

Professional Learning Re-constructed through  
Narrative Inquiry in the United Arab Emirates

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**Declaration**

I declare that I have solely researched, written and presented this dissertation. This work is original and it has been conducted within Newcastle University's guidelines.

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## **Abstract**

Research on teacher educators' professional learning within the United Arab Emirates is an emerging field. My roles as a senior educational professional have inspired my interest in the professional learning of teacher educators and specifically in reflecting on my own professional learning. This study adopts a narrative inquiry approach to my personal and professional learning in the United Arab Emirates. As a teacher educator, I operate within a complex cultural and economic environment that is underpinned by Emirati culture, Islamic values and a neo-liberal, market-based approach to education. As a result, I have worked in various professional roles with a high degree of uncertainty, and I have navigated unfamiliar professional boundaries to achieve personal agency. There are three main phases of this study which has taken place over a six year period; the first phase captures my thinking as an early career teacher, before progressing to a teacher educator role working across schools, and then working in a senior role, juggling a range of commercial and educational responsibilities. In order to make empowering decisions about my professional learning, I have needed to develop a set of *researcherly dispositions*, which has emerged from my awareness of the contextual challenges and opportunities within the UAE education sector. My narrative as a teacher educator is illustrated with cameos of two teacher educators and a teacher with whom I have worked, each with unique profiles and development needs that have informed my approach to the design of professional learning opportunities. Through my work with these educators I explore the conditions that have supported my professional growth and outline the impact this has had on me. This narrative study, which draws on European models, namely the Dutch Standards (VELON) and the Flemish Teacher Educator Development Profile (VELOV) and also Kelchtermans 'Dynamics of Learning' model (2018), demonstrates that I have been required to exhibit certain dispositions that are relevant to the UAE education context in order to perform in a variety of professional roles. The findings of this study reveal that I have examined my professional contexts in pursuit of personal agency, and attempted to capture the nuances of my professional learning, and the professional learning of

others, in a personal learning agility framework. I offer a contribution to the knowledge base on teacher educators who operate in the field, in complex cultural contexts, and who seek agency and empowerment within their personal and professional lives.

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## Glossary of terms

- AED: United Arab Emirates Dirham (currency)
- American Curriculum: Schools following a curriculum from the US, which in Dubai, usually means alignment with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)
- BSO Inspections: British School Overseas Inspection – A mandatory scheme for inspection of British schools operating within Dubai to demonstrate alignment to schools in the UK
- BSME: British Schools in the Middle East: A membership organisation that provides an accreditation system that closely aligns with BSO
- Capacity utilisation: Assessment of capacity for each school to assist in decision-making relative to space utilisation
- COBIS: The Council of British International Schools (COBIS) is a membership association for British international schools
- DfE: Department for Education of England– A government ministry that is responsible for education and children’s services in England
- DSIB: Dubai School Inspection Bureau – The school inspection division of Dubai’s Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA)
- ECI: Education Cost Index – Calculated annually by the Dubai Statistics Centre and informed by the consumer price index and school operation costs, which include remuneration, rent, and utilities
- EPPI Review: Systematic reviews conducted by EPPI-Centre Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London
- FS1: Foundation Stage 1 – Year of entry into formal schooling for UK curriculum schools.
- GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council – Comprises of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman
- IB: International Baccalaureate
- IGCSE: International General Certification of Secondary Education
- IT: Information Technology
- KG: Kindergarten
- KHDA: Knowledge and Human Development Authority – Dubai’s private school regulatory authority
- KPIs: key performance indicators
- MENA: Middle East and North Africa region
- MoE: Ministry of Education
- NEASC: New England Association of Schools and Colleges – A mandatory scheme for inspection of US curriculum schools operating within Dubai to demonstrate alignment to schools in the US
- PE: Private Equity
- PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment – A triennial international survey that aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students.
- TIMSS: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study – A series of international assessments of the mathematics and science knowledge of students around the world
- UAE: United Arab Emirates
- US\$: United States Dollar

## Introduction

### Background

As this work concerns my personal and professional learning as a teacher educator, I shall begin by giving a short biography. Throughout my career, I have been keen to learn about people *and* culture within the education sector. Since moving to the UAE in 2008, I have been committed to learning by engaging in a number of formal and informal learning activities as well as gaining additional professional and academic qualifications, both online and taught. In my first year of working in the UAE, I completed my M.Ed on the 'The Impact of Thinking Skills in a UAE Context'. At the same time, I have engaged with my colleagues and learnt through these interactions.

Furthermore, as I conducted this research, I worked in a full-time capacity for three different organisations, while also working part-time for two others. In my first role, I worked as a partnership teacher and a lead practitioner coordinator, and then later as a school improvement partner. I worked as the head of school development at Organisation 2 (see Table 1). I left this role because I wished to be in control of my professional situation and residential status within the country; subsequently establishing my employment in organisations where I could gain equity. I currently have six business partners across three organisations, and employ over 80 members of staff (including 50 teachers) from a range of countries. I am responsible on a day-to-day level for the income of these companies, the healthcare and well-being of the employees, and in some cases, the housing of the staff. I am also responsible for the legal status of the staff and their residency in the UAE. Although this level of responsibility has been overwhelming at times, my involvement in the many facets of this work has allowed me to understand the laws, employment practices and cultural nuances of the UAE, and to see the ways in which teachers operate within the society.

I started this research in 2012 and since then I have lived in two different cities in the UAE and worked in a number of organisations as illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1 My professional roles in the UAE**

Organisation	Description	Location	Years
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Worked as a Partnership Teacher in a British-owned, not-for-profit education management company.</li> <li>- Worked in the classroom with teachers to plan, team-teach, observe and collaborate.</li> <li>- Took on the role of lead practitioner coordinator to head the Lead Practitioner Programme in partnership with The University of Warwick</li> <li>- Acted as a school improvement partner based in a school, as well as project manager.</li> <li>- Was one of three hundred staff working across a range of public and private schools.</li> <li>- Operated on a two-year contract initially, and then a rolling one-year contract.</li> </ul>	Al Ain, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Doha, Qatar	Dec 2008 – Jul 2014
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Worked as head of school development for an Indian real estate and development company that owned two for-profit schools in Dubai.</li> <li>- Was one of a few Westerners out of 3000+ staff, predominantly from India based in Head Office, Dubai.</li> <li>- Permanent contract.</li> <li>- Responsible for developing two new UK curriculum schools in Dubai.</li> </ul>	Dubai, UAE	Jul 2014 – Oct 2016
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Act as CEO for a British-owned for-profit education management company.</li> <li>- Overall responsibility for Middle-East operations.</li> <li>- Permanent contract.</li> <li>- Own shares in the company.</li> </ul>	Dubai, Abu Dhabi, UAE.	Oct 2016 – present
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Am one of the owners and founders of an early learning centre in Dubai, licensed by the KHDA. The Centre has over 200 children from ages 1 to 6.</li> <li>- Permanent contract.</li> <li>- Own shares in the organisation.</li> </ul>	Dubai	Jan 2016 – present
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One of the owners and partners of an education research company that publishes reports on the sector.</li> <li>- Permanent contract.</li> <li>- Own shares in the organisation.</li> </ul>	Dubai	Sep 2015 – present

The details provided about my contract types are relevant as factors that have informed some of my data collection decisions. In the UAE, an overseas employee's labour contract is directly linked to their residence visa. This means that the stakes have been high for me personally, as success in my roles in Organisations 1 and 2 was vital to maintain my residency and therefore my livelihood in the UAE. In Chapter 4, I will unpack the ways in which this factor has influenced my sense of needing to be in control of my own personal situation throughout the research.

As a result of my roles as a researcher, governor, teacher, teacher educator, mentor, coach and business leader, my professional identity is wide-ranging and fluid. On any given day, I might assume multiple roles, and perform tasks within each professional space. At times, I have struggled to maintain all of these roles because I have been responsible for "building bridges between worlds" (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011:140), as I have been accountable to people in different professional disciplines, namely in business *and* in education. By crossing different professional spaces in order to "establish continuity" in my roles and to build on my professional understanding (Bakker & Akkerman, 2013), I have responded to unfamiliar challenges, as I engaged in dialogue with different people, and composed an inner dialogue with myself as my values have been challenged. This has strengthened my understanding of the education sector, and how it functions within UAE society, but created personal tensions that I continue to manage.

In Organisation 1, I worked across both the public and private sectors. I worked with Arab expatriate teachers as part of the government's reform project, and later took responsibility for training groups of teachers who had opted to undertake 'The Lead Practitioner' programme that led to a professional learning qualification. This programme, which was accredited by the University of Warwick, was owned by Organisation 1. Teachers completing the programme received 'Lead Practitioner Status' and were able to translate their accreditation into 30 credits of a master's degree in education through additional academic writing. I was responsible for

developing the programme in the UAE, and for overseeing it, which I did for 5 years. During that time, I also worked within the private sector with Western expatriate teachers whose schools had procured the qualification for some of their staff. In this role for Organisation 1, I felt outside of my comfort zone at first. I did not feel prepared—in terms of experience and skills as well as the cultural differences—but I also realised that my colleagues were feeling the same because the nature of the work was new to all stakeholders. I searched for academic literature that matched my needs within the particular micro-contexts that applied to me, but found it very limited. Writing was my outlet, and building networks enabled me to share ideas with colleagues in similar situations. As there was limited professional knowledge in the space, I made a concerted effort to write in professional newsletters, where I shared my work and the work of others which I refer to within Chapter 4.

With Organisation 2, I worked within the private sector in Dubai to open two new UK-curriculum schools. My role was primarily working with the owner to shape the commercial aspects of the school, and to ensure the quality of the curriculum and the teaching. I managed the pre-opening arrangements such as HR, staffing, marketing and the regulatory approvals. I provide details of the key performance indicators (KPIs) I was responsible for achieving in Chapter 4. In Organisation 3, which is my current place of employment, in addition to Organisations 4 and 5, I work across the education sector in all aspects of commercial and educational work, covering investment, school design, school improvement, teacher training, teacher recruitment, school inspection, and governance. In all these roles, I have maintained an external and online network which has provided me with access to a large group of teachers from across the country. I organise networking events for teachers within the network in order to encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing, outside of my professional roles.

The UAE is my home outside the UK, and I feel privileged to have lived part of my life in another country. My experiences as a senior educational professional in the UAE have challenged many of my personal views on issues both within and outside of education. In the UAE, education and healthcare are not free at the point of delivery; but on the other hand, there is no personal income tax. In some of the schools I have worked in, the academic results have been exceptional despite the relatively low cost of the education. This has challenged my opinion on the nature of education and on the social welfare system in the UK. In the UAE, there is no such welfare system. My beliefs on issues such as immigration, justice, Islamic fundamentalism, healthcare, and the role of government have also been challenged by my experiences in the UAE.

While working in Organisation 1, I noticed how my colleagues were often obsessed with importing approaches to teaching instead of starting with the needs of the learners or the context, and I sometimes fell into this trap too. As the UAE's context is unique, and the majority of workers are foreign; the implications of a high percentage of people adopting this mind-set is potentially dangerous. At times, this research interest has been my escape from managing the day-to-day challenges in my organisation, from the pressure to achieve results within a competitive environment, and from managing and resolving other people's problems within the sector. This research has afforded me a professional learning space without any interference from clients or business partners, and the process of conducting this research has provided me with an intellectual stimulus and focus. As this thesis explores my professional learning, it is crucial that the work-related factors that have underpinned my developing professional and research perspectives are taken into account in assessing the value of this work.

During my time in the UAE, I have worked with teachers in Abu Dhabi, the nation's capital; in Al Ain, the fourth largest city with the nation's highest population of locals; in Dubai, the country's business capital and most Westernised city; in Sharjah, the nation's home of Islam; and in Ras Al

Khaimah, a northern emirate close to Iran. Within these emirates—each one distinct from the others—I have worked in both the public and private sectors, and in schools with different curricula. In Chapter 1, I provided a detailed description of the UAE context so this research can be viewed within this historical, cultural and educational context.

### **Research Aims**

The thesis aims to address the research gap in teacher educators' professional learning in the UAE, where no formal research networks exist for teacher educators in this field. I have therefore operated within my own contexts to develop this research. My roles as a senior educational professional in UAE have inspired my interest in the professional learning of teacher educators and specifically in reflecting on my own professional learning. Therefore, my research aims are:

- To capture the nuances of my personal and professional learning in the UAE
- To elaborate on the process of researching my professional experiences and development

My research employs narrative inquiry to critique the different approaches to and perceptions of professional learning that have evolved due to my different roles and relationships with the participants represented in this study. I selected narrative inquiry as my methodological approach as I was attracted by the meanings I could convey through this methodology, and I wanted my professional experiences and personal development to be central to the research. It was important therefore to make my intentions transparent with the participants who contributed to my narrative (Riessman, 2008). I provide an authentic narrative of my experiences in the UAE and of the emerging sense of place and agency I developed as I gained an understanding of the challenges of facilitating professional learning. Narrative inquiry served as a pedagogical tool enabling me to reveal how I understand myself and my strategies for living and operating in this particular context (Trahar, 2013:22). I present my learning as a result of adopting narrative inquiry in ways that may be useful to teachers and teacher-educators wishing to consider their own

approaches to professional learning and “to review and refine the ways in which they enact their professional role” (Conle, 2000:5).

## **Overview**

Within Chapter 1, I provide information about UAE education context and the opportunities and implications for teacher educators. Chapter 2 provides a literature review of the research on professional learning of teacher educators and teachers and suggests that issues for teacher educators are not unique to my context. In Chapter 3, I outline my methodological commitments and data-collection methods. As this thesis concerns my personal and professional learning, I refer to my professional roles throughout this thesis, and in my findings chapter, I include personal information about my values and biography. I am aware that knowledge is intimately connected with power and can sometimes be used to oppress, especially when it is withheld (Etherington, 2004:27). This theme will emerge later in Chapter 4 where I also argue, that my enhanced consciousness, as well as my sense of purpose and agency through the research process, have allowed me to develop a sense of ‘self-in-the-world’ (Killick, 2013a:722; 2013b:186). This chapter interweaves the findings and discussion in order to triangulate the data with the literature on professional learning. This process has helped facilitate the development of my personal learning agility framework, on which I elaborate in a distinct section within Chapter 5.

I define ‘agility’ as the capability to move rapidly and flexibly in order to shape or adapt to the opportunities or threats arising from uncertainty (The Economist, 2012:68). The ability to make important decisions and move rapidly in uncertain conditions is critical in my professional role. Extensive research conducted by McKinsey (The Economist, 2012) shows a correlation between agility and successful performance in turbulent markets. McKinsey defines agility as “the capacity to identify and capture opportunities more quickly than rivals do” (The Economist, 2012:68); and turbulence as a measure of frequency of unpredictable changes affecting the ability of companies

to create and sustain value. In the process of creating this framework, I have reflected on my role, my limitations, and on the specific set of knowledge and skills I have found necessary to function effectively in the profession (Ben-Peretz et al, 2010).

In the Conclusion, I reflect on the process of conducting this research and the personal impact it has had on my learning, and my sense of control of my personal situation, whilst seeking empowerment through taking on un-familiar professional challenges. I consider the limitations of this study as well as the methods I have adopted and the potential implications for other teacher educators. I also identify some potential areas for further research into the professional learning of teacher educators and teachers within the UAE.

# Chapter 1.

## 1.1. Introduction

This thesis is a narrative of my professional learning as a teacher educator over a six-year period of working in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). At the time of writing this thesis, I work as the Chief Executive Officer for an education management company that works with schools and investors in the United Arab Emirates. As a teacher educator within the UAE, I have been required to navigate the context and its regulatory challenges. I have written publicly about the implications of teacher licensing, professional learning and teacher recruitment and have also discussed these topics in public fora. In my professional roles, I have been motivated to be in control of my own employment situation whilst conducting this research so within this chapter I outline the context of this narrative so the implications of my decision making can be viewed from a wider perspective.

## 1.2 The Research Context

The UAE, viewed as a major business hub of the Middle East (Buckner, 2017), is situated in the Arabian Gulf next to Qatar and facing Iran. It is still a relatively young country (Dickson, 2012). The national religion is Islam, and the country is separated into seven distinct emirates. The Federal Government oversees the seven emirates and, in turn, each emirate has its own arm of government that reports to the federal government. With a population of roughly 9.3 million, the majority of residents are non-UAE citizens (approximately 90%) with no opportunity to ever attain a UAE passport or be classified as UAE citizens (James & Shammas, 2018:492). This imbalance, coupled with globalisation, has had a significant impact on the Emirati culture, as well as on the society and mind-set (James & Shammas, 2018). The country's outward-looking ethos could be viewed, on the one hand, as a positive move towards multi-culturalism; but on the other hand, the rapid speed of development during the country's short history may have come at the expense of its own cultural traditions and Bedouin history.

Within culturally diverse societies, understanding, respect, and tolerance are required to ensure that individuals from all cultural backgrounds are protected by law (Huber et al, 2014:9). Whilst non-Emiratis who reside in and contribute to Emirati society are protected by law, they are unable to gain citizenship. These limitations in legal status impact on careers within the education sector and influence other aspects of life within the UAE. The legal status of Emirati and non-Emirati residents is in fact symbolic of “the exercise of power and control” (Huber et al, 2014). Having recognised this power structure in my professional life, I understand that when we discuss culture, we need to question the “very base of one’s own intellectual inquiry” and accept that knowledge is “colored by the social and historical context in which it is acquired and disseminated” (Kramsch, 1998:3).

A further contradiction can be seen in the way that Emirati society has been described as “tribal, conservative, and Islamic” (James & Shamma, 2018:492); but at the same time, and due to its significant wealth, as representing neo-liberalism and globalisation (Krane, 2009). Indeed, the negative impact of Dubai’s fast expansion on the city’s migrant workers has brought horror stories to the fore that demonstrate the wide inequality within the society (Buckley, 2013).

As a city-state, Dubai has seen a rapid transformation (Cherrier & Belk, 2015) and has developed a niche for itself as the third largest re-export centre between Europe and Asia, after Hong Kong and Singapore (Bagaeen, 2007). The city has a reputation for commerce and consumption. On the face of it, Dubai is very diverse in terms of its demographic population, and the growth of international education creates opportunities for connectivity (Ferguson, 2011). Although the global age is defined as a time when connectivity is enhanced by advances in technology and transportation (Giddens, 2007), the UAE, has banned Skype and some other forms of global communication, so the connectivity is restricted (The National, September, 2018).

### **1.2.1 The UAE: a multi-cultural working environment**

The term 'expat' or 'expatriate' is commonly used in day-to-day life by Western expatriates to describe mainly Western expatriates. I use this term here to describe anyone who is not Emirati, including Arab as well as European expatriates. When living in Al Ain, I worked with Emiratis as well as with Arab and Western expatriates, who made up a small minority of Al Ain's population. After the global recession in 2008, the UAE experienced a large influx of both Arab and Western expatriates, many of whom had moved to the UAE to "escape austerity-hit Europe for booming UAE" (The National, 2013). In Dubai there is a large concentration of Westerners, hence inter-cultural experiences are not as common. The academic workforce in the UAE is almost exclusively dominated by Western expatriates (Ryan & Daly, 2017). When inter-cultural opportunities do happen, I am comfortable working with Arabs, Emiratis, Indians and Pakistanis, as well as people of other nationalities, cultural norms and expectations. The ability to understand and communicate across "all kinds of cultural divisions is a fundamental prerequisite" (Barrett et al, 2013:9) for teacher educators working within the UAE.

The concept of 'culture' is difficult to define (Spencer-Oatey, 2012) and in the UAE, it is common to talk about Emirati culture but this relates specifically to Emirati citizens. In Dubai, there is a fuzziness of cultures where people belong to multiple cultures, intersecting with different cultures and communities. Such people often subscribe to a particular cultural structure nonetheless, a tendency that suggests how "the meanings that people attach to different cultures are a result of their own life histories, personal experiences and individual personalities" (Huber et al, 2014:14). Nevertheless, cultural understanding is comparative because no understanding of others is possible without self-understanding (Rizvi, 2009).

Culture can influence our behaviour, and how we interpret the behaviours of others. The reduction of the individual to the essence of his/her culture, known as 'essentialism', leads to (often national

cultural) stereotyping (Holliday, 2011). This thesis takes more of a constructivist view of culture. While it recognises that individuals do often share a broad-based heritage resulting from their nation of birth, there are numerous other components to an individual's cultural identity and these might include other (e.g. ethnic, religious, social class or political) aspects of family heritage, alongside individual life experiences. Together, these are employed by the individual to construct a fluid cultural identity—or even multiple cultural identities—over the course of their life that are activated within different circumstances. These identities are increasingly informed by a global context, where media exposure, internet usage and consumer choices may play as strong a role as nation of birth, and where families are increasingly likely to have a mixed culture (Salter & Halbert, 2017:413).

Although Dubai has the glitz and glamour of a cosmopolitan city, many of its residents have never actually left the city, and others have never visited the capital city of the UAE, Abu Dhabi, which is only an hour's drive away. This may be due to 'corporate cosmopolitanism' (Rizvi, 2009:259) where individuals have bought into the neo-liberal economic model, and their personal identities are de-centred, flexible, and strategic, because they are encouraged to be opportunistic to accumulate capital and power. This type of corporate cosmopolitan fails to bring about cultural understanding and it reproduces the privilege of the transnational elites (Rizvi, 2009). To create equitable global citizens, individuals must be equipped with a set of dispositions that enable them to be critical and reflexive. As I have lived in other parts of the country, knowing the people and places gives me confidence in my own personal understanding of the different communities that live in the UAE and therefore, an awareness and sensitivity to the cultural diversity within the country. As a consequence, I am aware that despite my experience, there are many elements of UAE society that I have not accessed such as the rural Bedouin communities, and many other communities that reside in different parts of the country.

### **1.2.2 The educational context in UAE: Opportunities for educational research**

The Federal Ministry of Education (MOE) regulates the public schools in all seven emirates, and the private sector in six emirates. The Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) regulates the private schools in Dubai. Although the international and multicultural educational context of the UAE poses a unique opportunity for researchers, it also presents a challenge. Access to different communities to explore cross-cultural themes can be difficult, for example; therefore, research needs to be designed accordingly, and with sensitivity (Ryan & Daly, 2017). Similarly, as the UAE is a private society and a relatively new country, access to participants and data can be a significant challenge. The difficulty of accessing people is compounded by the international and multi-cultural context of the UAE that “can be intimidating rather than inviting engagement with others” (Ryan & Daly, 2017:3). By conducting research in this environment, and using a research method that is relatively new in the UAE, I aim to offer new insights into my professional learning as a teacher educator within the UAE education context.

One major objective of employing expatriates is the UAE’s attempt to gain global recognition for research and higher education, but this ambition comes with a number of challenges for leaders both in education and business. Western teacher educators and school leaders must respect the local laws and traditions, while often paradoxically, demonstrating their expertise and justifying their place within the industry. Given these tensions, the presence of informed leadership in the international school sector is critical to ensure the quality of education and its relevance in a global economy (Chaudhuri & Alagaraja, 2014). The leadership needs to achieve and sustain the necessary improvements over time, across all the schools and throughout the different systems. New solutions are needed to address the impact of globalisation on international schools and to support new ways of approaching the learning of teacher educators in this context.

One possible solution to navigating complex contexts is the notion of 'boundary crossing'. A boundary is a socio-cultural difference that leads to a discontinuity in action (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). Boundary crossing can be described as the "efforts made by individuals and groups 'at the boundaries' to establish or restore continuity in action" (Akkerman & Bakker, 2013:3). Within this research, I have crossed multiple professional boundaries, within the roles I described in Table 1, and I have experienced multiple discontinuities, and used different methods to access and continue dialogue with my participants.

These experiences on the edge of boundaries, and often between professional spaces can be categorised in four different forms (a) identification, the nature of different worlds working together but with discontinuities (b) coordination of activity flow, which leads to the overcoming of boundaries; (c) reflection on differences between cultural backgrounds, and practices, and an effort to shape and take different perspectives leading to new understandings; (d) transformation, which leads to changes in views and potentially the creation of new in-between practice (Daskolia, 2014:4). Within my findings chapter, I allude to aspects of my professional practice which may resemble some of these categories, and my work on the boundaries has been infused with my values, emotions, prior experience, professional accountabilities and my personal goals. These four categories are useful descriptors of my learning whilst I have been situated in certain professional spaces.

My professional practice has been facilitated by the use of boundary objects such as written reports, visual research methods, learning skills rubrics, and quantitative research data. These objects have enabled me to bridge conversations when I have sensed that a discontinuity was about to happen, and therefore, they have allowed me and my participants to negotiate meaning (Daskolia, 2014:5). These objects have provided 'interpretative flexibility' and acted as a means of translation. They haven't always immediately resulted in continuity as some of the objects I

have deployed did not start out with this intention. This skill has been developed throughout this thesis as my inquiry has evolved, and as I have engaged in different professional spaces. This, along with the learning that has arisen from inter-cultural interactions have been sources of personal development and enrichment. The development of boundary objects, and inter-cultural competence have proved to be essential skills for me as a teacher educator in the UAE, and have helped me to navigate some of the challenges the education sector presents (Huber et al, 2014:24).

The skills involved in intercultural competence include empathy and cognitive flexibility, alongside the ability to adapt one's behaviour to new cultural environments and act as a bridge or mediator in conversations between people from different cultures (ibid). Inter-cultural competence is the ability to bring about normality in an unfamiliar interaction where individuals from different cultures are disorientated within the conversation and setting. Within such interactions, boundary crossing can enable spaces to be created for professional practice sharing and professional learning (Engestrom, 1987). However, interventions can enable "asymmetries or power differentials" within interactions, as a result of how people interpret the language and cultural elements (Huber and Reynolds, 2014:18). My goal was to bring an understanding of the sociocultural differences that existed between participants, and myself and participants, to avoid discontinuities in interactions (Akkerman and Bakker, 2011:113) and to explore beliefs, attitudes, and dispositions that underpin respectful and equal discourse with participants, demonstrate tolerance of difference and an empathy to understand alternative perspectives (Harrison, 2015).

In light of the particular demographic challenges presented in the UAE, I have reflected on how the society and education community could be enabled to cooperate more closely, instead of living and working in silos (James & Shamma, 2018:507). This thesis is a narrative of my learning as a teacher educator in the UAE; a country that is grappling with issues related to globalisation

whilst trying to maintain its national heritage (Christie, 2010). These issues include a reliance on foreign teachers without any formal teaching qualifications, and Western expatriates working within the public sector attempting to raise teaching standards. This requires the design of novel approaches to professional learning. The lack of an immediate research community to support my development as a researcher in the field and to provide a critical perspective, in a similar way to the support provided by practitioner research communities in schools, has been an on-going challenge of this research and the dearth of high-quality research both in the school and university sectors in the UAE, however, might be a contributing factor to this.

This lack of research has implications for the “quality of academic researchers attracted to the UAE”, and consequently for the research environment overall (Ryan & Daly, 2017:2). Research in the UAE is therefore not listed very high in the global research rankings. Khalifa University in the UAE is the highest ranked university in the range of 301–350 in the Times Higher Education Rankings. The Arab world has been defined as a “high context, communication environment where academics tend to avoid critical debate” (Ryan & Daly, 2017:3), with education described as ‘consumerist’ and ‘not necessarily a gateway to knowledge’ (James & Shamma, 2018). The lack of research culture has motivated me to develop strategies in order to encourage knowledge creation and critical debate within the teaching community, where I have experienced similar challenges. I will discuss some of these strategies in Chapter 4.

This thesis aims to contribute to the research on teacher educators and the skills and attributes needed by teachers and teacher educators within the UAE; a country that is better known for knowledge dissemination than knowledge creation, due to its relative history (Ryan & Daly, 2017). This characteristic has given rise to opposing perspectives such as: the good (non-problematic/we/us/willing/motivated/engaged/Western-educated academics) and the bad (problematic/they/them/unwilling/unmotivated/disengaged/Emirati students); thereby creating an

'othering' culture. This sentiment, which originates from the expatriate academic community in schools and in higher education and is echoed throughout life in the UAE, reveals a poor understanding of the nuances in the cultural challenges both for Emiratis and foreign workers. This 'othering' perspective may prop up the binary opposition created in order to justify the continued importation of knowledge rather than developing professional knowledge within the sector by bringing communities together through conversations (James & Shammas, 2018).

### **1.2.3 Towards a knowledge-based economy**

Along with other states within the Gulf Region, the United Arab Emirates has historically been described as a 'rentier state' (Beblawi, 1990), having been dependent upon oil for its economic development. But in the last 30 years, investment in education has significantly increased as the region has attempted to develop a knowledge-based economy (Farah, 2012:1). At the same time, governments have prioritised education reform in order to gain economic advantages within the globalised economy (Leat et al, 2006:1) and "the discourse surrounding the knowledge economy has become central in many national strategies and development plans across the region" (Farah, 2012:3).

It is estimated that in 2010 the education sector received the highest percentage of federal funding in the country (22.5%), amounting to approximately US\$2.7 billion (Farah, 2012:4). Nonetheless, the narrative surrounding education has changed little. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and Chairman of the Education and Human Resources Council stated that:

Learning is the most important skill for people in the 21st century, as every person should have the instinct for learning, as a person who does not learn in this age over the course of a day is a person who does not belong in this time. It is your right to not get a degree, but it is not your right to not learn (Khaleej Times, August, 2018).

Some 17 of the 22 countries in the Arab World are now in fact developing a knowledge-based economy as a medium to long-term economic policy objective (Schwalje, 2013:7). Indeed, the education sector across the MENA region is expected to be worth USD237 billion by 2020 (Al Masah Capital, 2014:2). The investment in public education has been publicised, and the size and growth of the private sector has received its fair share of media coverage. Despite these factors, however; and as educational reform in the UAE is a recent phenomenon, systematic evidence on student outcomes and teacher efficacy is limited (Kaddah, 2010). The discourse around the public and private sectors is separated, and both sectors have their own distinctive features, further complicating any assessments. So far, the financial investment in public education has not yet succeeded in bringing the necessary improvements to the public education system in order to satisfy the demands of the knowledge economy (Farah, 2012:4). The UAE has the highest enrolment of students in the private sector worldwide *and* the highest investment in the reform of public education. In the next decade, private schools may undergo radical changes that will increase the size of the private market yet further, and boost the quality of all education in the region (Booze & Co, 2011:4).

There are contextual challenges for the teacher educator in creating professional knowledge within the higher education sector in the UAE. Ryan and Daly (2017) highlight the challenges both of conducting business and of doing social research in the country. Farah (2012) provides an overview of education quality and competitiveness in the public-education sector and examines the country's ambitions for investing in education. Yates (2016) exploration of the identity of Western expatriates within the armed forces in an Emirati context relates many experiences I could identify with in my professional role within Organisation 1. Other papers on neo-liberalism (Buckley, 2013), teacher care, and motivation in the Gulf (James & Shamma, 2018), in addition to the teaching profession (Buckner, 2017), Emirati women and globalisation (Cherrier & Belk,

2015) have enabled me to deepen my understanding of the context and reflect on the wider challenges for my professional role as explored in the following sections.

### **1.3.1 The private school sector within Dubai**

The research on international schools in general is complex and the terminology around international education is broadly defined (Hayden & Thompson, 1995a:327). While the industry of international schools continues to grow very rapidly, the types of school on offer vary tremendously and their definition is therefore problematic (Keller, 2015:900).

The education regulator of Dubai, the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) has developed a market-driven approach to private education. Its approach is complex for all stakeholders, not least for teachers who operate on short-term contracts within a high accountability environment, with school inspections taking place annually. In the other emirates, the Ministry of Education regulates both public and private sectors. In Dubai, private, international schools can operate independently, although their success is tied to the education cost index (ECI), which is linked to the school inspection framework. The schools are owned by families, private equity companies, real estate funds and school groups. Revenue primarily comes from tuition fees paid by parents or employers. As independent schools rely on tuition fees, they are often “immune to the issues that accompany poverty and urbanicity” in Western countries (Mancuso et al, 2010:308). Private schools are allowed to increase their fees in line with their Dubai School Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspection rating. The market-driven approach to education can on the one hand “require the use of state power to circumvent existing democratic structures” and, on the other hand, generate public consent for the policy changes by presenting the idea of ‘choice’ as empowerment (Cohen & Lizotte, 2015:1825). Market-based education is not universally popular because of its lack of regulations, and its promotion of ‘choice’ for parents as a driving factor to legitimise the lack of regulation (Diedrich, 2012). The market-based approach

in Dubai also means that private schools regularly increase school fees, much to the disdain of parents.

In Dubai, the KHDA sets the education agenda for Dubai's private school system, which includes any school that charges tuition fees. For the purposes of this study, the term 'private school' refers to international, fee-paying schools. In Dubai, schools are often described by their curriculum label (British, American, Indian, International Baccalaureate [IB], Pakistani). When an education system is exported to a country with a different culture and system, any cultural differences may become evident, causing complications and misunderstanding between its stakeholders. Culture underlies and affects people's values within education and the workplace as well as the learning and teaching styles in the classroom (Lemke-Westcott & Johnson, 2013:67). Perceptions about how people learn can therefore differ according to the culture, influencing parent and student expectations in many areas of school life such as in the curriculum, with policies, teaching approaches, discipline, student voice, and student-led learning. For example, parents who were educated in non-Western systems such as India but have chosen to educate their children in British or American curriculum schools in Dubai may encounter approaches that are unfamiliar and differ from their own school experience. As they are fee-paying, parents may challenge the school's educational approach when it does not conform to their perceived definition of schooling. Teachers in the UAE are expected to manage these challenges, as the KHDA regulates the sector.

As the population of Dubai has increased, so too has the demand for private schools, hence the establishment of the KHDA in 2007 with its mandate to develop the education sector. The mandate includes supervising school performance against a set of quality standards, in addition to elevating the status of teachers in society, and ensuring that parents as well as children are catered for (Thacker & Cuadra, 2014). The KHDA states it is "responsible for the growth and

quality of private education in Dubai” and pledges to “support schools, universities, parents, students, educators, investors and government partners to create a high-quality education sector focused on happiness and wellbeing”<sup>1</sup>. The KHDA’s approach is market-driven; “a situation which is both unique and extreme—and yet without providing direct or indirect state funding or subsidization to it.” (Thacker & Cuadra, 2014:5). There are multiple implications of a market-driven approach for students, parents, teachers and teacher educators.

Driven by economic imperatives, Dubai schools therefore vary, largely according to the communities they serve, and the one common factor within a school is often the economic status of the parents as a consequence. Emiratis can choose to send their children to public or private schools, whereas non-Arab expatriate students can attend private schools only (Thacker & Cuadra, 2014). In September 2019, at the start of the school year, 88 percent of all students were attending private schools in the emirate. In total, some 205 private schools offer a mix of 17 different curricula including Indian, UK, US, UAE, IB, Pakistani, Japanese, German, French, Filipino and others. Government schools are state funded and regulated by the Ministry of Education (federal government). Dubai’s private schools are mandated to teach Arabic to native and non-native Arabic speakers, Islamic Education to Muslims, and all schools must teach UAE Moral Education and Social Studies.

### **1.3.2 High-stakes accountability in the market-driven education sector in UAE**

School leaders, teachers and staff are under constant scrutiny in Dubai with a system of high-stakes accountability driven by the KHDA. School inspections take place annually in Dubai, irrespective of a school’s rating. The inspection system and framework of the DSIB, the body that works under the KHDA, includes various judgement indicators that schools must achieve. School

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.khda.gov.ae/en//about-us>

inspection judgements are also linked to the Education Cost Index (ECI), and the inspection rating determines the size of any increase in the school fees. This approach has been heavily criticised because existing schools that opened prior to the regulations do not have the same entitlements as new schools entering the system. New schools can set their fees at whatever level they choose, which allows them to come in at the highest level. This approach is also fraught with limitations as the market conditions ultimately determine the school's capacity, and therefore, revenue. This situation enables good schools to improve because they have the capacity to do so; whereas weaker schools lack the means, "either material or technical", to improve (Thacker & Cuadra, 2014:37).

The school inspection framework is the same for all curricula because policy makers anticipated that families arriving or residing in Dubai would not only demand a curriculum similar to the one of their country of origin, but also of a quality commensurate with their own assumed high level of education (Thacker & Cuadra, 2014). This system means that principals and teachers are under pressure to perform not only to maintain their professional reputation but also to reap the financial benefits of achieving certain inspection ratings. However, as international school leaders have an average tenure of only 2.8 years (Benson, 2011:8) and the main reason for leaders leaving their role is related to school governance (i.e. board micromanagement) and aspects of the job that are described as "dark, and toxic", and "destructive" (Einarsen et al, 2007:2), the resulting lack of continuity is not conducive to high inspection ratings. Professional learning for principals and teachers that addresses the complexity, ambiguity and pace of change of international schools is therefore critical to address this challenge (Keller, 2015:900).

As the KHDA regulates the sector but does not fund it, the decision to allow market forces to drive improvement is an ambiguous one. At the heart of this decision is the idea of parental choice, which is intended to "force schools to innovate and diversify their offerings to parents" (Lubienski,

2006:323). However, evidence from several countries suggests that schools do not respond well to competitive incentives and usually “focus more on enrolment, rather than pursue more effective or diverse educational practices” (ibid).

