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Mature age professionals:

Transitions into a new career

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Abstract

This thesis explores career change transition through the stories of the lived experiences of mature age professionals who chose to make a career change into another profession by undertaking postgraduate coursework studies. The collection of evidence for the study spanned the time from when the participants started their postgraduate study program to make the career change, through their academic program and into their new careers – a period of 18 months for full time students and 30 months for part time students.

Modern labour markets, with fast changing technology, increasingly mobile populations, and the constant generation of new jobs and skills have resulted in the model of lifelong employment with a single employer no longer being viable for many people. Individuals now have to manage career transitions throughout their lifespans, with the need for continuous learning and ongoing innovation. These transitions present many challenges for individuals, however, there have been relatively few studies that examine how individuals respond to the challenges of career transitions. This study sought to provide an insight into the transition experiences of individuals making a career change into a new profession.

The study used an innovative research design that incorporated transition theory with narrative inquiry methodology in a longitudinal study. The integration of this theory and methodology enabled the research of the lived experiences of the participants as they moved through time during their transition. There were up to seven research conversations for each of the 17 study participants across the time of their transition. At any one moment, the participants' stories outlined not only their current transition experiences, but also their past and imagined future experiences. This moving back and forward in time produced multilayered and reflexive stories of the transition experience, as changes in time and place often resulted in different transition issues being experienced.

The findings of the study show that transition is not a linear process, but rather is dynamic, iterative and wave-like. Consequently a new model for transition is proposed. Transition experiences ebb and flow over time and place as the transition progresses. Some issues experienced during transition become more important at particular times, places and contexts, only to diminish as other issues come to the fore. Issues from earlier in the transition are often revisited in the later stages as individuals look back to their previous experiences and forward to imagined new experiences. The study found

that transition occurs in the midst of ongoing lives in relation to time, place and personal and social conditions. It highlights the need for research into career change transition to acknowledge these factors, rather than taking a ‘snapshot’ of transition experiences at a particular time and place.

In light of the study findings, a new career change transition model is proposed that incorporates the wave like iterative nature of transition and reaches in to the ‘settling in’ of the new career.

Stories of transition experiences into a new career provide useful information for institutions and organisations that are responsible for the recruitment, academic programs, induction and mentoring of individuals who are undergoing transition in order to enter a new career. This knowledge will assist these mature age professionals in their transition, allowing them to bring their valuable skills and competencies to their new profession. In addition, individuals who are considering making a transition into a new career would find the stories of career change of interest.

Keywords: transition, career change, career change into teaching, mature age students, postgraduate coursework students, career change students, teachers.

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.

Carmel Bauer

December 2017

Table of Contents

Abstract i
Keywords ii
Statement of Originality iii
List of Tables viii
List of Figures ix
List of Acronyms x
Acknowledgements xi
Publications and Conference Proceedings xii
Chapter 1: Introduction 1
Career Change 2
Teaching Profession 4
Teacher Shortages 4
Characteristics of Students 6
Mature Age Students 7
Career Change and Postgraduate Coursework Students 7
Research Questions 8
Overview of This Thesis 8
Chapter 2: Literature Review 11
Mature Age Students: Characteristics of Experience 12
Personal Life 13
University Studies 18
Postgraduate Coursework Students: Characteristics of Experience 20
Personal Life 22
University Studies 24
Career Change Students: Characteristics of Experience 26
Career Change Specific to the Teaching Profession 30
Reasons for Choosing the Teaching Profession 31
Push and pull factors. 32
Career change profiles. 34
Professional Experience 36
Career Change Beginning Teachers 37
Discussion 40
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework 42
Transition Theory 43

Situation 44
Self 45
Support 46
Strategies 47
Qualitative Research Theory 48
Narrative Research Theory 51
Theoretical Divisions in Narrative Research 53
Dimensions of Narrative Analysis 54
Narrative Inquiry 55
Model for the Narrative Inquiry Study 59
Narrative Inquiry Methodology and Transition Theory 61
Discussion 62
Chapter 4: Research Context and Design 64
My Story 64
Justifications for Study 66
Narrative Research Conversations 67
Research conversations: Focus group conversations 68
Research conversations: In-depth (unstructured) conversations 70
Research conversations: Email conversations 72
Participant Selection 75
Sampling 75
Introduction to Study Participants 77
Collection of Evidence 80
Process for Analysis of Evidence 87
Handling and Transcription of Evidence 88
The Creation of Interim Texts: Analysis of Evidence 88
Ethical Considerations 92
Research Rigour 94
Discussion 97
Chapter 5: Moving Out – "OMG What have I done?" 98
The Transition Begins: Moving Out 98
Personal Life 100
Reasons for Making the Career Change and Timing of Career Change 100
Feelings at Early Transition 105
Being a Teacher 108
Why Choose Teaching as a Career? 108

Influences and Reactions from Others about Choosing Teaching 113
Discussion.. 116
Chapter 6: Moving Through – "Too many plates to balance." 120
The Transition Continues: Moving Through (Personal Life)..................................... 120
Personal Life.. 121
Finances 121
Care of Children 125
Work-life balance 127
Time Management 130
Former Friendships and Networks 132
New Friends.. 134
Discussion.. 145
Chapter 7: Moving Through - "Whatever happened to pen and paper?"……....148
The Transition Continues: Moving Through (University Studies and Being a Teacher) 149
University Studies 150
Digital Technology 150
Academic Writing and Research Skills 153
Being a Teacher 156
Professional Experience Placements 1 and 2 157
Professional Networks 162
Reflections on Career Change into Teaching 164
Discussion.. 168
Chapter 8: Moving In – "It's a pretty good gig." 172
The Transition Ends: Moving In 172
Being a Teacher 173
Advantages and Disadvantages of Being a Mature Age Career Change Beginning Teacher 173
Work-life Balance in the Teaching Profession.. 178
Professional Competencies in the Classroom.. 179
Review of Decision to Make a Career Change.. 181
Employment Outcomes 185
Discussion.. 188
Chapter 9: Conclusion - but the story continues…………………………………..193
Research Design 194
Main Findings of the Study 196
Characteristics of Career Change Decision: Dynamic Decision Making.................... 196

Ebb and Flow of Transition Experiences 197
Career Change Transition Model 201
In the Midst: Where Are They Now? 202
Implications for Policy and Practice 205
Directions for Further Research 207
Concluding Remarks 209
Reference List 210
Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer 227
Appendix B: Study Information Sheet 228
Appendix C: Consent Form 231
Appendix D: Nominal Data Form 232
Appendix E: Prompts for Research Conversations 233
Appendix F: Research Conversation Protocol 236
Appendix G: Field Text – Excerpt from Participant Story 237
Appendix H: Example of Interim Text 239

List of Tables

Table 1.1. Examples of postgraduate coursework options for career changers…………3

Table 2.1. Summary of common characteristics for mature age,
postgraduate coursework career change students…………………………………...30

Table 4.1. Demographic details for the 17 study participants………………………….77

Table 4.2. Seven phases of evidence collection………………………………………..80

Table 4.3. Evidence collection schedule: Full time students: 2013 cohort……………82

Table 4.4. Evidence collection schedule: Full time students: 2014 cohort……………83

Table 4.5. Evidence collection schedule: Part time students 2013-2014 cohort……..…84

Table 4.6. Examples of relationships between refrains in individual stories
and resonances across stories…………………………………………….………90

List of Figures

Figure 1.1. Structure of chapter: Introduction……………………………….……..…1

Figure 1.2. Three characteristics of students………………………….……..…..6

Figure 2.1. Structure of chapter: Literature review……………………….………11

Figure 3.1. Structure of chapter: Theoretical framework……………..…..…42

Figure 4.1. Structure of chapter: Research context and design…………….…..…64

Figure 4.2. Three stages of narrative analysis………………………………..…87

Figure 4.3. Stages of transition theory: moving out, moving through, moving in…..…91

Figure 4.4. Organisation within four evidence chapters………………………..……91

Figure 5.1. Moving out stage of transition theory…………………………...…98

Figure 5.2. Structure of chapter: Refrains and resonances about moving out stage of transition……………………………………………………………….98

Figure 6.1. Moving through stage of transition theory……………………….……120

Figure 6.2. Structure of chapter: Refrains and resonances in 'personal life'…………120

Figure 7.1. Moving through stage of transition theory…………………..……149

Figure 7.2. Structure of chapter: Refrains and resonances in 'university studies' and 'being a teacher…………………………………………………….……149

Figure 8.1. Moving in stage of transition theory ..……………………………………172

Figure 8.2. Structure of chapter: Refrains and resonances in the moving in stage of transition……………………………………………………..……172

Figure 9.1. Structure of chapter: Conclusion…………………………………………193

Figure 9.2. Career change transition model……………………………….…201

List of Acronyms

APA	American Psychological Association
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
FYHE	First Year in Higher Education
HDR	Higher Degree Research
HOD	Head of Department
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
ITD	Industrial Technology and Design
IPT	Information Processing and Technology
PGR	Postgraduate Research
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PTES	Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey
PGT	Postgraduate Taught
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SEC	Student Evaluation of Courses
SES	Socioeconomic Status
SET	Student Evaluation of Teaching
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

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First and foremost, I would like to thank the 17 career changers in this project, who generously gave their time to tell the stories of their experiences as they made the transition from former professions into new careers. This thesis would not have been possible without their contribution to the study. Their stories are interesting and enjoyable to read.

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Publications and Conference Proceedings

Publications:

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Bauer, C., Thomas, S., & Sim, C. (2017). Mature age professionals: Factors influencing their decision to make a career change into teaching. *Issues in Educational Research, 26*(3), 185-197. http://www.iier.org.au/iier27/bauer.pdf

Conference proceedings:

Bauer, C. (2014, December). *Mature aged student career changers: Transitions into a new profession.* Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE), Brisbane, Australia. www.aare.edu.au/. . . /mature-aged-career-changers-transitions-into-a-new-profession

Chapter 1
Introduction

The focus of this thesis is transition, exploring the complexities and differences in the stories of the lived experiences of mature age professionals who were making a career change from a prior profession by completing a postgraduate coursework program. The study on which this thesis is based builds and expands on an earlier pilot study, which was a qualitative study of the lived experiences of eight mature age career change professionals as they completed a postgraduate coursework program to enter the teaching profession (Bauer, 2011). The current study, exploring the experiences of career changers into the secondary teaching profession, focused on the participants' stories across time. The individual participants told their stories from when they accepted an offer to undertake the coursework program, throughout the two semester (full time) initial teacher education program at university until they had completed two academic terms as a teacher, a period of approximately 18 months for full time students (30 months for part time students). However, the stories started well before the participants began their studies, reaching back in time to their earlier career experiences. Narrative inquiry methodology that explores stories of experience was utilised for this study. According to Connelly and Clandinin (2006) humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives, telling stories of their lived experience. This study explores those stories. The diagram below, Figure 1.1, illustrates the structure of this chapter, which outlines the context and background of the study.

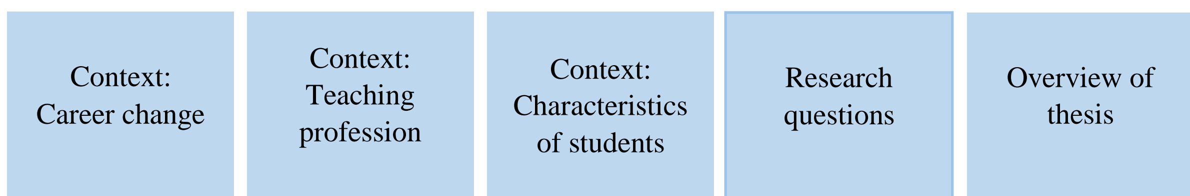

Figure 1.1. Structure of chapter: Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the background and the context of the study. The global and local employment environments and the context of the teaching profession are discussed. Student characteristics of being of mature age, undertaking a postgraduate coursework program and making a career change are outlined, followed by the research questions for the study.

Career Change

Career change can be defined as "a broad process of change in the relationship between the subjects and their work" (Gomes & Teixeira, 2000, p. 78). Over the last two decades, modern labour markets have been impacted by a number of factors that have resulted in profound changes in the workplace. Research by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP, 2015) outlined how fast changing technology, unprecedented global competition and regulatory standards, increasingly mobile populations and the constant generation of new jobs and skills have all impacted on workers. New players have come into the field, including multinational companies, international sectoral bodies and multilateral agencies. Traditionally, federal, state and local governments were one context providing secure employment for employees, however, recently there have been considerable job losses for federal, state and local government employees in countries such as the United States (Gault, 2013), Canada (Macdonald, 2012), the United Kingdom (Wright, 2013), and Australia (Helbig & Ironside, 2012).

Modern market changes and globalisation have resulted in the model of lifelong employment with a single employer no longer being viable for many people, and individuals now have to manage career transitions (Bimrose, Barabasch, Brown & Mulvey, 2015). The traditional psychological contract with employers of long term employment for employees is no longer applicable and individuals are increasingly expected to be responsible for their own professional and technological development (Baruch & Bozionelos, 2011). There is uncertainty around the career paths of individuals as organisational changes and career changes and transitions are now common. Savickas, Rossier, Dauwalder et al. (2009) have maintained that today, career prospects seem to be far less definable and predictable, with job and career transitions being more frequent and difficult.

Career changes or transitions present many challenges for individuals, however, there have been relatively few studies that examine how individuals respond to the challenges of career transitions across the course of their lives (CEDEFOP, 2014a). The majority of research on career change has focused on characteristics of the individual (e.g., openness to experience), while little is known of contextual and organisational issues that influence the decision to change careers (Carless & Arnup, 2011). In order to remain employed, workers now need to engage in continuous learning and ongoing innovation (Amundson, 2014) and there are increasing numbers of mature age career change students in tertiary institutions. Brown, Bimrose, Barnes and Hughes (2012)

have argued that those involved in education, training and employment settings need to have an understanding of career changers and to make effective use of career stories and trajectories within those settings. The need for further research into career change transition provides a justification for the study.

It is generally posited (for example, see Savickas et al., 2009) that in this modern market economy, workers today must become lifelong learners who can use sophisticated technologies, embrace flexibility rather than stability, maintain their employability and create their own career opportunities. Being a lifelong learner and making a career change may require gaining additional qualifications. Postgraduate coursework studies give options to career changers in a number of areas. Table 1.1. below provides a sample of career options available for career changers at the time of this study from two major universities in South East Queensland.

Table 1.1. Examples of postgraduate coursework options for career changers

Course Title	*Course Length*	*Prerequisites*	*Career Outcomes (examples)*
Graduate Diploma of Education (Senior Years)	1 year F/T 2 years P/T	Completion of a non-education degree comprising a minimum of three years study with six or more units in one nominated teaching area and four or more in a second.	Teacher
Graduate Diploma in Business (Professional Accounting)	1 year F/T 2 years P/T	Previous degree in non-accounting area with a minimum GPA of 4.0	Accountant
Graduate Diploma in Information Technology	1 year F/T 2 years P/T	Previous degree in a field other than information technology	IT Specialist (e.g., Computer Science)
Graduate Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety	1 year F/T 2 years P/T	A recognised bachelor's degree in any discipline	Occupational Health and Safety Manager
Master of Creative Industries (Interdisciplinary)	1.5 years F/T	Recognised bachelor's degree in any discipline with minimum GPA of 4.0	Visual Artist
Master of Audiology Studies	2 years F/T	Previous degree in area such as education, health, social, biological or physical sciences and GPA minimum of 4.0	Audiologist
Master of Occupational Therapy Studies	2 years F/T	Previous degree in a field other than occupational therapy such as education, health, social, biological or physical sciences and GPA minimum of 4.0	Occupational Therapist
Master of Social Work	2 years F/T	A completed bachelor's degree in any discipline other than social work	Social Worker

As is evident, career change professionals have a wide range of options for further study to enter a new profession, including undertaking a postgraduate coursework program to

enter the teaching profession. Career change professionals are defined as aged 25 years or older, with a recognised academic or trade based qualification (higher education qualification for postgraduate students) and prior work experience in a field that reflects their qualifications (Australian Department of Education, Science & Training, 2007). For the purposes of this study, participants were required to have been employed in their former profession for at least 60% of the previous five years. The reason for this decision by the researcher was to define career changers as individuals who had worked for some time in the profession in which they were qualified. This definition therefore excluded students who were completing their postgraduate qualification shortly after having completed their undergraduate studies, as these students were less likely to have an established career that they were changing from by undertaking their postgraduate coursework study.

This section has outlined the context for career changers as modern local and global environments have resulted in many individuals making a career change. While the focus of this study is career change transition, this study is in the context of the teaching profession as the participants were undertaking a career change to enter the teaching profession. Therefore, a brief overview of the context of the teaching profession is provided in the following section.

Teaching Profession

Teacher Shortages

There are many mature age professionals who consider a new career into the teaching profession and policy makers in education are interested in this cohort as they are needed in schools to overcome teacher shortages worldwide (Tigchelaar, Brouwer & Vermunt, 2010). For example, in the United States, there is a shortage of science, maths, special education, and bilingual education/English language development teachers, with projections that a significant number of teachers will be required over the next ten years (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas, 2016; US Department of Education, 2015). In British Colombia, Canada, there is currently a shortage of teachers of maths, science, fine arts, computers, French Immersion and special education (Chan, 2017). A report by the National Audit Office (2016) in the United Kingdom stated that there were growing signs of teacher shortages, particularly in maths and certain science subjects. The greatest demand and reported shortage of secondary teachers in Australia are in the areas of: maths, science, information technology, languages and geography (Weldon, 2015). There are also secondary teacher shortages in the staffing of regional,

remote schools and schools in low socioeconomic status (SES) areas (Australian Department of Education and Training, 2014).

One way to address this issue is to target mature age professionals to make a career change to teach in the classroom in these specialist areas. This cohort is being encouraged by education systems worldwide to enter the teaching profession. This section has outlined the areas of teacher shortages internationally. Mature age professionals are increasingly of interest to educational recruiters and administrators.

Career Change Transition into Teaching

Bolhuis (2002) contended that teaching should be a profession that need not be a lifetime career, but a profession one can choose following other life experience and work. It follows that adults will experience a period of transition as they change their career into teaching. According to Grier and Johnston (2012), there needs to be a better understanding of how to help career changers transition into their positions within the teacher community. However, the transition into teaching has not been extensively examined in the literature and much of the literature pertaining to career changers focuses on their experiences as in-service teachers, with relatively little information about their career transition during the teacher education period, particularly in the contemporary Australian context (Williams, 2010). Williams (2013) stated that "there is an absence of research into the experiences of career change student teachers in contemporary contexts" (p. 16). In agreement, Watters and Diezmann (2013) contended that the experiences of beginning teachers have been extensively studied for over half a century, but there has been little research on career change teachers and the challenges they face in becoming school teachers. Wilkins (2013) also noted that while career changers are seen as attractive candidates for teacher recruitment, research into this particular demographic was very limited.

A detailed understanding of the factors that prompt a career change into teaching would enable education authorities to design more effective recruitment campaigns (Laming & Horne, 2013). In a report commissioned by the Queensland College of Teachers about why individuals chose teaching as a career, Wyatt-Smith et al. (2017) stated that with teacher recruitment, there is a need for differentiated marketing to appeal to specific candidate subgroups, such as candidates seeking a second or subsequent career. In addition, Wyatt-Smith et al. considered that universities should reconsider their recruitment strategies as their study found that contemporary marketing

strategies (in particular, advertising) had low levels of influence on individuals considering entering the teaching profession.

It is important to learn who career changers are, why they chose to make a career change into teaching, the qualities they bring to teaching and their experiences as student teachers (Williams, 2013). Williams went on to say that "it is imperative to know how to capitalize on the diversity of attributes that career changers bring into the teaching profession" (p. 17). Such an understanding may facilitate a successful transition into the new career. Although it is located in the specific context of transition into teaching, the study will address career change in general. As the context of this transition study, this section has outlined teacher shortages and discussed the importance of understanding the career change into teaching transition. The following section provides a discussion of the characteristics of mature age, postgraduate coursework career change students.

Characteristics of Students

Figure 1.2. below illustrates three characteristics of students – being of mature age, completing a postgraduate coursework program and studying to make a career change.

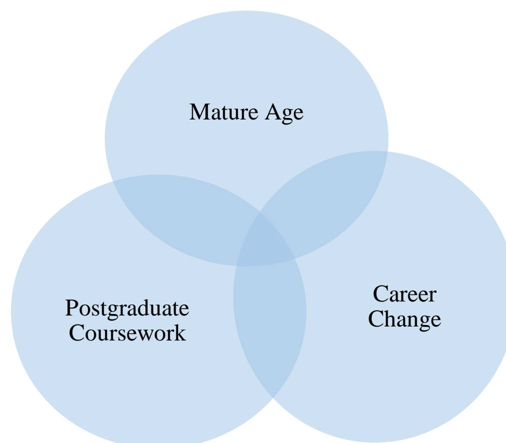

Figure 1.2. Three characteristics of students

Each of these three characteristics could contribute to a particular experience as a university student. The intention of this study was to explore how the combination of these characteristics contributed to the transition experience for career changers into a

new profession. The following section provides a background and context for these three characteristics.

Mature Age Students

Mature age students have an increasing presence on university campuses worldwide. They have been fuelling the growth in enrolments at universities far in excess of traditional age students. Mature age students now make up 40% of total student enrolments at American universities (Aslanian & Giles, 2007) while one third of students at universities in the United Kingdom are mature age students (Thorne, 2012). According to the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada (2011), 14% of full time and 60% of part time undergraduate students are over the age of 25. For postgraduate students, 31% of full time and 70% of part time students in Masters'programs are aged over 30, however, these postgraduate statistics do not differentiate between Masters' coursework and research programs. The numbers of mature age students at Australian universities has been increasing steadily since the 1970's, with the most noticeable increase being in those aged 30 and over (O'Shea & Stone, 2011). Today, mature age students make up a significant proportion of the higher education population. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013) approximately 41% of the total domestic student population at Australian universities in that year were mature age students. However, it cannot be assumed that there is homogeneity in mature age students. Marguerite Cullity (2006) asserted the individuality of students, in that they needed to be considered as individuals with separate social, education, personal and vocational experiences.

Career Change and Postgraduate Coursework Students

Many mature age students are also career changers (Australian Department of Education, Science & Training, 2004; Chao & Good, 2004). As many individuals make career changes throughout their lives, increasing numbers of older adults are choosing to return to postgraduate coursework education to retrain for a new career. The term 'coursework' is taken to mean a full sequence of studies whose completion qualifies the student for the award of a postgraduate certificate, diploma or degree (Reid, Rennie & Shortland-Jones, 2005). Internationally, there has been a rapid rise in the number of postgraduate coursework programs and the numbers of students enrolling in them (Kember, Ho & Leung, 2016). The growth in the postgraduate coursework market compared to the undergraduate student market is expected to be even more substantial

in America in the next decade (Aslanian & Giles, 2007). Hamlin et al. (2016) reported that in Australia, there has been a rapid increase in postgraduate coursework students on university campuses. Postgraduate coursework is now delivered to a largely mature age study population (Wozniak, Mahony, Lever, & Pizzica, 2009) and can be undertaken for a number of reasons, including for academic stimulation or job opportunities (Ho, Kember & Hong, 2012).

This section has outlined the characteristics of the increasing numbers of mature age, postgraduate coursework career change students at tertiary institutions. The following section articulates the research questions.

Research Questions

In order to understand the experiences and needs of mature age, postgraduate coursework career changers, the research questions focussed on aspects of the experience that could either assist or impede the transition experience.

The research question was:

What are the experiences of mature age, career change professionals who undertake a postgraduate coursework program, as they make the transition from their former career into a new profession?

This question was explored as three sub questions:

1) Why and how do mature age professionals choose to make a career change?
2) What opportunities and rewards, pressures and challenges do mature age career changers experience during their transition and how do they meet them?
3) What are mature age career change professionals' experiences in the first six months of their new profession?

Sub question one incorporates questions concerning why they make a career change, why at this point in their lives and how they choose the profession and sub question two includes what support systems they draw on (e.g., family, institutions).

Overview of This Thesis

There are nine chapters in this thesis. This introductory chapter provides the context for the following chapters. It begins with a brief overview of the study. A discussion of the modern labour market is provided, with details of possibilities for alternative professions for mature age, postgraduate coursework career changers. A brief outline on the context of the teaching profession is provided, followed by the characteristics of

mature age, postgraduate coursework career change students. Finally, the research question, with three sub questions, is provided.

A review to identify gaps in the literature on mature age, postgraduate coursework career change students is provided in Chapter 2. Literature on career change is discussed, covering topics such as why individuals choose to make a career change, the opportunities and rewards, challenges and pressures they experience, the social supports and networks they access, and their professional experiences in schools. Career changers' experiences as beginning teachers are also detailed.

The theoretical framework of transition theory and narrative inquiry methodology are detailed in Chapter 3. Transition theory is the underpinning concept for the study, as the participants are undergoing a transition into a new career, and narrative inquiry methodology is used in the study as a means to access their depth of experience. Details of qualitative and narrative research are provided. The model to be used for this narrative inquiry study is outlined.

Chapter 4 provides information on the research context and design. It outlines how, in narrative inquiry design, a study needs to have personal, social and practical justifications. As the researcher, my story is relevant to the narrative inquiry approach to the study, and this chapter tells my own story of my career change, and explains my personal interest in the topic. Social and practical justifications are also outlined (including references to Chapters 1 and 3 of this thesis). Details of narrative research conversations, the selection of participants and an introduction to the participants are provided. The process for the collection of evidence is described and shown in table format, followed by the process used for the analysis of the evidence. Ethical considerations and principles of research rigour used to guide this study are discussed.

The stories of the participants are provided in Chapters 5-8, with an analysis of the evidence utilising narrative inquiry methodology. Chapter 5 focuses on the beginning of the transition, at a time when the study participants have recently made their career change decision and are experiencing issues relating to the early impact of having made that decision. This period is called 'moving out' (Anderson, Goodman & Schlossberg, 2012). The issues include the reasons for making the career change and the timing of the career change. The question of why the teaching profession was chosen as the new career is explored. The role of significant others in the lives of the study participants and their influence in the career change decision is discussed. There is also an exploration of the early thoughts of the career changers concerning their having made this decision.

Chapter 6 explores the refrains in and resonances across the stories of the issues that impacted on the personal lives of the study participants. Their stories tell of opportunities and rewards such as new friendships and increasing confidence levels as well as challenges and pressures such as financial concerns, care of children, work-life balance and time management. In addition, the participants talked of the support they received at this stage of their transition.

In Chapter 7, the stories continue, with a focus on issues that arose in their university studies and their imagined future being a teacher. Their issues at this time of the transition focused on the use of digital technology, academic writing, utilising their professional competencies and their professional experience placements. Chapters 6 and 7 encompass the 'moving through' phase of the transition process (Anderson et al., 2012).

Chapter 8 continues the stories of the participants, as they commenced their employment in the teaching profession. The chapter outlines stories of rewards, such as being seen as more experienced than younger new graduates, as well as challenges such as having to deal with bureaucracy and being given less support due to a perception by colleagues that they had relevant experience and so did not require a high level of support. This phase of transition is called 'moving in' (Anderson et al., 2012).

Chapter 9 provides a summary of the study findings including the relevance of the research design utilised for the study and the main findings of the study. There is also a proposed new career change transition model that suggests four phases in order to explain more of the temporality of transition experience. This section is followed by implications for policy and practice, reflections of participant stories in the midst of ongoing lives and directions for further research.

The following chapter, Chapter 2, reviews the literature on mature age career changers who are undertaking a postgraduate coursework program. The chapter outlines the literature on three characteristics of the experiences of these students. It also explores the literature on career change and being in the teaching profession.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

Chapter 1 introduced the background and issues relevant to the study, and provided the context for this study. As outlined, many individuals are choosing to, or need to, make career changes throughout their lives, due to changes in global and local employment contexts. The numbers of mature age, postgraduate coursework career change students are increasing in universities globally with a range of postgraduate coursework programs being available to career changers. Many career changers are interested in teaching as their new profession.

This chapter continues the story by reviewing the literature on the characteristics of students who are of mature age, undertaking postgraduate coursework and making a career change. The review will then outline literature relating to making a career change into the teaching profession, including reasons for making the change, and why teaching was chosen as the new profession. Literature relating to professional experience placements (also known as practicums), and early experiences in the new career are explored. The diagram below, Figure 2.1., illustrates the structure of the chapter.

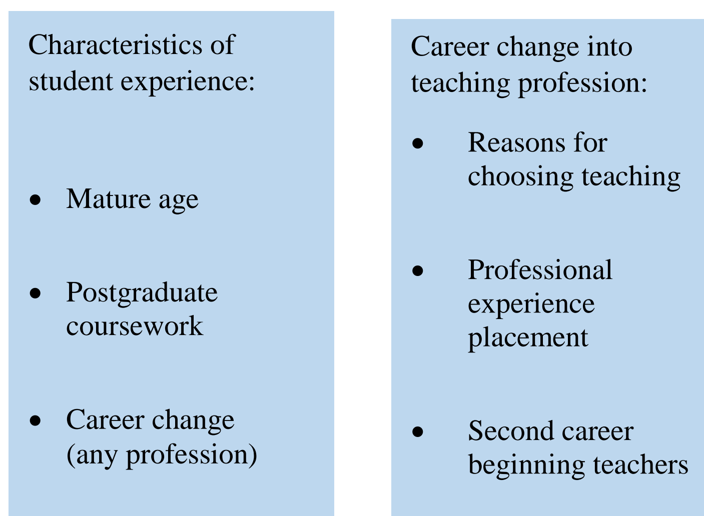

Figure 2.1. Structure of chapter: Literature review

As can be seen from the diagram, this chapter reviews the literature on students who have three individual characteristics - being of mature age, undertaking a postgraduate coursework program, and make a career change into any profession. As the participants in this study are making a career change into the teaching profession, there is further exploration of the literature specifically on career changers who are making a career change into the teaching profession. As outlined in Chapter 1, the intersection of the

three characteristics creates the unique experience of the mature age career changer undertaking postgraduate coursework. This intersection is shown in Figure 1.2., below (first introduced in Chapter 1). Students who have all three of these characteristics could have very different experiences from those with only one or two.

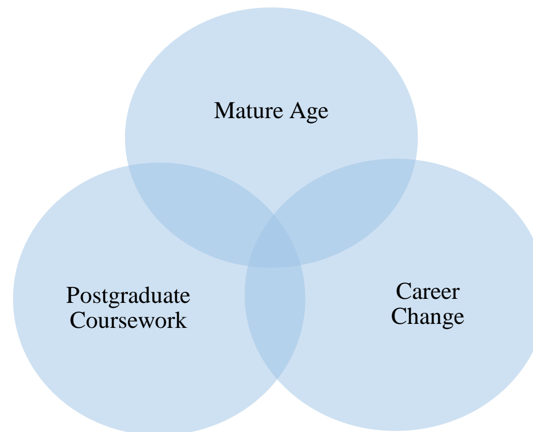

Figure 1.2. Intersection of three characteristics of mature age postgraduate coursework career changers

The purpose of this study was to investigate how each of these three characteristics intersected to create the experiences of mature age, career change students undergoing transition as they moved through a postgraduate coursework program and into their new profession. These three characteristics may contribute in different ways to the career transition experience. The following section of this chapter explores the literature on students with one of the characteristics: that of being a mature age student.

Mature Age Students: Characteristics of Experience

Surprisingly, given the increasing numbers of mature age students on university campuses, there has been very little recent research on the lived experiences of mature age students. Most of the relevant literature relates to the time period from 1990 to 2009, a time when there was a large and rapid increase in the numbers of mature age students enrolling in universities, as outlined in Chapter 1. The predominance of this literature is reflected in the following review. The current environment could be quite different to that of 25 years ago, so an exploration of the experiences of mature age students is timely in the current context. It is important to understand the needs of these students to assist them in their transition through their academic programs. The following section of the chapter outlines the literature relating to their personal life and university experiences.

Personal Life

Advantages.

Studies have indicated that there are advantages to being a mature age student, with the experience bringing opportunities and rewards. For example, in her study of mature age students at a major Melbourne university, Kantanis (2002) found that they possessed qualities such as maturity, experience, focus, motivation, commitment and a desire to succeed. Similarly, Kenny et al. (2007) in their quantitative study of 120 mature age nursing students in Victoria, found that they were highly motivated, with well-developed communication skills. Their time management skills, work ethic and life experience were significant attributes which contributed to their success. In addition, Krause, Hartley, James and McInnis (2005) reported from their surveys of mature age students in Australia that a strong work ethic, along with life experience, contributed to the success of these students. The students enjoyed the teaching and learning processes and the challenges associated with it. However, the literature showed that mature age students also faced considerable pressures and challenges, and required support.

Pressures, challenges and support.

Work-life balance.

Tindle and Lincoln (2002) found from their questionnaires of 37 mature age students in Australia that the demands on mature age students were greater than the demands on younger students at university. They often had partners and families, as well as home and work commitments, in addition to their studies. This resulted in a 'balancing act' with their time and personal resources in order to successfully complete their studies. If anything unexpected happened, such as an illness, accident, legal issues or a relationship breakdown, these events upset the finely tuned balance of these students' lives and had a negative impact on their ability to successfully undertake the demands of their study program. Similarly, Davies and Williams (2001) noted from their research in nine tertiary institutions in the United Kingdom, that mature age students were at the prime age for caring for children and having home responsibilities, so time management was an important issue. Time spent on study was time that was not spent on family and domestic responsibilities.

The vulnerability of managing the demands of their lives is also reflected in other research studies. Leder and Forgasz (2004), in their primarily quantitative study of

mature age students in Australian universities, found that they experienced difficulties balancing study, social activities and family life in addition to juggling paid work and study demands. The family and home responsibilities of mature age students were a major issue impacting on the ability of this cohort in successfully progressing through their tertiary studies, due to the stress and time pressures associated with combining family and academic life (Kenny et al., 2007).

Home and family responsibilities, including affordable and adequate child care, family relationships and activities, coping with household duties and routine were significant issues for many mature age students (Abbott-Chapman, 2006; Lauder & Cuthbertson, 1998; Risquez, Moore & Morley, 2008). In their study of 22 mature age students in Ireland, who kept reflective journals of their experiences during their university study, Risquez et al. found that students in this cohort experienced a lack of affordable and adequate child care, and had to make changes in household routines to cope with their study program. Similar problems were reported by Lauder and Cuthbertson (1998) in their surveys of mature students in the United Kingdom, with relevant issues including childcare, relationships with partners, coping with household duties and having insufficient time for hobbies. The cohort experienced role conflicts associated with the need to attend lectures, often resulting in their absence at family occasions (Risquez et al., 2008). Abbott-Chapman (2006) in her mixed method longitudinal study of 31 Australian mature age students, found that family activities were limited as students were spending their weekends on their study requirements.

In some cases work-life balance was experienced differently between male and female mature age students. Lauder and Cuthbertson (1998) found that the pattern of domestic and family responsibilities was different in female and male mature age students, particularly in the area of household duties. In their interviews with 10 undergraduate mature age women in Australia, Ayres and Guilfoyle (2009) found that many of the women felt that they had the primary responsibility for nurturing their families and that it was their role to juggle their study time so that the family was not inconvenienced. The women perceived that they had to consider everyone else's needs before their study, which could only be undertaken when the family's needs had been met. Similar experiences of women were reported by Stone (2009), who, in her interviews with 20 Australian mature age students, found that these women struggled to combine their studies with child care, housework and paid work, and had difficulty finding time for their competing demands. The women with children and ageing parents consistently put their family responsibilities before their study demands, often receiving

little help and support from their male partners. Their lack of time resulted in sacrifices in leisure time, social life and even sleep. The struggle to cope with both study and family life was also familiar to Giles (1990) who, when relating her own experience as a mature age student and working class mother in the United Kingdom, told of how she was determined not to let her family suffer because of her study, setting herself high standards for cooking, cleaning and washing - driving herself to near exhaustion and collapse in the process.

Similar findings were reported by Scott, Burns and Cooney (1996) when they conducted questionnaires of 118 Australian mature age female students with children. They found that many mature age women with children who decided to suspend their studies, did so because of the heavy demands associated with their greater responsibility than men for child care and household duties. The perception of these women was that these tasks were women's work and that other activities, like their study, needed to take second place. In addition, they were often required to take on the care of others outside their nuclear family, such as elderly parents. As many mature age women also had young children, this situation created a heavy domestic workload. According to Lauder and Cuthbertson (1998) men were often able to set aside time for their studies, uninterrupted by family responsibilities, and received a very high level of practical support from their female partners (Stone, 2009). As these studies were all conducted some time ago, the current study on mature age students is timely as it may well show a different set of gender relations.

Kenny et al. (2007) found that feelings of guilt were common in both male and female mature age students. Mothers in particular grappled with feelings of guilt around working and studying, and felt that they were not giving priority to their family responsibilities Their guilt may relate to the belief that it was desirable for children to have undivided maternal attention (Scott et al., 1996). Risquez et al. (2008) also reported that both male and female students expressed guilt concerning the time they spent on their studies. Risquez et al. contended that this experience occurred not only in the context of temporarily leaving the parenting role to focus on study, but also in the context of having previously been in the traditional role of breadwinner and no longer being in the full time workforce.

Finances.

A large number of mature age students experienced course related financial difficulties (Crow, Levine & Nager, 1990; Grier & Johnston, 2008; Lauder & Cuthbertson, 1998)

with many having increased financial pressures due to having left full-time, paid employment (Kantanis, 2002) or those families now living on one wage (Abbott-Chapman, 2006). Financial considerations were shown to be a major factor impacting on the ability of mature age students to successfully complete their studies (Kenny et al., 2007). Reduced income placed a strain on the personal relationships, family finances, and the health and well-being of some mature age students (Williams, 2007). As many mature age students had mortgages and dependent children, with extensive financial commitments, the financial burden for mature age students was greater than that of school leavers at university, in both the United Kingdom (Davies & Williams, 2001) and Australia (Leder & Forgasz, 2004). In their surveys of 40 mature age student teachers in the United States, Haggard, Slostard and Winterton (2006) found that as mature age students devoted a large amount of time and energy to their studies, some did not have time to take on employment in addition to their commitments to their family and other responsibilities. Lack of work exacerbated financial difficulties. The literature showed that support was important to mature age students and the following section outlines sources of support.

Support.

Studies found support systems were important to mature age students, with relationships with family and friends being important (Chao & Good, 2004). Chao and Good found in their interviews with 43 mature age students in the United States that the assistance, guidance, encouragement and emotional support that students offered each other increased their persistence in their studies through the camaraderie established in these relationships. These informal networks assisted them in better engaging with the university (Kantanis, 2002). In agreement with Kantanis, Stone (2009) found that relationships with other mature age students at university played an extremely significant role in students successfully completing their academic programs. She found that many mature age students formed close relationships with other students and found support in sharing their academic and/or personal concerns with these other mature age students.

Ayres and Guilfoyle (2009) reported that the majority of the female mature age students in their study had little expectation for social support at university, with their initial focus being on attending university, getting the work done and not being distracted by social contact. The students expected to feel socially isolated and this expectation was initially realised. As they progressed through their program of study,

they began to develop friendships and to see peer friendships as a means to exchange information on academic matters, such as assignments and lectures. While initial feelings of alienation and isolation were common, most mature age students seemed to be successful in developing a sense of community with other adult learners. These relationships often provided reassurance to mature age students that they had made the right decision in undertaking tertiary studies (Risquez et al., 2008).

However, not all students reported a sense of community. James, Krause and Jennings (2010) and Leder and Forgasz (2004) found that mature age students tended not to access the support which could be provided by developing relationships with peers at university, preferring instead to keep to themselves and showing little interest in extracurricular activities. In Leder and Forgasz's study, many reported a preference for working alone.
Reasons given for this preference included that they did not feel the need for these relationships as they had other support structures and they did not have the time for socialising because of other responsibilities.

In addition to the support accessed by some mature age students from peer relationships, other sources of support were also utilised. Ramsay, Jones and Barker (2007) conducted a quantitative study at an Australian university and concluded that mature age students were more likely to receive emotional support from partners, but were less likely to receive practical support from friends, family, partners and professionals than the younger cohort. Practical support included material assistance, emotional support communication with others who are valued and social support spending time with others in leisure activities. Support from academic staff was highly valued by mature age students, especially those staff willing to be flexible, to listen and to give encouragement (Stone, 2009). Ayres and Guilfoyle (2009) found that while the mature age students in their study considered the academic support to be excellent, they did not feel a connection with the academic establishment of the university, contrary to their expectations prior to entering university as a mature age student. Financial support, disability provisions, career advice, learning support and emotional assistance such as personal counselling were valued by mature age students and accessed by this cohort through formal university support services (Stone, 2009). Mature age students also experienced pressures and challenges in their university studies and the literature on these issues is explored in the following section.

University Studies

Digital technology and academic skills.

Research has shown that mature age students can face a range of technological and academic challenges including facility with digital technology (Kantanis, 2002; Kenny et al., 2007), numeracy and literacy (Kenny et al., 2007) and academic skills such as essay writing (Abbott-Chapman, 2006). Kenny et al. (2007) found from their research with undergraduate nursing students in Australia that mature age students considered there was an assumption by academic staff that the students were competent in their use of digital technology. However, this cohort had not had the exposure to digital technology that their school leaver peers had, resulting in a steep learning curve (Kantanis, 2002). They had to cope with this situation in addition to their concerns of lacking the important background knowledge and skills to successfully complete their academic program (Leder & Forgasz, 2004). Therefore, for the majority of mature age students, a lack of computer literacy was a great impediment to successful academic progress at university. Academic skills deficits in literacy and numeracy were also issues faced by mature age students (Kenny et al., 2007). Abbott-Chapman (2006) found issues such as difficulties with study skills for essay writing and examinations, as being more problematic for students who had been away from study for a long time.

Confidence.

Mature age students faced a range of personal issues that affected their study program: lack of confidence, fear of failure, balancing priorities and sense of purpose (Abbott-Chapman, 2006; Bauer, 2011; Davies & Williams, 2001; Kantanis, 2002; Kenny et al., 2007; Scott et al., 1996; Wilkins, 2013). Kenny et al. (2007) found that this cohort experienced a lack of confidence and a fear of returning to study. This lack of confidence was related to personal beliefs, such as the desirability of putting family responsibilities first (Scott et al., 1996) or to a fear of failure due to negative prior educational experiences (Kenny et al., 2007). They lacked confidence in their ability for academic writing and oral presentations (Kantanis, 2002) although over time, there was a reduction in their performance anxiety and a growing sense of confidence (Abbott-Chapman, 2006). These changing levels of confidence were also be related to other factors. Grier and Johnston (2008), from their interviews of three female participants seeking to make a career change into teaching in the United States, found that the experience of change from having an identity as a confident, competent professional in a former career, and leaving this comfort zone to become a student again, resulted in a

decrease in confidence levels. The experience of being a novice could destabilise a person's sense of purpose, causing a dip in confidence (Wilkins, 2013). Questions of whether the correct decision had been made with regard to the decision to make a career change into teaching also resulted in decreased confidence levels (Bauer, 2011). In addition, choosing to undertake tertiary studies as a mature age student involved taking a risk which affected not only their own current and future directions, but also their family's situation in terms of money and time (Davies & Williams, 2001). This sense of risk could affect confidence to succeed in the new environment and add additional pressure to a difficult personal situation.

Friendships.

According to Kantanis (2002) the majority of mature age students sought personal interaction with students who had followed a path of completing their schooling, then enrolling in their university studies, but were tentative in their approach, possibly due to their uncertainty of the response from these students. The age gap led to feelings of isolation, with the experience of being older, with more life experience resulting in problems adjusting to university life (Wilson, 1997), compounded by difficulties with understanding university culture (Tindle & Lincoln, 2002). Some mature age students reported a fear of humiliation and ostracism from school leavers due to their age (Kantanis, 2002), with many respondents reporting a subjective experience of being very different from their younger counterparts, hence secluded, rejected or insecure (Risquez et al., 2008). Risquez et al. reported that mature age students in their study felt a sense of estrangement from the communities and social circles to which they belonged prior to becoming a mature age student, and experienced feelings of alienation from friendships formed at a previous stage of their lives. Kantanis (2002) noted that the response of friends to a mature age student's decision to return to study may not be positive. These feelings of alienation and being unable to relate to friendships formed at an earlier time in life took different forms.

Gail Paasse (1998) reported on interviews with two mature age Australian women who had enrolled at university for the first time. One of the women identified herself as working class and the other as middle class. Paasse found that, for the middle class woman, the reaction of family and friends from her former life to her decision to undertake further study, was positive. However, she found herself to be increasingly less tolerant of ignorance in conversations with these friends from her former life, thus making these friendships more difficult. According to Paasse, there was a shift in her

identity from being a person who was ignorant to now being an educated person and this shift had impacted on her social relationships. The working class woman also experienced a sense of alienation from friends and social communities from her former life, for different reasons. None of these friends had been to university and did not understand why she was studying, or what she was doing. This lack of understanding caused her to feel that she had grown apart from her former friends as her interests had changed and she no longer felt that she had anything in common with these friends.

This section has reviewed the literature on mature age students. Issues faced by this cohort included pressures and challenges relating to balancing family and work commitments, with considerable time pressures being experienced. Financial pressures, the use of digital technology, academic issues, and personal issues such as lack of confidence in their new role were also reported, along with feelings of isolation from both their peers at university and also friendships formed prior to attendance at university. The provision of support was reported as being important to mature age students, particularly in the areas of finances, academic life, career advice and emotional support.

Most of the literature available on mature age students, as outlined above, focused on undergraduate students attending university or college for the first time (e.g., Kenny et al., 2007; Stone, 2009) and much of the literature reported on quantitative studies (e.g., Leder & Forgasz, 2004; Scott et al. 1996). In 1997, Wilson concluded that there was a dearth of published research on the subjective (lived) experience of mature age students. Recent research has not filled this gap in subjective understanding.

The next section of this chapter reviews the literature available on postgraduate coursework students. While it needs to be acknowledged that postgraduate coursework students may not necessarily be mature age students, many postgraduate coursework students are also mature age students. As mature age career changers often enrol in postgraduate coursework programs (Hamlin et al. 2016), it is important to understand this aspect of the career change experience in the current environment.

Postgraduate Coursework Students: Characteristics of Experience

As noted in Chapter 1, postgraduate coursework programs have surpassed postgraduate research study programs to become the most popular form of postgraduate study in Australia. Research into postgraduate coursework students has found that they have quite different needs and views from other students. There is also a clear distinction between on-campus and external off-campus postgraduate coursework students

(Coulthard, 2000). According to Coulthard, the most common reason for undertaking postgraduate coursework study was to gain credentials for a new career, that is, these students were likely to be career changers. Therefore this study focused on postgraduate coursework students who were studying on-campus as part of their career change experience. The current study considered postgraduate coursework programs in which coursework was the sole or predominant element as this aligns with what many people understand as 'postgraduate coursework' in the Australian context. Smith et al. (2010) outlined how, in the United Kingdom, postgraduate coursework students are known as postgraduate (taught) students (PGT) which distinguishes them from postgraduate research students (PGR).

The experiences of postgraduate coursework students has received much less attention than the experiences of undergraduate coursework or postgraduate research students, either in Australia or overseas (Watson, Johnson & Walker, 2005). Postgraduate coursework students have needs and aspirations which can be distinguished from both undergraduate students and postgraduate research students (McInnis, James & Morris, 1995). Hamlin et al. (2106) considered that it was likely that the traditional university program structure with a framework of the undergraduate degree, followed by the postgraduate research degree, had contributed to the invisibility of the growing numbers of postgraduate coursework students. They outlined how some academic staff at universities considered research postgraduate studies to have more status or importance than postgraduate coursework studies, therefore less consideration was given to the needs of this cohort.

There is little literature available on the experiences of postgraduate coursework students who are studying in universities outside of Australia. The reason for the absence of research is that international coursework programs cannot readily be compared with those in Australia, as they are often designed to accommodate students who have completed a broader range of undergraduate degrees than are available here (Reid et al., 2005). For students who hold undergraduate qualifications, the transition to higher levels of coursework study (e.g., Postgraduate Diploma, coursework Masters' program) can be just as daunting a transition as that experienced by undergraduate students to their new study environment. Postgraduate coursework students share some common characteristics with other students, such as mature age learners, but they have a particular set of needs and are less well understood than undergraduate students or postgraduate research students (Watson et al., 2005). Symons (2001) found that counsellors and learning advisers considered that university staff had little

understanding of the problems of transition for this cohort. They also found that there was no specific university wide approach to help these students negotiate their transition.

Much of the literature available on the postgraduate coursework experience focuses on quantitative surveys that aim to gain insight into students' teaching and learning experiences. For example, in the United Kingdom, one of the surveys conducted annually by the Higher Education Academy (2017) is the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) for graduates of postgraduate coursework programs. In Australia, one example is the Graduate Careers Australia (2016) Australian Graduate Survey, which was provided to all university graduates and included a section for postgraduate coursework students. In addition, universities collect data on student perception of the quality of teaching and courses in postgraduate coursework programs in their institutions. One example is the Postgraduate Taught Course Survey conducted annually by Trinity College Dublin (2017). The survey is provided to all students who have undertaken a postgraduate taught program, on completion of the academic year. Another example is Student Evaluation of Courses (SEC) and Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) questionnaires administered by Australian universities to all students, including postgraduate coursework students, each semester. In the context of these surveys and measures, descriptions of postgraduate coursework student experiences are often derived from institutional statistics (Cluett & Skene, 2006). Other reports of postgraduate coursework programs focus on the growth, diversity and quality assurance of these programs (McInnis et al. 1995) or the delivery technologies which may be utilised for postgraduate coursework (James & Beattie, 1996). The following section reviews the literature on issues in the lives of postgraduate coursework students.

Personal Life

As with mature age students, the literature found that postgraduate coursework students experience problems balancing their studies with their other commitments (Cluett & Skene, 2006) and finding a satisfactory fit between academic demands and those of their family, professional and personal life (Watson et al., 2005). Hamlin et al. (2016) made the point that many postgraduate coursework students had not only the challenges of a work-life balance, but of a work-life-study balance. As this cohorts' time was impacted by increasingly diverse pressures, they required more flexibility in their academic programs than undergraduate students (Forsyth, 2009). The students reported good support from family and friends, but some experienced difficulties with financial

arrangements and time constraints (Watson et al., 2005). As many postgraduate coursework students are of mature age, financial and time concerns may also be linked to the responsibilities that accrue to their mature age student status.

Professional networking.

Reid et al. (2005) found that professional networking was an important part of the postgraduate coursework student experience. As on-campus students, postgraduate coursework students were able to expand their professional networks through social contact with staff and colleagues. They could learn from each other's professional and life experiences and they could develop important study and professional networks (James & Beattie, 1996). If a postgraduate coursework student was also a career changer, the development of these new professional networks was an important part of transitioning into the new career as the process of changing careers often resulted in the loss of professional networks associated with the previous career (Bauer, 2011). When contact with other postgraduate coursework students was successfully negotiated, this contact assisted in the development of a group identity that was important to a cohort that could be small in number and belong to neither the undergraduate nor postgraduate research student communities, although classes could be shared at times with both these groups (Cluett & Skene, 2006).

