to thrive - they were doing what they loved, among people they enjoyed being with and, they were successful as teachers. Significantly, the features which pulled each of the participants back to teaching were stronger than the frustrations which had been pushing them to leave. As discussed earlier, it was when participants viewed their career through the lens of what they loved that they were more inclined to be positive about their career and down play or minimise the elements that caused angst. Frank found energy in his relationship with fellow teachers who had become his friends. Mary was energised by the exchange that happened when she created a place for learning in the classroom. Somewhat similarly, Peta was energised by the opportunity to share her passion for History and build authentic relationships with students. Significant in terms of a study of teacher retention was that despite being similar in that each participant was energised by the connections they made in schools, the value each participant looked to fulfill from that exchange, differed.

In the final chapter, Findings, the pieces of the research puzzle, drawn from the four lines of inquiry discussed in this chapter are drawn together to present the study's findings. Limitations are acknowledged and suggestions for further research proposed.

Chapter 6: Findings

As seen in the review of literature (Chapter 2) factors contributing to teacher retention are:

- Fulfilment of intrinsic and altruistic motivations related to: subject area; inspiring learning; intellectual stimulation; school-based relationships; a sense of professional mastery; and the opportunity to have a meaningful impact on the lives of students
- Working environments that are aligned with teachers' perception of identity, feelings of purpose and existing values and beliefs
- A sense of agency and resilience.

The findings of this research reinforce and add nuanced understanding to the importance of these factors by revealing three key areas significant to teacher retention. Teachers in this study sustained their teaching practice through passion, purpose, and people. In this study, passion is felt towards subject matter, the learning environment and the relationships formed through teaching and learning. Purpose, for these three teachers at least, related to the capacity for teachers to align their beliefs, values and sense of identity, with their teaching practice and as a result, change students in some way. People refers to a teacher's relationships with students and colleagues as well as recognising teachers as individuals.

Additionally, and something that may be of interest to other researchers, the process of re-storying seemed to generate an increased positivity toward teaching. This study found encouraging teachers to re-story their career helped them identify and give focus to what they most loved about their career, how they found purpose and who was important to them in a school environment. Figure 16: Identifying passion, purpose and people through the re-

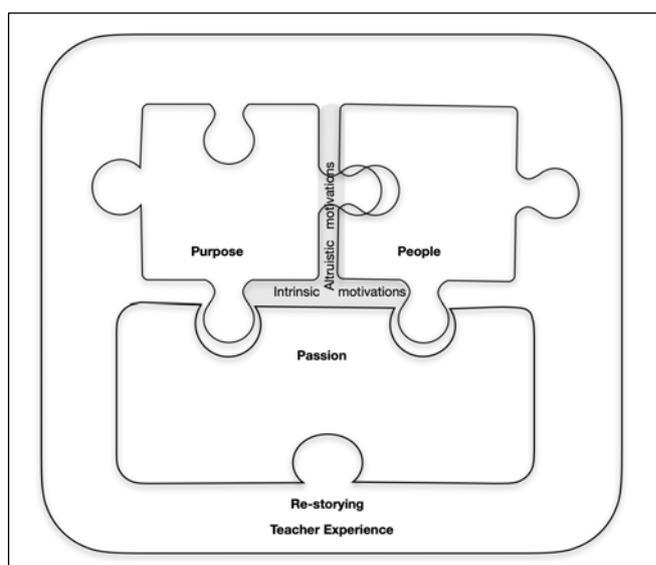


Figure 16: Identifying passion, purpose and people through the re-storying process

storying process, uses puzzle pieces to depict the interconnected nature of: a teacher's passion for teaching; the sense of purpose a teacher derives from their role as a teacher; and seeing people as individuals in schools. Intrinsic and altruistic motivations exist in the space that connects passion, purpose and people. The puzzle pieces are placed within the re-storying process to show how, in sharing their stories of life and teaching, a teacher can reflect upon their own practice to identify professional needs and motivations. A more detailed explanation of passion, purpose, people and the impact of re-storying is given below.

Passion

Teachers who have an opportunity to work within an area of passion, sustain their desire to teach. These teachers access internal motivations that are energising and contribute to overall wellbeing. Vallerand (2012) suggested passion-based activities have a positive impact on well-being because participating in that activity satisfies an integral part of a person's identity. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) suggested nurturing positive experiences can improve wellbeing, contentment and happiness, and contribute to a more optimistic view of the future. These aspects of passion and positivity applied to this study. The participants in this study were able to draw upon the aspects of teaching they most enjoyed to move through tensions associated with their role. Rather than dwelling on elements they did not enjoy about teaching, participants re-framed their experiences and drew solace and energy from their teaching passions. Be it subject area, a love of the learning environment or a commitment to student development, Peta, Mary and Frank felt positive, fulfilled, optimistic and successful when they were indulging their specific passion for teaching. These aspects of teaching represented how they saw themselves as teachers and aligned with their perceptions of personal and professional identity. For Peta that passion was sharing her love of History, for Mary it was creating a space for learning that met the cognitive and emotional needs of her students and for Frank it was developing the relational aspects of learning. Daily activities associated with these passions were energising and supported each teacher's understanding of what effective teaching required. In particular, both Mary and Peta described being in a state of flow when engaged in