A review of various literature on market-based approaches to education (Lundahl & Olso, 2013; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Lubienski, 2006; Cohen & Lizotte, 2015), shows that the majority of the studies were conducted in the United States, where various states have implemented voucher-based systems, or in countries that have de-regulated education policies, such as Sweden. In the United States, many of the current education reforms within this field have placed pressure on public schools. Evidence indicates that a market-based approach to education does not “produce gains anywhere like those needed for universal student achievement” (Lubienski, 2006:323), and is viewed as a means of reducing government involvement within state education, and encouraging competition between schools. ‘Market’ in this context refers to a situation where several producers compete to accomplish public tasks and/or the existence of internal management systems that are modelled on the idea of a business firm (Lundahl & Olson, 2013:202). Competition and choice are both at the heart of the market-based neoliberal approach to education. In Dubai neoliberalism is “not simply an economic policy” (Kirwan & Hall, 2016:4; Krane, 2009), but rather, “a governing rationality that disseminates market values and metrics to every sphere of life” (Lubienski, 2006:323). These core values mean that every aspect of the education system, from capital investment, to human capital, is viewed through a market lens. Although ‘choice’ is often the word used to legitimise market-based approaches to education with parents, it is rarely used with teachers. The ability for teachers to move positions within a market may actually signify a power structure that would not suit the neo-liberal approach because parents are the main source of revenue, and teachers are workers within the system. Choice for parents is “presented as an apolitical and socially neutral mechanism for allowing parents to maximize their children’s educational opportunities” (Cohen & Lizotte, 2015:1824) and it also

implies that the regulator will not regulate certain aspects of the market, namely admissions, so the power dynamics are with the parents, and their power to choose represents the ultimate freedom. The power to choose within a capitalist system is a highly individualised capacity, as choice and access go hand in hand<sup>2</sup>. Choice, “defined as the individual maximization of opportunities, has become the litmus test by which good membership in the polity is defined” (Cohen & Lizotte, 2015:184).

For a market-driven approach to work, there must be a number of buyers and sellers, homogeneous products, the free entry and exit of firms, the absence of transport costs and independent decision-making for profit maximisation (Diedrich, 2012:6). The private-school system in Dubai is mostly driven by for-profit schools and school groups (Thacker & Cuadra, 2014), and although the system can be described as market-driven, it is important to note that non-Arab expatriates are not allowed to attend government schools. Their choice is therefore limited to the private sector. It could be argued that the KHDA has adopted this approach to repurpose the state and reshape its institutions in the image of a market (Peck & Tickell, 2002). The journey that the KHDA is taking to regulate a completely market-led system is significant “because it is demonstrating how innovative governance designs can help a public institution steer an expanding private education sector towards quality improvements” (Thacker & Cuadra, 2014:50). The lack of criticality in this latter study may be due to the fact that the KHDA employed the World Bank to conduct this study on the sector.

Much of the research on market-based approaches is very critical of the approach in terms of student outcomes, access to education and the short-termism of schools and staff (Diedrich, 2012). Diedrich goes so far as to suggest that education reforms which focus on creating an

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<sup>2</sup> <http://gulfbusiness.com/full-exclusive-interview-gems-chairman-sunny-varkey-talks-profits-and-philanthropy/>

“educational marketplace” are doomed to failure (Diedrich, 2012:6). The critique in the literature mainly refers to the marketization of public schooling. The research on private-sector contexts similar to Dubai is limited, as is the research on the broader marketization of international schools and its impact on teachers and school leaders. Like the two different school systems, as mentioned earlier, the two sets of literature appear to operate in distinctive paradigms, quite separately. Global trends toward the commodification of education driven by business interests tend to privilege entrepreneurial skills together with cognitive forms of instrumental reflexivity over cooperative learning and sociocultural inclusive approaches (Pollman, 2016:7). The topic of reflexivity and its relationship to this study is discussed in more detail in Section 3.8. At the heart of the reforms in the UAE is the National Agenda, which is used as part of the inspection framework, with every school required to submit a UAE National Agenda Action plan.

The UAE National Agenda is driven by eight targets linked to international PISA and TIMS tests and other quantitative measures, with the ambition to be in the top 15 performing countries in TIMS and in the top 20 in PISA by 2021 (The National, 2017). However, a relentless focus on statistical targets presented in a comparative table of countries “may not provide meaningful comparisons” (Trahar, 2010:265). The education system designed within the environment of Dubai—unique in its demographic make-up due to its high percentage of foreign workers—operates over 17 different curricula within the school system (Thacker & Cuadra, 2014:50). The growth of investment in developing private schools is also the highest in the world<sup>3</sup>. This investment in public and private education first attracted me to the country.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://gulfnews.com/uae/education/the-uae-has-the-highest-number-of-international-schools-globally-1.1567703>

### **1.3.3 School accreditation**

Schools in Dubai can opt to undertake a dual inspection with an accreditation body linked to their curriculum. Four of the participants in this study worked in schools that were already accredited or were undergoing accreditation through the British Schools Overseas (BSO) and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Schools that follow the National Curriculum for England are encouraged to apply for BSO accreditation through the UK Department for Education. Schools that wish to retain their 'British' status are encouraged to apply for registration for inspection against the BSO standards. Both DSIB and BSO evaluate the effectiveness of teaching in promoting learning skills and progress. In addition, BSO evaluates how well the teaching enables students to enter or re-enter the UK education system at an appropriate level. Schools meeting the standards receive recognition by the Department for Education of England and Wales (DfE).

To obtain the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation, American curriculum schools in Dubai must deliver content that closely reflects subjects taught in American schools, with the mission of delivering high-quality teaching and learning. Starting from the academic year 2017–2018, schools meeting KHDA requirements and gaining NEASC accreditation are categorised as 'Authorized American Schools'. Schools not meeting these requirements are categorised as offering a 'school-based curriculum' (Thacker & Cuadra, 2014).

### **1.3.4 The UAE teacher licensing initiative**

In January 2018, the federal Ministry of Education announced that all private school teachers must obtain a license to teach in the UAE. The MoE Teacher License involves an online registration process that entails uploading qualifications and other key documents such as an up-to-date Police Clearance and overseas good conduct certificates. The MoE then reviews the teacher's degree and teaching qualifications, and their Language Proficiency (IELTS Level 7 for teachers teaching English and IELTS Level 6 for those teaching other subjects in English). All

teachers must also pass a Subject Specialisation Examination, sit a Teacher Competence Test, which evaluates their command of pedagogy, and complete a Professional Portfolio, which includes a Reflective Statement.

In addition, teachers in Dubai must also attain a Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) Teacher Permit. This also entails a review of degree and teaching qualifications as well as language proficiency; and requires every teacher to complete 90 hours of compulsory training on child protection and safeguarding, special education needs, well-being, moral education, sustainability, and diversity. This permit also requires teachers to pass an end-of-unit assessment on each module. It is understood that both the MoE Teacher Licence and the KHDA Teacher Permit must be completed within two years of taking up employment within the UAE.

Local newspaper, the Gulf News reported that “Teacher licensing may prove a challenge for schools—Schools fear they may have to replace a sizeable number of teachers after assessments” (Gulf News, March 2018). As a national initiative driven by the UAE’s National Agenda 2021<sup>[4]</sup> education targets, teacher licensing may have wider consequences for teachers and teacher educators as their professional learning is directed and prescribed by the government. Teachers must then complete four examinations on the UAE teacher standards before they can apply for ‘Competent Teacher Status’.

A number of private education providers have been appointed to lead the KHDA Teacher Permit training, and offer a mixture of approaches to the initiative. Some offer online solutions, and others, a mixture of blended and entirely taught solutions. The implications are that private

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<sup>4</sup> Please see Appendix A for the UAE National Agenda Education Targets

schools and teachers must commit a significant amount of time and resources to this initiative, irrespective of the quality of their existing staff or their specific school needs. The costs of the process vary, as some schools pay for the training and assessment, whereas others pass on some or all of the costs to their teachers.

Professional learning is sometimes viewed as a means of implementing a political agenda, and this often hides the fundamental questions underpinning the agenda. Managerial reforms in education have resulted in a greater focus on measuring the impact of teachers' professional learning (Keay et al, 2019:126). The new teacher-licensing regulations, however, conflict with the literature on professional learning for teachers that specifically highlights agency, autonomy and needs-based learning as the critical factors that empower teachers' learning (Webster-Wright, 2009). The implications of the teacher-licensing initiative are wide-ranging, and remove autonomy from teachers and school leaders. As the vast majority of teachers in the UAE are mobile foreign workers, their happiness and status within the UAE could be viewed as fragile, and therefore, their interactions with children might be affected by this. They may also possess professional knowledge about solutions to problems that have not yet come to the forefront of the sector.

As of 2018, approximately 19,000 teachers are working in Dubai's private schools. Teacher turnover is a commonly reported issue in the UAE media, and the high-turnover rate frequently appears in the literature on international schools. Previously, the local media had reported that "Overworked teachers quit in droves" (Gulf News, May 2016). In the following year, another headline announced that "UAE, GCC need thousands of teachers in next five years" (Khaleej Times, November 2017). Later, local media comments on the situation included the headlines "Teacher turnover taking its toll on the quality of instruction" (Khaleej Times, April 2018), and "Unprepared teachers in UAE refrain from registering for license" (Khaleej Times, September,

2018). A further report announced a teacher recruitment crisis in Maths and Science subjects (the National, May 2018).

Some of these stories may simply be sensation seeking, whereas others might reflect some of the real issues facing teachers and schools. Teaching and learning challenges are certainly heightened in a new environment, especially where cultural components play a major role (Lemke-Westcott & Johnson, 2013:82). Whilst in some cases a high turnover rate can have positive outcomes, more often than not, the consequences are negative (Mancuso et al, 2010:307). The issue of teacher retention in the UAE is one of policy significance, and there is little systematic knowledge of teachers' satisfaction in the UAE or of how satisfaction, on average, might compare to that of teachers in other nations, or indeed of how teachers from different backgrounds compare to one another (Buckner, 2017:5).

There have also been some contradictory narratives around teacher salaries and the status of the teaching profession within the local news. The Varkey Foundation, which is owned by Sunny Varkey, awarded the \$1 million-dollar Teacher Prize to a UK-based Art Teacher in March, 2018. Yet GEMS Education, which is the largest private school group in the UAE, also owned by Varkey, announced it was freezing teacher salaries as a result of the KHDA announcing a school tuition-fee freeze (Gulf News, June 2018). The Khaleej Times followed this up with the story 'Dubai schools make billions, but teacher salaries stagnant' (The Khaleej Times, June 2018).

Working in the UAE education sector for several years has enabled me to develop my awareness of this complex and nuanced context, thereby challenging my personal values and informing my decisions. I have also gained insights into the complex cultural aspects of the education sector in the UAE. Overall, the experience has contributed substantially to my professional learning.

At this crucial time, the voices both of teacher educators and of teachers need to be heard in order to learn about their personal stories, including the struggles and benefits of their work and lives in the UAE. I have navigated these challenges to re-shape my understandings of professional learning within this climate. I provide this contextual information as the backdrop for this study based on the circumstances prevailing at the time I started this study. The context continues to evolve significantly as time goes on. This research comes at a time when the professional learning space within the UAE is under greater scrutiny than before, and when the introduction of teacher licensing, presents a new set of requirements and challenges to the education sector.

I have often questioned whether distinct professional skills are needed to survive and prosper in the UAE education sector. I have seen many successful people from other contexts come and go for a variety of reasons. The current structure of short-term work visas, a lack of job security and the associated employment restrictions is a barrier to attracting education professionals (Ryan & Daly, 2017:6). Organisations need to prioritise research into global competency models for teachers so they “can reconcile with and survive in the changing global environment” (Kim & McLean, 2015:236). In fact, international school leaders need to be “mentally and emotionally prepared for radically different ways of working and living” (Chaudhuri & Alagaraja, 2014:364). I was faced with a variety of challenges as I attempted to respond to teacher educators and teachers’ professional inquiries, whilst navigating their epistemological beliefs about learning, values, and cultural differences.

This chapter will allow this narrative to be seen within the time frame and context of my professional roles in the UAE as I attempted to manage the parallel challenges of my roles and this research. Several interactions have shaped my perspective about professional learning within this context and helped me to consider my wider ambitions as an educator, together with the

nature and purpose of my evolving role. This experience has enabled me to critically reflect on my personal and professional journey as I searched for new challenges.

When deciding to undertake this study, I selected narrative inquiry as the methodological framework because the complexity of the context, and the fractures I observed in society meant that I needed a research methodology that was fluid and narrative inquiry seemed the most appropriate for that. In Chapter 3, I explain my ontological and epistemological assumptions. I also describe my methodological commitment to narrative inquiry, which resonates with my existing habits of thinking (Caine et al, 2013).

My professional story as a teacher-educator, together with the stories of my participants, have not only shaped my worldview, but have also enabled me to better perceive the levers that can influence change and personal growth within this context. Accordingly, this thesis explores the potential of narrative inquiry to re-shape my understanding of professional learning for me as a teacher educator, and sheds light on an education landscape that is complex and changing due to the emerging teacher-licensing regulations.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Literature Review: Part 1**

#### **2.1.1 An introduction to the literature on professional learning and teacher educators**

In order to frame this research, I provide a critical review of the literature on professional learning both for teacher educators and teachers. To identify the relevant literature, I used search terms such as ‘teacher professional learning in the UAE’ ‘teacher training in the UAE’ ‘teacher educators in the UAE’ and other variations of these terms for different middle-eastern countries in Google Scholar, Taylor and Francis Online and SAGE Journals. I also searched for wider literature on the professional learning of individual teacher educators in a range of contexts.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the professional learning of teacher educators was poorly understood, and their learning within the context of their roles, mainly in initial teacher training, was under-researched and undervalued. This situation has changed in the last ten to fifteen years, however (Meeus et al, 2017:15; Ping et al, 2018:102), as the status and importance of teacher educators has been increasingly recognised (Van der Klink et al, 2017:163). While there has been an increase both in research and policy literature (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2014:1), a “systematic overview of studies on teacher educators is still lacking” (Ping et al, 2018:2).

A wider analysis of literature on teacher educators indicates that the majority of research has been conducted within Anglophone settings, and most of the authors come from European countries (Livingston & Flores, 2017:1). The range of methodologies adopted over the past forty years include theoretical papers and empirical studies, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods. I have selected some of the more recent literature that either provides contextual similarities to my professional roles, or has theoretical relevance to this study. I have not encountered any literature on teacher educators in the UAE that adopts narrative inquiry as a

methodological framework or that explains how teacher educators in the field should best approach professional learning in the context of the UAE. The selection of literature is presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2 Literature on teacher educators**

<b>Author(s) Year Location</b>	<b>Methodology/data-collection methods</b>	<b>Focus of study</b>	<b>Key findings</b>
Ainat Guberman and Oded Mcdossi (2019)  Israel	Semi-structured interviews with 16 teacher educators working within teacher-training programmes. Mixed methods study.	Career development.	Research is integral to their development but competes with teaching and intuitional leadership.
Wil Meeus, Wouter Cools and Inge Placklé (2018)  Belgium	Electronic surveys with 240 teacher educators on initial teacher education programmes and adult education centres.	Professional identity, career pathways, professional learning activities.	Learning needs were broad, and it was not possible to cater for every need. A career development continuum was developed to match professional learning initiatives with career timeline.
Jurriën Dengerink, Mieke Lunenberg and Quinta Kools (2015)  The Netherlands	Questionnaire data from 377 teacher educators from the Dutch Association of Teacher Educators.	Professional learning domains, professional learning preferences between less and more experienced teacher educators.	Major differences found between school-based and university-based teacher educators. School-based teacher educators focused mainly on cooperation with the teacher education institution and on coaching; university-based teacher educators focused more on the pedagogy of teacher education.
Mary Britt Postholm (2019)  Norway	Focus groups with three teacher educators.	Teacher educator's role in school-based development.	Teacher educators' role and the use of language to support teachers' professional development deserve more focus to strengthen the support teacher educators can provide in school-based development.
T.M. Willemse and F. Boei (2013)  The Netherlands	Explorative, qualitative study of 508 in surveys, and a further 10 in focus groups.	Perceptions and teacher educators' capability to	Teacher educators need a shared language to conduct research, they need to be part of communities, and they lack a research support network.

		conduct research.	
Katriina Maaranen, Heikki Kynäslahti, Reijo Byman, Riitta Jyrhämä and Sara Sintonen (2019)  Finland	Qualitative case study of 15 teacher educators.	Teacher educators' concerns, beliefs, and values.	Societal values were seen as core values for teacher educators' professional work, although teacher educators' own values often came up in their interviews.
Richard Holme, Anna Robb and William Berry (2016)  UK	Qualitative study of three teacher educators.	The factors enabling a teacher to transition from first-order practitioner to second-order practitioner.	The pathway to becoming an early career academic for these three participants did not follow the conventional route of undergraduate, postgraduate then doctoral studies to become a lecturer in Teacher Education. Participants underwent a journey that was personally, motivated with prior knowledge of the systems and opportunities available. Further research into the impact of a continuum approach to teacher professional development that includes recruitment of teacher educators and teacher motivation, is necessary to inform debate and future policy development at national and international levels.
C. Ping, G. Schellings and D. Beijaard (2018)  The Netherlands	Peer review of 1700 abstracts on teacher educators.	Systematic review of what, how, and why teacher educators learn.	This study can be used as a framework to discuss teacher educators' work and professional learning in future research. It may also add to our understanding of designing a professional development program for (future) teacher educators. The content of such a professional development program could centre on pedagogy, research and reflection, professional identity and different kinds of knowledge.  The overview may serve as a reflective tool for teacher educators, inspiring them to critically reflect on their own

			professional learning and on opportunities to learn.
Hanne Tack and Ruben Vanderlinde (2019)  Belgium	Large-scale survey study involving 944 teacher educators working in teaching-intensive teacher education institutions. Semi-structured interviews from 20 teacher educators.	Study examines the relations between teacher educators' experiences of work pressure and opportunities for professional growth, their work-related basic needs satisfaction (i.e. autonomy, competence, relatedness) and their researcherly disposition (i.e. being a smart consumer of research, ability to conduct research, conducting, valuing research).	Teacher educators need support to develop research skills. As long as teacher educators—experiencing high work pressures—are demanded to engage in research on top of their (usually) full-time teaching job, it will remain difficult to support the development of their researcherly disposition. Therefore, policy makers should recognise that research conducted by teacher educators is a crucial professional development strategy, not only to develop a deeper understanding of their practice as a 'teacher of teachers', but also to develop knowledge about teacher education.
Marcel Van der Klink, Quinta Kools, Gilada Avissar, Simone White and Tetsuhito Sakata (2017)  The Netherlands, Australia, Japan	25 teacher educators who are members of the ATEE RDC 'Professional Development of Teacher Educators' from 10 different countries.	Ways that experienced teacher educators from different countries differ in their concerns, professional development activities and developmental goals.	As teacher educators become more advanced, their concerns change accordingly and shift towards concerns about their own identity and about their students as individuals with different ambitions and needs. Their concerns at the time of the interview seemed related to the more 'mature' professional, who was creating space for reflection on how best to educate student-teachers.

In summary, in the last fifteen years, research has largely focused on the following areas: teacher professional learning, research and enquiry in teacher education, partnerships in teacher education, linking research and the use of data to teaching, teacher leadership, intercultural and

multicultural issues, inclusive education, diversity, mentoring, reflective practice, digital competence, teacher portfolios, teacher retention, identity, motivation for teaching, and teacher educators (Livingston & Flores, 2017:1). Although historically, teacher educators have been an under-researched and ill-defined group, the profession has been increasingly in the public eye over the last decade (European Commission, 2013). Despite this exposure, however, the teacher educator profession remains fragmented. This situation is the result of international systems, traditional career paths and national systems becoming blurred due to political changes to the education sector, to public-private partnerships, to the marketization of education, and also due to the emergence of new actors. Public Private Partnerships in the UAE are an example of this, where private operators work within the public space.

Further, the various teacher educator associations that exist are often underpinned by the societal structures of initial teacher training and therefore the sector is diverse (Vanassche, 2019:1). Within the UK, changes to initial teacher education have led to a culture of 'selling courses' to schools. Teacher educators have also taken on marketing activities and consultancy roles with schools, thereby demonstrating their boundary-crossing roles (ibid). This has been my professional experience and in Chapter 4, I share the KPIs from my role at Organisation 2, including the commercial aspects such as marketing and student enrolment.

Research on teacher educators in Europe and the USA has highlighted some consistent themes such as the identity of teacher educators within the profession (Guberman & Mcdossi, 2019; Dengerink, Lunenberg & Kools, 2015; Kelchtermans et al, 2018) which I explore in more detail in 2.1.2. Furthermore, although the route that teacher educators take to start out in their roles is a common one, there are emerging trends in non-traditional routes to becoming a teacher educator that reflect the economic and political changes to education, and how governments have

responded to global challenges such as the impact of globalisation (Ping et al, 2018; Holme et al, 2016).

### **2.1.2 Definitions of the teacher educator**

Across the literature, both narrow and wide definitions of the term ‘teacher educator’ are given. University teacher educators play a recognised role in supporting initial teacher training programmes for novices. As political and economic structures within countries have changed, teacher educators have also worked with public and private operators “who actively facilitate the (formal) learning of student teachers and teachers” (The European Commission, 2013). These operators include teaching-practice supervisors, school mentors and also those in charge of professional learning programmes (Dengerink et al, 2015; Ping et al, 2018). Over the last ten years, teacher educators have been characterised as ‘teachers of teachers’, (Dengerink et al, 2015:78) and are engaged in a wide variety of practices (Kelchtermans et al, 2018:121). They fulfil many roles that are context-dependent and that can change over time (Guberman & Mcdossi, 2019:1). As a group of heterogeneous professionals, their identities are often fluid, constructed over time as they may adopt multiple roles such as teacher educator, researcher, coach, school improvement partner, gatekeeper, and curriculum developer (Meeus et al, 2018:16). Not all teacher educators experience all these roles, and for those that do, there may be competing demands (Ping et al, 2018). The implications of teacher educators in the UAE having different titles and roles means that the cultural interpretations attached to them will vary in different communities, including those of native and non-native speakers of English. Similarly, if a teacher educator adopts multiple roles, and therefore, titles, there may be some form of internal bias towards a particular title or role that establishes their public identity (Meeus et al, 2018:16). It is important to note that each cultural context has its own codes of practice, and within the UAE, certain job titles are known, whilst others are not. Teachers are rarely described as practitioners in the UAE, possibly due to the country’s relative age, and therefore the age of the profession

there. As Arabic is the national language, there may already be a precedent set regarding the identity labels that I am not aware of. The perception of teachers and their cultural codes may also bear connections to the 'consumerist' approach to education and the lack of research culture (Ryan and Daly, 2017). A distinct limitation of the literature is the lack of cultural research comparing Anglophone and Eastern settings and investigating these identity labels alongside the cultural interpretations, historical assumptions and perceptions that each label carries—all factors that underpin the power structures in the relationships of key stakeholders. Perhaps this dearth of research is due to the limited scope of the research on teacher educators undertaken so far.

This complexity suggests that teacher educators need to be recognised as a "specific and autonomous profession" because they are the teachers of teachers, and their expertise is therefore at a 'dual level' (Kelchtermans et al, 2018:122). Within Western and Anglophone settings, teacher educators are required to demonstrate their expertise not only in their subject (teaching) but also within areas of policy and research. In other contexts, however, their research identity is often emphasised much less, and is sometimes completely replaced by a focus on pedagogy and curriculum and lastly, their subject. Whereas commonly accepted criteria for defining a profession in Western/other Anglophone contexts include: 1) the profession performs a crucial social function, 2) it requires a considerable degree of skill, 3) its professionals draw on a substantial body of knowledge, 4) its entry requires a lengthy period in higher education, and 5) its professionals require a high degree of autonomy (Verloop et al, 2001). These criteria are not defined in the UAE as teacher educators do not have a formal professional association. This is important because there may be teacher educators who are not recognised as such, but are operating in the field in the UAE. Teacher educators may also be conducting research whilst supporting teachers in adopting practices that are contextually developed and translatable to others, as yet un-researched, contexts and bringing ideas from other contexts to their professional roles. In Sweden, for example, a country that has also adopted market-based practices of

education, teacher educators play an important role in the education process, but their contribution has received little attention; hence they have been labelled as ‘the hidden profession’ (Snoek, Swennen & Van Der Klink, 2011). The same could be true within the UAE, as teacher educators may operate in silos or within micro-contexts without any wider engagement with professional peers or any alignment to teacher educator standards. The study in Sweden includes the recommendation to safeguard the profession of teacher educators by developing a set of standards to give them professional status. Such a move or alternatively, introducing a teacher educator development profile like the profile developed by the Flemish Association of Teacher Educators (VELOV) in Belgium (VELOV, 2012) may also be helpful in the UAE; but first, a wider investigation of the sector may be useful to provide another perspective on how to increase the knowledge about teacher educators.

### **2.1.3 Teacher educators’ routes into the profession**

Most teachers have neither a formal route to becoming teacher educators nor a supportive induction program to learn from (Ping et al, 2018; Meeus, Cools & Placklé, 2018). In some countries, the chance for experienced teachers to move on to another stage of their career and become a teacher educator is described as ‘serendipitous’ (Kelchtermans et al, 2018:122). In general, two main factors often lead teacher educators towards their role: they were good teachers and promoted into leadership roles; and/or they possess specific expertise in a specialist area such as a subject or skill (Ben-Peretz et al, 2010:113).

In their study in the Netherlands, Dengerink et al (2015) show how the different routes to becoming a teacher educator can result in differences in professional practice. Their findings reveal that school-based teacher educators predominantly focused on coaching, on the curriculum, and on cooperation with the teacher educator institution; whereas the main focus of university teacher educators was on pedagogy (p.89). School-based teacher educators with seven or more years’

experience were more inclined to experiment with new experiences and indicated their readiness to learn by reading relevant research (p.90). Teacher educators within a university setting, and especially those who were previously teachers, felt obligated to achieve and maintain high standards of teaching and were committed to their trainee teachers. These obligations may be supported by their research or may even interfere with it, regardless of their level of experience (Murray & Male, 2005).

The increase in private sector organisations, social entrepreneurs, and non-establishment companies have resulted in more teachers being trained within school-based contexts, and in shorter periods of time (Cochran-Smith et al, 2018:585). This scenario resembles my role within Organisation 1 where I worked with teachers in school-based settings to support their classroom practice.

The main working assumption of Cochran-Smith et al's (2018) paper in the USA is that education and the economy are inextricably linked, similar to the situation in Dubai and its market-based approach to education. In fact the research into teacher educators within this paper resembles the context of the UAE more closely than the other studies because the teacher educators were not working in university settings or directly within school settings, and were, as such, labelled as 'entrepreneurial reformers' due to their disruptive positioning within the structure of the sector (p.575).

The shift towards more professionally-based initial teacher education, largely driven by accountability models seeking to produce teachers more quickly, and more efficiently, has implications for what it is to learn to be a teacher (Hodson et al, 2010). Such models in England can be critiqued for reshaping and restructuring teacher education to meet new priorities and resource constraints privileging the practical elements 'to the detriment of theory and analysis'

(Hodson et al, 2010: 4). This drive stems from the perception that university-based programmes have failed to produce enough teachers that meet the perceived standard set by the government to earn public confidence. However, England is an entirely different context to the UAE, and is classed as a developed country, so therefore, the economic challenges that the UAE faces require rapid solutions so that the country can move away from oil dependency to a knowledge based economy (Farah, 2012).

International education systems differ considerably, and research into teacher educators highlights many similar issues and challenges. Within the UK, the landscape has been described as 'divergent' due to the variety of routes into the teaching profession (Holme, Robb & Berry, 2016:341). Teacher educators in the UK's higher education system are nearly always recruited as school teachers rather than lecturers already in post (Holme et al, 2016:343). A number of studies have explored the process and challenges of becoming a teacher educator within university programmes, and specifically the progression of teachers to doctoral students in becoming teacher educators (Holme et al, 2016). The self-study method, and iterative approach to reflection and reflexion was one of the significant findings of the study. However, it also highlighted that there is a lack of literature exploring the reasons for teachers making the transition from school teacher to university lecturer because this field of education research is still relatively new (p.341). The motivational factors for this was highlighted as a critical challenge in the research.

#### **2.1.4 Research and the teacher educator**

Furthermore, the academic status of teacher educators is a point of contention in all the studies referenced in Table 3. The transition from teacher to teacher educator continues to be a challenge, as teacher educators are reported to take up to three years to establish their new identity. Within that time, they are required to develop their pedagogy as a teacher educator and grapple with a research identity to be accepted into higher education (Maaranen et al, 2019:212).

Teacher educators seeking to develop their research identity may find that their contribution to the research landscape of professional learning is undervalued, especially as they do not always work within academic research settings and are “uneasy residents in academe” (Murray, 2010:198). As ‘semi-academics’ (Vanassche, 2019:1) they may struggle to gain recognition as legitimate consumers and producers of research (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2019:16).

Additionally, teacher educators and practitioners in school settings often find the lack of research culture within their workplaces problematic; a situation that underlines their personal responsibility to conduct their own research in order to develop the necessary research skills (Willemse & Boei, 2013:355). I can identify with these statements, and therefore my connection to academia has been maintained through this doctoral study. The successful development of a research identity may be the bridge to academia, but crossing this bridge may be particularly challenging in a society without a strong research culture, or where research is still an emerging dimension of that society. Studies of teacher educators in Israel identified a range of challenges that may be encountered as they attempt to conduct research and develop a research identity without research structures and support mechanisms (Ben-Peretz et al, 2012; Guberman & McDossi, 2019).

In higher education settings, they operate within an institutional context, often with support structures such as unions, HR departments, and mentors. In developing countries like the UAE teacher educators may not have access to research structures and support mechanisms. There is potential therefore to research ways in which teacher educators might be supported to develop a research identity, which would be well designed, theoretically informed research to generate new insights in the field of teacher education (Murray, 2010:205). The research should inform discussions around the development of future and existing teachers (Ben-Peretz et al, 2010:113)

that contribute to knowledge of inquiry-based reflective models of professional learning (Ben-Peretz, 2012:120).

Research and knowledge creation may be better facilitated where there are established networks of teacher educators (Ping et al, 2018; Kelchtermans et al, 2018). Examples include research by professional organisations or networks such as the Association of Teacher Educators in the USA, VELON in the Netherlands, AITSL in Australia, and MOFET in Israel (Ping et al, 2018). Similarly, Kelchtermans et al's (2018) research was conducted with experienced teacher educators in Belgium, Ireland, Israel, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom. All these settings could be classified as developed countries with established education systems; hence the knowledge base that has emerged may be a reflection of those structures. This narrative research has been conducted in a developing setting, so therefore it addresses a gap within the field. I will shed more light on this matter when discussing the comparative nature of studies in more detail in Section 2.1.6.

Within emerging research settings in developing countries, the concept of disposition can play an important part in explaining teacher educator behaviours and sensitivity to research opportunities, and their ability to respond to these (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2014). Three studies have framed this problem and explored the process of "inquiry of the mind" in teacher educators (Kreijns et al, 2019) alongside their 'researcherly dispositions" in complex environments with work-related pressures (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2014, 2019). Little is known about the psychological mechanisms of teacher educators, however; or how workplace factors contribute or impede to developing a teacher educator's ability to conduct research (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2019:1).

In psychology, a disposition is defined as a habit of mind or tendency towards a particular pattern of behaviour (Katz & Raths, 1985). The concept raises important questions such as: can

dispositions be developed through experience? Are they immutable aspects of someone's character? What is the relationship between an observed behaviour and a disposition? (Nelson, 2015:87). For teacher educators, a researcherly disposition is "broadly defined as a teacher educators' habit of mind to engage with research—both as consumer and producer—to improve their own practice and contribute to the knowledge base on teacher educators (Tack, 2017:181). A teacher educator's researcherly disposition has three inter-related dimensions: 1) *the affective dimension*, which refers to the extent a teacher educator values a research-oriented approach towards their daily practice, as well as their capacity to be a smart consumer or reader of research; 2) *the cognitive dimension*, which relates to how well a teacher educator is able to engage in research in his/her daily practice; and 3) *the behavioural dimension*, which refers to a teacher educator's ability to carry out research activities (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2019:464). The dimensions are inter-related, since it can be assumed that the third dimension cannot be achieved unless the previous two have been (ibid).

The dimensions are helpful to explain different aspects of the teacher educator's research orientation. Teacher educators need to become more aware of the demands of their professional role and of how their "capabilities for conducting research are evolving" (Willemse & Boei, 2013:357). Tack and Vanderlinde (2014) present a typology, the 'Teacher Educator Researcherly Disposition Scale' (TERDS), which consists of a 20-item questionnaire that can be used by teacher educators' to self-report researcherly dispositions. Within the question, they used first-person statements to explore each participant's self-assessment of their research capability, such as 'I conduct research to improve my own practice' and 'I have enough methodological knowledge to autonomously go through a research cycle (e.g., ask a research question, gather data, analyse and report data, etc.)'. The analytical framework within the study explores teacher educators' inclination to research, their sensitivity and alertness to opportunities, and their ability to follow through and conduct the research. This analysis enabled me to gain deeper insights into the

factors that influence a teacher educator to behave in a certain way and the scale of behaviours can be used as a tool for reflection (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2014:301).

The traits necessary in developing a teacher educator's research identity include having a strong personal interest, a positive attitude, and a sense of urgency, and these traits need to be informed by values and missions; while similarly, "our habits are context responsive" (Nelson, 2015:88). Tack and Vanderlinde (2014) offer a typology of three different types of teacher educators: *The Enquiring Teacher Educator*, who is defined as lacking professional knowledge and methodological expertise, and therefore lacking in cognitive and behavioural dimensions; *The Well-Read Teacher Educator*, which refers to a teacher educator who engages in reading academic literature from time to time, and who strongly values research as part of their occupation, but still lacks the behavioural dimension; and *The Teacher Educator-Researcher*, who demonstrates all three dimensions of researcherly dispositions (cognitive, behavioural and affective). A limitation of the Tack and Vanderlinde's study relevant to this research is that the research was conducted in a developed country, so the results may not be generalizable to the UAE. Nonetheless, I adopted the three dimensions of researcherly dispositions as an analytic tool within the context of my professional roles because the dispositions provide an appropriate psychological tool to frame this research.

Tack and Vanderlinde (2019) incorporate the research on dispositions with work-related pressures, professional growth, and job satisfaction to explain self-determination theory, which suggests that individuals have three basic psychological needs within the workplace: autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Teacher educators are more likely to feel fulfilled in their roles when they have a sense of choice and psychological freedom (ibid, 462), and when they feel connected to and valued by others, and when they experience the need to self-report their

competence. Further, the 'relatedness' dimension was the most important predictor of teacher educators researching their role.

Kreijns et al (2019) explored the development of a psychometric instrument to measure teachers' researcherly dispositions and improve understandings of teacher educators' sensitivity to research opportunities, along with their capacity to conduct research. In their study, these researchers created a scale with three dimensions to measure a teacher's ability to: 1) *value deep understanding*, 2) *reserve judgment and tolerate ambiguity* and, 3) *take a range of perspectives and pose focussed questions*. Within these dimensions are thirteen 'I can', 'I am', and similar statements that I have applied to this research in Chapter 4. As a set of inquiry habits, they are general, and can therefore provide a scale of behaviours to reflect upon to judge one's tendency to conduct research. However, they do not include any inter-cultural elements that may be relevant to the UAE. The scale items are as follows:

**Value deep understanding**

1. I am critical on whether I did the right thing.
2. I wonder if I can improve my work.
3. I watch how colleagues do things in order to learn from them.
4. I ask others what they think of my work.
5. I try to collect information so I can evaluate my work.

**Reserve judgment and tolerate ambiguity**

1. I refuse to accept unwarranted assertions and explanations irrespective of how plausible they might be.
2. I have a certain tolerance for uncertainties and ambiguities in offered solutions and explanations,
3. I am willing to accept some uncertainty provided that finally there is insight into proven solutions and reasonable explanations.
4. I can deal with situations wherein solutions and explanations are not yet available.

**Take a range of perspectives and systematically pose increasingly focused questions**

1. I try, when it comes to sorting things out, to pose increasingly better and more targeted questions.
2. I try to view things from other perspectives.
3. I try to avoid prejudices with regard to solutions and explanations.
4. I try, by means of a systematic approach to investigations, to find evidence for solutions and explanations.

**Figure 1 Dimensions of inquiry habits**

Source: Kreijns et al's scale (2019)

Although Tack and Vanderlinde's (2014) Teacher Educator Researcherly Disposition Scale (TERDS) and Kreijns et al's (2019) Dimensions of Inquiry Habits (Figure 1) are similar, Kreijns et al's (2019) scale appears to explore more psychological and cognitive traits as opposed to the more behavioural traits in Tack and Vanderlinde's scale. Professional learning that facilitates the development of inquiry habits needs to "focus on attitudes, communication, and reflection"; and teacher educators need to continue working on their competencies as life-long learners "who keep in touch with the latest developments and insights in their own field" (Kelchtermans et al, 2018:128). The majority of factors within Kreijns et al's scale have influenced my ability to develop a critical perspective in research, to reflect on my competencies as a lifelong learner, teacher educator and researcher.

Teacher educators may benefit from engaging with international research, and hence to reflect on how they can translate this cultural knowledge into their practice. I have benefited from reflecting on my identity, values and behaviours as this has helped to determine my conceptualisation of this cultural knowledge into a context where I have maintained, as a complex professional roles. Consequently, teacher educators' reasons for engaging in research are a combination of internal and external motivations that can coexist (Guberman & Mcdossi, 2019:7). The motivations may include a personal interest in the research, a desire to contribute more fully to practice, and/or obtain academic recognition and a more influential position within their organisation (Guberman & Mcdossi, 2019:11). However, not all teacher educators in Maaranen et al's (2019:213) study in Finland were interested either research or in the theory underpinning their practice. In both Dengerink et al's (2015:92) study in The Netherlands, and Guberman and Mcdossi's (2019) study in Israel, the minority of teacher educators that were active researchers did also contribute to the knowledge base of teacher education (Guberman & Mcdossi, 2019:2).