Social interaction.

On a personal level, social interactions were reported as being an important part of the learning environment for many postgraduate coursework students (James & Beattie, 1996). Cluett & Skene (2006) found that many postgraduate coursework students expressed an interest in becoming involved in social activities, and said that making friends was one of the most enjoyable aspects of undertaking postgraduate coursework. These social interactions provided them with important stimulus and support during their studies (James & Beattie, 1996). However, only around half of the cohort actually engaged in social activities related to the university (Cluett & Skene, 2006) and this may have been related to the many demands on their time, such as family and work responsibilities (Lang, 2000). Alternatively, Watson et al. (2005) argued that perhaps there was a lack of opportunity on campus for many postgraduate coursework students to talk and interact with like-minded people and to form viable affinity groups.

University Studies

While mature age students (who could be undertaking undergraduate studies) experienced problems related to their university studies, postgraduate coursework students also experienced problems related to their academic program. However, these problems had different characteristics from the undergraduate mature age student experience. Cluett and Skene (2006) found in their surveys of 182 postgraduate coursework students at the University of Western Australia, that many of their respondents found their first year of postgraduate coursework study daunting and overwhelming. In her interviews with six postgraduate coursework students at the University of Queensland, Symons (2001) reported that students felt that they had been "thrown in the deep end" and really struggled to "get a handle on" what they were doing (p. 11) and there was some doubt among this cohort around whether they had made the correct decision in coming back to university.

Research has found that the difficulties experienced by this cohort could be related to the length of time since the students had completed their initial tertiary studies (Bauer, 2011; Crow et al., 1990; Ferrier & Martin, 1992; Symons, 2001). Many of these students had not moved directly from their undergraduate studies into their postgraduate coursework program (Ferrier & Martin, 1992). Symons (2001), in her report from questionnaires, interviews and focus groups administered to 65 postgraduate coursework students at Glasgow University (in addition to six University of Queensland students), found that the postgraduate coursework cohort faced significant problems with their academic programs as they had a number of years away from study prior to enrolling in their postgraduate program. These problems included worrying about expectations from academic staff as the academic program was a 'step up' from their previous degree, and possibly study in a new discipline area. An ethnographic study of 13 coursework graduate students in the United States found that some career changers had a fear of their ability to successfully complete graduate studies after not having been in an academic program for a considerable amount of time (Crow et al., 1990). The length of time since this cohort had been students also meant that their expectations of their academic program were not met because these expectations were based on their prior study programs, which had been completed many years earlier (Bauer, 2011).

A range of issues for postgraduate coursework students, related to their academic programs, have been reported by researchers, including a perception on the part of students that academic staff were making assumptions about the students' prior knowledge, anxiety around coping with the academic program, the need for academic

skills enhancement and the use of digital technology in the academic environment (Bauer, 2011; James & Beattie, 1996; Lang, 2000; Morgan, 2014; Stagg & Kimmins, 2014). Bauer (2011), from her qualitative research with eight mature age career change postgraduate coursework students in Australia, found that this cohort experienced difficulties with academic issues. Their perception was that there was an assumption by university staff that because they were postgraduate students, they had the required academic skills for their course. They often did not have these skills as it was some time since they had been in the academic environment. This issue was similar to one impacting on mature age students who perceived that academic staff made assumptions of their competence with digital technology, as outlined previously. In the United Kingdom, Morgan (2014) found in her survey of 233 postgraduate coursework students (postgraduate taught students) that these students were anxious or very anxious concerning their ability to cope with their academic program. Lang (2000) found that the postgraduate coursework student cohort had a need for practical skills enhancement in the area of academic writing as they worried about academic expectations and standards. Their field of study could be quite different from what they experienced in their undergraduate training. This cohort had concerns around critical thinking and referencing, academic writing, organisation of their study and the use of libraries and digital technology and the availability of resources. Stagg and Kimmins (2014), who worked with groups of postgraduate coursework students at a university in Australia, reported that many postgraduate coursework mature age students returning to study after a long break cited familiarity with card catalogues, but not the electronic environment of current academic libraries. As postgraduate coursework students were often enrolled in courses of a shorter length than undergraduate students, there was limited opportunity to develop the generic skills to learn in their changed environment (Wozniak et al., 2009).

A further issue was that not all postgraduate coursework students felt confident about learning technologies and course delivery methods requiring technical skills (James & Beattie, 1996). The use of digital technology was problematic for many postgraduate coursework students. For example, in the study by Bauer (2011), some students reported that they were required to produce their own web page as part of an assessment. Due to their lack of previous experience with this digital technology, they were unable to successfully complete this assessment requirement. They were reluctant to approach academic or administrative staff for assistance when required, due to their perception that there was a general belief on the part of university staff that because

they had completed an undergraduate degree that they should already have the required technological skills. They preferred to ask other students about the assessment. Similarly, Symons (2001) found mature age coursework students tended to ask other students for advice when necessary.

This section has reviewed the literature on postgraduate coursework students. It showed that many postgraduate coursework students experienced similar problems to those faced by mature age students more generally, such as time and family pressures, often with the loss of social interactions. The literature also showed that professional networking was important. Other issues reported in the literature on this cohort included feelings of being overwhelmed and daunted by their study programme, with problems related to their academic program and the use of libraries and learning technologies.

As outlined earlier, a third characteristic of the mature age postgraduate coursework students in this study was that they were making a career change. While little recent research of the career change transition experience was found, a summary of the available literature is provided in the following section.

Career Change Students: Characteristics of Experience

This section reviews the literature relating to career change into any profession (i.e., other than into teaching, specifically). A career change may be a planned change, such as a decision to undertake study in order to qualify for a new profession, or it may be an unplanned change, due to less controllable factors like job loss or economic need. The context of the career change may influence the experience of the career change transition. For example a person who is starting a new career due to job loss in the former career may have different experiences during the transition than the person who voluntarily leaves a former profession because they have new interests and see more opportunities in a new career (Gomes & Teixeira, 2000). As stated in Chapter 1, studies on career change into any profession are scarce. A review of the literature showed that much of the available literature relates to research conducted between 2000 and 2005. The following section outlines this literature on issues relating to the career change experience.

One study on the experience of career change was undertaken by Gomes and Teixeira (2000). Their study involved seven participants who had originally chosen a profession that required a university qualification and had subsequently freely chosen to change to another profession that also required university training. They interviewed the participants about the career change transition experience. The topics canvassed in the

interviews included reasons for making the career change, the experience of returning to study, challenges encountered during the transition, and an evaluation of the new profession. Gomes and Teixeira found that the process of career change could have resulted from a process where alternative career paths or activities began to interest individuals. Alternatively, the change could be sudden when a critical point was reached and an immediate decision to change was made. The career change was seen by some participants as a search for interpersonal development, self-determination and increased self-esteem. Other individuals saw the career change as an opportunity to expand their personal capacities and interests, integrating all their previous professional experience.

In another study, Wise and Millard (2005) interviewed ten participants who had experienced a voluntary career change in their mid-thirties. They explored topics such as the reaction to making the decision to change careers, issues faced during the transition and adjusting to the new profession. They found that the career change decision was often made due to increased levels of self-awareness developed through maturity and life and work experiences, with a desire to find work that truly reflected the individual's identity, abilities and values. The opportunity to learn and grow, to do something for the good of society, to achieve a better work-life balance and to find a sense of purpose and direction were also important considerations when making the decision to make a career change.

In contrast to positive reasons for making a career change, Wise and Millard (2005) identified factors such as dissatisfaction with the former career, unfulfilled potential or the sense of having unfinished business to attend to. However, they also found that, after having made the voluntary decision to make a career change, participants had feelings such as relief, a sense of possibility and a sense of rejuvenation. Similarly, participants in the study by Gomes and Teixeira (2000) also experienced relief as well as an increased sense of self confidence after having made their career change decision. Some participants felt conviction for their new choice of careers, while others felt that further exploration would be required before they could fully commit to the new career.

According to Gomes and Teixeira (2000), significant others such as family and friends are often important influences on the decision to make a career change. When making the decision concerning their choice of study program and future profession, their study participants did not generally conduct a realistic evaluation of personal interests and characteristics of the future profession, with a number of participants being guided by significant others in this decision. It is not surprising, therefore, that shortly after starting the course, there were moments of doubt by participants of their choice of

new career and their study program, although most participants in their study chose to stay with their choice of study program. Gomes and Teixeira (2000) found that upon commencing their new career, study participants were generally happy with their decision to have made a career change into a new profession. Feelings of having matured and undergone a personal transformation were common, along with feelings of being less tied down and capable of making changes in other spheres of life. Wise and Millard (2005) reported many benefits resulting from the career change, such as greater happiness, a more balanced life, increased confidence and maturity and improved personal relationships. However, they found that in spite of positive reactions to the career change, participants also found adjusting to the new career to be exhausting and demanding. In addition, the career change often resulted in a decrease in salary in the new profession.

Wise and Millard (2005) found that in order for an individual to adjust satisfactorily to the new career, it was important that employers in the new profession acknowledge the previous professional identity and achievement levels of career change individuals. They also found it was important for career change individuals to be flexible and open to new opportunities. Many individuals did not see one particular career change as their final career change as the career change experience had offered many new opportunities, which gave individuals the confidence to make further changes if they stopped enjoying their current career, or felt they had stopped progressing in their career, or should circumstances force a career change.

One of the few studies on the experience of being a mature age student undertaking a career change was a qualitative study conducted by Li (2009) into five mature age undergraduate students in Australia who were in career transition. These career changers were completing their studies in order to prepare to enter a number of different professions. Li reported that, similarly to mature age and postgraduate coursework students, during the career change transition students faced a range personal issues, including time management, to maintain their life balance and the ability to acquire knowledge and skills and seek assistance when necessary. They also needed to develop plans and strategies for success based on critical reflection. The building of networks was very important. Another finding was that support from family and friends, whether it was emotional, academic or financial was also important. The students considered the support provided by tutors, lecturers, course co-ordinators, librarians and practicum supervisors to be highly relevant to their success.

Postgraduate students found work experience in the new profession (e.g., professional experience), undertaken during the period of study, was advantageous as it provided an opportunity to further their understanding of the occupation by the individual, and allowed them to develop relevant professional networks (Wise & Millard, 2005). This exposure led to increased levels of confidence in the individuals and assisted with the decision around whether the individual had made the right decision to enter the new profession (Wise & Millard, 2005).

When outlining the limitations to their study of career change, Wise and Millard (2005) stated that their interviews illustrated the point of view of the participants at a particular time in their careers. They considered that a longitudinal study would provide an understanding of the career change process over time. As their study participants were at different stages of their careers at the time of the interviews, Wise & Millard acknowledged that study participants may have displayed different levels of recall in terms of their experiences and may have re-interpreted events to construct their career narratives. Their finding is part of the rationale for the longitudinal methodology adopted for this study.

This section has outlined literature relating to career changers and students who were undertaking studies in order to make a career change into any profession. The findings included whether the decision to make a career change was gradual or sudden, positive reasons for making the career change, such as increased levels of self-awareness; desiring opportunities to learn and grow and do good for society and finding a sense of purpose and direction. Other reasons included dissatisfaction with former careers or having a sense of unfulfilled potential. The findings also showed that significant others had an influence on career changers. While this cohort were often happier after the change, they also needed to have flexibility and an acknowledgment from their new employers of their prior professional experience. Other issues included the need to develop plans and strategies for career success, maintain their life balance and relationships, develop support networks and to manage issues with finances. Professional networks also needed to be built, as was the case with postgraduate coursework students.

A summary of the key themes identified from the literature on mature age postgraduate coursework students making a career change into a new profession is provided in Table 2.1. below. These themes relate to the three separate characteristics of being of mature age, undertaking postgraduate coursework studies and making a change

into a new profession as outlined in Chapter 1. Some of the themes cross boundaries as they relate to more than one of the three characteristics.

Table 2.1. Summary of common characteristics of experiences for mature age, postgraduate coursework, career change students

Mature Age Students	*Postgraduate Coursework Students*	*Career Change Students*
• Work-life balance • Family pressures • Time pressures • Financial pressures • Use of digital technology • Confidence • Social isolation • Requirement for support: academic, emotional, financial	• Work-life balance • Family pressures • Time pressures • Financial pressures • Study program flexibility • Use of libraries and learning technology • Feeling overwhelmed and daunted • Loss of social networks • Establishing professional networks • Requirement for support: academic, emotional, financial	• Work-life balance • Family pressures • Time pressures • Financial pressures • Development of career plan • Establishing professional networks • Requirement for support: academic, emotional

The above table shows that while these three characteristics have many commonalities, there are also differences. Mature age students were more likely to experience issues relating to confidence and social isolation, while postgraduate coursework students often felt overwhelmed and daunted. The development of a career plan was important for career change students.

There have been a number of quantitative studies into the mature age, postgraduate coursework career change student experience, as outlined above, however, there appears to be little qualitative research on this topic. While this study concerns mature age career change generally, the specific context is the teaching profession. As the participants in this study were making a career change into teaching, the following section reviews the literature on making a career change specific to the teaching profession. Williams (2013) stated that there are many parallels between the decision making for prospective teachers who were changing careers and those entering other fields of endeavour. Therefore, the findings of this study can be applied to career changers into other professions.

Career Change Specific to the Teaching Profession

While the above literature on the characteristics and experiences of mature age, postgraduate coursework career change students also applies to individuals who are

making a career change into the teaching profession, this section provides further details of the cohort making a career change into teaching. Literature relating to reasons for deciding to make a career change into teaching and the timing of the decision to make the career change are explored in this section. In addition, this section includes an exploration of issues that may be faced by these students during their professional experience placements and early career experiences in their new profession.

Reasons for Choosing the Teaching Profession

According to Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003), a number of factors influenced professionals in their decision to make a career change into teaching. The decision was multifaceted and complex. Different career histories and trajectories, along with factors in an individual's personal life, resulted in different perceptions of teaching as an attractive career choice. This perception occurred prior to actually beginning employment and provided a justification for the time and financial investment involved in retraining for a new career.

As Chin and Young (2007) contended, candidates who come to teaching as a second career differed in their motivation for choosing the teaching profession from those who chose it as a first career. Career change teachers make the transition from previously successful careers for reasons that are more complex than previous research has shown and they are motivated by different factors from those enrolling in undergraduate initial teacher education programs (Laming & Horne, 2013). They found that teachers who successfully completed undergraduate programs were more likely to have chosen teaching for pragmatic reasons, such as family responsibilities, while graduate entry teachers had more diverse reasons for choosing teaching as a career. In addition, according to Laming and Horne (2013), their choice to become a teacher often resulted in a significant drop in income and social status. Many mature age career changers into teaching had entered graduate teacher education programs at considerable personal sacrifice, and had more lucrative careers prior to the decision to make a career change (Bullough & Knowles, 1990).

However, Hart Research Associates (2010) urged caution in regard to career changers into teaching. They asserted that while public discussion around career changers into teaching often focused on individuals moving into the teaching profession from high-level professional jobs, and who made financial sacrifices to enter the profession, the reality was more complicated. They found that these individuals were in the minority of career changers and that only one in three career changers had taken a

pay cut to teach. Hart Research Associates considered that for many, the shift to teaching was an upward move in salary, or no worse than a lateral move, particularly for individuals who had less than ten years employment prior to their career change into teaching. However, a significant proportion of those for whom the move to teaching resulted in a decreased salary possessed a maths or science background and/or had been in the workforce for more than ten years prior to their career change into teaching. The issue of future salary or financial security is just one of many reasons mature age professionals decide to make a career change into the teaching profession. Reasons for making a career change into teaching have been discussed in terms of push-pull factors (Anthony & Ord, 2007) and career changer profiles (Anthony & Ord, 2008). The following sections provide a discussion of these factors.

Push and pull factors.

In relation to the teaching profession, there are initiating forces or factors that lead individuals into making the decision to make a career change into this profession. These forces, identified as "push" and "pull" (Anthony & Ord, 2007, p. 5) work in unison to influence the decision to make a career change and influence not only the reasons for making the career change, but also the timing of the career change. Push factors are those factors which provide momentum towards seriously considering teaching as a choice for a new career. These factors include losing one's previous job or changing location and being unable to find an alternative job in the same field, or feeling dissatisfied with one's job. This dissatisfaction can arise from such factors as feeling unhappy or lacking fulfilment, having undesirable work conditions, experiencing a sense of not fitting into the corporate world, having a lack of challenge or progression in the career or feeling isolated or disillusioned (Anthony & Ord, 2007; Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003; Wyatt-Smith et al., 2017).

Pull factors are those that seem to draw people into consideration of teaching as a career. Intrinsic pull factors into teaching might include perceived social orientation, a sense of mission, a desire to improve lives, being inspired by the love of a subject, teaching or young people, influences of others and a sense of civic duty or responsibility (Bunn & Wake, 2015; Dieterich & Panton, 1996; Freidus, 1994; Hunter-Johnson, 2015; Wyatt-Smith, 2017). Dieterich & Panton (1996) found in their research that many of the 100 participants who had applied for a postgraduate initial teacher education program originally came from professions that lacked the social orientation of teaching, such as accounting, banking or business, and many indicated that they felt their former

careers were ‘unimportant’ in that they did not influence future generations. According to Freidus (1994) most career change teachers had a sense of mission, and wanted to make the world a better place. They had a desire to make a difference and improve the conditions of life for those they taught (Bunn & Wake, 2015). Other intrinsic motivators Bunn and Wake found included the love of the subject they wished to teach, and having a perceived personality fit with the teaching profession (2015). Wyatt-Smith et al. (2017) reported that some career changers made the decision to enter the teaching profession because of a love of young people. Some research participants were inspired by a past teacher, or came from a strong family of teachers. Civic duty and responsibility and a desire to be a change agent were two intrinsic factors cited by career changers in initial teacher education programs in the research conducted by Hunter-Johnson.

Extrinsic pull factors include lifestyle, job security, family considerations, and access to suitable career preparation courses (Anthony & Ord, 2007; Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003; Wyatt-Smith et al., 2017). Bunn and Wake (2015) found that extrinsic factors such as the desire to gain more professional development and knowledge, the perceived benefits of the teaching profession such as retirement and health care benefits, or needing a career change due to the economy were motivators for career changes into the teaching profession. Perceived benefits such as having time for family, rather than having to spend long hours in research, and having a perception of financial security after having experienced short term research contracts were relevant factors in research findings on five PhD graduate career changers in initial teacher education programs (Whannel & Allen, 2014). Wyatt-Smith et.al. (2017) also found that career changers into teaching often made their decision for family reasons. Prior teaching experience in a different context, such as providing staff training in industry and private tuition such as music or dance, was another pull factor. This prior experience gave career changers the perception that they had the skills and/or disposition for a teaching career (Anthony & Ord, 2007).

The timing of the decision often resulted from the perception by career changers that they had reached a ‘crossroads’ in their lives at this particular point (Anthony & Ord, 2008). Often a catalyst acted as a turning point. Turning points are “episodes through which a person undergoes substantial change” (Drake, Spillane & Hufferd-Ackles, 2001, p. 22). Bauer (2011) found that the catalyst for a career change into teaching was either a gradual realisation that a current career was no longer providing fulfilment, or a major life event. Another factor, outlined by Castro and Bauml (2009), was that the

career changer had reached a time of their life when they had the financial means to incur the opportunity costs associated with returning to university.

Career change profiles.

Several researchers have sought to understand career changers into teaching by developing profiles. In this context, profiles are outlines drawn from the characteristics of career changers' decisions concerning the timing and reasons for the career change. Practical reasons for making the career change decision at any particular point in time included that other options at the time were limited, career changers had experienced an unplanned life change or were unable to find a suitable position in their current career. This group has been variously described as "Looks Good" (Anthony & Ord, 2008, p. 364), where the option of being in the teaching profession appears attractive; and "Displaced Turners" (Raggi & Troman, 2008, p. 584) where the individual may have been displaced from their previous job or career and is looking at career alternatives.

Individuals who had previous successful careers but decided that teaching was now the best career fit for their current parenting responsibilities were termed "Parent Turners" by Raggi & Troman (2008, p. 584) and simply "Parents" by Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, (2003, p. 98). Other profiles developed by Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant included "Freelancers" - individuals whose previous careers involved short term contract freelance work, and who wished to have more job security, such as musicians or artists. "Late Starters" had left school with few or no formal qualifications and had worked in a series of unskilled or semi-skilled positions. Those who had previously had short, successful, well paid careers were called "Serial Careerists" and "Young Career Changers". They had started on a previous career and now wished to make a change. The career changers outlined in each of the four profiles outlined by Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant cited employment stability and benefits in their new teaching careers as the primary factor in their decision to make a career change into teaching at a particular point in time. However, Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant considered that there was a gap between the aspirational desires of career changers into teaching and the realities of the teaching profession.

The "Converted" (Crow et al., 1990, p. 207) and "Successful Careerists" (Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003, p. 98) were professionals who had been successful in previous careers. The decision to make a career change into teaching often resulted in a considerable drop in their financial remuneration and status, however, they had a changing perspective on life and wanted a career where they felt they could

make a difference. Teaching appeared to offer this opportunity. Anthony & Ord (2008, p. 364) in their career changer profile "Time was Right", also described by Crow et al. (1990, p. 204) as "Homecomers", are outlined as individuals who had considered teaching as a possible career for a considerable period of time prior to the decision to make the change into a career in teaching. There appeared to be a convergence of this long held desire and the opening up of opportunities at this time to pursue a teaching career.

This opening up of opportunities was also relevant for career changers who had positive role models and prior experiences with teaching and who had the perception that they would be a good teacher and enjoy teaching. They are profiled by Anthony & Ord, (2008, p. 364) as "Teaching is Me", while "Self-Initiated Turners" were interested in teaching as a career because they wanted more personal fulfilment in their lives and believed teaching could provide the opportunity at this time in their career (Raggi & Troman, 2008, p. 584).

There is an additional career changer profile outlined by Crow et al. (1990, p. 212) as the "Unconverted". This group had achieved high status in other occupations and had begun their career change transition, however, they were not committed to a career teaching in the classroom. Their motive for beginning this transition at this point in their career was a dissatisfaction with their previous career and a desire for new challenges. They had a broad, vague interest in education and had decided to work in the educational field, without necessarily being in the classroom.

While researchers have profiled study participants, as outlined, this may result in 'labels' or 'categories', which is not what this current study aims to do. Profiles don't adequately describe experiences – they are reductionist, reducing the richness of the participants' stories. The career change profiles are outlined here to provide additional insight into the literature in relation to career changers into teaching, however, the profiles are not utilised in the evidence chapters of this thesis.

This section has explored the literature relating to the many and varied reasons individuals make a career change into teaching. Push and pull factors are relevant in the decision to make a career change into teaching. In addition, profiles are a useful way to characterise the many reasons that a person may make a career change into teaching. The following section explores the literature on issues experienced by mature age career changers with regard to their professional experience placements. The term 'professional experience' is used to encompass the previously used term 'practicum'.

This thesis uses the term ‘practicum’ when citing a source that uses that term. Otherwise the term ‘professional experience’ has been used.

Professional Experience

Reynolds, Howley, Southgate and Brown (2016) outlined how professional experience placements included a variety of experiences in schools and other educational settings and were designed to provide teaching skills and professional experience. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2015) stated that professional experience gives initial teacher education students the opportunity to be immersed in the culture of a school, to develop confidence in catering for different student learning needs and to understand the complex environment in which they will soon be employed. Professional experience placements were integral to initial teacher education programs (Etherington, 2009). During the practicum, student teachers were usually supervised by an experienced classroom teacher and a member of the university staff. The experience of the practicum by career change students significantly impacted on their attitudes to teaching (Hayes, 2004). The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2015) stated that initial teacher education students in postgraduate programs must complete a minimum of 60 days of professional experience.

Etherington (2009) researched the practicum experiences of ten second career accelerated pre-service graduate teacher program students in Canada. He found that the practicum was an opportunity for career changers to reveal their uniqueness as non-traditional teachers, bringing their life and professional experiences into the classroom. He also identified a perception by student teachers that their prior experiences were an advantage in the practicum experience. Positive experiences were also reported by Haggard et al. (2006) who stated that many career changers experienced the personal and professional rewards they had anticipated for their practicum, such as enjoyment of being with young people. In her in-depth research with one career changer, Williams (2010) found that the career changer was welcomed by other teachers and included in professional development meetings and conversations. The participant was able to draw on her previous career knowledge to observe the social dynamics and power relationships in the staffroom. She felt her life and work experiences were recognised, valued and appreciated. Being included in their social networks lead to her developing a sense of belonging. Therefore, she felt very comfortable in the practicum environment and her confidence increased significantly during this time.

However, there were also challenges and tensions for career changers during their professional experience placement. According to Johnson & Kardos (2005) "teachers who enter at mid-career often bring with them expectations about their workplace formed on the basis of their experiences in other settings" (p. 11). In his mixed method study of 75 pre-service teacher education students, Cherubini (2008) outlined how students over the age of 40 had anticipated a greater degree of respect, honesty and compassion from their teacher colleagues during their practicum. Cherubini conceded that this expectation may be related to the experiences of the cohort in their former careers, or a comparison to schooling experiences from the distant past. In addition, many career changers found the practicum experience demanding and challenging in the context of having to deal with time and family issues concurrently (Haggard et al., 2006).

The section has outlined the literature on the professional experience placement experiences (practicums) of mature age career changers in initial teacher education programs. Their experiences included personal and professional rewards, such as recognition of life and work experiences, as well as challenges, such as prior expectations of their teaching colleagues net being met. The next section of this chapter reviews the literature on the experiences of mature age career changers as they begin their new careers.

Career Change Beginning Teachers

While many beginning teachers will face a range of issues in their first year of teaching in the classroom (e.g., see Brouwer & Korthagen, 2005; Churchill & Walkington, 2002; Eifler & Potthoff, 1998), mature age career change beginning teachers also face challenges and pressures specific to their cohort and these issues are discussed in this section. As Teasdale-Smith (2007) contended, there may be an assumption by school leaders that a person who has experienced concurrent and challenging life events would be resilient; in Teasdale-Smith's research these included experiencing a company merger, divorce, being a single parent, and serious health issues. Teasdale-Smith found that this assumption could result in the viewpoint that such a person would already have the skills necessary to ensure a smooth and easy transition into the classroom, although the career changer may not have these skills. Additionally, mature age career changers were no longer familiar with the culture and structure of schools and the curriculum. As Watters and Diezmann (2013) note, these career changers may have spent up to 30 years in their former profession, and hence lost insights into the contemporary practices

of schools. Their experiences of school were dim (sometimes 'rose-coloured') memories by this time.

One of the challenges faced by the career change cohort in their career transition is that of being in a novice role, possibly after having experienced success and seniority in their former careers. Having previous career experience was not enough for the successful transition as novices into a new and entirely different profession (Mayotte, 2003). Mayotte found that the novice role was difficult for career changers and resulted in feelings of uneasiness due to the contrast between the high levels of competence in their former career and their lack of knowledge and skill in their new career. This may result in feelings of incompetence (Crow et al., 1990).

Career changers bring valuable skills from their former careers, such as managing, organising, working with adults and managing stress, to the teaching profession (Crow et al, 1990). However, these skills also resulted in challenges as the cohort began their teaching careers in the school environment. Powers (2002) reported a perception by career changers of a lack of guidance and direction, and an unwillingness on the part of school administrators to engage career changers in collaborative decision making. In Powers' study, the administrators were not perceived as creating a warm, caring working environment, and for these career changers, who may have experienced positive interactions and working environments in their former careers, these interactions were challenging. Their perception was that, contrary to their expectations of support given to novices, they were not being given the levels of support that they required as novice teachers.

Facility with the micro politics of organisations was a double edged sword for some career changers; on the one hand, having the skills and experience to cope with organisational bureaucracy, but on the other, having a decreased tolerance for organisational mismanagement and lack of support (Watters & Diezmann, 2012). Some too, were frustrated that their organisational and management skills and experience, developed in their former careers, were not recognised (Williams, 2010).

The transfer of competencies in content skills developed in former occupational environments was another challenge faced by career changers. Earlier professional experiences did play an important role during the transition into teaching, but the possession of previous competencies did not automatically imply that these competencies were easily transferred into the new professional environment (Tigchelaar, 2008). While Chambers (2002) found that this cohort believed that responsibly teaching their subject matter involved making links between the real world

and the classroom, Crow et al. (1990) reported that they had difficulties making connections between the content skills they had utilised in their former careers and transferring those skills to the classroom setting. Haggard et al. (2006) also reported that the transfer of knowledge in content areas to the classroom was a challenge for many career changers.

Due to the length of time since their own experiences in secondary school, career changers experienced problems coming to terms with their role as a teacher. They had forgotten what school was like, or their memory was of superseded schooling practices. In addition, they had little recent and relevant experience dealing with school age students, which could inform their thinking on student-teacher relations. And they did not have the personal resources to build an instructionally useful image of students (Bullough & Knowles, 1990). Novak and Knowles (1992), in one of their case studies of a career changer who was a beginning teacher, outlined how this career changer had no experience with school age students, had difficulty relating to them and had no clear conception of the role of the teacher. His own experiences with schooling and teachers had been negative and had occurred many years prior to his becoming a beginning teacher, resulting in his experiencing difficulties in his role as a teacher in the classroom. Teasdale-Smith (2007) questioned whether beginning career change teachers, who were unfamiliar with a younger generation and who had previously worked in careers where compliance, obedience and service are key values, were more likely to struggle in relating to today's youth. In this situation, she suggested that attitudes, learnings and dispositions learned in previous careers may need to be un-learned to successfully negotiate the beginning teacher role.

This section has outlined literature exploring the challenges and pressures experienced by mature age career changers into teaching. These challenges included a perceived assumption by others that the career changers' prior experience meant that they did not require additional support, coping with being in a novice role after a prior career, dealing with bureaucracy, transferring competencies into the classroom and possibly having an outdated view of the teaching profession.

The studies of career change beginning teachers above, in the main, used quantitative methodologies which did not provide an in-depth exploration into the participants' experiences during the period of transition into the new career. Further, much of this research focused on the experiences of undergraduate students or students completing short teaching credential programs. What is missing in the literature are detailed accounts of longitudinal research into the experiences of mature age students

completing postgraduate coursework to make a career change. Present studies in the main stop at entry into the new career. Studies that reach into the career changers' transition in the new context as they settle into their new career would be useful.

Discussion

This chapter has reviewed the literature on issues relating to the characteristics of students who were of mature age and undertaking postgraduate coursework studies to effect a career change. The intersection of these three characteristics resulted in their facing issues that often overlapped and included: academic studies (Abbott-Chapman, 2006); the use of digital technology (Kantanis, 2002; Kenny et al., 2007); time management (Davies & Williams, 2001); work-life balance (Leder & Forgasz, 2004; Tindle & Lincoln, 2002); financial pressures (Grier & Johnston, 2008); confidence (Bauer, 2011) and negotiating friendships and professional networks (Risquez et al. 2008). This review also addressed the specific literature that looked at mature age career changers who were making the career change into the teaching profession (Chin & Young, 2007; Laming & Horne, 2013). This literature showed a variety of push and pull factors that influenced the decision to make a career change into teaching (Anthony & Ord, 2007). A discussion of the literature on career change profiles added further depth of information on the career change decision (Anthony & Ord, 2008).

While the literature showed that there were positive experiences with the professional experience placements for some research participants, such as being welcomed by other teachers (Williams, 2010), there were challenges for others, such as a perception by career changers of a lack of respect, honesty and compassion from their teaching colleagues (Cherubini, 2008). According to the literature, early career experiences also provided challenges, such as being perceived as being skilled, due to a professional background (Teasdale-Smith, 2007); accepting the role of being a novice after having formerly being in senior positions (Mayotte, 2003) and dealing with bureaucracy in the education system (Watters & Diezmann, 2012). The settling in to the early career is a pivotal element of the career change process.

As previously stated, the experiences of students with the three characteristics of being of mature age, undertaking a postgraduate coursework program and being a career changer can be relevant to career changers into any profession. In addition, the literature on professional experience placements and early career experiences can be useful for career changers into other professions. In order to explore issues related to the transition of mature age, postgraduate coursework career changers, a theoretical framework of

transition theory and narrative inquiry methodology in a longitudinal research design was used to undertake this research. This framework includes three stages of transition – moving out, moving through and moving in; and four aspects of the transition experience: situation, self, support and strategies as suggested by Anderson et al. (2012). Further explanation of the framework used in this study is provided in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3
Theoretical Framework

The previous chapter reviewed the research literature and identified a gap in the literature in studies of mature age, postgraduate coursework career changers. While contributing to our knowledge of transition into teaching, the primarily quantitative methods utilised in these studies lacked an in-depth or longitudinal understanding of the experiences of transition into teaching. Wyatt-Smith et al. (2017), in their report on why individuals chose the teaching profession, stated that their report provided the basis for a longitudinal investigation of who chooses teaching and the impacts of that choice. As previously outlined, the current study explored stories of the lived experiences of individuals undergoing such a transition. Transition occurs over time, and is transformational. To access the deeply human experience of transition, this study has sought the stories of transition over an extended period of time – from the participants' entry into the postgraduate program through to their settling in to their new career. This chapter outlines the framework of transition theory and the narrative inquiry methodology used in this study. The diagram below, Figure 3.1., illustrates the structure of the chapter.

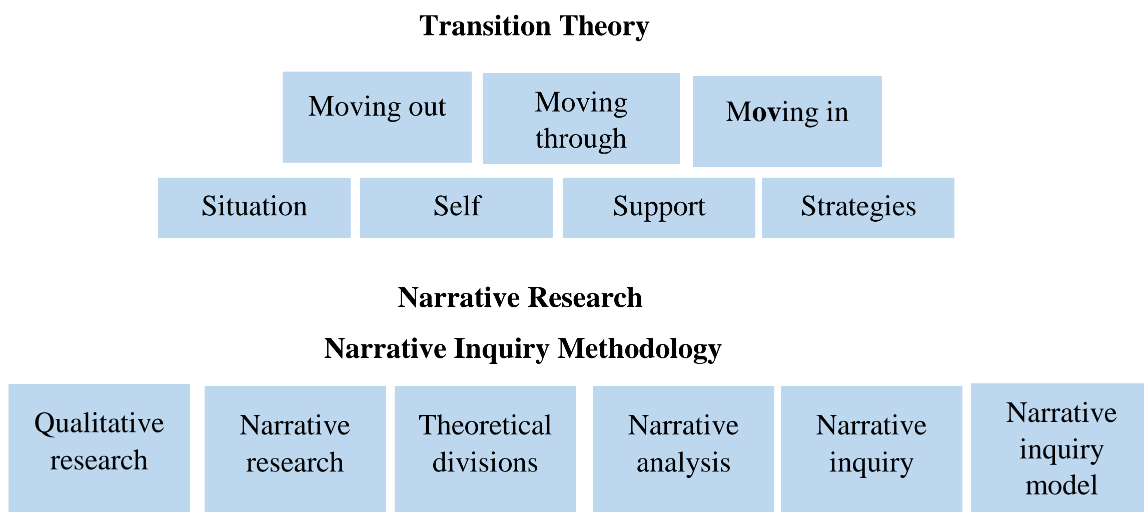

Figure 3.1. Structure of chapter: Theoretical framework

The chapter begins with a discussion of transition theory, including three stages and four aspects of transition, as outlined by Anderson et al. (2012). This discussion is followed by an outline of qualitative research theory and in particular one qualitative approach, narrative research. Theoretical divisions in narrative research, narrative analysis, narrative inquiry methodology, and a model for this narrative inquiry study are outlined. An explanation of the alignment of transition theory with narrative inquiry

methodology is then provided. The following section begins with an outline of transition theory.

Transition Theory

Transition is defined by Anderson et al. (2102) as “any event . . . that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions and roles” (p. 39). Transition involves periods of change that alternate with periods of stability with this altering sequence being linked to life events and various roles we assume, for example, parent, student or worker. Both anticipated and unanticipated transitions are opportunities for learning and development, with the learning often being additive or developmental in nature (Merriam, 2005). However, Latham and Green (1997) argued that such movement is invariably problematic, regardless of circumstance. Undergoing a transition involves letting go of aspects of the self, as well as former roles, and requires learning new roles (Brown & Lent, 2000). Individuals continuously experience transitions throughout their lives with the transition process affecting the whole person, their emotional, physical and mental functioning, with the possibility of both positive and negative effects (Anderson et al., 2012). Consequently, transition is an active process that requires energy, strategies and courage (Bloch & Richmond, 1998).

There have been two main theories of transition. Bridges (1980) posits three stages of transition: The first stage is ‘endings’, where individuals are moving into a period of transition in their lives, due to personal or social changes, for example, being retrenched from employment. The stage that follows is the ‘neutral zone’ where individuals are moving through the transition and may begin to feel disconnected from the past, and confused or disoriented as they prepare for the next stage of the transition, ‘making a beginning’. At this third stage, individuals are beginning to establish themselves in a new lifestyle or employment, with new routines and relationships.

The second widely cited transition model was developed by Schlossberg (1984, cited in Anderson et al., 2012, p. 184) and further developed by Anderson et al. (2012). Schlossberg’s original model of worklife transitions theorised four stages of the work lifecycle. When an employee begins a new job, they are ‘moving in’, where they are learning about the expectations regarding the job and workplace culture and the explicit and implicit norms. As they continue their employment, they are ‘moving through’, and may be fast tracked, plateaued and caught in between the two. At this stage, they may feel bored or stuck and have competing demands. The next stage of the work lifecycle is ‘moving out’. Individuals could enter this stage due to a decision to leave the job, retire

from the workplace, or make a career change. At this stage, issues for individuals include the loss and reformation of goals, along with ambivalence around the change. A further stage that individuals could experience is ‘trying to move in again’, where they may be unemployed and feeling frustrated and despairing.

This study uses an adaptation of the transition theories of Bridges (1980) and Schlossberg (1984). To anchor the focus on career transition, Schlossberg’s model, as outlined by Anderson et al. (2012), is predominantly used. The participants in this study were making a career change by leaving former employment (moving out/endings), undertaking studies to prepare for a new career (moving through/neutral zone) and beginning new employment (moving in/making a beginning). In the moving out stage of career transition, the process of leaving one set of relationships, roles, routines and assumptions and establishing new ones takes time (Anderson et al., 2012) and it is a time when individuals “are not sure of the guidelines, informal rules or accepted ways to behave” (Leibowitz & Schlossberg, 1982, p. 13). As a career transition commences, individuals are letting go of familiar routines and former colleagues and friends. During the next stage, moving through, individuals are facing issues related to uncertainty and changing demands as they move through their transition and prepare for their new career. In the final phase, moving in, individuals have commenced new routines and roles, and have new assumptions, colleagues and friends. Within the stages of worklife transitions, Schlossberg (1984) theorised four interrelated aspects of transition: situation, self, support and strategies. The first aspect - situation - is discussed in the following section.

Situation

The situation or context for the transition is important (Anderson, et al., 2012). Early questions to be addressed by the person experiencing the transition focus on what triggered the transition. The issue of whether the transition was anticipated or unanticipated is relevant. Relevant triggers could be external, such as losing a job and being unable to find another, or internal, such as an individual’s perceived need for personal growth or change. A trigger causes an individual to look at themselves and their lives in a different way.

Timing is a feature of situation and is relevant to the transition process. Issues such as why the transition occurred at this point in time, and whether life factors and context made it easier or more difficult to go through the transition process had an effect on how individuals dealt with the transition process. The expected duration of the

transition process affects the ease or difficulty of dealing with the issues associated with the transition. Anderson et al. (2012) noted that a transition that has an anticipated time frame after which time it is expected that the transition will be complete results in less stress to the individual. Concurrent stresses will impact on the transition process for individuals. Sometimes, transitions in one area of a person's life will result in other stresses during the transition, resulting in a negative impact on the process. A number of aspects of the self are important in the transition process, as outlined below.

Self

The second aspect of the transition process, as outlined by Anderson et al. (2012) relates to the self. This concept of self involves the dimensions of salience and balance, resilience, self-efficacy and meaning making as critical aspects of career transitions. Salience is the importance of work in one's life. There are a number of possible life roles we adopt in addition to being a worker, for example, student, citizen and partner. These life roles assume different levels of importance in a person's life at different times (Super, 1980). As long ago as the 1980's Super and Knasel (1981) noted there was a growing need in our culture to achieve a balance between our work and personal lives. Balance is characterised in this context by the interplay of work, love and play. They proposed the term, 'career adaptability' to denote the balance each individual seeks between the world of work and his or her personal environment.

Resilience is not a specific characteristic, but a blend of characteristics in an individual. Barrett (2004) outlined five characteristics of resilience: being positive, focused, organised, proactive and flexible. By being positive, an individual focuses on new opportunities presented by the transition, while being focused involves having a clear vision of what the individual wants to achieve from the transition. To successfully navigate the transition, an individual needs to have the ability to swiftly convert data to information, then organise this information in an effective plan for moving forward in the transition. Acting in the face of uncertainty that accompanies the transition process and taking calibrated risks shows proactivity. Flexibility is drawing effectively on a wide range of internal and external resources to develop creative strategies for responding to the changes of the transition.

Self-efficacy predicts how one will negotiate transitions. Bandura (1982) defined self-efficacy as "judgements of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" (p. 122). These judgements will determine how much effort a person is willing to expend and how long a person will persist when presented

with a challenge. Therefore, a person with a strong sense of efficacy will direct their attention and effort to meeting a challenge in a particular environment. Self-efficacy is the result of previous successes or failures when faced with similar challenges. An individual who feels highly stressed in a situation could have an issue with his or her level of self-efficacy in that environment.

Many people today want to find a sense of purpose and meaning in their career and experience a sense of connectedness and community in the workplace. Meaning making is a core concept related to finding meaning in the workplace, giving a sense of purpose (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Lips-Wiersma (2002) outlined four purposes that were significant and meaningful in career transitions. These purposes are "developing and becoming self" (self-knowledge and personal growth); "unity with others" (sharing values and belonging); "expressing self" (creating and achieving, influencing others) and "serving others" (making a difference) (p. 511). When individuals are undergoing these changes in the personal conditions of their lives, the influences of others, in terms of support, is important.

Support

Support is one of the aspects of a successful negotiation of a transition. In order to deal with issues that accompany the transition process, support from others becomes very important. For example, with regard to the situation triggering the transition, as outlined above, where an individual has lost her or his job and been unable to find another, support from significant others, as well as institutional support, may be required. Issues relating to changes in the sense of self that may accompany a transition, such as the desire to achieve balance, or find a sense of meaning and purpose in life, are likely to impact on significant others in the lives of those individuals undergoing transition. Therefore, the support of those significant and impacted others can be pivotal to successful transition. There are four main sources of support which may be provided to individuals during the transition process: close relationships, family units, networks of friends and the institutions and/or communities of which the individual is a part (Anderson et al., 2012). Lowenthal & Weiss (1976) maintained that "intimate relationships – involving trust, support, understanding and the sharing of confidences" (p. 12) are an important resource during transitions.

The individual who has the support of those closest to him or her is better able to adapt to a transition (Schlossberg & Leibowitz, 1980). The family unit can also be an important source of support during the process of adaption to transition. Another

important source of support is the individual's network of friends, ranging from casual acquaintances to best friends. The possible loss of the network of friends can cause difficulties for an individual during the transition process into a new career. As many people have friendships based in the workplace, engaging in activities with their co-workers, an individual's social life may be affected by a transition into a new career Institutions and organisations can also provide support for individuals during their transition by providing relevant services and programs (Schlossberg & Leibowitz, 1980). Obtaining support is one of the strategies individuals can use to effectively negotiate their transition. A range of other strategies may also be used and these strategies are outlined below.

Strategies

Another aspect of the transition process is the use of strategies to deal with the transition. A range of strategies can be used by individuals and could be related to the personal and social conditions they are experiencing. Coping "represents some of the things that people do, their concrete efforts to deal with the life strains they encounter in their different roles" (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978, p. 5). Coping is attained by utilising strategies relating to behaviours, cognitions and perceptions (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). In order to successfully cope with the transition process, individuals need to be able to use a range of strategies (Leibowitz, Schlossberg & Shore, 1991). These strategies include negotiation, seeking advice or brainstorming a new approach to a problem. According to Lazarus & Folkman (1984) there are two types of strategies for coping with transitions: strategies that aim to change problematic situations through problem solving, and strategies utilised to minimise personal responses to issues that arise. They outline four coping modes: information seeking, taking direct action, inhibiting action and the use of problem solving mindsets to cope with the situation.

One strategy to cope with career change issues is accessing further education. Aslanian and Bricknell (1980) found that 83% of adult learners stated that their reason for learning was some past, present, or anticipated transition in their lives. According to Merriam (2005) it was reasonable to assume that many adults in classrooms were undergoing a transition in their lives. During the transition process, issues faced by individuals and their reactions to the environment continually change. Ideally, research into the transition process should involve studies conducted at several points in time to study lived experiences of individuals as they negotiate the moving out, moving through and moving in phases of the transition. There may be ambivalence on the part of the

individual to the transition process, which explains the different stories a person tells at one point in time in comparison to another point in time (Anderson et al., 2012).

Transition takes place over time, it is longitudinal in nature (Latham & Green, 1997). The study on which this thesis is based used a longitudinal research design, with narrative inquiry methodology, in order to obtain stories of the lived experiences of the participants over time, through the lenses of the three stages and four aspects of transition theory as outlined above. A range of strategies were utilised to collect evidence at several phases of the study, enabling participants to move back and forward in time in telling their stories to capture the opportunities and rewards, challenges and pressures experienced while they underwent their transition. As narrative inquiry is a form of qualitative research, the following discussion outlines tenets of qualitative research generally and narrative research specifically.

Qualitative Research Theory

A qualitative research design was chosen for this study as it enabled deep investigation of the lived experiences of study participants as they transitioned into a new career. As noted in Chapter 2 there are few qualitative studies of career transition, so this design contributed to a more in-depth understanding of the experiences of this cohort. Qualitative research is defined by Denzin & Lincoln (2011):

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, and interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

A primary purpose of qualitative research is to provide the reader with vivid, rich and highly persuasive accounts of human experience, often in complex social settings. Qualitative research includes a range of inquiry traditions in the social sciences – psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy and literature (Locke, Silverman & Spirduso, 2010). It can be utilised when a complex, detailed, understanding of an issue is needed and these details can only be established by talking

directly to people, allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we might have expected to find by referring to prior research (Cresswell, 2013).

Cresswell (2014) outlined how research approaches have three underpinning aspects – the worldview assumptions that the researcher brings to the study, the research design related to this worldview and the methods that translate the research approach into practice. A worldview is a "basic set of beliefs that guide action" (Guba, 1990, p.17). Four worldviews outlined by Cresswell (2014) include constructivist, postpositivist, transformative and pragmatic. Qualitative researchers typically utilise the philosophical assumptions of constructivism (Cresswell, 2014) and it is this approach which was used in the current study. Constructivism is a belief that "individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. As part of this belief, individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences – meanings directed toward certain objects or things" (Cresswell, 2014, p. 8). As meanings are varied and multiple, researchers look for a complexity of views, rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories. Researchers seek the participants' views of the situation being studied, with processes of interactions among individuals being of interest. The contexts in which people live and work are studied in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the study participants. As researchers' backgrounds shape their interpretation of the data, they position themselves in the research. Inquirers in the study aim to make sense of the meanings others have of the world, and generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning (Cresswell, 2014).

The second element of research, as outlined by Cresswell (2014) is the research design or strategies of inquiry that are utilised in the research. Qualitative research designs might include narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnographies and case studies, for example. This study utilised narrative research, and a detailed explanation of the research design is provided in this and the following chapter. The third element in the research framework is the specific research methods utilised for data collection. In qualitative research, these methods could include interview data, observation data, document data and audiovisual data. In the current study, unstructured conversations were primarily used. A detailed outline of the qualitative research methods utilised is provided in Chapter 4.

With qualitative research, the researcher builds a 'thick description' using detailed records concerning context, people, actions and the perceptions of participants. Geertz (1973) coined this term to capture the richness and depth of description that qualitative researchers aim to provide of the phenomena they study and their context. This thick

description serves to help the reader judge whether the interpretation emerging from the analysis seems consistent with the description presented (King & Horrocks, 2010). It is the basis for inductive generation of an understanding of what is going on or how things work, that is, an explanatory theory. Several qualitative approaches are particularly interested in story. These approaches include ethnography, autoethnography, narrative inquiry, life history research and phenomenology (Cresswell, 2014). This study used the narrative inquiry approach to explore the lived experiences of participants, through the use of story. Clandinin (2013) contended that experience is synonymous with stories as they are lived and told by people in particular time and contexts. Experiences and stories cannot be separated.

Telling stories as a way of making sense of the world is a uniquely human trait (as far as we can tell), with the stories people tell being a rich source of knowledge and meaning making (Dwyer, 2017). That is, "people shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories" (Clandinin & Raymond, 2006, p. 101). As Clandinin & Rosiek (2007) stated:

> Human beings have lived out and told stories about that living for as long as we could talk. And then we have talked about the stories we tell for almost as long. These lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities (p. 35).

Huber et al. (2013) contended that we utilise stories to share, to understand who we are, who we have been and who we are becoming. According to Atkinson (2012), the stories we tell bring us into deep relationship with one another, connecting us on many levels. Storytelling is a relational activity that gathers others to listen and to emphasise, a collaborative practice that requires active listening and questioning (Riessman, 2012).

Individuals make sense of their experiences by organising them in a narrative form because "telling stories is one of the significant ways individuals construct and express meaning" (Mishler, 1986, p. 67). Detailed stories provided by participants reveal how people view and understand their lives (Josselson, 2011) and the uniqueness of narratives produces extremely rich data (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998). Often people construct stories of their lives with a beginning, a middle and an end, which sets the scene, presents a complication or crisis and then resolves that crisis (Cresswell, 2008). Stories typically include the elements of time, place, plot and scene (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Listeners to the story anticipate the

story will make a larger point, one that is relevant to their own lives (Polletta & Lee, 2006) as events in a story project a desirable or undesirable future, that is, they make a normative point (Polletta, Chen, Gardner & Motes, 2011). It is this storytelling that produces the narratives which provide insight into the ways people interpret and give meaning to their life events (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander, 1995). As Carpenter and emerald (2009) state "stories have the power to shape the awareness and behaviour of individuals as well as that of organisations and society" (p. 166). Narrative research is orchestrated around storytelling. Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou (2008) considered that by utilising narrative methodology, researchers investigate how stories are constructed, and by whom, how they are consumed and how stories are silenced, contested or accepted. These areas of enquiry help in the description, understanding and explanation of important aspects of the world. The qualitative framework that this research pursues is narrative research. The following section provides the conceptual theory relevant to narrative research.