teaching activities that reflected their passion. Even though Frank did not specifically describe being in flow, his description of specific teaching moments suggested a state of flow. The identification of flow was significant in terms of teacher retention because, as Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2009) suggested, a person experiencing flow was likely to continue the activity because the experience was “intrinsically rewarding” (p. 197).

These observations that teachers’ passion can induce flow and motivate teachers to teach were consistent with previous research which suggested teachers are intrinsically and altruistically motivated to teach (Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018; Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019). However, this study contributed to a more nuanced understanding. The teachers in this study stayed in teaching because they loved teaching in the classroom and found the experience energising and rewarding. The act of teaching had become a harmonious passion that integrated how they saw themselves as teachers, with how they saw themselves as people, and allowed them to fulfil intrinsic motivations: love of subject area; intellectual stimulation; positive relationships with students and colleagues, while working within a profession that aligned their values and beliefs, and gave them an opportunity to feel successful. Teaching also gave Peta, Mary and Frank an opportunity to fulfill an altruistic motivation to make a difference in student lives.

Purpose

Teachers who satisfy their sense of purpose, sustain their commitment to teaching. This study was consistent with previous research that identified the need to recognise the relationship between teachers’ values, beliefs and perception of identity, and a teacher’s sense of purpose. Day (2017) suggested teachers are motivated by a sense of moral purpose derived from their values and beliefs. He explained these beliefs and values are integral to a teacher’s identity and closely aligned to teachers’ emotional commitment to improve students’ lives. According to Day, teachers call upon their sense of moral purpose to find the cognitive and emotional energy to “teach to their best” (p. 35). When teachers are unable to teach in a way that aligns to their values and beliefs, their sense of moral purpose is questioned and job satisfaction, career

commitment and wellbeing suffer (Grazer 2018a; Kelchtermans, 2009, 2017). The stories participants told supported these previous findings. Peta, Mary and Frank were energised by the physical act of teaching in the classroom when an exchange of learning took place. They had clear ideas about what constituted effective teaching and wanted the autonomy to teach how they believed would best meet the needs of their students. Therefore agency was pivotal to Peta, Mary and Frank's enjoyment of teaching. All three expressed a need to be the master of their classroom domain. Peta, Mary and Frank were de-energised and frustrated when they believed ineffective management, systems and policies, or the actions of demotivated teachers, prevented them from meeting the needs of their students.

As I reflected further upon Peta, Mary and Frank's beliefs, values and perceptions of teaching, I saw nuanced differences. These differences meant each teacher navigated their experience of teaching differently. Beliefs, values and perspectives were used as a compass to give direction and purpose in teaching, and a gauge to measure of enjoyment of the teaching experience. In other words, Peta, Mary and Frank prioritised the various functions involved in teaching based on what they perceived was important. They felt happy and fulfilled, or frustrated and exhausted, based on the extent to which they were able to devote time to the specific teaching functions that aligned with their personal values, beliefs and perceptions of effective teaching and learning. Peta, Mary and Frank all wanted the best outcome for their students but taught and prioritised teaching related activities differently. For example, all three appreciated the banter to be found in positive student/teacher relationships and saw relationships with students as important to the learning process. However, Mary prioritised the learning environment, Frank prioritised actions that built relationships and Peta prioritised inspiring students' love of the subject. Purposeful teaching aligned what participants believed was important in teaching with where they felt successful as teachers, and was coherent with how they saw themselves personally and professionally. Therefore, as was evident in previous studies of teacher retention (Glazer 2018a; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018; Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019; Schafer & Clandinin, 2019), the teachers in this study were positive about their work when it was purposeful.

People

Teachers who feel a connection with the people in schools - their students and colleagues - are able to draw upon the positive feelings derived from those relationships to sustain them through workplace and personal tensions. Kelchtermans (2009) found even when teachers entered teaching because of love of subject area, they stayed because what they were doing was meaningful for students. Similarly, Turner and Thielking, (2019) found teachers valued “having an impact on students’ lives” (p. 70). Manuel, Dutton and Carter (2019) found teachers who sustained their passion for teaching did so because of a commitment to work with young people and an appreciation for collegiate collaboration. This study supported those findings.