In summary, research by teacher educators is recognised as important for their professional development and as a contribution to the knowledge base within the field (Willemse & Boei, 2013:355). Teacher educators who are involved in research, in order to enhance their own practice, are able to distinguish the benefits for their professional learning, and are more critical of methods and outcomes. Developing researcherly dispositions is of course critical, and specific instruments, such as the self-reporting questionnaire (TERDS) and Kreijns et al (2019) inquiry-habits dimensions may be useful aids in this process. More recent work from Tack and Vanderlinde (2019) emphasizes the importance of feeling fulfilled, connected and valued in the workplace, and that having a sense of 'relatedness' is an important predictor of the extent to which teacher educators conduct research within their role.

These studies have helped to shape the focus of my inquiry. In this study, earlier findings suggest that as a teacher educator in the UAE my sense of confidence in interactions with others, and ability to establish professional relationships across the different cultural contexts I operate within are crucial. In seeking to develop a researcherly disposition, deep engagement on a cognitive, affective, and behavioural level is required, alongside a specific commitment to study my own practice and to develop a research identity (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2014:314). Particular contextual challenges I face relate to the lack of value for research in the sector within the UAE and the lack of support systems to encourage it. A further personal professional challenge I face is the ability to manage uncertainty in this rapidly changing, neo-liberal educational context. This theme has not been discussed in great detail within the literature on teacher educators and is particularly relevant to my professional circumstances and central to this narrative inquiry.

### **2.1.5 Workplace learning**

As teacher educators within the UAE have no formal association or set of standards to bring consistency in terms of the qualifications and experience needed for the role, workplace culture may be important in determining what is learned in the role and how (Webster-Wright, 2009). Teacher educators' professional profiles and identities will differ widely in terms of their experiences. The context in which learning is situated may allow us to understand the factors through which the knowledge, skills and attitudes of teacher educators are enhanced (Eraut, 1994). The fact that learning within the workplace "is a socio-cultural activity, with socio cultural features" (Webster-Wright, 2009:707), implies that the learning is influenced by values, emotions, behaviours, people, places, and spaces, *and* the professional expectations within those settings. The learning is, therefore, informed by the wider influences of history, society, and of the economy, as well as by regulations and evolving professional standards. Other factors that may also affect learning are: poorly defined problems due to insufficient information; lack of personal agency and motivation, and the balance between personal choice and organisational norms and goals, where the stakes are sometimes very high (Eraut, 2004).

Research within community-based education programmes has highlighted that learning within a specific social setting carries with it a set of 'adult' like assumptions (Webster-Wright, 2009). Rather than a simple transfer of information from hierarchal, formalised relationships, the critical factors in developing a culture of professional learning involve direct participation and engagement. Teacher educators in the UAE work in a regulatory environment where it may be difficult to make the necessary networks to support their professional learning. Without regular contact with peers it may be challenging to generate the motivation or personal interest to maintain their professional learning. Workplace culture for teacher educators in the UAE could be said to consist of the regulatory environment and the spaces in which teachers work, as well as the spaces outside the classroom; so finding the necessary connections might be challenging as

there are no immediate peers. The absence of opportunities for collaborative development or meaningful dialogue between teachers and teacher educators within these spaces possibly adds a layer of complexity and challenge to the role of the teacher educator, as these professionals may not have the added incentive or the personal interest to contribute once they are outside the classroom space.

Past and present experiences inevitably influence evolving professional practices as well as discourses and identities. Moreover, individual capabilities, aptitudes, and personalities will influence the ways in which they participate and position themselves in workplace relationships and working practices; i.e. how they relate to colleagues and students. Some of this experience will be consciously codified, organised, documented, and consequently applied in professional practice; whereas personal knowledge might be defined, but hidden by its context. Although codified knowledge becomes personal in its acquisition, personal knowledge incorporates skills and experience to place the codified knowledge, as appropriate (Taylor, 2017:88), and “requires a degree of confidence to be enacted” (Eraut, 2008:15).

Situated learning involves the making or changing of identity through practice in such situations, both by teacher educators and teachers, to acquire what has been termed ‘cultural knowledge’ (Eraut, 2007). Situations where collaborative teacher development takes place can be thought of as ‘social units of learning’ or ‘communities of practice’; interrelated groups which may form ‘much larger systems’ (Wenger, 2000:229). Teachers might be aware of possessing certain knowledge, but this may not be explicit or codified (Eraut, 2007) and may be difficult to express or represent. An early representation—the 5-stage Novice to Expert model—proposed by Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986), was one of the first to emphasise informal learning from experience and the acquisition of tacit knowledge (see Figure 2). The early and middle stages of the model show the development of situational recognition and understanding, and of the standard routines that enable a person to

cope with complex contexts. The model illustrates that over time, and when a person becomes more confident in their role so that context behaviours become automatic and rules of working are either instilled or ignored. More complex activities are subjected to deliberation at the competence stage, but may not be treated very analytically unless analysis is specifically required. Progression beyond competence is then associated with the concept of proficiency, which is treated as the gradual replacement of deliberation by more tacit forms of cognition. The model was helpful in the analysis of my own tacit knowledge and professional practice.

<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Novice</b> Rigid adherence to taught rules or plans Little situational perception No discretionary judgement
<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Advanced Beginner</b> Guidelines for action based on attributes or aspects (aspects are global characteristics of situations recognisable only after some prior experience) Situational perception still limited All attributes and aspects are treated separately and given equal importance
<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Competent</b> Coping with crowdedness Now sees actions at least partially in terms of longer-term goals Conscious deliberate planning Standardised and routinised procedures
<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Proficient</b> See situations holistically rather than in terms of aspects See what is most important in a situation Perceives deviations from the normal pattern Decision-making less laboured Uses maxims for guidance, whose meaning varies according to the situation
<b>Level 5</b>	<b>Expert</b> No longer relies on rules, guidelines or maxims Intuitive grasp of situations based on deep tacit understanding Analytic approaches used only in novel situations, when problems occur or when justifying conclusions Vision of what is possible

**Figure 2 Summary of model of progression**

*Source: Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986)*

Within the model, tacit knowledge has been incorporated in three different forms, confirming that it is not a single type of knowledge. The first, 'situational understanding', is visible in all five stages,

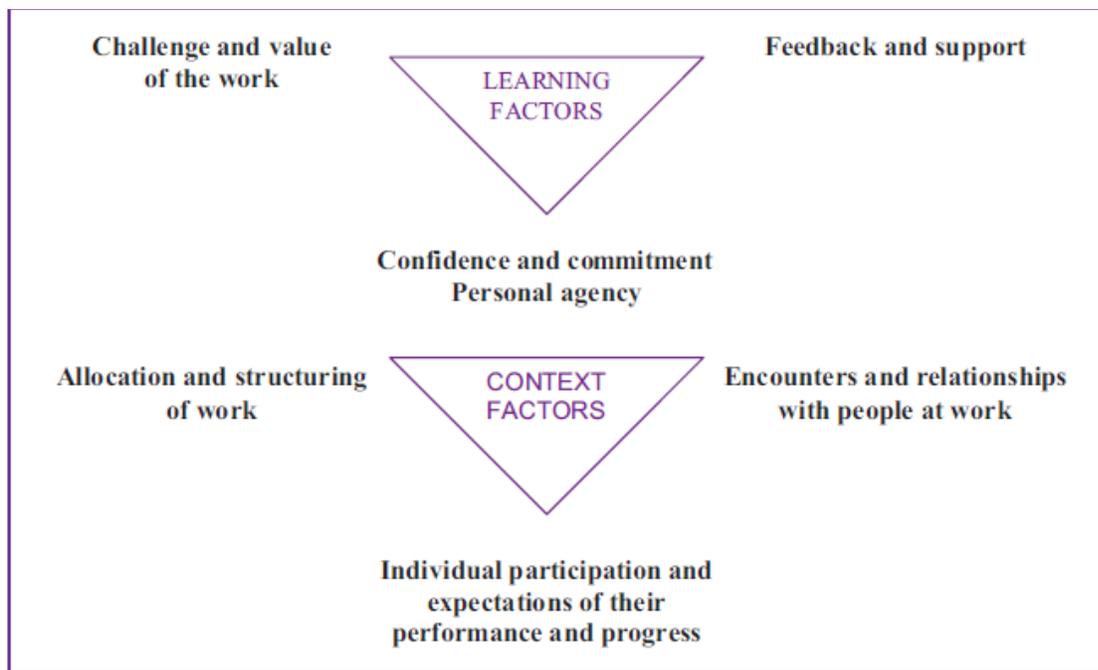
and is largely based on experience. The second, 'intuitive decision making', involves pattern recognition and rapid responses to different situations, based on the application of tacit knowledge and tacit rules. The third, 'routine procedures' are developed through to the competence stage for coping with the demands of work and avoiding information overload. Some of these procedures are likely to have begun as explicit procedural knowledge and then become automatic and increasingly tacit through repetition, with increases in speed and productivity that are dependent on the context (Eraut, 2004).

Conversations between teacher educators and teachers—normally regarded as an explicit form of communication—do carry with them implicit cultural and personal knowledge nonetheless. When someone shares an experience, some of their knowledge is provisional, and they may not display everything that lies beneath it. Yet that knowledge is still accepted in the interaction because the listener is unlikely to stop and think unless there is anything problematic about the occasion. The behaviour of the person sharing the experience is influenced by their aggregated knowledge of the other person, and that aggregation is usually a largely tacit process. Memories of incidents, encounters, and episodes contribute to a person's aggregated knowledge without them being aware of it. Such knowledge is therefore unlikely to be under one's critical control. It is, however, part of the taken-for-granted understanding of that person, and hence is liable to be both biased and self-confirming (Eraut, 2004:10).

In professional dialogue, we interpret the actions of others in particular ways, creating preconceptions during the early encounters that determine our own behaviour; and thus affecting how we respond; our responses often confirming those preconceptions. People commonly draw premature conclusions about each other, based on their early interactions. This tendency can often lead to unnecessary misunderstandings and the reinforcement of each other's prejudices; so it is important to find ways of opening discussions that create some space for different

perspectives to develop. While tacit knowledge of other people will continue to play an important part in our lives because it is available almost instantly whenever we need to use it, this kind of knowledge will rarely be as valid and unbiased as we would like to assume (Eraut, 2004:10).

Eraut's (2004) two-triangle model of factors affecting the learning at work provides some concepts that are highly relevant to my role(s), because it broadly captures the dimensions of my professional role (s) including the central themes between learning and context factors: confidence, commitment, and agency. I refer back to the relationship between context, and confidence within my findings chapter. Relationships, feedback, the structuring of work, and the challenges faced are further important themes (Figure 3). These concepts are similar to Tack and Vanderlinde's (2019) synergy of basic psychological needs and work-related factors that lead to work outcomes. The concept of relationships is similar to relatedness, and the need for challenge is similar to the need for autonomy, although not a direct comparison.



**Figure 3 Factors affecting learning at work**  
*Source: Eraut, 2004*

Similarly, Eraut's (2004) learning trajectories provide an important method of viewing professional learning and the domains such as 'awareness and understanding', 'role performance', 'academic knowledge and skills', 'personal development', 'decision making and problem solving teamwork', and finally, 'judgment', are similar to those identified by Kreijns et al (2019) as researcherly dispositions. Within the decision making and problem-solving domain, the disposition for good time management and making decisions under pressure is particularly relevant to this study (Eraut 2008:8). I discuss this in more detail with evidence in section 4.5. Eraut's typology was useful to the analysis of my role as a teacher educator, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 4.

Although this typology of trajectories is more general to the workplace, the relevance to the TERDS scale helps to situate research at the heart of the teacher educators' professional learning and practice (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2014). Although the literature on workplace learning shares many similarities to that on researcherly dispositions, the former takes a more holistic view on the behaviours and typologies within the workplace, and provides a more immediate view of time, decision making, and cognition. Teacher educator associations in Belgium, the Netherlands, and the USA, have gone so far as to capture some of these dispositions to create blueprint models defined as development profiles of teacher educators. These models and profiles help facilitate the move to professionalise and regulate the profession with formalised standards (VELOV, 2012). The standards differ from the dispositions described earlier, and although there are some similarities in language, there are conceptual differences, which I will explain in the next section.

### **2.1.6 Teacher educator standards**

In the Netherlands, a 'Professional Standard of Teacher Educators' has been presented as a frame of reference which includes a set of fundamental principles and four competency areas (Melief et al, 2012). The competency areas are holistic for all teacher educators within this context.

The framework professionalises the industry of teacher educators in the Netherlands, and the principles provide a tool for professional learning. The fundamental principles of competence in the field of pedagogy, supervising professional learning, organisation and management, and in developmental competence are broken down into sub-categories and descriptors. Although the framework itself is descriptive, the language used is broad and wide-ranging. The Dutch Standards promote attitudinal characteristics such as having a ‘questioning attitude’, ‘is reflective’, and ‘takes responsibility’; and their model comprises ten domains of knowledge separated into core domains, specific domains, and extended domains.

The Flemish Standards are similar, with descriptors of behaviour, identity, and statements relating to knowledge and understanding within the profession. In the USA, the Association for Teacher Educators has 5 standards of reference for teacher educators: 1) teaching, which specifically describes ‘model teaching’ and the ability to demonstrate best practices; 2) applying ‘cultural competence’ and promoting social justice; 3) scholarship and research; 4) professional development; and 5) programme development (Table 3).

**Table 3 Comparison of teacher educator standards**

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Content of standards</b>	<b>Gaps</b>
Model of Dutch Standards (VELON)	Identity, knowledge and understanding, behaviours, pedagogy of teacher education, coaching, theory and practice, developing expertise.	Developing research skills, intercultural competence and social justice.
Flemish (VELOV)	Supervising learning and development, pedagogy, content of professional development, theory and practice.	Developing research skills, intercultural competence and social justice.
The Association of Teacher Educators (USA)	Teaching, professional competencies, proficiency with technology, professional inquiry, programme development, cultural competence and the promotion of social justice.	Emphasis on research, research identity and research skills.

All three frames of reference refer to identity, knowledge, and understanding; along with criteria for professional practice and domains of pedagogy for teacher education. The main difference between them is the 'cultural competencies' identified in the USA, and the focus on social justice. All the models lack a focus on teacher educators' researcherly dispositions, as well as any in-depth illustration of research as a crucial driving factor in personal learning. Instead, the models tend to focus more on behaviours related to coaching and on facilitating practice, rather than on creating professional knowledge within the context or on the behaviours necessary for developing professional knowledge in practice.

The Flemish Standards provide a useful teacher educator development profile, with dimensions that include the mastery of skills, awareness of choices, technical repertoire, communication, and a connection to worldviews. The development profile incorporates the fundamentals of a teacher educator's role, and while the statements conform to the Flemish Standards, they provide a useful lens for viewing teacher educator knowledge and how it might be organised in the UAE. In contrast to the other standards and models, the Flemish development profiles contain a section on "being an innovator and researcher" and list several knowledge and understanding statements that are broad in application but nonetheless relate to a teacher educator's ability to consume and produce research (VELOV, 2012:13). The development profile also highlights the dispositions of awareness, and a teacher educator's ability to be "aware of the choices that they and other people make and can clearly state what the ideas, conceptions, beliefs, research on which these choices are based are." (VELOV, 2012:15), and the importance of communication, and possessing a technical repertoire to solve complex problems. In amongst this skill set, the development profile states that teacher educators should "be able to think critically about the place of education in the society" (VELOV, 2012:15).

As the profile was developed in Belgium, it may have been created with the assumption that the teacher educators were already in a position to conduct research, and therefore, there was no need to examine the psychological aspects of this aspect of the role. The development profile may provide useful content on the areas that teacher educators should be able to demonstrate, but it lacks the 'how' side of things and neglects the cognitive or affective dimensions needed for the role in the UAE.

The relationships between society, culture, support structures, and personal psychological needs, together with the confidence to conduct research are essential dimensions of the teacher educator's learning process, and the development profiles that have emerged from the European settings allow us to view this perspective more clearly.

### **2.1.7 How teacher educators learn**

The nature of *how* teacher educators learn and *what* they should learn is a re-occurring theme in the literature of the last decade (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2019:1). Indeed, researchers over the past two decades have developed ideas around how teacher educators work, and how their professional learning might be conceptualised (ibid). Ping et al's (2018) review of professional learning for teacher educators identifies four main categories of content within the learning: 1) the pedagogy of teacher education, which involves incorporating knowledge and skills for teaching while taking into account the beliefs and experiences that affect student teachers; 2) how teacher educators value research, together with their capacity for, and awareness of reflection; 3) teacher educator identity, and how teacher educators cultivate future teachers and *their* research identity—and 4) contextual factors, working environments and the various knowledge domains related to teachers, recognising that teacher educators require specific knowledge, skills and attitudes that are different to those of teachers. Ping et al's review also synthesises studies according to professional learning activities such as learning through academic engagement, collaboration, attending workshops and through reflective activities. The review gives details of

studies on the reasons for professional learning, with personal ambition and the need to improve one's knowledge base receiving greater emphasis from researchers. A limitation of the study is that it is restricted to those teacher educators working within initial teacher training programmes in higher education institutes. The arguments within the study also focussed on conceptual models of learning that are intended for wider audiences, as opposed to blueprint models that are contextually focussed, and more behavioural in their design (Rust, 2018).

The role of the teacher educator is complex, it exists within the "limited and provisional nature of all understanding" and is a "phenomen[on] that learning cannot be pinned down with certainty" (Taylor, 2017:102). Regardless of the multiplicity of approaches to learning, however, teacher educators do need "specific professional knowledge and skills to function effectively" (Ben-Peretz et al, 2010:113). The learning of teacher educators can be viewed from the perspective of either the group or of the individual. Dengerink et al's (2015) study, like this one, focuses on the individual aspects of learning, given the high degree of personal responsibility for their own learning that teacher educators must take within the context of the UAE. The fragmented nature of the broader UAE teacher educator network necessitates learning to take place primarily on the job, due to "evolving sector conditions" (Ping et al, 2018:1). Very few teacher educators within Europe participate in courses within higher education, and one of the reasons given for this was the time and money required for the course, and also the perception that the learning is detached from the workplace (Dengerink et al, 2015:93). At the same time, teacher educators from different countries may differ in their concerns and professional development activities as well as in their developmental goals (Klink et al, 2017:1).

Tensions about the place of professional learning for teacher educators "have persisted for a long time" (Murray, 2010:198), and their learning is described as "often neglected" (McGee &

Lawrence, 2009:140). Teacher educator learning should include exposure to big ideas and worldviews that include ethical, political, and philosophical viewpoints; in order to provide a strong foundation for self-critique and engagement with different people and perspectives that are “not neutral intellectual endeavours” (Kelchtermans et al, 2018:128). As mentioned earlier, the teacher educators in Sweden are labelled as ‘the invisible profession’, and the similar lack of association and structure in the UAE may also be a contributing factor to the fragmented relationships that I, for example, have developed over time.

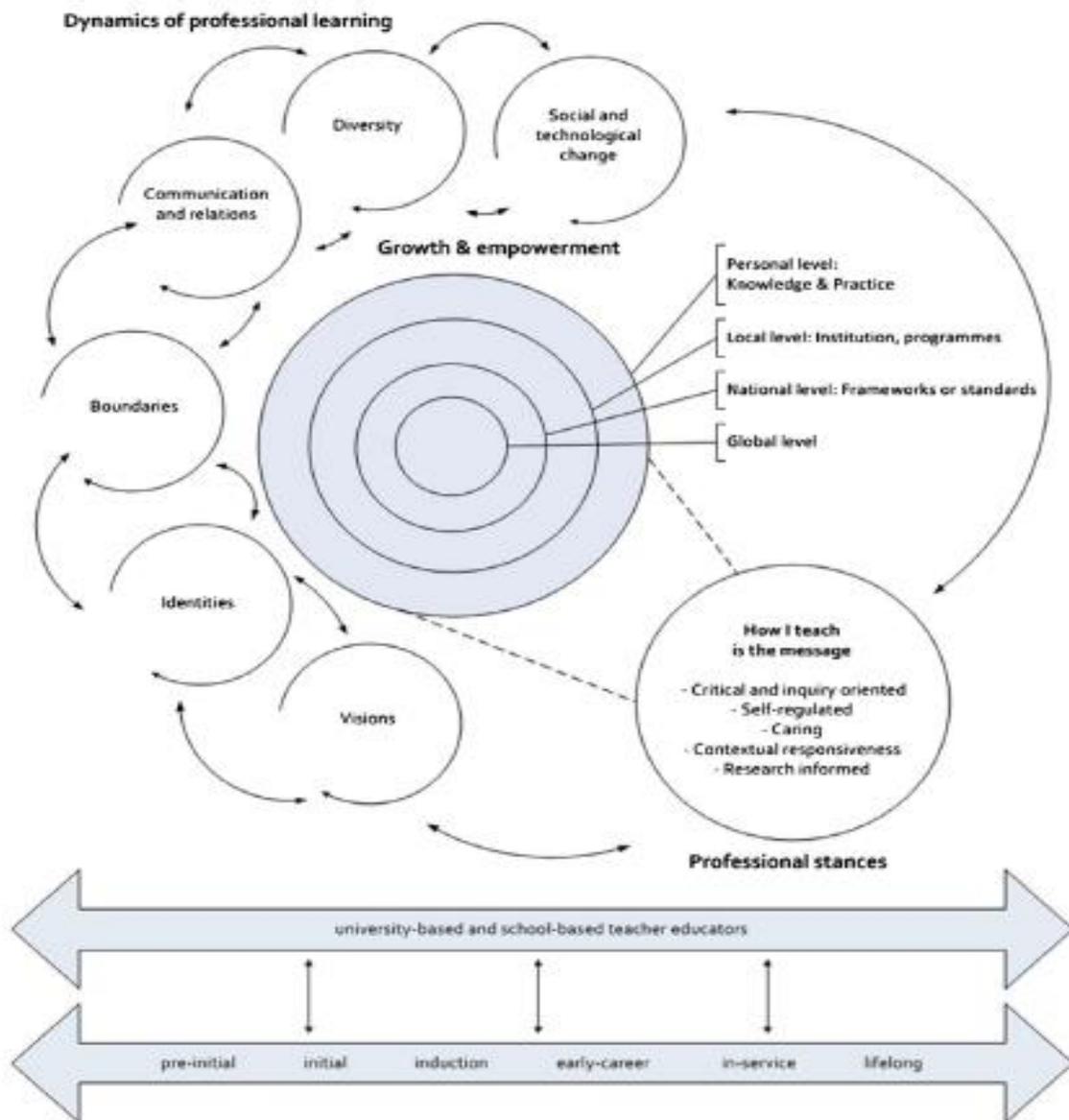
The education needs of teacher educators differ according to the career stage, and the appropriate education methods also differ according to the position of the teacher educator within the professional continuum (Meeus et al, 2018:27). Many beginning as teacher educators learn in order to educate student teachers on the job, for instance, by discussing problems in their teaching with colleagues and by “experimenting with new ideas in their daily practice” (Ping et al, 2018:2). Within Meeus et al’s (2018) study, those who become teacher educators early in their career tend to learn more formally with training, and as they progressed, their involvement in learning communities and in collaborative practice becomes more prominent (Meeus et al, 2018:25). The success of learning communities depends on the openness of the members and of their willingness to learn from each other’s strengths and concerns by sharing constructive experiences with each other (p.18). Meeus et al’s (2018) research was conducted in Belgium, in an environment with established structures for collaboration and cooperation. A positive outcome in this research is that teacher educators also need autonomy to shape their own processes and choices of professional learning (p.27).

The likelihood of effective professional learning increases when a combination of individual professional learning and professional learning in teams is pursued. By discussing their own authentic teaching practices with fellow educators, teacher educators with a researcherly

disposition are able to connect their self-study to the development of a knowledge base within the educational community (Meeus et al, 2018:27). The fear of change, as well as a lack of innovative ideas and the reluctance of teacher educators to leave their comfort zone, are factors that have often hindered learning, however (Van der Klink et al, 2017:167). Similarly, Maaranen et al (2019:212) also identified a fear of change and lack of intrinsic motivation as factors that may inhibit the professional learning of teacher educators in addition to other factors such as an excessive workload and insufficient time, a lack of resources, lack of engagement from managers, and a negative workplace culture. Again, the workload was a concern for teacher educators in Finland, together with a focus on their competence, and on curricular and program-level issues (Maaranen et al, 2019:222).

Within Guberman and McDossi's (2019) study in Israel, there was an over-emphasis on research and publications, and this meant that teacher educators were disconnected from practical issues; possibly at the expense of professional learning in other areas. The professional learning of teacher educators was seen as a personal endeavour, with teacher educators' research perceived as lacking in rigour and too limited in scope; therefore, receiving little attention (p.11). The study did not explore the differences between published research intended for a research audience and the more reflective practitioner enquiry work often published in practitioner journals and intended for a practitioner audience, however. Instead, these authors treated 'research' as a broad term, rather than defining it specifically for the different purposes of teacher educator research.

The 'Dynamics of Professional Learning' model, presented within Kelchtermans et al's (2018) research, frames a range of concepts, themes, and key questions. The model is meant to be iterative; the concentric circles reflecting movement and the dynamics of professional learning along with the inevitable situated-ness of the context (Figure 4).



**Figure 4 Dynamics of Professional Learning**

Source: Kelchtermans et al (2018)

Within the model, “personal judgment, personal knowledge and beliefs as well as the repertoire of skills and attitudes of the individual professional” are central in reflecting on and understanding practices (Kelchtermans et al, 2018:127). This model conveys a strong message of values, themes, empowerment, and relationships, similar to the literature on researchery dispositions

except that it does not focus on the research identity component of a teacher educator (Kelchtermans et al, 2018). Whilst the identity component may be important for teacher educators who are working within initial teacher training settings, or aspiring to, the necessity to have the disposition to inquire, reflect and to be reflexive may be more important for teacher educators in the field, in the UAE. Additionally, the self-regulated growth and empowerment element as well as the contextual responsiveness present resemble Tack and Vanderlinde's (2019) representation of autonomy, personal responsibility, and work-related outcomes. Furthermore, the model emphasises the local contexts within the wider national system. The relationships between the elements in the model are not linear, and the cyclical movement, along with personal judgements, determine the foci of learning. The model also contains a non-exhaustive list of content domains such as boundaries, communications, identities, and visions; but comes with the caution that it is not intended as a blueprint for teacher educators.

The organisation of the model is useful for this study because its themes resonate with my own experiences, and the concentric circles and iterative modes of interaction between the themes illustrate some of the connections that have emerged with my data. A benefit of this model is the shared language it contains together with the shared understandings between the professional colleagues who may use it. Interestingly, as indicated above, the research-informed component is given less attention than others. Without any national teacher educator standards to align to, however, a teacher educator model in the UAE may have to simply align to the context, but this is problematic, given the vast differences in the public and private sectors.

The task of comparing a detailed behavioural model such as this—as a cognitive representation of thinking between different dimensions with the Flemish development profile that uses 'I can statements', is less theoretical and includes more context-specific factors, has made me consider whether my learning can be captured with either model. Developing a blueprint model of my

learning would force me to evaluate my tacit knowledge, and decide if it could in fact be codified. Alternatively, a cognitive representation model of my dimensions of learning may enable a wider audience to consider whether my learning is translatable to other contexts as I have observed a need to develop my own model that has originated within the UAE context.

Important questions have been explored about teacher educator learning, particularly around the domains of learning, the types of activities they would benefit from and prefer, and the differences between school-based and university-based teacher educators. By focusing on these areas, observers have identified the personal and professional dispositions of knowledge, and shared the overall themes of professional learning and its salient outcomes (Dengerink et al, 2015:80).

The most significant papers that have informed the conceptual framework for this study are Ping et al's (2018) review that explores the content of teacher educator professional learning programmes; Kelchtermans et al's (2018) 'Dynamics of Professional Learning' model, which provides a powerful view of operating for teacher educators, together with Tack and Vanderlinde (2014, 2019), and Kreijn's (2019) work on researcherly dispositions. The latter two studies convey the importance of developing inquiry habits and an ability to act on these habits to produce research, which in turn, acts as a method of professional learning in itself. Eraut's (2004) research on workplace learning has also informed my thinking around workplace progression, time and cognition, and decision making. The presentation of Eraut's (2004) progression indicators have been important reflection tools which I elaborate on throughout my findings section when I reflect on my own progression and the progression of my participants.

In reviewing and reflecting on the literature, I have deepened my understanding of the research on teacher educators, the theoretical arguments around their place in the sector, and my personal/professional needs. I have also considered whether teacher educators require any

specific professional knowledge or sets of characteristics to be successful in, and make a contribution to, the growing international education sector in the UAE (Ben-Peretz et al, 2010:112).

There is a gap in research related to teacher educator professional learning needs within emerging research contexts, within different cultural settings, with limited support structures for teacher educators. Perhaps this gap in research provides an opportunity to highlight the structural conditions of professional learning within the UAE for teachers and teacher educators, such as the employment and residency laws, and the nature of the UAE as an emerging research context. These factors have underpinned this thesis, and therefore, present a set of challenges that are unique for teacher educators in the region. This challenge has therefore enabled me to develop appropriate and original approaches to professional learning of teachers in the region because the culture challenges of working within different settings has meant that I have had to consider culture has a factor of developing this narrative. In this thesis, I critically reflect on my own life experiences and those of teachers, and teacher educators with whom I have worked, with a view to opening up possibilities for our perspectives to be transformed (Etherington, 2004).

## **2.2 Literature Review: Part 2**

### **2.2.1 The teacher educator role in the professional learning of teachers**

In this section I review literature that I identify as important to my professional practice as a teacher educator. I review approaches to the professional learning of teachers including implicit and informal professional learning (Evans, 2019), more conventional models of professional learning (Boylan et al, 2017, Opfer & Pedder, 2011, Kennedy, 2005), and the conditions necessary for professional learning (Harland & Kinder, 2006). In reviewing the literature, I started with the research I had already engaged with in my professional practice, namely that of: Webster-Wright (2009); the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE); Baumfield et al (2010); and Timperley (2007a, 2007b, 2008). In my role as lead practitioner coordinator in Organisation 1, I was responsible for coordinating groups of teachers across schools through an action research and coaching programme, so I frequently engaged with this literature, and shared it with others. I translated the action-research framework of Baumfield et al (2010), into a programme of study that the teachers undertook<sup>5</sup>.

Systematic reviews of professional learning that drew on international research have been conducted by the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI Centre) in order to explore collaborative professional learning and its impact on teaching and teachers (2003, 2005). Although this research was situated largely within the state sector, the key findings were useful in developing my thinking around professional learning in public and private settings in the UAE. These studies demonstrate that collaborative professional learning is linked to improvements in teaching and learning for teachers, and is found to enhance “beliefs amongst teachers of their power to make a difference to their pupils’ learning” (EPPI, 2005:67). The evidence led to recommendations for policy makers to review the ‘continuing professional

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix B for the action research template I created.

development' (CPD) practices to include collaborative and sustained approaches to professional learning.

Over the last few decades, the expanded research on teachers' professional learning has recognised the importance of situated learning and workplace learning which I explored in the section 2.1.5. The more recent work of Evans (2019), Boylan et al (2017), and Boylan and Demack (2018) has informed my theoretical and methodological framing of the themes within this study; namely the approaches to professional learning and implicit and explicit learning, both of which I will discuss shortly. These studies each advocate different approaches to teacher professional learning while recognising the nuanced aspects of the approaches and the nature of situated learning. Boylan et al's (2017) conceptual framework for analysing models of professional learning captures the importance of relationships, theories of learning, agency, and different philosophical paradigms to highlight questions about each dimension, and thereby enable a comparison of different learning models. Research conducted in the UK, the USA, and Europe shares theoretical similarities to the research themes in this study, despite the contextual differences. Whilst working in Organisation 1, I worked with the University of Warwick as well as with UK-curriculum schools, using UK-specific literature to inform my professional practice, as I was familiar with its reference points, language and cultural links. As mentioned previously, I found that the literature on teacher professional learning within the UAE was limited either to specific public-education projects, or higher education with novice teachers (Gallagher & Bashir Ali, 2005; Hendry & Spice, 2007). However, a study by El Afi (2019) documented the learning of teachers in the 'Tamkeen' project that I worked on in Abu Dhabi from 2013 to 2014, and some of the contextual elements of the study are illustrative of a few of the challenges I faced in conducting this research. I will specifically refer to the relevance of this study in subsequent pages.

Professional learning can be critiqued as a means of implementing political agendas, for example, in order to measure the impact of teachers' professional learning (Keay et al, 2019:126). The evaluation of professional learning often focuses on learning outcomes (King, 2013; Timperley, 2008; EPPI Review, 2005; Kennedy, 2007; CUREE 2009), and whilst it is important to justify the investment in professional learning programmes, it is also essential to recognise the complex nature of such investments. Linear judgments of these do not necessarily have a direct impact on student outcomes that result in higher student attainment. Competing agendas, regulations, individual interests, and contextual challenges are all factors that affect the outcomes of students as well as the professional learning outcomes of teachers (Keay et al, 2019:126). Professional learning has also increasingly been recognised, both nationally and internationally, to enhance teachers' motivation and confidence alongside their capacity to improvement the quality of teaching and of children's learning (ibid).

Power and agency are both critical factors associated with teacher learning that are highlighted within the literature, and these important theoretical concepts, which also form part of my identity as a teacher educator, have influenced my decisions in my own learning. Furthermore, power and agency impact on the professional learning experiences of the teachers within this study, and on their "individual and social influences of motivation, emotion and volition on [their] enacted and lived learning" (Taylor, 2017:102). These two themes are discussed within the context of teachers, teaching, and within the overarching systems and regulations (Priestly et al, 2015).

In order to frame some of the arguments within the literature, I have selected research that is most relevant to my role as a teacher educator while working with teachers outside the classroom context, as a second order practitioner.

### **2.2.2 Professional learning: terminology and definitions**

Throughout this study, I use the term 'professional learning'. In the literature, this term is used interchangeably with 'continuing professional development' (CPD), 'professional development' (PD). The terms CPD and PD are somewhat "nebulous and overused", however, both implying that something is done or delivered to the teacher, perhaps because the teachers are in need of 'training' or 'developing' due to a deficiency in their expertise (Webster-Wright, 2009:713). This perception also calls into question their 'delivery' of training, thereby indicating the existence of a power structure between the 'transmitter' of knowledge and the receiver (Timperley, 2011). On the other hand, a focus on professional learning rather than an emphasis on professional development, indicates a different "conceptualization of knowledge" (Webster-Wright, 2009:713). Literature from the UK has described professional learning in broad terms, with teacher-change described as learning, development, socialisation, growth, improvement, and the implementation of something new or different; as cognitive and affective change, and as self-study (Fraser et al, 2007).

Furthermore, professional development is a process that implies a hierarchy of knowledge in which certain knowledge is 'legitimised' and localised, and according to which, other types of knowledge are viewed as inferior (Fraser et al, 2007:156). The question remains: when precisely do teachers integrate new knowledge and restructure their existing knowledge? (Evans, 2019). Also, in which places and through which lens?

The semantic arguments connected to our conception of knowledge and to teacher growth determine the way we are likely to envisage teacher change. In order to facilitate the best outcomes for teachers in their professional learning, we must understand the process of how teachers grow personally, and the conditions within their specific context that support that growth (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002:947). Teacher change can come in different ways: through training,

as a response to an event or realisation, through personal development, as the necessary response to a local reform or a systematic change, and/or through some kind of professional activity (p.948).

Teacher learning can therefore be regarded as the complex outcome of “formal and informal learning experiences throughout [the teachers’] careers” (Fullan, 1991:326). Because the learning involves a complex set of characteristics rather than an event, it may not always be undertaken in the classroom (Opfer & Pedder, 2011), and is often “self-generated in response to teacher development opportunities and purposes”, as personal, professional knowledge becomes embedded in behaviours, systems, and practices (Taylor, 2017:98). Crucially, teacher learning, whether personal or professional, evolves as teachers adopt practices based on “the opinions or experiences of colleagues, as they are deemed more feasible, accessible, practical and trustworthy than independently exploring research-based practices” (King, 2013:24). This practice illustrates the respect that teachers have for each other, and shows the nature of their motivation to change. At the same time, when teachers elect to change, as opposed to being mandated to do so, the desired change becomes achievable (King, 2013:24). This point is key in understanding why initiatives in the area of educational change either succeed or fail (King, 2013:23).

Professional development activities, which may lead to learning that meets corporate, departmental, and personal needs (Boylan et al, 2017), can be compared to the learning that involves a process of “self-development leading to personal growth” (Fraser et al, 2007:156). This can be a “dynamic process” that requires teachers to be reflective and open to new practices with the overriding goal of improving learning for children (Neuman & Wright 2010, cited in CUREE, 2010:12). The characteristics of this professional learning are a favourable combination of “formal and informal as well as planned and incidental opportunities for teachers to grow and develop”, and as a result, professional growth is driven by the teacher’s increased effort in reviewing his/her

own practice (Chaudary, 2012:93). Commonly used approaches to professional learning may actually conflict with the ideals and values that teachers embody with students (Webster-Wright, 2009). For example, schools and teachers may adopt constructivist models of learning with their learners in the classroom but adopt more traditional approaches to ‘training’ and ‘development’ for teachers that carry more specific assumptions about knowledge (Webster-Wright, 2009).

In summary, professional learning can involve a range of different approaches. These can be personal, collective, value-based, system-imposed, and motivated either externally or internally (or both); formal or informal (or a combination of the two); and may be interconnected in more ways than one (Webster-Wright, 2009). This type of learning is a multi-dimensional concept that can be pursued on “any occasion where a teacher works with or talks to another teacher to improve their own or others’ understanding of any pedagogical issue” (Duncombe & Armour 2004:144).

For the purposes of this thesis, I use the term ‘professional learning’ (PL) as a broad, overarching definition, and ‘professional learning activities’ to describe specific activities that are “active, situated, social and constructed”; and lead to learning through practical experience that is contextually mediated (Webster-Wright, 2009:720). I outline my epistemological assumptions regarding social constructivism within the methodology chapter.