Narrative Research Theory

Broadly, narrative research, according to Lieblich et al. (1998), refers to any study that uses or analyses narrative materials. A narrative can be the object of the research, that is, the work is about the narrative itself (e.g., Labov & Waletzky, 1967), or the narrative can be used as a means to study a research question (e.g., Plummer, 1995). Additionally, there are studies on the philosophy and methodology of narrative research (e.g., Polkinghorne, 1988). Narrative research is used in a diverse range of fields including psychology, gender studies, education, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, law, and history (Lieblich et al., 1998). Narrative is both a phenomenon and a method. Narrative is both the story itself and the methodology used to explore and record the stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

One of the defining elements of a narrative is that it "can be understood to organise a sequence of events into a whole so that the significance of each event can be understood through its relation to that whole. In this way, a narrative conveys the meaning of events" (Elliott, 2005, p. 4). Polkinghorne (1988) outlined the concept of meaning in a narrative research context as follows:

> To ask about the meaning or significance of an event is to ask how it contributes to the conclusion of the episode. It is the connections or relationships among events that is their meaning. Narrative creates its meaning by noting the

contributions that actions and events make to a particular outcome and then configures these parts into a whole episode (p. 6).

Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) asserted that researchers need to adopt particular ways of thinking and being in order to undertake narrative research. They outlined four "narrative turns" with a "turn" being a particular change in direction from one way of thinking or being towards another (p. 8). These turns can be understood as underlying principles of narrative methods.

The first and most important turn towards narrative research is the change in relationship between the researcher and the person who is participating in the research. This turn is a move away from a positivist understanding of objectivity towards a perspective based on the interpretation and understanding of meaning. With this turn, narrative inquirers understand that the researcher and the person being researched are in a relationship with each other. The researched and researcher are seen to exist in a particular time and context, bringing with them a history and a worldview. They are not static, but dynamic and both parties will learn and change in the encounter.

The second turn is the move from the use of numbers as data towards the use of words as data. Researchers may move towards word data to seek ways to represent the complexity of human interaction, the richness of observations or accounts, the meaning of human interactions for the persons involved in those actions and to create trustworthy, recoverable data. A change from the focus on the general and universal towards the local and specific is the third turn towards narrative. With this turn, the researcher, rather than conducting research which can be generalised, instead uses the power of the particular for understanding experience, recognising specificity in context, place and times. An understanding that there are multiple ways of knowing and understanding human experience is the fourth turn. There is a widening of acceptance in alternative ways of knowing. The hallmarks of knowing in narrative inquiry include acceptance of the relational and interactive nature of human science research, the use of story, and the focus on the personal accounting of particulars. Narrative inquiry research can provide authentic and resonant findings, with alternative views being part of the research account. These turns to relationship, interpretation, words, specificity of context and multiplicity of ways of knowing underpin the research reported here. The following section outlines the theoretical divisions in narrative research.

Theoretical Divisions in Narrative Research

There is wide variability among narrative researchers in the materials, methods and routes used to understand psychological or social phenomena. This section outlines some of the theoretical differences and approaches utilised by narrative researchers. Squire et al. (2014) asserted that there is a great diversity of approaches to narrative research. One approach is the spoken recounting of past events that happened to the narrator, described in the work of Labov and Waletzky (1967) on event narratives. Narratives are defined in terms of the representation of past events. As Labov (1972) stated, the personal experience narrative is "one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses of events which (it is inferred) actually occurred" (p. 359). He made the assumption that spoken stories express cognitively stored records of events that have occurred, therefore they were event narratives (Squire et al., 2014).

In contrast, experience centred research explores stories that could range in length from interviews to life histories. These stories could be of general or imagined phenomena, that may have happened to the narrator, or of which the narrator may have heard. Experience centred narrative research can encompass a broad range of media including speech, letters, laundry lists, diaries, visual materials, photo albums and video diaries (Squire, 2008). Experience centred narrative research is about capturing the lived experience of individuals in terms of their own meaning making, followed by theorizing about it by the researcher in insightful ways (Josselson, 2011).

What both event centred and experience centred narrative research have in common is the assumption of an individual internal representation of phenomena – events, thoughts and feelings – to which narrative gives external expression. Where the two approaches differ is that while event-centred work assumes that these internal and individual representations are constant, experience-centred research stresses that these representations may vary over time, and across circumstances within which one lives, so a single phenomenon may produce different stories across time, even from the same individual (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013).

There is a third focus of narrative research that could be adopted by narrative researchers, which does not fit into either event-centred or experienced-centred work. This third focus addresses the co-constructed narratives that may develop, for example, in conversation. This focus views narratives as stories which are dialogically constructed, rather than expressions of internal states. It reflects an interest in the social patterns and functioning of stories. One example of this type of research is from

Michael Bamberg (2006) where he discussed the function of 'small' stories as part of narrative research. According to Bamberg, small stories are the ones we tell in passing, with everyday small narratives in which co-conversationalists portray themselves in ways that are interactively useful. Small stories can be used by conversationalists to mount arguments and counterarguments, to gain support for their views and to introduce theories in what may appear to be mundane tellings of small stories within a longer 'big' story. It is in the telling of small stories that we can gain insights into what may be contradictory views in narrators concerning larger issues - for example, gender and race (Ryan, 2008). These small stories occur in spoken language as well as in writing, and in paralanguage. Small stories tend to prioritize event over experience and socially-oriented over individually-oriented narrative research.

Narrative researchers who argue for small stories consider that we need to pay more attention to the micro-linguistic and social structures of the everyday narratives that occur naturally between people. In contrast to small stories, narrative researchers who focus on big stories such as biographical and life story research, defend the experiential richness, reflectiveness and validity of big stories. However, researchers of both small and big stories do recognise the value of having both big and small stories in research (Squire et al., 2008). The current study focused on experience centred research, with, over time (18-30 months), participants telling many small stories that represented the experiences within their transition journey, with these small stories contributing to their big stories of the lived experiences as they moved through a transition into a new career. The following section outlines the dimensions of narrative analysis.

Dimensions of Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis of evidence is one component of the broader field of narrative research. It is again, a broad term referring to the methods used for interpreting texts in storied form (Riessman, 2008). In common to all forms, though, is the understanding that analysis is a search for meaning, not truth (Hansen, 2006). Texts might include oral, written and visual materials. Narrative analysis can take diverse forms because researchers base their research in a diverse range of theories and epistemologies. The researcher will choose the type of analysis to be utilised, based on their particular theoretical aim (Riessman, 2008). For example, Lieblich et al. (1998) noted that analysis of narrative evidence may have two dimensions. In the first dimension, either a categorical or holistic approach can be utilised, depending on the theoretical aims of the research. When using a categorical perspective the original story is dissected with

sections or single words belonging to a defined category or theme being collected across cases or narrators. The contrasting holistic approach takes the life story of an individual or group of individuals as a whole and sections of the text are interpreted in the context of the other parts of the narrative. This holistic approach is useful for exploration of the development of an individual or individuals (Lieblich et al., 1998). The histories of individuals are kept intact, which results in an accumulation of detail that is then assembled into a 'fuller' picture of the individual or group (Riessman, 2008, p. 11). The story itself is the object of the investigation, with the purpose being to see how participants "impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives" (Riessman, 1993, p. 2). Extended accounts are kept as a complete unit and treated analytically as a unit, rather than being fragmented into thematic categories. (Riessman, 2008).

The second dimension for narrative analysis as outlined by Lieblich et al, (1998) relates to the content and form of a story. The content oriented approach studies the explicit content of the narrative by focusing on what happened, why it happened, and who participated in the events, as related by the narrator. The researcher may also focus on implicit content by studying the meaning of the story, the traits or motives the individual has displayed or the meaning of images used by the narrator (Lieblich et al., 1998). This concept was outlined by Squire et al. (2008) as focusing on the thinking and feeling of the individual. Alternatively, the form oriented approach focuses on the structure of the plot, the sequencing of events, the style of the narrative and its complexity and coherence (Lieblich et al., 1998), also described by Squire et al. (2008) as the social production of the narrative.

This study adopted an holistic approach to narrative analysis, which focused on the smaller stories within a bigger story – across 18 to 30 months - of mature age, postgraduate coursework students making a transition into a new career. Analysis of evidence focused on the content of the stories as an expression of the lived experiences of the study participants as they made the transition into their new career. The following section outlines the principles of the narrative inquiry methodology used for this study.

Narrative Inquiry

Two terms are frequently used in the literature for research that uses narrative materials – 'narrative research' and 'narrative inquiry'. The term "narrative inquiry" was first used by Connelly and Clandinin in 1990 (Clandinin, Pushor, Murray Orr, 2007, p. 22). They developed their inquiry theory and model in the context of education research. In

the context of this thesis, the term narrative research is used to refer to the broader fields of research which utilise narrative methods, while the term narrative inquiry is used to detail the narrative methodology as described by Connelly & Clandinin (2006). They stated “to use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study” (p. 479). Therefore, a narrative inquiry proceeds from an ontological position about how people are living and the constituents of their experience. They see experience as “lived in the midst, as always unfolding over time, in diverse social contexts and in place, and as co-composed in relation” (Caine, Estefan & Clandinin, 2013, p. 575).

Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) theory of narrative inquiry and experience is based on the philosophy of John Dewey (1938) who described two criteria for a narrative view of experience, ‘interaction’ and ‘continuity’. With the first criterion, interaction, they stated "people are individuals and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation, always in a social context” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 2). Adopting Dewey’s notion of interaction, in their understanding of narrative inquiry, a narrative is a collaboration between the researcher and participants. By continuity, they mean that “experiences grow out of other experiences and experiences lead to further experience” (p. 2). Recognising continuity, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) noted that narratives are created in the unfolding of our lives to explain our experiences and to create meaning.

In considering the inquiry itself, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) identified three commonplaces of inquiry: temporality, sociality, and place. For them, a commonplace is “a place to direct one’s attention in conducting a narrative inquiry” (Clandinin et al., 2007 p. 23). These commonplaces or dimensions provide a conceptual framework for conducting a narrative inquiry. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) considered there needed to be “careful attention to the narrative inquiry commonplaces. The text needs to reflect the temporal unfolding of people, places and things within the inquiry, the personal and social aspects of inquirer’s and participants’ lives and the places in the inquiry” (p. 485). In order to undertake a narrative inquiry there needs to be a “simultaneous exploration of all three commonplaces” (p. 479). The following section outlines these three dimensions in narrative inquiry – time (the commonplace of temporality), personal and social conditions (the commonplace of sociality) and context (the commonplace of place).

The first commonplace outlined by Connelly and Clandinin (2006) is the commonplace of temporality or time. Narrative is always about time, with the co-

presence of the future and the past in the present. The past can be reconstructed by the current present and the present can be projected into imaginings of the future (Squire et al., 2008). According to Heidegger (1927) (in Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 129):

> the present is not a singular notion; it is a threefold notion that includes a present about the future – expectation; a present about the past – memory; and a present about the present – attention. Time is constituted by the multiple structure of the threefold present, a structure of human experience.

In narrative inquiry, this temporality means acknowledging that people and events always have a past, present and a future (Clandinin et al., 2007) as the plotlines move backwards and forwards in time, going back to an earlier experiences or jumping forward beyond the story being told (Clandinin et al., 2006). As they stated:

> the plotlines of the research extend backwards and forwards in time and they often overlap so that going backwards to an earlier experience or connection leads to jumping forward beyond the story being told. Characters and milieus are dynamic rather than static (p. 179).

Therefore, "each individual's storied life is neither smooth nor unchanging, but rather shifts and changes over time and in relation with specific contexts" (Clandinin & Raymond, 2006, p. 102). Importantly, the temporal dimension recognises the interrelation between individual lives and social contexts. The meaning of events relates to both temporal ordering and the social context in which the narrative is being told (Elliott, 2005). Polkinghorne (1988) discussed the relationship between the temporal dimension and meaning when he stated "the realm of meaning is not static: it is enlarged by the new experiences it is continuously configuring, as well as by its own refiguring process, which is carried out through reflection and recollection" (p. 15).

The second commonplace outlined by Connelly & Clandinin (2006) is sociality, which references both the personal and social conditions that form each individuals' context. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) maintained that "narrative inquirers are concerned with personal conditions . . . By personal conditions we mean the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions whether inquirer or participant" (p. 480). Social conditions are "the existential conditions, the environment, surrounding factors and forces, people and otherwise, that form the individual's context" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). The constructed story reflects both the current internal world and aspects of the social world of the narrator (Josselson, 2011). In narrative inquiry, it is important to seek to understand the meaning of behaviour and experiences from the perspective of the narrator of a story (Elliott, 2005).

Addressing both the personal and social conditions of the individual(s) distinguishes narrative inquirers from highly personal studies that focus on a person's thoughts and feelings, as well as from studies that focus mostly on social conditions and treat the individual as an expression of social structure and process (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006). Another consideration of sociality is the relationship between the researcher and the participant. Narrative inquirers are always in an inquiry relationship with the participants' lives. Researchers cannot remove themselves from the research context. Narrative inquirers are in relationship, for example, when negotiating purposes, next steps, outcomes and texts in their research. They need to give an account of who they are in the inquiry, and who they are in relation to the participants. This situation is in contrast to some other types of qualitative study where an inquirer may bracket themselves out of the research, focusing primarily on the participants (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).

The third commonplace is place. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) describe place as "the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequence of places where the inquiry and events take place" (p. 480). In narrative inquiry, the location is crucial, acknowledging that all events take place somewhere. The place may change as the inquiry moves through time and the researcher needs to consider the impact of the place or physical location on the experience being researched (Clandinin et al., 2007). When writing of the relevance of their work for others, narrative inquirers acknowledge the qualities of place and the impact of place on the research study. In real lives the commonplaces of temporality, sociality and place are in relation. For example, place and temporality can be linked as places or locations may change with time. In addition, when addressing issues of personal and social conditions, details of place may be pertinent (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006).

As Clandinin & Connelly (2000) stated: "Narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience. Experience happens narratively. Therefore, educational experience should be studied narratively" (p. 23). The current study focused on the stories of the lived experiences of individuals moving from one career to the teaching profession, and how they negotiated this transition. Addressing the commonplaces of temporality, sociality and place enabled multifaceted rich and thick description of these transitions. As Caine, Estefan and Clandinin (2013) contended, narrative inquiry involves "a relational journey in which we come alongside others and ourselves, in different times, places, and relationships" (p. 580). In this study, as I was undergoing my own journey of transition, I followed the transition of the participants from their initial university offer

and consequent decision to accept a place in the postgraduate coursework program, until they had completed six months in their new profession, a period of approximately 18 months for full time students (and 30 months for part time students). As such, the stories were gathered as our transitions unfolded. A narrative inquiry model developed by Clandinin et al. (2007) and utilised for the study, is outlined in the following section.

Model for the Narrative Inquiry Study

When conducting a narrative inquiry, eight elements form the basic design of a study (Clandinin et al., 2007). This study was informed by each of these eight elements:

- Justification
- Naming the phenomenon
- Methods
- Analysis and interpretation
- Positioning
- Uniqueness
- Ethical considerations
- Representation

The first element is a justification for the study; three kinds of justification are relevant – personal, practical and social. The personal justification comes from situating yourself in the study (Clandinin et al., 2007). As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note "Narrative inquiries are always strongly autobiographical. Our research interests come out of our own narratives of experience and shape our narrative inquiry plotlines (p. 121). The researcher outlines his or her relationship to, and interest in the inquiry. My personal justification and interest in the study is outlined in Chapter 4 in the section *My Story*. Research must also be justified on a practical level, that is, how it might be insightful to changing the researcher's or others' thinking or practice. The third justification, social, concerns the larger social and educational issues the study might address. The practical and social justifications of this study have been addressed in Chapter 1 and are also briefly discussed in Chapters 4.

The second element requires the naming of the phenomenon or the "what" of the inquiry (Clandinin et al., 2007, p. 25). In this study the phenomenon is the lived experiences of mature age postgraduate coursework career changers during their transition into teaching. Chapter 1 gives further details of the topic of investigation.

The researcher chooses the methods to be used in a narrative inquiry study, based on the phenomenon being studied (Clandinin et al., 2007).

Element three considers the methods used to study the phenomenon. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) use the terms 'field', 'interim' and 'research' texts to describe three moments in the research process, with the word 'moment' being used to capture the ongoing flow of the research process and the permeability of the research phases. Field texts are the narrative inquirers' term for 'data' or 'evidence' used for the inquiry purposes (Clandinin et al., 2007). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest the use of the term field text helps us shift the concept of "objective reality" embedded in the notion of "data" (p. 93). They consider field texts constitute the evidence upon which claims are made. An interim research text is then produced from the evidence created during evidence collection. An interim research text is "situated in the spaces between field texts and final, published, research texts" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 133). The interim text is the starting point of pulling forward narrative patterns and threads from the evidence. These interim research texts continue to be negotiated with the participants during the research process until the final research text is completed (Clandinin et al., 2010). The interim text is akin to the analysis phase of a research study. The final research text is created to present the ongoing analysis of the evidence in the interim texts. Research texts are the representation or how we present our evidence to the audience (emerald & Carpenter, 2017). Further information of the methods used to collect evidence in the form of field texts, and the process for the production of interim and research texts in this study is given in Chapter 4.

The fourth element for a narrative inquiry is the analysis and interpretation processes. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) drew attention to the importance of "defining and balancing the commonplaces" (p. 482) in the research text with the researcher moving backward and forward in time (temporality), inward and outward with regard to the personal and social conditions (sociality), and incorporating place. The three commonplaces of temporality, sociality and place are incorporated into all phases of this research design: the collection of evidence and the interpretation of evidence.

The fifth element is the positioning of the narrative study concerning other research on a particular phenomenon, to related programs of research and to research undertaken using different epistemological and ontological assumptions. This study is qualitative and differs from previous studies outlined in the literature review in Chapter 2. These earlier studies were primarily quantitative and did not address the lived experience of the transition of mature age career changers into teaching. Following the positioning of

the study, an outline of what is unique about the findings of the current study is required. This fifth element is also addressed in the analysis chapters of the thesis (Chapters 5-8), as the basis for the findings of the research study.

Element six addresses the uniqueness of the study, or “some sense of what it is that can be known of the phenomenon that has not been explored by other theories, methods or lines of work” (Clandinin et al, 2007, p. 30). Chapter 1 has outlined the reasons the research has been done at this particular time and Chapter 2 has outlined the gaps in the literature on the topic. The final chapter of this thesis, Chapter 9, outlines the uniqueness of the study, with the use of a longitudinal research design, transition theory and narrative inquiry methodology.

Ethical considerations are the focus of element seven of narrative inquiry design. Special care needs to be taken with regard to ethics in narrative inquiry, as relationships are being formed, trust is being developed and experiences and stories are being shared (Clandinin et al., 2007). As Caine, Estefan and Clandinin (2013) stated “The first responsibility of narrative inquirers is always to participants. The negotiations of entry and exit, as well as the representation of experience, are central ethical concerns” (p. 579). This special care needs to be taken into account in addition to the ethical review mandatory for all research with human participants in qualitative studies. Further details around ethical issues are provided in
Chapter 4.

The eighth element concerns the process of representation and the kinds of research text intended. Narrative inquiry works from a set of ontological and methodological assumptions, so questions of representational form follow from those assumptions. Clandinin et al.s’ eight elements of narrative inquiry frame considerations of this narrative inquiry. Clandinin et al. also present the details of research design in terms of the six considerations of: thinking narratively; considering the possibilities of a range of textual forms; being aware that the writing of a research text is a narrative act; consideration of audience; having an awareness of the criteria by which the work may be judged and making explicit the social significance of the work. Chapter 4 articulates the research design in detail with reference to these considerations.

Narrative Inquiry Methodology and Transition Theory

Transition is itself a process, not a thing, and necessarily takes time. Notwithstanding the recognition that this transition is ‘in the midst’ of a greater life story, the transition explored in this study took place over at least 18-30 months, from the start of the

participants' postgraduate study until they were settling in to their new profession. Transition theory has been used as the underpinning concept, particularly Schlossberg's theory, as outlined in Anderson et al. (2012) with the consideration of three main transition stages: moving out, moving through and moving in. Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) commonplace of temporality aligns with this recognition of time. This commonplace acknowledges that people and events always have a past, present and a future (Clandinin et al., 2007). As such, the narrative inquiry methodology utilised for the study aligns with the underpinning concept of transition as a process over time, where stories may change as the transition progresses.

Transition is an experience – a deeply personal and also social human experience. As detailed earlier in this chapter in the section *Transition Theory*, this theory considers the aspects of situation, self, support and strategies. These aspects speak to the personal and social conditions of the transition. The commonplace of sociality, as outlined by Connelly and Clandinin (2006) provides a lens to capture the personal (e.g., feelings, desires, hopes) and social (e.g., environmental and surrounding factors and forces which makes up the individual's context) conditions of a transition. Experience takes place in a place – it takes place somewhere. So, while transition theory does not directly address place, Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) narrative commonplace of place provided a focus during the research design and an analytic lens in the analysis of evidence in this study.

Discussion

As transition was the underpinning concept for the study on which this thesis was based, transition theory has been outlined. Transition theory captures transition as a *process* and further, a process *over time* in the three stages of transition: moving out, moving through and moving in. Transition theory also captures the personal, social and experiential elements of transition by considering situation, self, support and strategies.

This chapter has provided an overview of qualitative research, which can provide vivid, rich and highly persuasive accounts of human interactions. Qualitative approaches produce narratives that give knowledge of the meanings and interpretations individuals give to their lives and to specific events. One type of qualitative research is narrative research, which organises a sequence of events into a whole account, so that the significance of each event can be understood through its relation to the whole. The section *Narrative Research Theory* outlines 'the narrative turn': as a change in the relationship between the researcher and research participant; a move from the use of

numbers as data to words as data; a change of focus from the general and universal to the local and specific and an understanding that there are multiple ways of knowing and understanding human experience (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

Theoretical divisions in narrative research are outlined in the section *Theoretical Divisions in Narrative Research.* The divisions speak to whether a narrative research study has a focus that is event or experience centred, on content or form, with a third focus being on the co-construction of narratives. Evidence can be collected as either big or small stories. This study focused on participants' small stories within a bigger story of the transition process, with an experience centred research approach.

Methods for interpreting texts with storied forms are outlined in the section *Dimensions of Narrative Analysis*. These methods include using an holistic or categorical approach with a focus on either content or form of the stories, with the researcher choosing a particular approach according to their particular theoretical aim. An holistic approach with a focus on content of the stories has been used in this study.

Narrative inquiry, as developed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) in the context of education, was utilised in this study. Narrative inquiry focuses on the temporal, personal and social conditions and place of the participants – these are described in the commonplaces of temporality, sociality and place. The research design used in this study was based on the eight elements of a narrative inquiry study as articulated by Clandinin et al., 2007. These elements include justification, naming the phenomenon, methods, analysis and interpretation, positioning, uniqueness, ethics and representation and incorporated Clandinin et al.'s six considerations of research design.

The alignment between transition theory and narrative inquiry methodology is outlined by demonstrating that the four aspects of transition theory – situation, self, support and strategies and the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry methodology – temporality, sociality and place align.

The following chapter, Chapter 4, provides details of the research context and design used for the study. The design for the study was based on narrative inquiry methodology and Chapter 4 outlines the methods utilised in the study for the collection of evidence, including personal, group and email conversations in the seven phases of evidence collection. Details of participant selection, along with an introduction to the participants, are provided. Analysis of evidence is discussed, as well as ethical issues and guidelines for research rigour.

Chapter 4
Research Context and Design

The previous chapter explained the theoretical framework and methodology used in this study, that of transition theory and narrative inquiry methodology in a longitudinal research design. As previously stated, narrative inquiry methodology is appropriate for exploring the stories of transition experiences as it captures rich experience over time and enables consideration of place and relationship. This chapter provides further details of the methodology, by outlining the methods used in the research design. The following diagram, Figure 4.1., shows the structure of this chapter.

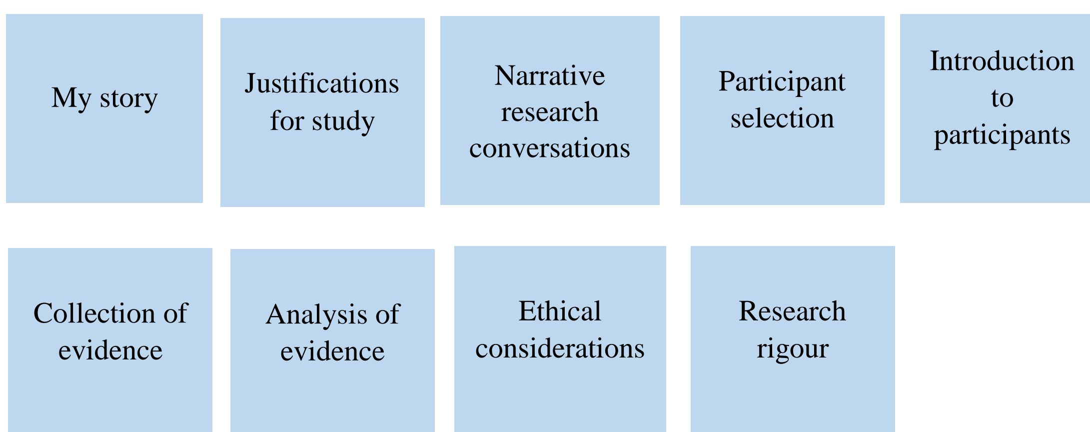

Figure 4.1. Structure of chapter: Research context and design

The chapter opens with the story of my interest in mature age career changers, followed by a discussion of the justifications for the study. Principles of narrative research conversations are detailed. Next, the process for participant selection and an introduction to the study participants is provided. Details of the evidence collection phases follows. Information is provided on the analysis of evidence, ethical considerations and processes for research rigour utilised in the study. The following section begins the chapter by telling my story.

My Story

As previously outlined in Chapter 3, in qualitative research the researcher positions herself in the research (Cresswell, 2014). This study grew out of my own experiences as a mature age student undertaking postgraduate coursework study while undergoing a career change. Like many women in the 1970s, I left school after grade 10, and gained employment in a secretarial role, where I worked for 10 years. At the age of 25, I found

myself at home with three babies under the age of three and a vague sense that I wanted more personal and professional development in my life.

In 1984 I was granted mature age entry to a Bachelor of Arts degree by distance education. This course of study was followed by Graduate Diplomas in both Business and Education. During my studies as a mature age student, I experienced a range of issues including: trying to find the work-study-family life balance, time and financial pressures, academic issues, feelings of isolation and lack of confidence. On completion of my studies, I undertook teaching employment in the vocational education and tertiary education sectors, where I remained for twenty years. During this time, I also completed a Master of Education by coursework. It was once again a vague sense of dissatisfaction that led me to the decision to make a career change from teaching into a research career in 2009. As I did not have a background in research, I was required to undertake postgraduate coursework studies in research methods before I was able to progress to writing a thesis. I decided to make a complete break in order to focus on my studies, and I left my teaching career early in 2009.

I began my transition journey by undertaking a Research Higher Degree (RHD) Qualifying program which provides an alternative route for entry into a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program for applicants who do not possess the required research background or qualifications for admission to this program. At the time of undertaking my postgraduate coursework studies, I became interested in the work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000). I was inspired by Clandinin and Connelly to understand how experience plays out in the stories we tell. While the research design I was developing was not directly that outlined by Clandinin and Connelly, I took their lead to consider the Deweyan concern with experience. The understanding that our stories are located in place, and that stories unfold in time, place and social contexts further developed my thinking on the research design for a thesis. I could experiment in understanding how these three commonplaces could work to bring an understanding to the research design itself.

A research puzzle began to emerge: what were the experiences of individuals like myself who were undergoing a career transition? I was wondering what my new world would look like, as I moved through a place that is not just a physical place, but also a headspace. The ideas were further developed as I considered how I could live with the research puzzle alongside the participants – dancing along as a researcher with the participants in Geertz's (1995) metaphoric parade. As Caine, Estefan and Clandinin (2013) contended "that we are living stories means that the connection between

researcher and participant begins long before formal research contact" (p. 583). From these early ideas of undertaking a narrative inquiry research study, I developed and completed a pilot study on the topic of mature age professionals who were undertaking postgraduate coursework to make a career change into teaching (in contrast to my own transition from teaching to research). The study explored the experiences of this cohort in the early stages (first six months) of their career transition. The stories of their experiences were outlined in my RHD (Qualifying) thesis (Bauer, 2011) and the stories of the current thesis expands on this original study. The time frame for the current study was 18 months (30 months for part time students) and explored the stories of the lived experiences of mature age, postgraduate coursework students from the time they began their studies, until they had completed six months in the teaching profession (or had chosen to enter another profession). This section has outlined my story and interest in the topic and in narrative inquiry methodology. The following section outlines the justifications for the study.

Justifications for Study

As stated in Chapter 3, narrative inquiry research needs to be justified personally, practically and socially. For the personal justification for this study, I had an interest in the topic of mature age students undertaking a career change as articulated above. This reflects Clandinin et al.'s (2007) assertion that narrative inquiry research can be strongly autobiographical as the researcher's interest in the topic can come from their own experiences. The practical justification for this study (Clandinin et al., 2007) was informed by the intention of this study to provide insight through story into the experiences of mature age individuals completing postgraduate coursework studies in order to make a career change. The social justification for this study (Clandinin, et al., 2007) addressed larger social and education issues. As the numbers of career changers increases, fulsome understanding of the process can contribute to creating conditions of success.

The practical and social justifications for the study have been discussed in depth in Chapter 1 of this thesis. These justifications have implications for students and staff in the tertiary education sector. The individual perceives the university experience in his or her own way, and this perception of the experience may differ from that assumed by university administrators and teaching staff (O'Shea, 2008). The findings of this study will also inform university and educational institution policies and practice to better

meet the needs of the career changers cohort. Mature age career change students themselves will benefit from reading the narratives of those who have gone before them.

This section has outlined the personal, practical and social justifications for the study. In the following section, a discussion of the methods of collecting evidence, narrative research conversations, are outlined.

Narrative Research Conversations

Chapter 3 provided a discussion of the telling of stories in narrative research. One method of obtaining stories is through the use of interviews. However, *interviews* can have different meanings in different research paradigms. Narrative research interviews are characterised as conversations which are co-constructed between the researcher and participant. Qualitative researchers generally, and more particularly, narrative researchers, recognise that meaning is co-constructed, not delivered in a clean conduit from participant to researcher. The presence of the researcher in the conversation and the nature of the research are alive in the meaning making. While narrative inquiry research uses the term *conversations* when discussing interview evidence, much of the literature on qualitative and narrative research methodology utilises the term *interviews.* This thesis uses the term *interview* when citing a source that uses that term. Otherwise the term *conversation* has been used.

Riessman (1993) described narrative research interviews as conversations in which both participants – the teller and listener/questioner develop meaning together. The respondent is not considered to be simply a repository of information, but an animated, productive source of narrative knowledge. The participant stories the information, assembling it into a coherent account for particular purposes at particular moments. The interviewer is a necessary counterpart, a working narrative partner (Gubrium & Holstein, 2012). Mishler (1986) contended that there needed to be an analysis of the interview process by the researcher as the process itself impacts the meanings of the questions and answers. This analysis can be achieved by successive reformulations of the questions and answers by the interviewers and interviewees until they arrive at an accepted level of shared agreement of meaning, which is grounded in and constructed by the discourse. In this way, interviews are actively constructed through interviewer-respondent collaboration (Talmage, 2012).

Connelly & Clandinin (2006) also characterised research interviews as research conversations. The narrative research interview is based on the conversations of daily life and is a professional conversation in the context of being a collaboration between

the researcher and participant. Research conversations are marked by equality and flexibility that allows participants to establish the form and topics of the conversation (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994). They stressed the importance of listening during the conversation: "Conversation entails listening. The listener's response may constitute a probe into experience and takes the representation of experience far beyond what is possible in an interview" (p. 422). The type of research conversation to be used in a study depends largely on the research question and the ontological and epistemological premises of the study – in this study, focus group conversations, in-depth individual conversations and email conversations were utilised. The following section outlines the principles of focus group conversations.

Research conversations: Focus group conversations

Since the mid-1980s, focus groups have re-emerged as a popular technique for gathering qualitative evidence across a wide range of academic and applied research areas. They are often used as a self-contained method, that is, on their own, or in combination with surveys and in-depth interviews (Morgan, 1996). According to Chrzanowska (2002) focus groups are group interviews which involve discussion among small groups of people (around 6 – 10, although many recommend fewer) who have a common purpose, with the researcher acting as the moderator or facilitator. There is a nondirective style of interviewing with the topic for discussion being introduced by the researcher, who then facilitates the conversation process among the group with minimal intervention

While it is the focus group participants themselves who sustain their own discussion, the decisions made by the researcher prior to the focus group meeting can have a major influence on the nature of that discussion. The researcher needs to decide on the research design to create the desired forms of interaction in the focus group. Decisions need to be made about the focus group composition, how the group discussion will be introduced to the participants (topics and purpose) and the style of interviewer moderation to be used. These considerations will affect the nature of interactions in focus groups, and the degree to which participants share and compare experiences and viewpoints (Morgan, 2012).

When composing the group, Morgan suggested that it is advisable to choose participants who are homogenous with regard to the topic (not homogenous with regard to background characteristics and demographics). For example, in this case all participants were mature age career changers in a postgraduate coursework program. He

suggested introducing the group discussion by defining the situation for example, the degree of structure to be used in the meeting, ranging from less structured groups, where participants can explore the topic, to more structured groups, where the researcher's agenda seeks depth and detail of the topic. The first question in the discussion should be a discussion starter which matches the goals set during the introduction. Further questions should build on the direction set by the first question, flowing smoothly with regard to the substantive topic and the developing group dynamic. Morgan maintained that the moderator needs to listen to the discussion and learn from it, as well as assist with the ongoing group dynamics.

Focus groups have the advantage of gathering evidence more quickly and economically than individual interviews (Minichiello et al., 1995). They allow for the involvement of a larger group of study participants in a shorter amount of time than one to one conversations and are generally thought of as a highly efficient means of collecting informational evidence (Warren & Karner, 2010). Another advantage is that the group dynamic in a focus group can result in the interaction between group members, resulting in richer information than could be obtained in individual interviews. This interaction, engagement and discussion may help participants think about and reformulate their views (Peek & Fothergill, 2009). Focus groups can encourage recall and stimulate opinion elaboration and provide insight and evidence produced by the interaction (King & Horrocks, 2010). Therefore, focus groups can be extremely dynamic with a larger number of ideas, issues, topics and solutions to problems being generated than would be expected in individual interviews (Berg, 2007). A final advantage to focus groups is that they may provide a social support function as the participants have the opportunity to share their stories with others with similar life experiences or circumstances (Peek & Fothergill, 2009). Although the primary reason for the focus group conversations in this study was to gather narrative evidence, the group members could, if they chose, also provide social support to the other study participants. The principles underlying this support are outlined later in this chapter in the section *Participant Selection.*

A disadvantage to the use of focus groups is that if some members dominate the conversation, others may feel they are unable to fully express their views or may be unwilling to express disagreement or unpopular viewpoints. This situation is called "groupthink" where participants may be swayed by what they perceive is the overall view of others in the focus group (Minchiello et al., 2008, p. 151). It is therefore important that the group facilitator remains aware of the dynamics of the group and

intervenes by directing the conversation if it should become necessary to do so. An effective focus group facilitator is tasked with managing both topic and interaction.

In this study, the use of focus groups was an advantage in that the group discussions among the participants allowed for a greater range of topics being discussed than may have occurred in individual conversations. In addition, members of the groups were able to meet others in their cohort at the university, with the possibility of the development of future friendships. One disadvantage was the dominance of some participants in conversations. The strategy used to overcome this problem was to bring other members into the conversation by explicitly asking for different viewpoints or directly asking individuals if they had something to add. This section has outlined the principles of focus groups. The following section provides a discussion of theory relating to in-depth (unstructured) conversations.

Research conversations: In-depth (unstructured) conversations

In-depth interviews give the researcher access to the meanings and interpretations that individuals give to their lives and events (Minichiello, Aroni & Hayes, 2008). As the research questions in this study related to the exploration of the lived experiences of mature age students undertaking a career change, in-depth, unstructured conversations were used as one method to explore the phenomenon. Chapter 3 outlined the place of stories as essential to much of qualitative research. Mishler (1986) stated: “We are more likely to find stories reported in studies using relatively unstructured interviews where respondents are invited to speak in their own voices, allowed to control the introduction and flow of topics, and encouraged to extend their responses” (p. 69). In-depth or unstructured interviews tend to be of a relatively long duration and commonly involve one-on-one, face to face interaction between the interviewer and the respondent, seeking to build the kind of intimacy resulting from mutual self-disclosure. They involve a personal commitment on the part of participants that may span several interviews (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012), in this instance, up to seven conversations.

While research interviews can be single events with the researcher interviewing participants only once, they can also be part of a longitudinal research design, where interviews are used to trace the development of social meanings over time (Warren & Karner, 2010). The later interviews are usually more focused on specific probes and verification of what has been learned in the earlier interviews (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012). Also, as Warren (2012) stated, these interviews can bring different perspectives. However, longitudinal interview research designs can also have disadvantages.

Sometimes participants cannot be traced for later interviews as they may have moved location, have changed circumstances or they may be unable to unwilling to participate further in the study (Grinyer & Thomas, 2012). Caine and Estefan (2011) outlined how an ethical dilemma can be created when a participant can no longer be contacted at a later point in a research study. For Caine and Estefan, the dilemma was how persistently they should follow up on the participants, especially as, over time, each become quite concerned for the participants' welfare. In addition, the disappearance of their participants raised methodological issues as they had undertaken to involve participants in how their stories would be represented in the final research report.

Johnson and Rowlands (2012) outlined guidelines for conducting in-depth interviews. They suggested that the interviewer begin with an interview protocol, which includes two or three ice-breakers, an explanation of the purpose of the study, the gaining of informed consent and permission to use an audio recorder (they consider it essential that in-depth interviews are audio recorded), a set of possible questions that may be asked to start the conversation and a set of scripted prompts as an aide memoir for the interviewer. With in-depth interviews, a researcher might refer to a topic-based interview schedule, but will not be governed by it and will be responsive to the idiosyncrasies of each conversation (Fraser, 2004). The in-depth interview schedule is not so much about actual questions to be asked by the researcher, as topics which may be covered (Rice & Ezzy, 2000). Johnson & Rowlands (2012) suggested that the interview be concluded with the researcher summarising the main points covered in the interview.

In setting out these guidelines, however, they cautioned that the trajectory of these interviews, which are usually flexible and reflexive, often do not follow this sequence and the interviewer needs to be aware of this eventuality. As interviews progress, they may take unexpected turns or digressions to reflect the informant's interest or knowledge. These digressions can be very productive, so the interviewer should follow the line of conversation, although he or she may need to bring the informant back to the topic in question at some point. Riessman (2012) considered that what may appear to be an unrelated response to an interviewer's question can be important analytically, telling the interviewer of his or her interviewing practices, and the participant's preferred topics. Over time an interviewer will develop a certain amount of skill and trust in the process, finding the balance between exploring unexpected pathways and going hopelessly and irrelevantly off track.

In this study, the advantages of using personal, unstructured conversations was that in-depth information was obtained through the conversations. In addition, positive relationships were formed between myself as the researcher and participants. Disadvantages included the considerable amount of time required for the interviews and the transcription of a large amount of evidence. The following section outlines the principles of email interviews.

Research conversations: Email conversations

Research conversations can be conducted by email. The use of the internet, including interviews by email, has become a valuable resource for researchers (Silverman, 2006). As James (2016) said, "Email is a useful site for rich and sustained interactions and a useful tool to capture the complexity of social interaction online" (p. 160). Email is a form of electronic letter and is used in this study because "the most notable quality of the letter is its conversational, personal tone" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 106). This personal tone facilitates the email conversation and elicits narratives.

Advantages of email interviewing include that participants can answer emails at a time suitable to their work and personal schedules, and they are particularly useful for studies when working with participants who are located in different time zones, have different work patterns or for whom it may be difficult to set up face-to-face or telephone interviews. The email interview can be simple to administer as the researcher sends out questions or a series of topics and waits for a response. Participants may also feel more comfortable discussing sensitive topics by email than in face-to-face conversations (James & Busher, 2012). In addition, researchers and participants can take time to reflect on their questions and responses, reading and reflecting on what has previously been written. James (2015) argued that this ability for the participant to respond in their own time and from their own space, affords a more equal relationship as the participant is empowered to respond to the researcher's agenda in a considered way. The long term nature of email interviews can allow for the collection of in-depth evidence through the repeated interaction and closer reflection of the interview issues (James & Busher, 2012). A further advantage is that email interviews are self-transcribing in the sense that the written text is the medium through which the researcher and respondents express themselves, hence the text is ready for analysis when the email interview is complete (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). As no transcription is required, there is less likelihood of misrepresentation of the evidence and participants do not have to wait to validate the record of the interview (James & Busher, 2012).

However, the researcher needs to be aware of the disadvantages of email interviews and to take steps to minimise the effects of these disadvantages. One disadvantage is that as the email conversation is not conducted in 'real time', there is a time delay inherent in the interview. This time delay could cause the interviewer to wonder about the cause for the delay, for example whether the interviewee is simply busy or whether they are unhappy about some aspect of the email interview. Of course, the interviewer can check with the interviewee concerning the reason for the delay. Expectations of the timing of replies could be clarified in advance of the interview by, for example, advising interviewees that follow up emails would be sent if there was no reply within a certain time frame to check that the interviewee has in fact received the message. While there are strategies to address the mechanics of the delay, conversational flow can be affected, causing loss of spontaneity (Bampton & Cowton, 2002). A strategy to overcome these issues could include re-establishing the conversational flow by providing a brief overview of previous email conversations, before continuing with the ongoing email conversation.

Further disadvantages include that security of evidence may be an issue for email interviewing, as online interactions are potentially accessible to service providers (King & Horrocks, 2010). Bampton and Cowton (2002) cautioned that email replies should be saved in another format as soon as possible (for example as a Word document) by the interviewer due to the possibility of failure in computer systems, which could cause the loss of valuable evidence. They also cautioned against including too many questions in the email, in case the interviewee felt overwhelmed by the task of formulating a reply. In addition, meaning may be lost in the interview because the nonverbal cues are missing from the interaction. This potential loss of meaning could be minimised by using the conversational strategies as outlined by Mishler (1986) where the researcher and participant successively reformulate the questions and answers until they arrive at an accepted level of shared agreement of meaning.

If the researcher and participant have not previously met in person, rapport needs to be established (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2008). In the current study, this rapport had been established prior to the email conversations during individual research conversations and focus groups. The email conversation consisted of an initial email sent to each participant with an open ended question (for example "How are things going at this point in time?" along with some prompts based on previous conversations), allowing participants time to reflect on their experiences and send a response in their own time. A context for response had already been established through the personal and group

conversations, hence such an undefined opening question was effective in eliciting relevant responses. A reminder was sent to the participant if no response had been received within two weeks. Although each email interview consisted of only one initial email and one response from participants, participants were given an option of ongoing email conversations if they requested it.

In the current study, one advantage was that email conversations allowed evidence collection to occur while the participants are undertaking their professional experience and during their first two terms in the classroom. During this time, participants were likely to be under considerable time pressure, and may not have been able to participate in individual or group conversations. A further advantage was that no further transcription of the evidence was required as refrains were quoted directly by the participants in the emails. One disadvantage was a time delay in responses from participants. Follow up emails were sent by the researcher, and further responses were given by the participants.

The study reported here had a longitudinal research design, which incorporated group conversations, face to face in-depth conversations, and individual email conversations. The iterative design used in this study was appropriate to explore the experience of career transition as it necessarily occurs over a period of time. The longitudinal design aligned with the concept of temporality as part of narrative inquiry theory outlined in Chapter 3.While temporality as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) define and use it does not necessarily refer to the research design itself, rather theorising the place of time in people's stories, the longitudinal research design enabled an enriched understanding of time as will be explored in Chapters 5-8. After a small initial attrition in the early weeks (three potential volunteers chose not to continue), 14 individuals continued to participate in the study until the end, a period of either 18 or 30 months, so there was no evident disadvantage to using this design in terms of participant fatigue.

The above section outlined the principles of each of the methods utilised in this study: focus group conversations, in-depth conversations, and email conversations. The advantages of using these three types of conversations in a longitudinal design are outlined. The following section outlines the processes for participant selection for the study.

Participant Selection

Sampling

Purposive sampling methods are often used in qualitative research. This sampling method uses a range of strategies, including criterion sampling, which involves searching for cases or individuals who meet a certain criteria, for example, having a particular professional background (Palys, 2008). Typically, in-depth interviewers employ purposive sampling methods that aim to identify specific interviewees for their perceived ability to answer specific questions of substantial importance to the research (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012). In this study, criterion based purposive sampling was used, with the choice of participants for this study based on their ability to provide stories of being a mature age career changer undertaking postgraduate coursework studies. As the focus of this career change study was the teaching profession, as outlined in Chapter 1, the participants in the study were recruited from the 2013 and 2014 cohorts of a one year full time (or two year part time) postgraduate coursework initial teacher education program. As this research was conducted on a university campus, participants who were on site and who were willing to be available to be part of this research study were recruited.

Participants were invited to participate in the study with a written invitation in the form of a flyer (Appendix A). This flyer was placed on the intranet where the course information for the above initial teacher education program was located, during Orientation Weeks in 2013 and 2014, at the university campus on which the students were enrolled. As noted in Chapter 1, the criteria for the study was to be a mature age student (aged 25 or over), and to be undertaking a postgraduate coursework program in an area different to that studied in their original degree. In addition, they needed to have been employed for at least 60% of the previous five years in the profession associated with their previous studies. The reason for the employment criteria was to ensure that a genuine career change was being undertaken, rather than a postgraduate coursework program that followed soon after the initial degree was completed.

Participants who were eligible and interested in being involved in the study received an initial welcoming email outlining the study and evidence collection details. This email included a copy of the Study Information Sheet (Appendix B) and a copy of the Informed Consent Form (Appendix C) that they would be asked to complete and sign if they attended meetings. A Nominal Data Form (Appendix D) was also included. They could also refer to these documents if they were responding to any email contact.

Sample size.

According to Cresswell (2008) one objective of qualitative research is to present the complexity of individuals or sites. Therefore, in qualitative studies, the sample size typically involves a small number of individuals (e.g., between 1 and 40), so that the researcher can make an in-depth examination of the individuals or site. However, Morse (2015) asserted that it is difficult for qualitative researchers to calculate sample size prior to the research to be conducted. The sample size will depend on a number of factors, including the nature, amount of complexity and scope of the phenomenon being studied, the interview techniques to be used, and the analytic skills of the researcher. In order to provide the thick and rich evidence required in qualitative research, an appropriate number of interviews and/or participants is required. If the sample size or number of interviews is too small, the evidence may not be saturated (Morse, 2015) and the results superficial and obvious.

In the early phases of this study, I had concerns of whether I would find at a later date that I had insufficient participants and/or evidence to effectively complete the analysis of evidence. Fortunately, there was a reasonable level of interest in the study with 17 students volunteering. Of the total number of participants, all were mature age career change professionals: five full time and six part time students in the 2013 cohort, and six full time in the 2014 cohort. One student left the initial teacher education program and study during semester one in 2013 and one student left after completing semester one in 2014. A third student continued in the coursework program, but advised that due to time constraints, she was unable to continue in this study after semester one 2013. The remaining 14 students remained in the study until the final evidence collection.

Caine, Estefan and Clandinin (2013) outlined how narrative inquirers hold responsibilities for and toward people who told their stories. Peek and Fothergill (2009) suggested that researchers can *give back* to participants in some way during a study, for example, by providing assistance in setting up an informal social support group as part of the research process. In order to provide some support to the study participants during their transition, I facilitated the formation of an informal peer support group by introducing students to others in their cohort during my initial introduction to the groups in 2013 and 2014. Many of the study participants subsequently formed friendships and provided support to each other and other students in this cohort during their studies. In addition, the participants gained because they had someone walking alongside them in their transition, as I was interested in their transition experiences alongside my own.

This section has outlined the sampling processes used in the study. The next section of this thesis provides an introduction to the study participants.

Introduction to Study Participants

This section provides an introduction to each of the participants in the study. As Locke et al. (2010) stated, in qualitative research the participants in a study are the central points of interest, therefore such details of the participants adds richness to their stories. These details, including partner status and number of children also showed other elements in their lives alongside study. It was part of the inquiry to find out if these elements were in fact relevant. For purposes of confidentiality pseudonyms are used for all participants. Table 4.1. below provides demographic details of the 17 study participants, followed by a section outlining the professional background of each of the participants.

Table 4.1. Demographic details for the 17 study participants

Name *pseudonym	Prior Profession	Sex	Age	Partner	Number of children
Bec	Office Administrator/Manager	F	34	Yes	0
Callum	Engineering Manager	M	38	Yes	2
Cate	Research Scientist	F	26	Yes	0
Elise	Study Manager	F	30	No	0
Eva	Business Manager	F	30	No	0
Kelly	Senior Chemist	F	52	Yes	2
Lynda	University Lecturer	F	39	Yes	3
Mal	Fire Protection Designer	M	38	Yes	3
Max	ICT Manager	M	43	Yes	2
Mike	Software Developer	M	43	Yes	1
Nadia	Photographer/Gallery Owner	F	26	Yes	0
Neve	Urban Planner	F	42	Yes	0
Peter	Real Estate Manager	M	28	Yes	0
Ray	Study Engineer	M	44	Yes	2
Rick	Contract Manager	M	46	Yes	2
Sally	Accountant	F	40	Yes	3
Sarah	IT Manager	F	45	Yes	2

Details of the professional backgrounds of the participants are as follows:

Bec had been employed for the previous ten years as an office administrator/manager. She has a degree in Behavioural Science (Psychology) with Honours which she completed ten years prior to her decision to make a career change into teaching. She completed her initial teacher education program on a part time basis, while also working in two part time jobs.

Callum has a Bachelor of Engineering. Since completing his initial degree, he worked in the field of mechanical engineering as an engineering manager for sixteen years. During that time, he also travelled and had a family. He left his former employment to complete the initial teacher education program on a full time basis.

Cate gained a Bachelor of Biomedical Science (Honours). Since completing her degree she worked as a scientific research assistant in the equine industry for a period of four years (meeting the study criteria of being employed for at least 60% of the previous five years). She completed her initial teacher education program on a part time basis, over two years.

Elise worked in the area of interior design, having completed a Bachelor of Built Environment (Interior Design) in 2003. Her employment in this field continued during the building boom, however, it was difficult even at this time to obtain permanent employment. She subsequently obtained a permanent drafting/archiving position in a university. From here she moved into study Management where she was employed on a full time basis, in addition to completing her part time studies over two years.

Eva holds a Master of International Tourism and Hospitality Management. She was employed in the area of hospitality management for a period of seven years and was employed as a lecturer in a private university. She completed her studies on a full time basis, while continuing her full time employment.

Kelly has a Bachelor of Science (Honours). She subsequently had a thirty year career as a scientist in a government department. She studied her initial teacher education program on a part time basis over two years.

Lynda gained a PhD in Environmental Economics. After completion of her PhD, she was a lecturer in economics and applied maths in the United Kingdom and Malaysia for eight years. She was previously living in Denmark, where her husband was working and she had recently moved to Australia with her husband, who is a university lecturer, and her family. She studied her initial teacher education program on a full time basis.