Peta, Mary and Frank were motivated by a close connection with students and colleagues. As discussed earlier, close relationships with students, where individuality was recognised, was both an intrinsic and altruistic motivation to stay in teaching. All three participants appreciated the banter with students and knew they could rely on that banter to ease tensions in other areas of their life. For example, close relationships with students helped soothe Peta and Mary when they experienced personal challenges. Teaching provided a place to be successful and feel appreciated. Equally relationships with colleagues were seen as a positive motivational force. Even though Mary and Peta spoke about relationships with colleagues in terms of the intellectual stimulation to be found in schools, it was clear they valued the connection they had with other teachers. Frank was very specific in terms of the way he valued relationships with colleagues. Frank viewed his colleagues as friends and “missed” those friends during school holidays.

The second finding related to People in schools was the importance of recognising teachers as individuals who teach. This study found recognising individual teachers’ personal values, beliefs and professional identity needs may foster teacher agency and wellbeing because it allows for a more nuanced understanding of individual motivations. Significant in terms of teacher retention was the observation that even though a behaviour or comment may look or sound similar to an outside observer, the internal motivations informing that external behaviour or comment, differ. For example, Mary and Frank were both

frustrated by their experience of being mismanaged. Both were aggravated by a lack of agency when school-based systems and procedures were unwieldy or ineffective. However, Frank experienced greater tension because the mismanagement impacted his ability to form relationships with students. Mary's greatest tension came from the way the mismanagement impacted her ability to work efficiently.

All three teachers in this study had different experiences of teaching and each had their own values and beliefs. The uniqueness of each teacher's values, beliefs and perceptions contributed to different needs and motivations for teaching, and these differing needs and motivations created different areas of passion. For example, Peta and Mary valued being busy but Peta's motivation was to accomplish *as much as possible* and Mary's was to use her time productively. Peta, Mary and Frank believed it was important to create relationships with students and colleagues. All three participants needed to feel a sense of agency and wanted to contribute to something beyond themselves. However, the reasons each participant needed to feel connection, agency and purpose, differed. Frank valued being part of a team and believed it was important for each person to contribute to the greater needs of the community. The outcome Frank sought was a social harmony that gave each person an opportunity to shine as an individual. Mary valued being part of a team that prioritised intellectual endeavours and believed it was important each person contributed their share. However, the outcome Mary was looking for was the achievement of a specific objective or goal. Peta also valued being part of an intellectual community because being around other intelligent people inspired her to keep moving and improving. The outcome Peta sought was the intellectual, cognitive and emotional challenge that led to growth. This aspect of recognising teachers' individuality was not found in previous studies of teacher retention and more research is required to determine how recognising the individuality of teachers could contribute to teacher retention. For instance, we allow for the differentiated learning of students. Could we similarly allow for teachers' differentiated teaching?

Impact of career re-storying

Career re-storying gives teachers an opportunity to reflect upon and objectively consider their perspective of teaching. As a result, teachers may identify and name what it is they most enjoy about teaching. Rinke and Mawhinney (2017) found teachers' retelling of their career narrative offered a mechanism for "capturing teachers' career pathways in their own voices" (p. 363) and could help teachers value the work they did as teachers. Kelchtermans (2009) suggested narrative offers teachers a way to reflectively access areas of discomfort, confront tension and grow in their career. Schaefer and Clandinin (2019) proposed narratively exploring career perceptions could provide opportunities for teachers to explore their own emotional and knowledge landscapes, in the context of their teaching practice, to better understand what they required to sustain themselves as teachers. This study supported and built upon these findings.

The process of narratively recounting life and career stories gave Peta, Mary and Frank the opportunity to reflect upon their career in the broader context of their life. The participants were able to identify and articulate aspects of teaching they enjoyed and those which they did not. Importantly, Mary and Peta used the narrative retelling of their experiences to reframe moments of career or personal tension and to notice how they had drawn strength from their role in the classroom. Additionally, the process of sharing stories revealed how a teachers' perception of their role may change according to how they felt in the moment of telling the story. These fluctuations may not be visible in the moment of the event nor in the recounting of a single experience. However, when a teacher recounted experiences across a career, they were better able to consider their career objectively. For instance, Peta's career story revealed multiple fluctuations in how she felt toward teaching. She spoke about the dualistic nature of teaching and realised that the elements which drew her to teaching could also be the elements that pushed her to leave.

Therefore, the study revealed how the re-storying process helped teachers recognise and articulate how they felt about teaching in a specific moment in time and how that moment may be interpreted within the wider span of their career. By placing the teacher at the centre of the teaching experience and examining the life and career narratives of individual teachers, it became clear that passion, purpose and

people were key factors in a teacher's ability to sustain a thriving career. Whilst more research is needed in this area, there is the potential for teachers to use the reflective and reflexive nature of career re-storying to identify their own passion, purpose and people, and then actively seek situations that fulfil their needs as a teacher.