### **2.2.3 Factors influencing teachers’ professional knowledge**

If we are to facilitate professional learning, “we [need to] understand the process and the conditions by which teachers grow professionally and the conditions that support and promote that growth” (Evans, 2019:3). For a teacher educator, it is important to identify how teachers view knowledge and to understand their conception of it, both inside and outside the classroom (King, 2013; Webster-Wright, 2009; Kennedy, 2005). By analysing the means through which learning

for teachers is organised and structured, we may understand “not only the motivation behind such structures, but also the nature of professional knowledge and professionalism itself” (Harland & Kinder, 1997:236). Teachers bring their own beliefs, values, experiences, behaviours, and motivations to the profession, as they work within the boundaries of their personal relationships and the school culture, along with the curriculum, systems, and regulations (Webster-Wright, 2009). One of the challenges of working in a multi-cultural environment is the diversity of beliefs, and the ways that these beliefs are catered for and regulated at the same time, in order to design structures that society can benefit from. As the UAE has a diverse teaching workforce, exploring teachers’ beliefs about knowledge, and how they translate it into their practice becomes a major challenge (El Afi, 2019). Religion is a key factor in UAE society, and the relationship between knowledge, religious belief, language and culture is a complex one. The main language in the UAE is English, despite the two dominant nationalities (Emirati and Indian). Language between cultures is often a challenge, and nuances and subtleties are not always recognised. Westerners, whose first language is English, benefit from the privilege of their language being adopted across all sectors, and educators similarly benefit both in the public and private sector. The knowledge within specific cultures has often been developed through socially mediated processes, with nuances and codes that are understood but often invisible. The personal knowledge of individuals enables them to think, interact, and perform. The distinctive feature of this definition is its focus on the *use* of personal knowledge, rather than on its *truth* (Eraut, 2006:1). The implications here for teacher educators are wide-ranging—not only do they have to grapple with the wider contextual challenges, but also with the personal challenges and personal beliefs that individuals carry with them. The fact that these social and cultural factors are unseen makes them difficult to manage. The same is true for teachers working with teacher educators. Identifying any specific instruments or tools that could aid in revealing and exploring these factors in more depth would benefit both teacher educators and teachers in the UAE.

#### **2.2.4 Professional learning and context**

The relevance of the context of professional learning is emphasised across the literature (King, 2013; Timperley, 2008; Chaudary, 2012). Professional learning concerns are in fact “driven by the context in which they occur” (Van der Klink et al, 2017:5) and by the “conditions that teachers operate within” (Evans, 2019:3). Teacher professional learning is therefore shaped by the context, and “is strongly influenced by the wider school culture and the community and society in which the school is situated” (Timperley, 2008:6). Hence, we must study the learning processes within each of the contexts that teachers operate in order to conceptualise teacher-learning, (Borko, 2004). The teachers who have participated in this study come from a variety of backgrounds and operate within several micro-contexts that I will elaborate on in Chapter 4. There may be nuances of practice that are contextually unique to the UAE and are consequently under-researched, but could be relevant to my role as a teacher educator. As the context legitimises the knowledge that is acquired within it, the context can therefore, “help us to understand the nature of that knowledge” (Harland & Kinder, 1997:236). Professional learning that is integrated with existing understandings *and* context, and with “personal theories about students” (Timperley, 2008:15), requires more than teachers simply gaining new knowledge and merely transferring it; but requires the teachers to decide on the value of the knowledge presented “to them personally, to their children, to the school, and to the system” (p.17).

Professional knowledge can be acquired in academic contexts, in institutional discussions of policy and practice, and in “the practice itself” (Kennedy, 2005:2). Context-specific or school-based approaches can promote reflection on practice and develop communities of practice to support and provide “realistic, accessible, continual and equitable professional learning” (Chaudary, 2012:92). In any context, teachers need time to develop, absorb, discuss, and practice new knowledge. At the same time, the activities that effectively support teachers’ professional learning need to be sustained and intensive “rather than brief and sporadic” (Opfer & Pedder,

2011:384), and acknowledge that “teachers bring both past experiences and beliefs to their teaching and learning” (Opfer & Pedder, 2011:387).

### **2.2.5 Approaches to teacher professional learning**

While the approaches to teacher professional learning bear some similarities to teacher educator professional learning, there are also several major differences. The underlying values and beliefs about professional learning held by individuals and groups that determine the interactions, structures, and organisation of professional learning as well as the nature of the interactions that take place, and the ways in which people respond. These interactions are enabled both by deliberate and non-deliberate approaches to learning, and for different purposes. Professional development has also been viewed on a micro-level that “involves [the] identifying notional, theoretical, ‘singular units’ of individual’s learning or development” (Evans, 2019:8) that occur in some form of chain reaction, whereby one part of the chain is connected with another. This thesis *critically examines* the various approaches to professional learning I have adopted while engaging with teachers outside of the classroom, as out of classroom spaces have been the primary location of my interactions with teachers throughout my professional roles. I critically examine the appropriateness of these approaches for the professional learning of teacher educators, and therefore, for my own learning.

Professional learning has been investigated by its particular model or modality, and the effectiveness of those modalities (Coldwell et al, 2011; Dadds, 2006; King, 2013; the EPPI Review, 2005, 2007). Professional learning is often prompted by an underlying premise that there is a better way of doing something (Evans, 2019). There is a substantial literature theorising the process of designing, modelling, analysing, and evaluating the impact of professional learning (Webster-Wright, 2009).

Professional learning models include relationships, scale, context, and the theory of learning (cognitivist or social), as well as agency and philosophical paradigms (Boylan et al, 2017:123). Some of the models of professional training are universally recognisable as “transmissive models” (Kennedy, 2005:2). The training model where a specialist transmits information in that subject or area is often the most popular one in the UAE. Schools employ training providers to focus their efforts in specialist areas such as curriculum, assessment or exam preparation. The training, aligned to standards-based teaching, exemplifies the central control by the school, and can therefore “be effective in introducing new knowledge” (Harland & Kinder, 1997:238). In practice, the responsibility for implementing improvements lies with the schools and the teachers, however (Webster-Wright, 2009). The training model has accountability issues for teachers as the training is often situated outside the classroom, and teachers are therefore responsible for implementing it within their own settings.

El Afi (2019:367) explores the effects of professional development activities on teachers’ lesson planning, teaching methods, teaching tools, classroom management and cooperation in the ‘Tamkeen’ government-reform programme in Abu Dhabi, mentioned earlier. I participated in this programme while working in Abu Dhabi as a researcher and trainer whilst at Organisation 1. The study suggests that training should focus on addressing teachers’ needs and reducing the workload, while giving more emphasis to coaching, mentoring, and peer observation. For these aims to be achieved, the traditional model of ‘delivery’ should also be re-considered and integrated with other models. Furthermore, the coaches, mentors, or trainers should have some understanding of Arabic culture in order to gain greater insights into teachers’ practices and in order to build on and cultivate teachers’ inner voices (p.380).

Award-bearing models emphasise the completion of programmes of study, and are often accredited or externally validated. Some may lack real focus on, and therefore, have limited

relevance and impact in the schools in which teachers work. Although the award of a professional qualification can be significant in career terms, it does not necessarily guarantee competence in practice (Eraut, 2008:6) or that the learning will be transferred and applied, no matter how flexible or well-designed the programme (Webster-Wright, 2009). The dearth of research investigating award-bearing models of professional development in the UAE shows the need to explore outcomes for students and the quality of teaching and learning that result from award-bearing programmes. This gap within the literature on award-bearing models implies that in some contexts—such as the UAE—qualifications are highly significant in providing teachers with a metaphorical passport to travel and work within a variety of international contexts. As teachers are not able to gain citizenship in the UAE, this lack of status may determine their decisions about professional learning. A recognised qualification offers a tangible outcome that is transferable to other contexts, and with potentially positive career implications.

Similarly, in standards-based models such as the UAE Teacher Licensing initiative, teachers must complete compulsory training regulated by the KHDA and the MoE. Participants have no ownership, choice, or capacity to contribute to the prescribed content of the training. The focus is on accountability rather than on valuing teachers' own capacities for reflective, critical inquiry, or their personal theories about learning (Dadds, 1997:34). Models that focus on a perceived deficiency in teacher effectiveness and performance, often defined within the context of performance management or performance appraisal, have obvious limitations. They imply, for example, that the root cause of the deficit lies with teachers, and not with the leadership. Similarly, cascade models, which require individual teachers to attend 'training events' and to disseminate the information to colleagues, rely on the ability of the individuals attending the training event to effectively communicate "general skills or knowledge rather than values" to a range of other individuals (Harland & Kinder, 2006:238). The nature of how knowledge is selected, and therefore,

communicated within these models implies that the legitimised knowledge is not with the teachers, and therefore, the control and agency is with others.

The literature on teachers has attempted to capture behavioural, cognitive, and contextual knowledge; and similarly, some of the literature on agency has focused on connecting various concepts to enable individuals to demonstrate agency. Agency “is theorised as an interaction between personal capacity and disposition and the affordances or resources for agency of the particular socio-cultural context (Philpott & Oates, 2017:319). In other words, agency is not something that people have—as a property, capacity, or competence—but “is something that people do” (Priestly et al, 2015:626); for example, by deciding which form of new knowledge to invite, accept and mediate.

The concept of agency highlights that “actors always act by means of their environment rather than simply in their environment [so that] the achievement of agency will always result from the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural factors as they come together in particular and, in a sense, always unique situations” (Priestly et al, 2015:626). The individual development of agency suggests that personal capacity and disposition arise from one’s earlier “biographical trajectories through differing socio-cultural contexts...rather than in terms of innate or idiosyncratic personal differences.” (Philpott & Oates, 2017:319).

Agency can also bring about autonomous thinking through changes to ‘habits of mind’ and ‘points of view’ among individuals and groups. When teachers engage in conversations about learning, and reflect on the views expressed, the experience can significantly increase their capacity for autonomy (Keay et al, 2019:125). When they have a sense of agency to shape their professional learning and inquire into their own practice, teachers thereby not only gain insights into the

complexities and possibilities for improvement “but also contribute to the field’s understanding of teaching and learning” (Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008:1180).

In his study, Taylor (2017) explores teacher learning in Finland and Poland and teacher educator learning in Bulgaria, Slovakia, France, Portugal, Turkey, and England; and presents a model that analyses individual teacher-professional growth. His interviews with teachers from each country reveal how they kept pace with innovations in teaching and learning, and explore which types of learning and development they most valued (Taylor, 2017:91). Based on his findings, Taylor proposed a model of teacher growth (Figure 5) that emphasises that transformational professional learning should have a clear purpose, giving teachers agency to respond to either individually or collectively, and cultivating the alertness and sensitivity that are integral to researcherly dispositions.

Taylor’s study highlights that teachers’ sense of purpose relates to situational and external factors resulting from external agendas or capability criteria underpinning teacher monitoring and inspection, which can be drivers for personal and professional growth. Models that are aligned to local needs *and* local teacher needs and priorities are likely to have greater impact (Kennedy, 2005).



**Figure 5 Model of teacher growth**

Source: Taylor, 2017

The teachers within Taylor’s study associated transformational professional growth with choice and agency to enhance their subject knowledge or pedagogical expertise through informal as well as formal professional learning opportunities that benefitted their students and themselves. While teachers valued sharing ideas and experience through regional, national, and international networks, or in macro-level communities of practice (Kendall et al, 2013), meeting with and learning from their peers at such events was seen as equally important (King & Newman 2001; Taylor, 2017). Leaders and managers can play an important role in building and sustaining a professional learning culture where development needs are identified with and for individuals and teams.

A limitation of Taylor’s model is that the dimensions related to purpose, opportunity and response do not capture the complex, dynamic interactions entailed, as “teacher accounts do not always fall neatly into the quadrants.” (Taylor, 2017:97). This thesis acknowledges that useful insights can emerge when the nuances of interactions within specific contexts are studied. If, within these

interactions, teachers and teacher-educators seek to understand each other as self-referential and responsive to their environments, great understandings of each other's learning might be possible. By adopting this approach, my study seeks to view individuals in their complexity and dynamism, rather than as static and non-situated entities (Taylor, 2017:93).

Drawing on coaching and mentoring models of development on trust, safety, and minimal pressure within relationships is emphasized to allowing the coach and coachee to work together effectively (Lofthouse, 2019). The presence of trust in professional relationships allows for ambiguity, dialogue, and a divergence of views to be considered. Coaching models recognise three developmental components involved in professional growth: behavioural, attitudinal, and intellectual. Attitudinal development, for example, comprises perceptual change, evaluative change, and motivational change. When a teacher recognises a 'better way' of doing something, change often occurs across more than one development component. While it is not necessary for change to occur in all the dimensions for professional learning to take place, by seeing professional learning as a complex process, and analysing the granular interactions, can increase our understanding of how change occurs (Evans, 2019).

Where professional learning communities are developed in schools, educators committed to working collaboratively in an ongoing process of collective inquiry can achieve better results for the students they serve through continuous, job-embedded learning (DuFour et al, 2008). Inquiry or the practice of collaborative action research provide dynamic alternatives to the passive role imposed on teachers in traditional models of professional learning (Burbank & Kauchack, 2003), shifting the balance of power towards the teachers themselves through their identification and implementation of relevant research activities. Professional learning communities are more likely to thrive when there is supportive and shared leadership, a shared purpose and values, and a

sustained collaborative culture of problem-solving and collective inquiry (EPPI, 2005; King, 2013), and thus of school improvement (Duncombe & Armour, 2004).

These models address, in different ways and to different extents, the relationship between teacher beliefs and practice; the conditions in which teachers grow; and the influence of the stimuli on learning. Research has highlighted that individual aspects of professional learning such as staff training, courses, activity-based learning, and inter-related factors including structured support and conversations with peers can all lead to transformative professional learning (Webster-Wright, 2009; Fraser et al, 2007).

Of the approaches to professional learning discussed so far, the micro-level model of professional learning with its cognitive processes is the most relevant to this study as this involves interactions with teachers through conversations (Evans, 2019). Within my role as a teacher educator, conversations and relationship building is an essential part of my work, and this has been one of the data sources of this research.

Within my specific contexts, perhaps what is needed is a better balance between the teacher-centred, context-specific models of professional learning and the transmission-focused models. This kind of balance would enable teachers to connect theory and practice, to internalise and reflect on concepts, and to construct new knowledge and apply it to respond more appropriately to the requirements of the specific professional and political contexts they find themselves in (Fraser, 2007). Training in an award-bearing programme, for example, could prompt action research or collaborative enquiry, and lead to a transformation in classroom practice. Thus, a transmissive purpose could become transformative “through the agentic response of teachers” (Kennedy, 2016:694). Transformational professional learning may emerge from the tensions that arise through an awareness of the conflicting agendas and philosophies, thereby provoking

engagement that can result in transformative practice (Kennedy, 2005:13). As a prerequisite to achieving this result, participants must perceive the validity of their skills, knowledge, and experience, in addition to the value of their contributions (Carpenter, 2015). At the same time, school-based professional learning must be well-supported by leadership to enable collaborative peer learning (Chaudary, 2012). Teacher educators can facilitate the development of theory-informed practice, mediating the academic or evidence-based research into practice. The data from this study will be analysed to investigate how, in my role as a teacher educator, I mediate this process with my participants.

### **2.2.6 Informal and formal professional learning**

The majority of studies have focussed on 'explicit' and formal types of professional learning activity because they are easier to evaluate (Evans, 2019:13). One of the limitations of this approach is the "objectivist epistemology that views knowledge as a transferable object" (Evans, 2019:13) that is primarily cognitive and implies that learning can be studied separately from the socio-cultural context.

Professional learning has, however, increasingly been viewed as occurring informally more often than not, and therefore, implicitly (Webster-Wright, 2009). One of the major challenges and limitations of researching professional learning that is informal or implicit is that learning can occur without the participants' awareness; therefore, the knowledge created is often tacit (Eraut, 2004:249). As mentioned previously, tacit knowledge appears in three quite different forms: situational understanding, intuitive decision-making and routine procedures (Eraut, 2008:4).

Informal learning could be described as unplanned, opportunistic, unstructured, and perhaps even taking place in the absence of a facilitator (Eraut, 2004:250). At the same time, the terms 'implicit' and 'explicit' are not definitive, but contain nuances and approaches to learning, some of which

are radically different to others (ibid). An awareness of informal learning and its benefits recognises the social significance of learning from other people, and implies greater scope for individual agency than socialisation. This is the learning that takes place in the spaces surrounding activities and events with a more overt formal purpose, learning that happens in a much wider variety of settings than formal education or training (Eraut, 2004:247). Most workplace learning is informal and occurs as a by-product of engaging in work processes and activities. Newcomers often have to learn “how we do things here” without being given any specific objectives or advice, or they might be given a set of objectives or competencies, and then assessed on how well their “performance meets the expectations of significant others in [their] workplace” (Eraut, 2008:1).

Too often, professional learning as an outcome is interpreted narrowly, as relating to teachers’ physical action, or measured in students’ learning and attitudes (Evans, 2019:6). To assume that any generative impact of professional learning will be (immediately) evident represents an oversimplistic kind of reasoning that fails to consider the complexities involved. An individual’s learning over time is difficult to define due to the hidden, and invisible aspects, and therefore, any attempt to measure implicit professional learning is potentially dangerous and limited (Evans, 2019:7). Yet, informal, implicit learning has been recognised as the most significant form of professional learning for teachers (Webster-Wright, 2009).

### **2.2.7 Evaluating the impact of professional learning**

This narrative examines my role as a teacher educator in developing appropriate and effective professional learning for teachers. Since the evaluation of professional learning is often neglected by schools (Earley & Bubb, 2004), is considered problematic (Rhodes et al, 2002; CUREE 2008), and is seldom carried out in a systematic and focused manner (Muijs & Lindsay, 2008), this is an area of interest and importance that is addressed in this research. Earlier research in the UK

described professional learning as inadequate and inequitable, and “largely unrelated to teaching experiences and needs” (Chaudary, 2012:92). Little evidence is available on whether schools sustain and embed professional learning practices (King, 2011). At the same time, where significant investments of money and resources have been expended in some countries to research, deliver, and improve professional learning, confidence in the returns is limited, and “little evidence exists of its effects on pupil outcomes” (King, 2013:1). According to Opfer et al’s (2011) study on the UK state system, evaluation of professional learning appeared to be ‘instinctive’, pragmatic, and without explicit reference to any clearly defined learning outcomes for teachers or students (ibid). There is little agreement in fact on how to assess the quality of professional development (Borko, Jacobs, Eitljorg & Pittmann, 2008) because the underlying processes of professional learning make it difficult to evaluate their impact, and the inner-workings of teachers are difficult to observe (Coldwell & Simpkins, 2011).

In summary, the key themes and arguments found within the literature on teacher professional learning highlight the importance of teachers’ beliefs and values about learning as a starting point for the design and implementation of this research. The models I have explored have limitations, however; and complex factors will impact the outcomes of any given approach. School-based approaches are often recognised as the most appropriate, but in a strongly regulated context such as the UAE reflective practice and collaborative professional development models are undermined by the teacher-licensing initiative which favours a training model to license teachers. While the literature on teacher professional learning can and does inform my role in the UAE, the lack of formal structures for teacher educators to work with teachers has been an on-going challenge. As the regulatory environment has changed, I have adopted a pragmatic response by adapting my approach to professional learning. This narrative considers whether research informed approaches to teacher professional learning have been undermined due to the increased pressure for schools to adopt mandatory teacher-licensing training.

In the following chapter I outline my research aims and provide a rationale for selecting narrative inquiry to examine my evolving personal perceptions and approaches to professional learning as a teacher educator in the complex educational context within the UAEI also provide a criteria to be able to judge this thesis as an authentic narrative so my own position as the researcher can be considered as central to the process.

## Chapter 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

Although academic research has traditionally been seen as an impersonal activity (Etherington, 2004:25), the focus of this narrative study is on *my* evolving personal perceptions and approaches to professional learning as a teacher educator in the UAE. I critically reflect on the professional attributes and research skills that are required for conducting research as a teacher educator, and on the professional learning that has taken place through my experiences with teachers in the UAE. The research aims I am addressing are:

- To capture the nuances of my personal and professional learning in the UAE
- To elaborate on the process of researching my professional experiences and development

In this chapter, I explore the literature on narrative inquiry that has connections to professional learning, while also looking at its philosophical underpinnings. Additionally, I outline the ontological and epistemological position that has informed my research design, together with my rationale for selecting narrative inquiry, and the collection methods I have used to address my research aims. Finally, I consider the potential limitations of this study.

Narrative inquiry has gained popularity as a research methodology because of its theory/practice/reflection cycle of inquiry (Kim, 2016:18) that offers broad access to different disciplinary traditions (ESRC, 2008:7). This methodology has received growing attention as it has challenged traditional research approaches that claim greater validity. It falls within the qualitative research paradigm because narratives are “social, relational, and infused with power relations” (O’Toole, 2018:178), whilst also being “rigorous, creative, and political” (Trahar, 2013:xxi) at the same time. Narrative inquiry is an interdisciplinary approach with connections to law, science, psychology, education, and medicine (Kim, 2016); and has also become increasingly popular in

entrepreneurial research, which was previously “dominated by discourses of individuality, heroics and masculinity” (Larty & Hamilton, 2011:222).

Narrative as a methodology is concerned with lived experience (Bignold & Feng Su, 2013) and in this study I explore my own knowledge as lived experiences as well as other teachers’ lived experiences. The term ‘lived experience’ may appear to be contradictory in nature, as any experience by virtue, is lived. Dewey’s (1938) work combined with inquiry “provided the foundations for narrative inquiry, as well as reflective practice” (Craig, 2009:107) as a means for teachers to hold and express their knowledge (Clandinin, 1986). Narrative provides the human mind with a means to make sense of the world (Bruner, 1986; 2002) through processes of reflection (Craig, 2009) that are situated alongside inquiry; thereby serving both as a research method and a form of representation (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). Many aspects of this study are ‘raw’, as descriptions of my interactions with teachers and of my own and their lived experience of critical incidents within schools. These experiences integrate “interaction (the personal and the social), continuity (past, present and future), and situation (place)” as aspects of professional learning that help to conceptualise my experiences and ideas about practical knowledge (Craig, 2009:107). The facility to capture the true essence of my experiences and the experiences of the teachers I worked with is the aspect of narrative inquiry that first attracted me to this methodology.

Historically, narrative research has been underpinned by binary assumptions (quantitative vs qualitative), but this view of research needs to be disrupted so that interactions between qualitative and numerical research can be viewed more optimistically to examine the experiences of educators and education in the UAE (Hendry, 2009).

Of course teachers operate within any society from the perspective of their values, culture, and/or religion, and this informs their pedagogical perspective. However, “the individual’s experience and flexibility with their own personal narratives and consequences for the future are all parts of an educational continuum (or narrative) that is constantly being put into question by the present.” (Ferguson, 2011:26). Personal perspectives inform our decisions regarding our judgements of situations, people, and choices, and on what we intend as our purpose (Etherington, 2004:25). In the process of drafting this thesis, I adopted the following criteria to ensure my research could be evaluated as an authentic narrative:

- provide knowledge and information about the cultural context
- be open about myself and about my involvement in the context
- be transparent about my participants and the context of their lives so that meanings can be generated
- be open and transparent about my choices, and about the actions I have taken as a result, in order to bring the story alive and provide depth about the choices made within the specific context
- create a sense of continuity and history for the characters involved so that individual stories and the histories influencing them can be determined
- structure the document so that the learning episodes are coherent, and the narrative is consistent throughout (Etherington, 2004:82)

When these criteria are met, narrative can contain “good stories” that engage readers and capture experiences (Etherington, 2004:82). Crucially, some significant questions have been posed about the criteria for judging narrative research. These include: does it make a substantive contribution to my understanding of social life? Does the work have aesthetic merit? Is the work reflexive enough to make the researcher sufficiently visible? What is the impact of this work on me? Does the research provide the reader with an account of lived experience? (Etherington, 2004:148). I have attempted to address these questions throughout this thesis.

As narrative inquiry has no prescribed set of rules (Bruce, 2008:325), and as no definition of ‘narrative’ has been agreed upon, there are no obvious categories on which to focus (ESRC,

2008:4). Nonetheless, research that is framed as narrative allows for different layers of meaning to be brought together in dialogue, which in turn, allows for greater understandings about people, including particular individuals, within education settings (Squire et al, 2013:2). Following an initial struggle due to the open-endedness of narrative, I have since understood narrative inquiry as “a systematic approach that seeks to understand subjective experiences by focusing on stories that recall these experiences. As a methodology nested within “the interpretive paradigm” (Yip, 2011:134), I understand its purpose “involves the reconstruction of a person’s experience in relationship both to the other and to a social milieu.” (Clandinin, 2006:14). Narrative is both a method of knowing and an ontological condition of social life. Narratives are a cultural resource that gives substance to our lives and help “shape identity, guide action, and constitute our mode of being” (Smith & Sparkes, 2006:3).

With clear connections to storytelling, narrative inquiry has become a field with its own distinctive nature and significance (Kim, 2016:6). It draws on literary and cultural theory, as well as on story-research traditions within sociology, anthropology, psychology, history, medicine, therapy, and new media (ESRC, 2008:7). It does not try to prove or disprove a theory (Trahar, 2008), but combines interests in describing, interpreting, and improving individual human experiences (ibid). Narrative inquiry represents the relational and interactive nature of human science research, with careful accounting and re-counting of the human story acting as its hallmarks. Narratives convey experience through reconstituting it, resulting in multiple and changeable storylines. These uncertainties of language can even be understood as a route to the unconscious, if the unconscious is itself defined (ESRC, 2008:23). A move towards multiple ways of knowing the world is a move towards authenticity and trustworthiness (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Narrative inquirers recognise the tentative and variable nature of knowledge and accept and value the way in which narrative inquiry allows wondering, tentativeness, and alternative views to exist as part of the research account (Clandinin, 2006:25).

### **3.2 Key terminology**

The term 'narrative inquiry' is commonly used in the literature (Clandinin, 2013; Trahar, 2010; Kim 2016), sometimes interchangeably with the more generic term 'narrative research' (Mischler 1999:xv), particularly when the inquiry embraces the method and phenomena of a study (Trahar, 2008; Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008). In fact, the term 'narrative' has multiple meanings and is used in a variety of ways in different disciplines, often synonymously with the term 'story'. The Latin root of the word 'narrative' and 'narrate' indicate its historical and current meaning. 'Narrative' is derived from the Latin root *narros*, which means 'to know' (Emihovich, 1995:38; Bruce, 2008:323), while *narrat* translates as 'related' or 'told' and *narrare*, 'to tell' or *narrativus* 'telling a story'. These terms are akin to the Latin term *gnarus*, which translates as 'knowing', and which is in turn derived from the ancient Sanskrit *gna* or 'to know'. In short, narrative is therefore a form of knowing, and also telling, so "a narrator, then, could mean one who knows and tells." (Kim, 2016:6).

### **3.3 Ontology and epistemology**

Narrative research falls within the interpretivist and social constructivist paradigm of social research. There are arguments about where narrative inquiry sits, and whether it constitutes phenomenological research or represents a research approach that is distinct (Kim, 2016; Caine et al., 2013). My use of narrative inquiry is informed philosophically by a social constructivist approach to learning that I adopted after completing my PGCE. I believe that reality is socially constructed, and accordingly, we subjectively determine our behaviour through this by responding to people, places, situations, and contexts (Etherington, 2004:29). This philosophical standpoint invites us to actually view the world and ourselves as socially constructed, and challenges us to view grand narratives as one of the many possible discourses (Etherington, 2004:21). Through social constructivism, my perceptions of truth and reality have been challenged as my identity and my understandings of professional learning have also been challenged through "language, stories, and behaviour" (Etherington, 2004:20). This epistemological stance confirms that

knowledge “is socially constructed and always fallible, and, as such, there can be no theory-free knowledge: there are multiple ways of knowing” (Smith & Sparkes, 2006:178).

The epistemological contexts relevant to this research are the settings outside the classroom but within schools that have been used to provide teachers—in non-judgmental ways—with opportunities to reflect on their careers and professional learning in the UAE (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995).

Research writing is a social construction, and people have always used structures as a form or template for their representations (Etherington, 2004:84). Journal writing—reflexive research in particular—has been recognised as an important part of qualitative research in general (Etherington, 2004:117). Usually, we think of our journals as the private space in which we log the uncensored thoughts and feelings about our lives, relationships, activities, and interests (ibid). Writing also has a strong cultural component—as text genres are endorsed by cultural conventions—and “these ways with language, or norms of interaction and interpretation, form part of the invisible ritual imposed by culture on language users. This is culture’s way of bringing order and predictability into people’s use of language” (Kramsch, 1998:1). Western education has been criticised for focusing too much on the explicit and the measurable and too little on “the intersubjective capacities of people” (Ferguson, 2011:26).

It has been defined as the study of “human essences, perceptions and everyday life, and an attempt to provide direct descriptions of experiences without taking account of their psychological origin” (Kim, 2016:54). Narrative inquiry incorporates ways of thinking about phenomena, and “interweaving narrative views of phenomena and narrative inquiry that require careful selection of terms” (Caine et al, 2013:575).

As narrative research is still a maturing field with few tight methodological and definitional prescriptions (Latta & Kim, 2009:684) and no “overall rules about suitable materials, modes of investigation” (Andrews et al, 2013:1), the onus is on the researcher to articulate how they gathered and analysed the data in a transparent manner. Narratives are a means of expressing changes in life meaning, identity, sociocultural situations, and personal stories of significance (Riessman, 2005). Narratives do not mirror, but refract the past (Riessman, 2005:8) because narratives are “the intimate study of an individual’s experience over time and in context(s)” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:21) that reveal their “beliefs, desires, theories, values, and so on” (Bruner, 1991:9). A narrative is not an objective representation of life “it is a rendition of how life is perceived” (Bold, 2012:17).

Narratives of events can tell us when and where something happens and also show the impact of an event over time (Polkinghorne, 1995; Bruner, 1991; Conle, 2000). Narrative data has often been collected and presented through lived experiences, and then revisited and re-presented (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The approach is fluid, open-ended, and at times, complicated, as it involves human experiences that are gathered from written, verbal, oral, and visual data from different cultural perspectives. The meanings are therefore both hidden and visible; attached to experiences that involve beliefs, both social and personal (Josselson, 2006, Trahar, 2013).

A narrative inquiry starts from the ontological position of curiosity about how people live and experience the world. It does not start from a “realist, constructionist, or postmodern position” (Caine et al, 2013:575). Re-positioning all inquiry as narrative, as opposed to categorising narrative as one form of inquiry, provides a space for re-thinking research beyond dualisms, as different types of data may be viewed from a different perspective, if they fall under narrative research, and to see the value of different research methods whilst viewing them as necessary components of narrative. As a wide variety of data has emerged from my inquiry, it might be

possible to conceptualise this dialogue. The epistemological roots of the scientific and humanistic traditions can be traced to narrative when narrative is understood as the primary way in which humans construct meaning. There are three distinct arguments about the position of narrative inquiry within research discourse. The first argues that science and narrative are distinct genres; the second, that narrative is post-science or post-positivist, and the third, that science is the only legitimate source of knowledge.

### **3.4 The benefits of adopting narrative inquiry**

There are many potential benefits to adopting narrative inquiry (Phillion, 2002). Narrative has the potential to represent the nuances of communication, joy, happiness, sadness, and hope in people's lives. It can reveal the specific factors that sit beneath contexts and people to "shed light on everyday issues and feelings" (Bolton, 2010:91). Narrative provides a basis for examining practice and processes across cultures and contexts (Fletcher et al, 2007) because it is a communicative tool to "understand people and events" (Conle, 2000:50). As narrative inquiry does not reduce human experiences to transactions, it can offer us insights into the spiritual depths of human experience. It also "emphasizes the importance of claiming one's voice, while also respecting and empowering the human person" (Bruce, 2008:324) through "an essential strategy of human expression." (Kim, 2016:6). Narratives can be "seductive" and "their plots draw us in shaping the stories we tell often in spite of our experiences" (Richardson, 2002:414).

A narrative approach hinges on getting people to articulate their experiences through stories and to reveal more about themselves when they are thinking within the mind-set of story-telling (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007:46). This approach thereby has the potential to uncover uncomfortable truths as well as valuable insights into the "story in our lives that teaches us, makes us who we are, and can change us" (Neilsen, 1998:99). For some, narrative inquiry is incredibly powerful yet doubts regarding its philosophical positioning, and our relationship to it, remain (Richardson,

2002:414). These doubts arise from its non-traditional principles, and its acceptance of relationships as a central focus, which I will discuss shortly.

### **3.5 Storytelling as a pedagogical tool**

Although story and narrative are connected, there is also a clear distinction between the two (Kim, 2016). We have used stories for centuries, and retelling stories has been central to how people and communities have formed their identities over time (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007:36), and we have now returned to valuing local stories and lived experience (Etherington, 2004:27). Stories cross cultures, nationalities, places, and timeframes (Trahar, 2008), and have been used as a means of teaching religion, values, history, traditions, and customs, to help us understand who we are and show us “what legacies to transmit to future generations” in order to instil hope and stimulate resourceful thinking (Schram, 1994:176). Some communities, such as those that seek greater understandings through written texts and/or religious texts and cultures with strong oral traditions may be more amenable to stories and value their significance. Stories are not only fluid, but are shaped by “the temporal notion of becoming, and link knowledge, context, and identity” (Caine et al, 2013:581); helping people to shape their lives and interpret their past (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Stories like narratives, are open to interpretation but definitively, “narratives constitute stories and stories rely on narratives” (Kim, 2016:9); although the terms are often interchangeable in the literature (Moon, 2010).

We naturally talk about ourselves and others in a storied way. Stories are intertwined with other stories, and we tell, retell, and affirm in our own eyes and in the eyes of others (Bolton, 2010:31). In telling a story, the narrator takes responsibility for making the relevance of the story clear—so that meaning is created between storyteller and listener (Trahar, 2010:260). Writing out stories openly about personal interests is an enterprising process that, in turn, drives data generation (Conle, 2000:198) because within the writing process, stories emerge that are personal

interactional, historical, institutional, and discursive (Riessman, 2008:105). Stories can be used as artistic devices to prompt reflection, and crucially, transcend time, which adds to their significance (Kim, 2016). Stories hold significant promise for qualitative researchers because they are particularly suited as a linguistic tool in which human experience can be expressed (Polkinhorne, 1995). Most stories have a beginning, a middle and an end, are held together by some kind of plot, and end in a resolution (Sarbin, 1986). However, narratives do not necessarily involve a plot or structured storyline. Narrative research may therefore simply include “interruptions of reflection in a storied life” (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007:464). Storied lives may have unplanned interruptions such as an unexpected event that disrupt someone’s identity, and thereby change that person’s outlook (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007). An example might be an inter-cultural experience that highlights differences between people, positions of power, and forces the people involved to question their place within a society. There is a distinction between thinking *about* stories and thinking *with* stories. The concept of thinking with stories is meant to challenge and build upon institutionalised Western research practices, in both the quantitative and qualitative fields. In other words, thinking about stories “conceives of narrative as an object”, whereas “[t]hinking with stories is a process” where we allow narrative to guide the process (Huber et al, 2014:226).

*Story* is a gateway through which a person sees their world, and when they interpret events, places and people, it becomes personally meaningful (Trahar, 2008, Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007). Storytelling is more complex than often thought and it is important to recognise that “stories can be used as a verifying mechanism, as a means of confirming or defending truths, and...as a means of control” (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007:462). As stories often come from a personal perspective, it is difficult to argue against them as representations of events and people because stories are “connected to human emotions and retold as representations of them” (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007:462). Storytelling tends to be closer to actual life events than other methods of

research that are designed to “elicit explanations” (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007:464). Researchers always play a central role in stories, and I have entered my participants’ lives when they were in “the midst of their personal, social, institutional, and professional learning stories” that did not stop when I left (Craig, 2010:108). Their stories may have continued to be constructed either in or away from my presence, and they may have evolved during the interview process, when meaning is “negotiated between the researcher and the participant” (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007:464). In this sense, narrative inquiry goes beyond telling stories; it may reveal “multi-dimensional meanings of society, culture, human actions, and life” (Kim, 2016:6).

Stories that people tell should not be regarded as simple reflections of experiences or as transparent windows of their life envisaged through dialogue. People resort to a mode of communicating they are familiar with, and in this sense, they draw upon their cultural repertoire of stories, and synthesise these into personal stories. In the act of doing so, people “engage in creating and constructing certain kinds of self in specific social contexts” (Sparkes, 1999:20). By adopting this methodology, I hope to capture the nuances of my professional practice, and the nuances of decisions I have taken regarding my own professional learning, and the learning of the teacher educators and teachers whom I have worked with.

### **3.6 Positionality**

It is important to note that I was already in the midst of my personal and professional story when I started this research, as were the participants I worked alongside (Trahar, 2008; Clandinin, 2000). When I began the study in 2012, I was already writing personal blogs and articles for various newsletters, but had not defined my writing as narrative. Before writing these blogs, I had previously written poetry, and frequently wrote about my experiences in personal diaries; so in essence, I had been thinking in a narrative style for some time. Subsequently embracing the idea that my experiences here in the UAE were worth something within the space of education, I

believed my story was worth telling. This realisation prompted me to apply for my Ph.D in Education, and to begin structuring my thoughts. In short, the narrative style resonated with me as a research design because my thought processes were already taking the form of story (Huber et al, 2014).

From the outset, I have been situated within the research and have not set out to prove or disprove any theory or claim through my story. This stance therefore blurs the lines of traditional research approaches. Taking a position within the research is actively encouraged within narrative inquiry, so I have focused on the methods for analysing and understanding the stories I relate, including my own. This means I take full responsibility for the views expressed in this document, and use the first person pronoun 'I' throughout, rather than referring to myself in the third person, which would distance me from this research (Etherington, 2004:27).