Mal completed a Bachelor of Built Environment twenty years prior to this research, and subsequently pursued a career in landscape design. During his initial teacher

education program, he was employed as a fire protection designer on a part time basis, in addition to his part time studies.

Max's qualifications include a Bachelor of Engineering (Computers) Honours, a Bachelor of Computer Science and a Postgraduate Diploma in Management. His career of twenty four years had been predominantly in engineering, specifically in defence. He enrolled in the initial teacher education program on a full time basis.

Mike has a Bachelor of Engineering in Electrical and Electronic Engineering, a qualification he gained twenty years prior to his decision to enter the teaching profession. After completing his qualification, he was employed for fifteen years in the information technology industry. However, he was unhappy in the corporate sector, and subsequently became self-employed in the information technology industry. He completed his initial teacher education program on a full time basis.

Nadia graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Media. Since completing her degree she had worked as a photographer, run an art gallery and worked in the film industry for a period of eight years. She undertook her initial teacher education program on a full time basis.

Neve completed a Bachelor of Environmental Planning (Honours) and a Master in Educational Leadership. Since graduating from her initial degree, she worked for ten years in urban planning and fifteen years as an environmental educator for young people. She was employed on a part time basis while completing the initial teacher education program full time.

Peter has a Bachelor of Business Administration, majoring in Finance. He worked in real estate in the United States for a number of years, before moving to Australia where he continued his employment in the real estate industry, doing investment analysis, management, leasing and business development management. He studied his initial teacher education program on a full time basis.

Ray completed a Bachelor of Science (Psychology) and a Bachelor of Engineering (Mechanical). After completing his first degree in psychology, he worked as a family service officer. He did not enjoy this work and so made a career change by completing a degree in engineering, a field in which he was employed for fifteen years. He enrolled in the initial teacher education program on a full time basis.

Rick has a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Engineering Science and a Diploma in Study Management. He had twenty years' experience in management and construction, although he also had a background in biology. Prior to commencing his full time initial teacher education program he was a stay-at-home dad.

Sally completed a Bachelor of Commerce and was subsequently employed as an accountant for a period of nineteen years, mostly for small and medium businesses, ending up in management positions. She had recently completed a part time Graduate Certificate in Maths. She studied her initial teacher education program on a full time basis.

Sarah completed a Bachelor of Science and subsequently spent twenty years in the information technology industry. As part of her career change into teaching, she worked part time as a teacher aide in addition to her part time studies so that she could gain experience in the classroom.

This section has introduced the study participants. These 17 participants expressed an interest in participating in the study, however, the numbers quickly dropped and 14 participants continued with this study until the end of the evidence collection phases. The following section outlines the process for the collection of evidence.

Collection of Evidence

In this study, there were seven phases of evidence collection for each of the participants. They could choose to participate in all seven phases, or enter or leave the study as they wished. Table 4.2. below, provides a brief summary of the evidence collection phases.

Table 4.2. Seven phases of evidence collection

	Phase 1	*Phase 2*	*Phase 3*	*Phase 4*	*Phase 4*	*Phase 6*	*Phase 7*
Time	Semester 1 (week 2)	Mid semester 1	End semester 1	Mid semester 2	End semester 2	Term 1	Term 2
Place	University	University	University	University	University	School	School
Conversation	Focus group *or* Individual conversation	Individual conversation	Individual conversation	Individual conversation	Individual conversation	Email conversation	Email conversation
Transition stage	Moving out	Moving through				Moving in	

The table above shows each of the phases, which were approximately six weeks apart during the academic year at university and in the classroom. For each of the phases, the timing, place or context of the participants and the type of conversation is illustrated. The table also shows the stage of transition of the participants at the time of collection of evidence.

Tables 4.3., 4.4., and 4.5., below, provide more in-depth details of the evidence collection phases for full and part time study participants in the 2013 and 2014 cohorts of the initial teacher education program. In a research design innovation, the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry – temporality, sociality and place – were built in to the research design. The tables show the conversational prompts that allude to the three commonplaces. These prompts were not prescriptive, and were used as conversation guides only. The commonplaces were features of the environment, for example, the place of the university or school, and topics of participants' stories. In this design innovation, the commonplaces have been included in the research design itself – bringing an awareness of the commonplaces into the creation of evidence. This awareness relates to the importance of attentiveness to thinking narratively in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Importantly, the prompts were used as *guides* for me as the researcher to focus attention on the experiences of transition as it progressed. For example, prompts which included the commonplace of temporality and sociality could include questions such as "Tell me about when and why you decided to make a career change" which addressed the fact that this research conversation was occurring 'in the midst' of the participants' lives. The participants were looking back in time (temporality), and considering the personal and social conditions (sociality) that had affected their decision from an earlier time in their lives. Another example relates to the participants' experience of place as part of their transition. A prompt that addressed this commonplace could be: "Tell me about being back at uni, how is that for you?" Participants may pick up on any aspect of their experience, for example the place or the sociality related to their transition experience. In listening, then, the skills of the researcher are brought into play in follow up prompts, for example, "You have told me about your difficulties with the place itself, getting here, getting parking, finding rooms, how about people, your class, your lecturers and so on, do you have any reflections about the people?" However, it was not the intention of the researcher to confine the talk to these aspects of the participants' experiences. The purpose of the use of the commonplaces in the research design was to explore them, given the research that has indicated the importance in sense making in people's stories. The tables are followed by an in-depth discussion of the evidence collection phases.

Table 4.3. on the following page illustrates the seven phases of evidence collection for the full time students in the study from the 2013 cohort of the initial teacher education program. Table 4.4. on the following page provides details of the collection of evidence for the 2014 cohort of full time students.

Table 4.3. Evidence collection schedule: Full time students: 2013 cohort
(*plus one part time second year student)

Date	*Contact*	*Commonplaces***		
		Temporality	*Sociality*	*Place*
February 2013 Orientation and Week 1	Recruitment: Initial invitation to participate in study	N/A	N/A	N/A
March 2013 Weeks 2 - 4	Focus group conversations or: Individual conversations (in person, or by telephone)	Review of weeks prior to commencing course; current experiences; looking ahead to course experiences and teaching career	-Reasons for career change -Image of self as teacher -Image of teaching profession -Expectations of course	Consideration of the effect of being on university campus as part of transition experience
April 2013 Weeks 8 – 9	Individual conversations (in person, or by telephone)	Review of weeks 1 – 8 of semester 1 of course; current experiences, looking ahead to professional experience	-Experiences during course (semester 1) -Expectations of first professional experience placement	Consideration of the effect of being on university campus as part of transition experience
June 2013 Week 16	Individual conversations (in person, by telephone or by email)	Review of professional experience (weeks 9 – 14); current experiences; looking ahead to teaching career	-Experiences of first professional experience placement -Image of future self as teacher	Consideration of the effect of being in secondary classroom as part of professional experience placement
September 2013 Weeks 8 - 9	Individual conversations (in person, or by telephone)	Review of weeks 1 – 8 of semester 2 of course; current experiences; looking ahead to professional experience	-Experiences during course (semester 2) -Expectations of second professional experience placement	Consideration of the effect of being on university campus as part of transition experience. Comparison with previous professional experience.
November 2013 Week 16	Individual conversations (in person, by telephone or by email)	Review of professional experience (weeks 9 – 14); current experiences; looking ahead to teaching career	-Experiences of second professional experience placement -Expectations of future teaching career -Image of self as teacher	Consideration of the effect of being in secondary classroom as part of professional experience placement; comparison with previous professional experience placement
March 2014	Individual conversations (in person, by telephone or by email)	Review of early weeks as beginning teacher; current experiences; future teaching career	-Experiences as beginning teacher -Image of future teaching career	Consideration of the effect of being in the secondary classroom as a beginning teacher
July 2014 (Final conversations)	Individual conversations (by telephone or by email)	Current experiences; future teaching career	-Experience of being a beginning teacher -Image of self as teacher -Future teaching career	Consideration of the effect of being in the secondary classroom as a beginning teacher

*One student in the study was a part time student who was in her second and final year of study when the evidence collection began in 2013. **Very importantly, the commonplaces were *guides* rather than *drivers* or *constraints* in the conversations. Please see Appendix E for examples of prompts.

Table 4.4. Evidence collection schedule: Full time students: 2014 cohort

Date	*Contact*	*Commonplaces*		
		Temporality	*Sociality*	*Place*
February 2014 Orientation and Week 1	Recruitment: Initial invitation to participate in study	N/A	N/A	N/A
March 2014 Weeks 2 - 4	Focus group conversations or: Individual conversations (in person, or by telephone)	Review of weeks prior to commencing course; current experiences; looking ahead to course experiences and teaching career	-Reasons for career change -Image of self as teacher -Image of teaching profession -Expectations of course	Consideration of the effect of being on university campus as part of transition experience
April 2014 Weeks 8 – 9	Individual conversations (in person, or by telephone)	Review of weeks 1 – 8 of semester 1 of course; current experiences, looking ahead to professional experience	-Experiences during course (semester 1) -Expectations of first professional experience placement	Consideration of the effect of being on university campus as part of transition experience
June 2014 Week 16	Individual conversations (in person, by telephone or by email)	Review of professional experience (weeks 9 – 14); current experiences; looking ahead to teaching career	-Experiences of first professional experience placement -Image of future self as teacher	Consideration of the effect of being in secondary classroom as part of professional experience placement
September 2014 Weeks 8 - 9	Individual conversations (in person, or by telephone)	Review of weeks 1 – 8 of semester 2 of course; current experiences; looking ahead to professional experience	-Experiences during course (semester 2) -Expectations of second professional experience placement	Consideration of the effect of being on university campus as part of transition experience
November 2014 Week 16	Individual conversations (in person, by telephone or by email)	Review of professional experience (weeks 9 – 14); current experiences; looking ahead to teaching career	-Experiences of second professional experience placement -Expectations of future teaching career -Image of self as teacher	Consideration of the effect of being in secondary classroom as part of professional experience placement; comparison with professional experience placement
March 2015	Individual conversations (in person, by telephone or by email)	Review of early weeks as beginning teacher; current experiences; future teaching career	-Experiences as beginning teacher -Image of future teaching career	Consideration of the effect of being in the secondary classroom as a beginning teacher
July 2015 (Final conversations)	Individual conversations (by telephone or by email)	Current experiences; future teaching career	-Experience of being a beginning teacher -Image of self as teacher -Future teaching career	Consideration of the effect of being in the secondary classroom as a beginning teacher

The previous table, 4.4., outlined the collection of evidence phases for the 2014 full time students. The following table, 4.5., provides details of the collection of evidence for the 2013/2014 part time cohort.

Table 4.5. Evidence collection schedule: Part time students 2013-2014 cohort

Date	*Contact*	*Commonplaces*		
		Temporality	*Sociality*	*Place*
February 2013 Orientation and Week 1	Recruitment: Initial invitation to participate in study	N/A	N/A	N/A
March 2013 Weeks 2 - 4	Focus group conversations or: Individual conversations (in person, or by telephone)	Review of weeks prior to commencing course; current experiences; looking ahead to course experiences and teaching career	-Reasons for career change -Image of self as teacher -Image of teaching profession -Expectations of year one of course	Consideration of the effect of being on university campus as part of transition experience
April 2013 Weeks 8 – 9	Individual conversations (in person, or by telephone)	Review of weeks 1 – 8 of semester 1 of course; current experiences, looking ahead to next semester	-Experiences during course (semester 1) -Expectations of experiences prior to semester 2	Consideration of the effect of being on university campus as part of transition experience
September 2013 Weeks 8 - 9	Individual conversations (in person, or by telephone)	Review of weeks 1 – 8 of semester 2 of course; current experiences; looking ahead to next year	-Experiences during course (semester 2) -Expectations of 2014 course	Consideration of the effect of being on university campus as part of transition experience
March 2014 Week 2	Welcome back to second year email. Request for update or comments on career change experience.	Review of weeks prior to recommencing course; current experiences; looking ahead to course experiences and teaching career	-Experiences as a part time student -Expectations of year two of course	Consideration of the effect of being on university campus as part of transition experience
April 2014 Weeks 8 – 9	Individual conversations (in person, or by telephone)	Review of weeks 1 – 8 of semester 1 of course; current experiences, looking ahead to professional experience	-Experiences during year two course (semester 1) -Expectations of first professional experience placement	Consideration of the effect of being on university campus as part of transition experience
June 2014 Week 16	Individual conversations (in person, by telephone or email)	Review of professional experience (weeks 9 – 14); current experiences; looking ahead to teaching career	-Experiences of first professional experience placement -Image of future self as teacher	Consideration of the effect of being in secondary classroom as part of professional experience placement

Table 4.5. continued on following page.

Date	*Contact*	*Commonplaces*		
		Temporality	*Sociality*	*Place*
September 2014 Weeks 8 - 9	Individual conversations (in person, or by telephone)	Review of weeks 1 – 8 of semester 2 of course; current experiences; looking ahead to professional experience	-Experiences of year two of course (semester 2) -Expectations of second professional experience placement	Consideration of the effect of being on university campus as part of transition experience
November 2014 Week 16	Individual conversations (in person, by telephone or email)	Review of professional experience (weeks 9 – 14); current experiences; looking ahead to teaching career	-Experiences of second professional experience placement -Expectations of future teaching career -Image of self as teacher	Consideration of the effect of being in secondary classroom as part of professional experience placement; comparison with previous professional experience placement
March 2015	Individual conversations (in person, by telephone or email)	Review of early weeks as beginning teacher; current experiences; future teaching career	-Experiences as beginning teacher -Image of future teaching career	Consideration of the effect of being in the secondary classroom as a beginning teacher
July 2015 (Final conversations)	Individual conversations (by telephone or email)	Current experiences; future teaching career	-Experiences as a beginning teacher -Image of self as teacher -Future teaching career	Consideration of the effect of being in the secondary classroom as a beginning teacher

The table above illustrates the phases of evidence collection for the part time students in the study from the 2013/2014 cohort of the initial teacher education program. The collection of evidence for part time students continued for a period of 30 months as they completed their studies and entered the teaching profession. Further information of these seven phases for the study cohorts is outlined below.

An initial email invited students to either a focus group, or an individual face to face conversation, according to participant availability and preference. In 2013, two focus groups were conducted, with six participants in the first group and four participants in the second. In 2014, one focus group of three participants was conducted. The remainder of the study participants attended a personal research conversation. All focus groups and personal conversations were conducted in a private interview room provided by the university on campus. Berg (2007) stated that with regard to confidentiality in the group meeting situation, the agreement must be among all group members and the researcher. Therefore, for group meetings, attention was drawn to the consent form so that the group was aware of the requirement for group confidentiality. All participants were asked to confirm that they would maintain group confidentiality and were

comfortable with having the voice recorder running during each meeting. All transcripts of field texts were emailed back to participants after every interview during the study, requesting feedback and elaboration or clarification if participants felt it necessary.

In week eight of semester one, 2013/2014, individual conversations were conducted with all available study participants. At the end of semester one, after their first professional experience placement, participants were invited to participate in a further conversation. Some participants responded by talking of their experiences by email, while others requested a conversation in person or a telephone conversation. In week eight of semester 2, 2013/2014, individual conversations were again conducted. In November 2013/2014, study participants were invited to an individual conversation to be conducted by email, telephone or in person. Most of the participants responded by email, although some study participants preferred to have their conversation by telephone.

In semester one (terms one and two) 2014 or 2015, participants experienced the first six months of employment in their new profession. They were contacted in March and asked to relate their experiences as they arrived in their new profession. As time constraints for participants could have been an issue, liaison by email primarily occurred during this time. However, some participants chose the option of a telephone conversation or conversation in person. One final individual conversation for the participants was conducted at the end of school term 2, in July 2014 or 2015. Once again, these conversations were primarily by email or telephone for practical purposes, as outlined above.

Participants were advised that as evidence collection was voluntary, they could leave the study at any time. They had the option of participating in individual, group or email conversations, or all three types of evidence collection. For this reason, one consent form which covered all three types of conversation was prepared, and was signed by each participant. For email conversations, advice to participants was that a response to the email from the researcher with regard to the issues being discussed in the study was consenting to the information being used. For telephone conversations, participants were informed at the time of the phone call that the conversation was being recorded in order for a transcript to be prepared. Participants were asked if they consented to this procedure, and all participants agreed.

An evidence collection protocol (Appendix F) was prepared in advance of the conversations. This protocol outlined group and individual meeting details for the researcher and was attached to the list of sample conversation starters or prompts (as

previously discussed). King and Horrocks (2010) outlined how flexibility is a key requirement of qualitative interviewing. The evidence used for analysis in this study arose from the stories the participants chose to tell of their experiences. On conclusion of the evidence collection phase of the study, all participants were emailed, thanking them for their time and involvement in the study, and requesting final feedback from them by email. This section has provided details of the evidence collection phases, incorporating the commonplaces of temporality, sociality and place. The following section outlines methods for analysis of evidence.

Process for Analysis of Evidence

As outlined in Chapter 3, this study has adopted Clandinin et al.'s (2007) structure of field texts, interim texts and research texts. Field texts are the 'evidence' on which claims are made, interim texts might be called analysis and research texts are the dissemination texts. In this study, field texts were created by the collection of interview audio or text and the transcription of conversations as recorded, including pauses in the conversation, conversational stops and starts, laughter and words such as *um*, *ah* and *you know*. These field texts were 'cleaned up' of dysfluencies and were then shown to study participants for confirmation of accuracy and to request feedback or elaboration. Participants were advised that they could request changes to their own record of the conversation after reading through these transcripts. An example of a field text from this study is provided in an excerpt from one participant's story (Appendix G). These transcripts, together with participants' additions, clarifications or elaborations informed the next round of research conversations, establishing an iterative process of meaning making, enabling a deeper examination of issues arising. The next stage of the analysis was the creation of the interim texts. This section outlines the process utilised in this study for the phases of the analysis of evidence. The following diagram, Figure 4.2., illustrates the stages of analysis for the study.

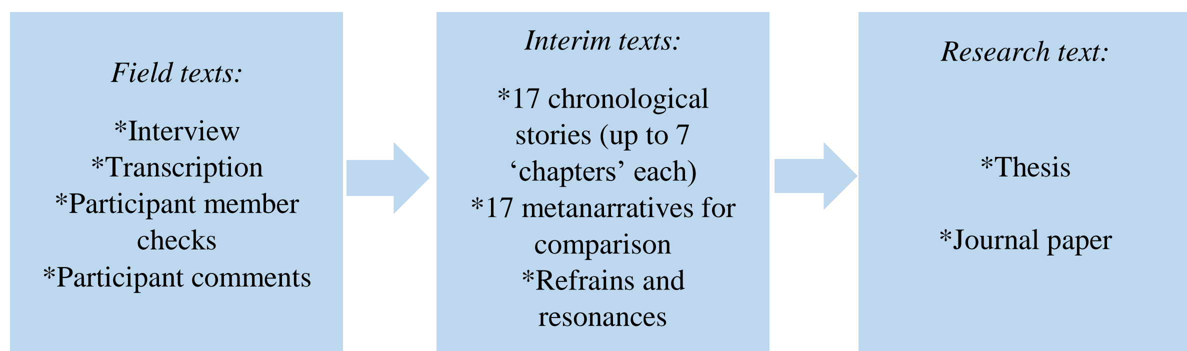

Figure 4.2. Three stages of narrative analysis

As can be seen from the diagram, in the initial stage of analysis, transcripts were created from the conversations. Interim texts were then created, using these field texts. The final research text is the (re)presentation of the research, in this case, this thesis and a journal paper. Further information about the analysis of evidence – or in Clandinin et al.'s. (2007) terms, the construction of interim texts - is provided in this section.

Handling and Transcription of Evidence

Systematic transcription of interview evidence is an important starting point for the valid analysis and interpretation of narrative evidence (Mishler, 1986). As part of this analysis process, transcription is more than a simple or routine task (Elliott, 2005). Mishler (1986) stated that in interview research, a carefully prepared transcript assists the analysis of evidence. The analysis depends on the adequacy of the description of the phenomenon in question. In this study Poland's (2002) guidelines for quality recording and transcribing were used. The guidelines for the initial field texts include showing in brackets occurrences of laughter and short responses given by the researcher, for example, agreement or encouragement to continue (back channels). The evidence was transcribed by myself following the group and individual meetings. Pseudonyms were used for the participants as required by ethical considerations. As Riessman (1993) contended, researchers who do their own transcription come to a close knowledge and understanding of the stories.

The Creation of Interim Texts: Analysis of Evidence

The process used for the analysis of evidence in this study was informed by the theory of narrative analysis as outlined by Riessman (2008). Riessman's method involves the researcher studying a single conversation at a time and putting relevant episodes into a chronological biographical account. When we story our experience in conversation with others, we seldom retell events in strict chronological order, shifting backwards and forwards in time in telling relevant moments of the history or imagined future. When the chronological biographical account has been completed for all of the conversations, a story through time has been created and the researcher then identifies the underlying assumptions in each account and names them. The next step is to select particular cases to illustrate general patterns and underlying assumptions and develop a comparison between the different cases (Riessman, 2008). This 'analysis' forms the interim text. A written report is then prepared, reproducing excerpts from the evidence, interspersed with the interpretation of the research, theoretical formulations and references to prior

theory. This report is the research text. In this written report, the speech quoted from the interviews might be cleaned up of dysfluencies, back channels and such, as long as meaning is not impacted, for easy readability. The active participation of the interviewer, transcriber and analyst disappear from the writing (Riessman, 2008).

While informed by Riessman (2008), the analysis of evidence for this report differed slightly from these principles. Each of the stories was read several times to identify refrains within each account. In this context a refrain is a comment, statement or idea that is often repeated within a participant's story. As each story unfolded over time, these refrains could be identified. For example, comments on the development of academic skills were revisited at different times during the conversations with several participants. As there were seven interview phases in the study, there was up to seven 'chapters' in each participant's story.

An example of an interim text for this study, based on a participant's field text, is provided in Appendix H. Metanarratives were created in each individual's story by the researcher. Using the metanarratives, a comparison was made to identify resonances across the seventeen stories. According to Conle (1996) narrative resonance is "a complex relationship between many aspects of a story. The metaphorical connections or correspondences come holistically as a field, a scene, a narrative image (p. 313). Drawing on a musical metaphor, Clandinin (2013) described this process as the laying of research accounts or stories metaphorically alongside one another, to search for resonances or echoes that reverberated across accounts (p. 132) just as the strings on a musical instrument will reverberate or resonate with other parts of the instrument. As Mary Catherine Bateson (2000) stated:

> Wisdom comes not by accumulation of more and more experiences but through discerning patterns in the deeper mystery of what is already there . . . Wisdom, then, is born of the overlapping of lives, the resonances between stories (242-243).

An example of the relationships between refrains within stories and resonances across stories is shown in Table 4.6., on the following page.

Table 4.6. Examples of relationships between refrains in individual stories and resonances across stories

Refrains in individual stories				*Resonances across refrains in stories*
Participant 1	*Participant 2*	*Participant 3*	*Participant 4*	
Work-life balance	Work-life balance	Work-life balance	Work-life balance	Yes
Confidence	Confidence	Confidence	Confidence	Yes
Finances	Finances	Finances	Employment	Yes (Finances)
Relationship Difficulties	Relationship ended	Visa issues	Transport problems	No

In the above table, the columns show examples of refrains which could be apparent in the stories of individual participants. By looking across the rows, it can be seen that there were three refrains in this example which had a strong presence and resonated across the stories – work-life balance, confidence and finances. However, the fourth row shows refrains that, while present for individual participants, did not resonate across the stories – relationship difficulties, relationship ending, visa issues and transport problems. Not all refrains had resonances across stories.

The representation of the research text utilises theory outlined by Elliott (2005). He outlined the differences between first order and second order narratives. First order narratives are defined as the stories individuals tell of their own experiences. For example, the stories of the participants as recorded and transcribed in the study are first order narratives. In contrast, second order narratives are accounts researchers construct to make sense of the social world and other people's experiences.

The analysis of evidence chapters, Chapters 5-8, are written as second order narratives, they are my constructed metanarratives, illustrated by quotations from the participants' original accounts (their first order narratives). As the participants' stories are quite lengthy and therefore unable to be reproduced in full in this thesis, the refrains can be seen in quotations from the participants. The resonances across the stories can be seen in the grouping of the refrains, for example, refrains on the use of digital technology or academic and writing skills. The second order narrative also includes

interpretations of the research and reference to theory. The four evidence chapters (Chapters 5-8) tell the stories of the participants, and are organised according to Anderson et al.'s (2012) three stages of transition theory as discussed in Chapter 3. The diagram 4.3., below, shows the relationships between the three stages and the four evidence chapters.

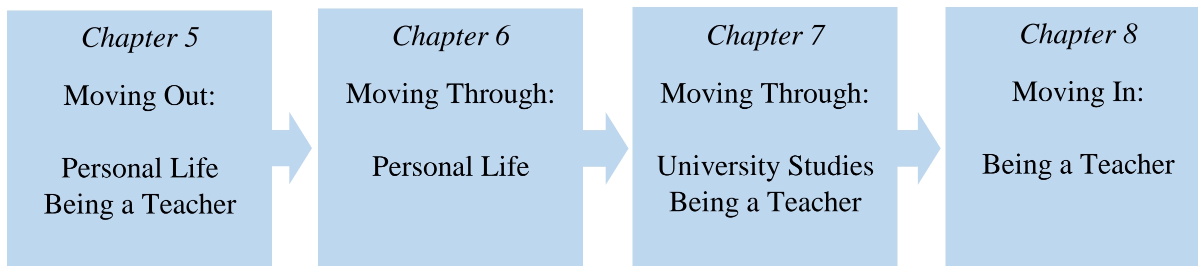

Figure 4.3. Stages of transition theory: moving out, moving through, moving in

As can be seen from the diagram, Chapter 5 relates to the early stages of the transition, moving out. As there were a large number of stories around the moving through stage of the transition (a time frame of approximately 12 - 24 months), two chapters, Chapters 6 and 7, tell the stories of this stage. Chapter 8 outlines the stories around the transition experience as the participants were moving into their new profession. In relation to the organisation of topics within the four evidence chapters, the diagram below, Figure 4.4., shows the relationships between the three stages of transition theory, and the grouping of refrains and resonances.

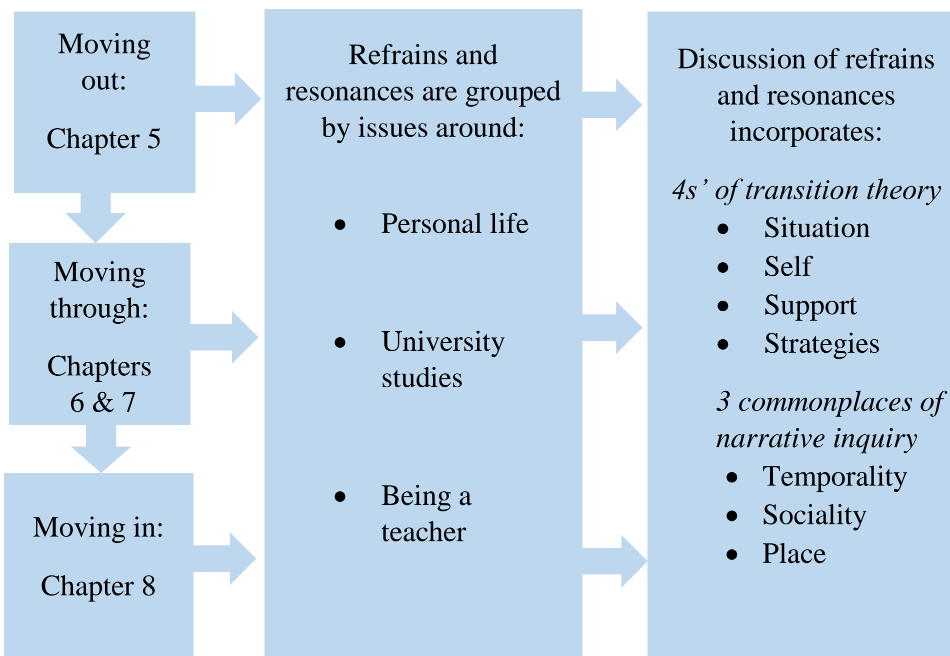

Figure 4.4. Organisation within four evidence chapters

As previously outlined, the four evidence chapters are ordered according to the three stages of transition theory – moving out, moving through and moving in. In addition, there are three main headings within the chapters that group the refrains and resonances according to the following issues: Personal Life, University Studies and Being a Teacher. These headings arose from the participants themselves. Their refrains are evident in their stories. The stories of the participants emphasised different aspects of the transition experience as it progressed. For example, in the earlier stages of the transition, personal issues were more relevant to them, but in the later stages of their transition, issues related to being a teacher become more important. The four evidence chapters reflect this differing emphasis. The analysis of the refrains within and resonances across the stories in the chapters is driven by the theoretical lenses of transition theory and narrative inquiry methodology. This section has outlined the process for the analysis of evidence or the production of the interim texts on which the final research text is based. The following section addresses ethical issues relating to the study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles are an important consideration for researchers. These considerations are relevant to both qualitative and quantitative research. For example, gaining informed consent from study participants is an important ethical consideration. Informed consent involves informing the participants about the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design, the study procedures and any possible risks to participants in the research study. Participants need to be informed of the voluntary nature of their participation in the study and of their right to withdraw at any time (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

However, there are other special considerations for qualitative studies, as outlined by the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2007). These considerations include the special care needed to protect the identity of the participants when there is a small sample size. While confidentiality is an issue in both qualitative and quantitative research, in a qualitative research study extra care needs to be taken as participants' statements from a private interview conversation may appear in public reports. Precautions need to be taken to ensure confidentially and security of evidence (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). These precautions could include using pseudonyms for the participants and keeping recorded and transcribed evidence in locked cabinets and computers.

As collection of evidence from individual participants in a qualitative research study may continue for some time, King and Horrocks (2010) pointed out that informed consent in this context is a process over time. They suggested that in this situation, study participants be reminded of their right to withdraw from the study throughout the process. Cresswell (2013) also made the point that ethical issues can arise at several phases of the research and the issues can be ever expanding in scope as the researcher becomes more sensitive to the needs of the participants.

Mello, Murphy and Clandinin (2016) asserted that, when addressing the issue of ethics in narrative inquiry methodology, "the importance of relationship shapes an ethical response that goes beyond the ethics process we must engage in at our universities and attends to our obligations to the people with whom we work in an inquiry" (p. 578). Ethical considerations for narrative inquiry, as identified by Clandinin et al. (2006) included how participants might read the words of the researcher, how participants may feel vulnerable and how the researcher's view of the story might differ from his or her participants. Carolyn Ellis (2007) also discussed the need to be aware of the ethical issues involved in telling the stories of participants in research studies, where this knowledge, if publically available, could be detrimental to those individuals. Researchers need to be aware of ethical sensitivities in the manner in which they present these stories. In addition, as the pool of participants in a narrative research study may be small, participants may be known to each other. Therefore there can be a risk that participants are able to identify each other in published reports, so the researcher must be sensitive to the implications of this possibility.

Ethical approval for this study (Reference Number: EDN/93/12/HREC) was granted by the university prior to the commencement of the collection of evidence in 2013. The subsequent adjustments to the evidence collection phases (where the evidence collection process was extended to include the 2014 cohort, as previously outlined) was given ethical clearance by the university. Late in the study, when it became apparent in analysis that a 'settling in' phase in the transition model would enrich understanding, further ethical clearance was sought to contact participants for a further conversation. Results of that reconnection are reported in Chapter 9. Ethical principles were observed throughout this study. These principles included obtaining informed consent from the participants, using pseudonyms for all participants and taking measures to ensure confidentiality and security of evidence.

Research Rigour

As a form of qualitative research, narrative research needs to be consistent with criteria for validity in qualitative research. Polkinghorne (1988) stated that "In narrative research, 'valid' retains its ordinary meaning of well-grounded and supportable" (p. 175). He concluded that narrative research does not produce certainty and that the conclusions of narrative research remain open ended although guidelines can provide some assurance of research rigour for narrative researchers. Considerations concerning validity in narrative research are provided by Riessman (2008) who argued that there is no "clear set of rules or list of established procedures and abstract criteria for validation" (p. 200) relating to narrative research. She did however, provide a list of three considerations to establish validity in narrative research:

1) Making explicit how methodological decisions were made;
2) Describing how interpretations were produced, including alternative interpretations considered; and
3) Making primary evidence available to other investigators where appropriate (p. 195).

In accordance with Riessman's considerations, the methodological decisions for this study and a description of how the interpretations were produced are outlined in this chapter. The primary evidence is kept in a secure location and is available to the supervisors and examiners of this thesis and sizable extracts of that evidence are incorporated into the final report (this thesis) as appropriate.

Morse (2015) states that, with regard to reliability, when evidence is plentiful, as with the use of 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) obtained through unstructured interview methods, evidence naturally overlaps and key issues bear resemblances. The overlap allows the researcher to see replication, thus contributing to the reliability of the research. As outlined in this chapter, unstructured interview methods were used in this study, to produce thick descriptions in the participants' stories. This thick description has enabled identification of refrains within and resonances across the stories, which are outlined in Chapters 5-8 where analysis and interpretation of evidence is reported.

Several models for evaluating qualitative research have been proposed (e.g., Erikson, 1986; Lincoln, 2002; Wilson, 1994). As this study and thesis draws on Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) understanding of narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Caine's (2013) 12 touchstones for evaluating rigour in a narrative inquiry study have been adopted. The touchstones, with an outline of how the current study has met them, are outlined below:

(a) *Attending to relational responsibilities.* The relationships between myself as the researcher and the participants were an important component of this research. These relationships were developed over time as there were a series of conversations with each individual participant. I was aware of the need to treat these relationships with respect and care, including appropriate and appreciative 'exiting' at the closure of the research. Negotiating exit from a narrative inquiry study looks different for different people. In this study, at the end of the evidence collection, I emailed all of the participants to thank them for their participation in the study and to ask for further comment or feedback if desired. I subsequently emailed all of the participants during the final writing of this thesis to provide the study findings and ask about their current lives. There was a good response from the participants to this final email.

(b) *Recognition of being in the midst*. Narrative inquiry researchers enter the lives of research participants in the midst of their own and the participants' lives. I entered the lives of the participants as they were beginning a transition into a new career. I was also in transition into a different career. The relationship between myself and the participants continued until they had completed six months into their new career, with further email contact just prior to the finalisation of this thesis. Although I as a researcher have stepped out of their lives, this study maintains an awareness that their, and my story continues.

(c) *Negotiation of relationships*. Relationships were negotiated on an ongoing basis during the conversations between myself and the participants. The evidence in the study arose from the topics decided by the participants during our conversations. Participants were reminded on each interview occasion that they could withdraw from the interview at any time. This freedom to remove oneself from the research can, paradoxically, create a sense of ownership and commitment to the research. After three participants withdrew from the study within the first weeks, the remaining 14 participants remained throughout the study.

(d) *Narrative beginnings*. Clandinin and Caine (2013) encourage researchers to articulate their 'beginnings', including their investment and interest in the research. As outlined earlier, this study began with the story of my own experiences and my interest in the topic of mature age students who were undertaking a postgraduate coursework program in order to make a career change. In an interesting turn, this study of career changers into teaching is part of my own personal journey of career change into research.

(e) *Negotiating entry into the field.* The participants were recruited on the university campus at which they were studying. The relationships with the participants began with the early focus groups and individual conversations, when the participants began to tell their stories. I had a legitimate place in the field of education as a research student, myself studying 'alongside' the participants.

(f) *Moving from field to field texts.* I had ongoing conversations with the study participants, which were recorded and transcribed as field texts. These field texts were returned to the participants for member checks with the invitation for further comment and clarification as part of these ongoing conversations. Further details on the use of field texts are provided in this chapter and in Chapter 3.

(g) *Moving from field texts to interim texts and final research texts.* Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis describe the creation of the field and interim texts – this document is the research text for this study. The interim texts were created as chronological narratives, with metanarratives written by the researcher. The relationship between these texts has been explicitly articulated at each turn: gathering evidence, collating and transcribing evidence, analysing and creating this final text.

(h) *Representing narratives of experiences in ways that show temporality, sociality and place.* As outlined in this chapter, the collection of evidence was built around the three commonplaces of temporality, sociality and place. The analysis of evidence also reflected these commonplaces.

(i) *Relational response communities.* My response communities have overseen and reviewed the ongoing development of the study and thesis and provided feedback and ongoing academic and emotional support. These communities include my research supervisors, the research confirmation panel, the ethics approval board, my research peers and the participants themselves.

(j) *Justifications.* Three justifications for the study have been outlined in this chapter – the personal, practical and social (in addition to the justifications discussed in Chapter 1). These justifications relate to my own story, and the contributions this research can provide to the educational community as well as organisations and institutions interested in mature age career changers.

(k) *Attentive to multiple audiences.* The stories in this study could be of interest not only to other individuals considering a career change, but also to individuals and institutions involved in the recruitment, education and mentoring of mature age

career changers. Researchers into transition experiences and other narrative researchers may also have an interest in this study.

(l) *Commitment to understanding lives in motion.* The longitudinal nature of this study reflects the fact that for individuals undergoing a transition, stories of lived experiences are likely to change as the context of the transition in terms of time and place continues to change. It is the understanding of these lives in motion that has created the depth of knowledge of the topic.

This section has outlined the considerations utilised to ensure research rigour in this study. The following section provides a summary of the chapter.

Discussion

This chapter has situated myself, as the researcher, in the research study by outlining my story of being a mature age, career change postgraduate coursework student, and the experiences that prompted my interest in this research topic. Next, there was an outline of how the research study was underpinned by personal, social and practical motivations. Principles of narrative research conversations were then discussed.

The process of participant selection was outlined, followed by an introduction to the study participants. This section was followed by the detail of the collection of evidence. A discussion of the analysis of evidence, including the methods used for evidence handling and transcription followed. Ethical considerations have been considered with a specific focus on ethical principles as applied to qualitative research. The articulation of Clandinin and Caine's (2013) 12 touchstones for evaluating rigour in a narrative inquiry was offered as the principles observed to ensure research rigour.

The evidence analysis chapters, commencing with Chapter 5, outline the refrains within and the resonances across the stories, and include interpretations of the research and references to prior theory.

Chapter 5
Moving Out: "OMG, What have I done?"

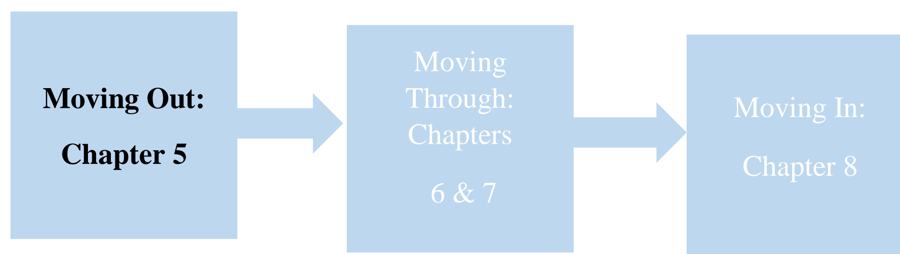

Figure 5.1. Moving out stage of transition theory

The previous chapters of this thesis outlined the justifications for the study, the literature on mature age, postgraduate coursework career changers, the theoretical frameworks for the study and the methodology used. This chapter, Chapter 5, and the following three chapters, Chapters 6-8, explore the stories of the participants in the study as they progressed through their transition into the teaching profession. The diagram above, Figure 5.1., shows the relationship between this chapter and the following chapters, in relation to the three stages of transition theory.

The Transition Begins: Moving Out

In the individual and focus group conversations conducted in the first two weeks of the participants' academic program, the topics that arose can be understood in terms of two broad categories: Personal Life and Being a Teacher. This chapter explores the refrains within and resonances across the participants' stories of issues that affected their personal lives and imagined future being a teacher. The diagram below, Figure 5.2., illustrates the structure of this chapter. Note that these are the refrains that arose from the participants themselves in the individual and focus group conversations, not predetermined categories of investigation.

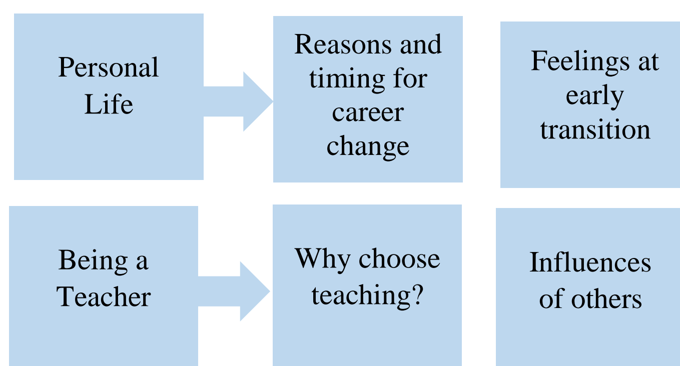

Figure 5.2. Structure of chapter: Refrains and resonances about moving out stage of transition

The decision to change careers is a complex process beginning some time prior to the commencement of a study program or other undertakings related to the career change process. This chapter examines the participants' stories, given in response to the general prompt – "Tell me about making the decision to change career" – to understand why participants decided to make a career change, why they chose to make a career change at this time in their lives, their feelings at this early stage of transition, why they chose teaching as their new profession and the influences of others on their decision. At this stage of the transition, the participants reflected back in time and their stories incorporated a range of events prior to the commencement of semester one of their initial teacher education program. In addition, stories of the current experiences of the participants during the moving out phase of the transition, as well as their imagined futures in the teaching profession, are explored. The chapter separates the reasons and timing of making the career change decision and the reasons for choosing teaching as the new profession into two refrains.

However it should be noted that the reasons for the career change, the timing of the career change and the choice of profession may interweave. For example, some participants made the career change decision because they were experiencing employment insecurity, or a desire for a better work-life balance. However, while these factors were impacting their lives, for some, there had been prior constraints around the timing of the career change for either personal or social reasons, such as a need to attain personal maturity in order to deal with the challenges of the new profession, or because of financial constraints. Over time, as these constraints were lifted, participants were able to move ahead with their decision to change careers. The choice of the new profession was related to the above factors. Some participants chose teaching as their new profession as they perceived the teaching profession would provide employment security and a work-life balance, while for others the decision was based on their personal and financial resources at a time of their lives when they had many commitments. The length of the initial teacher education program (12 months full time) was a relevant factor for participants who considered they did not have the personal and financial resources to be out of the workforce for longer periods of time. The following section outlines refrains within and resonances across the participants' stories of their personal lives.

Personal Life

Reasons for Making the Career Change and Timing of Career Change

This section of the chapter explores the stories of why the decision to make a career change was made, and why it was made at this point in an individual's life. Reasons included social conditions such as former career options no longer being available, and personal conditions such as employment insecurity, being unhappy in a former career, wanting a better work-life balance, and seeking meaning and fulfilment. For some participants, there were a number of different reasons they chose to make a career change, and why this decision was made at this point in their lives. For example, one participant, Ray, summed up his situation: "I mean, there is a whole pile of reasons why I am here, but the easiest one I can identify is lack of a job". Often these different reasons brought participants to the point where the 'time was right' for the change. An example can be seen from Max's refrain: "Why right now? Presently I am unemployed and I thought, well, let's add another string to the bow". Reasons are explored here in terms of issues that participants raised, here discussed in terms of the refrains within and resonances across the stories: employment insecurity; seeking challenges, meaning and fulfilment; desire for work-life balance and the 'time was right'.

Employment insecurity.

In relation to findings from earlier research, it is important to note that there is diversity of participants' responses concerning factors that resulted in their making a career change decision. The factors found in this study did not fit neatly or completely into the findings of previous career change studies such as those of Gomes and Teixeira (2000) or Wise and Millard (2000) whose findings were focused on personal rather than environmental factors. Longitudinal methodology (as suggested by Wise and Millard (2000) for further career change research) used in this study could account for different findings from these previous studies.

The refrain of job insecurity and unemployment caused by global and local issues resonated across the participants' stories. At the time of the study, the context of globalisation had impacted on employment prospects, particularly in the areas of engineering and information technology. Study participants who had previously been in the engineering profession told stories that outlined the impact of the decline of the manufacturing industry in Australia in the past few years on their employment situation.

In the past four or five years, Callum had been aware of increasing job insecurity as he watched the decline of the manufacturing industry in Australia: "I've been building

machines or equipment and then getting it built in China, sending jobs overseas. And I was just watching the decline of manufacturing in Australia. It made me think it is not a secure job".

Similarly, difficulty finding employment had been the catalyst for Ray to make the career change decision: "I was primarily in the manufacturing sector and that's shrinking quite markedly. At the moment, it is very difficult to get a job". For participants with a background in information technology, such as Mike, the decline in this industry in Australia, together with the outsourcing of work overseas, had also impacted on job security: "It wasn't till I just lost my job in December last year" [that I considered teaching].

Within the local context, the shedding of staff by the state government in 2012 also impacted the workforce and created job insecurity. Being made redundant from her previously secure public service employment as a scientist was a surprise for Kelly: "I worked for 30 years as a scientist in a state government department. I had expected to stay there until retirement and had not foreseen the cutbacks in the public service. The change came suddenly". The indirect impact of these government policies had created job insecurity for Rick, who had formerly worked in the state water industry:

> *I was working for a company as a contracts manager and they shed bucket loads of staff. And this has been the consequence of the state government shedding lots of staff as well, it's gone through local government and state government.*

For other participants, the career change decision was the result of reduced options in their former profession due to changes in their life situation. Nadia found her art gallery had been closed due to the end of the lease while she was away overseas: "I decided to open an art gallery. We were given our thirty days' notice while we were overseas so we couldn't come back to it. By the time I came back, it was all closed, all finished". Neve also experienced reduced options in her former career when she moved to another state, which had different legislation and insecure employment in urban planning:

> *I moved interstate in 2013. In the beginning, I hadn't thought of going straight into teaching. I knew I would lose the urban planning career because of the hard times I had heard of in this state. And also because of the state based legislation and that is a hard jump to make.*

As can be seen from the above, employment insecurity, that may have been a sudden or gradual process, was an important factor in the career change decision for some participants. Other participants had a more gradual realisation that they needed to make

a career change. These participants began to question their personal values and goals, for example, searching for what might offer meaning and fulfilment for them.

Seeking challenges, meaning and fulfilment.

The decision to make a career change was a more gradual process for some participants and resulted from the realisation that they were unhappy with their former career, as it was no longer providing the stimulation and challenges they required. Finding employment that was both meaningful and provided a sense of fulfilment was also important to many participants in the study. For example, the realisation that she was not working to her full potential caused Bec some unhappiness, leading to the decision to make a career change:

> *I decided to make a career change because where I was working I had been there for six years and I was very good at my job but I was very unhappy. I always wanted to be someone who used their degree as opposed to someone who went to university and then didn't, and I became that person.*

While completing her studies, Elise was still working in a role that she did not find fulfilling: "I like my job but it's not particularly anything, it's not fulfilling. I was stuck for a year doing incredibly boring, dull projects". Eva previously worked in a marketing position, and, like Elise, did not find meaning in the work:

> *It has to be more satisfying and I think, OK I will do something meaningful, and that's what I missed from the previous positions that I had. I can meet the targets, I can do the tasks, I can meet the deadlines, I can deliver the resources given but that's it. It's not really fulfilling in the long run.*

Some participants sought a sense of meaning and fulfilment by changing their profession to one where they could interact with and be of service to others. For example, Mal began to question the meaning of his life, finally deciding that he wanted to be interacting with others who had similar values to himself, especially pertaining to a sense of service to others:

> *I think I had my own little mid-life crisis of some sort and it was just, what are we here for and how can I make a difference and all sorts of things. I felt very dispensable to a point as well. I've probably always been a people person. Dealing with a computer, I was good at my job but I was just ready to have conversations again and deal with people. People who have possibly similar values to myself in some way, teachers I have found already, whereas the building industry they seem to be, money orientated people.*

Mike also wanted a career where he could engage with others after working in information technology: "I think a lot of the struggle I've had in the work environment for me, has been that wanting to engage, wanting to, I don't know, discuss ideas". Another gradual realisation for many participants in their career change decision was that they wanted a better work-life balance.

Desire for work-life balance.

The desire for a 'better' work-life balance and the perception that a new career might provide this balance resonated across the stories of many participants. There was a strong resonance in particular for participants who had children. Lynda had previously been a university lecturer, working long hours. She now wanted to have more time to spend with her children:

Well, I know what it's like to be a lecturer, how busy it is. And that is just time off from your family completely. You work day and night, really. And I know that, I don't think I can do that with three kids. I just want to have a comfortable life.

Similarly, as the primary caregiver to his two young daughters, Rick had given considerable thought to careers which were compatible with his parental duties: "I had to make a change into something. And looking at the possibilities, this seemed the most compatible with being a stay at home dad now and continuing in that role as a participatory parent". Sally also had the primary responsibility for her children when her husband was away on military duty:

My husband is in the Army and works away a lot. I have young children and it was all too hard. Really, that life is too hard on your own. Which I am a lot with my kids. I then found teaching. And it really does interest me. I think it will be a better life for all of us.

Work-life balance was a significant motivator for many participants, particularly those who had families. In relation to the career change decision, while many participants had been considering making the career change for some time, for some it was a matter of the timing of the change due to personal circumstances.

Time was right.

For some participants the 'time was right' for making a career change, for personal and financial reasons, as previously outlined. Sally now found herself in a financial position where she was able to achieve a long held dream: "My husband was given an opportunity at work that allowed him to take a bonus that allowed me to take a year off

work to allow me to do this". Similarly, Mal was now able to make the career change he had been considering for five years as his wife had returned to work:

> *I think for the last five years I've been putting off a career change. I think due to financial reasons, probably the biggest reason why. My wife has gone back to work and she has been happy to go back three days. That gave us a situation where I could afford to study again.*

With maturity, Elise now felt it was time to make a career change into a profession she had been considering for some time:

> *I would have felt I was too young. When you are in your early twenties and you are trying to deal with 15 year olds, it's too fresh. In one way, you can relate to them but the other way there is a whole lack of, or a difficulty in obtaining respect. Because the age is too close. And also in the past, my personal esteem wasn't very high, so I would have been reduced to tears at the slightest provocation by a student or anything like that and I don't think I would have been able to handle it, so I would have been useless.*

These findings reflect those of some contemporary transition and career change researchers, with 'push' and 'pull' factors driving the career change decision. As previously outlined, push factors provided momentum towards seriously considering a career change, while pull factors drew people into consideration of the change. Push factors were relevant in the career change decisions for Callum, Ray, Max, Mike, Kelly and Rick who experienced employment insecurity or redundancy. This confirms earlier research (Bunn and Wake, 2015) that many career changers had made the decision due to changes in the economy. The study findings echo those of Anthony and Ord (2007) and Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003) who described factors such as losing a job, being unable to find an alternative job and wanting employment security as push factors in making the decision to make a career change. Similarly, Bimrose et al. (2014) suggested experiences such as employment security could trigger a career change. Other employment challenges were factors that influenced the career change decision for participants in this study. Neve's story echoes the findings of Anthony and Ord (2007) who concluded that changing location and being unable to find an alternative job in the same field was a push factor for the career change decision.