Assembling the Findings

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), suggested focussing on a problem, in an attempt to find a solution, may be less effective than building upon what is already working. This study analysed the stories of late career teachers to learn more about attitudes toward teaching, motivations in teaching and sustaining a teaching career. Rather than adopting a systematic approach that focuses on generalised characteristics to solve the *problem* of teacher retention, the study proposes a personalised approach where teachers contribute to individualised processes that *support* teacher retention. A core element of this approach is the identification of teachers' motivations, beliefs, values and identify perceptions. In analysing teachers' stories, this study was able to identify factors contributing to a teacher's enjoyment of teaching and notice how that enjoyment sustained a desire to continue teaching. What became clear was that teachers are individual people, working within a relational system, who find purpose by pursuing their passion. Internal perceptions of shared external experiences varied because teachers are individuals. Giving attention to these differences provides a nuanced understanding of what is required to sustain a teacher throughout their teaching career. Rather than teachers being seen as part of an education system, they can be placed at the centre of the teaching experience and their individual needs recognised.

However, teachers may need tools to access, identify and understand their needs. Through the re-storying process, the teachers in this study were reflective and reflexive as they articulated how they sustained their career and what they needed to feel supported and inspired as teachers. Frank, Mary and Peta had clear perceptions of effective teaching and management and wanted the freedom to teach in ways that, in their opinion, best met the needs of their students. Each was positive about being a teacher because

teaching allowed them to do: what they loved doing (and were good at); what was important to them; and to be around people they liked. While teaching fulfilled various intrinsic and altruistic motivations, participants prioritised their needs differently. Frank was sustained by the friendships in schools, Mary was sustained by the learning environment and Peta was sustained by her love of subject area. Importantly, rather than feeling constrained by an education system, the teachers in this study were willing to change positions and move to schools that better aligned with their needs.

Therefore, this study supported the findings of previous studies of teacher retention by demonstrating the importance of recognising how individual teachers' beliefs, values, motivations and perceptions of identity impacted their career decisions (Glazer, 2018a; Gu 2018; Kelchtermans, 2017; Manuel, Carter & Dutton, 2018; Manuel, Dutton & Carter, 2019; Oolbekkink-Marchand et al., 2017). In addition, the study found the re-storying process helped teachers access their beliefs, values, motivations and perceptions of identity to articulate what they needed for a sustaining teaching career. In identifying their own needs, the teachers in this study became active contributors to the study of teacher retention.

In summary the study found:

- Teachers can sustain their career by deliberately identifying, developing and drawing upon the energy they derived from their personal teaching passions, sense of purpose and connections to people they inspire and are inspired by.
- The reflexive and reflective power of re-storying can help teachers consciously craft a successful, self-sustaining career that supports their own professional needs.
- Teachers have an individual contribution to make to a study of teacher retention.

Significance

This study found that teachers can craft, shape and direct their career by giving specific attention to their career story and focusing on elements they feel most passionate about, the difference they can make, and the people who are important to them. When teachers viewed their role through the lens of a

passionate activity, and told stories about that activity, they were positively inclined toward teaching. Studying individual teachers' stories and privileging their individual experience provided an opportunity to personalise understandings of teaching and recognise different teachers have different needs within a teaching role. Significantly, in terms of teacher retention, this study found behaviours or comments made by a teacher may seem similar, but in reality are motivated by different internal values, beliefs and perceptions. This variance between internal representations and external presentations may account for some of the inconsistencies in previous research into teacher retention. Each of the teachers in this study found different ways to re-energise and sustain their career. Therefore, rather than focusing on 'what' each teacher said it was helpful to consider 'why' they said it. In particular, what inspires one teacher to stay, may be what pushes another teacher to leave. If strategies to address a specific need, tension or joy are systemically implemented, without recognising varying teacher needs and motivations, the strategy may not be as effective as it could be. Importantly, this study found putting the teacher at the centre of the research and giving them tools to recognise how they can direct their career can give teachers a sense of career agency. This agency is important, especially when so much of a teacher's career is outside their control (Kelchtermans 2017, Manuel, Carter and Dutton 2019).

Limitations of the Study

While there was never an intention to suggest that this study offers definitive answers to the research question for all teaching situations, I believe the insights gained from the three teachers who participated are authentic. However, limitations of this study include the small sample size and the fact that all participants taught in the same school. Even though each of the participants had a wide and varied career that involved teaching in a variety of school systems, each was currently teaching in a school that provides a positive experience for its teachers. A second consideration was that the interview process occurred during the early phase of the 2020 Covid pandemic. The teachers had experienced the massive upheaval caused by a flurry of activity to be ready for on-line teaching, had taught using unfamiliar teaching

practices and had only returned to the classroom towards the end of the interview process. It is unknown how much that experience contributed to participants' choice of stories or if part of the untold story was that these teachers were grateful to be in a secure job unaffected by Covid layoffs. However, given that the stories represented teaching experiences across a career and represented how teachers were feeling about their career during times of uncertainty, the findings remain authentic in terms of how these teachers view their careers at a particular moment in time.