From a narrative perspective, people learn to share their stories in order to give meaning in environments that are not of their own making. People learn within a particular environment that enables them to construct their own narratives over time (Sparkes & Stewart, 2016:118). In the spirit of reflexive research, which I will explore shortly, I have been transparent about my life and my professional environments throughout this research process, especially in presenting the findings and discussion chapters. In Chapter 4, I provide contextual data about my personal accountabilities and the roles I have undertaken that have influenced my decisions regarding my data analysis, and how I have represented my collection process (Etherington, 2004:83).

As the concept of 'voice' is closely related to authenticity and accuracy, finding my voice and expressing my experience was central to this narrative inquiry. Rather than presenting a collective voice of understandings, I have allowed my voice to be dominant, and I recognise the privilege I

have gained in claiming this (Trahar, 2008). Claiming my voice allows me to represent and reflect upon my personal stories within my own unique circumstances and from my own point of view.

This is an authentic personal, rather than objective, approach to constructing a narrative that is truthful in relation to my experiences and interactions, represented “through language, through stories, which by virtue, are human” (Heikkinen, 2012:8) and an “intrinsic part of narrative research” (Bruce, 2008:329). I recognise how I have influenced the participants’ behaviour (Chan, 2017:33), following our interactions, and they in turn may have behaved in a certain way to influence their own context. The ‘truths’ of narrative accounts “are not in their faithful representations of a past world, but in the way they enable us to “re-imagine lives” (Riessman, 2005: 8) as “storied ways of knowing and communicating” (Riessman, 2005:1).

Narrative truth, constructed in these interactions, refers to the trustworthiness of the data, and it is generally sought in narrative inquiry and reflective practice, as well as in other kinds of qualitative research. Different interpretations can arise from each interaction. This study aims to reproduce the voices of the teacher educators and teachers whom I have worked with as authentically as possible. There is actually a “true for now” nature about narrative research (Bruner, 1986). Thus, “participants’ narratives involve multiple versions of narrative truth and derive their trustworthiness from their resonance” with, and usefulness to, others (Craig, 2010:112). Accordingly, as part of my own professional learning, the narratives of my participants are intertwined with my own narrative and my quest to identify my own professional learning journey. Generating questions and exchanges across the boundaries that separate research scholars produces “a truth effect that science is real knowledge and that narrative is mere interpretation and thus not real” (Hendry, 2009:73). In presenting this research, I attempt to truthfully represent my own experiences and emotions alongside those of my participants (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007).

### **3.7 Research situated in context**

Narrative research bears similarities to the literature on situated learning (Eraut, 2004) and professional learning within context (Webster-Wright, 2009). When researchers adopt a position from an objective stance, it is their view of the research and the data that changes, rather than they themselves. As human interactions all exist in a context, this context will impact the interactions and the humans involved (Trahar, 2011; Clandinin, 2006). I have outlined above some of the arguments around the position of narrative researchers as a central part of the research, and how narrative research is always situated within context. Contextual knowledge often has greater value than attempting to attach meaning to a 'grand narrative' of a culture (Geertz, 1983). Research is never situated within a vacuum "but exists in time and that time is itself a socially constructed concept" (Slife, 1993, cited in Clandinin, 2006:12).

Researchers who view narratives as relatively unmediated expressions of personal experience, may see context as important, but tend to treat it separately from the personal story, and pay most attention to obtaining reliable records of research participants' narratives. Those researchers with a strong interest in context may also concentrate on personal stories if these seem the most practical or effective means of researching particular issues. Spoken personal testimony has a strong cultural currency in the West and beyond, and with powerful effects (ESRC, 2008:27). Context may be understood as comprising interpersonal language, interpersonal relations, or the broader field of social and cultural relations (ESRC, 2008:43). Within this narrative, the context and the personal stories both have currency as they have driven my narrative. This has not been unmediated and there hasn't been a particular focus on one or the other.

### **3.8 Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is about coming as close as possible to an awareness of how others experience and perceive us. Being reflexive is about being “aware of our personal responses and to be able to make choices about how to use them” (Etherington, 2004:19), and being able to say with personal certainty how others perceive us. Reflexivity requires the flexibility to “consider deeply held ways of thinking and being” (Bolton, 2010:14). When we are reflexive, we become aware of the limits of our knowledge, and of how our behaviour affects others, including how we may even “marginalise groups or exclude individuals” (ibid). Managing uncertainty is one of the tensions of becoming reflexive. The essential uncertainty associated with reflexivity “makes it difficult to conceptualise, as certainty goes down and as experiential knowledge goes up” (Bolton, 2010:33). Reflexivity is an important part of narrative research as it “demands continued examination and critical appraisal of research practices and processes” (Larty & Hamilton, 2011:231); obliging the researcher to reflect upon and acknowledge their position and involvement in the research as well as their own subjective perceptions. Reflexivity also involves finding strategies to “examine our beliefs, behaviours, values, assumptions, prejudices and habitual actions to strive for understanding of our complex lives and how we relate to others” (Bolton, 2010:13).

Furthermore, reflexivity represents a methodological process of learning about the self as researcher, which enables a greater exploration of personal, theoretical, ethical, and epistemological themes. Qualitative researchers engage in reflexivity “because they have reason to believe that good data will result” (Kleinsasser, 2000:155). The process of reflexivity is iterative, involving the researcher’s intentions, the participants’ views, and opinions that inform the data, as well as “the actual data, and the researcher’s biases that shape the representation of the data” (Pillow, 2010:275). When we are reflexive, and we reflect on these dimensions, we are active in constructing our surroundings, and we “then begin to take circumstances and relationships into consideration rather than reacting to them” (Bolton, 2010:14). As a result, personal, social, and

cultural contexts become more prominent (Etherington, 2004:19) as I, the researcher, am implicated in the collection, analysis, and theorising of data; making these processes highly subjective (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

Reflexivity is not only a state of mind, but also an ongoing constituent of practice. It is not a technique or curriculum element, but “a pedagogical approach which should pervade the curriculum” (Bolton, 2010:9). The principle of reflexivity is based on the idea that reflective thinking is pivotal to my research. Reflexivity means that as the researcher I must be aware of the impact of my personal experiences while interacting with the other participants in the research. This principle also includes analysis of the ontological presumptions—my presumptions concerning reality. Closely related to this analysis is the process of epistemological analysis; that is; analysis of the presumptions concerning knowledge. For example, as a researcher I may assume that truth is a state of affairs that prevails in the world surrounding me. On the other hand, I may believe, in line with constructivism, “that the world is constructed psychologically and socially in interpersonal communication” (Angen, 2000:385). As a reflexive researcher I must be aware of the fact that I have created the story. As researcher I expose the process of knowing to the ‘readers’ by stratifying the text in a way that helps them see my way of writing” (Winter, 2002:150). Narrative researchers need to reflect upon their identities, cultural expectations, and subjectivities when they are interviewing and interpreting interactions, and most importantly, when they re-visit the data (Chan, 2017).

As a pedagogical medium, narrative inquiry involves an intentional reflexive process of interrogating one’s own teaching and learning (Latta & Kim, 2009). As a researcher I have been aware of my role as narrator throughout the research process (Elliot, 2005; Plummer, 2001). Reflexivity is crucial to understanding how as researcher I construct and present data. This understanding enables me to evidence my self-awareness, experience, and motivations.

In summary, reflexivity is the liberating aspect of narrative inquiry, as it frees the researcher to be honest about their perspectives (Bruce, 2008). In the discussion and concluding chapter, I will be transparent about the limits of this research, and about the new professional knowledge I have gained as a result.

An advantage of employing a narrative approach is that it takes into account the subtle changes in individuals and groups of teachers as they shape and are shaped by their experiences in context (Dewey, 1938; Bruner 1990). In this study the interactive narrative approach has allowed my story and the different stories of participants to emerge (Trahar, 2010), in a process of sense-making, representation, construction, and co-construction of lived experiences; with myself as the researcher, playing a central role in this process (Squire; 2008; Wengraf, 2004). At the same time, I realise that the study of relationships is complicated and involves a high degree of empathy and understanding of others within context.

### **3.9 Rationale for my research design**

In framing this research, I started with my experiences rather than with theory (Huber et al, 2014; Kim, 2016; Bold, 2012; Trahar, 2010). Thinking narratively about pedagogy is a complex task because “all stories are in the midst” of telling (Huber et al, 2013:227) and can have multiple starting points (Craig, 2012; Trahar, 2010; Clandinin, 2000). Any thesis work begins with the “researcher/writer’s feelings and their motivation”, and this is what generates the initial interest in the topic (Conle, 2000:194). In personal narrative inquiry, the motivation is therefore likely to come from the writer’s expertise and interests, together with the needs of the field, and is ultimately informed by the researcher’s values. This seems logical from a theoretical perspective, but as a researcher on the ground, it was difficult to get started without any categories or themes to focus

on (Andrews et al, 2013). Starting from the standpoint of lived experience has enabled me to reflect on my professional space within the sector, and also on the lives of my participants (Kim, 2016).

Based on my knowledge of the context, I have taken an open-ended stance with my research design, which challenges conventional research traditions. Due to my ontological and epistemological assumptions, I was not able to design the research approach from the outset because I began with my experiences, and then moved between my thinking, values, the data, and theory. This iterative process since the beginning of the study has taken greater shape with my emerging understanding of my learning within the context.

Inquiry is a negotiated process, and the process of thinking narratively and inquiring involves an ontological commitment (Caine et al, 2013). My research design lacks linearity because the data is connected to my thinking and values as well as to my experiences, and decisions. I anticipated the difficulty in presenting this, and in order to frame the research design process, I have presented data within the findings section from a variety of sources, where each set of findings is accompanied by a rationale for the data collection method. Having already described the wider context of the UAE and the education regulations that govern the sector, I have provided further contextual data that relates specifically to the roles I have undertaken within Section 4. This data is intended to provide clarity and enable a wider consideration of this study and its place within the field of teacher educator research.

Throughout Western research on education, there has been a relentless focus on the 'truth' through numbers, which "may have hindered our understandings of cross-cultural teaching" (Ferguson, 2011:26). Narrative inquirers have turned from numbers due to their sterility (Clandinin, 2006), yet numbers can add a layer of certainty and perceived credibility to professional conversations, as numbers are less ambiguous than words and language and can

bridge language barriers (Damodaran, 2017). A quantitative dominant approach may not capture the nuances of authentic experiences, emotions, values, and differences that a qualitative approach might. However, numbers can be meaningful as part of an experience, and-as an important feature of business life in the UAE- some quantitative data is included in this narrative because it allowed me to engage some of my colleagues who feel more at home with numbers than with qualitative data (Damodaran, 2017).

This study includes some quantitative data to illustrate some of the demographic challenges of the context and to inform some of my decisions regarding my professional learning. Damodaran's (2017) research resonates with my experience of working in Organisation 2 because my colleagues, who were mainly Indian nationals, often struggled to understand written education-related texts and education vocabulary, such as the nuances of vocabulary used in emails, policies, and school prospectus documents. Numbers can be framed in certain ways to get certain responses, and can create "the illusion of objectivity" (Damodaran, 2017:46). As my roles have involved working with investors and teachers from the Middle East and South Asia, I have seen a high degree of emphasis placed on the use of numbers to present 'truth'. Within the business world, numbers offer a "sense of precision and objectivity and provide counterweight to storytelling" but this precision is often misplaced (Damodaran, 2017:4). In many disciplines, numbers are used to inform, but also to intimidate.

Stories may be remembered more than numbers or other data because they have "memorable features" (Damodaran, 2017:13) that can help us to "comprehend rich experiences" (O'Toole, 2018:177). As humans, we do not store experience as data, like a computer, "we 'story' it and we then remember the story" (Bolton, 2010:3). Conducting this study while working in professional roles and studying narrative inquiry, has shaped my thinking because stories "allow business to connect to investors, customers, and employers at a level that pure facts or numbers cannot, and

they induce action.” (Damodaran, 2017:23). Narrative research allows a clear path for addressing questions of the trustworthiness of data and their interpretations.

Unlike other research methods, narrative research offers no automatic starting or finishing points (Squire et al, 2013:1). In talking to teacher educators and teachers and recognising the challenges they face within the context, I observed the potential and value in creating a narrative about the professional space in which we were operating. This task could not be approached scientifically or through traditional forms of knowing. While narrative approaches are not appropriate for studies of large numbers of nameless and faceless subjects, they can capture the rich and deep nature of experiences and the nuances of my personal narrative and the narratives of my participants more meaningfully than other methodological frameworks (Riessman, 2005:8). I am aware that my interactions with the participants happened in a particular place in time, and they may have resulted in changes to those participants and their environments. By thinking narratively about these experiences, I have been able to make sense of my thinking as well as my place and position within the education sector in the UAE.

Additionally, as the author of this narrative, I am aware of the privileges and limitations of my writing. Writing is an art form, “like painting and music” (Bolton, 2010:104), and is an adventure into a particular writer’s own being, and into their culture and society. Reflective writers’ share their journey when they are ready, and it becomes a joint journey when it is shared (Bolton, 2010). A writer has the privilege of entering the life of another person to gain an in-depth understanding of “their feelings, thinking, perception, and memories” (Bolton, 2010:17). All interpretations are provisional, however; made by positioned subjects who are prepared to know certain things and not others; analyses therefore are always incomplete (Andrews et al, 2013:205). In this study, my approach to writing is informed methodologically by Sparkes and Stewart (2016) who highlight

the value of auto-biographical writing. This form of writing allows self-understanding to emerge over time, and has clear connections to narrative research and thematic analysis.

### **3.10 Relationships in narrative inquiry**

Relationships are central to narrative inquiry and their importance is another re-occurring theme across the literature (Bruce, 2008:327). My choice of narrative as a methodology allows me to interpret and “understand interactions and relationships” (Squire et al, 2013:2) by “becoming involved in the lives of participants” (Clandinin et al, 2010:82), and through situating myself within the phenomena rather than attempting to control or predict it (Trahar, 2007; Craig, 2010; Clandinin, 2010). Relationships are in fact central to the business and professional culture in the United Arab Emirates. Indeed, when I first moved to the region, the training I received during my induction stressed the importance of relationships within Arabic culture. My colleague advised me how this was the single most important factor in conducting business in the UAE, and emphasised how my success would be determined by this factor. Relationships are also key for developing trust and mutual respect that leads to the development of agency (Timperley, 2018).

Such relationships may also result in a co-composing of lives (Huber et al, 2013). The emphasis on relational management, wherein the researcher understands the social significance of experience, is built on a commitment between the researcher and the researched in the research design (Caine et al, 2013; Kim, 2016) and in “the exploration of experience, knowledge, values, identity” (Bolton, 2010:9), rather than in any attempt to arrive at a true account.

The sense of knowing afforded by relationships allows insights into narratives that would not otherwise be possible (Trahar, 2010). The researcher not only understands that there is a relationship between the people involved, but also that they bring a history and worldview that

influences what emerges from the interaction (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2006). In this situation, “growth and learning are part of the research process” (p.14).

Relationships and ‘relational inquiry’ distinguish narrative inquiry from traditional or scientific approaches because the interactions with people in a relational process involve some level of communication, empathy, and interaction (Clandinin, 2006; Trahar, 2010). My story is intrinsic to the study (Trahar, 2010:261) because my own narrative has evolved as I have reconstructed those of my participants and have deepened my understanding of professional learning, both within the context and in response to the challenges presented. This approach represents a shift in focus from traditional researcher-participant relationships “toward a more relational view [that] involves a reconceptualization of the status of the researched in the relationship” (Clandinin, 2006:11).

As my professional narrative has evolved, so too have the narratives of my participants. The way in which narratives are constructed is a key consideration in making sense of lived experiences (Bruner, 1990; Squire, 2008; Wengraf, 2004). It is important not only to recognise the possibility of a researcher bias, but also to acknowledge that the narrative account is a representation; not a direct observation (Clandinin, 2010:82). It takes time to develop trust—an essential aspect of the relationship—to ensure the “integrity of the stories told” (Chan, 2017:32) in an “ethical approach” (Charmaz, 2016:45). This integrity can easily be compromised when an outsider to the participants’ community enters the scene, and probably causes both the researcher and researched to demonstrate behaviours that are un-natural. In this view, the researched and the researcher are seen to exist in time and in a particular context, each bringing with them a particular history and worldview. They are not static but dynamic, and so growth and learning are an intrinsic part of the research process (Clandinin, 2006:14).

In narrative inquiry the researcher comes into contact with “the intellectual territory of another way of thinking or working” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:21). Tensions sometimes create competing or conflicting stories, and the researcher, as the one who “interpret[s] the story in order to locate the truth” should be aware of this (Clandinin et al, 2010:82). The researcher also needs to uncover the participants’ personal practical knowledge (Kitchen, 2005). Within section 3.12, I outline who the participants of this study are.

Narrative inquiry distinguishes itself from other forms of by embracing the depth of language and its “connectedness and [the] coherence of the extended discourse of the story entwined with exposition, argumentation, and description” (Clandinin, 2006:29; Denzin, 1997). The issue of representation and language is seen as problematic because “language is not neutral, and it always contains a writer’s values” (Bryne, 2017:38). This leads me to the next important, and challenging, aspect of the research: narrative interviews.

### **3.11 Narrative interviews**

A key method of collecting data within this study was the narrative interview. The interviews were central to the kinds of stories told and collected (O’Toole, 2018:180). Professional conversations can be facilitated by different enablers such as interview tools that shape the quality and content of the conversation (Timperley, 2018). The co-constructed nature of interviewing and analysis was a vital aspect of this study enabling “further insights ... to be revealed and progressed” through listening (Taylor, 2017:103) Involving an exploration, both for the researcher and the participants, the co-constructed nature of interviewing and analysis is therefore a vital aspect of this study. As the participants were telling their stories, I listened and interacted with them flexibly to allow the stories to be related as fully as possible (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007:464). Personal narrative involves long sections of talk and extended accounts of lives in context that develop over the course either of single or of multiple interviews (Riessman, 2005:1).

I conducted this research with the assumption that I have co-constructed the participants' narratives and the participants have re-presented their experiences (Riessman, 2008:3). I define this approach as 'conversational sensitivity' because the set-up and style are crucial to the interaction that takes place. This required cultural sensitivity, given the cultural diversity of the participants. In the narrative development process, I also became my own narrator whilst constructing the narratives of others (ESRC, 2008:37).

Collecting data involved the use of unstructured interviews and the exploration of texts and field notes. I felt that a single narrative would not be sufficient to unpack a participant's narrative, as it might not take into account the range of contexts where a teacher or teacher candidate must self-position (Rice, 2011:151). Good narrative research through interviews entails interpretation, which begins during the interview itself. The interpretation can be fluid, but requires careful listening and engagement, and even then, the transcripts may not accurately demonstrate the context or the unfiltered truth (Riessman, 2008:3).

How I write about these interactions has consequences for myself, the context, and for the people I serve (Richardson, 2002:414). Language is a constitutive force that creates experience and "expresses cultural reality" (Kramsch, 1998:1). A disclosure of writing practices is therefore a disclosure of privilege and power, as the writer retains the ability to write from their interpretation of reality (Richardson, 2002:414). Qualitative writing is an intimate process, and therefore, the emotions should not be filtered (Etherington, 2004:83). Writing is not simply a means of transmitting information, but also a tool by which I can make sense of the world. It is a subjective exercise that can be used to create understanding (Denzin, 1990:2).

Writing always comes from specific perspectives, and the 'truth' it represents may never be completely objective. In written communication, the reader may come to a different understanding, rather than a misunderstanding (Bolton, 2010). Writing creates closer contact with emotions, thoughts, and experiences (Bolton, 2010), and the writing in narrative inquiry is part of the analysis and the reflexive process (Conle, 2000). Further, narrative is, at the same time, both product and process (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), and a "method of inquiry that moves through successive stages of self-reflection" (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:10); moving from initial field texts to research text, to quasi-public and public texts (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994). In rewriting my story, I questioned my assumptions about myself and my actions, and I reflected on my values and the things I have taken granted (Bolton, 2010:9). In the process of conducting this research, and writing this document, I have revisited my story several times and in doing so; I have influenced the data with my new understandings and with a heightened awareness of my professional self. Three of my participants have also engaged in the process of autobiographical writing, which we have then used as a conversational tool to discuss their professional learning. For clarity, a biography is always written in the third person, and autobiographical writing, in the first person (Sparkes & Stewart, 2016:113).

### **3.12 Selection of participants**

The participants in this study were selected as people I had worked with in various capacities and because I was able to access their professional lives. Knowing that I would be leaving Organisation 1 at some point, I took the opportunity to work with those participants I could access whilst performing my professional role. Two of the participants whose narratives are included were teacher educators I was working with in one of my roles. I worked with another teacher in Organisation 1 who later asked me to support him following my move to Organisation 2. Two other teachers I interviewed within the study were situated in a private school where I was coordinating the Lead Practitioner Accreditation over the academic year, so I knew I would be

interacting with them frequently, and established close relationships with them. In Chapter 4, I provide a detailed description of each participant, their relationship to my role and professional organisation, and their context at the start of each section relating to their narratives in order to establish the contextual underpinning of my research with them. Table 4 outlines the main participants, their schools and locations, and their nationalities:

**Table 4 The Participants**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>School/Location</b>	<b>Nationality</b>
Ahmed	School Social Worker	Government school in Al Ain	Egyptian
Stephen	Head of History	Private school, UK curriculum, Dubai	British
Phillip	Deputy Head of P.E	Private school, UK curriculum, Dubai	British
Sarah	Head of Kindergarten (teacher educator)	Private school, US curriculum, Dubai	British
Salem	English Teacher	Private school, US curriculum, Dubai	Syrian
Michael	Head of CPD (Teacher educator)	Private school, UK curriculum, Sharjah	British

### **3.13 The importance of time and timing**

One of the critical components of adopting narrative as a research methodology is time (Squire et al, 2013:11). Deciding which data to collect and include has been crucial due to the speed of the changes within the UAE and also because of my evolving awareness of my place within educational organisations and UAE society. Eraut (2004) discusses time and cognition within the workplace, and how factors related to workplace environments influence decision making, and how patterns of thinking and processing knowledge develop. With greater experience, and awareness of workplace factors, “intuitive routines enable people to complete tasks more quickly and thus save time” (Eraut, 2008: 8). In the six years it has taken to complete this study, I have taken specific decisions regarding my professional learning and data collection while being aware of the limitations of my professional roles and organisations whilst managing the uncertainty of the socio-economic factors in the UAE. Time and timing within the context of this

research have been medium and long term factors, related to my emerging awareness and management of my role within the context, rather than immediate workplace challenges. Narratives convey experiences, personal identities, preferred stories, justifications and explanations and they can also mobilise people. I have presented this narrative in a chronological order to relay experiences and explain how and why I have taken professional decisions about my roles and this research (O'Toole, 2018). A limitation of focusing on chronological time may limit unconscious thinking about different perceptions of reality, possibly causing stories to unfold outside of time narratives (Squire et al, 2013). New experiences and understandings of old experiences “enable new perspectives, which in turn, allow us to make sense of the lives of others in context” (Andrews, 2013:205). The sense-making has to be managed and re-presented in order for it to be shared and understood.

### **3.14 Summary of research design**

To frame this research, I had to ‘think narratively’ about myself and my participants within the context of professional learning, together with my personal relationships; and the physical environment around me (Trahar, 2010; Craig, 2010; Clandinin, 2006). Doing so involved “imagining a life” in which the research took place, “investing in self-inquiry and recognising where I sat in the process” (Kim, 2017:90). As the researcher I was indeed part of the research, and so building relationships is central to the process, in order to recognise the importance of co-constructing texts about interactions that acknowledge tensions and emotions within the story (Clandinin et al, 2010:84).

Table 5 presents an overview of the data given in each section of the findings, including the organisation I was working for at the time of the data collection; in addition to an indication of the forms my own personal narrative takes as it runs through each section.

**Table 5 Overview of data collection methods**

<b>Findings</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Org</b>
A	Personal writing from my blog and Organisation 1 newsletter	1
B	Personal writing from my blog Contextual data in the form of excerpts from a report	1
C	Survey data from the Lead Practitioner Accreditation pre-course questionnaire (43 teachers)  Interview data from two teachers in a school in Dubai  Narrative accounts from two teachers, one in Sharjah and one in Dubai	1
D	Narrative account from one teacher in a school in Dubai  Survey data from the UAE Learning Network (525 teachers)  Personal narrative writing from my diary  Excerpts from emails (contextual data)  Excerpts from reports (contextual data)	2
E	Email communication between myself and a school principal in Dubai	3

### **3.15 Data collection methods used for findings A and B**

Within this section I have provided data from my personal reflections. I also write in the first person to establish my values and the context for my thoughts. This data is selected because it captures my thinking at the time and illustrates the values that sit beneath the approaches I took towards my roles as a teacher educator. Whilst at Organisation 1, I wrote a blog about my observations on the education system in the UAE, including details of the teachers and students and of how they functioned within the context, and of how I navigated the culture to search for meaning in myself as an emerging teacher educator. I provide contextual data from Organisation 1 in terms of the professional learning model I was encouraged to adopt by my employer, and also my key performance indicators that I was judged on. The main purpose of these findings is to illustrate my starting point as a teacher educator.

### **3.16 Data collection methods used for Findings C**

In this section, I provide data from the pre-course questionnaire I issued at two schools I worked at while coordinating the Lead Practitioner Accreditation. I issued the questionnaire to the teachers at the start of the programme, and the teachers completed it in my presence in a classroom at the school.

In this section I provide transcribed dialogue from two semi-structured interviews with two teachers who were participating in my award-bearing programme. Prior to the interview, the participants created a visual representation of their action research projects to use as a very useful interview prompt. I was attracted to the use of visual methods as a potentially powerful mode for the reflective investigation (Gourlay, 2011, cited in Savin- Baden & Major, 2011:83), and because it was different from a traditional method of research which I did not feel would enhance my professional learning within this setting. The use of visual narratives can aid deeper understanding and enhance awareness of the narrative (Caine, 2010:493). Images—often more effective than words—can capture our attention and draw us to see things in new ways. Images tend to linger in the memory for a longer time and they can carry multiple meanings and can evoke stories as well as questions (Kim, 2016:150). A focus on images may provide participants with the means to express complex narratives in an indirect manner, taking the focus away from their words towards the visual, which in turn prompts them to express themselves in an unthreatening manner (Gourlay, 2011). This idea resonated with me because I had worked in mainly Arabic settings up until this point of the research with people from different cultures, whose beliefs and values differed. Quite often, values are hidden, and the cultural gap sometimes prevents any deep discussion. A visual image is something tangible that is open to interpretation. As this setting was culturally familiar, which I describe in more detail in section 4.4, I adopted this methodological approach with teachers from the same culture as me, so therefore, it did not present the same level of threat for me personally, and I could gain confidence from the approach, rather than

attempting this method, whilst managing an uncertain intercultural interaction. The teachers' action research projects provided a focus, and the visual representation acted as an instrument.

I conducted the interviews in a private room within the school settings where I was responsible for the Lead Practitioner Accreditation. In the interviews I was transparent with the participants about my research, my intentions, and what I was trying to achieve by conducting the interviews. The participants knew that this was for my doctoral study, and that I would be using the data to shape my personal and professional narrative. Research interviews do not need to stop after the first interview, as follow up may be required to check facts, story content, or to examine interpretations. Less formal post-interview interactions can also be viewed—by those who see personal narratives as more historically and socially extensible—as chances to give interviewees more power over the materials; to enable them to 'look back' historically and also in order to continue the conversation (ESRC, 2008:31). I therefore drafted responses from the participants throughout the interviews, and verified that the accounts were accurate during and after the interviews.

### **3.17 Data collection methods adopted for Findings D**

Surveys can provide important statistical information about incidences of phenomena that would not be possible to capture through reflexive or small-scale narrative research (Etherington, 2004:26). Surveys can raise awareness about some of the wider issues that are connected to grand narratives. I chose to use this method of data collection because I felt detached from my teacher educator role. It was an opportunistic choice, and I will explain the reasons for this in greater detail in section 4.5. The demographic profiles of the participants who completed the survey can be described as follows:

- Of the 525 teachers participating, 22% had 4–7 years' experience; 23% had 8–11; 18% had 12–15; 14% had 16–20; and 15% had over 21 years' experience.

- Of the teachers surveyed, 50% worked in the government sector in their home country; 30% in the private sector; and 20% had worked in both sectors at some time in their career.
- Classroom teachers made up 44% of the teachers surveyed; 22% were middle managers; and 5% were principals (24 in total).
- Some 49% of teachers were on 2-year contracts; 7% on 3-year contracts; and 29% on 1-year contracts.
- Of the teachers surveyed, 52% had a masters' degree and 4% held a Ph.D.
- The age group of 38% of the teachers was 35–44; with 35% in the 25–34 range and 20% in the range of 45–54.
- Of the teachers surveyed 48% taught in Dubai and 44% taught in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.
- Some 48% of the teachers surveyed were primary school teachers; and 46% were middle- and high-school teachers.
- Teachers within British curriculum schools made up 42% of the respondents; 20% were teachers in American curriculum schools; and 15% from public schools.
- Females constituted 75% of the teachers surveyed.
- Some 30% of the respondents had previously taught in the UAE.

The importance of my decision to collect this data, and what I was experiencing at the time is perhaps more important than the data itself. I elaborate on this in-depth in section 4.5 where I also provide an extract from my personal diary.

Within section 4.5, I continue to use interviews with my participants, in the same form and with the level of transparency as I discussed in the previous section.

### **3.18 Data collection methods in Findings E**

The data I present in Findings E relates to an email conversation between a principal, a senior school leader, and myself, concerning the presentation I had developed for their teaching staff. I have included this data because it illustrates the progression in my thinking from the Findings A, which was mainly around approaches to professional learning and the cultural aspects of my role, rather than the more communicative means of accessing teachers. The presentation discussed

in the emails was based on the Dubai School Inspection Framework's Learning Skills indicators from the DSIB Handbook.<sup>6</sup>

### **3.19 Data analysis**

In light of the diversity of narrative research, there is no single approach to narrative research (Squire, 2008). How the analysis is done depends once more on the researcher's idea of what constitutes 'narrative' (ESRC, 2008:34). Life stories need to be subjected to multiple forms of analysis as the stories are multi-dimensional and complex; they are constructed, and change with time and context (Smith & Sparkes, 2005:214). Data "must be translated into words so that they can be accounted for and interpreted" (St. Pierre, 1997:179, cited in Byrne, 2017:39), but certain elements may be difficult to capture, such as senses, emotions, and responses. A reflexive analysis that embraces vulnerability and uses emotions as sources of knowledge "renders the inquiry process more transparent, communicable, sophisticated, and enjoyable" (Gemignani, 2011:705). I have continually gone back to my data and literature, and the research process has seemed messy since the start (Byrne, 2017:39), though this is perhaps inevitable if we are to reflect the messiness and uncertainty of human life.

Narrative research can be difficult to interpret because story telling exists in "different layers, such as the interview", in the re-presentation of the interview; or in the reflexive space between (Bolton, 2010:89); where the "interpretation has happened, and the retold story" (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007:466). The "interpretations of events can always be otherwise usually expressed as a kind of uncertainty" (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000:31); an uncertainty that is often held up as another distinguishing feature of narrative research (Trahar, 2010:259). Narrative forms of representation can be effective "ways of representing results or findings in various qualitative and quantitative

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix C for the UAE Inspection Framework Learning Skills indicators.

methodologies and are increasingly seen as an effective approach to knowledge translation and knowledge mobilization” (Caine et al, 2013:575). The implications of this are clear: our interpretations can only ever stem from the vantage point from which we see the world, which is always in a state of change.

Narrative analysis often has a triangular structure formed between the respondent, the researcher, and the responses to the research questions (Miller, 2000). At the same time, it is understood how this triangle involves the interpretational bias both of the interviewee and interviewer as they impact the dialogue. The activities of listening to individuals and working alongside them as participants in the field represent cornerstones to narrative inquiry as a research methodology (Trahar, 2008). Data analysis and documents do not relinquish—but retain—their narrative quality in narrative inquiry (Conle, 2000:51). This factor was an important advantage to me, as a lot of my early writing was in the form of messy notes, and was also messy in terms of the actual content. Since then, I have revisited my participants’ lives at different times, and been drawn into their ways of seeing their narratives (Caine et al, 2013:579).

The analysis of stories generally involves a multi-layered approach with a focus on form (how the story is told), content (what is said in the story), and context (wherein the story is produced and told), in order to illustrate the dimensions of temporality, defined as the “three-dimensional narrative inquiry space” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:50) in which the researcher moves between the different dimensions. Accordingly, the narratives of experience are constructed within the dimensions of ‘personal/social’ and ‘place’ that constitute temporality (O’Toole, 2018:177). The researcher can move from the outside to the inside during the data collection, analysis and representation stages (Byrne, 2017:38). By its nature, narrative analysis is sometimes slow and painstaking; requiring attention to subtleties such as the nuances of speech, the organisation of a response, the relations between the researcher and subject, and the social and historical

contexts. It is cultural narratives that make 'personal' stories possible. In a reflexive turn, researchers at the same time produce their own narratives by relating their biographies to their research materials (Riessman, 2002:6).

Furthermore, different modes of thematic, structural, and interactional analysis may be appropriate within narrative research (Riessman, 2005; Kim, 2016; Bold, 2012). 1) *Thematic analysis* may be effective when there is a clear focus for the research from the start and interview questions lead interviewees into providing the information sought (Bold, 2012:131). The emphasis within thematic analysis is on the content of a text, with a focus on what is said rather than on how it is said (Riessman, 2005:3). An understanding of the philosophy of language underpins this approach (Kim, 2016:1999), as the researcher "inductively creates conceptual groupings from the data" and organises narratives by themes (Riessman, 2005:3) to enhance "the coherence and clarity of the story and create meaning" (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007:464). Stories of personal experience organised around the life-world of the teller may be inserted into question and answer exchanges (Riessman, 2005:5). Thematic analysis includes two main ideas: "that the researcher is often seeking and identifying themes (or not) within the narratives; and that experiences usually involve relationships between people and contexts" (Bold, 2012:129).

2) In *structural analysis*, the emphasis shifts to how the narrative is told and the way language is treated as a serious object of investigation. Thematic analysis is still possible within this concept but the focus on language means that the narrative devices are interpreted to make a story more persuasive (Riessman, 2005:4). The main focus of 3) *interactional analysis*, however, is on the dialogic process between the researcher and the narrators, while "attention to thematic content and narrative structure are not abandoned in the interactional approach, but interest shifts to storytelling as a process of co-construction, where teller and listener create meaning collaboratively" (Riessman, 2005:4).

I have used elements of all three types of analysis and my interpretations of interactions in the data I have collected represent my choices made at a moment in time, and remain a constant source of material. When I have returned to the data, I have gained further insight and a more “complex understanding of my interpretations” (Andrews et al, 2013:206). We bring our research knowledge through our experiences, and bring new perspectives from our lives. Human reality is “always the reality of interpretations” (Andrews et al, 2013:205) and the interplay between memory and imagination shapes our experiences and our life stories, “[require] an attentiveness and wakefulness within the relationships we enter as narrative inquirers” (Caine et al, 2013:581).

My data analysis is multi-layered as I have viewed the data from different perspectives at different points in time. Table 6 represents the ways in which I have analysed my data in its form, structure, and content:

**Table 6 Authors’ that have influenced my data analysis**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Data Set</b>
Riessman (2005)	Narrative, culture and context	Findings A
Smith & Sparkes (2005)	My biography	Findings A
Bolton (2010)	Form, structure, and narrative	Findings B
Gemignani (2011)	Reflexive analysis and spaces in-between	Findings D
Tack and Vanderlinde (2014, 2019)	Teacher educator inquiry habits	Findings C & D
Erkut (2004)	Workplace learning	Findings C & D
Kreijns (2019)	Teacher educator inquiry habits	Findings C & D
Caine (2010)	Visual representation	Findings C & D
Taylor (2017)	Teacher professional learning	Findings C & D
Huber et al (2014)	Inter-cultural learning	Findings B & E

### **3.20 Limitations**

One of the difficulties in adopting narrative inquiry is in ‘managing’ the story in terms of how participants in the story are represented in the data. Treating interactions as stories opens up many complex analytical problems that I have resolved by being open about my commitments and approaches to data collection. Analysing the data was initially difficult because I was uncertain about where it was located within my narrative. Managing the overall story was a challenge but it became easier to analyse and piece it together once I was able to re-present the data in the form that I needed. At the same time, I am aware that all analyses are incomplete and provisional, and there is a constant danger in revisiting the data (Andrews et al, 2013:205). Despite this danger, however, I have attempted to utilise the new insights I have gained each time to give a wider perspective to the stories. In fact it is inevitable that narrative analyses are open to multiple valid interpretations, and therefore, to multiple narrative ‘truths’ (ESRC, 2008:34). Each time I have revisited the data, I have observed or interpreted something slightly differently.

Aware that my interpretations are always connected to my evolving view of this study and the data within it, I have made choices at different points in time, and my transcriptions and narratives about the teachers are, in fact, interpreted observations (Andrews et al, 2013:206).

### **3.21 Ethics**

Various ethical implications of my research design need to be considered. Research undertaken with people is messy and full of ambiguity—it can challenge our perceptions and understandings of them (Caine et al, 2013). People and experience are situated in between spaces, and people look backward and forward, inward and outward; paying attention to places simultaneously as spaces for being and becoming as well as for new possibilities (Caine et al, 2013:579). Working with and alongside participants, their narratives become our narratives and vice versa. Participating in narrative inquiry can be an enjoyable process, especially when participants may see themselves as co-inquirers or co-researchers in the studies in which they are involved (Savin-

Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). As a teacher educator, I have carefully managed the ethical implications at all stages of the inquiry, in order to collect the data with integrity and to represent the participants' stories with honesty.