Mal, Bec, Elise and Eva's stories featured dissatisfaction in a former career, a feeling of having unfilled potential or a change in perspective. These findings lend support to earlier research (Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant, 2003) of how dissatisfaction with a former career and a change in perspective were push factors for a career change.

However, the challenges faced by the study participants also provided opportunities that acted as pull factors into the new career. The participants now had the desire to find work which reflected their values, provided the opportunity to learn and grow, and fed their desire to do something good for society (Wise & Millard, 2005).

Many of the study participants, like Mal, talked of wanting to have a career with a social orientation after having career that did not have this attribute. Hunter-Johnson (2015) and Bunn and Wake (2015) contend that career changers often have a sense of civic duty or responsibility. Dieterich and Panton (1996) also concluded that career changers considered it important to influence future generations. These factors created a pull into a new profession. A better work-life balance was often a strong motivator for study participants, which created a pull into a new career as also noted by Wise and Millard (2005). Wanting time for family was a factor in making a career change decision for many career changers (Whannel and Allen, 2014).

Pull factors were also related to the timing of the career change. Mal and Sally's having financial means was a pull factor, similar to some of the findings of Castro and Bauml's (2009) participants. In addition, making personal life changes such as gaining maturity and experience may act as a catalyst for a career change at this time in life, as Elise said. These changes could be relevant in the timing of a career change (Wise & Millard, 2005). Similarly, the timing of the decision to make a career change often resulted from the perception by career changers that they had reached a 'crossroads' in their lives (Anthony & Ord, 2008).

This section has outlined the factors that have influenced the career change decision for study participants. Employment insecurity, seeking challenges, meaning and fulfilment, a desire for a work-life balance and a sense that the 'time was right' were relevant factors in the career change decision. The following section discusses the feelings of the participants in response to their career change decision.

Feelings at Early Transition

Stories of the early days of the transition into the university program showed resonances across the participants' refrains within stories of personal responses such as having confidence in the decision. These refrains related to participants' questioning whether they had made the right decision and whether they could cope with the university program. Refrains arose of feeling confident, a rollercoaster of emotion and loss of confidence.

Feeling confident.

Callum enjoyed his early days as a postgraduate student and felt confident and very positive about his career change:

I'm feeling the best I've felt in years. I'm probably more confident. I was really probably in a role I didn't enjoy. It's a bit different to what I did [at university] twenty years ago. But getting through the first week and figuring out how this place works, you know, it's really good. I'm engaging with all sorts of people from the kids [university students] who have graduated the maths degree and with people like myself. My mind is being stretched in the theoretical side of the courses and all that. So I'm really enjoying it.

After Cate experienced a loss of confidence due to issues in her previous employment, she also felt renewed confidence that she was able to make the transition:

I lost a lot of confidence when my managers told me [in the last job] that I wasn't suited to my job any more. And I have got confidence that I can do this and it's an amazing thing to have that backing you up.

However, not all study participants experienced an increased sense of confidence after making the career change decision.

A rollercoaster of emotions.

A more common response to the career change decision was a feeling of confidence at times, with doubt and a loss of confidence creeping in at other times. As Bec said: "The first day, I was 'OMG, what have I done?'" Days into the semester, Elise also began to have doubts around her ability to cope with the academic program and she questioned her own understandings. After a prompt by the researcher about whether her confidence levels had been affected, she responded:

Yess!! A whole lot. I have bouts of like, I go round in circles, I'm like, yeah, I can totally do this, yeah I can do this and then I will go to a tute and they'll talk about something and I'll hear my classmates go I'm going to do this for the assignment and blah blah blah and I go, oh, I wasn't even thinking about that part.

Another participant who experienced fluctuating levels of confidence was Nadia. Initially she felt positive about her decision to make the career change into teaching, however, her confidence levels had begun to change days into the first semester:

Overall, I feel pretty positive most of the time about it. Obviously I have moments where I don't feel so positive. Up and down. Really up and down. Some days I feel like I am on top of it all and this is a piece of cake and other days I am pulling my

hair out thinking have I made the right decision, can I handle this? Yeah, this is all too much.

A further response of participants at the early stage of the transition was a loss of confidence. Low levels of confidence were either related to aspects of personality, as was the case with Eva, or were situational, as can be seen from Max's refrains.

Loss of confidence.

Eva described herself as not being confident in the first place: "And I'm not that confident. Not as confident as people see me", whereas situational factors around the change process and implications of the change caused Max to lose some confidence:

It's funny because I have lost a lot of the lustre for engineering, but still I don't know if this is the right path I am going on for other, more logistical reasons. I'm enthusiastic about teaching. But it's the limitations that worry me. I've lost some confidence. Certainly in the last couple of weeks. But, if I expected it to be easy, it was going to be boring. I feel less confident now than I did a week ago. Change is something I think everyone is apprehensive about. So I am making a career change in changing times with a changing environment.

As demonstrated above, the career changers in this study had differing levels of confidence after having made their career change decision. Their levels of confidence were related to two issues – whether they had made the 'right' decision to a) change career and b) change into teaching, and whether they could cope with the academic program. The participants' refrains show that there was often a personal/emotional impact of making the decision itself. Callum felt an increased sense of self confidence and rejuvenation following the *decision* to make a career change. This finding lends support to earlier research by Gomes and Teixeira (2000) and Wise and Millard (2005). However, for other study participants, the situation was not as positive. Max felt a decrease in confidence as he was unsure whether he had made the 'right' decision. This finding echoes with that of Bauer (2011) who found that questions of whether the right decision had been made caused a decrease in career changers' confidence. Max's career change decision reflected that of many of the study participants who had made a major investment with their career change decision, and this decision had an impact on their family's situation in terms of time and money, which confirms earlier research by Davies and Williams (2001). This suggests that participants' fluctuating levels of confidence may relate to the impact on significant others in their lives. Another factor could be the result of underlying anxiety concerning the major change they had made in their lives. Morgan (2015) found that levels of anxiety can be quite high for

postgraduate (taught) students on recommencing their studies. This high anxiety may have played into the 'rollercoaster' response for study participants.

Participants' doubts concerning whether they could cope with the academic program were also apparent, as evidenced by Elise and Nadia, with this issue having an impact on their confidence. These findings reflect those of Kantanis (2002) who found that the postgraduate career change cohort lacked confidence in their ability for academic writing and oral presentations.

This section has outlined the participants' feelings at the early stage of their transition. Levels of confidence ranged from increased to decreased levels of confidence. However, the most common response was that of a sense of being on a 'rollercoaster' of emotion, depending on the context at a particular time. The following section discusses the reasons participants chose to make a career change into the teaching profession.

Being a Teacher

Participants discussed their choice to change into teaching specifically in terms of why they chose teaching and the influences and reactions of others.

Why Choose Teaching as a Career?

Participants had a variety of reasons for choosing teaching in particular as a career. As previously stated, the reasons for making a career change and the reasons for choosing teaching as the new career may be the same. For example, the career changer may desire job security and have the perception that the teaching profession could provide this security. The decision to choose teaching as the new career was often related to having a family background in teaching, with wanting to make a difference and 'give back' being frequent motivators too. A passion for teaching, or for a specific teaching area, or a background in training were relevant for some participants, as was an enjoyment of being with young people. For some, a teaching career was a long held dream, and for others either their positive or negative schooling experiences were drivers.

Callum was motivated by a passion for science and maths, as well as a love for working with young people:

> *We need to educate scientists and engineers, just people with maths/science ability, so that is why I am passionate about coming back and doing physics and senior maths. You do it because you love kids. If you are enjoying doing it, it's not work.*

Ray also enjoyed teaching young people and had the desire to give back:

> *I like teaching kids stuff. I do think, at some point in your life, you sort of feel you have a social responsibility to give something back. I think being a teacher is sort of related to that as well. I think that's probably about it.*

Some participants, such as Lynda, had a love of teaching from their former professions in education and were also looking forward to working with young people:

> *I love teaching, I know that I love teaching but [teaching] at university, you have to do other things. Teaching is only 50% so I am hoping that by becoming a secondary school teacher, I get to teach more and be involved with the kids a lot more.*

Similarly, Nadia, who had previously enjoyed being in a teaching role as part of her previous employment was looking forward to being in a teaching role again: "And I also felt like I was in a little bit of a helping role in the gallery and I enjoyed that aspect of it and doing workshops and helping people learn. And here I am!" Neve also had a background in training in a variety of settings, and a passion for bringing new opportunities to young people, so education felt like an obvious choice of career for her:

> *I've been an experiential educator, an outdoor educator, I've been a youth leader and done naughty boys trips, you know, boot camp, take them out into nature, break their souls and help them rebuild them. Every sort of company I've worked in, I've done training of some sort. Love it, love people, love it. I am absolutely here because I believe education is the key to life and I want to bring the opportunities that education brings to young people. That is why I am here. It's just not about the money. No one would go into teaching for the money, seriously. You do it because you love kids. And you don't even see it as work. The one thing I've heard is oh, the work, you know, and it's like, but it's not. Because it's passion work. It's going to be hobby sort of stuff, anyway. I'm not concerned about that at all.*

As previously outlined, a number of participants had a long held dream to be a teacher. One of these participants was Elise. She was now in a situation where she was able to make a new start in her life and decided this was the time to make the career change:

> *Teaching is something that I had always thought that I would do. I had a really good schooling experience, from the get go. I distinctly remember when I was six years old, in grade one, going, that's what I want to be, I want to be a teacher when I grow up. And I know lots of kids do that, but it's something that did stick with me for the majority of my schooling – I would like to do that.*

Another reason for making the career change decision, as stated by many participants, was the influence of family who were in the teaching profession. Cate always had the desire to be a teacher, due to observing the career of her mother:

> *Mum is a secondary teacher, so I grew up with that again in my family. Mum is, as far as I am concerned, a brilliant teacher. So if I can be as good as her, or half as good, I would be really happy. I have seen my mum in a teaching career even since I was little and I went, oh, I can do that. I could make that a career path. I could see clearly where I was going.*

As previously outlined, many participants decided to make a career change to attain a better work-life balance. They perceived that the teaching profession could provide this balance. One participant who decided to make a career change in order to have a better work-life balance and be available to his two young daughters was Rick. His first choice of an alternative career was not teaching, however, it was a profession which could give him the lifestyle he desired: "I am looking for a lifestyle choice that is compatible with parenthood. So teaching was never my Plan A but it's becoming a fairly good Plan B". Interestingly, Rick did not articulate what Plan A was. Another participant who considered teaching would provide her with work-life balance when she had a family in the future was Nadia, who was planning her wedding at the time of the study:

> *Having had my parents as teachers, I was kind of familiar with the lifestyle, not that it is not hard work, but that it's nice to have similar working hours to your children, for example. Also thinking about down the track. That kind of thing.*

Previous experiences with schooling, either with one's own schooling, being a parent or volunteering in a school, were influences for other study participants on their career change decision. Sarah had volunteered in her children's classrooms. She had also been influenced by her teachers in her own schooling and now wanted to make a difference to students' lives:

> *With my decision to become a teacher, it basically stems from when I was volunteering in my daughter's classroom, she was in grade one at the time. The teacher said 'you're great with the kids, you're wonderful in the classroom'. I'd had a fantastic maths teacher myself in grades seven to ten and I thought if I could make a difference in even a handful of students' lives like he touched mine, then it would be a worthwhile profession. So I thought I would really like to try and engage kids and have them see that maths isn't just boring stuff and algebra that you've got to try*

and skip class for, that it could be fun and exciting and just turn a couple of lives around if at all possible.

In contrast, Peter's negative experiences in his own schooling were a motivator in making a career change into teaching. He believed he could connect with students and make a difference:

I think I will be good at it and it satisfies me, I actually really enjoy teaching. But on the other side, the more important side, I was a horrible student, I was bad, I was a troublemaker and I didn't go to the great school. And I think I'm not too far removed from there, what maybe 12 years, but I think I can honestly connect to kids who would need it the most. I really think I can do that.

Another influence on the decision to make a career change into teaching for many of the study participants was wanting employment security and having the desire to utilise their former competencies. With a background in visual arts, with little employment security, Nadia now wanted a career which could provide this security: "I wasn't necessarily qualified in one particular thing and I wanted the stability that I hadn't experienced with the film industry for example and I thought how about teaching?" Similarly, Max wanted employment security and stability and the opportunity to utilise his experiences from his former profession:

Teaching seems to gel because it means I can leverage my past experiences. So I think teaching, as far as a career option, seemed to make the best use of what I already know. There is stability I see teaching as having.

Stories told by study participants revealed a range of pull factors that influenced the decision to choose teaching as their new career. One example was Callum's love of his teaching subjects, science and maths. This finding lends support to earlier research by Bunn & Wake (2015) as a strong motivator for choosing teaching as a new profession. Neve, Lynda and Sarah had prior teaching experience in different contexts. Anthony and Ord (2007) established that having this experience can be a motivator or pull factor for a career change into teaching as this experience gives the impression that an individual has the skills and disposition for a teaching career.

A number of the study participants came from a strong family background of teachers and other participants were influenced to enter the teaching profession because of their positive experiences with their own schooling (e.g., Sarah and Elise). These pull factors were strong motivators for entering the teaching profession (Hunter-Johnson, 2015). In contrast, Peter was strongly influenced by his negative experiences with his own schooling. He considered that his experiences would be relevant in understanding

and connecting with students who were experiencing difficulties. Memories of one's own schooling were a pull factor that had an impact on the decision to make a career change into teaching (Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003). Some participants, including Neve and Bec, spoke of the enjoyment in teaching young people and told stories of the importance of being a positive influence, giving them knowledge, skills and attributes for the future. Bunn & Wake (2015) found that career changers were motivated by such pull factors in their decision to enter the classroom.

Many participants imagined rewards of the career change as they reached back and forward in their own story, with these ideas being pull factors into the teaching profession. For example, Max talked of utilising his previous skills, Neve discussed the relevance of her previous life experiences to her new career and Ray talked of having a social responsibility to 'give back'. Williams (2013) found that positive rewards desired by career changers into teaching included the attainment of personal growth and development, the ability to apply previous experience, to contribute to society and the development of young people, and to utilise their skills. The participants in her study were also keen to utilise their personal qualities and attributes gained from their life. Most participants in the current study who had families stated that factors in their decision to enter the teaching profession in particular included a desire for a work-life balance and financial security. Rick, Sarah, Lynda, Max, Sally, Mal and Callum had the perception that the teaching profession would provide these benefits. This finding lends support to earlier research by Anthony and Ord (2007) and Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003) which showed these pull factors into the teaching profession.

Another pull factor in this study for some mature age career changers was the duration of the one year postgraduate coursework program, as they indicated that they did not have the financial or personal resources to undertake a two year full time initial teacher education program. One pull factor that did not occur for this cohort was a response to advertising into the teaching profession. Wyatt-Smith et. al. (2017) reported a low level of influence of advertising for initial teacher education programs, although they did not differentiate between career changers and other applicants into these programs.

This section has outlined the refrains within and resonances across the stories of the reasons participants chose the teaching profession for their new career. The reasons include: having a passion for teaching, a subject area, or working with young people; wanting employment security, having a background in training, teaching as a long held dream, family members were teachers, participants' own school experiences, wanting

work-life balance and wanting to use previously acquired skills. Push and pull factors into the teaching profession were also outlined. The following section explores the ways that participants talked about the influences and reactions from others to their decision to career change into teaching.

Influences and Reactions from Others about Choosing Teaching

Reactions from others to the decision to make a career change into teaching were varied. The majority of the participants received full support from their family and friends, although those who had family in the teaching profession were often cautioned against becoming a teacher. One participant was questioned by her parents who held particular beliefs on the role of women. Overall, however, the responses from others about the career change decision were positive.

Positive responses.

Elise had good support and a positive response from family and friends to her decision to make a career change into teaching:

> *I've had nothing but support from everyone I've spoken to. It was the same thing, 'Oh, you would be really good at that' or 'Oh yeah, that's a great thing'. Overall, the reaction has been very positive. People are excited for me, and I think that's partly because they think I would be good at it, but also, it's like, good on you for doing something that you want to do and that kind of thing. They know my background. I suppose I've had a couple of people who went, 'Oh, I wouldn't want to do that' or 'Gee, that's a hard job', but that's been their personal reaction to themselves, as opposed to 'I don't think you should do that' or 'Aren't you worried about xyz?'*

Similarly, Mal had a lot of encouragement from his wife, in-laws and children about entering the teaching profession. However, his father's response on the career change decision was more cautious, although not about teaching *per se*:

> *My wife was very supportive. She knew that I needed that change. I guess my kids were very excited, the idea that I would be around for holidays. My in-laws were probably supportive. They're ministers in a church but there are also a lot of teachers in their family. And my Dad's reaction was probably the one which was the more extreme, which was 'Oh, you are going backwards', you know, like, I'm taking a pay cut and 'Why would you want to do that?' But no, it's generally been a lot of*

people saying 'I can see you doing that' or 'I think you would be good at that' or you know, a lot of encouragement.

With a family background in the teaching profession, the response of Nadia's parents was also positive, although similarly to Mal, there was some caution around making a career change into teaching, in this case due to their perception that dealing with difficult students could bring challenges:

Oh, they were thrilled! 'Finally', I think they said! Well, my dad is very passionate about teaching and about students and was a little bit worried that I think being protective as well, thinking how are you going to go with all the students? You know, they can be a handful. I don't want them to be nasty to you kind of thing. I'm going to go in and tell them not to be nasty to my little girl!

Other participants had positive responses from family and friends but negative responses from those in the teaching profession. One participant had a negative response from family members with traditional views on the role of women, while another had negative responses from strangers about her teaching area, maths.

Negative responses.

As previously stated, Cate also had a family member in the teaching profession. However, she had a different response from her family to that received by Nadia. She had earlier told a story of being inspired to enter the teaching profession because of her mother, who is a secondary teacher. But her parents were initially against her decision to make a career change into teaching. A friend who is a teacher also advised against it. Her partner and friends, not teachers themselves, were supportive though:

My parents were against it, they didn't want me to teach. They actually didn't want me to leave work either. Mum is not happy being a teacher any more but she is too close to retirement to leave. And Dad has watched her be unhappy. Every day. And pretty much I think the reason their response was like that was because they don't want me to be unhappy but I am going in with a totally different skill set and with a different perspective and the thing I know about the reasons that are upsetting Mum, I am hoping to avoid. But my partner was supportive, my friends have all been mostly supportive. The one friend who has been involved in the education system has gone 'Are you insane?'

Sarah had a negative response from her parents, who held traditional views of the role of women with children:

The main people in my life – my parents were sort of 'But you've got children to look after'; my mother is very much a 'You're a female, you're married, you've got kids,

that's it, you don't do anything. You stay in the home, you cook, you clean and your children are your life and you're not entitled to anything else'. So, very negative from that side. My father said 'Well, you reckon you're going to handle it?' kind of thing. Pretty negative.

While Sally's husband and children were supportive, when she talked to others, she received a negative response, particularly as maths was her teaching area:

My husband has been really supportive. He just wants us all to be happy and he's always supportive with whatever I want to do, that makes a huge difference. I think they [the children] are excited, actually. People called me insane. Strangers particularly, and maths, particularly. People think you're crazy, wanting to do maths.

It is not clear in Sally's story whether these negative responses were to maths *per se* or to maths in the context of being female. Six participants – Cate, Neve, Max, Rick, Lynda and Nadia discussed their career change decision with family members who were working in the teaching profession. With the exception of Lynda, the responses they received from these family members were either negative, or cautionary. Mal and Sarah also had negative responses from significant others with traditional views of their role as providers (Mal) and homemakers (Sarah) while Sally had to contend with negative responses from strangers with stereotyped views of teaching maths. Although many study participants told stories of these negative responses, all had continued with their career change decision. One reason for this reaction can be seen in resonances across participant's stories from Cate's response: "I'm clinging to this idea that it could be different for me!"

This study found the participants generally did have considerable insight into the reasons they had decided to enter the teaching profession. A number of participants persisted with their decision to make a career change into teaching despite the negative comments of others. These findings contrast with those of Gomes and Teixeira (2000), who found that the career changers in their study generally did not conduct a realistic evaluation of their personal interests and characteristics of their future profession. Rather they relied on the influences of significant others in their decision. While Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003) considered that there was a gap between the aspirational desires of career changers into teaching, and the realities of the teaching profession, it cannot be ascertained at this point in time if participants in the current study were realistic about the teaching profession. However, they professed to have considered the decision with 'eyes wide open'.

This section has outlined the influences of significant others on the decision to make a career change into teaching. While some participants received positive encouragement about their decision, a number of participants received negative or cautionary comments. These comments were most likely to come from others in the teaching profession, or families with traditional views. However, these participants continued with their career change transition. The following section provides a summary of the findings on the moving out stage of the transition, including a discussion of the lenses used for analysis - four aspects of transition: situation, self, support and strategies; and the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry: temporality, sociality and place.

Discussion

This chapter has outlined issues that mature age career changers may face during the initial moving out stage of their career change transition as they depart from or leave their former careers. This stage could be called the *Departure* stage of the transition. During this stage, participants had left, and were looking back at their former careers, while at the same time, looking forward at their imagined future in a new career. When looking back, reasons cited for the decision to make a career change included employment insecurity, being unhappy in a former career and wanting meaning and fulfilment they did not find in their former career. When looking forward, participants cited wanting a better work-life balance, they were responding to life changes as relevant to the decision. The decision to make the career change was linked to the timing of the career change. Making a career change can have an impact on the confidence of an individual. These changes can include an increase or decrease in confidence levels, or, more commonly, fluctuating confidence levels.

Reasons for choosing the teaching profession included having a family background in the teaching profession and having a passion for teaching and/or the teaching area itself. A desire to work with young people was a further factor. Positive and negative schooling experiences of the participants were also relevant. Employment security and the desire for a work-life balance were factors that were important for some participants. Influences and reactions from others about the decision were mostly positive, although there were some negative responses, often coming from family members who were in the teaching profession or who held traditional views of gender roles and the workplace.

The lens of transition theory contributes to our understanding of the situation or context that triggered the career change decision for participants in this study. As stated by Anderson et al. (2012) questions around this stage of transition included an

exploration of what triggered the transition as this had an impact on how individuals coped with the transition process. Anticipated transitions were easier to cope with than those that were unexpected. For most of the current study participants, the transition was triggered by a gradual realisation that they needed to seriously consider a career change due to changes in their employment situation, personal and family commitments, or as a result of personal growth or change. Only one participant reported that the transition was unanticipated, due to a sudden loss of previously secure employment. This participant did not continue in the study after the first focus group, so it cannot be ascertained whether her transition experiences were different from the other participants due to the unanticipated nature of her transition.

According to Anderson et al. (2012) the expected duration of the transition affects the ease or difficulty of dealing with the issues of transition. Transitions with anticipated time frames, after which time the transition was complete, resulted in less stress to individuals. In this study, the participants had an anticipated time frame of 12 months for their academic program (24 months for part time students). The study itself then followed them for an additional six months when they arrived in their new career. Some participants commented during the research conversations that they did not feel they would have had the personal and financial resources to cope with a career change transition if the time frame was longer, that is for example, if the academic program was two years' full time.

The context of the transition, in terms of whether life factors made the transition easier or more difficult, were relevant to the transition process. Concurrent stresses impacted on the transition process with transitions in one area of a person's life resulting in other stresses (Anderson et al., 2012). In the current study, the majority of the participants had commitments outside of their academic program, which resulted in increased complexity during the transition process. In Chapters 6-8 of this thesis, factors that impacted on the self during the transition, such as the opportunities and rewards, and the challenges and pressures they experienced are discussed, along with aspects of support they received and strategies they utilised to cope with the issues of transition.

The lenses of the commonplaces of temporality, sociality and place enrich our understanding of these career change experiences. Temporality is alive in the stories as the participants look back to the time when they decided to make the career change into teaching and the circumstances that led to that decision. They also looked forward into an imagined new life in the classroom. As previously outlined, transition theory also addresses the concept of time as an important feature of the transition process. The

participants in this study felt they were able to cope with the issues of transition by having the process bounded by a particular time frame (e.g., 12 months for the academic program for full time students) after which time they would be working in their new career.

Personal conditions such as their feelings, hopes and desires and social conditions such as the employment environment during the transition, speak to the commonplace of sociality. The lens of sociality helps us focus on and understand how the social milieu, including how the personal and professional relationships of each participant play out in their decision and uptake of this transition. Both the constitution of the social world and the influence and impact of that social world were a little different for each participant – with personal, family and professional socialities constituted in different ways. Interestingly, many participants did not heed the warning of their social group – and took up teaching despite those warnings. Participants' stories were placed in the background of their previous work places, homes, the university campus and the (imagined) schools. The lens of the commonplace of place allows us to see how place played out for each participant – place of previous work, place of home, place of the university.

Using the narrative inquiry approach, the refrains within and resonances across stories of experiences became apparent. They revealed variations in confidence even in the first two weeks of the program. The stories revealed that issues confidence levels or the early reaction to having made the decision to change careers were not static in the early stages of the participants' career transitions, often changing, even on a daily basis, according to personal and social conditions in their lives. In addition, the participants' stories have shown that confidence levels could be impacted by events which occurred prior to the commencement of the transition, and which were still having some impact.

The use of narrative inquiry methodology has enabled the participants to tell their stories of the responses of others in their lives to the career change decision. These stories offer an in-depth understanding of the influences of others on the career change decision. However, it also shows that, for the participants in this study, negative influences were often resisted, with the participants continuing with their decision to enter a new profession. The refrains within and the resonances across the participants' stories tell of their hopes and aspirations for the new career. In addition, participants talked of how they believed they could have different experiences from the negative experiences of others in the teaching profession. The refrains on these perceptions showed strong motivation to continue with their career change decision, despite

warnings from others of possible challenges in the new career. This level of detail may not be available from research which utilises other methodologies.

One important finding from the stories of the participants, is that by looking forward, they were imagining a future in the teaching profession which would meet their needs in the kind of profession they wanted to be working in and the life they imagined. This imagined future was related to their former profession in that, when looking back, they were able to reflect on why they were unhappy or unable to continue in their former career and to subsequently reflect on why they felt the new career would be different, with a positive outcome. The participants were starting to become agentic at this stage, realising that they did not have to remain in a career where they were unhappy, or that was no longer a viable career option. They had the option of changing their careers and lives by embracing new opportunities and exciting new challenges. Through time in their telling of stories of the stages in the transition, more in-depth knowledge of the participants' choice to enter the teaching profession has been obtained. The stories demonstrate how the participants created a coherent story of decision making and transition by looking back and forth through time in their telling of events.

This chapter has given into insight into research sub question one: Why and how do mature age professional choose to make a career change? In the following chapters, Chapters 6-8, the stories of the participants unfold as they move further into their career change transition during their 12 month (full time) or 24 month (part time) study program, which includes two periods of professional experience in schools.

Chapter 6
Moving Through: "Too many plates to balance."

(Personal Life)

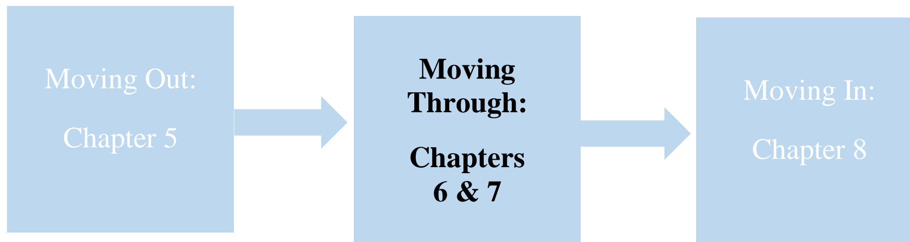

Figure 6.1. Moving through stage of transition theory

The previous chapter reported on the stories of study participants at the early stage of the career change transition, in the first two weeks of commencing their initial teacher education program. This chapter focuses on moving through; the stories of the participants' experiences of opportunities and rewards, challenges, pressures in their personal lives as they moved through their transition by undertaking their 12 month program of study (24 months for part time students). Chapter 7 is a continuation of these stories of moving through, with a focus on the participants' experiences with their university studies, and their imagined future being a teacher. The diagram above, Figure 6.1., shows the relationship between this chapter and the following chapters, within the three stages of transition theory.

The Transition Continues: Moving Through (Personal Life)

The diagram below, Figure 6.2., illustrates the structure of this chapter.

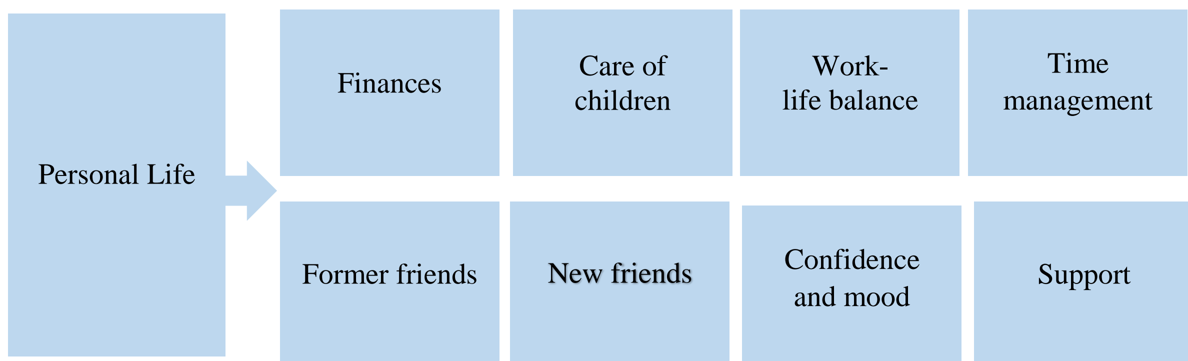

Figure 6.2. Structure of chapter: Refrains and resonances in 'personal life'

As can be seen from the diagram, the stories in this chapter focus on issues related to participants' personal lives as they undertake their academic program. The chapter outlines the refrains within and resonances across the stories from their early transition, through to their experiences in semester one, and on to semester two of their academic

program. In this manner, the changing nature of the transition experience through time has been captured.

Personal Life

A number of refrains of personal conditions resonated across the stories of the study participants as they moved through their career transition by undertaking their university program. These refrains included concerns around coping with financial pressures, finding appropriate child care while they attended lectures and completed their professional experience placements, and maintaining a work-life balance. There were also issues around time management, dealing with former friendships and new relationships, and coping with changes in confidence levels. The following section begins the discussion of the challenges and pressures of the transition by outlining the financial issues faced by the participants.

Finances

Early transition.

All of the study participants who were undertaking their studies on a full time basis had either left full time employment or were unemployed when making the career change decision. All of the part time students continued in their employment on either a full or part time basis during their studies. As many also had mortgages and families at this stage of their lives, the issue of reduced finances during their university studies resulted in worry and stress for many study participants. Early in the transition (in the first two weeks of the study program), many of the participants did not tell stories of current financial hardship, having only recently left or reduced their employment, however, they expressed concerns about how they would cope financially as the transition progressed. For example, having left full time employment to undertake her studies, Bec now felt concerned about her financial situation. Even though she worked two part-time jobs while studying, she still felt unsure of her financial situation: “I’m still scared about the financial side of it because I need to find a balance between working too much”. Callum had a different perspective, having accepted the fact that he would not be earning while he was undertaking his studies. He was only prepared to undertake casual employment if it did not impact on his studies: “I went into the year thinking that well, we are not going to earn anything. I am hoping to pick up some casual work here and there but not if it affects what I am doing here”.

While Cate had been offered financial support from her partner during her studies she wanted to remain financially independent:

Finances are definitely the issue. I am trying to get work, part time. I have a bit of savings but it is going to run out. My partner is happy to support me but I am resistant to that idea. I want to do it myself. I want to prove that I can do it myself.

Elise had separated from her partner prior to coming to her postgraduate studies, so she had to be financially independent. In contrast to Cate, she did not have financial support from a partner during her studies, so full time employment was her only option while she completed her studies: "I still have a mortgage that I have to pay. Which means that I have to work full time, I don't have a choice". Another participant who had concerns around his financial situation was Mal. The finances were going to be a 'juggling act', so he felt pressure about the situation:

It's just that juggling, I mean, we could have been quite flush if I had persisted in my career and my wife worked part time. We would have been able to pay down the mortgage and be much more relaxed.

Although he didn't have any large financial commitments, Peter also had some concerns around how he and his wife were going to make ends meet during his studies:

I don't have much, I don't have kids yet, so that's a huge factor when you're going to university, you know, part time, full time, whatever, so we don't have much, you know. We've got a house, but that's about it. So, we'll worry about that . . . I was probably hardest on myself, how are we going to do this, how are we going to make ends meet?

While Max did not express concerns about his finances in the short term, he had calculated not only the financial consequences of taking a year out of the workforce to complete his studies, but also the long term opportunity costs of the career change into teaching:

I guess the financial realities of study are starting to bite home, the fact that I am an income down and when I come out I will be earning roughly half what I was in previous positions. I actually sat down and spreadsheeted it and realised by doing this I am going to be costing my family roughly 1.3 million in lost earnings over the next X years. That's a dose of reality which kinda hurts.

In addition to the above concerns around paying mortgages and having other financial commitments, another concern was the cost of studying on a reduced income. Kelly recognised that expenses related to being a university student were going to have an impact: "It is a bit more financial strain because of parking and then there is the student

fees and you have to print everything out yourself on your own paper and you've got no income".

Semester one.

As semester one progressed, refrains within the stories of financial issues were apparent with many study participants experiencing pressure, particularly with the upcoming professional experience placement during which time it would be difficult to undertake any employment as the placement was full time, five day weeks for seven weeks. A range of strategies were utilised by participants to cope with the resulting financial issues. Bec was now relying on her partner financially: "I've had to rely on my partner more, that's what you should do when you have a partner, but I've never had to do that, I'm quite independent". Similarly, even though she had earlier expressed a desire to be financially independent, Cate was now receiving assistance from her partner: "So he is now covering most of the rent and I am covering my expenses which is better, I think. Once the rent is taken out, I can still do it". In contrast, Elise and Eva had to be independent as they did not have partners who could provide financial support. The strategy for Elise was to be careful: "I was still living week to week". Eva was concerned about not having an income during the professional experience placement. Her strategy was to work and save in readiness: "It is going to be an issue. A big issue, yes, but I have to, because I support myself alone. There is no one else who can support me, so I just have to get through it, I think".

Semester two.

By semester two of the program, for many of the participants, the refrains in their stories showed that financial pressures had eased a little, often due to financial assistance from partners and family members. Cate had made another agreement with her partner: "My partner has now started to pay me a fortnightly salary. He sat down and worked out how many hours of cleaning I do". Elise had a change in financial circumstances and was now receiving support from family:

> *I'm paying my mortgage by myself now, well the joint mortgage that I had with my ex. With the assistance of a family member who is generously helping me with getting it to a level where it was within affordability range.*

Financial assistance from her family had also been helpful for Sarah:

> *It's also been helpful, with my grandmother passing away last year that things have finally been settled and mum has decided to do what her parents didn't do and that is, look you girls could all do with some help now, so she's given us all a*

little bit of what she got. And it's helped us out a little bit, you know, paid the university fees for the semester, so, you know, I didn't have to worry too much about that.

However, Bec, who had earlier talked about having to rely on her partner financially, had experienced increased financial stress in semester two, as she was now also planning her upcoming wedding:

I mean, obviously that is a stressor - money. Outside of university, that's stressing me, now there's the wedding. Like I said the other day to someone, it's like, it's up to about here, the stress levels about money, but I am just trying not to let it get on top of me with everything else. Because there is just too many plates to balance and there is nothing I can do about it.

As previously stated, many participants in this study were unemployed or had left full time employment prior to undertaking their studies to make a career change, resulting in decreased financial resources, a finding similar to that of Kantanis (2002) who found that mature age students experienced increased financial pressures after having left full time employment. In this study, after leaving their employment, the study participants often became families on one wage, a finding that echoed Abbott-Chapman's (2006) research. Many participants stated that they did not have the time to seek employment that could improve their financial situation, due to their study and personal commitments (Haggard et al., 2006).

Not only did this cohort experience the loss of income, but also had the expenses associated with the academic program, such as books and travel. This finding confirms earlier research by Davies and Williams (2001). Participants in the study expressed concern about the costs associated with being a student, while having reduced financial resources during their studies. The evidence is similar to earlier research by Leder and Forgasz (2004), who found that the financial commitments for mature age students were greater than that for school leavers at university, with a consequence that mature age students were anxious about their ability to cope with their reduced financial circumstances (Morgan, 2014).

This section has outlined the financial challenges and pressures related to the career change transition. After commencing the academic program, financial pressures intensified for many participants in semester one, before falling in semester two, due to the participants implementing strategies to decrease the level of financial stress. The following section outlines issues related to care of children.

Care of Children

Early transition.

As a number of the study participants had young children (aged less than 13 years), resonances across participants' stories revealed that care of children was a major issue. There was no child care available on the campus at which the participants were studying so they had to make other arrangements. In the first two weeks of the transition, some participants were already experiencing pressure around the care of children. For example, Rick's wife was working full time as a midwife and was often on call, so Rick was struggling to find adequate child care:

> *I don't have great strategies and don't have great support networks in terms of alternative child care. My parents are aged and live 120 kilometres away. My siblings are quite a distance as well and can't offer much so I am relying on neighbours and looking on Gumtree [an internet site for free classified advertisements] and finding a babysitter as the need arises.*

Similarly, Mal's wife, who had been a stay at home mother prior to his commencing his studies, was now working so his youngest child was put into child care for the first time. Unfortunately, this situation had resulted in the child contracting sicknesses, which meant that he was unable to attend the child care centre so Mal had to make other arrangements:

> *The toughest thing so far in this first time was child care in the fact that it's the first time he's ever gone to child care, he's eighteen months now and he has brought home all the sicknesses and that's just the way of it. And anyway, he's brought home, for the last six or seven weeks, he's been sick and then I've caught a little bit of that and then we've not been able to send him to child care because of that and so I've taken a bit of the load there, because I'm part time on some days, you know.*

With Sally's husband being away on military duty, she was solely responsible for the care of her children, therefore child care was a major issue for her during her studies. The lack of a child care centre on campus was impacting on Sally, and also her peers: "Something that I've talked to some of the other ladies about is, I know a lot of them have child care issues. I know at other campuses they offer things like that, which they don't at this one".

Semester one.

During semester one, issues relating to the care of children appeared to intensify for some participants. Mal continued to have challenges relating to the care of children: "It would be that combination of sick children, late nights, broken sleep, and then late nights with assignments". Similarly, Sarah felt she was coping with her studies until her children become ill: "I've had a couple of times when the kids have been sick that's been hard. I get calls on the way into university, during lectures and everything". As the primary carer for his children, Rick continued to experience difficulties with both child care and domestic issues:

> *Being a Dad has taken priority. So, I've skipped classes and I've handed in assignments that were not as good as I'd hoped they could be. I suppose the biggest things, the things that are suffering are keeping the house clean. I'm getting the kids to school and to care and I'm looking after them, but the domestic duties have gone into chaos.*

The demands of Lynda's study program meant that she was unable to spend the time with her children that she would have liked: "It alters a lot of things. I spend very little time with the kids now". Similarly, being away from the children was also an issue for Sarah:

> *It's hard in some ways because it takes my time away from my children which is a bit of a worry because I know that there are things that I could help them with more which I won't be able to.*

Semester two.

While a number of study participants did not tell stories of having issues with child care in semester two, Sally continued to have difficulties:

> *If you have given up a job to come and do it or you have a life anyway which anyone with a family has lots of commitments, particularly women, they are always having commitments to a family much heavier than a man's. I don't know what the answer is. But it's hard, it's really hard on everybody. And the kids as well. It's been really hard on them this year. Mother guilt, it comes with the children. Oh, yeah, it does. And it's much worse than normal.*

Mature age students often have to cope with a lack of affordable and adequate child care (Lauder & Cuthbertson, 1998; Risquez et al., 2008). Two female participants in this study had a higher level of child care responsibilities than other students. Sarah was in a traditional relationship and therefore often had sole responsibility for child

care, while Sally, whose husband was away on military duty, was also often solely responsible for caring for her children. However, most of the refrains within and resonances across the stories of participants in this study showed that in relation to child care, the male students were equally likely to have responsibilities for child care as the female students (for example, Rick and Mal). In contrast, Ayres and Guilfoyle (2009) identified that women had primary responsibility for nurturing the family and as such juggled their study time so that the family was not inconvenienced. Similarly, Scott et al. (1996) found that mature age women who suspended their studies often did so because they had greater responsibilities for child care and domestic duties. Therefore, while the numbers are small, the findings of this study show a positive change in gender roles and responsibilities, with the male students taking on equal child care responsibilities to the female students. Sally talked of experiencing ‘mother guilt’, a finding that echoes those of Kenny et al. (2007) and Risquez et al. (2008) who found that feelings of guilt concerning not giving priority to family responsibilities were common in mature age students.

This section has outlined the pressures and challenges for the participants concerning child care. Relevant issues include a lack of appropriate child care, children becoming ill, finding time to spend with children and guilt about the study program taking time and energy from parenting. The following section outlines issues relating to their work-life balance.

Work-life balance

Participants’ stories of difficulties with child care were often related to the issue of work-life balance, as the work involved in looking after small children had an impact on this balance. The academic program was intensive, and many of the study participants had heavy commitments outside of their study program, therefore the challenge of maintaining work-life balance while undergoing the transition into a new career was a refrain in the stories of many of the study participants during their career change transition.

Early transition.

Even in the early stages of the transition (the first two weeks of the academic program), participants talked of their concerns with their work-life balance. Balancing his domestic responsibilities with his studies proved to be a challenge for Rick:

I'm underwhelmed by the content and I'm overwhelmed by the volume. The content I am finding very easy, but just keeping up with the amount of reading I am supposed to be doing and I'm still study managing and I'm still running my family and overwhelmed with domestic duties that I'm not particularly good at, anyway. So it's really just juggling lots of balls in the air. In isolation, none of them are particularly difficult. But it's the combination of roles that I am feeling at the moment is quite challenging.

Sally also had a combination of roles, running the household on her own while her husband was away. She had little flexibility in her schedule, although good planning helped. However, she still had very little work-life balance:

I mean, my life is insane. A lot of the time, my husband's away a lot and we never know when. I plan life for me and the kids so that it works no matter who is there or who is not there. And we're pretty good, I don't have a high degree of flexibility but I can rearrange things pretty well if I have to. [Work-life balance] . . . not initially. Not this year, certainly. And I even think the first couple of years of teaching, probably not.

Another participant who had difficulty with her work-life balance due to having full responsibility for child care and household duties in addition to her studies, was Sarah:

I've gone part time to try and fit in that work-life balance. My husband, I hear lots of stories from other [postgraduate students] about their wonderful partners like "Oh, he cooks dinner" or "He does all the cleaning" or "He's taking the kids out for the weekend because I had an assignment due" and I'd love to be able to say the same thing. But it's not true.

While she did not have child care responsibilities, Eva lectured for 20 hours per week at a private college in addition to her studies. She talked about her work-life balance:

[It's] all over the shop. There is no such a thing as balance. It's just work. That's it. It's not a question of balancing anything. There is nothing to balance [laughs] at this point, unfortunately. I knew that, I was prepared for this.

Semester one.

For many participants, the early difficulties with their work-life balance continued throughout semester one of their studies. These issues had an impact on both their physical and mental health. Having less sleep was one strategy used by Lynda and her partner, to cope with their heavy workloads: "Both of us sleep less now. Every weekend, work, work, work, work, work". A poor work-life balance had also negatively

affected Neve: “A lot of the time I was a bit overwhelmed and that has led to a real lethargy and loss of motivation”. For Elise, there was an impact on her mental health: “My anxiety and stress levels were very high”. No longer having time for physical exercise and a social life affected Mal: “It’s all been university but juggling caring for kids and then work so yeah, exercise did go out the door and social life stuff did as well”.

Semester two.

For some participants, their work-life balance had improved by semester two. However, for many it had worsened. Many participants made comments to the effect that the course content was more difficult in the second semester, affecting work-life balance. Rick outlined his situation: “I faced all the same issues, juggling the work-life balance-study stuff. My work-life balance has always been a challenge and that hasn’t changed. I think the [course] content has been up a notch”. Work-life balance continued to be an issue for Sally, particularly in the context of having her partner working interstate, leaving her to cope with three children on her own:

> *It’s [work-life balance] non-existent! It’s been like that since week one. But what do you do, there is no choice. You have to make sure your kids get what they need and be where they have to be. This semester, I was up till one two nights ago. And if I am at my desk working until one, my brain doesn’t switch off sometimes, so I was awake until three and I had to get up at six to get my son ready for school and on the bus.*

As the evidence shows, there were ongoing refrains within and resonances across the stories of work-life balance, particularly for those participants who had partners and families. Work-life balance was a challenge for this cohort, having more demands than younger students (Tindle & Lincoln, 2002), feeling added stress and pressure due to family life (Kenny et al., 2007). Cluett and Skene (2006) found that postgraduate coursework students experience problems balancing their studies with other commitments and Watson et al.’(2005) found postgraduate coursework students had difficulty finding a satisfactory fit between academic demands and those of their personal and professional lives.

In this study, the men were as likely to be concerned with issues of work-life balance in the context of the home and family life as the women. Of the seven men in the study, four of the six with families told stories of the pressures of domestic duties. The issue of work-life balance affected both genders in this study, and

continued to be an issue for participants throughout second semester. This contrasts with the findings of Lauder and Cuthbertson (1998) and Stone (2009) who found that work-life balance was experienced differently between male and female mature age students, with female students often having additional difficulties with their work-life balance due to having sole responsibility for domestic duties. However, two of the study participants did not fit this pattern. They had sole responsibility for their domestic lives: Sally's husband was away on military duties and Sarah's husband had traditional views of the role of women (e.g., beliefs that women should take responsibility for domestic duties and child care).

This section has outlined issues relating to the work-life balance of the study participants. The participants' work-life balance continued to be an issue throughout their academic program, intensifying in semester two due to a perceived heavier academic workload. The following section outlines time management issues.

Time Management

Early transition.

Another issue related to both child care and work-life balance was the issue of management of time. Even in the early stages of the transition, some participants felt time pressures. Sally struggled with time:

> *[I'm] running out of time. Time is already proving difficult for me. Because like all mothers you tend to put your kids first. And you know, your stuff goes to the end. And I don't have any support at home this year so that's not helpful. I don't know. Time is my biggest issue right now. And I don't feel organised.*

Time pressures were also a factor for Max, leaving him little time to spend with his children or on personal interests:

> *And we have to do wider professional experience, a component of our professional unit. And it was kinda like, OK, I'm already time poor and here's a requirement for 50 hours additional stuff that can't be related to your course. So, do I not do homework with my children, do I give up any social activities that I have, even though those are really in the minority at the moment. I've had to pause my martial arts training and now there's another 50 hours of stuff I've got to do. Yay, isn't this fun. On top of that I also have to co-ordinate tutorial groups.*

Semester one.

There was little improvement as semester one progressed, with participants continuing to experience challenges concerning time. Eva's problems with time related to her heavy work commitments: "So, I found it a little bit challenging especially with work commitments besides university life"; while Neve was not keeping up with her study program due to having to deal with issues in her personal life: "I'm behind in a lot of things. I am also finishing a last study on a Masters and I'm behind in that because I've had to give time to my relationship and a few things". A lack of time for a social life was an issue for Peter: "There is [no time], I've felt like I haven't done anything social in a long time"; and Sally: "There was no time. I have no social life whatsoever. None. It's non-existent. There is nothing but university or kids. There is no time for anything else". One strategy Mal used to help cope with a lack of time was to structure a timetable:

> *I did make a point of on weekends, blocking out time for family so Saturdays I would get up early in the morning and do some [study] and then I would spend two or three hours with them and then just work around their quiet times or their up and downs.*

Semester two.

For many study participants the situation of the management of time worsened during semester two. In addition to finalising their studies, they were also putting together their portfolios for future employment and beginning their employment applications. The pressure of the added workload was an issue for Lynda:

> *And the thing is, I feel I have less time to consolidate what I have learned. I just don't have time, really. And especially because we have to start applying for initial teacher registration, start applying for jobs, and I don't have time to do any of those. It was quite bad actually [laughs]. No time. It was worse this semester. Less time, even.*

Bec also felt pressure concerning the management of time, as she was still employed while undertaking her studies:

> *Really I am working full time and studying part time and so, you know, I am sure my university work is suffering. University is a job plus my other work. There is not one day where you can sit back and relax. If you've got any time spare when you are at university, you should be studying.*

In addition to feeling pressured, Mike perceived that university staff did not understand the added responsibilities and time pressures on mature age students:

And I think the thing I find hard is that I don't get the impression there is an appreciation of how much stuff we've got to do, coming in as a mature age student and how much work you've given us compared to how much time we've got to work on it.

As discussed above, the participants in this study felt considerable time pressures with their studies, families and other commitments. They had to prioritise how they would spend their time, and often social life, relaxation, hobbies and study time were curtailed. Davies and Williams (2001) also reported this finding. They outlined how mature age students were at the peak age when they had families and other commitments, therefore any time spent on studying was time not spent with families and on home and employment responsibilities.

The resonances across the participants' stories of time management in this study showed that the issue and the impact on family was of equal concern for both genders. Unlike Stone's (2009) findings, no males reported privileged study time and they were equally likely to express concern about the impact on their family of having time management pressures. Stone found that women consistently sacrificed leisure time, social life and even sleep to put family responsibilities before study whereas men were often able to set aside uninterrupted study time. In this study, none of the men with families told stories of having study time unencumbered by concerns for their domestic responsibilities. The following section outlines the participants' refrains relating to their friendships and networks prior to commencing their career change transition.

Former Friendships and Networks

Early transition.

In the early days of the transition, refrains of the loss of relationships that may have previously offered support to study participants appeared in resonances across the stories, with some participants feeling isolated as they left behind old friendships, having not yet developed new ones. Other participants had no concerns about leaving their past relationships behind, having had negative experiences with these relationships. For example, Cate had been bullied by her manager in her former employment and was happy to leave her former relationships from that organisation behind. Similarly, as the ending to her former profession was unpleasant, Bec had made the decision not to maintain relationships from her former employment:

The only person I keep in contact with is the girl who took my job, it was a pretty ugly ending, really. They burnt me in that situation so it's the best thing ever that I could have done from that perspective.

In contrast, Sally wanted to maintain her relationships with friends prior to returning to university, however, time pressures meant that she no longer had the time to maintain these friendships:

I've got some great friends that are really helping me. So I guess there is a bit of an overlap there. But like the people I would have normally spent time with, working, I'm still friends with, but, yeah, there is just no time. There is no time for that. I don't have time.

Having left his peers from his former profession and now having a new group of peers who were students left Max feeling unsettled. He acknowledged that being a mature age student may impede the forming of new friendships:

Already feeling that [isolated]. Very much so. You've moved from one peer group into another where the circumstance is that peer group is either not understanding, not accessible or not supportive. I must admit, university this time around is very different to the last couple of times. Even though mature aged students are a minority, the chance of that minority getting together are incredibly remote.