Suggestions for Further Research

In addition to highlighting some of the factors contributing to a teacher's decision to stay, the stories also gave a glimpse into the elements required to renew and replenish a teacher – factors that nourish a passion for teaching including: love of subject area; love of learning; student-teacher relationships; relationships with colleagues; intellectual stimulation; alignment of individual values, beliefs and sense of identity with teaching practice; and feeling successful as a teacher. These factors are worthy of further investigation. In addition, future studies might focus on how to best identify harmonious passion in conjunction with the experience of flow (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009) and career re-storying (Del Coso & Reh fuss, 2011) or career crafting (Dix, 2020), to give teachers specific tools to create a career story that fulfills their individual needs.

Perhaps, rather than searching for ways to implement a systemic solution for teacher retention, research could address ways to help teachers identify and language what *they* need. Such research might help teachers focus on the positive aspects of their role. As teachers re-story earlier career experiences over time, they are more likely to see the multiple perspectives that have influenced their approach to teaching. If that is the case, longitudinal studies that ask teachers to consider multiple perspectives and re-story their career warrant further investigation. Certainly, it seemed re-storying their career helped the teachers in this study identify what sustained them as teachers and what influenced their decision to stay in teaching for more than sixteen years.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Project information sheet

Appendix B: Project informed consent

Appendix C: Project release form

Appendix D: Life story interview questions

Appendix E: Career story interview questions

Appendix F: Data summary sheet



PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

Listening to the Career Life Story of Teachers

GU ref no: 2020/081

Research Team	<p>Chief investigator: Dr Mia O'Brien</p> <p>School of Education and Professional Studies Griffith University, Mt Gravatt, Brisbane, Queensland, 4111, Australia</p> <p>Contact phone: 07 373 55715 Contact email: mia.obrien@griffith.edu.au</p> <p>Co Investigator: Dr Madonna Stinson</p> <p>School of Education and Professional Studies Griffith University, Mt Gravatt, Brisbane, Queensland, 4111, Australia</p> <p>Contact phone: 07 3735 1085 Contact email: m.stinson@griffith.edu.au</p> <p>Co Investigator: Ms Nicole Feledy</p> <p>Masters (Research) Candidate School of Education and Professional Studies Griffith University, Mt Gravatt, Brisbane, Queensland, 4111, Australia</p> <p>Contact phone: 0425 209 008 Contact email: nicole.feledy@griffithuni.edu.au</p>
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Why is the research being conducted?

For more than thirty years researchers and governments alike have tried to understand what encourages certain teachers to remain in teaching while others leave. This interest in teacher attrition and retention intensifies during times of perceived teacher shortages and high attrition. Yet, rarely are individual teachers given an opportunity to add a positive contribution to the wider body of education research that informs education policy. This study, which is part of a Master of Education and Professional Studies Research, hopes to redress this gap by giving late career stage teachers a platform to share their positive life and career stories. The aim is to identify factors contributing to career longevity as well as career satisfaction, engagement and retention. In the process, it is hoped that strategies may be found for individual teachers to take an active role in their own career wellbeing and progression.

What you will be asked to do

As a participant you will be asked to participate in;

a) Life story interviews

You will participate in two interviews, each interview lasting 90 minutes (180 minutes in total). A gap of one week will occur between interviews. Each interview will be recorded audio and latter transcribed. The interviews will be conducted face to face in a place of your choosing. The first interview will focus on aspects of your life related to teaching. Questions will encourage you to share stories about your early life, significant events, relationships and aspirations. The second interview will focus on your teaching career. Questions will encourage you to share stories about your role as teacher and your experiences of teaching. The interviewer, will ask questions to prompt the storytelling process however, you will be in control of the interview at all times. You choose which stories to share and may change the direction or focus at anytime. During the interview, the interviewer will take written notes to record observations and reflections. These notes will be used as data when reviewing your interview transcripts. You will be given a copy of the notes and the interview transcriptions.

b) Reflective journaling (optional)

You will be given a note book to record any feelings or comments about your participation in the project. It is anticipated that your reflections will be based on your interview experience and any outcomes of participating in the project. If you choose to participate in the journaling process, journaling would occur in intervals of your choosing at times that are convenient to you. In total, the journaling process is

anticipated to take one hour spread between the first interview and the transcript review. You will be asked to share your journal when you return your review of your transcript. The journal remains in your control and you have right to choose what you share with the research team.

c) Review your research data - interview transcripts & researcher field notes (optional).