Reflection and reflexivity are critical for ethical practice, yet “there have been arguments against it” (Bolton, 2010:5). In the process of conducting this research, I have respected the individuals involved, and their decisions and the choices they have made. Narrative inquiry is a relational research methodology, and, while it is research, it is also a “transaction between people, which makes ethical issues and concerns central to the inquiry” (Caine et al, 2013:578). As narrative inquiry is driven by the researcher's interests, values, and biases, the transparency of the ethics embedded within the project is crucial. There is a “moral obligation of narrative researchers to address their research with honesty” (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007:467). All action is based upon personal ethical values, and “how we act rather than what we say is a reflection of our values” (Bolton, 2010:4).

Working with others entails a moral obligation to observe the ethical aspects of the relationships I have formed throughout this study. With the participants Sarah, Michael, and Salem, I was able to build open working relationships, and empathise with their personal situations—I feel privileged to have learned about their lives and experiences (Kim, 2016). From the outset, I have been transparent with my participants about my intentions, and this may have resulted in the participants over-describing their situations, or in Salem's case, in overstating his learning—perhaps to avoid ‘losing face’ with me, a Western outsider. They may have also over-emphasised certain points or interactions to provide me with data, a tendency of which I am aware. I have not tried to validate my findings with other findings in the way that other researchers do in different paradigms. I have collected the data and re-presented it to tell the wider story of my experience.

I sought their consent in representing their stories, and they were not bound by any legal agreements.

I am aware that the truth I have presented may represent only one of the truths from the interactions; a matter that may therefore limit this study in its representational claims. I have tried to capture these representations and acknowledge my limitations in doing so. I am also aware that this study can never be truly finished, and therefore, the narratives of others as well as my own may change if the data is revisited once again.

As some of the data is emotive, and at times culturally sensitive; this is a further challenge when interpreting and presenting the data, specifically when it comes to representing human emotions, and interpretations of un-familiar interactions.

All ethical guidelines from BERA (2018) have been interpreted and adopted within the context of this study. All the participants of this study have been anonymised, and I am bound by the ethics of the University and the privacy and confidentiality policies of the course. It is also important to note that as the United Arab Emirates is, in my opinion, a private society; I have adopted a pragmatic view while collecting data within the context of researching this study. The nature of conducting research within the UAE sometimes means that the design of the research is secondary to gaining access to data, and I have adopted this stance throughout. As I have progressed through the study, I have sought and received ethical approval from the relevant university committee, and agreed to handle data sensitively in order to maintain confidentiality.

Ethical relationships (or relational ethics) are central to narrative inquiry (Zaner, 2004). As narrative research involves interacting with people and their emotions, and re-presenting their experiences; a high degree of ethical representation is required. The ethical issues that arise from

the messiness and blurred unconventional approach can “rarely be resolved” (Trahar, 2008:61). Vivid emotions are an indicator of ethical values. People become emotional in a variety of ways when their human values are opposed or affirmed. Critically, “reflecting upon emotional situations can help to discover ethical values in practice” (Bolton, 2010:37).

Unless we are conscious of research ethics, we may struggle to manage the balance between research relationship and personal friendship (Kim, 2016); or alternatively, we may end up “taking advantage of our research relationships, exploiting their vulnerabilities. Being an ethical researcher is a paramount disposition that cannot be...emphasised [too much]” (Kim, 2016:100). The researcher’s ethical responsibilities need to be negotiated with the participants at all phases of the research, and the participants need to consent to the narrative inquirers representing their stories. Ethical responsibilities are present in writing and in thinking narratively when initiating the research puzzle, and similarly; in the collection of research texts that aid the re-storying of someone’s life. As a matter that needs to have special consideration because of its place within qualitative research, relational ethics needs to be at the heart of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013). In narrative inquiry, the actual inquiry must explore the depth of living in an ethical way with people and relationships. Ethical considerations need to be constructed from the outset “as stories begin to emerge” (Clandinin, 2013:199), as ends in view are imagined, and as “participants are represented in research texts” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006:483).

The issue of legitimacy and validity is commonly identified as a limitation of narrative research because of the contrasting nature of narrative inquiry compared to other research paradigms (Clandinin, 2010). As traditional notions of reliability do not apply to narrative research, validity should be reconceptualised (Riessman, 1993:65) because this form of research depends on the transparency provided by the researcher regarding the social, cultural, and historical context of the stories that are related (Etherington, 2004:82). Ideally, narrative inquirers are attuned to the

feelings, desires, needs, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions both of the self and of the other (Hamilton, Smith & Worthington 2008:20).

Additionally, it is important to note that one of the common limitations and primary areas of focus pertinent to this study is subjectivity (Bruce, 2008:329). Subjective experience is considered to be a source of knowledge (Bruce, 2008:329), and there is no single way to express a moment in a life. Human beings are always 'in process'; existing at multiple levels of present experience, and in complex relation to the past and future (Bruce, 2008:329). As my research deals with people, who are generally complex by nature, the research does not reflect any sense of separateness or detachment from the subject or the participants. Reviewers have questioned the subjectivity involved in data interpretation and the validity of findings, highlighting the importance of reflexivity and the need to 'de-messify' for the readers or at least to acknowledge the mess (Chan, 2017:33). In narrative inquiry, patterns and connections can be identified within the mess and in the contradictions, while multiple interpretations are possible. In these contradictions, "there are possible moments of rupture where our consciousness and our actions change" (Bruce, 2008:335).

While living within the data, this changing state of consciousness does not indicate an event, but constitutes a process (Bruce, 2008:329). From the outset, I have clearly stated my personal interests and motivations for undertaking this study, so I have no reason to hide behind the idea of neutrality. Narrative researchers argue that claims of neutrality can hide a researcher's underlying political agenda (Bruce, 2008:329). When seeking understanding within data in the form of field texts, the living aspect of the data means that subjectivity is implicit (Caine et al. 2013). In contrast to a researcher seeking objectivity, which implies that our practice is isolated from any theoretical or conceptual influences, a narrative researcher shapes the research according to their "epistemological expectations to the interpretation of narratives, and their

assumptions, contextual knowledge”; their personal life experiences also mediating the narrative (Chan, 2017:30).

One of the challenges of subjective research is self-consciousness. By stating my research interests and my intentions, I raise consciousness about my inquiry, and also acknowledge my position. Consciousness-raising can also happen during the process, as a result of the significance of the data or story that is being revealed. Consciousness-raising refers to the deepening awareness in research participants and myself, of self and of others, generating mutual understanding and growth (Bruce, 2008). Narratives are interpreted doubly by telling the story (Cortazzi, 2001). It is possible that each time a story is told, it is re-interpreted, and the meaning is altered. As previously stated, there is no absolute truth in narrative inquiry as the stories are considered to constitute the “narrative truth” or “subjective reality” (Atkinson, 2009:239). It is the “interweaving of narrative views of phenomena and narrative inquiry that marks the emerging field and that draws attention to the need for careful uses and distinctions of terms” (Caine et al, 2013 575). By confronting human complexity through subjectivity, we open up the possibility of welcoming differences and liberating potential.

In Chapter 4, I analyse my findings and interweave contextual data about my roles and responsibilities, with my discussion whilst making connections to my thoughts and perceptions regarding my decisions about my personal and professional learning.

## Chapter 4. Findings

This chapter is organised as a chronological narrative of data collected whilst working in my professional roles. I have incorporated the discussion throughout this chapter, and summarise my main arguments around the grand narratives at the end of the chapter. Additionally, I am reflexive about my decisions as well as the factors in my workplace that informed my data collection choices. The type of data presented and analysed in this section ranges from interview data, biographical writing, and personal blogs to diary extracts and survey data. Within this narrative research, I have worked iteratively, collecting data, responding to my experiences in the context, then moving between the data and research to analyse my interactions and actions with participants, responding to my experiences first, then moving between the data and research to reflect on how I have interacted the participants.

### 4.1 Overview of the findings and discussion

In line with the criteria for judging narrative research which I shared in 3.1, I provide data about the contexts I worked in and the historical experiences that have affected my values, motivations, and emotions. Within Findings A, I share some of my life experiences prior to working in the UAE in order to establish my values and motivations and because my narrative starts with my biographical puzzle (Philpott & Oates, 2017). I write about my time in Organisation 1 and my reflections of the emerging awareness of my learning as a teacher educator in the UAE, as well as my exposure to different worldviews. In Findings B, I present the data from my blog which illustrates my evolving awareness of my role and place within UAE society as a Western educator working within Arab settings. This data may reveal the value in acknowledging uncomfortable issues and how this discomfort can also be a transformational aspect of narrative research (Riessman, 2005). In Findings C, I provide interview data from two teachers I supported in one school and the results of a visual tool that I used to prompt a professional conversation. I also

provide narrative accounts from two other teachers in two further schools I worked in. In Findings D, I present my personal narrative writing from the time I worked in Organisation 2, where my decision making was often driven by my additional roles. I also offer contextual data about my professional responsibilities such as my KPIs, and data about the decisions I was responsible for at the time. I also present narrative data from my support of a Syrian teacher, and survey data on the wider perceptions of professional learning from teachers in the UAE. In Findings E, I share data in the form of my communication with a principal and a senior school leader who I supported through a DSIB inspection.

#### **4.2 Findings A: Establishing the origins of my inquiry**

I have viewed the data within this section through the lenses of Riessman (2005) and Smith and Sparkes (2005) as I have related my biography to the research, and inserted my own stories into the data. This set of findings establishes the start of the development of some of the professional attributes that have emerged from this research that are significant to my learning. When I reflect on my life experiences, particularly from my teenage years, I sometimes felt 'between worlds'. When I played basketball for Gateshead between the ages of 11–18, I frequently interacted with black and Asian people from outside my immediate community on a personal level. My coach was black and he has been a huge influence on my life, as many of the disciplines he taught me in training have been translatable to my professional career. I trained with the team four times a week and travelled to places such as Brighton, Manchester London, Birmingham, and Paris to play for the team. I attended the local comprehensive school in Wallsend with my immediate community of peers, who were predominantly white, working-class. At the time I was aware that my experience was different to that of most of my school friends. Whilst at school, I often heard ignorant comments about black and Asian people from my peers, and realised that their experience of the city we grew up in was completely different from mine; despite our shared experience in the immediate community. I wrote about this in personal diaries in order to try and

make sense of it. These experiences, and how I navigated them instilled confidence in my ability to interact with people from beyond my immediate community, and the rawness of the conversations I had about race, ethnicity, and other topics are still memorable.

As a result of playing basketball, and travelling from an early age, I believe I underwent a process of 'accelerated maturity' (Lilley, Barker and Harris, 2015: 236) and I began to develop a 'global mind-set' (ibid. p.235), although I may not have been fully aware of this at the time. My childhood experiences have had a profound effect on my personal and professional identity, and particularly on how I view my place within UAE society and with others. The dimension to my identity has shaped the way I approach my role as a teacher educator within the context of the UAE.

Engaging in this study has enabled me to reflect on my personal need to be in control of my professional situation in the UAE working as a teacher educator and how this has influenced the development of the thesis and the professional decisions I have made (Conle, 2000:194). This experience aligns with Bolton's (2010:21) notion that "a story often creates order and security in a chaotic world", and it has driven my approach to data generation (Conle, 2000:198). The process of thinking narratively was challenging (Phillion, 2002) as I became more aware of my responsibilities and obligations to others (Huber et al, 2014:227). This awareness meant that I needed to imagine the significance and possibilities of my work as a teacher educator (Huber et al, 2014).

Whilst working at Organisation 1, I sensed that my age was a point of contention amongst my colleagues because they were all older and more experienced, and the seniority of my role may have conflicted in their minds. In our initial staff induction, the majority of my colleagues introduced themselves as "ex-senior school leaders", whereas I introduced myself simply as a teacher. At the time I was aware of how I may have been perceived by others, and this motivated me to work

harder in order to prove myself. Over time, I have become accustomed to this age difference and I have learnt to manage it, not by addressing it directly but by working to achieve results in my daily practice, and proving my ability to achieve results within my roles.

From a very early age, I wanted to travel and experience other cultures, people, and places. At the age of 17, I went to New Jersey in the USA to play basketball for two months at the College of New Jersey and to audition for college recruitment scouts. During my time there, I witnessed first-hand some of the racial tensions between white and black Americans. Then, at 19, I travelled around Spain and worked over the summer period. Two years later, I worked in New Jersey at a school for children who had been expelled from mainstream school and were required to attend additional classes over the summer. Most of the children were from economically deprived areas of New York and New Jersey. In all these situations, I have embraced other people's experiences when they shared them with me, and each of these experiences prompted me to write a journal, and then, whenever I returned to the UK, I wrote up these experiences into the form of stories. I never showed them to anyone, however, because I felt they were too personal. These stories could be described as the origin of my 'thinking narratively'. Actually recognising the significance of writing as a means of prompting reflection, or to capture the contexts in which I worked in, came later (Riessman, 2008:105).

Despite always writing in various forms throughout my life, such as personal notes, blogs, a journal, and other types of texts—I was not always aware that my thought processes could be defined as 'thinking narratively'. Thinking explicitly through story and reflecting on this process was challenging because of the open-endedness of this approach. Once I realised that I had to embrace this, and to see messiness as part of the process, I was able to see the possibilities of adopting a narrative approach and could conceive of thinking through stories as a process that was guided by narrative theory (Huber et al, 2014:226).

By adopting narrative, I have been able to examine my beliefs and strive to understand my habitual actions and the complexities of my professional life as well as the things I take for granted (Bolton, 2010:13). Thinking narratively might be a psychological habit, but the ability to reflexively act on it and apply that thinking requires an affective and behavioural component similar to that described by Kreijns et al (2019) and Tack and Vanderlinde (2014; 2019) on habits of mind.

When I made the decision to undertake a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), I did so with the intention of working within my immediate community in Newcastle, so I could encourage young people to be more aware of different cultures, people, and places. I completed the PGCE at Newcastle University, and during my first placement, I accepted an offer to become an English Teacher at a school very close to the community where I grew up. The area was economically deprived with prevalent crime, drug use, and high unemployment. I felt a connection to the children and the area, and felt that I could empathise with their experiences, and therefore, make a difference.

During my PGCE year, I was inspired by Grimmit's (2000) work on social constructivism, as it resonated with my beliefs at the time. He argues that individuals should be critical of beliefs and challenge existing assumptions about knowledge, particularly in relation to religion and culture. As a student, I relished the opportunity of exploring different belief systems, and conceptualised this idea with the children I taught, who were often perceived as being racist. I interpreted their behaviour differently, however; seeing them instead as being critical, but limited in their communicative methods to articulate their criticality. It reminded me of my own childhood, and the comments my peers made. The children I taught were often judged by other teachers I worked with for their lack of awareness regarding socially acceptable language, rather than trying to comprehend the substance of the message the children were attempting to convey. Having

previously experienced a similar situation when working in New Jersey, I was able to translate this to my own community in Newcastle. These observations and experiences enabled me to critically reflect on the use of language in communities that were economically challenged, and to realise the importance of language in the process of conveying meaning, as well as understanding how it affects social integration and acceptance through its interpretation by people within power and also the powerless. Although Huber et al (2014) argue that language is not usually a salient problem among people of the same cultural affiliation, language competence can still be a barrier with people of different social classes. Throughout the findings chapter, I refer to my own use of language within my professional roles, and the participants' use of language within their schools so a wider consideration of language and its connection to power and agency can be considered.

One of my personal, inner tensions is the concept of social mobility and social justice, and the arguments around increasing social mobility for disadvantaged people within society, as I have now experienced and observed this in three different countries. I am conflicted between different schools of thought, as I have personally benefitted from perceived liberal approaches to social support, and I have also experienced more conservative approaches in the UAE. In my undergraduate degree, I studied the relationship between ethnicity and class, and how these two social constructs are connected with history and the economy. Having studied Critical Race Theory, post-colonialism, post-modernism, and linguistics; enabled me to make sense of my experiences in the USA and the UK, and in a range of professional roles, with a theoretical underpinning.

In the summer between my PGCE year and my NQT year, I travelled to the Solomon Islands as a volunteer on a conservation island where I lived with two families who had little in the way of material possessions. The experience was significant—I was able to experience life without any technology, advertising, mobile phones, commercialisation, or consumerism. The people there

were grappling with the challenges of globalisation, and particularly education; as formal education often meant leaving the villages, and therefore, the communities were uncertain about their future and about how their families could continue their traditional way of living. This dilemma provoked a number of questions in me as an early career teacher, relating to education in rural or isolated communities, to social mobility, and on the impact of the global economy. Although this experience took place at the very start of my teaching career, the exposure to different people in different communities, and with different philosophical viewpoints, provided “a strong foundation for self-critique” as my experiences were difficult to view as “neutral intellectual endeavours” because the experiences were real, and involved human outcomes, both positive and negative (Kelchtermans et al, 2018:128). This meant I was able to put these experiences into context and develop a sense of cultural awareness and sensitivity.

Whilst working as an early career teacher in Newcastle, I also worked in the evenings and school holidays as a finance clerk at Newcastle Building Society. I worked there prior to starting my PGCE and then continued throughout my NQT year. In my role, I managed online savings accounts for high-net-worth individuals, and this experience provided me with a different set of professional expectations outside the teaching profession, which I believe has helped me today as a teacher educator, with multiple roles, particularly the commercial and corporate aspects of my role. As I was required to interact with high net worth individuals, they often challenged my mathematical thinking and assumptions around their savings, which I enjoyed because it was cognitively and professionally stimulating. Working within this environment conflicted with my own personal desire to experience and live without consumerism but the experience enabled me to see a different way of thinking and working. Knowing that I could work two jobs at the same time, and personally fund more travel opportunities enabled me to see this experience from a more positive perspective.

Working as a teacher near the community where I grew up forced me to re-evaluate my worldviews on a range of issues from a different perspective as a result of working and travelling outside of the UK. At the time, a critical incident when I was teaching a Year 11 English class shaped my evolving perspective at the time. The class consisted of 15 boys, and the majority had learning difficulties, and/or social and emotional difficulties. As an early career teacher, I felt the burden of responsibility in teaching them because they were in Year 11 and from my observations, they were not in any way prepared either for further education or for employment—most of them struggled to read and access basic written texts. As I attempted to teach them the GCSE English Syllabus, I became aware of my limitations as a teacher, and also frustrated at the time wasted on certain content that I believed did not support their immediate needs. On one particular day, two of the boys got into a physical fight in my classroom, and I had to restrain one of them and physically drag him into another room, while the other boys destroyed the classroom. Another student threw a chair across the room that hit me in the leg. Although I was able to put the incident into context, and isolate it from others, my frustration at the failings of the students and of the system, together with the students' difficult personal circumstances, made me consider how much impact I could truly have working as a teacher in that environment. On reflection, I would still manage the classroom fight in exactly the same way because a student was at risk from physical injury, and so I had a responsibility to respond. The situation was the result of the students' lack of personal management, and their inability to deal with conflict in an appropriate manner. This was not the single defining factor that triggered me to consider moving to the UAE, but it was a contributing factor. At the time, I used to write political poetry about issues related to immigration, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and about my travels. Writing poetry and performing at spoken word nights in Newcastle was my creative outlet then, and it allowed me to make sense of my experiences and feel closer to my emotions and personal tensions (Bolton, 2010)<sup>7</sup>. I saw poetry

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<sup>7</sup> Please see Appendix D for my personal poetry

as a mechanism to express my frustrations and the challenge of performing the poems to an audience took me out of my comfort zone. Whenever I travelled, I would keep a diary but also write poems because I was in a space that allowed me to reflect my perceptions of different worldviews. All of these factors contributed to my desire to work in a different cultural context.

My professional journey in the UAE can be traced back to 2008 when I saw an opportunity to work as a partnership teacher in a government-led Public-Private-Partnership' (PPP) reform project with the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) for a UK charity. The charity, along with five private education companies, aimed to raise the teaching standards in public schools, and the partnership teachers were charged with meeting a range of KPIs. At the time, ADEC's vision for the future was to be recognised as "a world class education system that supports all learners in reaching their full potential to compete in the global market" (ADEC, 2013). The PPP project was aimed at raising national standards to prepare local Emirati learners for the global market and to "shift from teaching to learning, from teacher to learner, from memorization to creativity, reflection and imagination and innovation" (Henry & Spice, 2010:1). The increase in private-sector organisations and non-establishment companies has resulted in more school-based teacher training in order to increase the rate of teacher development (Cochran-Smith, 2018).

Through joining this project, I was able to explore the teachers' pedagogy in my M.Ed titled, 'The Impact of Thinking Skills in a United Arab Context', stating that "I feel that the development of the local teachers (Arab expatriates) is the key to the long-term success of education in the United Arab Emirates." One of the critical factors to consider here though was the length of time those teachers would remain in the country. Prior to working on this project, I lacked experience in training teachers, but was able to use my Masters research to demonstrate my specialist skill in developing thinking-skills approaches (Ben-Peretz et al, 2010:113).

One of the emerging themes from my M.Ed was the fragility of the UAE educational context, due to the rapidity of the changes—particularly the teacher redundancies and movement of teachers between schools, without any consultation. One of my conclusions alluded to the teachers' hesitation to engage with the objectives of the governmental reform project, which at the time, failed to focus on improving the skills of teachers (Kaddah, 2010:3). Whilst the idea may have been well-intentioned, the practicality of achieving this goal within such a complex cultural setting was perhaps unrealistic. The challenges were twofold: Did the teachers share the government's vision to compete on a global level in regard to education? How could the teachers gain an understanding of alternative approaches to learning when their own lives were hampered by so many restrictions? (Dickson, 2012:206). These questions remain relevant today, and it may be that the teacher-licensing initiative is aimed at achieving universal success with improved local teacher capacity.

At the time, I made sense of my role and my emerging identity by critically reflecting on the experiences and opportunities available to young people in the UK and in the UAE. I wrote about this partly to gain a sense of perspective in my own mind, and also to share my experiences with my colleagues back in the UK. The following extract from a professional learning newsletter for Organisation 1 provides an account of my experiences and beliefs of the two contexts at the time:

When comparing my observations, it is evident that social class is often the factor that impacts the students' perceptions of how education can be used as a facilitator of global or social mobility. In both of my experiences, it could be argued that the dominant institution's ideology did not match the target audience's perception of what type of progress was to be made. Aspirations were generally low because the students could not see the authenticity in the traditional subjects that were being promoted, and as a result, were disaffected in school. Interestingly, for many Emirati students, their economic well-being is guaranteed in the short term but their country's is not. For many students in the UK, their position is far more fragile; vocational education often provides them with functional skills that allow them to operate within their social class.

My critical reflections juxtapose the two contexts without considering the cultural context of each. When reflecting on my writing at the time, I suggested that vocational education provided children with the potential skills to operate within their social class. My intention was not for these children to be excluded from opportunities that others had, and my views have changed since then. But my reflection was borne out of frustration for what I perceived to be the systematic limitations in providing these particular young people with skills to thrive within society. I do think that vocational education has its place within education; however, I also see the societal impact of striving for excellence in subjects such as English, Maths, Science, Arabic and other subjects. When I returned to the UK, and visited my previous school to reflect on the experiences of the children there, I recognised how significant societal differences exist between the two contexts that result in different outcomes in each.

My knowledge of the UAE context was emerging at the time, and writing helped me make sense of it and shape my learning. I believed there was a lack of research on UAE education; and was therefore motivated to create the kind of professional space that others could benefit from, as such a facility was missing from the UAE at the time. This led me to create the UAE Learning Network, and to expand the Lead Practitioner Programme. Whilst context might legitimise knowledge and shape learning in the process, one of the challenges of working in the UAE is the diversity of the context, especially the differences between the public and private schools, the teachers, and the curricula (Ryan & Daly, 2017). The nature of working in these professional spaces has enabled me to take the position that both the public and private sectors should engage in greater dialogue about the sector as a whole in the UAE. Therefore, my learning has not been situated in a vacuum, but has been a “socially constructed concept” (Slife, 1993, cited in Clandinin, 2006:12).

By describing my personal experiences and beliefs within the context, I have been reflexive in a process of learning that has enabled greater awareness and understanding of personal, theoretical, ethical, and epistemological themes, and that has also served to underpin my values (Andrews et al, 2013) and emerging identity. I build upon this within Findings B where I discuss my emerging awareness of my role and place within a specific UAE education context. Kim (2016:156) describes narrative thinking as “a method of making a story out of experience.” I was able to reflect on and create stories from two different contexts as well as explore my personal tensions and follow my curiosity in issues related to social class (Caine et al, 2013:575), in a process underpinned by narrative theory and by using narrative inquiry as a methodology’.

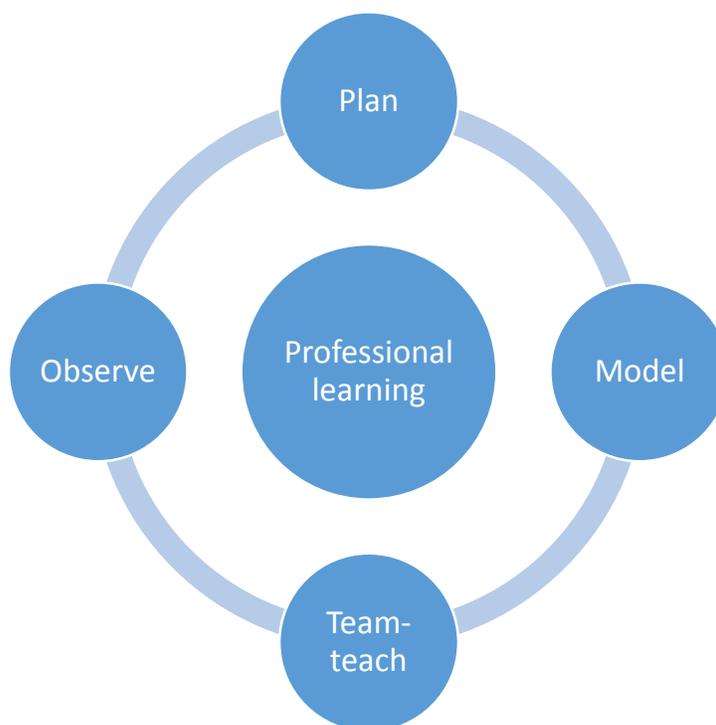
When I started this thesis in 2012, I was already working in two roles for the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust. My first and main role in the PPP project was as a Consultant Partnership Teacher in the public school system in Al Ain, part of the Emirates of Abu Dhabi. My key accountabilities were:

- Team teaching with relevant subject teachers in one or more of the SSAT programme schools.
- Planning, preparing, and organising lessons.
- Monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing continuity and progression in the delivery of the subject across all phases.
- Contributing to, marking, and evaluating student work.
- Analysing results achieved in student tests, examinations etc., patterns of achievement, past performance and value-added data, and keeping the senior management team informed of conclusions.
- Setting appropriate student targets that were consistently used as the basis of learning assessments within the subject area.
- Cooperating with colleagues from the subject team in the use of recommended teaching and learning strategies or resources to meet the needs of all students.
- Working co-operatively and collaboratively with other colleagues on whole-school issues and cross-curricular projects.
- Directing and monitoring the work of support staff.
- Reviewing the local teacher / subject staff on a regular basis, supplying constructive feedback and sampling work set throughout the age and ability range to ensure consistency and the maintenance of high standards.

In my role as a Consultant Partnership Teacher, I was naïve to the implications of my position at the time. I attempted to improve the teachers' pedagogy by getting them to think reflectively and to develop a constructivist mind-set through coaching, mentoring, and action research; but I did this without knowing their underlying beliefs about knowledge acquisition, or on the power structure within the project. We often talked about family, culture, literature, religion, and current affairs for hours, and I sensed they were often testing my commitment to their cultural norms within the workplace. It was critical that I did this, as it allowed me to access their world, once our relationships were established. The Arab expatriate teachers also openly prayed in the staff room—something I had not experienced in the UK, and we often talked about the similarities between Islam and Christianity. I felt like an outsider even though I was working on the inside, as I was exposed to a different intellectual territory and “another way of thinking and working” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:21).

From an outside perspective, I was the Western-educated, perceived expert brought in to the country to make an impact yet inwardly, I struggled with meaningful ways to progress the teachers' understanding of approaches to teaching because I still lacked the knowledge of the context and tools that were necessary to be impactful. I also lacked the communicative methods needed to operate with confidence in the role because I had never been in a professional role that had involved such uncertainty in a diverse cultural setting. I also started to learn Arabic in order to gain greater access. In contrast to my own personal struggles, I was able to demonstrate success on the ground with behaviourist approaches to professional learning as the teachers adopted the approaches I recommended. This period could be defined as the start of my emerging teacher educator identity. Because I wanted to master the skills in my CPT role at the time, I deliberately adopted only one role, and decided not to apply for promotion even when everyone else did.

As part of this role, I was asked to adopt a 'gradual release' model of working with the teachers to address the need to "shift the focus to improving the skills of teachers" (Kaddah, 2010:3). The model was designed by my line manager, and I was required to submit a timetable each week showing the frequency of my actions with each component of the model, and with each of the teachers I was responsible for. The planning stage implied that we should plan a lesson together, so I would first co-plan a lesson with each teacher. I would then model certain activities or strategies within the lesson, such as questioning techniques or a starter or plenary, following which we would team-teach another lesson. Finally, I would observe the teacher and provide feedback. There was no supporting guidance or advice on how to manage conversations. The model included behaviourist components and collaborative elements (see Figure 6) but the power structure of the relationship meant that I was always seen as the Western outsider.



**Figure 6 Gradual release model**

*Source:* SSAT PPP Model

Although the teachers engaged in this approach, I sensed that they did so only because they had to, and not because they necessarily believed in it. There was no philosophical basis provided to them in the guidance for the model; it was procedural and therefore lacked depth, but it did force us to work together. Despite these limitations, this enabled me to build relationships with the teachers and it helped me formalise my approaches into documents, and to codify a range of teaching strategies that I developed into resource books for the teachers.

Having gained more experience in my main role, I was given the additional responsibility of coordinating the Lead Practitioner Accreditation across the organisation's schools. The UK-based Lead Practitioner programme was mainly used as an online, reflective tool for teachers to demonstrate their impact in the classroom and with colleagues. It had no taught component. The programme required teachers to reflect on ten skills, and submit evidence of the impact against the criteria for each skill, which would then be moderated by a lead practitioner in the UK. When I first launched the course, the participants were a mix of my Western colleagues and Arab expatriate teachers from the public sector.

Having been given the professional space and autonomy to develop the programme in Abu Dhabi, I took the existing programme from the UK and designed six taught sessions around two of the skill areas: action research and coaching; and used the programme as a tool to engage with teachers across different schools to further my own knowledge. I adapted Kate Wall's 'Action Research in the Classroom' (2012) templates to record and report the research, along with Jean McNiff's, (2010) and Frances Rust and Christopher Clark's (2007) work as the course content of what action research entails. The teachers were encouraged to engage in the action cycle, and to reflect on an area of their professional practice. I created an action research rubric so the teachers knew how their projects would be assessed, and they were given a 3-4 month period to

complete it and submit it as part of their evidence for the accreditation<sup>8</sup>. As I had completed my M.Ed in Practitioner Inquiry, I was confident that this approach would empower the teachers to inquire in their professional contexts. As a result of the programme, I published three volumes of action research projects celebrating the teachers' work, and then organised two conferences so the teachers could present their projects to an audience. At the time in Al Ain, education conferences for teachers, by teachers were new and therefore, they created a positive energy within the community, the programme was recognised by the government, which enabled it to expand. I later worked with one of the teachers who completed the programme, which I will discuss in Findings D.

I also adapted Cordingley's (2009) resources and designed a template to support the teachers' reflections on their coaching experiences. On completion of the programme, the teachers were able to transition to a masters' level programme with the University of Warwick, and gain credits for deepening their understandings of their research and coaching projects. I felt a sense of accomplishment at having coordinated different teachers from different cultural backgrounds through the programme. This responsibility not only enabled me to see expatriate teachers exploring their practice through action research and peer coaching, but also gave me the feeling that I was on the edge of knowing something about the context in the UAE because we were able to formalise and celebrate their work. At the time, I would have evaluated myself as an 'advanced beginner' on Eraut's (2004) progression model as a teacher educator within the UAE context, as I was starting to observe longer term goals, and operating with my own routines and procedures; although I wasn't yet viewing situations holistically and my decisions were still as laboured as they had previously been.

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<sup>8</sup> Please see Action Research Rubric

For each year that I was responsible for the accreditation, I re-designed the taught components of the programme, based on how the teachers responded to my approaches and content. At the same time, however; I felt I was failing to truly support the teachers because there was insufficient time during the course for me to explore their underlying beliefs about learning and about the use of language to articulate their educational knowledge. Based on my first experience within the context of the UAE using the gradual release model, I sensed that I needed to explore the teachers' beliefs first, in order to discover their starting points before we engaged in any CPD activities. I developed tacit knowledge and situational understanding, but without knowing how to codify it, whilst the teachers I worked with also possessed their own tacit knowledge. If I were to self-evaluate according to the summary of Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) Model of Progression, I would judge myself to have limited *situational perception* due to my awareness yet a lack of ability to affect personal change within my role (Eraut, 2004).

Within my role, I published a series of action-research publications titled *Emerging Professional Knowledge* in order to celebrate the teachers' insights and their engagement while working towards the qualification. I also wanted to illustrate that teachers within this context can inquire and create professional knowledge if they are provided with a framework to guide them, along with the necessary tools. This objective was driven by my motivation to recognise the value of the learning in the UAE rather than the learning that was imported from elsewhere, and to help build the capacity of the educators who were committed to living and working within this context. In the second publication of this series, in 2013, I stated:

Despite the investment in resources and human capital, a high percentage of teachers from a range of cultural, social, religious, and economic backgrounds work and influence learning in the United Arab Emirates, whilst experiencing a unique set of challenges. These educators bring their understanding of learning with them—which adds to the diversity of the country and makes it an extremely rewarding place to work. However, due to the multiplicity of ideas surrounding 'best practice' and the complexities of the context, I wanted to encourage teachers' to reflect upon their practice, explore areas of interest, and implement new ideas to create and translate professional knowledge here in the UAE. This,

I thought, would be much more significant than parachuting strategies in from elsewhere that were designed in another context with a very different set of challenges (Emerging Professional Knowledge, 2013:2).

At the time of publishing this study, my identity as a teacher educator was still emerging, and I was aware of the bigger challenges of working with teachers from different cultures. The publication was shared and celebrated within our network of schools, and the teachers acknowledged how this—together with the professional learning activities—made them feel part of a professional network. I also chaired a special interest group on practitioner inquiry, and used the publication as a discussion point. During this time, I started to think there was a bigger story to tell, and that greater consideration should be given to sharing the developments of the sector in the UAE. At the time, I made no claims regarding the validity of the data, nor did I seek to prove or disprove any learning theories; but I did wish to celebrate the process we had undertaken within this context because the UAE “can be intimidating rather than inviting engagement with others” (Ryan & Daly, 2017:3).

These experiences forced me to reflect on the most effective ways to work with teachers within the UAE to improve their professional practice. My use of literature—related to specific activities such as coaching, mentoring, and action research—enabled me to understand the approaches we adopted towards professional learning, but I struggled to find literature on the nature of Western teacher educators working in public-private partnerships in the Arab world. The Lead Practitioner Accreditation provided an overarching structure as well as an external factor that motivated and attracted teachers to be part of it; and therefore, to commit to the course. External motivations may provide support for teachers within fragile contexts like the UAE by connecting them to established institutions.

In discovering this gap in support and resources in the sector, I established the online UAE Learning Network, alongside another teacher educator who worked in Dubai and Abu Dhabi in American curriculum schools<sup>9</sup>. We both agreed that networking would improve the opportunities for people within the sector so we encouraged teachers to join, collaborate, and communicate online by using this network. We organised events for teachers and teacher educators, and shared resources for those that registered. Within Taylor's (2017) growth model, networking and external factors are seen as a high-value activity; both for sharing professional practice and building relationships. Without any research underpinning my decision, this network grew over time, and I will revisit this shortly to emphasise how I used it later to conduct research. At the same time, I now realise that my need to establish this network may have been a basic psychological need for relatedness at the time, therefore, confirming the need for relationships which both Tack & Vanderlinde (2019) prioritise as the most significant basic need, and Eraut (2004) identifies as a factor that affects learning at work.

To conclude this section, it's worth mentioning that these findings represent the starting point of this narrative, and the life experiences (Smith and Sparkes, 2005) I have referred to here actually underpin my teacher educator identity. Furthermore, my route to becoming a teacher educator did not follow a traditional path; and my experiences outside the sphere of education influenced my worldviews and my motivation to work in the UAE. This should be seen as my cultural narrative and reflexive turn in order to synthesise my personal biography with the research (Riessman, 2002:6).

The findings also illustrate my emerging awareness of the societal importance of qualifications together with the presence of external motivating factors (Taylor, 2017); and how the Lead

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix E for UAE Learning Network.

Practitioner Accreditation provided me with a stimulus to explore different conceptions of knowledge within my professional space, despite my internal insecurities.