The participants in the study chose the topics they wished to discuss during each interview. After raising the issue of former friendships and networks early in their transition, none of the participants told stories on this issue in the first or second semester of their studies. Most of the study participants had reported at the early stage of their transition that they had maintained many of their friendships outside of the university, even if they were unable to socialise with these friends due to time. Only one participant (Max) reported feeling isolated. His experience is similar to that noted by Risquez et al. (2008) who identified that becoming a mature age student may result in a sense of estrangement from former communities and social circles.

This section has outlined refrains within and resonances across stories of former friendships and networks for the participants in the early stage of their transition. Some participants were happy to leave past relationships behind, while others lamented the fact that they no longer had the time to continue past friendships. The process of leaving behind former peers and acquiring a new peer group was unsettling for one participant. The following section outlines refrains within and resonances across stories concerning the development of new friendships.

New Friends

Early transition.

Even in the first two weeks of the university program, new and rewarding friendships were beginning to develop. However, issues resulting from being a mature age student had an impact on the development of some of these friendships. In Orientation Week Bec met some new people, and was also beginning to form relationships with new acquaintances as group work was required in some tutorials:

I met a couple of people in Orientation Week and it's just where you sit on the day. In the tutorials and the lectures. It's purely who I happened to sit next to. And those are the people I've met. We had a presentation in one group, we were forced to talk to each other, we've got another presentation in the other, so we're forced to form relationships very quickly with people, swap emails, that sort of thing. And so that is how I've primarily, I guess formed some acquaintances.

Preferring to have a small number of close friends rather than a large number of friends had resulted in Eva developing friendships with two other students in her classes:

I've got two people that I can call friends, or close to friends in this course. [I met them] the week before last week. Yeah, it is great. Like others, they know twenty or thirty people. I don't know that many. But I go for depth, not for spread [laughs].

Sally had met other students in similar circumstances to herself: "There are some really nice, mainly ladies that I've met who are in a similar situation to me". On the other hand, while Nadia found it useful to talk to other students, she found the lack of consistent contact with the same people impeded the opportunity to develop friendships. She believed mature age students tend not to socialise outside of the course they were undertaking:

I didn't know anyone in the course when I first started and since then I've met people but I don't feel I have consistent contact with the same people. But still I find it useful to talk to other students about what they are going through and know that I am feeling the same way and that they are feeling the same way and that we are all in the same boat. [It's] really been my experience [that mature age students do not socialise outside of the course].

Semester one.

As semester one progressed, most of the study participants had developed friendships with other students and were enjoying these relationships. Sally was surprised to find that she had new friendships with a wide variety of other students: "I've enjoyed the

people I've met. I've met some excellent people, really and from a wide age range, actually, which surprised me. Really, really nice people". By making the effort to fit in and interact with others, Callum had also developed friendships with a wide variety of students:

So generally I think I've gone all right, fitted in really well. I've made an effort to sort of spread around sort of the younger and older students. I mean there is an old man's club, an old engineer's club [laughs]. Which is great, because we've all got the same mindset. There are three of us with young children the same age so it would be nice to see them outside of this, but that's probably when things settle down.

Having previously spent some time at home looking after her children, Lynda enjoyed the friendships she had made with other mature age career changers in the program: "I have friends in the program, I love my friends. I love the social environment, I love being able to get out of the house and have my own circle of friends". For Sarah, friendships at university provided support during the academic program and also formed the basis for a professional network for her future in the teaching profession:

I make a point of trying to meet other people. Not only am I thinking of down the track with networks, but I find it's easier to study if you have other people to talk to about things and bounce ideas off and although I do like working alone, it is nice to know that you have that circle there.

Semester two.

For most of the study participants, their friendships remained stable throughout second semester, with participants continuing to interact with, and enjoy being with, other students. Elise, who previously had difficulty with new friendships due to being a part time student, now had the opportunity to develop new relationships:

So it's only been in the last few weeks where we've had to teach our class ourselves where we have really had the chance to interact with people. So I really felt like I've only just had the chance to get to know people as people as opposed to oh, yeah, that's that person who knows that.

However, another part time student, Mal, missed the opportunities of being able to socialise with other students and celebrate end of semester:

People were sort of interested in going out for a drink. To celebrate [end of semester]. And I guess I have missed a little bit of that. I've connected with a few of the guys but it [assignment] wasn't officially due until today, so they're all sort of going home to work on it. And they weren't quite ready to celebrate [laughs]. But

there is a sort of a wanting to let your hair down and recognise what you have achieved.

In contrast to participants' stories of the importance of developing new friendships at university, Neve was not interested in developing relationships on campus:

People go in, attend, and leave. There is no . . . and I am one of them . . . there is no real social focus or hub and I find this campus is just appalling for it too. So, no, I've never had social time with [fellow] students. I probably have [had the opportunity], but I just couldn't be bothered.

Some participants, for example, Mal, maintained that the opportunity to network and form friendships with other mature age and postgraduate coursework peers in the academic and social context was very important to them, concurring with Williams (2007) and James and Beattie (1996). However, while they expressed the desire to socialise with other students, they often did not have the opportunity due to other commitments, a finding similar to that of Watson et al. (2005). Mal, Elise and Bec experienced particular difficulty in developing new friendships at university due to their work commitments and part time student status. This confirms earlier research by Cluett and Skene (2006) and Lang (2000) that mature age students had little time to socialise outside of the university context and this may be related to their other commitments. Only Neve expressed the contrasting position about friendships at university, preferring to work alone and being uninterested in developing new friendships (Mallman & Lee, 2014).

None of the study participants reported that their mature age status and life experience resulted in problems adjusting to university life (Wilson, 1997), or had difficulty understanding university culture (Tindle and Lincoln, 2002). There were no participant refrains on fear of humiliation or ostracism from school leavers (Kantanis, 2002) or subjective feelings of being different from younger counterparts leading to feelings of being secluded, rejected or insecure (Risquez et al., 2008). The findings of this study showed that these mature age students did not feel a sense of discomfort being on a university campus with other students who may be considerably younger. As the participants in the study were completing postgraduate studies, it may be the case that they felt comfortable on the university campus as they remembered their own previous experiences as young tertiary students. Mature age students completing undergraduate studies have not had this prior experience, possibly resulting in this discomfort.

This section has given an outline of the development of new friendships for study participants. For full time students, many friendships began in the early weeks of the academic program, while for part time students, the process took a little longer due to their other commitments such as employment. Most of the participants enjoyed these new friendships, which gave them the feeling of 'fitting in'. Only one participant expressed disinterest in pursuing new friendships due to other commitments and relationships in her life. The following section explores the confidence and mood of the participants as their transition progressed.

Confidence and Mood

Early transition.

In Chapter 5, there is a discussion of the feelings of the study participants early in their transition, both as a reaction to having made the decision to make a career change into teaching, and looking ahead to the challenges of the academic program. Confidence levels for the participants at that stage were varied, with stories of increased, decreased and fluctuating confidence levels. This section continues to explore participants' confidence and mood as refrains of confidence levels about the decision to make the career change and coping with the academic program were evident.

Semester one.

Early in the transition, Callum talked of having higher levels of confidence and an uplifted mood since making the decision to make a career change into teaching. As first semester progressed, his mood and confidence remained strong and he considered his life had changed for the better since leaving his previous career:

> *[My confidence levels are] probably higher. I am so much more positive. My wife knows when I am happy because I am singing or whistling. And I am doing that more than I ever have. I have lost ten kilos, getting close to the ten kilos now. I am more active. I am feeling great, I'm feeling positive. I get up in the morning and I don't throw up. I was doing that for months and so you know, my life has turned around.*

Having the opportunity to meet new challenges because of the career change decision had also resulted in increased confidence for Sarah:

> *Yes [I am confident], because I feel more at home. I feel like, when I am here, I am allowed to turn my brain on. It's like I've been given permission to be me and to shine and to not be afraid to do well.*

Making the career change decision and undertaking the transition had resulted in Elise having more self-awareness in other areas of her life, which increased her confidence: "Well from that self-awareness I've got more confident in saying no to things and knowing what it is that I need to do for myself". Neve had been very confident about having made the career change decision during the early stages of the transition. However, the situation changed when she became aware that it was possible the secure employment she had envisioned for the future may not become a reality:

> *About two weeks ago, probably, I really had my confidence shaken, I was really doubting the choice because of the draconian way [the Education Department] operates with the country service. Because we are so vulnerable and we are just there for the employment, you can come away thinking have I done the right thing?*

The most common response to the academic program was fluctuating levels of confidence, which was often related to the participants' perception of how well they were coping with the program. When she felt she had good content knowledge, Cate was fine, less so when she was unsure of the content: "My confidence levels fluctuate. I feel very confident when I go into science except when they are covering content that I have not really been exposed much to". Similarly, Peter's confidence levels changed according to how he felt he was coping with the academic program at any particular point in time: "Honestly, I would say it's a seesaw effect. Yeah, today I'm great, last night I was a wreck".

Semester two.

During semester two, refrains of confidence levels for most of the participants were more focused on whether they had made the right decision to make a career change, rather than issues with the academic program. The participants were preparing to finish the program and leave the course in a matter of weeks to seek employment, so it could be the case that academic issues were becoming less relevant at this point in time. Early in the transition, Mal had had some questions concerning whether he had made the right decision about his career change into teaching. He was now more confident:

> *I am probably more confident with the choice that I've made. I guess at the start of the year, you are still questioning, is this the way to go? But yeah, I certainly am more confident about the career change.*

It had taken Mike until semester two to feel that he belonged in the program and with his current cohort. The realisation that he did fit in gave Mike the confidence that he had made the right decision to make a career change:

I think it's something that has changed. I think it's a confidence thing. I think as my confidence has grown, to feel . . . and that's the thing. It's taken me this long [laughs] to feel I'm being part of the class if that makes sense.

However, it was a different story for Peter. He admitted to having had a number of challenges related to his career change experience and these challenges had negatively affected his confidence levels:

My confidence levels since not working and doing the normal grind and not earning an income has dipped, I'll be honest. It's tough for me being a student. You know, pushing thirty, mortgage, maybe a family on the way. The stress level has definitely gone up with that. You will never be on top of it. You just barely tread it. That's the way I feel. So that all took a big chunk out of my confidence, it really has, you know. That's a big change. Getting back into school. I don't enjoy school. I mean, I enjoy learning, I like the light bulb, it goes off, I enjoy that, but I won't miss it.

Even though the participants in this study had previously completed undergraduate degrees, some expressed an early lack of confidence in their ability to cope with the academic program. Lack of confidence was a recurring theme for mature age students as Kantanis (2002) noted. She found that mature age students show a lack of confidence in their ability for academic writing. As the participants spoke less of their confidence about the academic program in semester two, they were becoming more confident about this aspect of their transition, especially as they were approaching the end of their studies. Abbott-Chapman (2006) also reported a growing sense of academic confidence for mature age career changers over time.

As outlined above, confidence levels for the participants in this study ranged from being high to low, with the most common response being fluctuating confidence levels. There was a loss of confidence for some participants caused by changing identity from a confident, competent professional in a former career to becoming a student again. Grier and Johnston (2008) and Wilkins (2013) found that this shift in identity can destabilise an individual's sense of purpose and cause a dip in confidence. Just as Bauer (2011) contended, some participants reported their confidence shaken by questioning whether they had made the right decision to change careers.

This section has outlined issues related to mood and feelings of confidence of the study participants concerning their transition. The findings show that while some participants experienced an increase in confidence and positive mood, for many participants their confidence and mood continued to fluctuate throughout their academic program. In second semester, the focus of their confidence was whether the decision to

change careers had been the correct decision, in contrast to the early transition and first semester, when the focus was on the ability to cope with the academic program. The following section outlines the support required and accessed by the participants during this time.

Support

Early transition.

In the early days of the transition, the majority of participants accessed support from family and close friends outside of the university environment. However, some participants looked to their university peers for support. One participant who used this strategy was Bec:

I've just picked everybody's brains to try and get a better understanding of what we are supposed to do, and then I was even helping someone today who is more mature age than myself, with something, so I definitely feel a bit more in control.

However, for most participants, partners, extended family and close friends were the main source of support during the early days of the transition into the university program. Elise utilised this strategy:

I've got the support of my family and my friends and my other big issue is I don't have children, but I have a dog. And now that I don't have a partner, I don't have anyone to look after her. So, my parents, for the nights that I have tutorials, I go and stay with my parents and they look after her. And I've got some close friends who are quite supportive, especially with my friends who are teachers, I've got a bit of a network with them.

Having the support of a former high school art teacher was important for support and inspiration for Nadia. She also relied on her partner for support:

I have a bit of a relationship with my high school art teacher. I did actually talk to her as well. And she was really hugely supportive. She said that she thought that I would make a wonderful teacher. And that inspired me as well. So that filled me with confidence as well. Coming from someone who I really respected and who had such an influence on my life. And my partner is obviously very supportive as well.

For Ray, having his wife work from home gave him support for his own studies. He also relied on his parents-in-law, who lived nearby and were available for assistance when required:

My wife works from home which is kind of handy. So basically for one offs like this afternoon, like this afternoon I had to pick up the kids and take them home, they

played Lego and did their homework and she worked so that's kind of quite flexible. And I mean my parents-in-law are just up the road so they normally pick up the kids from school once a week and have them over from school until we go over and have dinner at 6.30 or something and then they come home. So I mean that's going to be the Wednesday thing. So I think it can all kind of work.

While Rick had said earlier that his extended family lived some distance away, he was planning to access support from them in terms of advice and moral support when required during his studies: "And I suspect I will be falling back on my brother and my mum for you know, some advice and support when the time comes". Eva is an international student whose family all live overseas. Therefore, she relies on her close friends in Australia, outside of the university environment, to provide support:

They [friendships outside of university] are definitely a very good support. Very, very good support. I am really thankful to them because being an international student, I don't have anyone here. I am absolutely alone, so the only people I can draw on are my friends. They are true, good, genuine friends. So that's absolutely a big support.

Friends from both inside and outside of the university environment were a good source of support for Sarah:

I have a couple of friends that are trying to be supportive, there is one in particular who has offered me babysitting whenever possible to help out and then I guess there are the friends that I make while I am at university that are really my support network.

Semester one.

As semester one progressed, the refrains of 'support' began to change. Many participants talked of the support they were accessing from their university peers, while others talked of having accessed support from university staff. Some continued to talk about the support offered by family and friends, with the focus now being on support for their academic studies. Nadia found that her new friendships at university were now an important source of support in terms of having common experiences during the transition:

I would put the friends that I have made, just in terms of listing, you know, from greater support to less support, the friends that I have made have been a good support because they are going through the same thing that I am going through.

Similarly, being able to interact with other students in her class had provided good support for Elise in terms of the academic program:

[There is] a forum of support and from that we were able to bounce ideas off each other and go, OK, well I'm doing this for this assignment, this is how I am interpreting this, is this how you interpret it, yes/no, OK why is that? So, yeah, it has been supportive by being able to interact and communicate with some people in the class.

Some participants accessed support from university staff during semester one. Cate was happy with the support of one of her tutors: "Well, I definitely utilised my middle years' learning tutor. I emailed her a lot, asked her a lot of questions. When I saw her face to face, she was good". A variety of university staff and students provided support for Sarah: "So, at university, I've received some great support from lecturers and tutors. I've had support from the IT guys here at university. In general, staff and students and everybody else have been great". Lynda had been able to discuss ideas related to her studies with her husband, who is an academic. He also provided advice about formatting her essays:

[I get support from] My husband. If I try to run some ideas, you know, I just check through with him, do you think this is sensible, this is to format my essay. With my studies, with life, both.

Other partners offered editing and proofreading support. Peter's wife had given him this support: "She's been amazing, my partner, she's been really good. She supports me, she edits my essays, you know, we sort of work together". Similarly, Mal had assistance from his wife: "And I had a lot of help, my wife proofread and her dad is also an academic sort of a guy and he could help by focusing on some things, so I did surprisingly well".

Semester two.

As the participants moved through second semester, a range of challenges related to their personal lives and access to support impacted them. For some participants, although not all, the focus of the support they accessed had moved to their university peers and staff, rather than family and friends, as had been the case earlier in the transition. Lynda now had little support at home: "He [husband] is busy with his research and I pretty much do everything on my own"; while Nadia's focus at this time was on issues in her personal life, as her grandmother was in palliative care:

Because of things that have been happening in my personal life, there has been mutual support from my family, but a lot of it is me supporting my mum as she is going through a hard time. And me supporting my brother as he is coming up to his wedding. It's sad for them and it should be a joyful time and you know, it's hard to feel joyful.

Having university colleagues to reflect and discuss ideas with, had been an important source of support for Rick during second semester, particularly while he was undertaking his second professional experience placement. He considered these supportive relationships would continue after the academic program was completed:

I have been hanging out with a couple of people in the course and that support has been invaluable. And when we are in the practicum, doing reflective practice with colleagues is a lot easier than trying to do it on your own. So, coming home and getting on the computer and bouncing a few emails around. Or having a chat on the phone about what went right and what went wrong with colleagues has been invaluable. And those relationships have firmed into friendships as well. You know, I imagine we will be dispersed geographically but I still think we will stay in touch.

In addition to having the support of friends she made at the beginning of the course, Cate found that the academic support provided by one of her university lecturers to be very helpful:

Definitely having that group of people who have come with me from the beginning [for support]. And that little group has been amazing. I think our lecturer for science has shown me what being a supportive teacher means. So, this semester, we had to write a report, she booked us in for a library session and we did searching. Which I know helped a lot of the older people in our classes who weren't familiar with the university website. But it helped me as well. And yeah, it was really great to have that, it really helped with my work. So that was fantastic.

In contrast, the support provided to Neve during second semester came from her partner, father and two friends. In a conversation in first semester she had mentioned that she had not at that stage accessed any university support services or developed any relationships she would classify as friendships. In semester two, she expanded on this refrain:

Oh, now, very much so [my partner is supportive]. My father was a big support to me and I can chat very openly and frankly with him. I just talked to maybe two friends. I didn't get any services from the university and I never would. No, not really [I didn't seek support from peers at uni].

The participants' stories showed the importance of support from family and friends, with many participants echoing the findings of Chao and Good (2004) and Ramsay et al. (2007) that one important component of support for mature age students was partners, family and friends. And like Stone's (2009) conclusion, the majority of participants cited friendships with university peers an important part of the support network. While many of the participants who were studying full time began to develop friendships that offered support from early in the transition, the part time students did not expect to develop friendships initially that could provide support and this expectation was realised. They later reported having developed new, supportive relationships with their university peers. This finding on the experiences of the part time students is similar to that of Ayres and Guilfoyle (2009) that mature age students had little expectation for social support at university, but later began to develop friendships.

Support provided by academic staff was also highly valued, a finding consistent with that of Li (2009). As detailed, the findings of this study show that almost all of the study participants were interested in developing supportive relationships with other university students, with the exception of Neve, who had different priorities. In this research, only Neve aligned with James et al. (2010) that mature age students tended not to access support from university peers, preferring instead to keep to themselves and Leder and Forgasz (2004) that mature age students preferred to work alone, not feeling the need for university relationships but relying on other support structures and responsibilities. Interestingly too, the participants in this study did not talk of accessing formal sources of support from the university, such as financial support, disability provision, career advice, learning support or emotional assistance. This finding contrasts with that of Stone (2009) that these sources of support were valued by mature age students.

Notably then, with the passing of time, from the early transition through to second semester, the focus of the support changed. In the early stages of the transition, the main focus of support for the participants was family and friends. As first semester progressed, the focus was more on support from university peers. While family remained an important source of support during this time, the support was likely to be of an academic nature, for example, editing essays. In second semester, the focus was more strongly on support from university peers and staff, and less on family and friends. Therefore, it is important to recognise that as this cohort was undergoing a transition, over time, sources of support changed.

This section has explored the sources of support for the participants during their academic program. In the early stages of the transition, the participants accessed support

from close family and friends, with the focus of this support changing to academic support as the transition progressed. Later in their transition, the focus of their access for support was on university academic staff.

Discussion

As the participants moved through or continued their transition in preparation for their new career, they continued to look backward and forward as they began to take up opportunities and face challenges related to their personal lives. This stage of the transition could be called *Ongoing Journey*. This chapter outlines the ebb and flow of opportunities and rewards they were able to take up, as well as the challenges and pressures they needed to face, and how they developed a sense of agency when dealing with these transition issues. In addition, the chapter outlines the support participants received in relation to the issues they faced in their personal lives while undertaking their academic program.

The opportunities and rewards of making new friendships were important to most of the study participants. Some participants reported difficulties in developing these friendships due to lack of time or opportunities. Increased levels of confidence were rewards for some of the study participants, often related to having new career opportunities. However, a more common response to the career transition was to have fluctuating levels of confidence, both in relation to coping with the academic program, and questioning whether the right decision to make a career change had been made. Other challenges included financial concerns, where participants had often left full time employment in order to make the career transition, therefore their financial resources were reduced when family and other commitments had often increased. Care of children was a major challenge for most participants with children. These participants felt the pressure of having to find suitable child care and finding time to spend with their children. Work-life balance was also a major issue for most of the study participants, who often had responsibilities such as financial, family and domestic commitments.

Along with work-life balance, time management was a challenge for most of the participants, with the time required for their academic program, in addition to their other commitments, increasing their levels of stress. Leaving former friendships and networks proved to be difficult for some study participants. The participants in this study accessed support from family and friends, university peers and university staff during their studies. The focus of this support changed, from family and friends in the early

stages of their transition, to university peers, and also to university staff for some participants.

In this chapter, the lens of transition theory informs our understanding of three of the aspects of the participants' transition into a new career: self, support and strategies. As stated by Anderson et al. (2012), in transition theory, the concept of self involves the dimensions of salience and balance, resilience, self-efficacy and meaning making as critical aspects of career transitions. Salience is the importance of work in one's life, with individuals having a number of possible life roles in addition to being a worker. For the participants in this study, work was an important component of their lives, and provided a reason for deciding to make the career change (as outlined in Chapter 5). As mature age career change students, most of the participants also had the roles of partner, parent, worker, and had financial commitments and responsibilities. These additional roles added a layer of complexity to the career change transition, and created particular challenges and pressures in their experience.

In 1981 Super and Knasel stated that there was a growing need in our culture to achieve a balance between our work and personal lives, with this balance being an interplay of work, love and play. In this study, refrains within and resonances across the stories showed that work-life balance is still a major issue for the majority of the participants, as they struggled to meet the challenges of balancing their study, family and personal commitments. Resilience, is characterised by being positive, focused, organised, proactive and flexible (Barrett, 2004). The participants in this study remained resilient when facing personal and social conditions in their career transition. The refrains in their stories show that in spite of the challenges and pressures of their career transition, they demonstrated these five characteristics, remaining positive, focusing on new opportunities and persisting in their transition.

Anderson et al. (2012) state that support from others is an important part of the transition experience. They outline four main sources of support: close relationships, family units, networks of friends and the institutions and/or communities of which the individual is a part. In this study, the participants' refrains showed the importance of support in their career transition. They accessed all four types of support at different times in their transition. In the early stages of the transition, most of the participants accessed support from their family and friends, although some chose to access support from their new friendships with their university peers. As their transition progressed, the focus of support changed for many participants, who accessed support from university staff and from friendships with university peers. The nature of the support for those

participants who continued to rely on family and friends at this stage was around assistance with the academic program, for example, the proofreading of assignments. As the transition continued into semester two, close to the end of the academic program, most of the study participants were relying on university friends and colleagues for support, rather than family networks.

According to Anderson (2012), it is important for individuals undergoing transition to develop strategies to cope with the issues associated with the transition experience. Leibowitz et al. (1991) state that when coping with transition, a range of strategies can be used, including negotiation, seeking advice or brainstorming a new approach to a problem. In this study, participants coped with the issues of transition by developing a sense of agency about time, place and personal and social conditions, for example, using strategies such as negotiating with a partner concerning financial issues and support, seeking advice and support from university peers or staff or by making time by structuring a timetable that included time for family and study. Participants like Sally were developing a sense of agency in relation to time, as she indicated that she had 'not yet' achieved work-life balance (but was on a trajectory towards it). The participants also became agentic by valuing learning, thus increasing their confidence during the transition.

The lenses of the three commonplaces of temporality, sociality and place can be applied to the refrains within and the resonances across the participants' stories to gain insight. In this study the participants moved through time in their transition, from the early stages of the transition, through semesters one and two of their academic program (and later into their teaching career). The analytic lens of temporality reveals the way that time was a thread throughout the participants' stories; they told of having to make time, find time and create time. Temporality also helps us discern how, over time, students' needs and concerns develop and shift, creating an 'ebb and flow' effect as some issues become more or less important at different times in the transition process. For example, some participants had challenges about child care early in their transition, as the academic program commenced. These issues intensified as the transition progressed in semester one, before ebbing for most participants in semester two, as child care issues had been resolved.

The lens of sociality helps us discern the personal and social conditions at play during this stage of their transition. For the participants in this study, the refrains concerning personal conditions included the challenges of financial issues, care of children, work-life balance, time management and changes in confidence and mood.

Many of these refrains pertain to sociality in a particular way. The social conditions impacting on the transition of these participants included the loss of former friendships and networks, developing new friendships and accessing social and academic support. The place of these phases of transition were quite circumscribed to their homes and the university campus as the participants completed their academic program. The lens of place showed that domestic and family responsibilities in the home impacted the transition experience, creating increased complexity in the transition experience due to the challenges of additional responsibilities and commitments in addition to the academic program. The university campus was the place where personal conditions such as new friendships could be developed, as well as providing opportunities for new challenges and increased confidence.

The use of narrative inquiry methodology in this study has provided in-depth knowledge of the personal issues relevant to undertaking academic studies when making the transition into a new career. With this methodology, individuals were able to talk about their experiences, not only by telling stories of current experiences, but also by looking back in time at their previous responses and feelings about an issue and forward to an imagined future relating to the issue.

This chapter has given insight in relation to the participants' personal lives for research sub question two: What opportunities and rewards, pressures and challenges do mature age career changers experience during their transition and how do they meet them? The following chapter continues the stories of the participants as they move through their transition. Chapter 7 outlines their experiences in the moving through stage of their transition in relation to their university studies and being a teacher.

Chapter 7

Moving Through: "Whatever happened to pen and paper?"

(University Studies and Being a Teacher)

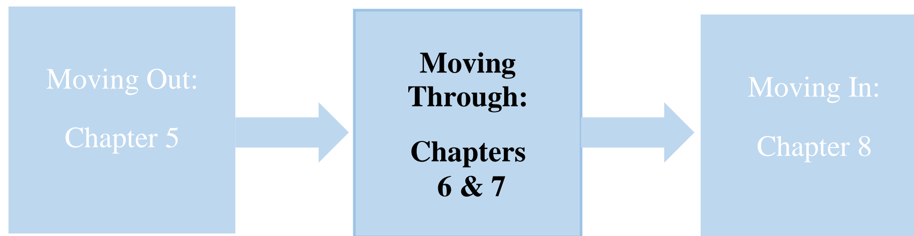

Figure 7.1. Moving through stage of transition theory

The previous chapter of this thesis told the stories of the personal issues that mature age career changers faced as they were undertaking their studies in order to enter the teaching profession. This chapter continues the story, with a focus on the opportunities and rewards, challenges and pressures the participants faced while undertaking their academic program. The diagram above, Figure 7.1., shows the relationship between this chapter and the others that follow the participants through the three stages of transition theory.

The Transition Continues: Moving Through (University Studies and Being a Teacher)

The diagram below, Figure 7.2., illustrates the structure of this chapter.

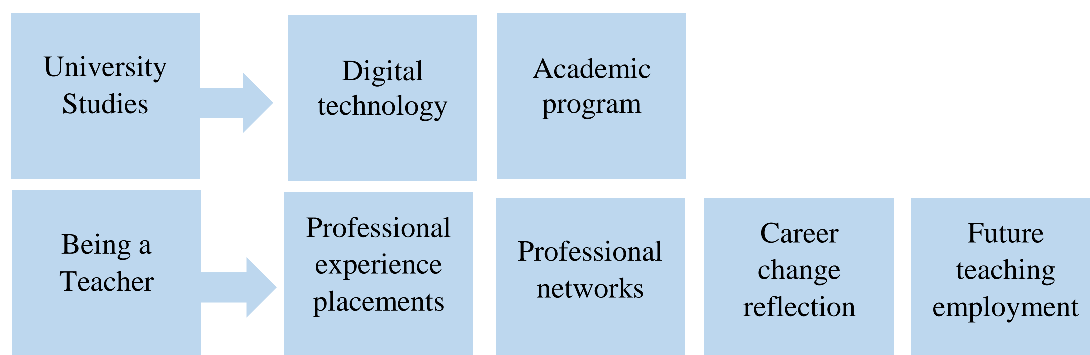

Figure 7.2. Structure of chapter: Refrains and resonances in 'university studies' and 'being a teacher'

As can be seen from the diagram, this chapter outlines the stories of the opportunities, rewards, challenges and pressures the study participants experienced in terms of their university studies and being a teacher (at this point in their journey, being a teacher refers to their professional experience placements). In this chapter, the participants tell of their experiences as they moved through their transition from the early stage of the

transition, and through semester one and semester two of their academic program, including two professional experience placements.

University Studies

Some participants in this study began to experience challenges concerning their academic programs at a very early stage of their transition, even prior to their first day at university. The academic program was quite different from their earlier studies, in terms of both delivery and administration, which was a surprise to study participants returning to university after a break in their studies. One of these changes was the use of digital technology, which may have been utilised to only a minor degree in their former studies. They now had to use digital technology to apply for the program, enrol in their courses, access their course materials and academic literature and submit their assignments. In addition, the participants also experienced difficulties with their academic writing and research skills.

Digital Technology

The challenge of using digital technology in the university environment was an issue that resonated repeatedly across the stories of a number of the study participants. Many had completed their previous degrees at a time when digital technology was not utilised to a major extent in academic programs.

Early transition.

As outlined above, the challenges with digital technology began early in the career change transition. Callum was surprised by the extent to which digital technology was utilised, even in just enrolling in the university program:

> *I got my acceptance on 14 December or whatever. I was spending weeks and weeks just trying to figure it out. And then I got some email about enrolling in your classes and I'm like oh, OK, I've got to enrol. Click, where does it go? OK [laughs, yes].*

Kelly also had challenges early in the program, as she attempted to utilise the university portal to access course materials:

> *The study method has completely changed since I last studied and it's all online and there is a lot of technology and there are mazes within mazes and trying to navigate through the whole university website, it's very time consuming. You've got assessment and the course profile and you try to print it out and it won't print out and you think 'Why isn't it doing it?' so that bit is really frustrating and new, but I am hoping I will be able to navigate through there fairly well.*

The first lecture of the university was a surprise for Bec, who had not anticipated the way lectures were delivered and accessed:

Even going to my first lecture. I have a tablet, I got given it for my birthday, but I went with pen and paper to my first lecture and people are on their iPads and taking photos and I'm like 'Whatever happened to pen and paper?' And so I was a bit blown away by that.

Sally felt daunted by the use of computers in the academic program: "And even when I was at university then [first degree], computers had really only then just become mainstream and you certainly didn't use them for research. You didn't use them like you do now. So it's totally different". In contrast, one participant who was pleased with the use of digital technology was Mal, as he felt that the delivery of the program was now more user friendly than in the past:

I don't think the concept of tertiary study has changed much. It's just the way you deliver it. And the quality. More in the technology. You know, everything's on the web and I've probably made a few comments to say that it's a good time to study. I used to be a technophobe but now I've got a bit better. Everything has become a bit more user friendly.

Semester one.

Some participants continued to have difficulties with the use of digital technology for their academic program during semester one of their program. The uploading and downloading of information and the use of the university portal caused difficulties for many participants. Uploading her assignment for assessment caused problems for Cate: "I struggled with having to upload our assignment. I've never had to do that before. Never. So, I don't trust that my assignment has been submitted" [laughs]. As she was unfamiliar with the SafeAssign plagiarism checker software, Bec also experienced difficulties in correctly submitting her assignment:

The SafeAssign submission was new from when I was at university the first time. I think the SafeAssign thing, I don't know how new it is, but for mature age students it's new. It's important they go through that because it's a must do.

Using the university learning portal caused difficulties for Elise:

I had many issues with technology [laughs]. And the thing technology wise was that we've got this Blackboard learning portal at the university. We are expected to use technology in order to communicate and to upload and download

information and access lecture notes and things. I think there has not been much communication or training about how we are to use the website.

According to Neve, in contrast to her earlier studies, where you could purchase hard copy academic resources, the digital environment had a negative impact in terms of time:

Now, the amount of time in accessing, downloading, printing, all that sort of stuff, resources, finding them, following them, it's just enormous. It's not so much that the load is unreasonable but I really find that digital environment creates a lot of labour.

Semester two.

During semester two, participants did not raise issues of the use of digital technology in the academic program in the research conversations. As participants were free to raise issues of relevance to themselves during these conversations, it may be the case that they were more concerned with other issues at this point in their transition.

As can be seen from the above refrains, the study participants at times had difficulty using the digital technology as required by the university administration and lecturers in the academic programs. A point made by one of the participants (Mal) was that he was competent with the use of digital technology in his former profession, but that the academic environment required different technological skills. It is therefore likely that this cohort was computer literate, however, they needed to develop skills in using digital technology for academic purposes. Another point made by some study participants was that, while they were aware of the workshops and seminars provided by the university to assist students with academic and digital technology issues, their other commitments (e.g., collecting children from school) prevented them to utilising these support services. In addition, they were not confident that online tutorials could provide the assistance they required. They stated that their preference was to have lecturers and tutors give brief explanations on these issues during lecture or tutorial times, for example, providing a brief tutorial on how to use library databases to access resources for assignments.

In previous research many postgraduate coursework students did not feel confident with learning technologies and were not always confident with course delivery methods that required technical skills (Bauer, 2011; James & Beattie, 1996). The participants in this study had a steep learning curve in relation to acquiring technological skills for the academic environment, a finding consistent with that of Kantanis (2002). In relation to accessing electronic resources in the library, Bruce

(1994) found that postgraduate coursework students needed additional support. While some of this research is over 20 years old, it seems that there has been little change since that time, with Stagg and Kimmins (2014) reporting that many postgraduate coursework, mature age students cited familiarity with card catalogues, but not with the electronic systems now in use, and therefore difficulty accessing resources. There appeared to be an assumption by university academic and administrative staff that mature age students were competent in the use of digital technology (Bauer, 2011; Kenny et al., 2007). However, the findings of the current study showed that these participants often did not have the required technological skills for their academic program.

This section of the chapter has outlined the challenges associated with the use of digital technology in the academic environment for this cohort. As some time had elapsed since the study participants had completed their initial degrees, they were often surprised by the requirements of the academic program concerning the use of digital technology. In the early stages of their transition and semester one, they found this situation quite challenging. There has been little change over the last 20 years, as outlined in the literature review. The following section outlines the refrains within and resonances across the stories about academic writing and research skills.

Academic Writing and Research Skills

While the participants in this study came to the university program with a range of professional backgrounds including business, visual arts and industrial design, a number of participants had professional backgrounds in science, technology, engineering and maths. The consequence of having this professional background was that many of these participants did not have experience in the type of academic skills, such as writing essays, required for their current program and they were challenged by this situation.

Early transition.

With a professional background in engineering, having to do research was a challenge for Callum: "And [with] engineering, we probably didn't need to do a lot of this sort of research". Similarly, with a background in science, Cate was having to learn a new method of academic research and writing:

> *Academic wise, I haven't actually written longer than a couple of hundred words. So it's APA referencing style which I've never done, it's not what the scientists did so I have to go and learn to do a whole new style in addition to keeping up with my online quizzes and everything else.*

Sally had previously not been required to write essays during her maths studies at university, and she now felt unsure of her ability: "[I'm feeling] daunted . . . a little bit. Particularly essay writing. Because I haven't done that since my first degree. I didn't do that in my Graduate Certificate. It was maths assignments, you don't write essays". Elise's former studies were project based, with drawings. She now had to master the skills of academic writing:

> *It's the getting through this year and the academic aspects as a university student that are doing my head in a bit. Just because, I think, it's very theoretical and the assignments are essay based and there's research methods and how the essay needs to be presented and all these things that I've never done, even in my undergrad. It was project based, it was drawings. I did very little hard, heavy writing of things.*

With a background in finance, Peter also felt challenged by the academic program:

> *Yes [there will be challenges]. Absolutely. I mean, it's a lot of psychological things like that. These are wordy essays. The whole education language is different from finance. Finance is very direct, boom, boom, boom, that's what it is. You read these textbooks, so you read these things and it sounds bad, but it's coming from me, they want to sound like they know it all and it seems, because half the time it's define this, define that. So I have to wrap my head around that.*

Semester one.

A number of participants continued to experience difficulties with their academic program as time progressed. One reason for these difficulties appeared to be related to their academic and professional backgrounds, in particular for those participants whose previous degrees were in areas other than humanities. They were unaccustomed to writing essays and had a continued preference during the semester for the type of assessments they were familiar with from their previous studies.

Callum continued to have difficulties with writing essays, preferring to use dot points: "I'm trying to write a four thousand word essay. And you know, I'm a dot point man". Expository essays were a challenge for Peter: "I do reports, that's what I've been doing. [There] was a written expository essay. Expository – I still can't get my head around it. Coming from maths and numbers and things". In agreement, Cate outlines her preferences for the academic assessments: "We would like some flexibility with what we can do, because an expository essay is not a style I've ever done". Another issue related to the background of the participants was the number of readings they were required to do for this program. For many, their former studies and professional

backgrounds did not require large amounts of reading. For example, Lynda was challenged by the amount of reading: "There were a lot of readings in an area that I am not familiar with at all, with lots of readings, just words, because I'm used to symbols and graphs and equations".

In addition to the lack of familiarity with writing essays, many participants struggled because they had not been in the university academic environment for a considerable amount of time and were therefore unfamiliar with the current requirements for referencing their assignments. Like Callum above, Mike briefly outlines the issue: "I'd never heard of this thing APA referencing so, assignment wise, it's been a struggle". Due to the length of time since she had previously studied, Sarah also experienced difficulties with referencing: "Because the academic writing for that is so different from what I have done before. So I had to teach myself all the referencing stuff first. That was the main problem".

Semester two.

During semester two of the program many participants were still experiencing the same difficulties they had experienced in their first semester of study. Mike continued to resist the idea of writing essays: "One tutor said, I just want an essay, I don't want dot points, no pictures, no nothing and I go, well, I don't communicate like that". Similarly, Sally stated: "So for people like me, with maths, business, sciences, no, no, no, no. It's very wishy washy. And I just dislike it. And I'm struggling with it". According to Callum, there is a dichotomy between students who are familiar with humanities subjects and those with a background in maths and sciences who would like to have different assessment styles:

> *And there is a group of people like me who don't want to be writing. They just want to write numbers down, but then you've got people from the arts side, and invariably these are the people who are taking the course.*

As can be seen from the above, many of the participants in this study had undergraduate degrees in the areas of maths, engineering, science and technology and they were now studying in the academic discipline of humanities. The participants acknowledged that they needed to learn new skills for their current academic program. Symons (2001) and Lang (2000) concluded that many mature age students needed to enhance their skills in practical writing, as they were studying in a field which was quite different from their undergraduate program. None of the participants reported experiencing difficulty with numeracy and literacy in their academic program, in contrast to the findings of Kenny et

al. (2007). For all of the participants, there had been gap in time since they had undertaken their previous studies and this situation had impacted on their ability to cope with the requirements of the current academic program. This finding echoes those of Abbott and Chapman (2006) and Bauer (2011) who found that difficulties with the academic program were problematic for students who had been away from study for a long time. While the current study participants could have made a prior assumption that postgraduate coursework studies would bring few academic difficulties when returning to study due to their previous experience, the findings of this study show that they did not have the required academic skills. The participants in this study were feeling daunted or challenged by the academic program. This finding lends support to that of Morgan (2014), that postgraduate coursework students (postgraduate taught students) had difficulties coping with their academic program.

This section of the chapter has outlined the academic issues faced by mature age, postgraduate coursework students, as they re-entered the academic environment. Many of the participants with backgrounds in science, technology, engineering and maths struggled with the requirements of the academic program, particularly concerning the writing of essays and the use of referencing. These issues were quite challenging and remained unresolved for many participants throughout their academic program. The following section discusses issues related to the participants' professional experience placements – their experience of 'being a teacher'.

Being a Teacher

As previously outlined in Chapter 4, participants in the study were required to complete two professional experience placements in the secondary classroom during their initial teacher education program, one in semester one and the other in semester two. These placements gave the participants the opportunity to explore issues that could impact on them in the future when they would be mature age, career change beginning teachers. As this study explored the experiences of mature age career change beginning teachers in relation to their transition into a new career, the following discussion of the two placements focuses specifically on issues that may be experienced by this cohort. The participants told stories of both opportunities and rewards and of challenges and pressures they experienced during the placements.

Professional Experience Placements 1 and 2

This section of the chapter tells the participants' stories about their two professional experience placements (participants refer to them as 'practicums'). The refrains in the stories of many of the study participants were similar for both placements, even though most of them undertook their second placement at a school quite different from their first (e.g., an elite private school for the first and a low SES [socioeconomic status] public school for the second placement). In order to avoid repetition, the stories of both placements have been integrated and are not separated according to the two semesters. The stories told by the study participants revealed a number of opportunities and rewards to being a mature age career change beginning teacher. These included having respect from students and other teachers, and being able to bring their personal, professional and parenting skills into the classroom. Many participants, like Mal, considered that older beginning teachers had more respect from students than their younger teaching peers:

> *I think you were instantly recognised as someone who is more mature and has something to offer, or something. Kids seem to instantly respect you, so I didn't feel like I was ever disrespected or they thought that I didn't have anything to offer.*

In addition, other participants, such as Neve, considered their professional background brought respect from their teaching supervisors: "I was held in very high regard by both of my supervising teachers, most probably due to my qualifications and prior experience in such a wide range of educational contexts". Peter had previously worked in the business environment, and had the opportunity to bring the personal and professional skills developed in that environment, into the teaching workplace:

> *So in the broader nutshell, you will know how to manage people better, you know a bit more about how things work in organisations whether they be schools, jobs, businesses, so you know that sort of structure, you know how to talk to people, you know how to deal with HODs [Heads of Departments], Principals, you know, you are a bit more confident.*

Similarly, Rick's professional background provided him with opportunities to use diagnostic skills in the classroom and to reflect on his teaching practice:

> *I don't think either myself or any of my contemporaries in my class would have had the life experiences or the analytical skills [then] to do that kind of diagnostic [skills] and self-reflection. It's very much an acquired skill through life experience, so I don't think I could have done that at twenty two or twenty three.*

Sarah's professional background in the information technology industry also meant that she was able to apply her real world experience to her lesson planning:

> *When it comes to making up questions, for example, your life experience is there, your industry experience is there, so you can show more applications and you can draw on your experience and make up real life questions. Because you have lived that real life.*

Similarly, Nadia was able to be able to use her competencies from her professional background as a visual artist:

> *Definitely [I was able to use my professional competencies]. I was able to tell stories and anecdotes, for example about the film industry, the different roles and real-world experiences to give the students a context for their learning. I think this helps to make it relevant for them, particularly the older students who may be starting to think about the real world after leaving school.*

The personal skills developed through her life experience and professional background had provided an advantage for Elise in terms of understanding and engaging effectively with her students:

> *I think my younger self would have become frustrated, stressed or anxious much quicker so my even-temper and problem solving skills that I've acquired over the years enabled me to step back and look at an issue logically without too much emotional charge. Likewise, I also found it easier to empathise and understand some of the issues my students were experiencing outside of class - which made me more approachable and trustworthy. Essentially, I think that my personal life experience has given me a greater and wider perspective on things that enables me to get a better understanding of my students and find ways of engaging them.*

Similarly, Neve's personal skills derived from her life experience were useful when she had an unpleasant incident with another teacher during her first placement:

> *I also dealt with a teacher's behavioural issue, which was interesting and unexpected. A few weeks into my practicum I was verbally attacked by a very ignorant middle-aged teacher who had an incorrect and uninformed opinion about my performance on practicum. When I calmly but assertively corrected her misconceptions, the teacher recoiled and made many apologies. It was a good experience to have, actually. It demonstrated another benefit of being a mature age/career change teacher. I can't imagine a 20 year old undergraduate handling such an unprovoked and ill-founded ambush.*

Opportunities and rewards of being a mature age, beginning teacher, according to Sarah, relate to parenting. Skills can be brought from parenting into the teaching profession, and skills learnt in the teaching profession can be brought to parenting:

And being a parent also helps a lot. The skills that I use with them all day, every day are the sorts of things that come in handy. And I find that it's a two way street, because some of the things that I pick up on practicum, I've being using them on my kids [laughs].

As outlined above, the participants in this study had the opportunity to utilise a wide range of personal and professional skills from their prior professions, in the classroom. This finding confirms earlier research by Etherington (2009) and Haggard et al. (2006), that the prior personal and professional experience of mature age career changers into teaching brought benefits to their professional experience placements. Williams (2010) had a similar finding from her research with a career changer who was able to observe the social dynamics and power relationships in the professional experience placement, due to her professional background.

The positive experiences of this cohort on their professional experience placements are outlined above. However, many study participants experienced challenges related to being mature age, career change beginning teachers. In her former profession, Lynda had taught economics at university level. Her experience of having to teach young people with a low level of knowledge provided a challenge for her, as she began to feel that she was losing her own knowledge:

And then having to go down to actually teaching at a really, really low level . . . the first three weeks was quite bad for me. And I came to the point where I thought, I don't really want to do this. It's a bit like feeling an insult to your intelligence, somehow. And I felt like my knowledge was disappearing, it was not accumulating.

For Sarah, the challenge was about not using the technical language she had used in her former profession, in the classroom.

[One challenge was] Trying to cut out technical language. Whereas, if you were coming straight from school through the Bachelor program, you haven't picked up all that stuff.

[You need to] filter it. It's not really dumbing it down, it's really hard to find a word, the best I can come up with is filtering out all the high level stuff and aim it at the correct level. So that's probably harder.

Some study participants had expectations that the teaching culture would be similar to that of the professions in which they had previously worked. However, they were

surprised to find that this was not necessarily the case. Mike was challenged by the environment and culture of his new profession:

I think what also threw me was I had a picture of walking into an office kind of environment and you have your little dog boxes and things like that and there were papers everywhere, it wasn't the pristine arrangement I expected [laughs]. My first surprise was [laughs] it's so noisy.

In addition, an expectation of respect for others, based on his personal and professional background, meant that Mike was surprised by the reality he met in the teaching workplace:

The thing I found difficult was the way that they spoke about kids, about the students, in terms of the expectations of marks and their level of competency. They'd already decided who was dumb, who was smart kind of thing and I'm still probably struggling a little bit with that.

Callum was also challenged by the culture at the elite private school where he completed his placement: "The biggest disappointment was how disconnected all the teachers are from each other. They are all essentially competing against each other for pay rates. They didn't seem to share resources, they didn't seem to share anything". Prior expectations of the workplace were relevant for Neve during her second placement. The culture at this school was quite different from both her first placement and from what she had experienced in her former profession:

However, there were aspects of the school, the conduct of some teachers and the staff room cultures that I wasn't expecting. Unpleasantly, I didn't expect to see such blatant hostility, poorly masked harassment and quite toxic cultures within the staff room[s]. I was surprised and interested to witness such poor management and HOD [Head of Department] leadership and examples of very poor performance and unchecked attitudes of some teaching and support staff. So much went on by tacit approval. More what I'd expect of a dodgy small business than a government school. It is harassment and inappropriate. It is against organisational policies and expected conduct and when it's a rampant culture it is toxic and dangerous. I hate it.

A bureaucratic system that was quite unlike what he had previously experienced caused Peter to feel challenged:

I did really like the teaching aspect of practicum however the other factors with teaching - the administration, the bureaucracy, the ever changing and demanding education system in general is quite daunting. And the 'system' just keeps demanding more - more polices, more accountability, more transparency, more this, more that.

While being seen as mature can be an advantage, as outlined previously, it can also be a disadvantage or challenge, as others can assume that an individual has more experience and requires less assistance, as Sarah found:

I got mistaken when I went for my first day of teaching for a supply teacher because people assumed looking at my age, that I wasn't a student, so perhaps in the future, people might assume that I have more teaching under my belt than I have, which is a danger for a mature age career changer.

Work-life balance issues continued to challenge participants throughout the professional experience placements. Sally, whose husband was away on military duty, continued to have major pressures in this area:

Work-study-life balance during practicum? OMG, terrible. I was so tired. I worked all weekend every weekend and every night of the week except Friday, which I took off. It was really, really hard. Much harder than I thought. There was just so much work and none of your other responsibilities are taken away in this time so you still have all of those. And I have no help at home, as you know. I felt like I really neglected my kids during practicum, which I really don't like.

As outlined above, prior expectations of teaching could be a challenge for mature age career changers into teaching. Mike, Callum and Peter told stories which reflected how their impressions of the teaching workplace did not meet their prior expectations of the culture and structures in schools. This finding lends support to earlier research by Johnson and Kardos (2005) that teachers who entered the profession mid-career may bring with them expectations of their new career based on their previous profession. These expectations included that there would be a greater degree of respect, honesty and compassion from their teaching colleagues during the professional experience placement (Cherubini, 2008). Another example of this situation can be seen in this study in the stories told by Neve concerning her response to the workplace culture and relationships she experienced during her professional experience placement. Watters and Diezmann (2012) found too that because of their professional backgrounds, mature age career changers can have a decreased tolerance for organisational mismanagement and lack of support. In 2013 Watters and Diezmann found that mature age career changers may not be familiar with the culture and structure of schools, after having been away for a long period of time.

Participants in this study also told stories concerning problems with their work-life balance during their professional experience placements. While work-life balance issues may also be relevant for students who are not mature age, career change students,

Haggard et al. (2006) make the point that the experience could be more challenging for mature age, career change students because they are also dealing with family issues. Work-life balance adds an additional complexity to the transition process for mature age career change beginning teachers.

These stories of the advantages or opportunities and rewards; and disadvantages or challenges and pressures of these mature age career change students provides a recent and in-depth understanding of the experiences of this cohort during their professional experience placements. Industrial contexts are changing rapidly and the impact of new workplace contexts and new technologies must be often revisited. An understanding of this cohort as they undertake their professional experience placement is relevant as part of their transition into the new profession.

This section of the chapter has outlined the experiences of the study participants as they completed their two professional experience placements in the classroom. They found advantages or rewards in being a mature age beginning teacher, such as respect from staff and students, and being able to bring their life and professional experiences into the classroom. Parenting experiences could be an advantage also. However, there were also disadvantages or challenges, such as unmet expectations of the teaching environment and culture, being mistaken for a more experienced teacher, therefore possibly receiving less support, and experiencing work-life pressures. The following section explores the stories of developing professional networks.