Within six weeks of your final interview, you will be emailed a copy of your combined interview transcripts. The interview questions will have been removed and paragraphing added so the transcript takes the form of a life story. At the same time, you will also be given a copy of the field notes taken by the researcher during the interviews. You will be invited to read through the material and make any comments or changes to your transcribed life story. You may also ask for any of the researcher field notes to be omitted from the project. It is anticipated this review process will take two hours and occur at intervals of your choosing. However, we ask that the process be completed within two weeks of receiving the transcript and field notes. You will be sent an email reminding you to return and changes on a marked-up version of the document sent to you.

The basis by which participants will be selected or screened

To be considered for participation in this project you be a full-time secondary school teacher who has been teaching continuously for more than sixteen years. You must also have the time required to commit to the interview process. If you would like interviews to occur on campus, you should have the support of your principal.

The expected benefits of the research

This research will contribute to the wider body of teacher retention literature. It is intended to add a subjective, individualised view of the teaching experience that personalises the big data studies currently being conducted in Australia (ATWD) and hopes to give long serving teachers a voice in teacher retention and wellbeing practices. It also hopes to provide a reflective platform for teachers consider their career and proactively exchange knowledge and experiences with less experienced teachers.

There will be no financial reward or benefit from sharing your story, nor will there be any financial benefit from the inclusion of an extract of your story in any published material.

Risks to you

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You remain the owner of your story however, transcribed

extracts of your story will be included in the final research document. To mitigate any potential social or career risks, your anonymity will be preserved with all identifying elements removed. The same applies to any school or person mentioned in your stories. You will be given a copy of your transcribed interview so you may make any adjustments you feel necessary.

Interviews and participation in external surveys will require a notable time commitment. Therefore, care and discretion will be taken to ensure you experience no undue stress caused by time burdens.

The life story interview process asks you to reflect back through events, experiences and relationships in your life and may trigger uncomfortable memories, thoughts or emotions. You may stop an interview, change the direction of a topic, change location of the interview or withdraw from the project at any time. Additional support services may be accessed through:

Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au>

Lifeline 13 11 14

<https://www.lifeline.org.au>

YOUR CONSENT

How are we going to use your personal information

Your personal information (stories) in the form of de-identified extracts of your transcribed Life Story Interview will be included in published research documents. At all times your anonymity will be preserved – although you will be given an option to be credited for your story if you prefer. All names used within your story will be changed and schools identified only by broad region. Prior to publication, you will be given the option to review your transcribed Life Story Interview and make any changes you see fit.

Copyright Consent

In signing the consent form you give the research team copyright consent to use de-identified extracts of your transcribed Life Story Interview in research publications associated with this project. However, should you wish to be credited for the publication of an extract of your story, you retain the right to be so and may stipulate when, where and how you wish to be credited.

How will Personal Information be stored

All interview audio recordings will be erased after transcription. However, other research data

(interview transcripts, field notes) will be retained in a password protected electronic file at Griffith University Storage Services (see <https://research-storage.griffith.edu.au>) for a period of five years before being destroyed.

You will also be given the option to bank your de-identified story (in the form of a transcribed Life Story Interview) in an *Australian Teacher Life Story* data base. If you choose to bank your de-identified story, you will be asked to complete a separate release form. The *Australian Teacher Life Story* data base will be stored securely in a password protected electronic file at Griffith University Storage Services. Banking your story allows for future use by the research team or other approved researchers. Your de-identified story will be given a registration code and stored securely in a Griffith University password protected data bank. Your registration code will be stored separately stored in a separate file, securely located in a password protected electronic file at Griffith University Storage Services. Should the research team wish to use your story in future projects or publications, your permission will be sought and at that time you will again be given the option to be credited for your story or remain anonymous. At all times you retain complete control of your banked story and you (or upon your death your family) may ask for it to be removed from the data bank at any time.

Your participation is voluntary

Participation in this project is voluntary. As such, you are free to withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty, and without providing any justification to the research team.

The ethical conduct of this research

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If potential participants have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project they should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 3735 4375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Feedback to you

Throughout the data collection (Life Story Interview and field work observations) you will be given opportunities to review all data. You will be given an electronic copy of your transcribed Life Story Interview whereby you may make any adjustments, changes or deletions. You will be offered a draft copy of the researcher's thesis paper, to be sent via email. A final copy of the researcher's thesis paper will be stored electronically in the Griffith University library and made available to the public.

Privacy Statement

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access, storage and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes, including publishing openly (eg. in an open access repository). However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at <http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan> or telephone (07) 3735 4375.