### **4.3 Findings B: Emerging awareness of my role and place**

This set of findings is multi-layered because it involves my reflexive analysis of the dialogical process between the data, the literature and the research context (Bolton, 2010). This set of findings indicates the early development of my research skills. As I expanded the Lead Practitioner Accreditation to schools that employed mainly Western teachers, I was able to use familiar educational terminology and approaches that I had previously adopted in the UK. The cultural familiarity enabled me to grow in confidence as I did not have to learn new codes of professional practice. At the same time I continued to work with Arab expatriate teachers in the public sector. At that stage, I was gauging whether I could still be accepted and successful in a Western context, considering I had spent some time away from it. I noticed that Western teachers were less personal and less interested in building relationships, and more likely to commit straight to the CPD activities. The switch to more Westernised contexts made me consider my place as a Western educator in an Arab society, and also made me question the role I played in the wider education system. Was I a symbol of authority imposing my perceived expertise on 'others'? By working in Western settings with predominantly Western teachers and children, was I following the Western traditions of colonialism, and enacting Western thinking; therefore, not staying true to my emerging sense that people from different cultures should be integrated and that historical structures of power between Westerners and 'others' should be challenged? I grappled with these questions frequently while reflecting on my personal beliefs. This, I believe, was due to my emerging awareness of the global and local dimensions of my work.

This questioning led me to critique the place of the private schools in which the host nation adopted curricula from other societies. Following a very challenging cultural situation in the UAE, I wrote

about this theme in a blog titled 'Cultural Hegemony or Globalization? Education can work both ways'. In my blog I wrote:

Over the past few years I've been situated in a different culture and in a different political landscape with people who share a completely different worldview. The topic of 'culture' is a regular talking point among colleagues and some cultural experiences have stood out more than others but none more so than the one I am going to share with you today.

The incident took place in an all-boys school situated in a socio-economically deprived desert community on the outskirts of Al Ain. The majority of the children were Emirati, most of the teachers were Arab expatriates, and a few were Emirati. All the children wore the traditional *kandora* for school. I was one of five Western teacher educators employed to improve the performance of the Arab teachers. My main responsibilities as a Partnership Teacher were the supervision of the English department, a role that entailed running the department on a daily basis, evaluating the teachers, and mentoring the school social worker, Ahmed, who was responsible for the pastoral system within the school. In my blog I noted:

Tribal factions still existed among the people and this was a contentious issue in this school and in the neighbouring school and community (the desert's version of gangs). I've worked with disaffected young people in New York, New Jersey and the UK, but I can honestly say this challenge was completely different due to the context of the school. The students were like young people anywhere else in the world—inquisitive, interesting and thoughtful. However, the students had extremely low levels of literacy in Arabic (their first language) and a disproportionate number of them required support for a specific learning need. The school was quite literally at the heart of the community and the Principal, although not from one of the local tribes, was the saviour. I was one of six people employed to change the learning culture of the school and to implement the government's reform agenda.

In mentoring Ahmed, I was seeking assistance in my responsibility for improving the student behaviour and attendance rates as well as the pastoral system. Some of my support was on a one-to-one basis, and some of it meant that we interacted with the wider school community. I communicated in English to Ahmed and he communicated in Arabic to the parents. His role involved frequent communication with the local families, and he had a significant amount of

knowledge about the local customs. In retrospect, I was not at first aware that Ahmed did not always understand the nuances of my communication, or that he sometimes understood my communication literally rather than in the light of the cultural and workplace assumptions it was grounded in.

Likewise, if something was written down, it was often understood literally. At the time, I was not aware that “inter-cultural competence involves an awareness of the role of language competences” (Huber et al, 2014:17). I believed that Ahmed’s exterior proficiency in English compensated for my lack of knowledge in inter-cultural learning. One day, he called me to his office, as he had followed the written guidelines we had set out in the school’s new behaviour system. This particular incident stands out because it made me very uncomfortable about my presence as an outsider in the school. I describe the incident below:

Picture this—a very spacious office with the usual equipment; the pastoral leader who was wearing a shirt and pants; a student from Grade 9 wearing the traditional kandora, the student’s older brother who was wearing his military uniform; and his very elderly father, who was also wearing a kandora and was holding a walking stick. Neither of the boy’s family members could speak English. The pastoral leader, Ahmed explained that the student had skipped Science and he was on a school report, so his father had been informed and Ahmed he wanted to take action. Due to my lack of Arabic, I asked the pastoral leader to interpret my words to the student and his father; I could sense that things were a little tense and was keen to move things forward. In my most assertive and convincing voice, I re-assured the boy and his father that I knew he wouldn’t do this again, that we were working well together, and this was a ‘one off’. The boy was next to me, shaking. I used a bit of reverse psychology with the boy to bring him back on board—standard stuff. The pastoral leader then started interpreting my words to the father and older brother. In the back of my mind, I was aware that this could escalate if the interpretation wasn’t accurate or if my body language and non-verbal cues were negative or because of my position (or lack of it) in the community.

At this point, the boy was still shaking and his father was starting to wave his stick in the air whilst mumbling in Arabic. The pastoral leader was doing his best to calm him down and to re-assure him that we had the boy’s behaviour in hand. Before I had a chance to consider our next move, the

boy's father stood up and smashed his stick across his son's head, sending him sprawling across the room; cutting his finger on the wood in the process. He then repeatedly hit him with the stick and then the boy's brother started throwing punches in the boy's face. There was blood everywhere, the office was now a fighting ground and everyone apart from me was shouting in Arabic. In what must have been a split second, I managed to conceptualise a million thoughts about the predicament I was in: a white, British educator wearing a suit, working in a tribal community in the desert, who doesn't speak Arabic, and doesn't understand the local tribes and their customs, whilst sitting in an office witnessing a father and brother physically assault their sibling, who is 12-years-old, for missing a science class.

- What should I do?
- What would somebody else do in this situation?
- Is this an isolated incident or a regular punishment?
- Who am I to stop this parent from doing this to his son?
- Who am I to judge these people who have lived in this community for years without any Western 'support'?
- Who am I to impose my Western values on the people who are raising this boy?

Describing the inner-conflict I was grappling with, a little later I posed the following statements:

- Imagine if, in a globalised community, no Western values were imposed and each participant had an equal right to contribute.
- Imagine if Arabic (change to Chinese if you like) educators were brought to the UK or USA to work with students and teachers to implement their ideas, language and 'culture of learning', what would the implications of such a partnership be?
- Would it strengthen our own culture and community cohesion whilst developing our understanding of one another?
- Would it diversify our understanding of humans or would it maintain our subconscious belief that we (Western educators) are ultimately 'better'?

It is evident from my writing that the situation was incredibly stressful, and it brought many feelings to the forefront. As the situation unfolded, I grappled with my values, my position, my place in the society and my role as a teacher educator there. As an outsider, and being in a position of authority, I was unaware of the "asymmetries" that had led this incident (Huber et al, 2014:17) to create the power differential in the interaction, such as how I was perceived by the boy's family, their history and experience of dealing with Western educators in positions of power, and their

own personal education experience. The event confirmed for me that “cultural differences are reinforced in any education system. Culture underlies and affects values within education and the workplace” (Lemke-Westcott & Johnson, 2013:67). By experiencing this critical incident with Ahmed, and by writing about it, and reflecting on myself, I was able to identify a major limitation in my role and a barrier to my learning in this context. The tensions I became aware of were very powerful, suddenly revealing my place within this community together with the deficiency in my professional expertise regarding inter-cultural interactions. The incident also exposed my lack of awareness about how to adjust my position within the community. This tension and discontinuity may have been as a result of two intersecting social worlds. As I reflected on the incident and my lack of awareness about how to adjust my position within the community, the concept of boundary crossing helped me to understand the tension and discontinuity I experienced at this intersection of two social worlds. Within boundary crossing, “only when cultural differences lead to discontinuities can these generate negotiation of meaning” (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011:146). In this instance, I was able to construct multiple meanings about what the incident meant.

The boy’s father understood my position as an outsider - as a white, Western male wearing a suit, who was being consulted by Ahmed. This may have positioned me as a symbol of authority that provoked his actions rather than a dialogue.

At the time, the incident raised some significant questions in my mind relating to culture and cultural hegemony as well as history. Here is an extract from my blog on this topic, also written with the incident in mind:

- In a global society, is there a point where we should stop trying to understand other cultures? And if so, does that define cultural hegemony?
- In a globalised world, are we willing to accept people with completely different value systems just as long as they buy into the global economy?

- If a local community has values that conflict with Western values, but they are functional and successful by their own indicators, who are we to judge this community?
- What can we learn from cultures and communities that function with completely different value systems?

When I reflect on these issues today, I still feel there are some unanswered questions to address regarding the fundamental nature of cultural hegemony and globalisation. Keller (2015:911) argues that “cultural heritage may oppose international education” because international education is largely dominated by Western approaches that promote global, and not local customs. While I did not, at the time, endorse the behaviour described in the incident at school, and nor do I now, the bigger questions regarding my place and position as an outsider within their community became prominent in my mind, and I felt like an education tourist. I concluded my blog by stating:

Western educators are being employed by governments around the world to ‘educate’ people to prepare them for a global community. This could be translated to read ‘Western educators are being employed to homogenize the world so big businesses can ultimately reap the rewards’.

The incident is still memorable and leads me to consider the implications for Western educators working as outsiders within the government sector. By sharing this incident, I am also aware that by describing it from my own perspective, I may even be supporting the ‘othering’ culture as the motivated, engaged, Western educator having to deal with the problematic Emirati. This dilemma highlights the problem that other Western educators perhaps face as they grapple with uncertain cultural situations with the burden of history on their shoulders. Further to this, the incident breached the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, specifically, Article 19 which is there to protect children from physical abuse. In 2018, the UAE government issued the ‘National Family Policy’ which was aimed at protecting children from abuse. When I started my employment

at Organisation 1, and within this school, I was not made aware of any legislation or policies that were aimed at protecting children from abuse, and it was communicated to me by my colleagues, and professional peers that the UAE was a private society, and therefore, I should not raise the alarm with this incident, and any others that arose that I was aware of.

Ryan and Daly (2017) described the difficulty of researching within educational settings in the UAE because of the challenge of working within an environment that is not accustomed to research. My presence in the government school, with Ahmed supporting me, may have been seen as a threat to the local culture, and influenced the way that the situation unfolded. If, as the literature argues, we are to engage and embrace other cultures and communities, we should expect to have our values challenged more frequently. The boundary crossing process may result in internal and external discomfort. How individuals manage and respond to this will shape their evolving values and cultural competence.

Clandinin (2006) argues that there are always conscious and unconscious influences underpinning human interactions. In the case of Ahmed and myself, we were unaware of the unconscious influences attached to our personal stories. Ahmed, the boy's father and brother also brought their values, history, and worldviews to the situation, and their own stories were not static at the time (Clandinin, 2006:14). Not speaking or fully understanding Arabic, I was unable to access the community in a way that positively affected change.

By writing about this experience, I acknowledge the privilege I hold, and at the expense of the young boy. I am aware that my writing always comes from a specific perspective, and the truth it represents may never be completely objective, but the process has made me feel closer to my emotions and to the experience (Bolton, 2010). Although this incident may have triggered my own 'cognitive flexibility', and enabled me to see myself within the bigger picture, I do not see the

greater benefits because of the negative impact on the boy. Despite this, the experience encouraged me to gain the confidence to develop my own voice in order to address the challenges of this context and the factors that may affect the mentoring of Arab expatriate teachers in public schools. It also enabled me to develop a heightened sense of self within certain contexts as a result of my experiences. This was due to my awareness of inter-cultural competence and my ability to be reflexive and adapt my communication skills (Keller, 2015:904).

Although this data may suggest that I value Kreijns' (2019) 'deep understanding' dimension, I have in fact been critical about my ability to actually gain such deep understanding (ibid) or know whether I did the right thing. I had to deal with a situation that was difficult to comprehend at the time, and by virtue of my writing; I have taken a "range of perspectives and systematically pose[d] increasingly focused questions". This incident may have revealed to me the need to act upon my new awareness, and thereby demonstrate some of the researcherly dispositions. The incident may have also expanded my awareness of the "contextual factors" affecting my work (Eraut, 2004, Taylor, 2017). The development of my multi-perspectivity has come at a cost, however (Huber et al, 2014).

To make sense of this experience at the time, I referred to the work of the British documentary film-maker and author, Bruce Parry. The conclusion of his book *Tribe* (2007) enabled me to see my experience in context, and I still value the sentiment in the conclusion of the book today. A section from the conclusion illustrates my thinking after having reflected on my experience and I included this in my blog.

In order to improve all societies, ours as well as others', surely cultural exchange is a key. Mixing people up. Separating us all from our one sided views. Just as a tribal community may wish to learn new methods of gender equality or animal welfare from us, maybe we, by looking at or spending time with tribal people, can assess our own society too (Parry, 2007:318).

This writing resonated with my beliefs about cultural exchange, and human interactions, and it shares similarities with aims of achieving global citizenship. I firmly believe that different cultures can learn from each other if they mutually engage in finding commonalities. However; power structures, history, values, and context are fluid influences that can affect decisions. It might be that “knowledge within specific cultures” has been “socially mediated with nuances and codes, understood but often invisible”; but in order to learn from each other, this knowledge needs to be brought out into the open so we can learn from it (Eraut, 2006:1). However, perhaps this believe only comes from a position of privilege, and the learning may not be mutual.

I question whether my professional peers at Organisation 1 possessed the inter-cultural awareness necessary to establish positive relations with people from other cultures. (Huber & Reynolds, 2014). These abilities also involve valuing cultural diversity as well as pluralism of views and practices. The capacity to apply cognitive flexibility and adapt thinking to different situations is an important consideration in this study. In addition, the ability to demonstrate multi-perspectivity and to de-centre from one’s own perspective might be an essential skill for teacher educators in order to operate successfully in the UAE. Multi-perspectivity can also be enhanced by story-telling through the construction of narratives to help individuals decentre from their own values and beliefs (Huber & Reynolds, 2014) which may also enable a greater awareness of self in the world (Killick, 2013).

At the same time as my role as the Lead Practitioner Coordinator extended to private schools, the PPP project came to a close because the funding had finished—making me recognise the short-term employment reality of working for a company that was funded solely by the government sector. It was at this time that I started to question and explore the structures within UAE society and their psychological impact on residents like myself. Many of my colleagues had moved on, either to other countries or to other positions. I was travelling frequently between Al Ain and Dubai,

and Al Ain and Abu Dhabi due to my increased work in the private sector. As my time spent in school as a Partnership Teacher decreased, the interest from the private sector in the Lead Practitioner Accreditation increased, due to the connection with the University of Warwick. This situation meant less interaction with Arab teachers in the public system and more interaction with Western teachers and leaders in the private sector.

#### **4.4 Findings C: Building on my role with Western expatriate teachers**

The research that has influenced the analysis within this section includes Akkerman & Bakker, (2011) and their work on boundary crossing, Tack and Vanderlinde (2014, 2019) research on dispositions, Kreijns et al (2019) inquiry habits, Bold's (2012) thematic narrative analysis and Gourlay (2011) analysis of visual narratives. Throughout this section, I provide contextual data about my role and also interview data from my conversations about professional learning. The PPP project finished in June 2013—one year after I started this research—and was replaced by the new Tamkeen training project. The PPP context-based behaviourist model of mentoring and partnership teaching, contrasted with the Tamkeen top-down approach of training that situated teachers outside the classroom, and relied on a cascade model that did not address the communication skills needed to ensure that professional learning was effective (El Afi, 2019).

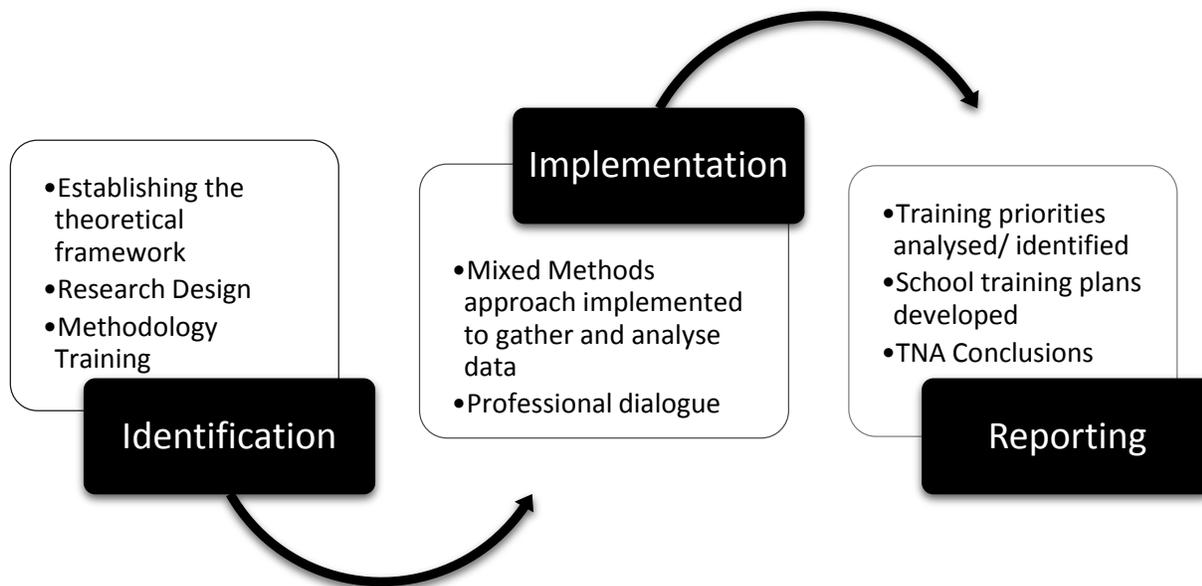
At the very start of the Tamkeen project, I was asked to conduct a training-needs analysis across 47 schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi to achieve KPI 1 (Conduct Training Needs Analysis and Identify Training Needs) for the project for Organisation 1. A financial reward was offered for the operator achieving the highest score. In preparation for conducting this analysis, I was required to develop a methodology and train my colleagues on data collection methods and report writing. Although I had completed my M.Ed, I had never completed a large-scale research project of this size with high-stakes accountability; and although nervous, I also relished the challenge. It was an intensive process that took over six weeks, with a significant amount of writing. I adopted a

mixed-methods approach to the data collection and in the report that was submitted to the Abu Dhabi Education Council. In it I stated:

Due to the uniqueness of each school, and the importance of gathering accurate and reliable data, SSAT Middle East adopted a *mixed-methods* approach in the collection of data for the Tamkeen Training Needs Analysis (Denscombe, 2010). (TNA Report, Tamkeen, 8).

In summation, a *mixed methods* approach creates a convergence of information. Aspects of this research were collated qualitatively and then validated in a quantitative way, to substantiate the initial findings. In order to obtain qualitative data about each school, there was a need to be descriptive and, at times, interpretative. For the purpose of this report, and our strategic delivery of future training, there was also a need to be quantifiable with the same [qualitative] data.

I included the following diagram in the report to represent the process implemented by our team (Figure 7).



**Figure 7 Process of Tamkeen training needs analysis**

Source: Author's own

Within the TNA report, I addressed the challenge of trying to please and satisfy the regulator by acknowledging that the use of the model was positive, but also that the system was complex:

It is clear from our TNA that several recommendations and training requirements are interrelated, and it is difficult to prioritize them based on their combined significance to the success of each school, and to the wider ADEC vision for success. School improvement planning is vital to the success of the *New School Model* and the ADEC curriculum. Without it, some teachers will operate outside of the intentions of the vision for Abu Dhabi. To effectively promote teachers' accountability, the ADEC *Performance Evaluation System* has to be understood and implemented beyond a compliance level. School leaders need to understand and apply the complexities of the system to ensure accountability, promote teacher development, and lead genuine school improvement.

Although I took personal satisfaction in the company achieving KPI 1, deep down, I knew that the model that was designed for the schools was not appropriate because it did not get to the root of the challenges or take into consideration the contexts of each school. The subsequent KPIs for the project were mainly focussed on the attendance of training events, and therefore had accountability issues. The measurement of compliance indicated that the project was not designed to evaluate teacher learning beyond a managerial indicator. I would agree with the findings of El Afi's study (2019) that teachers' voices need to be cultivated more, and greater emphasis should be given to supporting teachers within the context, and with stakeholders who can culturally connect to the teachers. Whilst training might be useful for introducing new knowledge, this particular model did not cater for the complex socio-cultural factors within the schools, as exemplified by the critical incident I described in the Findings A section.

Whilst I benefitted professionally from the situation, I must acknowledge that, on reflection, I was not qualified to conduct the research but, by virtue of timing, I was the person available to conduct it. Perhaps future research in developing countries with contexts similar to the UAE should consider this circumstance of cases where timing and availability supersede experience and expertise. This may also be a consequence of efficiency practices driving perceived progress through public private partnership structures, and private operators within the public space.

While managing the Lead Practitioner Accreditation, I was also able to work flexibly on the Tamkeen project. Knowing that my employment was driven by the funding from this project, I realised I had to start searching for a different employer. At the same time, I was gaining more experience within international schools and was making sense of how I thought learning should be organised for children. As a relatively early career teacher who quickly transitioned into the role of a teacher educator, I was still uncertain about my own philosophical position on how learning and the curriculum should be presented to children in different cultural settings. In a blog titled 'What should learning look like in 2013?' I posed the following questions:

- Would the value of English be enhanced if young people had to convince another person of their business idea through technology? Would the value of English be enhanced if young people not only had to learn the Key Stage 3 curriculum but teach it to a second language learner?
- Would the value of Mathematics be enhanced if young people were asked to manage a budget responsibly?
- Would the value of the humanities be enhanced if young people had to learn, empathise with and disseminate information from another culture?
- Would the misunderstandings about and the polarizing of other cultures and religions be less prominent if young people engaged with and drew similarities with people through shared-direction setting?
- What would happen to teachers if they were expected to facilitate a range of dispositions under a range of themes with a range of resources? Would there be any need to bring in an 'expert' if the learning was a fluid as this?
- What would happen if young people were given the responsibility of managing and leading an organization?

My writing at the time illustrates that I was still trying to make sense of the cultural components of learning within the UAE that I had experienced. The international schools I worked in were culturally diverse in their student bodies, and cultural differences were embraced. However, as all those schools were fee-paying, social class, rather than culture was the common factor amongst

the students and body of parents. On one hand, the celebration of diversity was positive but on the other, it reminded me of the relationship between ‘race’ and ‘social class’ because the children were privileged in some way by virtue of their fee-paying status, and the schools appeared to be “immune to the issues that accompany poverty and urbanicity” (Mancuso et al, 2010:308). It made me think of the children I had worked with back in Newcastle and some of the people I grew up with. The majority of them would not have been able to access private schooling; a fact that left me conflicted about the nature of fee-paying education. However, as Dubai regulations do not permit foreign students to attend public schools, the private sector effectively performs a state service in this sense.

So therefore, the structures within UAE society enabled this function, and therefore, the outcomes. I am conflicted about this because the children’s socio-economic status may not be a barrier to learning with *and* about other cultures. However, their social class has determined this, so therefore, these inter-cultural experiences are the result of privilege in some form.

As part of my role as lead practitioner coordinator, I partnered two British Curriculum schools—one from Dubai and the other from Abu Dhabi; both not-for-profit—for them to complete the Lead Practitioner Accreditation together so the teachers could benefit from collaborative sessions. The findings of the EPPI Review (2005) influenced this as I sought to gain the same benefits of collaborative learning. At the start of the taught component in the course, I conducted a pre-course questionnaire with the teachers. The data provided me with information to help me respond to the teachers’ needs, and I believed that by exploring their beliefs at the start of the course, I could establish their starting points about professional knowledge. I surveyed the 43 teachers who started the programme, and used the questionnaire at the very start of my inquiry into their professional learning to give me an insight into their values, beliefs, and conception of knowledge. The information gained—from a mix of closed and open questions that were value-based and

process-based—enabled me to re-design the teachers’ professional learning programme and make it more personalised. Later, however; it became apparent that the questionnaire results—due to my lack of awareness—did not provide sufficient depth.

The questionnaire enabled me to learn about the teachers’ perceptions of professional learning in the context of their schools. From the survey, 49 percent of the teachers said they read academic research on learning ‘sometimes’ and 30 percent did so ‘rarely’; compared to 16 percent who did so ‘frequently’. Additionally, 47 percent of the teachers surveyed said they collaborated with their peers to explore their context and 21 percent said they did this ‘frequently’; compared to 28 percent who collaborated ‘rarely’. Further, some 63 percent said that they shared ideas with their colleagues, while 40 percent used various means to measure the impact of their teaching. As a starting point for me, it was interesting and surprising to see that nearly half the group already engaged in academic research, which I did not expect at the time.

In reviewing the survey results, and also the survey itself, I realised I had not explored the teachers’ beliefs or prior learning in enough detail; and having had no prior relationships with any of those teachers, the data therefore lacked meaning. However, the results did enable me to re-plan certain aspects of the programme, and the impact of this allowed me to reflect and build more opportunities for reflection into the programme. With hindsight though, I realised I should have included more collaborative and informal tasks instead of some of the activities I had created. Nonetheless, the data helped establish the context of the teachers’ motivations. If I were to repeat this exercise, I would design a much more engaging task that would provide me with greater insights into the teachers’ reflections about their context, their motivations for being in the UAE, and their personal beliefs about learning. I would also challenge their beliefs about their positions as teachers within British international schools in the UAE. Further, I would engage the

Arab expatriate teachers with texts they were already using in Arabic and utilise this as a prompt to explore their beliefs about knowledge.

Although there are limitations to this data as it stands, as well as in my choice of collection method, I sensed that I needed to conduct this research regardless, in order to further my knowledge about this specific context, and about these particular teachers (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2019). Although my research identity was still developing at the time, the survey was necessary at that point because the schools had signed up for the programme, and it seemed a good opportunity to reveal some of the perceptions within the context of the school partnership. Conducting this survey demonstrates that I had tried to collect information so I could evaluate my work (Kreijns, 2019); and also, perhaps, my ability to act on my intuitive awareness of research opportunities (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2014).

As the programme evolved, my relationship with some of the teachers was closer than with others, and I was able to build trust with two of them and engage them in my research. Although I was able to do this, I was still seen as an external person leading an accredited programme that they had signed up for and the school had paid for, so the power dynamics were not equal. The data mentioned in this section was from two teachers from one of the partner schools, a private, not-for-profit school in Dubai. The school, which opened in 1978, is a selective school with approximately 819 students enrolled, aged from 11 to 18 years. Registered with the Department for Education in the UK, the school was accredited by several UK education bodies such as the British Schools Overseas (BSO) and the British Schools in the Middle East Association (BSME). The BSO Inspection Report stated that it was “an outstanding school” that represented the very best of British education whilst, at the same time, respecting and celebrating the local culture in Dubai (BSO, 2013). The school was also classed as ‘outstanding’ in its recent KHDA inspection. Teacher turnover in 2018 was relatively low, at 8 percent. Further, it was noted in the school’s



First, I asked Stephen if he had found any tangible or conceptual benefits in drawing and visualising his action research project. He replied that the exercise had made him think about the project, and this had been beneficial. As our relationship was hierarchal despite the trust that had been built, it is possible that he felt the need to overstate the value of the activity in order to impress upon me. I followed this up by asking if, by going off track and exploring this method of constructing a visual, he had seen something he might not have previously thought of in relation to teaching his class. I indicated one part of the visual that I thought might represent a journey into the unknown. Had Stephen previously seen it like that? I wasn't really sure where the conversation was taking us and there were several times when we were both thinking and stuttering. When pressed about his teaching methods, Stephen said that defining them might be "too restrictive", and he was keeping things more "open-ended".

As I was not really sure about the direction of the conversation, the visual prompt allowed me to take the conversation back to his project, and to the drawing. I suggested that it might include the idea of collaboration monitoring. Stephen explained that it related to his hunch about introducing a homework diary to his class. All the students would "have a homework diary where they record...their homework", adding "if I put more thought into their homework and design each homework in a different way, it would accomplish what I want it to accomplish, which is that they [the students] will be less focused on me at the start of each lesson. Less time will be taken up by me talking, telling them what to do".

I pressed Stephen again on his approach to learning and asked him to describe how this type of learning was similar or different to others. He said he found it similar and that there were "always lots of things that could be done better". He added that he was always aware of how he could improve his teaching or of how other areas in the school could be improved on, and he'd sought

to make improvements where he could. "But I think this approach actually gets me to think it through in a more sequential...more structured way."

Asked about the most significant developments he could foresee in his professional learning and in the school, Stephen replied: "that there will be a better quality of learning, in terms of skills and knowledge, but it will take time, maybe just a few weeks for them to...develop [a] new attitude toward lessons. What would be [of] immediate benefit to me would be [that] the quality of their understanding will be better, and their sense of ownership and sense of responsibility towards learning will definitely be changed." Despite my efforts, Stephen continued to provide insipid responses, and this made me feel awkward at times, and question the level of depth he had in his understanding about his professional practice. I also considered whether the visual method was too threatening, and so far out of his comfort zone that it made him gloss over some of the detail and depth I was expecting.

The conversation moved to lesson modelling and its credibility as a CPD activity. Stephen noted that "the idea that we should try to model each other is, I think...a real fallacy". Instead, he believed that "every teacher has an individual way of thinking...[a ] different way of communicating information, [a] different way of getting all the kids [involved], and it doesn't really work for them to try and become like the head of department. [W]e can get ideas from each other, but we don't [do that] necessarily. Hence, I think having freedom for teachers who are generally creative people, I think it works."

I selected this data because the experience of using the visual method and interview was transformational for me. I had asked Stephen to complete a visual representation of his action research project, and I used this as an instrument for us to engage in dialogue about the project. This created some tension and nervousness. When I reflected on our conversation, it was difficult to pin down any concrete or certain outcomes immediately because it was a very open-ended

activity, and also something I had not done before. Perhaps both of us displayed a lack of situational perception (Eraut, 2004) because of the unfamiliar activity, and for Stephen, the fact that I was an outsider to the school may have stopped him from being completely open with me. Although Stephen's response to the experience was somewhat anodyne, the activity enabled me to experiment with using the data collection methods in a new educational setting in the UAE which was nevertheless culturally familiar in that it involved engaging participants from Western educational backgrounds.

As part of the accreditation, I designed an action research rubric<sup>11</sup> to enable the teachers to reflect on their progress towards the end of the programme. There follows a section of the feedback I provided for Stephen on his action research project:

Your rationale for developing thinking skills and a 'flipped' classroom are founded on tangible challenges within your school and context. The constant juggling of knowledge for exams is a very real issue that quite often limits authentic learning within the classroom. In your findings, you've mentioned that the learning has improved and...[the students] are taking more responsibility for their learning. I've attached some resources that I would like you to review in light of this. The first one [is] 'Dialogic Teaching' by Robin Alexander. I've attached the full paper and [a] summary of the key principles. In short, the work you have been doing to empower the learners to construct their learning as opposed to you directing it relates to this notion of dialogic teaching. Classroom talk is essential to this and Alexander has categorized different types of talk. You've mentioned the role of discussion and debate before but I think this paper might direct you to develop these skills with a theoretical underpinning.

I attempted to provide detailed and constructive feedback, so that Stephen could reflect on my comments, and respond. This feedback was part of the formal component of the programme and I also felt a sense of responsibility to him as a practitioner. Professional growth is increased by different experiences and by examining teaching in a systematic manner (Chaudary, 2012). Although this comment focuses on teachers, it also bears relevance to my role as a teacher

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<sup>11</sup> See Appendix G for the Action Research Rubric.



added: “I’m obviously putting students...and their experience at the centre of it, but I...hope I’d do that quite a lot anyway, so I’m not sure that’s necessarily different; but the fact that I’m actually involving students in conversations as to getting their thoughts and their opinions on it, and then helping them to develop the process, that is...something I’ve never done before.”

When I brought the conversation back to reflection and change, I sensed that Phillip was less confident. I enquired how he went about making a change when he realised this was necessary—was there a process he would normally go through or would he just unconsciously make a change there and then? Phillip responded by saying: “I think I would look for a quick fix and then...I’d look [at how to] make the change.” He explained that the “quick fix” was a solution that would work only for a very short time. “Change is obviously difficult for anyone” he added. Phillip went on to say that he would sometimes reflect and see the benefit of something, yet find it hard to follow through in order to change his style of teaching in the long term.

For Phillip, as for Stephen, the dialogue had tensions, and I shared Phillip’s nervousness. The extract was not as rich with different themes as Stephen’s and I would classify this as incidental professional learning because my dialogue with Phillip was not planned, and at times, it was uncomfortable. I selected this extract because at times, I stumbled through the conversation and my learning came as a result of it.

In the same way as I did for Stephen, I provided written feedback towards the end of the accreditation to Phillip in relation to this action research project:

You’ve identified the timing of your project as a key limitation, noting that the start of the academic year would be a more suitable time to start. These papers should provide you with some insight into how you could develop a tangible strategy for engaging your staff in a project whilst developing their capacity. As a leader, it is vital to not only share but to ensure that capacity is developed along the way so the

process can be repeated. The second attached paper highlights the importance of this. I would be really keen to see how you develop your strategy to not only share your work but also to ensure it has an impact and that your colleagues will value it. There is so much potential here. Imagine if your entire department was engaged in small-scale AR projects around this theme? You would then have two concurrent developments: the actual AR focus (time, resources, efficiency) and an additional tool to develop (change management within your department). This would constitute an authentic learning community. A really important question to consider is: now that you have gained this knowledge through this process, do you have a professional responsibility to act upon it? This question should also be asked when/if you decide to develop it with others.

It is, however, your discussion that provokes the most interest and potential from my perspective. As you've noted, change takes time *and* intrinsic motivation. You've developed practical solutions that should/could benefit your colleagues. But what is the most sustainable method of ensuring that your strategies are not only shared, but valued, developed and can impact on your colleagues and their learners? This is a crucial and quite often, mismanaged challenge. I've attached two papers from Michael Fullan that might guide you through this next step. On page 4 of 'Motivating the Masses', Fullan summarizes his seven deadly flaws in 'carrot and stick' approaches to motivation. He then describes a process for developing intrinsic motivation among others.

### **Summary of Interviews**

When I analysed our conversation, the significant areas ranged from the idea of being a research-driven practitioner to the impact the action research project and professional learning had on Phillip. I have selected these extracts from the interviews because they were significant to me and my personal learning at the time and I wanted to develop my confidence in using a research method that was new to me. Both interviews surprised me in terms of the directions the teachers took, and the visual representations of their work were used as a tool—to prompt and guide the conversation—that I had never used before. During both conversations there were awkward moments when I was not sure where to take the conversation next, or how the teachers might respond. This discomfort led to me to reflect on why I had chosen to do this. In order to work through the awkwardness, I referred back to the visual representation, and it acted as a boundary object that enabled us to talk about a different aspect of his project. I learnt that the visual representation supported my understanding of their professional capacity to engage in action research. Despite the discomfort experienced, the efforts I made 'at the boundary' to restore

interaction led to learning (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). The dialogue that came from this led to learning, prompting my thoughts about the methodologies used to explore teachers' perception of professional learning and about the ways in which they articulate their own learning within this context. The micro-dialogues of talking, explaining, and reflecting together enabled me to consider the nature of the programme as well as the CPD models it included. Phillip, although he had completed the action research project and the coaching project, did not submit his work to be accredited, and subsequently asked for later deadlines, but never completed the programme. He then moved back to the UK to take up another role, which was one of his factors for undertaking the programme in the first place.

The interviews enabled me to use a research tool, namely a visual prompt, to explore the reflective space with the two participants (Kim, 2016). The images—more memorable than written descriptions—helped us to gain new perspectives on our work (Kim, 2016). The use of a visual prompt enabled me to lead the interview and take the teachers into a different space to talk about their practice (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). This co-construction of meaning, using an instrument to aid the participants in reflecting on their practice, opened up the possibility of a deeper understanding of practice, and the potential for multiple perspectives—an outcome that was unexpected (Caine, 2010:493). The visual representation acted as a boundary object that facilitated our conversations because we were able to revert back to it when there was awkwardness (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011:141).

As both conversations took place within the context of the Lead Practitioner Accreditation (an award-bearing programme), and therefore involved 'external factors' (Taylor, 2017), it is important to situate my learning within this context. My role here combined action research, coaching, and collaboration, in addition to my role in facilitating the participants' enquiry and engagement. Webster-Wright (2009) described these tasks as inter-related because the mentoring took place

between the taught components. Also, the fact that the school sought external validation for its programme added a level of accountability into the programme, both for me and for the teachers.

The findings suggest that professional conversations can involve tensions, especially when participants are engaging in something new. Analysis of the dialogue suggests that working through the tensions, using boundary objects to facilitate interactions, can lead to deeper reflection and learning. Stephen and Phillip operated within a school that provided them with opportunities to engage in professional dialogue. In my interactions with them, they chose to focus on curriculum, learning and outcomes. Neither of their projects explored culture, language, or context. This may be due to the school's position as a 'British School Overseas', which focuses on specific British values. I noted the difference from the tensions I found in other education settings around culture, context, qualifications, language and meaning.

Each time I physically left the school I felt strange because I felt like it was a small British bubble in an Arab country. Comparing my narrative in the desert school, and its socio-economic challenges, and then working in this school with privileged children, and then thinking about the reasons why I entered the teaching profession, meant that I felt very conflicted. The school's academic reputation was very good but I did not feel that they were addressing the challenges within UAE society, and they were a representation of the cosmopolitan elite (Rizvi, 2009) because they were focussing on teaching their own version of 'Britishness' to a privileged community.

While working at the British curriculum school, I also worked as a School Improvement Partner in another international school in Dubai. There, as explained in my methodology, I was able to gain access to Sarah, who could also be categorised as a teacher educator.

## **Narrative Account of Sarah**

Within this narrative, I infuse elements of thematic analysis drawn from Eraut (2004), Tack and Vanderlinde (2014, 2019) and Kreijns et al (2019). Themes drawn from the literature include workplace learning, researcherly dispositions and inquiry habits, and the nature of the work of teacher educators in different contexts. This narrative has also been analysed through the lens of Bold (2010) and Gemignani (2011) as I am active in constructing my surroundings, and transparent about my emotions within the process. As I have mentioned in my methodology, I have blended thematic, structural and interactional analysis and related these to my personal biography because this is a “useful approach to making sense of a different set of stories” in order to formulate a final narrative (Bold, 2012:124).