Professional Networks

Another topic of conversation that emerged in the second semester of the academic program, and had only been briefly mentioned in earlier conversations, was the development of professional networks for the teaching profession. A number of study participants talked about the professional networks that had developed during the two professional experience placements during the year. For example, although he felt he was not a good networker, Callum was beginning to develop his professional networks, starting with teachers from his recent placement:

> *I am starting to [develop professional networks], like my supervising teacher and my co-ordinator at the private boys' school, I really sort of hammered that with them. Once you start looking, you find all these people, it's all connected. And I am not a good networker.*

Similarly, Mike had developed his professional networks, starting with the relationships he had with his fellow university students: "So I guess what I'm hoping is the

professional network is starting with what I've got from classmates. And then see what happens from there". A wide range of strategies were utilised by Sarah to develop her professional networks for teaching. The refrain on this topic came from semester one, when she had talked of developing these networks from friendships:

I am developing networks. I am trying to keep in touch with several people. I've been in contact quite a bit with the two supervising teachers I had at the first practicum, the maths and IPT [Information Processing and Technology] teachers, so I'm counting them as part of my network. And a couple of the other teachers, and a couple from learning support. And I am hoping that as I meet people at either professional development programs or practicums, that I can keep building.

Cate also had been working to develop her professional networks from early in the transition and by second semester was working to consolidate the network: "I think rather than grow the network, I think I have probably strengthened the network". Some of the participants in this study, for example, Max and Sally had, earlier in their transition, talked of their feelings about losing professional networks and relationships with their former peers following their career change decision and the commencement of their transition. One strategy to overcome these feelings of loss was utilised by a number of participants in this study, by developing networks from the friendships formed on campus early in the initial teacher education program. Being an on-campus student provided the opportunities for the development of these networks (James & Beattie, 1996). The importance of developing professional networks was identified by Reid et al. (2005), whose research showed that networking is an important part of the postgraduate coursework experience.

A finding of this study is the importance of professional experience placements in the development of these networks. However, participants reported that there was little guidance or assistance in developing these networks during the placements. Some participants told stories of relevant professional development programs which were provided for current teachers, but professional experience students were not included in these programs. Others told stories of overcrowded staffrooms which did not facilitate communication between staff, or of being in staffrooms with teachers from different faculties, for example, maths teachers being in the humanities staffroom. This situation contrasts with the findings of Williams (2010), where the mature age career changer in her research was provided with professional development opportunities during her placement, which would have assisted with networking.

This section of the chapter has outlined the importance of professional networks for mature age, career change students. For many study participants, these networks had developed from early friendships in the academic program and were strengthened during the professional experience placements. However, the participants considered that there could have been more assistance in developing these networks during their professional experience placements. The following section discusses the participants' reflection on their career change into teaching.

Reflections on Career Change into Teaching

In Chapter 5, the participants told stories of their personal experiences and feelings following their decision to make a career change into teaching. This section of the chapter moves forward through time to investigate the participants' reflections on their career change decision as they continued through their transition in semester one of the program.

Semester one.

At this point in time, the beginning of semester one, Nadia was feeling positive about her career change experiences, considering that they would offer her new opportunities, with a career path and secure employment future:

> *I am actually feeling quite positive in general about the career change. I feel like, it just, again, drawing on the question about the opportunities, I feel like this is something that does have a very clear career path and that in itself kind of fills me with confidence. You always hear about the job market being so competitive and quite difficult, but it leaves a clear direction and I think that that feels really safe and secure whereas the situation I was in before, it was much less secure.*

Similarly, Peter considered his career change experience involved opening up a range of new opportunities, offering a completely different life from the one he had in his former career in real estate:

> *It's a whole new career. The way I see it, this is almost from scratch and it's a completely different field from the finance and real estate side, so this is almost like a new life, you know, the education side is very different, you know. Yeah, the social aspects are much greater, it's just a whole different . . . you will meet different people, you will meet different kinds of minds, things like that. So, as far as opportunity, yeah, it's amazing, a whole new life. It's a whole new world, yeah, it's a whole new world.*

Sarah considered that her career change experiences had provided her with the opportunity to motivate her son, as they were both required to complete academic work:

I have found with my son who finds motivation rather difficult and he is only in grade two that I've said to him a bit lately, right, I'm sitting down to do my homework. You do your homework, come in and sit down and do it in the room with me but I will just check on yours at the end of each section of mine and help with anything you are stuck on. And it is helping motivate him a little bit more. Anything that motivates them more is positive [laughs].

Similarly, Sally found that the experiences of making the career change gave her the opportunity to develop her understanding of her children's lives:

I think it will help me understand what the kids are dealing with on a daily basis in terms of them. Especially my daughter in high school. You don't really understand what they're doing on a day to day basis. Yes. Just how much work they have to do. It's a lot. So I think, hopefully, I think she and I could end up with a better relationship which is something that is really important to me because she is a teenager and teenagers are horrible at the best of times. And I think it will help me.

However, for some participants, the career change experience also presented challenges such as losses from the previous career and lifestyle. Eva reflects on the impact of the career change on some aspects of her life:

It already did [incur losses]. Just starting from this mental kind of thing that I used to be someone, used to manage people, my signature was worth something on a piece of paper. I don't get these kinds of things anymore, you know [laughs]. And the money. Oh, my gosh. The things that I just had to refuse because I just cannot afford them any more.

For Sally, the losses were not only present and future financial losses, but also the loss of previous relationships and structures associated with her former career:

Financially, at some point, there is a loss. Not just now, but in the future. The salaries won't be comparable. You are losing contact with people who might have been in your life before because it's a different world now, different schedules, different everything.

Semester two.

Further along in the transition, in conversations that occurred during the second semester of the program, there were fewer reflections on the career change decision. It may be that the participants were no longer looking back and were now more focused

on the future. However, some participants did reflect on their feelings about their career change and one participant (Bec) outlined a pressure she was experiencing:

> *I'm like, well, what if I do graduate in the next year and then get a job, then I'm thirty six how would I factor in getting a job to be qualified to be a teacher and still have a family? Because then I am finished and a graduate, if I go straight to have a family would I even get a job as a teacher without going straight into it? I don't even know the answer to those things.*

Other participants, like Cate, talked of the rewards of the career change, with a positive effect of the career change on her levels of happiness:

> *[I am] so much more confident. And happy. And I wasn't happy because I had been unhappy at work and when you don't have something you care about. . . I think that is the other thing I have grown to realise, that this is more than just a job, this is what I want to spend the rest of my life doing. And I've never had anything like that in my life before, that I cared so much about doing well.*

Mal also described his career change experience as being rewarding, providing the opportunity to feel more like himself and more challenged:

> *I was searching, wanting a change of career, that was the whole point of it, to feel I could make more of a contribution in society to a point [laughs]. It wasn't about the money as we were talking about and so I do think I feel more like myself, more challenged.*

There is little literature available about the reflections of career changers on their career change experiences while they are undertaking their studies for their transition into the new career. This study provides insight into this aspect of the transition experience.

This section has explored the opportunities and rewards of a career change into teaching, such as opportunities for a new career and lifestyle, positive influences on, and understanding of, young people; increased levels of happiness and feeling challenged in a positive way. However, the experience can also bring challenges and pressures such as the loss of professional status, financial losses, and loss the previous relationships and professional structures. In the following section, the study participants look ahead at their future employment prospects.

Future Teaching Employment

As discussed in Chapter 5, a number of study participants had made the decision to make a career change into teaching because of their perception that it would offer future employment stability. This section outlines the refrains on the participants' perception

of future employment, at the end of semester two, as they were ready to take up employment. Refrains of this issue were not apparent in semester one (with the exception of Neve, who in first semester had talked of being angry about the employment situation after a visit to the university from the Education Department). The participants' refrains in semester two were mostly around their personal circumstances and feelings about future employment prospects in the teaching profession.

There was uncertainty for Nadia concerning her future teaching career, with the possibility of moving to the United Kingdom the following year:

> *My partner is British and we are getting married next year in England. His parents are a lot older than my parents so they are at any age where they are going to start requiring more support. So we have been talking about spending a bit of time with them and I think he really feels the pull to be there to help out. But it is difficult being so far away and hearing about the things that are happening and not being able to be there. So we are talking about doing that. My qualification will be recognised in the United Kingdom, so that is a potential option, that we take it to the UK. And I will work in a classroom there.*

For Rick, the issue of having to care for his two daughters was a major factor in his career change decision. His refrains on this topic continued as the focus for his future teaching employment was on the flexibility he needed for his family commitments:

> *The whole reason for doing it is to have a life that is aligned with my kids' lives in some respect. I am just pinning my hopes on getting a classroom teaching job that is close to home and being able to do drop offs and pickups. So it's going to be tricky because I've got to be at school at the same time they do. So you know, I've starting applying for jobs with private schools in my local area and I've got to work one way or another so I am open to other avenues.*

Sarah also admitted she was constrained in her future teaching prospects because of her family responsibilities. However, she was unhappy at this stage (the end of her academic program) because she believed that maths teachers (her teaching area) were in demand and that she would have no trouble finding suitable employment in the area in which she lived:

> *And given my family and my children's needs, I can't really take something that is going to 1], where we've got to move; or 2], it's going to take me an hour to get to work and back from work every day. Because my kids are in before and after school care and they are not necessarily coping really well with that sort of stress. My*

daughter is not doing too badly but my son is really not handling it so well. So, I've got to put them first. If I was more mobile, I know I would get job offers, but we can't move out the back of whoop whoop. They say maths are in demand and apparently teachers are in demand in this area, so a maths teacher in this area should have a really good chance. But as yet, this maths teacher in this area hasn't got a job.

This uncertainty around employment in the maths subject area was also relevant for Lynda, who felt less motivated, having found out that the future employment situation may not be as she had expected: "And also the fact that we have a negative view . . . there aren't many jobs around, really. We do all this and we might not get a job. So, there is less motivation going on".

This section of the chapter has outlined the perceptions of future employment of this cohort at the end of semester two as they were ready to take up employment. There was disappointment for some participants concerning suitable employment in their field of study, with the perception that their prior understanding of the employment situation may not have been accurate. Many were constrained in their search for appropriate employment by factors such as moving overseas with a partner, or having to take the needs of children and family into consideration. None of the participants talked of developing a plan for the new career in contrast to the career changers in Li's (2009) study who stated that the development of a plan was important. The following section summarises the findings concerning 'university studies' and 'being a teacher' during the moving through stage of the participants' transition.

Discussion

As the participants continued their *Ongoing Journey* in preparation for their new careers, they were taking up opportunities, facing challenges and becoming agentic in their strategies to deal with their transition issues. They continued to reflect on their career change decision as they looked backward and forward during this time. The issues outlined in this chapter were related to the ebb and flow in a range of opportunities and rewards; challenges and pressures around the use of digital technology, the academic program, and their professional experience placements. In addition, the participants continued to look back and forward in a dynamic, iterative process as they reflected on their career change decision at this point in time.

Most of the participants had not been in the academic environment for some time, so they were unfamiliar with the digital technology used in the academic context and had challenges related to this throughout their first semester. Many were unfamiliar with the

requirements for essay writing and referencing, and the correct submission of assignments in the academic program. These issues continued to challenge some participants throughout the second semester of their studies.

The two professional experience placements provided opportunities, rewards, challenges and pressures for many of the study participants. Opportunities included being able to bring their personal, professional and parenting skills into the teaching workplace. Rewards included a higher level of respect from both teaching colleagues and students because of their mature age status and previous experience. The challenges and pressures included that their prior expectations of the professional experience placements were not always met. They were surprised by some aspects of the educational environment and culture. A perception that the career changers' levels of knowledge were being compromised and the stress of adapting technical language to the school students' understanding were relevant for some participants. Further challenges and pressures included dealing with educational bureaucracy after a career in private enterprise, and being seen as being more experienced in the area of teaching due to the career changers' mature age status. The participants had the opportunity to develop professional networks, with university peers and professional experience placements offering the opportunity to develop these networks. However, a challenge was the assistance required by these career changers to develop these networks.

This chapter includes a discussion of the reflections of the participants on the career change decision as they transitioned through the moving through stage of their transition. Reflections by the participants on their future employment showed that at this time in their transition, there were challenges yet to be faced. These challenges included uncertainty around employment, whether related to personal circumstances, or to employment contexts in the teaching profession.

Two aspects of transition theory, as outlined by Anderson et al. (2012) are relevant to the findings in this chapter: self and strategies. As previously outlined, aspects of self include salience and balance, resilience, self-efficacy and meaning making as critical aspects of career transitions. In addition, Anderson et al. (2012) stated that a range of strategies can be used by individuals to cope with the demands of a transition. As outlined in this chapter, participants faced several challenges. In dealing with these issues, the participants in this study demonstrated resilience, or the characteristics of being positive, focused, flexible, organised, and proactive. For example, participants like Callum, Cate and Bec remained positive, showing a sense of humour in their stories of their difficulties using digital technology in the early stages of their transition. Many

of the participants demonstrated the qualities of being organised and flexible in their stories of their experiences in their professional experience placements, for example in bringing their professional competencies into the classroom. Most of the participants were proactive in developing the professional networks they would need in their teaching career, reaching out to their university peers and teaching colleagues during their professional placements, for future professional networks. The majority of the participants remained positive in their reflections on their career change experience and focused on their future in the profession.

Strategies that participants used to cope with their transition issues included attending professional development programs and keeping in contact with colleagues they met during their professional experience placements in order to further develop their professional networks. Another strategy used by some participants was the application of their parenting skills during their professional experience placements. The strategy for participants with family responsibilities when considering future employment was to apply for positions which were close to the family home or which could provide flexibility for family commitments.

The lenses of the three commonplaces of temporality, sociality and place were used to understand these stories of transition. The commonplace of temporality reveals that participants' challenges and pressures changed over time. Stories concerning digital technology challenges were alive in early transition, but as their transition progressed into second semester, this issue was no longer a point of discussion in the research conversations. In contrast, the issue of coping with the requirements of the academic program, such as writing essays and referencing, became a more important issue as first and second semester progressed. The lens of temporality also shows the progression of the participants' experience of transition, as they moved from their ideas early in the transition about their imagined future in the teaching profession, to actual experience in the classroom during their professional experience placements. The placements both reinforced and challenged their thinking around being a teacher. The lens of temporality allows us to look forward, too, and see the participants' thoughts on their career change into teaching as they look ahead, imagining new opportunities and challenges, a new life and a secure career.

The lens of sociality shows the personal and social conditions of the transition experience of the participants. These conditions included the development of professional networks, their reflections on their future teaching career and experiences in their professional experience placements in the secondary classroom. The lens of

place shows how the experience of being a mature age career changer, who is returning to study after a break, plays out on the university campus on which they are studying and then in the contemporary secondary classroom, where their previous experiences may have been some decades prior to their current experience.

This chapter has given insight in relation to the participants' experiences with their university studies and being a teacher, for research sub question two: What opportunities and rewards, pressures and challenges do mature age career changers experience during their transition and how do they meet them? Chapter 8 tells the stories of the participants as they arrived at or entered the teaching profession (or chose not to enter or continue in the teaching profession). The stories cover their experiences of their first six months in the new profession as they entered and started to settle in to their new career.

Chapter 8
Moving In: "It's a pretty good gig."

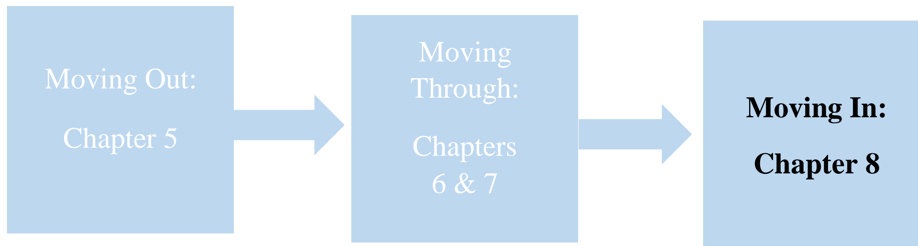

Figure 8.1. Moving in stage of transition theory

The previous chapter outlined issues faced by mature age, career change postgraduate coursework students in their experiences with university studies and being in the teaching profession as part of the moving in stage. This chapter focuses on the refrains within and resonances across the stories gathered during the two final research conversations with each of the participants, at which time the majority were in the teaching workplace. As the stories across the two conversations (term one and term two of the school year) revealed similar refrains within and resonances across the stories, this chapter reports on the two conversations together, rather than separately. The primary focus of the participants' stories at this stage of the transition was related to being a teacher, including the ways that being in the teaching profession impacted their personal lives. The diagram above, Figure 8.1., shows the relationship between this chapter and the previous chapters, in relation to the three stages of transition theory.

The Transition Ends: Moving In

The diagram below, figure 8.2., illustrates the structure of this chapter.

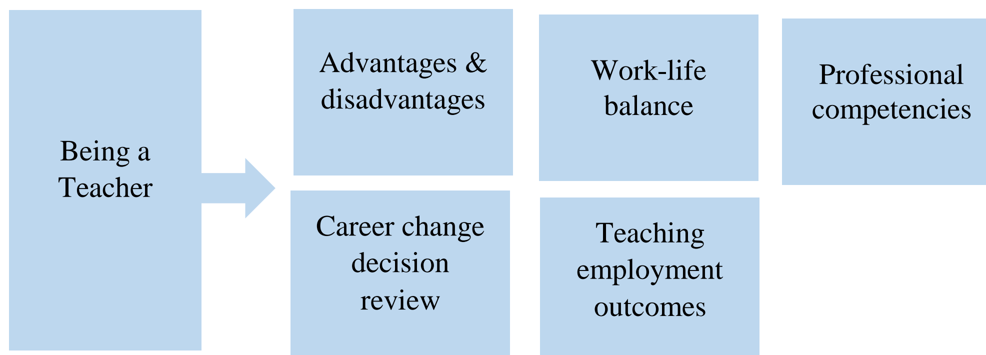

Figure 8.2. Structure of chapter: Refrains and resonances in the moving in stage of transition

As represented in this diagram, this chapter outlines the stories of the study participants in relation to being a teacher. As previously stated, the structure of the evidence chapters arose from the refrains within and resonances across the participants' stories. At this phase of the evidence collection, conversations were conducted by email, as the

participants were in the workplace. Therefore, the participants' refrains are shown as written in the email conversations. These emails from the participants continued in the conversational tone established in earlier research conversations. In some instances, square brackets have been used by the researcher to change details of institutions or places for purposes of confidentiality, to ensure clarity of expression or to clarify abbreviations used by the participants.

Being a Teacher

Every beginning teacher is likely to experience a range of challenges as they commence their career in the secondary classroom (Australian Education Union, 2008). However, mature age, career change beginning teachers may have additional or particular challenges. Therefore, while the participants in this study faced many of the challenges experienced by all beginning teachers, for example, managing students with behavioural problems, or dealing with large class sizes, this study focused on the experiences peculiar to being a mature age career change beginning teacher.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Being a Mature Age Career Change Beginning Teacher

Advantages.

The participants in this study found that there were a number of advantages to being a mature age, career change beginning teacher. These advantages included being able to bring personal and professional skills into the classroom, being appreciated as more experienced, applying real world skills to the classroom and having parenting experience and status. For example, Sally considered her personal life experiences, particularly concerning raising children, had given her the skills to deal with students and parents, as well as an increased sense of confidence:

> *I think having children is a big bonus before going into teaching, especially having a teenager. It has made it easier for me to relate to the students and given me a more realistic view of their capabilities and actions. Also, it has helped in terms of parent teacher discussions. They seem to like the fact that you are also a parent and know what they are going through from that point of view. My career experience has made me confident in terms of dealing with people of all areas of life and also confident in my skills and knowledge.*

The development of communication skills through personal life experiences were advantageous for Peter, who considered that he had better communication skills with teachers and students than if he was a young graduate:

Having a previous life outside the classroom is definitely beneficial because you can link a lot of things, and you just know a lot more about how the world works. So I think it makes you easier to talk to or you communicate just better with people, better with teachers, better with students and things like that.

Mal also found his personal life experiences were an advantage as he was being treated as a more experienced teacher: "Students, staff and parents all treat me like I have been teaching for a number of years". Elise's experience showed the benefits of previous life experience:

My life experiences in dealing with less-than-favourable behaviour did provide me with some strategies for dealing with student behaviour. On the flip-side, I think this also resulted in me being more tolerant than others might be - with both positive and negative results. I am more inclined to call-out/intervene with abusive behaviour directed towards others than at me. My ability to read people and be willing to listen to their experiences rather than shut them down allowed me to form relationships and develop targeted strategies and differentiation for my students.

The personal and professional backgrounds of a number of participants, like Neve, provided advantages due to the development of a wide range of skills relevant to the teaching profession:

I have 25 years of working and have experienced the wide range of personalities - good and bad - that present in workplaces and how to get the best out of working relationships. I have knowledge about the political nature of human nature and the experience and wisdom on how to avoid negative politics and how to get the most out of positive politics. I think overall I'm a lot calmer, I take things a lot less personally, I'm a lot more skilled at self-care and self-management, and I have a far more universal/global perspective of teaching/being a teacher as a mature age career changer. I'm also not dependent on others' approval to validate my self-worth. Given all that, I have great ability to hit the ground running and keep up with the pack.

In addition to the life skills which contributed to Nadia's teaching practices, her professional skills gave her the advantage of having an additional breadth of knowledge:

I feel like my life experiences are really valuable to my teaching practice, that I am more mature and confident than I would have been coming straight from school. Knowing that there is a certain amount of age and experience separating you from the students makes it much easier to be in a position of authority. I feel like my previous experiences before commencing the [postgraduate coursework program] have given me a breadth of knowledge that I otherwise wouldn't have.

The development of her personal skills, such as being able to remain calm in demanding situations, and provide interesting stories in the classroom was an advantage for Cate:

Apparently I am a very calm person outwardly so I think that has also come from working in a high throughput lab. I have found students are interested in learning what else I did and how I felt about my previous work life, which helps build a rapport with senior students, especially as they move towards completing their education.

Similarly, Lynda's professional background gave her the advantage of being able to bring real world skills to the classroom:

My experience, my prior experience, helped me, I think. I said to them, this is my experience, when I was working elsewhere before, and also I've looked at a lot of job advertisements, that one of the skills that they want is that you can solve complex problems. You are thorough, you are detailed, you have absolute command of English, both oral and written. But you know, I just try to show the relevance of what I am doing with them.

Following a bullying incident by a senior teacher towards a young graduate, Mike speculated that it could be the case that he had the advantage of being treated differently from the young graduate due to his life experience and being a mature age beginning teacher:

I think I am being treated differently due to being of mature age. And we've talked about that as well, with the other guys. I think because I am older. I think too, her [the 'bullying' teacher] son goes to my daughter's school in the same class and so I think there is a bit of kinmanship, whatever you want to call it, in her head at least.

While the participants in this study outlined a number of advantages of being a mature age, career change beginning teacher, there were also refrains within and resonances across the participants' stories of the disadvantages.

Disadvantages.

Disadvantages or challenges experienced by participants included being seen as being more experienced in teaching than was the case (resulting in less support), becoming a novice after having had a professional career, dealing with bureaucracy and experiencing a lack of respect because of age. While having a professional background had given participants some advantages in the teaching profession, as outlined above, it also resulted in some participants being seen as more experienced in teaching than was the case. In this study, this resulted in the perception by other school staff that less support was required by the beginning teacher. Examples include Callum's experience: "I think being mature age has led to a low level of support compared to some of the younger graduates". Similarly, Cate was given less support because she was a mature age beginning teacher:

There has been an assumption made about my knowledge and thus how much support I require. While in many respects, I have a maturity and professionalism as a result of my mature age, there is [sic] still occasions when I need support.

Having a professional background also caused challenges for Sally, who had been competent and confident in her former career, prior to becoming a novice teacher:

A disadvantage would be coming from a career where I was very confident in my skills, to a new one, where some things were very different, it is hard for me to accept the fact that I am still learning and need to be a bit kinder to myself. I work a lot to be super prepared and confident.

Coming from a background of private enterprise, Peter was not comfortable with the educational environment: "It is very bureaucratic. I still don't like it. I mean I don't think I will ever like the public system. Particularly the educational public system. But besides that, it's a good job, but it's incredibly bureaucratic". The strategy he used to cope with this challenge was to treat it as a game:

I play the game, you know. I do what I have to do. Especially as I've just come in, I'm sort of just observing a lot. A lot of teachers do speak up against it but I sort of keep to myself in that regard.

As outlined earlier, one of the advantages of being a mature age beginning teacher was receiving respect from others. However, one of the participants experienced a lack of respect from students because of her age:

It's just comments, not being directly rude but I have come up against a lot of students that will sort of make comments to one another within my earshot about

things like 'granny'. So they are not being directly rude, but you know they are meaning to be insulting.

As discussed, there were a number of advantages and disadvantages of being a mature age, career change beginning teacher. An advantage for the participants in this study was being able to bring personal and professional skills into the classroom. Crow et al. (1990) also found that this cohort brings skills developed from their previous profession, such as managing, organising, working with adults and managing stress.

One disadvantage experienced by study participants such as Callum and Cate was being seen as being more experienced in the teaching profession, due to having a professional background. This meant that they received less support than younger graduates. Similarly, Teasdale-Smith (2007) found that school leaders often assumed mature age, career change beginning teachers had the skills necessary to make a smooth transition into the classroom. However this may not be the case. Powers (2002) reported that their novice status may be overlooked and therefore undersupported. As Callum and Cate's experience attests, having previous career experience was not enough for career changers as they entered a new and different profession (Mayotte, 2003). Sally's experience echoed the findings of Wilkins (2013) who concluded that the novice role was difficult for career changers and could cause feelings of uneasiness and incompetence in the new profession. Sally had been competent and confident in her former profession, and was now in a situation where she was still learning the skills required for her new profession. Peter, after having worked in private enterprise in his former profession, found dealing with bureaucracy a challenge. His coping strategy was to 'play the game'. As Watters and Diezmann (2012) noted, mature age career changers, having experienced the micro politics of organisations, have often developed the skills to cope with organisational bureaucracy.

Most of the participants in this study spoke with positive regard of their students, with only a small number of participants in this study reporting that they had difficulties relating to students. This finding contrasts with that of Teasdale-Smith (2007) who questioned whether career change beginning teachers could bridge a communication gap with the younger generation after having worked in professions with key values such as compliance, obedience and service.

This section has outlined the advantages or opportunities and rewards and also the disadvantages or challenges and pressures, of being a mature age career change teacher. Advantages include being able to bring personal and professional skills into the new profession and increased respect from colleagues. The disadvantages include receiving

a lower level of support, dealing with bureaucracy, being in a novice role after having had a professional career and decreased respect from students because of age. The following section outlines refrains within and resonances across the stories relating to work-life balance for individuals in the teaching profession.

Work-life Balance in the Teaching Profession

During this study, as the participants were undergoing their career change transition, many told stories of wanting a career which provided work-life balance. These refrains within the stories had continued throughout their academic program at university. Some participants had stated that they believed they would not have a work-life balance in the early days of their teaching career, however, they expected that eventually they would have this balance, particularly because they were able to take school holidays. As the participants were still in the early stages of their teaching career in terms one and two, their expectations about having difficulties with their work-life balance were realised and they were challenged by this issue. Sally made the point that all beginning teachers may struggle with a heavy workload during the early days of their teaching career, however the extra responsibilities associated with being a mature age beginning teacher increased the workload:

> *One issue is the volume of work required for a first year teacher. While we are all no doubt in the same situation, young first year teachers are not likely to have the same level of family and other responsibilities and that makes it hard juggling these.*

An unexpected challenge arose for Sarah in her early teaching career in that she was required to teach outside of her teaching areas of maths and computing. This affected her work-life balance as she needed to work additional hours every day to keep up with the knowledge required for her teaching: "Teaching outside my teaching area, I probably put in at least two hours a day, every day, outside of the time I am at school. Because I've got to learn stuff". The strategy she utilised to cope was to have higher expectations of her children with their domestic tasks:

> *And the kids have had to step up more at home, we've really had to get on their back about helping out with things like put your washing away, clean your room, you got these things out, you put them away, vacuum after yourself. Which they should be doing at their ages, anyway, but it's become more important.*

Being the primary caregiver for his two daughters and having to deal with school and child care arrangements continued to present work-life challenges for Rick:

I have my girls in after care and day care four arvos a week. My beloved has Mondays off most weeks. She is on call or in birth suite the rest of the time. It is always a challenge doing drop off, my youngest to day care and try to get to school before form. My eldest joins a walking bus at 8:15. The logistics is working but it is hard work.

The strategy Rick used to cope with his work and home responsibilities was to do as much lesson preparation at home as he was able: "I am having to do a lot of prep at home. I am not very good at it and it takes a long time. I will get better". Mike had challenges with his work-life balance in relation to having sufficient time for his daughter, as well as being organised and prepared for the school week:

My daughter said 'Dad you are always getting stuff ready for school' so it's the time thing. And Saturdays are probably the days where I just don't do anything school wise but even then I am aware that if I don't do anything on Saturday, then I am still getting a bit behind and doing preparation on the Sunday, and it's just fiddly things. It would be OK if I didn't have to worry about diversity. So, I would spend hours looking for worksheets for kids that aren't keeping up, and it's organisation.

The literature on work-life balance was previously discussed in Chapter 5 *Personal Life: Desire for work-life balance;* Chapter 6 *Personal Life: Work-life balance* and Chapter 7 *Being a Teacher: Professional experience placements 1 and 2.* As stated in these earlier chapters, the study participants had not expected to achieve work-life balance in the early stages of their new career and their expectations were realised as they faced this challenge.

This section of the chapter has outlined the challenges of mature age, career change beginning teachers faced in trying to establish a work-life balance in their new career. The findings show that the study participants had difficulty with their work-life balance as they had responsibilities and commitments in addition to the requirements of all beginning teachers. The following section outlines issues related to bringing professional competencies into the classroom.

Professional Competencies in the Classroom

Most of the study participants talked of being able to utilise their professional competencies in the classroom. Cate was able to use her professional background as a scientist to assist with student engagement: "I am able to incorporate my knowledge of a science lab into sharing with my students so that the content is more engaging". Having a background in accounting helped Sally to apply theoretical knowledge to real

life situations for her teaching: “I have also found that my prior career and life experiences have held me in good stead in terms of being able to apply the theoretical knowledge we are learning, to real situations”. Elise was able to utilise her professional experience for her teaching areas of design and art:

> *I used my study management experience to inform unit planning of my own programs. I also used them with teaching designing, drafting/sketching and sustainability to year ten ITD [Industrial Technology and Design], design principles to year eight ICT [Information and Communication Technology] and design/art principles to year nine art. I also introduced study management basics to [the]senior furnishing [subject] to assist them in organising their own work.*

While a number of the study participants talked about teaching colleagues being interested in their prior professional background, only two of the participants told stories of feeling that their prior professional background was valued by others in the education profession. Mal received confirmation that his previous professional skills were valued, when he was able to negotiate a higher salary based on his professional experience:

> *I have just had confirmation that [my employers] will recognise my experience from my previous career. They felt my experience in the construction industry and software relating to graphics and design technology was worth increasing my pay to that of a teacher with five years' experience.*

Similarly, recognition of her professional experience meant that Elise felt highly valued in her search for employment in the teaching profession:

> *It seems my working background is a huge plus and highly valued by employers. The [Education Department] Human Resource representative, my Principal and Heads of Departments recognised my experience and connections as a boon for their region where employment opportunities can be slim for school leavers. In subsequent work searches, I have gotten the impression that both public and private schools are keen for me [and others like me] to work at their schools due to my experience and industry knowledge.*

As can be seen from the above refrains, most of the study participants were able to transfer their professional competencies into the classroom without difficulty. This finding contrasts with that of Tigchelaar (2008) and Haggard et al. (2006) who found that, while prior professional competencies were valuable in the classroom, the

transference of these competencies into the classroom environment proved to be a challenge for many mature age career changers into teaching.

While the study participants brought valuable professional and personal skills into the classroom, the majority did not receive official recognition of their prior competencies. In addition to content knowledge and experience, career changers often brought management and organisational skills to their new context. Mature age career changers into teaching often had to deal with a lack of recognition by others in the teaching environment of their valuable management and organisational skills, developed in their former careers (Williams, 2010). In order for individuals to adjust satisfactorily to their new careers, employers in the new profession needed to acknowledge the previous professional identity and achievement levels of these individuals (Wise & Millard, 2005).

This section has outlined how professional competencies may be taken up in their new environment. Many of the participants experienced no difficulty in using their prior competencies in their new profession. However, only two participants had these competencies formally recognised (one with pay increments and one verbally) by educational authorities. The following section explores the reflections of the participants on their career change, at this moving in stage of their transition.

Review of Decision to Make a Career Change

While there were some early challenges as mature age career change beginning teachers, all 14 of the participants who remained until the end of the study expressed positive views of their decision to make a career change into teaching six months after completing their studies. At this point in time, Sally felt that she had made the right decision concerning making a career change into teaching and that it was a good fit for her as she loved working with young people:

I feel that so far, I have made the right decision about the career move. It is certainly a lot of work during the term, but I do love working with the kids and that all of us are learning new things. I also love school holidays and my kids are enjoying me being home with them too! I think this was a good move for me so far.

The decision to make a career change into teaching had also been good for Peter as he considered he was learning a lot, with interesting days and good relationships with his colleagues:

I am glad I did it. Yeah, it's good, I mean I am learning a lot. I guess the pay is never going to be good. But you can sort of look past that. It's a pretty good gig,

especially I think as time goes on, it will get easier because with the content you have to sort of really teach yourself everything, which is good. I may have some long nights, but it's fun, you are on your feet, never a boring day. The people I work with are great. You get some holidays every once in a while, which is good. I am very glad I did it.

Similarly, Neve considered she 'made the right decision' to make a career change into teaching, enjoying the challenges and working with others:

I definitely made the right decision. I have the potential to be an excellent teacher who has very positive and memorable relationships with students and who makes a valued contribution to the teaching/school community. I love that teaching is incredibly challenging. So much so that the challenge never ends. I have been bored witless in other careers. Teaching suits just about every aspect of my nature, my personality, my needs, what I like doing and how people see me. I love the activity. I am someone who needs variety and I get that in bucket loads. I love working with people, young and old and in between. Teaching is awesome!!

After a career in university lecturing, Lynda was happy with the decision she had made to make a career change into teaching in the secondary classroom. She found the profession easier than her former profession and she may in future be able to combine her teaching duties with her own university research, which was still of interest to her:

I think I am happy with my career change. The job expectations, the job that you are asked to do as a teacher, it's doable. So I think, on balance, I am pleased that I have made the decision to switch to school teaching and if I continue at my current school working part time, I still have Tuesday and Thursday to do whatever I want. So if I want to do university research, I can still do it, I can work with my husband if I want to, so it gives me some flexibility in a way, if I work part time. If I end up working full time, that's out of the window.

Mal had no regrets around having made the career change into teaching as he was enjoying the challenge and had additional confidence because he was a mature age teacher:

I don't have any regrets about the career change. I needed to do something which was more of a challenge. It was a big investment. With teaching, you've got to push yourself, but you can burn yourself out as well. It's all gone quite well. When you are a mature beginning teacher, you are seen as being a teacher already, there are

no questions about your authority or anything. You have the confidence to get through it. So, it's a positive thing.

Some study participants initially faced challenges which tested their resolve in their new careers. However, they persisted, and at the end of term two of teaching, stated that they had no regrets about their career change decision. Cate admitted that there had been difficult times early in her teaching career, but now she was loving it and had no regrets:

There were times when I cried, when I wondered whether I had the strength to get out of bed and face another day. The roller coaster ride has been intense. But I don't for one second regret becoming a teacher. I know that I am dealing with people, and that carries with it a tendency to be unpredictable and stressful, but it also has moments of pure joy and satisfaction. Loving what you do and liking it day to day are different things. I love what I do, but some days I don't like what I do. Luckily, most days I do like what I do. I was blessed to be able to have the opportunity to change careers as I did, supported as I was. Now I will build a new career and a new future, happy in the work that I do and surrounded by good people wanting to achieve the same thing.

Callum (who was employed at a rural school) also faced challenges early in his teaching career. He was uncertain whether he had made the right decision with his career change, however, he decided to continue in his new career:

I question my decision almost every day, especially when I have trouble controlling the class. I always knew the first year would test me, and so far it's been harder than I could have ever imagined. Given the potential financial cost of walking away, I am sticking at it for now. Whatever the outcome, I have no regrets with the career change. It has pushed me out of my comfort zone and taught me new skills that I will keep forever.

Working in a rural school had also caused considerable challenges and uncertainty for Elise, who eventually made the decision to move back to the city. She still considered that she had made the right decision in her career change:

Despite the initial stress and emotional toll, I believe I have made the right decision to change into teaching. In retrospect, the location I moved to was not right for me. I underestimated the impact the distance and isolation would have on me. I am definitely happier now that I am back in [the city] and am able to focus on teaching well and developing engaging programs for a new group of students. Reconnecting with my friends and communities as well as the

opportunity to get involved with the various creative projects at my new school has assured me that I made the right choice.

Mike had decided at the end of term two to leave his teaching career and return to his former profession due to a range of issues, including witnessing the bullying of a younger graduate, although the primary reason was a lack of work-life balance:

There is the time factor and speaking with teachers that were there, they had been teaching for twenty years and they still felt under pressure and quite busy and overloaded. So I've been looking at it going five or ten years down the track do I want that to be my life?

However, he had no regrets about his career change decision as both he and his partner felt they had a much better insight into the education system because of his teacher education and his experiences in the teaching profession. While the study participants faced a range of challenges during their first two terms as mature age career change beginning teachers, all were continuing in their career after six months in the teaching profession, with the exception of Mike who had accepted alternative employment, and Eva who did not commence teaching in the secondary classroom as she had chosen to work in educational administration. None of the study participants, on reflecting on their career change decision six months into their new career, had regrets about their decision, and most of the participants were happy in their new career. Career changers often felt they had undergone a positive personal transformation (Gomes & Teixeira, 2000) and had a positive attitude to the change when they were in their new profession, with more happiness, increased confidence and maturity and improved personal relationships (Wise & Millard, 2005). One thread that can be seen throughout the participants' refrains is the importance of learning to these career changers. For example, Peter talked of how he enjoys learning, while Sally talked of how she needed to be kinder to herself, as she was still learning. In addition, participants talked of the importance of understanding the learning processes and needs of their students. These career changers consider learning to be a valuable experience; and they embody the lifelong learner.

This section of the chapter has outlined the stories of the participants' reflections on having made the career change, six months into their new professions. While they had faced challenges, most of the participants were happy in their new career, and had a positive attitude about their career change decision and learning opportunities. The following section outlines the employment

outcomes of the study participants, six months after completing their academic program at the university.

Employment Outcomes

In Chapter 4 of this thesis, the study participants were introduced, with a brief outline of their backgrounds and prior employment. In Chapter 5 there is a discussion of the reasons they had decided to make a career change into teaching with the majority of participants stating that it was important for them to have employment stability and security in their new career. This section of the chapter returns to these aspects of the stories of the 14 participants who remained in the study, at the end of term two, six months after having completed their initial teacher education program. (The school academic year in Australia comprises four terms per calendar year, with each term being approximately ten weeks.) The outcomes of the participants' decisions to make a career change into teaching are outlined.

Bec was offered contract employment at the government school at which she did her professional experience placement. She loved teaching. Life took a different turn when she became pregnant, so she took maternity leave from her teaching position and was looking forward to spending time with her baby son. She planned to return to the school to teach at the end of her leave.

Callum was employed on a permanent basis with a rural government school, but was unsure whether he wanted to continue his teaching career as he was struggling to remain motivated because of disengaged students. His plan was to complete the three years required by the Education Department contract for teachers in rural schools, then seek teaching employment in a private school closer to his home on the coast.

Cate was teaching at a Catholic college on a one year contract, with the option of becoming permanent after one year. While being a novice teacher caused early difficulties, she was loving her new teaching career and was looking forward to a challenging future in the teaching profession.

Elise initially had a permanent position with the Education Department in a rural school. She had a very difficult first and second term due to organisation, expectations and behaviour management. She decided to take compassionate leave for her mental health, and subsequently was involved in a serious car accident. The outcome of these incidents was that she left her teaching position (with the consequence of having to repay her relocation expenses to the Education Department) and moved back to the city

where she accepted employment at a private school for one term, with an ongoing contract. She considered her new job was perfect for her.

Eva chose not to teach in the secondary classroom after completing her initial teacher education program. She gained a working visa for Australia and started a new educational administrative position at the private university at which she had previously been employed in a casual lecturing role. She was happy in her new position. Eva subsequently commenced a research Master of Education.

At the end of term two, Lynda continued with her contract employment to teach in the government school at which she had been employed since the beginning of the school year. Initially, her contract was for a 60% teaching load for term one, however, she had a full time contract in term two and had also been offered full time employment at the school for terms three and four of the school year.

Mal was employed full time on a one year contract at the Catholic school where he completed his first professional experience placement. He had been given the offer of another contract after the first year and was enjoying his new career as a mature age teacher.

Mike had obtained a casual full time teaching contract in a government school for one term only and was subsequently able to negotiate a contract for term two. He had struggled in first term as his teaching career had not met his expectations, finding that it was not the fun, exciting adventure he had hoped it would be. He also began to feel that the workload was getting on top of him, with a lack of time for family and personal life. He was concerned about not having secure employment, as his partner was not currently employed. At the end of term two, he was offered permanent employment in his former profession and he decided to leave the teaching profession.

Nadia initially had a full time teaching contract for one term in her 'dream school' (a private college for girls) however, due a teacher returning from long service leave in the second term, her teaching hours were considerably reduced. In the meantime, she and her (new) husband had decided that they would live in the United Kingdom. At the end of term two she was working as a supply teacher, although the work was sporadic, while she was waiting for her overseas move.

Neve had commenced employment at a government school on a full time basis, on a temporary contract until the end of term two. As she was on the timetable for the following two terms, she considered there was an assumption by the school that her contract would be extended until the end of the academic year. At this time, she intended to have a long career in classroom teaching.

Peter had obtained a six month employment contract at a government secondary school ranked in the top ten high schools in the state. At the end of term two, he was employed full time at the school, and his contract had been renewed for another six months. He was still enjoying his teaching career.

Rick had obtained a short term contract for term one at a government school, which was renewed for term two. He was enjoying having a career which he considered was compatible with his parenting responsibilities. He stated that if his contract was not renewed again, then he did not have a Plan B.

Sally was offered a two year teaching contract at a private secondary college. While she intended remaining in the classroom, teaching for the foreseeable future, she said that at some point in the future, she may choose to apply for educational administrative positions. For this reason, she started a Master of Education.

Sarah only had occasional casual employment in one school in the early weeks of the secondary school year. She felt considerable frustration about her situation, particularly in light of some others in her university cohort being able to obtain suitable teaching employment without too much apparent difficulty. Things began to improve during second term, when she was offered a longer term contract at another school, potentially until the end of the academic year.

As can be seen from the above employment outcomes, very few of the study participants had achieved their desired outcome of employment security, even though all of the participants had teaching subject areas which were reportedly in demand in secondary schools in Australia. Only two of the 14 participants who had remained in the study had obtained secure employment, with both of these positions being in rural schools, which have a requirement of three years' service before relocation expenses do not have to be repaid. Both of these participants struggled with their experiences teaching in a rural school, with one participant choosing to return to the city and take a short term contract rather than continue teaching in the rural school. Private schools and colleges offered slightly more security, often offering 12 month contracts, with the option to renew in the next academic year. The rest of the participants who had taken employment in government secondary schools were, in the main, offered only short term contracts, sometimes with the option to renew. A number of these participants expressed frustration about the contract renewal process, often not being given information on whether their contract would be renewed until the last few days of the previous term. Hence, they did not know whether they would be returning to the school for the next term. This situation caused them to feel insecure in their employment.

Some participants in the 2013 cohort of the study initially experienced difficulty in obtaining suitable employment in the teaching profession. This difficulty caused anger as they had been under the impression that there would be a number of suitable positions available on completion of their studies. The situation was slightly better for study participants who entered the teaching profession in 2014, as this was the first year that year seven students in the state began their studies in high school, rather than primary school, as had previously been the case. Consequently, there were additional teaching positions available in that year.

The perception of the study participants at the time of commencing their career transition had been that there was a shortage of teachers in Australia in their subject specialist areas, therefore providing some level of employment security on completion of their studies. However, according to the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (Australian Department of Education and Training, 2014) there is a lack of clarity concerning the Australian teaching workforce. The common perception was that the teaching workforce was experiencing widespread shortages, with the reality being that available workforce data was incomplete and at times conflicting.

This section of the chapter has outlined the outcomes of the career change transition for the mature age professionals in this study concerning their employment situation six months after having completed their academic program. Most of study participants had not had their expectations of employment security met in terms of permanent or long term contract employment. The following section summarises the findings on the experiences of mature age career changers in their first six months of employment in the teaching profession.

Discussion

This chapter has outlined the experiences of mature age career change beginning teachers as they moved into or arrived in their new careers as they commenced their first six months in the teaching profession. This stage of their transition could be called *Arrival.* The ebb and flow of opportunities and rewards for making the career change into the teaching profession continued, as well as in the challenges and pressures they encountered in new environments, cultures, relationships and norms. The participants continued to be agentic in relation to these transition issues, utilising strategies that would help them deal with their transition experiences.

The advantages or opportunities and rewards of being a mature age career change beginning teacher included being able to bring personal and professional skills into the

classroom, being seen as more experienced, applying real world skills to the classroom and having parenting experience and status. However, there were also some disadvantages or challenges and pressures for this cohort, including being offered less support due to being seen as more experienced in teaching than is the case, becoming a novice teacher after being a competent, confident professional, having to deal with bureaucracy after having worked in private enterprise and a lack of respect due to age.

Work-life balance continued to be an issue for many of the participants, with heavy workloads, child care and domestic duties bringing a more complex beginning teacher experience than younger graduates may experience. One advantage of being a mature age career change beginning teacher was being able to bring prior professional competencies into the classroom. However, only a minority of the participants had these prior professional competencies officially recognised. On reflecting on their career change decision after six months in the teaching profession, almost all study participants who were teaching reported feeling happy with their career change decision, despite early challenges for some, and were planning to remain in the teaching profession. The moving in or arrival in the new career was challenging for participants, although after six months, they began to start settling in to their new career. The exception was Mike, who decided to return to his former career. However, he also reported feeling no regret about having made the career change transition, even though the outcome was not as he had originally envisioned. While all of the study participants had expressed the desire for employment stability and security during the early days of their transition, the outcomes of the study participants' career change transition showed that only two had obtained secure employment six months into their new career.

Anderson et al. (2012) in their discussion of four aspects of transition, outline how issues relating to the self, support and strategies utilised during transition are relevant to how well an individual copes with the transition process. In this final stage of the participants' transition, moving in, these aspects of the transition process were apparent. The participants' refrains within the stories and resonances across the stories highlighted their resilience. For example, all of the participants remained positive about their career change decision, as discussed by Sally and Peter, as they talked of the rewards of their new career. The stories also showed the focus of each participant, for example, Neve talked of her potential to be an excellent teacher, while Mal stated that he felt the need to push himself in his new career. The refrains within the stories of Mike and Sarah demonstrated organisation as part of the transition into the new profession. Mike talked about needing to be organised in order to cope with his family

responsibilities, while Sarah outlined how she was organised in her lesson planning as she was teaching ‘out of field’. Other participants, like Sally were proactive. Sally was looking further ahead in her new profession and had commenced further postgraduate studies in order to progress her teaching career. Most of the participants were flexible in their approach to obtaining employment. While many of the participants expressed the desire for secure employment at the beginning of their transition, most of them accepted short term contracts with the hope of obtaining more secure employment in the future. Participants, for example, Cate, Callum and Elise, also demonstrated flexibility as they drew on their internal and external resources in order to respond to the challenges they faced in the early stages of their teaching employment.

Self-efficacy can be seen in the refrains within and resonances across the participants’ stories. Self-efficacy relates to how individuals make judgements of how well they may cope with prospective situations (Bandura, 1982). In this study, most of the participants had a high level of self-efficacy in relation to the professional and personal skills they brought into the teaching workplace. They were confident in their knowledge in this area. However, at the same time, for some participants their self-efficacy was low as they managed the stress of having to cope with the challenges of being in the teaching profession. In addition, the experience of changing from being a competent, confident professional to being a novice in the teaching profession, caused a drop in self-efficacy for some participants. This situation was made more complex by the fact that, as mature age beginning teachers, some participants, for example, Callum, experienced less support from their teaching colleagues and educational administration staff because of the perception by these staff that they were competent in their teaching skills.

Participants told stories of a range of strategies they utilised in order to cope with this stage of their transition. Peter talked of coping with bureaucracy in the teaching profession by treating it as a game, observing others and keeping to himself, while Mal discussed how teachers needed to use strategies such as pushing themselves, while avoiding burnout. Sarah became agentic in freeing time by using the strategy of asking for support by having her children to do more at home in order to help with her work-life balance. Rick was also agentic with time and place in relation to his child care duties, in addition to his teaching workload, by using the strategy of doing his lesson preparation at home whenever possible.

As in the previous evidence chapters, the lenses of the three commonplaces of temporality, sociality and place reveal insight from these stories of transition. The lens

of temporality enables a longitudinal view encompassing past, present and future. As the participants moved on in their transition, into the classroom, that is, into what had been an imagined future, they reflected on their refrains from the early stages of their transition, considering issues of desiring work-life balance and employment security. By looking back at their earlier refrains of these issues, they were able to see that these early issues were still relevant at this later stage of their transition. Their stories told of the challenges of balancing work with child care and domestic responsibilities, and, for some participants, their unhappiness about being unable to find employment security in the current market. In addition, the participants looked ahead at possible futures in the teaching profession, with their stories telling of optimism about their future careers.

The lens of sociality shows the personal and social conditions of the participants at this stage of their transition. Their personal conditions at this stage of the transition included the rewards of changing into the teaching profession, such as being able to bring their personal and professional competencies into the classroom and their positive responses to having made this career change decision, at this stage of the transition. This context also included challenges such as trying to maintain a work-life balance and coping with being in a novice role in their new profession. Social conditions experienced by participants included being seen as more experienced because of their mature age status which could either be perceived as positive, due to higher status, or negative, as less support was offered to some participants due to their mature age status.

The participants negotiated new relationships with their teacher colleagues. The personal and social conditions played out on the background of place with participants in school staffrooms and classrooms. The sociality of the staffroom and school had been confronting for some during their professional experience placements, and played out in the early stages of their teaching career, as the reality was quite different from their prior expectations. One example was the physical environment, described by one participant as being cramped, messy and disorganised. Another example was the bullying of an early career teacher by a more experienced teacher. Several aspects of being in a classroom were related to the participants' mature age beginning teacher status. Many of the study participants were parents with school age children, so in some ways school was familiar to them as parents. Their prior experience with classrooms as place were in the context of relating to teachers as parents of school aged children. For other participants, their experiences of the classroom had occurred as students many years before. These participants now had to revise their memories of their schooling and incorporate the realities of the current classroom. All of the participants in this

study had professional backgrounds and the culture and situated environment of contemporary classrooms and teaching staffrooms were challenges for a number of the participants.