Questions / further information

Further questions about this project may be directed to:

Ms Nicole Feledy
(Co Investigator)

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Dr Madonna Stinson
(Co Investigator)

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CONSENT FORM

Listening to the Career Life Story of Teachers

GU ref no: 2020/081

Research Team	<p>Chief investigator: Dr Mia O'Brien</p> <p>School of Education and Professional Studies Griffith University, Mt Gravatt, Brisbane, Queensland, 4111, Australia</p> <p>Contact phone: 07 373 55715 Contact email: mia.obrien@griffith.edu.au</p> <p>Co Investigator: Dr Madonna Stinson</p> <p>School of Education and Professional Studies Griffith University, Mt Gravatt, Brisbane, Queensland, 4111, Australia</p> <p>Contact phone: 07 3735 1085 Contact email: m.stinson@griffith.edu.au</p> <p>Co Investigator: Ms Nicole Feledy</p> <p>Masters (Research) Candidate School of Education and Professional Studies Griffith University, Mt Gravatt, Brisbane, Queensland, 4111, Australia</p> <p>Contact phone: 0425 209 008 Contact email: nicole.feledy@griffithuni.edu.au</p>
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By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet on *Listening to the Career Life Story of Teachers* and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include participating in two 90 minute audio recorded interviews and that I have the option to also participate in written reflections about my life and teaching experiences as well as reviewing my interview transcripts. The reflection process is likely to require an hour of my time and the review process is anticipated to require two hours of my time;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that I may be asked to contribute to further research projects;
- I understand my permission for the banking of my story (data from this project) will be sought;
- I give copyright consent for the inclusion of extracts of my transcribed life story interview in published research material associated with this project;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;
- I understand that the interview session will be recorded via a recording device;
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3735 5585 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project;
- I agree to participate in the research study.

Additional permissions being sought

We would also like to check your views in relation to the use of your anonymous data in further projects. Please tick which of the below you give your permission for;

I *may* give my permission for the research team to bank my de-identified data in the form of a transcribed Life Story Interview, for future research (note: if this box is ticked you will be given a separate release form at the conclusion of the data collection)

There may be circumstances where we would like to contact you about a future research project. Tick this box if you *don't want* us to contact you

Name	
Signature	
Date	



RELEASE FORM

Release for Story Banking Beyond the Scope of the Initial Research Project – *Listening to the Career Life Story of Teachers*

GU ref no: 2020/081

In consideration of the work being done by Nicole Feledy, under the supervision of Dr Mia O'Brien, PHD (principle supervisor) and Dr Madonna Stinson, PhD, SFHEA (associate supervisor), to complete her Master of Education and Professional Studies Research at Griffith University QLD and to record the career life stories of Australian teachers for better understanding of the experience of being a teacher, I would like to deposit, for banking in the *Australian Teacher Life Story data bank*, my written career/ life story which is represented by the registration code below. This story was created by myself and the interviewer from transcripts of interviews and reflective journal entries conducted between _____ and _____. My written career/ life story will be banked under the registration code _____ and all identifying personal and institutional names, removed.

My written career/ life story is the combined result of transcribed recordings of multiple voluntary interviews with me as well as associated reflective journal entries. Original research recordings are not part of this data base and have not been stored.

I retain full ownership of my story. I have been given a copy of my written career/ life story and understand that I may use it for personal use, or publication, as I see fit. It is also understood that Nicole Feledy will, at the discretion of Griffith University Ethics committee bank my written career/ life story for future research use by the project research team or other approved researchers. Storage of my written career/ life story will be as a password protected electronic file at Griffith University. It will not be used, shared or moved to other storage without my informed, written consent. Registration codes

will be stored (password protected) separately to protect my anonymity. Five years after the initial research project (Strengthening the Career Life Story of Teachers: A Positive Approach to Teacher Retention in Australia has been completed), I (or upon my death my family), may request my written career/ life story to be removed from the storage data base and destroyed.

It is further understood that portions of the written career/ life story may be included in published documents (print or digital) and I give copyright consent for the inclusion of extracts of my transcribed life story interview in published material. If portions of my written career/ life story are proposed for inclusion in a published document (print or digital) beyond the scope of the original project, I will be notified and given the option to review the proposed portion of my written career/ life story, choose to be credited for the story or remain anonymous and then give signed consent or decline the use of my written career/ life story.