This chapter has given insight into research sub question three: What are mature age career change professionals' experiences in the first six months of their new profession? The chapter has explored the participants' experiences up until six months after arriving in their new career. For all, the moving in or *Arrival* stage, as the new career commenced, posed challenges and all but one showed signs after six month of starting to settle in. As transition occurs in the midst of ongoing lives, the longitudinal design enabled insight into the transition stages over time and also flagged a fourth stage of transition – '*Settling In'* where participants could develop a sense of coherence in their transition story as their career change goals were achieved. This stage, where the experiences of settling in to a new career are explored, is missing from previous research. This absence will be explored further in Chapter 9 where the findings concerning the career change transition for mature age, postgraduate coursework career change professionals are presented. Chapter 9 also outlines the research design, a proposed career change transition model, participants' reflections on transition in the midst of ongoing lives, implications for policy and practice and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

(but the story continues)

This chapter provides the conclusion to the thesis. The diagram below, Figure 9.1., illustrates the structure of this chapter.

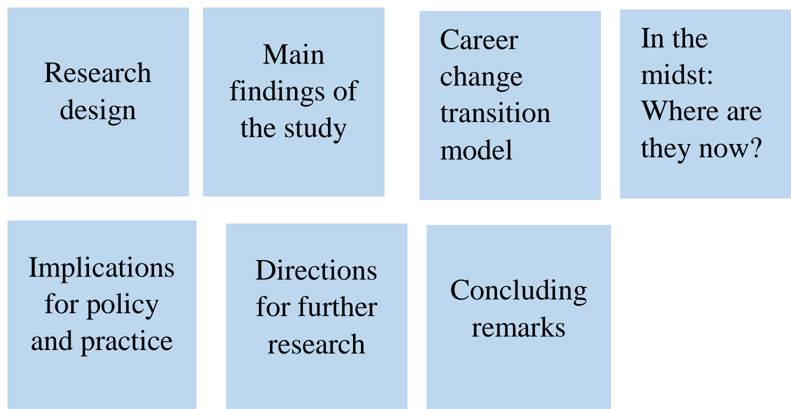

Figure 9.1. Structure of chapter: Conclusion

Transition into a new career is the focus of this thesis. This chapter outlines the results of the study and shows how the utilisation of transition theory and narrative inquiry methodology in a longitudinal research design provides a unique perspective of the transition of career changers into new professions. In the findings, the research question and the three sub questions are revisited through the lens of the research study, that is, through the stories of mature age career change professionals undertaking postgraduate coursework study and entering a new career. The findings reflect the refrains within and resonances across the participants' stories in relation to the three stages of transition - moving out, moving through and moving in – and four aspects of their transition experience: situation, self, support and strategies. Given the findings of this study, a new model of transition is proposed – one that reaches in to the new profession to explore the 'settling in' phase of career change and also makes space for the iterative, non-linear ebb and flow nature of the experience of transition. Next, there is a reflection on the participants' stories being in the midst of ongoing lives. Implications for policy and practice are explored and suggestions for further research are provided.

Participants in this study made a significant life move, changing careers. For this, they committed themselves, and their families to a one year (full time) or two year (part time) postgraduate coursework program. This study followed them over the course of their transition and into their new career. The study contributes to understandings of

transition theory, narrative inquiry and career change. It provides a reflection on earlier models of transition that propose transition as a linear process, usually with three stages involving moving out from a former career, moving through a period of transition and finally moving into a new career. As the transition unfolded over time for the participants and the study followed them as they arrived or moved in to their new career, it became apparent that they may have just begun settling in and that a further phase of transition was warranted. The new career change transition model characterises transition as a four stage process that is dynamic and iterative and captures the ebb and flow of transition experiences. Narrative inquiry methodology has enabled an expanded understanding of transition as being in relation to time, place and personal and social conditions, and occurring in the midst of ongoing lives. This study also contributes to the field of career change, with implications for policy and practice relevant to recruiters, administrators, academic staff and workplace administrators and staff who are part of the transition experiences of career changers into new professions.

Research Design

In this study transition theory and narrative inquiry methodology were mutually supportive in a design that captured transition experiences over time. Narrative inquiry methodology and longitudinal research designs both capture the concept of time, or temporality, as an important part of the transition process. Narrative inquiry theory and methods explored the experience in ways that captured the deeply human experience of transition. Innovative use of the three commonplaces of temporality, sociality and place in the research design itself, and in the collection of evidence, is outlined in Chapter 4. This awareness of the commonplaces in the evidence exemplifies the importance of attentiveness to thinking narratively in narrative inquiry research. Of course, temporality, sociality and place are not discrete in lived experience, they interweave and intertwine. Experience takes place over time and stories of experience look back and forward in time. Likewise, sociality and place change through time and stories of sociality and place may look back and forward in time. We can capture the intricacies and interrelationships of these dimensions using the concepts of temporality, sociality and place as both conceptual and analytic lenses, enabling richness and depth. The narrative inquiry lens has been used to report on the range of issues that impacted participants and provided a thick description, creating layers of complexity and unpacking what is taken for granted. In addition, the use of narrative inquiry

methodology enabled the issues that were most relevant to the participants during their transition to come from the individuals' stories and not from preconceived categories.

The research design utilised in this study has given us a new understanding of transition as a dynamic, not linear, process. This study was planned around an adaptation of two earlier transition models – Bridges (1980) and Schlossberg (1984) - that described three main stages of transition as a linear process. However, by targeting experience in narrative inquiry methodology during the different phases of moving out, moving through and moving in, the experience and telling of the experience was found to be more iterative than discrete – at any one moment in the telling, participants oriented back and forward in the stages – for example, moving out of their professional context and moving into the university context was something of a sub cycle of transition within the bigger story/process of transition. While previous transition models outlined three stages of transition: moving out, moving through and moving in – each of which could be classified as a sub cycle in the larger transition process – the current study shows that these sub cycles are not linear and, as we are always in the midst, continue throughout our lives.

Each of the participants in this study had up to seven research conversations across the time of the transition. During these conversations, they told stories not only of the current personal and social conditions of their transition, they also looked back to the past and forward to imagined future experiences. Over the seven conversations, participants themselves built up layered and reflexive stories of their transition.

Many previous studies of career change utilised a quantitative design, which provided a 'snapshot' of a moment in the transition. This previous research showed the transition experience at a particular point in time, at a particular place and in the personal and social conditions of that moment. While possibly useful for particular purposes, this snapshot is limited. As transition occurs over a period of time, in shifting places and shifting personal and social conditions, the experiences of individuals' transition continues to change as the transition progresses.

Previous qualitative research that explored the lived experience of individuals often used methods that involved undertaking one or two research conversations per participant. As this study shows, many of the participants' experiences and attitudes changed over time. Distinctively, in this study, the two cohorts of participants (2013 and 2014) were all at the same stage of their transition at the time of the research. Their stories were told at, or close to the time of their experiences. This differs from many previous research studies that recruited participants who had already completed their

transition some time prior to the research study and were at different stages of their new careers and were therefore relying on memory and retrospect. In the current study, at any one moment, the participants' telling and reflection ranged back and forward in time, reflecting over the new layer of experience in the context of previous experience and previous conversations, and reimagining the future with now a new past to reflect upon.

The following section outlines the main findings of the study from the evidence chapters and illustrates how this research design provides a multilayered and reflexive account of the participants' transition experiences.

Main Findings of the Study

The research question was: What are the experiences of mature age, career change professionals who undertake a postgraduate coursework program, as they make the transition from their former profession into a new career?

This research question had three sub questions:

1) Why and how do mature age professionals choose to make a career change?
2) What opportunities and rewards, pressures and challenges do mature age career changers experience during their transition and how do they meet them?
3) What are mature age career change professionals' experiences in the first six months of their new profession?

Addressing these questions led to an increased understanding of career change. In particular, it led to insights into the characteristics of career change decisions with dynamic decision making, the ebb and flow of transition experiences, and the agentic storying of participants' meeting the opportunities and rewards, pressures and challenges of their transition. The following sections discuss these findings in more detail.

Characteristics of Career Change Decision: Dynamic Decision Making

This study found that the career change decision for these participants was a dynamic process involving the balancing of tensions: being at once reflective and imaginative; equally idealistic and prosaic, and rational and emotive. However, although holding apparent contradictions in balance, these tensions did not function for participants as binaries. In decision making, participants at once reflected on a past and imagined a future. For example, at the time of initial decision making, as participants reflected on their current career, many found it no longer provided the meaning, fulfilment and

challenges they sought. In addition, for some, their reflections were influenced by significant others, particularly by those with, in this case, a family background in teaching. This *reflection* in turn, fed a vision of an *imagined* future in the different career - that a long held dream to teach could be realised, or that the teaching profession would provide a sense of fulfilment and meaning.

Similarly, idealistic and prosaic concerns were held in dynamic relation in decision making. Idealistic concerns influenced the decision making process, for example, in this case, the ideals of having a passion for teaching, for 'making a difference' and 'contribution' or an ideal of igniting passion in students for a particular subject area. This idealistic impetus was in dynamic balance with prosaic or practical factors, for example, the 'time was right' for personal and social reasons and practical matters such as finances and family commitments feeding into the commitment of a full year of education in preparation for the new career.

Rational and emotional tensions balanced too. Rational concerns such as the changing global and local employment contexts, particularly in the areas of engineering, information technology and science, resulted in disruption and uncertainty in employment and fuelled the desire for employment security. Another decision of a rational nature was related to work-life balance, with the former profession not providing the desired balance. For some, their imagined future in the teaching profession provided both security and work-life balance. Participants spoke of these rational concerns alongside emotional interests such as working alongside young people, and strong positive or negative feelings of one's own schooling. Participants' imagined futures provided emotional satisfaction or resolutions.

This dynamic balance of reflection/imagination, idealism/practicality and rationality/emotionality in making the career change decision shaped the aspirational desires of the participants. However, six months after arriving in their new career, few of the participants had achieved what they had imagined for themselves for their new profession. For example, tensions around employment security and work-life balance were still evident. Only with time will it become apparent whether these tensions resolved with a settling in to the new career.

Ebb and Flow of Transition Experiences

The research design used in this study captured transition as non-linear and dynamic, with a wave-like ebb and flow effect as these individuals moved through time, into different places and experienced different personal and social conditions. Transition

issues ebbed, or become less important; and flowed, or increased in importance, throughout the career change transition experience. This ebb and flow of experience was in relation to the opportunities and rewards, challenges and pressures of their transition, through into the first six months of teaching. These experiences included: feelings around the career change decision, levels of confidence, financial concerns, care of children, time management, accessing support, use of digital technology, requirements of the academic program, opportunities to gain new professional skills and the recognition of their prior professional skills.

Reflections on feelings around the career change decision were apparent throughout the entire transition process, with positive feelings ebbing and flowing over time. Early in the transition, positive feelings were reduced. As the transition progressed during their academic studies, these positive feelings remained high in relation to their imagined future in the teaching profession. The positive feelings continued six months into the teaching profession even though the reality of the teaching profession for many had in some ways not met their aspirational desires as articulated in the early transition.

Levels of confidence also ebbed and flowed as the transition progressed. In the early stages of the transition, the most common response was a sense of a rollercoaster of emotion. Confidence levels then began to rise for many as their academic program continued. During the first six months of teaching in the secondary classroom, confidence levels were high in relation to the personal and professional skills they brought to the workplace, however, confidence ebbed or was slightly lower in other areas, due to being in a novice role after having been in more senior positon in their former careers.

There was an ebb and flow in concerns around financial issues, with less concern in the early stages of the transition, followed later by an increase for some participants who had concerns of the future financial consequences of having made the career change decision. As the transition continued, participants implemented strategies that eased financial concerns. During their first six months in the teaching profession, financial concerns had ebbed and did not appear to be of importance. Care of children was also an issue that ebbed and flowed throughout the transition. Early in the transition child care was an issue, and became of increased importance as participants were attending lectures on campus. However, the issue began to ebb in semester two and in the first six months teaching in the secondary classroom issues of child care were not raised. The issue of time management was raised early in the transition, increasing in intensity as the participants undertook their studies on the university campus, with

further intensity in semester two, and continuing during the first six months of their new career. There was ebb and flow in relation to the sources of support during the transition. Early in the transition, there was an increase in the reliance on family and friends for support. However, this reliance on family and friends began to ebb during semesters one and two on campus, as the participants began to rely on university peers and staff. In the first six months of teaching in the secondary classroom, support from teaching colleagues and administrators did not materialise to the degree many participants had hoped.

Difficulties in using new technologies that were unfamiliar to participants was an issue from early in the transition with an increased intensity during semester one. However, as semester two progressed this issue ebbed for the participants. The use of new technologies in the secondary classroom was not raised as a concern during the first six months in the teaching profession. Similarly, issues relating to unfamiliarity of the requirements of the academic program were of importance from early in the transition. However, as the participants continued in their studies during semester one, this issue did not ebb, but continued to be of concern. In second semester, these issues appeared to intensify to a further degree and did not ebb, or resolve, during the time the participants were undertaking their academic studies.

The learning of new professional knowledge and the recognition of passing on prior professional knowledge ebbed and flowed for the participants during the transition. There was an increase in the acquisition of knowledge during their academic program, as well as during their professional experience placements in schools. However, there was also an ebb in new learning during the placements as the participants were often not included in professional development opportunities being offered by schools. In addition, during their first six months in the teaching profession, recognition by others of the importance of participants passing on their professional knowledge had ebbed, as most did not receive formal recognition of their prior competencies.

The literature outlined in Chapter 2 in relation to mature age, postgraduate coursework career change students showed that this cohort experienced a range of issues during their transition into a new career, including in their early months in their new profession. These issues included work-life balance, time and financial pressures, using digital technology, coping with the requirements of the academic program, developing confidence and developing new social and professional networks.

The findings of the current study show that, with regard to the topics or issues of concern for this cohort, there has been little change in the current environment for over

25 years. However, the previous findings about issues concerning this cohort were often based on studies that utilised either a quantitative research design or a qualitative design with a one to two research conversations per participant. Therefore, the findings were based on a 'snapshot' of the issues faced by this cohort. The research design utilised in the current study provided rich, in-depth information about these issues and revealed the complexity of these issues through the ebb and flow nature of these experiences over time and changing personal and social conditions and places. The design has revealed that transition is a dynamic, iterative process involving ebb and flow of transition experiences throughout the duration.

Agentic Storying

The participants developed their sense of agency throughout their transition. As they reflected on their previous careers and began to explore opportunities for a new career, they were agentic in their storying of how their former careers were either no longer viable, or aligned with their values and lifestyles, and so their story of making a decision to change careers and of an imagined future began. They were also agentic in meeting the opportunities and rewards, challenges and pressures of transition. For example, participants explicitly constructed themselves as lifelong learners. By positioning themselves as 'learners' challenges were framed not as obstacles or failures but as contexts of application and learning which deliberately framed them as individuals agentically in the midst of a learning and development process. This seemed to feed confidence and a sense of efficacy. In addition, they were agentic in relation to time, place and personal and social conditions. For example, participants often spoke of 'making time' and 'finding time'. Likewise, personal and social relationships were agentically manipulated, for example, changing the distribution of domestic chores in the home, itself a strategy to 'free time'. Participants engaged with space and place too, by using spaces and places to effect. For example, some spoke of doing their studies or work at home to alleviate issues with child care. Participants were agentic too in their storying of their experiences – constructing a coherent and ongoing account of their journey of transition. For example, Sally spoke of herself as 'not yet' achieving work-life balance – but on a trajectory towards it in her ongoing learning journey. Rather than story this as a failure to achieve work life balance or story the 'arrival' in the new career as 'final', she created an ongoing plotline of a story of her transition 'in the midst'.

Career Change Transition Model

Given the experience of ebb and flow and agency as a dynamic process, a new *Career Change Transition Model* that builds on and extends earlier transition models and captures a fourth stage of transition proposed here. While it is difficult to visually capture the wave-like dynamics of ebb and flow, the model shown in Figure 9.2. below shows transition as non-linear, dynamic and iterative. The ebb and flow of transition experiences occur in relation to time, place and personal and social conditions, in the midst of ongoing lives.

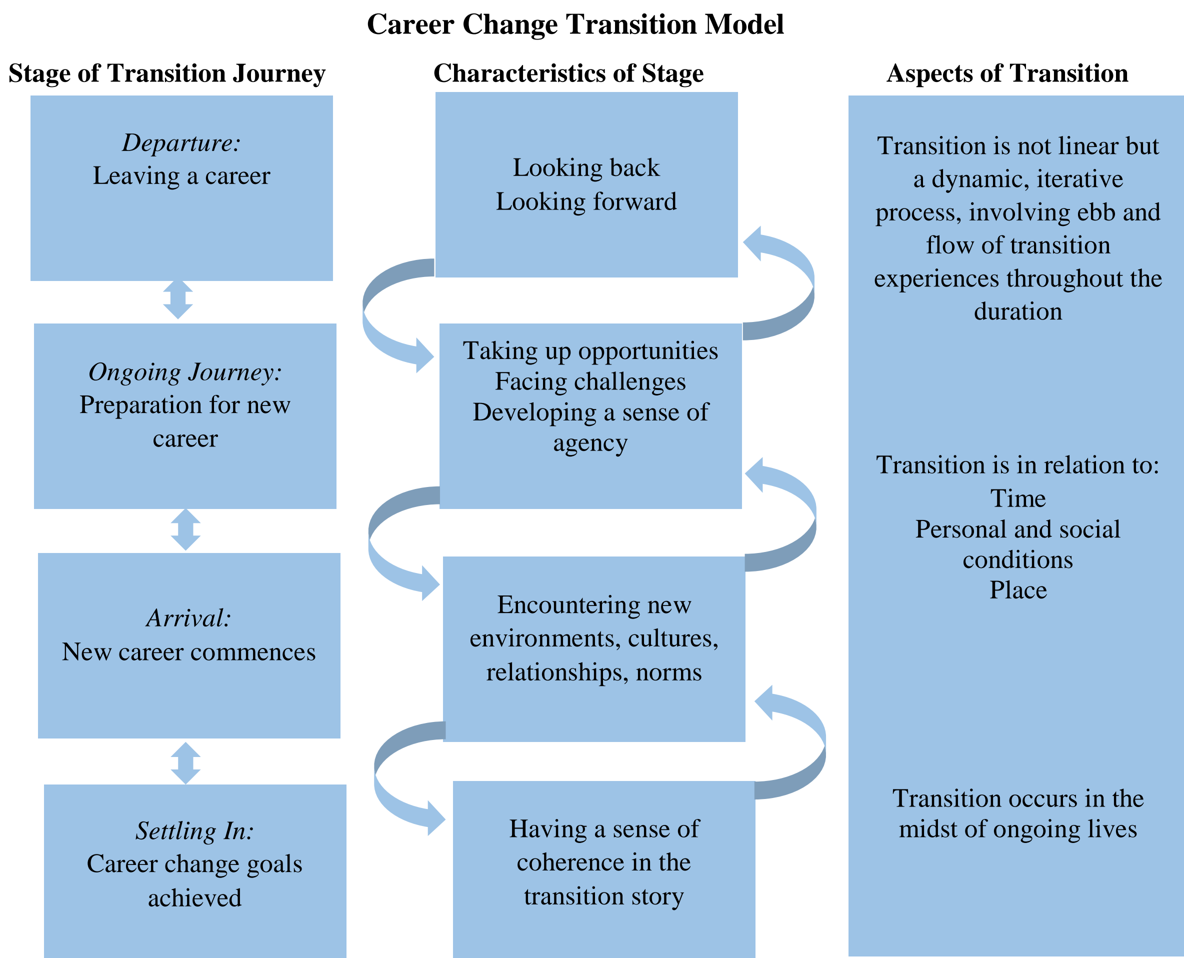

Figure 9.2. Career change transition model

As the evidence chapters show, transition is a dynamic, iterative process, with ebb and flow of transition experiences, and the development of a sense of agency during the transition. It is in relation to time, personal and social conditions, and place, occurring in the midst of ongoing lives. In each stage of career change transition, there are definitive touchstones: leaving a former career, undertaking studies or other preparations for a new career, commencing the new career and settling in to a new career. However, the movement between the stages is not clear or discrete. Each of the

four stages segue into the following stage as the characteristics of each of the stages ebb and flow in a wave-like manner. In the initial stage, *Departure*, individuals begin, over time, the process of reviewing their (then) current career or life and imagining a future in a new career. This process may take place over a period of many years, to just days, according to the personal and social conditions of the individual. Individuals become agentic as they imagine new opportunities, as well as the challenges they may face during their transition and in their new career. The next touchstone is reached in the *Ongoing Journey*, as individuals commence their studies or in other ways prepare for new careers, and experience a range of opportunities and challenges, which do not occur in a linear process of encountering and resolving issues, but ebb and flow, or become more or less important as the times, places and personal and social conditions of the transition change. Individuals develop a sense of agency during this time in order to take up opportunities and cope with challenges. They continue to look back at their former careers and imagine their new careers - they reflect on their career change decision as they undergo the transition process. As the third touchstone, *Arrival,* is reached, and individuals commence their new careers, they encounter new environments, cultures, relationships and norms. These encounters also present opportunities and challenges. Individuals look back and compare their new employment environments to their former career environments. They begin to further develop their stories of their career change transition in relation to whether their career change decision had been the ‘right’ decision for them. The touchstone for the fourth stage, *Settling In*, comes as a gradual process of individuals becoming aware of having achieved some or all of the goals they had set early in their career transition, in alignment with their imagined futures early in the transition. Whether or not this imagined future has been achieved, they may agentically create a sense of coherence from the plotlines of their transition story, or they may possibly come to terms with a future quite different to that imagined at the outset, with their story of transition as ongoing rather than achieved. As transition occurs in the midst of ongoing lives, individuals may at some future time decide to begin another transition, starting once again at the *Departure* stage.

In the Midst: Where Are They Now?

Transition is always in the midst of a greater life story, unfolding over time and place, in diverse social contexts (Caine et al., 2013). It does not end, there is no closure - we are always in the midst, stepping in and out of others’ stories. As Clandinin and

Connelly (2000) noted “Narrative inquiries are always strongly autobiographical. Our research interests come out of our own narratives of experience and shape our narrative inquiry plotlines” (p. 121). I undertook transition alongside these study participants – although my timeline has been considerably longer. They are all now established in their new careers – moved in and settling in, and I, having completed the more deliberate ‘research and analysis’ phases of my moving through, am still writing this thesis. As the writing of this thesis draws to an end, I return in my memories to a different time and place as I reflect on my own journey of transition, making a career change from tertiary teaching into research. It began with moving out from my teaching career several years ago, with a gradual realisation that my former career was no longer fulfilling for me. As I moved around the campus on which I was studying, in time I began to let go of the places with which I had been so familiar in the past – the buildings, classrooms and staff rooms where my teacher friends were gathered; and began to develop new routines, new spaces and places, and new relationships. As my transition continued, moving through the research apprenticeship, I had similar experiences to the study participants during this ongoing research. This time was a rollercoaster for me, both personally and professionally; just as the participants did, I experienced academic and technological issues, was challenged by leaving behind former networks, wondered whether I had made the right decision and struggled to maintain a study-life balance.

I was inspired in the study by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and the idea of researchers dancing along in a metaphoric parade with their participants (Geertz, 1995). I enjoyed, and was heartened and inspired by, the ongoing conversations with the participants as they moved in time through their transition, telling stories of their past experiences, current lived experiences and imagined futures. Their reflections helped me reflect on my own unfolding transition. I felt a sense of loss as they moved on in time and place, in their new profession, and our conversations were no longer frequent. It was as if the parade had moved on, leaving me standing by the wayside. I am yet to move in to my imagined future. I agentically constructed a coherent plotline of my transition story, absorbing delays, obstacles, shocks and new opportunities, rethinking timelines and at times questioning my decision. I took heart from participants like Sally for articulating this transition as an ongoing journey, not an arrival.

I was buoyed by Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) reminder that stories do not end; but continue throughout life because humans are always in the midst. I began to wonder about the ongoing stories of the study participants. Of the initial 17 who expressed an

interest in the study, 14 continued until the end of the evidence collection phases. At that point, six months after completing their academic program, one participant had decided not to enter the teaching profession, entering educational administration instead, and another had decided not to continue in the profession but to return to his previous profession. The remaining 12 expressed an interest in continuing in the teaching profession. I wondered whether these participants were settling in to their teaching careers, and whether they were happy at this time of their lives. Had they achieved their career change goals? Or had they made a decision to begin a new transition in their lives, into a further stage of their current career, or another career change? Having garnered ethics approval, I sent an email to these participants asking whether they would like to write briefly about 'where they are now'.

There was a positive response from participants and it was good to 'touch base' and continue our conversations, albeit briefly. Most of the participants were still in the teaching profession, and many were working at the schools where they began their careers. Many stated that they found teaching challenging, but enjoyable. Some of the participants talked of strategies they utilised to ensure work-life balance, for example, doing all preparation work during the school holidays. Most made the comment that they were planning to remain in the profession long term. Cate and Sally had undertaken further professional development to advance their teaching careers, and Neve was planning to do so in the future.

Callum and Elise had both left their rural teaching positions and returned to the city, where they were employed full time at private schools, as were Cate and Sally. Neve, Peter, Mal, and Rick had full time employment at government schools. Bec had a 0.8 contract (by choice) at a government school. Rick was the only participant who commented that he did not feel secure in his employment. Nadia had moved to the United Kingdom and wanted employment in the teaching profession, however, as she did not have full teacher registration (as she was still 'provisionally registered' in Australia), her teaching qualifications were not officially recognised. Instead, she took employment as a private tutor, and she was enjoying the challenge of this work. Of the participants contacted, only one (Lynda) had made the decision to leave teaching, which occurred 12 months after beginning employment in the profession. She had initially left a research career to make her career change into teaching, however after a 'honeymoon' period in the profession, she found that teaching was not intellectually stimulating for her. She was offered a contract as a researcher and decided to return to her former profession.

As can be seen from the findings, the longitudinal research design captures the ebb and flow effect of the participants' transition and highlights changes that can occur over time. At the end of the evidence collection phases (outlined in Chapter 8 of this thesis), while they had arrived in their new profession, it was not clear whether they were settling in. Now, two to three years later, it appeared that most of the participants had now achieved their career change goals and were settling in to their new profession. For example, many participants had felt insecure in their employment six months into their new career, however, two and three years later, only one participant in the profession felt this insecurity. In addition, most of the participants had now achieved their goal of having challenging, interesting employment. These findings demonstrate how transition works in relation to time, place and personal and social conditions. In the participants' responses it can be seen that most were settling in to their career change profession.

The participants in this project had travelled a path through their transition, departing from their previous career, undertaking an ongoing journey through their academic program and finally arriving in their new career. The evidence collection concluded at this stage, six months into their teaching. Up until six months into their new career, the three stage model of transition provided a strong frame for their transition. While they had arrived or moved in to their new career, there was still the question of whether they were settling in – at six months there was still uncertainty, they were still looking forward to achieving job security and work-life balance. The narrative inquiry methodology, in relation to time, place and personal and social conditions, revealed this uneasiness or sense that while they had arrived, they were yet to settle. This suggested the fourth stage of transition, 'settling in'.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings outlined above imply a range of policy and practice changes that speak to the needs of the mature age, postgraduate coursework career change cohort, as well as recruiters and administrators in institutions and organisations that have an interest in career changers. While this study focussed on teaching as a case example of career change, the suggestions for policy and practice are equally pertinent to other professions.

Individuals currently working in professions like engineering, information technology and science would be a valuable resource for educational recruiters and administrators wishing to recruit mature age professionals. As previously outlined, Wyatt-Smith et al. (2017) found that in marketing campaigns, one strategy (advertising)

was not effective in attracting entrants into initial teacher education programs. However, their research did not differentiate between cohorts and they considered that the strategies used in marketing campaigns should be differentiated according to cohorts (e.g., mature age career changers). By developing policies and practices that utilise recruitment strategies specifically targeted to mature age professionals, a broader pool of applicants into career change education programs could be created. Likewise, in other professions that wish to attract career changers, targeted marketing strategies would be useful.

In the findings of this study, it was not clear at the end of the evidence collection phases (six months into their new profession) that participants had made a realistic assessment of their new career at the time of making the decision to change career. In the evidence chapters, the participants' refrains showed that they did not seek, or chose to ignore, career change advice, believing that the new career could be different for them. This may well make them vulnerable to being disappointed, disheartened and disenfranchised, thereby vulnerable to career attrition. In order to alleviate possible early attrition from the profession, unrealistic expectations need to be addressed. Policies and practices for recruitment into new professions should include ways to reduce the difference between the aspirations of mature age professionals, and the realities of their target profession. In the context of the transition stories told here, most participants had been away from the classroom for many years, from 8 years for Nadia to 34 years for Kelly. While some had revisited classrooms as parents, the participants' view of the classroom may be well out of date, and from the perspective of a student or parent rather than a teacher. Likewise in other professions, career changers may have an outdated or one sided perspective of the profession – for example, having been a patient, and thereby extrapolating the work of a nurse.

Another issue that emerged from the findings was employment security, in particular, the perception held prior to making the career change decision that their new profession would provide this security. At, or close to, the time of making their career change decision (e.g., when they make an application to an educational institution, or during open days at educational institutions), mature age career changers should be aware of the employment situation in the profession they are moving into. In the context of teaching, this is particularly in relation to contract and casual employment if career changers are to make their decisions based on accurate information.

The findings showed that these career changers were often not invited to participate in professional development opportunities during their professional experience

placements. Implementing policy and practice of including these students in seminars for current professionals would assist not only with industry (or for teachers, pedagogical) knowledge, but would also assist in the development of professional networks for this cohort.

Some mature age career changers found that colleagues in the workplace had higher expectations of them and hence they were offered less support than they felt they needed in the early days of their new career, as, due to their apparent maturity and often personal confidence (garnered from former life and professional experience), they were mistaken for more experienced professionals. The implication for policy and practice is that mature age career changers may benefit from tailored support systems that recognise that prior experience has not been in the new profession.

An issue for many participants in this study was that their prior professional competencies were not formally recognised. Policy and practice that formally acknowledges the professional skills and knowledge this cohort brings to the new profession would be useful; rather than an ad hoc personal acknowledgement in practice, dependent on who the manager or supervisor (in the case of the teaching profession, the Principal) happens to be. One example of this acknowledgement would be the provision of a Certificate of Recognition of Prior Competencies that lists their competencies from their prior profession. If career changers consider that their contribution to the new profession is acknowledged, this may support their further commitment to the profession.

Directions for Further Research

Career change is a common modern phenomena (CEDEFOP, 2015). While it has always occurred, in recent times, changes in industrial contexts – with fast changing technology and the constant generation of new jobs, individuals can expect to change careers (not just jobs) (Bimrose et al., 2015). As there may be multiple career changes during a person's lifetime, it is important to understand the transition period from the former profession to the new career. Further in-depth research in this area would be advantageous for individuals making a transition into a new career. This research would investigate the transition experiences of mature age, postgraduate coursework career changers from a wide variety of professions, from the time of making the decision to change careers, until the stage when they are settling in to their profession (two to three years after they arrive in the profession), utilising the research design outlined in this study. The use of this design, with transition theory providing a lens for exploring the

content of stories; narrative inquiry providing in-depth knowledge of the transition experience and the longitudinal design illustrating the ebb and flow of the transition experience, would provide a useful framework for further research.

This study has highlighted the need for further research into the stages of transition for mature age, postgraduate coursework career changers into new professions. While there has been research into aspects of the settling in stage for teachers, such as induction and attrition (e.g., Buchanan et al., 2013; Clandinin et al., 2015), as these studies do not specifically address the mature age, postgraduate coursework career change cohort, there is a need for further work in this area.

Another profession that may particularly benefit from utilising the research design used in this study is the nursing profession. According to a report by HealthWorkforce Australia (2014), workforce planning projections show that in the medium to long term, Australia's demand for nurses will significantly exceed supply by 2025. The report suggests that the scale of this problem would be reduced by implementing a range of strategies including improving retention of nursing students in university education, improving employment rates following graduation and implementing strategies to increase early career retention. This employment situation, with a shortage of qualified professionals, and the strategies utilised to alleviate the situation, is similar to those relevant to the teaching profession, as explored in the current study. A number of Australian universities are advertising postgraduate coursework programs for individuals who wish to make a career change from other professions into nursing. The same research questions as utilised in this project would cast light on, and support, the nursing transition.

This study found that there had been little change in a number of aspects of the postgraduate coursework experience over the last 25 years, in particular coping with new technologies and managing the scholarly requirements of academic programs. This is surprising in the sense that universities are, in the main, very aware of transition to study as a risk time for student attrition, and they often provide various support services around those very elements. Research into what support is most useful and why students do or do not take up that support would be useful to further understand and address these aspects of the transition experience.

There were a range of factors that drew the study participants into a teaching career including: the need for employment security, wanting a career that was fulfilling and meaningful, and the desire for a work-life balance. Exploration of whether the same or similar factors are relevant to career changers into other professions would provide

useful information for institutions and organisations recruiting new members to their professions. The length of the one year initial teacher education program was a relevant factor for several participants in deciding to undertake the program. As many postgraduate initial teacher education programs in Australia are now of two years' full time duration, research to determine whether study duration influences the choice of the new career, or whether potential career changers were more likely to explore options for a new career where the duration of the training for the new career was shorter, would be beneficial to educational and professional institutions.

Concluding Remarks

This study used an innovative research design to tell the stories of mature age professionals making a career change by completing a postgraduate coursework program. The findings of this study are broader in scope than career change into the teaching profession and can be applied to career changers into any profession, as the complexity of the situation for mature age, postgraduate coursework career changers has been unpacked. Their stories of the transition provide useful information for institutions and organisations responsible for the recruitment, academic programs, induction and mentoring of career changers during their transition. The application of this knowledge will assist mature age, postgraduate coursework career changers with their transition, thus providing opportunities for highly skilled professionals to enter new professions, bringing their valuable skills and competencies from their former professions. In addition, individuals who are considering undertaking their own transition into a new career will find the stories of interest.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

Mature age professionals: Transitions into a new career

Are you a mature age student (aged 25 or over)?

Have you worked in a former career/industry for at least 3 of the past 5 years (approximately 60%)?

Are you currently enrolled (or enrolling) as a postgraduate coursework student, studying for a new career or profession?

If you answered yes to all three of the above questions, you are invited to participate in a research study being conducted over an 18 month period commencing March, 2013, by a postgraduate research student at Griffith University. This study looks at stories about being a mature age, career change, postgraduate coursework student as you make your transition into a new profession. The study will help inform universities and employers about ways to support individuals during their career change transition.

The study will have group meetings, individual interviews and some email contact as your story unfolds over the 18 month period from January, 2013 to July, 2014. You may choose to participate in any, or all of the meetings, interviews and email contact groups and you may leave the study at any time. The first meeting will be held in March, 2013. Meetings will run for around 45 minutes and will be held at the Mt Gravatt campus of Griffith University. At the meetings you will be given the opportunity to share your stories. It is hoped that the meetings will build a community of learners for postgraduate coursework, mature age career change students.

If you think you may be interested, please email Carmel Bauer at [email] or telephone [telephone] and provide your contact details. Carmel will contact you to provide further details about the study and to see if you would like to participate.

Thank you for your support.

Appendix B: Study Information Sheet

(ON GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY LETTERHEAD)

Mature age professionals: Transitions into a new career

STUDY INFORMATION SHEET

Chief Investigator:	**Co-Investigator:**	**Student Investigator:**
Principal Supervisor Name: Associate Professor Sue Thomas School: Education and Professional Studies Telephone: [telephone] Email: [email]	Associate Supervisor Name: Associate Professor Cheryl Sim School: Education and Professional Studies Telephone: [telephone] Email: [email]	Student Name: Carmel Bauer School: Education and Professional Studies Telephone: [telephone] Email: [email]

Why is the research being conducted?

This research study is being conducted as part of a Griffith University Doctor of Philosophy course requirement for the above student. The study looks at the transition experiences of mature age students who are making a change from a former career or profession into a new career by undertaking postgraduate coursework studies. It is the intention of this study to document the narrative or story of these students during this transition in order to inform university administrators and academic staff about the specific needs and requirements of this student group.

What you will be asked to do

This study will involve discussions about the transition experiences faced by mature age career change, postgraduate coursework students. There will be an initial focus group (or individual) interview in March, 2013 to discuss these issues. This will be followed by individual face-face-face interviews in week 6 of semester 1, and a follow up in week 14 of semester 1. There is an individual interview in week 6 of semester 2 and a focus group meeting or individual interview in week 14 of semester 2, at the end of your coursework program (full time students). There will be email and telephone contact in early 2014 as you begin your new career and an email interview at the end of term two in the teaching profession. You may choose to be involved in any or all of the sessions. These sessions will be audio taped for research purposes. All data collected remains confidential. You will be asked to sign a consent form for your participation in a focus group or interview. If you choose to respond to the email follow ups during the course of the study, you will be deemed to have consented to your participation for this part of the research study. Please retain this sheet for your later reference.

Why you have been invited

You have been invited to participate in this study because you meet the criteria of being a mature age, career change, postgraduate student (i.e., 25 or over, having worked in a previous career for 60% of the last five years, and are currently enrolled, or currently enrolling, in a postgraduate coursework program). The invitation to participate in the study was by invitation prepared by the researcher, and given during Orientation Week

by the Course Convenor. An electronic notice was also posted on a relevant academic learning space on the Griffith intranet by a Course Convenor.

The expected benefits of the research

This study will inform university, school administrators and academic staff about the experiences, needs and appropriate support systems required by mature age postgraduate coursework students who are in transition between a former career or profession and the early stages of a new career. The findings may allow university and school staff to develop policies and processes suited to the needs of this student cohort. In addition, the findings may assist employers in providing appropriate support for career changers into new professions.

Your confidentiality, risks and voluntary participation

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of identified personal information. If you decide to participate in this study, identifiable data in the form of focus group, interview and email records will be collected. All data will be de-identified, so that participants will not be identifiable in the preparation and presentation of this study report. During the study, all relevant data will be kept in a secure area and will be accessible only by the researcher and relevant study supervisors. Accuracy of attributed comments will be checked with participants prior to the report completion. On completion of the study, all data collected during interviews, focus groups and by email, including voice recordings, will be destroyed. Participation in this research poses no risks. Your participation is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participate in this study. Your decision will in no way impact upon your relationship to the University, as a student. You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time.

Questions/further information

For additional information about this study, please contact Carmel Bauer [email] [telephone] or Associate Professor Sue Thomas at [email] [telephone].

The ethical conduct of this research

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of this research study, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics on (07) 373 55585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

Feedback to you

The study will culminate in a thesis to be submitted to Griffith University for examination in December, 2015. At that time, you will be provided with a one page report summary of the study.

Privacy Statement

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access 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. However your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at www.gu.edu.au/au/aa/vc/pp or telephone (07) 373 55585.

Appendix C: Consent Form

(ON GRIFFITH LETTERHEAD)

Mature age professionals: Transitions into a new career

CONSENT FORM

Chief Investigator:

Principal Supervisor Name:
Associate Professor
Sue Thomas
School: Education and
Professional Studies
Telephone: [telephone]
Email: [email]

Co-Investigator:

Associate Supervisor Name:
Associate Professor
Cheryl Sim
School: Education and
Professional Studies
Telephone: [telephone]
Email: [email]

Student Investigator:

Student Name:
Carmel Bauer
School: Education and
Professional Studies
Telephone: [telephone]
Email: [email]

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this study will involve one or more of the following: personal interview, focus group, email interview with the researcher, Carmel Bauer;
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and in no way impacts upon my grades;
- 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 373 55585 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the study;
- I agree to participate in the study; and
- I agree to have the personal interview or focus group meetings audio-taped and understand that all recordings will be destroyed on completion of this study.

Name	
Signature	
Date	

Appendix D: Nominal Data Form

Mature age professionals: Transitions into a new career

Nominal Data Form

(to be completed by each participant in the study)

Name:______________________________ M/F (please circle)

Age:________________________________

Address:____

Is English your first language? Y/N (please circle) If no, please state first language________________

Previous Education:____

Partner: Y/N (please circle)

Number of children and ages (if applicable):_____________________

Full-time/part-time study: F/T P/T (please circle)

Current full-time/part-time employment: F/T. P/T. N/A. (please circle)

Occupation prior to beginning studies:__________________________

How long in this field?_________years

Partner's occupation (if applicable):____________________________

Appendix E: Prompts for Research Conversations

Mature age professionals: Transitions into a new career

Prompts/conversation starters

- For researcher use only. These are prompts or suggested conversation starters, and are not prescriptive.

Initial Conversation

1 Tell me about your decision to make a career change – why now? Influences?
2 Family and friends' reactions?
3 Feelings about the career change decision?
4 Expectations of initial teacher education program?
5 Expectations of new career?
6 Lifestyle factors/issues that may be relevant to your new career?

Review of Semester 1

1 Positive experiences? Effect on you?
2 Opportunities/rewards you received?
3 Negative experiences/challenges/pressures? Effect on you?
4 Review of career change decision at this time? Any losses?
5 Consideration of leaving course at any time?
6 Support accessed/received? From whom?
7 Any changes or adjustments you made?

**Full time students:*

1 Thoughts about upcoming professional experience placement?

**Part time students:*

1 Planning on undertaking employment during break?
2 Thoughts about being a part time student?

Review of Professional Experience Placement 1, Semester 1

1 What are your stories about your first professional experience placement?
2 Biggest challenge?
3 Most enjoyable experience?
4 Any surprises?
5 Confidence levels?
6 Thoughts about being an older, mature age beginning teacher?
7 Relationships with students?
8 Use of real world competencies?

Review of Semester 2

1 How has this semester gone compared with semester one?
2 What happened? How did this affect you? (refer to previous transcript for participant)
3 Biggest challenges?
4 Strategies to cope with challenges?
5 Review of career change decision?

6 Professional networks?
7 Support accessed/received during semester?
8 Any changes or adjustments you made during semester?
9 Any changes in your personal outlook, attitudes, values etc.?
10 Future career in secondary classroom, or other options?

**Full time students:*

1 Expectations about the upcoming professional experience placement?
2 How did the first placement experience influence your thinking about the second?

**Part time students:*

1 Planning on undertaking employment or other activities during the break between semesters? Full or part time?
2 Any second thoughts about having chosen to be a part time, rather than a full time student?

Review of Professional Experience Placement 2

1 Tell me about your second professional experience placement.
2 Meet expectations?
3 Most interesting observation/story?
4 Did you bring professional competencies into classroom?
5 Professional networks?
6 Work-life balance?
7 Thoughts about future career?

Beginning Teacher Review – Term One in Classroom

If currently employed in the teaching profession (including casual work), utilise the following prompts (if not, see prompts below):

1 What have been your experiences in relation to being a mature age career change beginning teacher?
2 Stories to illustrate experience?
3 Does career meet expectations? Why or why not?
4 Image of professional future?
5 Thoughts about remaining in teaching profession?
6 Current thoughts about career change decision?
7 Any other thoughts or comments about your career change into teaching?

If not employed in the teaching profession, request details of current employment situation and utilise the following prompts:

1 Reason you are not currently employed in teaching profession? (for example, choice or circumstance - please give details).
2 Thoughts about whether you will be employed in the teaching profession at some point in the future (please give details).
3 Thoughts and feelings about having completed your studies to make a career change into teaching? (e.g., Did you make the right decision? Why or why not?).

4 Thoughts about returning to your former profession either at this point or at some time in the future (please give details).
5 Any other thoughts or comments about your career change experience?

Beginning Teacher Review – Term Two in Classroom:

If currently employed in the teaching profession (including casual work), utilise the following prompts. (If not, see prompts below):

1 Rate perceived level of competence as a beginning teacher at this stage of your career (please give details and examples).
2 Relationships with your fellow teachers and school administrators?
3 Support accessed/received? From whom? Satisfactory?
4 Experiences – positive/negative – give stories.
5 Previous competencies utilised? Recognised?
6 Relationships with students?
7 Advantages/disadvantages of being mature age beginning teacher?
8 Perception of professional future?
9 Ideas about moving to higher levels in education?
10 Review of career change decision?
11 Other thoughts or comments?

If not employed in the teaching profession, request details of current employment situation and utilise the following prompts:

1 Reasons you are not currently employed in teaching profession? (for example, choice or circumstance - please give details)
2 Thoughts about whether you will be employed in the teaching profession at some point in the future (please give details)
3 Thoughts and feelings about having completed your studies to make a career change into teaching? (e.g., Did you make the right decision? Why or why not?)
4 Thoughts about returning to your former profession either at this point or at some time in the future (please give details)
5 Any other thoughts or comments about your career change experience?

Appendix F: Research Conversation Protocol

Mature age professionals: Transitions into a new career

Protocol

(used as a guide during focus group and individual conversations – not to be provided to participants)

Study: Mature age professionals: Transitions into new career.

Notes re: conversation(s):

1 Have audio equipment (pre-test), study information forms, consent forms, nominal data forms, research conversation protocol form

2 Welcome and briefly outline study. Give information sheet, consent form, nominal data form. Consent form to be signed and returned. Nominal data form to be completed and returned. Discuss length of focus group or individual conversation. Any questions from respondent about procedures etc. before we start?

3 Audio tape focus group/individual conversation

4 Any questions from respondents about the focus group/individual conversation?

5 Thank respondent(s) for their time and assure of confidentiality.

*Time of focus group/individual conversation:*___________________________

Date of focus group/individual conversation:___________________________

Researcher: Carmel Bauer

Questions: See prompts for possible conversation starters.

Appendix G: Field Text – Excerpt from Participant Story

Mature age professionals: Transitions into a new career - Carmel Bauer

11 March, 2013: 2 pm

R: Researcher

B: Participant

R: Tell me about your decision to make a career change into teaching.

B: I decided to make a career change because where I was working I had been there for six years and I was very good at my job but I was very unhappy (yes) and it was at the ten year mark after I'd studied the first time (yes) so it was on a whim I applied to do teaching and I said to my partner after I'd hit Send, I've just applied to go back to uni (laughter) and he just went I'm sorry what? - we didn't talk about that. I said, I just want to see if I'll get in. And I did. And so I went 'Defer'. I had no intention of getting in. I had no intention if I got in, I hadn't prepared for getting in (OK).

I really enjoyed studying the first time. I always wanted to be someone who used their degree as opposed to someone who went to uni and then didn't and I became that person. And so I applied, because I'd heard somewhere about this ten year thing and I did get in so I deferred because I hadn't prepared my life for going back to uni. And then I approached my work, so this was two years ago (OK) so I approached my work last year with the naïve view that they might let me go part time. After having been there then five years. I was playing a very key role as the office manager but at the time, I thought it would be half a day a week. And they said no, and that was probably January or something of last year. Uni was going back in February I didn't have a great deal of time to start trying to find work and so I made the decision then to defer again (OK) because you have four years to defer. So you take a leave of absence. You can defer once and you can take a leave of absence apparently up to four years (OK).

So it came about this year again and come December when enrolments and the course outline came about, so I touched on it with my boss, a year had passed, we had this big hoo haa last year about it and I was going to leave. It was coming back up. And I said to him the timetable is coming out on 5 December, we would talk. I was pre-warning him (mm). We were moving office and warehouse, Christmas came, he went on leave, I went on leave, then we were in January. This time I documented the time I would be able to be at uni. It was something like 28 or 29 hours across four days (yes) and he said it made it easier for them to make the decision to still say no. Because I'd

put it on paper, they could see in black and white whether it fit in with what they wanted out of my role (yes). For the business I understand I was supposed to be there five days a week as the Office Manager, so they said no again.

And so I had like a month to decide what I was going to do. I spoke to a lady here by email and she said you do have the option of leave of absence up to four times but because you are now in twelve years since you finished uni, she didn't recommend I do it again (yes). And so I quit my job (OK). I finished the Friday before I started uni (so that was only a couple of weeks ago?) Mm. So I have two part time jobs. One I have been doing for 6 years, the other one is brand new. So I started a new job and uni on the same day (yes).

Why teaching? I did psychology as my first degree. I'm a people person, I really like helping people. As part of my other weekend job I've had for six years, I'm a manager and I get to train people. I really enjoyed school when I was at it and I think it can make an impact on people um if they enjoy going to school (yes) and what their decisions are for their future. I came from, I didn't have a terrible background, but it would be a working class background. When I was younger, I wanted to go to uni because I saw that as an avenue to better myself and I want, I guess, to be able to enable other students who perhaps some from a similar world (mm) even if it's only a handful, to be able to so the same for themselves (mm). And that's why, and also the reason I chose adolescent over middle years, it's not because, everyone thinks that's crazy, going adolescent (laughter) but I figure with a psych background, I'm better with people of that age group. I'm not overly clucky of little people, like they're OK but I treat them like little grownups anyway, so I that's just what I wanted to do, adolescents (OK).

Appendix H: Example of Interim Text

Story 1: Bec

The transition begins:

Bec's decision to make a career change into teaching came as the result of increasing feelings of unhappiness in her former career as an office administrator. She had been considering the fact that it had been ten years since she had completed her initial studies and six years since she had commenced her current employment. In addition, she wasn't using the skills she had gained from the completion of her first degree in psychology. In relation to the timing of the decision to make the career change, she relates how she submitted her application to the university two years ago "on a whim". However, on being offered a place in the teaching program, she felt unready to return to university, so she decided to defer her studies. Eventually she realised that she would be unable to remain in her current employment and satisfactorily complete the course requirements, so she left her employment. She now studies part time and is employed in two different part time jobs:

> *I decided to make a career change because where I was working I had been there for six years and I was very good at my job but I was very unhappy. And it was at the ten year mark after I'd studied the first time so it was on a whim I applied to do teaching and I said to my partner after I'd hit Send, I've just applied to go back to university [laughs] and he just went I'm sorry, what? - we didn't talk about that. I said, I just want to see if I'll get in. And I did. And so I went Defer. I had no intention of getting in. I hadn't prepared for getting in. I really enjoyed studying the first time. I always wanted to be someone who used their degree as opposed to someone who went to university and then didn't and I became that person. And so I applied, because I'd heard somewhere about this ten year thing and I did get in so I deferred because I hadn't prepared my life for going back to university.*
>
> *And then I approached my work, so this was two years ago so I approached my work last year with the naïve view that they might let me go part time. After having been there five years. I was playing a very key role as the office manager but at the time, I thought it would be half a day a week. And they said no, and that was probably January or something of last year. University was going back in February. I didn't have a great deal of time to start trying to find work and so I made the decision then*

to defer again because you have four years to defer. So you take a leave of absence. You can defer once and you can take a leave of absence apparently up to four years.

So it came about this year again and come December when enrolments and the course outline came about, I touched on it with my boss, a year had passed, we had this big hoo haa last year about it and I was going to leave. It was coming back up. And I said to him the timetable is coming out on 5 December, we would talk. I was pre-warning him. We were moving office and warehouse, Christmas came, he went on leave, I went on leave, then we were in January. This time I documented the time I would be able to be at university. It was something like 28 or 29 hours across four days and he said it made it easier for them to make the decision to still say no. Because I'd put it on paper, they could see in black and white whether it fit in with what they wanted out of my role. For the business I understand I was supposed to be there five days a week as the office manager, so they said no again. And so I had like a month to decide what I was going to do. I spoke to a lady here by email and she said you do have the option of leave of absence up to four times but because you are now twelve years since you finished university, she didn't recommend I do it again. So I quit my job. I finished the Friday before I started university. So I now have two part time jobs. One I have been doing for six years, the other one is brand new. So I started a new job and university on the same day.