Storage Registration code: _____

I _____ have read and understood the above and agree to the banking of my *written career/ life story* and its possible future use for education or publication (with my permission) purposes.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Interviewer: _____

Appendix D: Life story interview questions

LIFE STORY QUESTION DATA BANK

Note

- Questions are used as prompts and not all used.
- Questions are an adaptation of Atkinson's (1998) suggested questions.
- Questions marked with an asterix (*) are considered core questions to be asked of all participants

Early to young adult life

- What is your earliest memory? *
- What would you say was the most significant event in your life up to age 21? *
- How would you describe yourself as a child?
- What are some early memories of cultural or social influences?
- Did you have any dreams of ambitions as a child / teenager?
- What clubs, groups or organizations did you join?
- How much did you enjoy being alone or did you prefer to be around small groups or a crowd?
- What did you do for fun or entertainment?
- What was the best part of being a teenager / worst part
- How important was a sense of community to you?
- What was the most important thing given to you by your family / friends?

Education

- What do you remember most about your own schooling? *
- What has been your most important life lesson, outside school?

Inner life and awareness

- Which stressors seem most acute as you have become older? *

- In what ways do you experience yourself as being strong? *
- What single experience has given you the greatest joy?
- What primary beliefs guide your life?
- What values would you not want to compromise?

Major Life Themes

- What would you say were some of the crucial decisions in your life? *
- How would you describe your world view? *
- How satisfied are you with the choices you've made?
- What has been your greatest accomplishment/s?
- In what ways are you changing now?
- Is the way you see yourself now significantly different to how you saw yourself in the past?

Final Questions

- Is there anything you would like to add? *
- Is there anything you feel we may have missed or left out? *
- What are your feelings about this interview and all we have covered?

Appendix E: Career story interview questions

CAREER STORY QUESTION DATA BANK

Note

- Questions are used as prompts and not all used.
- Questions are an adaptation of Atkinson's (1998) suggested questions.
- Questions marked with an asterix (*) are considered core questions to be asked of all participants

Questions sent via email to participants before the interview

1. Reflect upon your journey through teaching and draw an image of your career as a roadmap that traverses a series of landscapes (e.g., have there been times you traversed mountains or travelled through desert or green meadows with chirping birds and butterflies).

And / or

2. If you were to divide your career into a series of phases, how would you distinguish each phase (e.g., by years of teaching / levels of responsibility / triumphs and tribulations?) what metaphor or symbol would you use to represent each phase?

Then, during the interview we can also explore

- Most memorable moments
- What is important to you about being a teacher
- When do you feel strongest, as though you're teaching from your strengths (how often does that happen)
- What entices you back into school each day? What brings you joy I teaching?
- What keeps you in the profession?

- If you were to divide your career into a series of phases, how would you distinguish each phase (ie by years of teaching / levels of responsibility / triumphs and tribulations?) what metaphor or symbol would you use to represent each phase?

Question bank to be used during the interview

- If you were to divide your career into a series of phases, how would you distinguish each phase / how many years of teaching would separate each phase? *
- If you were to give a metaphor for each stage of your teaching career, what would represent each phase? *
- How did you come to teaching / what attracted you to a career in teaching?*
- What have been your most memorable teaching moments? *
- What is important to you in your work as a teacher? *
- When do you feel strongest / happiest / most successful in the classroom? *
- What do you see as your greatest challenges at work? *
- How would you describe your relationships at work – with students, colleagues, admin? *
- Why do you keep teaching? *
- What comes the easiest in your work?
- How do your work life and home life integrate / mix / balance?
- How have your relationships with students, colleagues, admin changed / developed / grown over your teaching career?
- How has teaching changed for you over the span of your career?
- Why do you teach?
- What advice would you give younger teachers or those just beginning their career?

Final Questions

- Is there anything you would like to add? *
- Is there anything you feel we may have missed or left out? *
- What are your feelings about this interview and all we have covered?

Data Summary Sheet

Based on (Atkinson, 1998, p. 78)

Transcript No.			
Interviewer		Interviewee	
Gender		Birthplace	
Teaching role		Number years teaching	
Teaching areas			
Events and experiences mentioned in life story			
Childhood <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ earliest memories ○ traumatic experiences ○ relationships 	Youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ puberty ○ mentor ○ relationships 	Adulthood <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ marriage ○ relationships 	
Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Graduate (multiple) ○ Post Graduate ○ Masters ○ Doctorate 	Career <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teaching internationally ○ Teaching in Australia (QLD) ○ Teaching Australia (not QLD) ○ Teaching boys school ○ Teaching girls school ○ Teaching co-ed ○ Teaching private ○ Teaching government 	Additional Career / work	
Major Life Themes:			
Transitions and life changes:			
Accomplishments and Achievements (life):			

Teaching
Mentors:
Transitions and changes teaching:
Accomplishments and Achievements (teaching):
Teaching themes:
Attitudes toward teaching <u>Greatest Joy</u> <u>What keeps you in the profession</u> <u>What fuels you through the difficult days</u> <u>What keeps you coming back in each day?</u> <u>Happiest, Strongest or most successful when</u>

Impact / influence of Corona Virus
Career outlook:

Career progression

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