Sarah, a white British national, worked in a private, for-profit international school located in Dubai (School A). Initially employed on a two-year contract, and then on a one-year rolling contract. Sarah was an unqualified teacher, with a B.A. in Physical Education. The school, which followed a state curriculum from the US, was classed as ‘acceptable’ by the KHDA in its inspection report in 2013. The school owner was Lebanese and the nationalities of the students ranged from American, Syrian, Palestinian, Lebanese, Emirati, South African, French, Egyptian, and Canadian, with no single nationality dominating. The teaching staff were equally diverse; however, many had no teaching qualifications. In the school’s 2013 KHDA report, it stated that the school’s teacher turnover rate was relatively high, at 34 percent. Some of the pertinent recommendations in the report were:

- Improve the quality of teaching by implementing a focused programme of professional development and a rigorous system to monitor teaching
- Improve the effectiveness and impact of the Senior Leadership Team by:
  - reviewing its size and structure

- confirming the roles, responsibilities, and lines of accountability for individuals
- Teachers used a range of strategies to help students learn, but insufficient emphasis was placed on developing students' skills of enquiry and critical thinking

After the school contracted Organisation 1, I was made responsible for improving all aspects of the education provision at the same time as coordinating the Lead Practitioner Accreditation in various schools. I enjoyed the challenge of this role in an American curriculum school because it was something new and unfamiliar to me. It was also an opportunity for me to introduce the approaches to professional learning I had previously adopted in my role as a CPT, and incorporate them as part of my new role. The ambitious KPIs I was responsible for reporting to the school owner and my CEO were as follows:

**Implement a strategic improvement plan to improve teaching and learning across the school**

- Implement a middle-leadership development programme
- Ensure that the self-evaluation of departments and teachers is accurate and rigorous
- Establish a distributed leadership of learning through action research, departmental reviews, and a lesson-observation framework
- Create and coordinate a number of professional learning communities within the school
- Embed a 'learning ethos' across the school
- Model 'good learning' and leadership to teachers

**Ensure the Teaching and Learning in Arabic and Islamic Studies is of 'acceptable' or higher standard**

- Coach and mentor the teachers to ensure learning is engaging and student-centred
- Conduct regular reviews of both departments and set agreed targets for performance
- Establish strong links with successful Arabic and Islamic departments in local schools identified as 'outstanding' in line with KHDA standards
- Improve the analysis and use of assessment data across the school
- Establish wider awareness of KHDA expectations regarding assessment and data
- Communicate expectations for departments' development of assessments
- Ensure that assessments are leveled; standardize
- Track pupil progress across the school
- Ensure that student data informs lesson planning and assessment selection
- Analyse data to identify specific learning opportunities
- Share data analysis with all stakeholders to ensure accountability and buy-in
- Establish a framework for the continuous development of effective teaching and learning within the school

- Create a leadership of learning framework to ensure that all changes are sustainable and distributed throughout the school
- Establish clear roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders
- Embed framework into medium-term planning

The DSIB inspection recommendations I have shared<sup>12</sup> establish the reasons the school contracted Organisation 1; and therefore the context of my role with Sarah. In order to get around the local labour laws, and due to Sarah's lack of a teaching qualification, the school—unable to obtain a visa for her as a teacher because she did not possess a teaching qualification—processed a Labour contract for her as a teaching assistant. She was passionate about sport and the opportunities it provided for young people. However, due to staff shortages and a lack of teacher retention in other areas of the school, she was asked to work as a kindergarten teacher, without any previous experience. This starting point of a teacher educator being unqualified as a teacher is therefore not included in the research, which is based on routes that are more conventional. The department was rated as 'unacceptable' by the KHDA when she joined, and despite her lack of experience, she did not view the department in a positive light. The interview extract below illustrates her perception:

When I started my role, the Department was lacking in many areas and as a result the level of education offered and the learning environment was very poor and in some cases unsatisfactory.

As a novice teacher in a foreign country, not wanting to be viewed negatively by her peers, Sarah made a concerted effort to research what she deemed to be best practice. She valued her professional identity, perhaps more so than other teachers I worked with because of the school's 'unsatisfactory' label. She was aware of how her status, due to a lack of professional qualifications, may be viewed by others; and this factor had been a strong motivating factor for her to learn and demonstrate her capability within the school. Sarah articulated her insecurities in leading others as they may learn about her status, and as a result of this, she wanted to be even

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<sup>12</sup> See Appendix H for KHDA Inspection summary.

better at her role. Her approach to professional learning had been purely self-motivated, not driven by the need to get qualifications for their own sake, and at the same time, she ensured that her professional knowledge was current and in line with that of her 'qualified' colleagues. In this further interview extract below, she explains this predicament:

I have been encouraged to learn for myself, to research and become actively involved in early years education in Dubai in order to further my subject knowledge. The only time I found that the lack of qualification affects me is when I am knowingly leading teams of staff and I am aware that some of them are more qualified than I am but that is probably more of a personal concern...than professional. However it has led me to want to be extremely good at my job so that my professional status and qualifications never get called into question.

Sarah's comments illustrate her commitment to developing a deeper understanding about her role. She was aware of the type of encounters and relationships that may affect her work, and committed to overcoming any difficulties arising from these. She indicated that she had been 'encouraged to learn for myself, to research' to inform her teaching practice. She had been "actively involved in early years" teaching in Dubai, showing a relatedness to others within her peer network, meeting a need to be connected to others and valued (Tack and Vanderlinde, 2019). This demonstrates a high degree of personal responsibility at the same time. Sarah leads a team of teachers and works with students and parents, although she is unqualified. The need to be feel competent in her role has motivated her so her "professional status and qualifications never get called into question". The work-related psychological pressure of performing in her role without having the foundation of a qualification may have created a level of uncertainty and challenge but she is able to manage these challenges. She was aware that her success had come at a price and that she may not be able to translate it to another setting because of this lack of appropriate qualifications.

In return for her loyalty to the school, Sarah was rewarded with greater responsibilities, and promoted to the role of Kindergarten Coordinator, with responsibility for 24 teachers. I saw

similarities between her level of responsibility and my own when I first moved to the UAE. Her teacher identity had never been established in the UK, so the formative training that professionals receive before starting their teaching career had not prejudiced her approach, either to learning about the profession or to her own professional learning. Her learning had not followed a path that many other teachers or teacher educators in the international sector or the UK sector had taken; and she had not worked in or received any training in the US curriculum before undertaking the role. She had, in essence, started a new career in a different country, without any training, with a curriculum different to the one she was educated in, and had also been thrust into a leadership role. I empathised with her and admired her courage. Because of this context, she had not brought the usual prejudices or assumptions about professional practice into her role as a starting point. Subsequently, with her enhanced role, Sarah was driven to learn more about the profession and on how to improve the quality of her teachers and the outcomes for the children. She noted:

It has made me more determined to achieve. I have been very fortunate that as a result of my performance, I have been given yearly promotions in terms of responsibility and management. I have therefore had numerous challenges and by proving that I have the capacity to lead, I have been rewarded with [further] increased responsibilities.

In Sarah's situation, the context fuelled her learning and professional growth (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002:948). Although her learning was situated, and much of her knowledge was tacit, she was able to learn on the job and demonstrate progression within that specific context. It is important to note that I did not learn or engage in these conversations with Sarah immediately within my role, it took time for her to open up and share her insecurities. Despite us both being British, I was an outsider in this school context, and I was the perceived expert charged with improving the school. I could have highlighted her lack of qualifications as a limitation in her role but I observed her expertise within the context, and I relied on her situational understanding of

the people and environment for my own success within my role. Although qualifications can be significant in career terms and represent a sign of commitment (Eraut, 2008:6) as well as establishing a benchmark of standards; for schools that are struggling, this situation highlights that there is a balance between recognising personal success stories that have emerged as a result of the context, and recognising which new regulations to implement in order to improve the outcomes within the context. I probed Sarah about her predicament, and she commented:

Whilst I fully understand that qualifications are key in terms of academic achievement I have also experienced in my school working with both qualified and non-qualified individuals that real-life experience can sometimes be far more rewarding and beneficial than achieving an extra qualification. Skills required to be in a management role can't be taught from a book or in a lecture theatre- skills needs practice, individuals need opportunities to problem solve and face challenges to know how to resolve them.

Whilst I am extremely keen to expand my academic qualifications, I would say I am not driven to as I don't feel at this point in my career it would benefit me. However I do know that in other countries that I would not be able to work in my current position without such qualifications so therefore that would be my main reason for obtaining additional qualifications- should I find myself moving.

I have found working in the UAE that requirements and regulations for qualifications are limited and unlike other countries, they are maybe not as regulated here. This has worked well for me as I have been able to flourish professionally and have opportunities that elsewhere I would most likely not have had. To move elsewhere and gain the qualifications required to work in a similar position as I am now, I would almost be going backward in terms of professional stature.

It was clear that Sarah had developed a significant amount of cultural knowledge about the school and about her own learning as a professional. Although she had not worked in any other school setting, her popularity with parents, alongside the positive evaluations of her work in the external inspection reports, suggested a large degree of confidence in her abilities. As all the parents were fee paying, her popularity and success may have been driving factors in the school's popularity with parents, and therefore, its ability to generate revenue despite its low KHDA inspection rating. Within market-based education sectors driven by parental choice, fee-paying parents that provide revenue influence school owners' decisions most, above the quality of learning. Sarah's popularity

may have arisen from her position as a Western educator serving mainly Lebanese children, in a school with very few other Western teachers. As the school was not considered expensive in fee terms compared to other schools in Dubai, parents may have felt that Sarah's presence and skills added value at the school.

I observed that Sarah demonstrated competence within the context of her role, and was provided with the autonomy to run her department. Although she had no formal teacher training, Sarah was able to develop into an enquiring teacher educator (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2014). She read research to inform her practice, rather than conducting research with methodological expertise (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2014). Situational drivers such as the need to improve the school's position in the external KHDA ranking, and the need to engage in development initiatives influenced Sarah's approach to professional learning (Taylor, 2017). In this extract, Sarah articulates the approaches she had taken toward her professional learning:

Professional development is limited in my school and so therefore I select areas that I wish to improve in and use various approaches to increase my knowledge and practice. This includes networking and individual research. If I observe areas in need of improvement or [if] my staff ask me for advice in areas I am not so confident in, I want to be able to answer, demonstrate and teach so this instigates my willingness...to research and further my own learning. Being able to learn and then put theory into practice makes the 'want to learn' far more appealing.

In this response, Sarah's pursuit of knowledge is driven by networking (external), individual research (response), and by working with others (collective); therefore demonstrating several components of Taylor's (2017) teacher-growth model. Although the growth model does include the integration of 'opportunity' and 'responsiveness', it does not make research or the habits of mind explicit perhaps because it is geared towards teachers. The model is therefore insufficient in terms of fully conceptualising her learning as a teacher educator; hence a hybrid or extended model that displays all the dimensions is perhaps needed that can guide teacher-teacher educator interactions within this context.

Sarah explained that her departmental progress was limited and had reached a ceiling. The school's external inspection rating and the constraints of the formula used to judge schools by the KHDA meant that Sarah's department was unlikely to achieve higher than a 'good' rating, despite her claim that it could be 'outstanding'. The limitations of the rest of the school, in her opinion, could be addressed by sharing best practice within the school, but the senior management did not agree with this course of action. Sarah argues that:

Many elements of the school, particularly in the Early Years—have been recognised through inspections and various professional visits, to be 'good' / 'outstanding'. To share this best practice and embed 'what works' in other areas of the school, would in most cases be pretty straight forward. However, for some reason this is not recognised by the management. I have done as best as I can with my Department and for the Early Years to be recognised and awarded as 'outstanding'; the rest of the school must achieve at least 'good' in the inspection. This is a long way off as there are so many issues, so therefore it puts the success and development of my Department at a standstill.

Recommendations from inspections are ignored and not followed. This year we achieved 1 out of the 5 recommendations and failed to create an effective and achievable school improvement plan and until we achieve both of these...the school is very unlikely to improve.

Sarah clearly understands what is required to level up the practice across the school to achieve the recommendations from inspections and achieve good or outstanding results across all phases. As her preferred approach to sharing best practice across the school is not supported by senior management, she is frustrated in her efforts to implement an achievable school improvement plan.

When I worked at the school, I shared similar frustrations, as it seemed to be in a state of continual turmoil. I had numerous interactions with the owner, as I attempted to persuade him to invest more in the school and take a long-term view toward development. It was a challenge because of the financial implications of achieving a certain inspection rating, but this would mean he could increase the tuition fees. My experience of working with him showed me that I hadn't learned

enough about the professional space that he worked in to make generalizable assumptions about the psychology of school owners in the UAE or about their motivations to invest in education. I felt disconnected from my previous roles, and also felt that I perhaps lacked competence in the area that required the most energy to affect change. I had no autonomy or mechanism to demonstrate that I could operate in his professional domain, and therefore, influence decisions in the school, and this troubled me, but it also motivated me to search for opportunities that would provide me with the necessary knowledge and hence allow me to gain a sense of competence within the workplace (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2019). Although I felt comfortable talking to this school owner, my lack of commercial knowledge made me feel like an outsider in his space, as he was a businessman with a bigger vision for the school that I could not access, nor was I able to level with him because he did not view me on an equal footing in this regard. This did, however, bring my professional limitations to the forefront of my mind. This aspect of my practice could be categorised within the 'identification' phase of boundary crossing, as we both worked simultaneously but we were not able to overcome the discontinuities.

In her pursuit of finding 'what works', Sarah demonstrated considerable professional agency and her inclination to deep learning. She recognised how learning should be connected to real life and how teacher-learning is critical to the profession, which is constantly evolving. Utilising her experience of how she learned at university enabled her to learn more effectively to improve in her teacher educator role.

I like to be in charge of my own learning and identify the areas that I wish to improve in. I like to connect new concepts to what I already know and build upon these. At school/university, I used to learn better when relating what I was learning to real-life. My job allows me to master the connection between these two elements, which makes the whole learning process more enjoyable for me.

The world of education and teaching practice is constantly changing and therefore I keep myself fully up-to-date with research and available opportunities that will be of benefit to the teachers in my department. Learning opportunities shouldn't stop when you become a teacher or an educator—

teachers need to have the opportunity to continue their love of learning and to keep up-to-date with changes in education.

Sarah's recognition of autonomy as her own personal driver and the need to keep up to date with relevant research demonstrated her awareness of her 'self' in the context. As I also worked in the school, I was aware that the research culture there was not strong; and so Sarah had displayed a high level of personal responsibility and professionalism to achieve positive outcomes (Willemse & Boei, 2013:355). In the time I worked with Sarah, she undertook the Lead Practitioner Accreditation, and a middle-leadership programme that I facilitated in the school in order to gain professional qualifications within her workplace. Her commitment, and success within the school may suggest that she had agency within that "particular socio-cultural context" (Philpott & Oates, 2017:319) but not beyond it, due to the professional limitations she had as a result of being unqualified, therefore external factors on Taylor's (2017) growth model.

In Eraut's (2004) scale of workplace progression, Sarah could be regarded as being situated between proficient and expert within her context. She was able to identify what kind of changes were needed in various situations; and based on her tacit understanding, had an intuitive grasp of what was happening in a situation. Not only was Sarah successful in her role but she was driven to learn and to develop her professional expertise by experimenting (Ping et al, 2018:2). Despite the research noting that early career teacher educators tend to learn more through training, in Sarah's case, it was the opposite, as the context had fuelled her personal motivation to learn. Perhaps there were other factors associated with living in Dubai that motivated her too that I was not aware of. Her approach to learning is captured in the comment:

My approach to learning primarily involves trial, error, and reflection, which optimises effective, deeper learning as far as I am concerned. I observe, I analyse, I evaluate and then I problem solve. To encourage this, I like to network and share best practice and ideas with other professionals and where necessary, I will enhance and develop my skills and what I learn through independent research.

Learning as an adult goes way beyond pedagogical experiences, I am no longer learning to learn; I am learning to teach and therefore the way I go about learning has changed significantly. My learning doesn't just involve 'me', like it did at university; what I learn now impacts my staff and all the students in my Department.

As already mentioned, Sarah's references to research tended to involve 'keeping up to date' rather than conducting research. In her daily interactions with teachers and teaching assistants, Sarah learnt that professional learning is personal to the individual, as illustrated in the quote below. This was something she cared about deeply. Her awareness of the importance of meeting each teacher's needs is articulated in this comment:

Over the past few years I have really grown to see the important role that professional development plays in the improvements of teaching and learning, and [in] the professional and personal development of staff. Teaching observations, achievement data, student, parent and teacher feedback all contribute to identifying professional development needs. I have learned that every teacher is different in their requirements and as a result I now offer a very tailor-made approach to professional development. Poor[ly] performing teachers have different needs to teachers recognised as 'outstanding'; KG teachers require differentiated sessions in classroom management in comparison to upper elementary and high school [teachers]. It is key to remember that 'one size doesn't fit all' in terms of professional development requirements and success, and impact is far more likely if key factors are used to determine one's needs.

Sarah's comment here shows that she recognises the importance of personal professional learning for herself and her colleagues. The scale of the challenge within the school was large, but Sarah's confidence and the outcomes of the KG section meant that I did not have to expend as much energy on working with the teachers in KG. I worked more with Sarah herself so she could manage her team. We devised a strategy to improve the performance of her underperforming teachers<sup>13</sup>. This strategy could potentially fall under the 'deficit' model of professional development. Sarah worked directly with the teachers to co-plan, co-observe, and

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix I for the strategy to improve underperforming teachers.

co-analyse videos of other teachers and I modelled the steps at different times. We implemented this over a sustained period of time with two teachers. Sarah viewed the improvement of her department as a result of the improved approach to professional learning:

As a result of the improved approaches to professional development provision there has been a clear improvement in various success criteria. With regards to my department I have seen the biggest impact in teachers who were initially identified as performing at an 'unacceptable' level moving up to 'acceptable' and in some cases now achieving consistently 'good' ratings.

Our strategy could be defined as a blend of cognitive and behavioural approaches in a coaching model of professional learning. As the two teachers were Lebanese, and trained within Lebanon, we knew that certain visible behaviours had to be modelled, and we also wanted them to observe others and to experience collaborative planning, with continued support. It was not an accountability model but it did demand commitment from the teachers. The small success in the school enhanced my confidence, but I still had to report on the KPIs I was responsible for, since I was also working within a high-accountability environment.

As we worked through the approach with other teachers, Sarah searched for the needs of the children to inform her decisions about professional learning and looked for signs of her success in this in her evaluation of the impact of her own professional learning. She did not view professional learning as separate to the children's learning:

My approach to the requirements of professional development is very much student/teacher led and this is the basis of identifying various teacher needs and requirements. It is key to evaluate the impact of professional development to assess whether or not it is effective. I have seen an evident increase in the quality of teaching and learning as a result of the PD program offered and there has also been a clear impact on student outcomes.

External[ly]-based PD courses are no longer a priority. I have identified that there are many outstanding elements and areas of best practice within

the school that can be used to lead various workshops and opportunities for improved teaching practice. Selected teachers take lead roles in sessions and all teachers have the opportunity to participate in peer observations and mentoring sessions. External PD sessions are still used to support development but the opportunities for teachers to be involved in various areas of PD has increased as a result of the increased emphasis of in-house provision.

Sarah believed that support through coaching and mentoring rather than accountability enabled teachers to get the best out of their children. The school's poor retention of teachers motivated her approach to this, and she perceived that coaching was far more impactful than a managerial model of accountability that seeks to make teachers redundant within a short space of time. In this commentary below, Sarah articulated these beliefs about improving teacher capacity:

I am a firm believer in the fact that teachers who feel supported, guided and happy in their roles are more likely to deliver high-quality lessons and in turn get results. If teachers are actively involved in their own personal and professional development journey, then they are more cooperative and willing to aid the success of students. I have found that by encouraging staff morale, those teachers whose PD needs are higher than others or who have been identified as performing below level, are far more willing to listen to recommendations and act upon them. If they feel appreciated and respected they tend to have the willingness to want to improve. If teachers do not feel this loyalty and are just identified as needing numerous areas of professional development with no encouragement and support, then their willingness to succeed can be very limited.

Sarah was directly responsible for the development of her teachers within the department, but she saw her role more as a facilitator than someone who takes ownership of the process. I used the Lead Practitioner Accreditation as a pedagogical framework in the school so that it would encourage all teachers to collaborate and inquire about their own practice and the practice of others. In her comment below, Sarah articulated that teacher-learning must be teacher-led for it to motivate the teachers.

I ensure that the professional development cycle is very much teacher led and that teachers are constantly made aware of their own personal successes and the impact that this has had on the school and [on] their

students. Teachers need to feel good about what they are doing and know that their efforts are appreciated.

While Sarah demonstrated an awareness that teachers need support, feedback, and guidance to develop confidence and competence, I questioned how she recognised the point at which her teachers had integrated new knowledge or had understood how to restructure their existing knowledge (Evans, 2019). It would be naïve to think that our approach to working with the teachers was the only contributing factor to their improvement because “situated learning does not create universal levels of shared understanding” (Eraut, 2006:10); possibly because the improvement was driven more by external factors, such as the teachers’ personal commitment and sense of responsibility.

The inter-related factors such as the accountability system, the teachers’ desire to remain employed within the country, and their own professional ambitions were factors that were invisible in this process which re-affirms Eraut’s (2006:10) notion that “different individuals come and go in different contexts, all with their own perspectives”.

In the lead up to the DSIB inspection at the school, I was asked to write documents and reports about the teaching and learning there. I tried to model the writing process for Sarah, as this was an area for development I had recognised during my work with her. She understood that writing was critical to her role, and the ability to write for different audiences would enable her to demonstrate her capability. We spent a significant amount of time completing the school self-evaluation form. Composing educational documents and improvement plans were an integral part of her role; but her lack of any formal training meant that no one had introduced her to this task, so it was completely new to her. Sarah articulated her awareness of language and how she adjusted her writing according to the audience to ensure they fully understood the message. She explains this in the extract below:

As my leadership role has increased so too has the requirement for me to write quality, academic documents that not only guide me in my role but also other members of the leadership team, staff and quality assessors. I have become far more aware of the different audiences that I am writing to and in turn always ask myself: who am I writing for? What do I want them to know? Is my writing directing or informing the reader? The answers to these questions guide the direction of my writing.

As Sarah was writing mainly for non-native speakers, this comment, which comes from her own perspective, displays her awareness of the cultural component present in writing (Bolton, 2010), and that her audience may interpret her words in a way she had not intended. Her comment also suggests that writing is a “subjective exercise and one that is used to create understanding” (Denzin, 1990:2). I have referenced writing within the methodology section, and have referred to this aspect of language use in referring to the literature on inter-cultural learning—it is notable that language is rarely mentioned as a critical communicative factor within the literature on professional learning (Webster-Wright, 2009). Perhaps the reason for the lack of attention given to this area can be explained by the fact that most of the literature originates from English-speaking countries rather than from the international sector. Clarity of language used in professional learning interactions in multi-cultural school contexts is critical if shared understandings are to be achieved (Bryne, 2017). The nuances and subtleties of language may not always be recognised between teachers and teacher educators in multicultural settings because the dominant language used, in my case, English, forms “part of the invisible ritual imposed” on the teachers (Kramsch, 1998:1). An emphasis on the impact of language use in multicultural professional learning would help develop a greater awareness both among teachers and teacher educators within the UAE, so that the communicative implications could be explored when working with non-native speakers of English.

Sarah was cognisant of the international environment of her school and the importance of language and meaning in her communications. The school had a significant Arab population of non-native English speakers and Lebanese teachers who were responsible for implementing the US curriculum. Sarah's experience of communicating in this environment (right from her first teaching job) meant that her awareness of language and culture had been critical in her day-to-day work. Despite her lack of any formal training or qualifications in education, Sarah had developed a language of learning, and then re-presented it for non-native speakers of English in the school. In this extract, Sarah explained her awareness of language:

I work in an environment of educators that come from all over the world. Their language is different, their training has been different, their knowledge and opinion of education and how it should be delivered is different and therefore I have grown to ensure that anything I write—as much as possible, speaks the same language as the audience.

For documents that I write that involve instructing others, such as policies and training manuals, I issue feedback forms to allow the audience to critique my writing and to assist in helping me improve. I ask detailed questions such as: What did you think was most and least helpful? Are there any sections that you found confusing? Did any parts seem like they were lacking in detail? How could the document have been improved to assist in your understanding? I use this quality feedback to improve different areas of my writing and as a result over time, I have seen the quality of my writing improve as I am far more aware of the audience for which I am writing. I used to write in a language that made sense to me but I wasn't always aware that those that were reading my writing found it difficult to or couldn't comprehend my choice of language or style of writing. This in turn was having an impact on the effectiveness of my documents as (especially with instructional pieces) the audience weren't always clear about what I was explaining or requesting and therefore were not meeting my performance expectations—not because they weren't capable or didn't have the capacity to, but because I had not been clear enough in my explanations and hadn't taken into account the audience I was writing for.

This awareness of language and the nuances of communication demonstrated Sarah's own self-awareness and her impact on others (Bolton, 2010). She also displayed 'cognitive flexibility' by

adapting her enhanced awareness of others and engaging her stakeholders in the process of improving her own practice. Although Sarah did not speak Arabic, her narrative indicates some “intercultural competence” nonetheless (Huber & Reynolds, 2014). She arranged for written policy documents, manuals etc. to be checked for understanding by users, and respectfully adjusted according to their feedback, in her efforts to achieve a common language around learning. In retrospect, I could have explored this aspect of her learning in more detail, as the findings could potentially be applied to other teachers in similar positions as Sarah. I could have explored the power structure of the situation, and the fact that she was a white, British National in a position of power making decisions about her own learning and the learning of others, whilst confessing insecurities about her professional knowledge and status. Although I respected her commitment, I wondered if she was aware of her privilege, and if non-white, non-European person be afforded the same respect in this context.

It is evident that the cultural dualities of international schools require leaders to develop a particular set of skills (Keller, 2015). Sarah knew the importance of her use of language, perhaps because she felt the need to prove herself, and had a heightened awareness of her context and surroundings. In terms of her research skills and research identity, I would argue that she falls within the category of a “well-read teacher educator” who frequently engaged in reading academic literature and strongly valued research. She still lacked the behavioural dimension to conduct and produce research within her own context, however (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2014).

The school that Sarah worked in was sold in 2016 and she left to take up the role of founding principal for a new early learning centre with the same owner. In order to be approved as a principal by the KHDA to undertake the role, the KHDA requested evidence that she had completed an accredited leadership qualification. She was able to submit evidence of the Lead

Practitioner Accreditation and gain a one-year temporary approval on condition that she would gain a full certificate that year.

Perhaps, one of the challenges that education professionals face within the UAE is the limited options available to gain education qualifications. As the UAE is a developing country with a huge expatriate workforce, I question the structure of implementing the teacher-licensing initiative. As it is a mandatory initiative, the balance between retaining fully qualified and good but un-qualified professionals has not been struck. I see the value in qualifications but a teaching workforce that operates under short-term conditions can simply choose to move elsewhere if their needs are not catered for.

### **Narrative Account of Michael**

At the same time as working as a school improvement partner, I was also coordinating the Lead Practitioner programme in a school situated in Sharjah, an Emirate next to Dubai, as mentioned earlier. The Head of Professional Development, Michael, had sought the programme as a way of building collaboration and inquiry within the staff. Michael had completed a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education and worked for several years in a school in England before making the move overseas. As Deputy Head of P.E. and also responsible for professional learning across the whole school, Michael was employed on a two-year contract. The school was a co-educational, not-for-profit school catering for children between the ages 3 and 18, and followed the National Curriculum for England. It was accredited by the British Schools Overseas Inspectorate (BSO), and registered with the Department for Education in England. The majority of teachers within the school were British and had trained in the UK. A recent inspection report stated that the school had “an incredibly high standard of education” and was “recognisably British”. Data on the students’ nationalities was not publicly available as this school operated under the Ministry of Education, and did not publish school-inspection reports.

Despite the Lead Practitioner Accreditation starting in the school, I had already begun to consider leaving Organisation 2. My desire to work more closely with school owners as well as my awareness of the limitations of the Tamkeen Project made me start searching for new opportunities whilst working in my various roles. In the same way that I was able to build relationships in the other contexts in the UAE, I was able to build a relationship with Michael, who was open to working with me and engaging in interviews about his practice. It felt strange to be starting a new project, while inwardly knowing I would be leaving it soon as I needed to move on from this role.

My relationship with Michael was positive, but there were boundaries that I recognised early in our relationship that he respected. I did not feel as close to Michael or have the ability to access Michael's values as I had with Sarah. Whenever I interviewed Michael, he expressed frustration with the landscape of professional learning within the UAE and with his school's approach to staff development. He was extremely motivated to bring people together to share professional practice and to lead professional learning. As his school was in Sharjah, with less public accountability, this may have contributed to his frustration with the speed of change in his school. Michael articulated his frustration about the perceived lack of quality learning:

As a teacher, I attended Teachmeet-style events, which I set up a series of around the UAE. I felt that CPD was very limited in the UAE and very expensive and perhaps didn't focus upon learning but surface knowledge content and small subject-specific content. The presenters of the events I personally felt were not in touch with the current education trends and didn't match my needs. I also relied heavily upon Twitter and reading blogs to keep up to date with the pedagogical practice.

The themes within his comment describe an awareness of external factors and the need to have relatedness with others. Although he uses the term 'trends', the intention was to convey the fact that others failed to engage in the current debate about education. The principal in Michael's school had sought the Lead Practitioner Accreditation as a means of increasing collaboration and professional inquiry; and Michael was my point of contact from the senior management, so our

relationship was crucial in implementing the programme. He trusted me enough to convey his inner frustration about their perceived lack of knowledge in school improvement, as he stated in the comment below:

SLT are very inexperienced and have very little knowledge about school improvement. A very basic model is in place but not followed or used to inform performance management. School improvement is not learning centred and mostly focuses on issues outside the classroom and...on school 'cosmetics'. Teaching and learning [is] seldom an item on the improvement plans, much to my disappointment, as this would inform the direction of the CPD programme.

Effective professional learning for principals and teachers needs to address their complex environments, operating within the wider regulatory framework (Keller, 2015). Whilst I could not prove or disprove Michael's claims, I was forced to consider his frustration during our conversations and work with him, whilst at the same time, contemplating my own professional status within Organisation 2. We were both teacher educators, both with a desire to have greater autonomy and a stronger sense of job satisfaction at that time, and both considering our professional options while having the responsibility for implementing the programme in the school with the ten teachers there. In my case the deficit in my work, I felt, was my need to gain competence on a wider level—I knew I needed more experience in working with school owners. This “unfulfilled psychological need” was affecting my ability to focus (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2019:463). Michael, in his situation, sought autonomy and relatedness; both of which appeared elusive.

In developing his identity and research skills, he focused on the consumption of research, which enabled him to recognise the value of evidence-based practice. As we were co-delivering the taught components of the Lead Practitioner Accreditation, we were able to encourage engagement in research with the teachers, and in turn, share practice between ourselves. Michael remarked:

One of the most memorable [experiences] was reading a book by John Hattie [in] which he did a meta-analysis—there was a clear distinction between what

was effective practice and what was ineffective and this made me realise the importance of evidence-based practice. I now try and use as much evidence [as possible] to inform my practice.

Hattie's work had been adopted and packaged for schools as part of a Visible Learning programme by the British Schools in the Middle East Association (BSME). Michael did not critique Hattie, and at the time, I did not share my critique of Hattie either because we were not at a point of comfort in challenging each other at this point but it was pleasing to know that Michael was engaging with some research. Michael shared academic research with his teachers to engage them in theory, and encouraged them to read different case studies about aspects of professional practice within the profession. I never saw the research or the data, and sensed this was a boundary that I was not able to cross. Michael commented:

I lead people to some essential reading (logical chain, what is sauce for the goose, is sauce for the gander, etc). I am also in communication with some senior members of the school with whom I share my experiences and thoughts. Every Monday, we have staff training/briefing [and] there are opportunities here to share thoughts and findings and entice people to look into particular practices.

I encouraged Michael to focus on developing contextual-based solutions with his teachers and to encourage them to see the value of a focus on their own professional learning. He recognised that they needed ownership and that this needed to be given value within the school day.

I try and give them opportunities to try and learn by empowering and giving them ownership. On another note, regular and consistent meetings...during the school day and after school are also essential as [these] give the professional more value than merely a bolt-on exercise.

When I interviewed Michael, we talked about his perception of failures and the limitations of his approaches. He conveyed that his communication with teachers hindered both his and their progress. Michael's frustration with the school management for making CPD mandatory was identified as a serious contextual challenge. He articulated this in the extract below:

One of the biggest failures was not having constant communication with those identified in the lesson-cycle group, and ultimately people are now no longer involved. This was because of my time being spent in the department

trying to sort out some issues and consistency but neglecting the CPD role. There were 30 people who were told that they had to do lesson study and [so it] was not voluntary (top-down approach). As people got more responsibility this number quickly diminished. There were a few after-school meetings but nothing of value. After a meeting with a vice principal, my role/anxieties regarding the state of PE diminished and I was back on track focused on lesson study. I started with a smaller group of 3 people who were genuinely interested in lesson study and teaching and learning and [we] had weekly meetings within the normal day (free periods). We soon had an effective working party and made some interesting findings and really started to get deeper into the learning and impact on pupils.

I sensed that Michael did not feel a sense of purpose in the school; his frustration with the school management's top-down approach was one of his motivations to leave the UAE and move back to the UK. The challenges and issues that Michael conveyed to me about what he perceived as a negative workplace culture and the lack of intrinsic motivation constitute factors that may inhibit professional learning (Maaranen et al, 2019:212). Michael's learning—conceptualised within Taylor's (2017) professional growth model—suggests he had the same level of commitment within each of the dimensions, and whilst he was aware of the factors within his workplace, he did not move iteratively or fluidly between the dimensions and the external factors, as referenced in Figure 5 on page 91 (Taylor, 2017). This may have been as a result of limited situational perception or wider contextual awareness of other opportunities within the UAE. I believed that he was not aware of some very good opportunities within the UAE and he was tainted by his experience in this school, so sought to move back to the UK instead of exploring roles elsewhere within the UAE. From a personal standpoint, I realise that he simply wanted to regain his perceived professionalism and therefore sought a role where professional learning was democratic:

I learned that a top-down approach leads to a lack of attention and effort and the effectiveness of the strategy is a lot less compared to [other situations where teachers] are genuinely interested in improving their own practice. Another important lesson was that if SLT value CPD initiatives and create capacity, then staff are more likely to fully participate in what you are trying to achieve.

Michael's description of his professional context suggests a number of workplace factors that negatively affected his work satisfaction (Eraut, 2004). He referred to context and learning factors, such as the challenge and value of the work and relationships because he was struggling between the two. I was not in a position to comment on his perspective on the school leadership nor did I wish to pursue this line of conversation with him.

Some of the teachers in the school gained the accreditation from their work, and others did not. I left Organisation 1 when the academic year came to an end, and the taught programme concluded. I was aware that the programme may not have continued in its prior form and saw that the teachers responded negatively to this change. I had a similar experience in Al Ain when the school I was working at was sold, and the new owner would not continue to pay for the accreditation; effectively leaving the teachers in the middle of the year with no opportunity of gaining the accreditation. When Michael left the school, and following my departure from Organisation 1, there was a gap in the leadership of professional learning. When he returned to the UK, I sought his comments on the impact of the return, and how he had made sense of it:

I returned back to the UK due to being asked to consider a post that came up. Personally, I accepted the post because of the development and CPD I would access and teaching back into a rich education system in the hope of upgrading my skills and practice. After doing some research, it seemed a very dynamic and ambitious school with a large amount of success in such a deprived area.

The school is a lot larger compared to [the one] in the UAE; therefore, the demands are higher, particularly with school league tables and funding at stake, and the pressure to perform is a lot higher. Having said that, the opportunities to develop as a teacher and a leader [are] higher, which [was] the main reason for returning...Within the first year, it took longer to settle down than originally thought. This was due to the behaviour of the students in a highly deprived area. However, the impact I have had on poor students' lives more than makes up for some unruly behaviour. Next year, as the leadership programmes take effect, it will be more professionally rewarding along with the rolling out of lesson study and implementing various research initiatives for the teaching alliance.

Michael also described how his motivations for moving back to England were based on his wish to advance his career, and due to the lack of opportunities at his school in the UAE. He had high expectations of what he wanted in his learning and of the professional learning he wanted his colleagues to engage in. He conveyed his frustration with what he described as the focus on “cosmetics” and an SLT that was “very inexperienced and [with] very little knowledge about school improvement.” There are similarities between Michael’s narrative and my own, concerning the tensions that existed in the pursuit of research and knowledge within this context. Michael talked about having read blogs and using Twitter to maintain his pedagogical knowledge. His fear of losing touch with the UK was very clear from the beginning. Michael explained that Hattie’s book had made the biggest impact on him and that he was turning more towards evidence-based practice as a result. Because Michael’s school had employed me to work with him and a group of selected teachers, I had felt a duty to expose them to a different form of professional learning that was collaborative and context-based. I sensed that each teacher there had been working in isolation from the others, and also in isolation from any community that was similar to theirs.

I would argue that Michael’s research identity could be described as “well-read” (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2014) as he was a consumer of research, although he did not proactively carry it out himself in order to drive the creation of professional knowledge within his context from a research perspective. I sensed that he valued ‘deep understanding’ and also that he could, at the same time, tolerate ambiguity. Being on a short-term contract may have implicitly led to short-term thinking regarding his personal situation within the UAE. His basic psychological needs were not being met, and as a result, he left the country. As the UAE private-education sector is predominantly made up of foreign teachers, it may be that a high volume of other teachers are similarly finding that their basic needs are not being met.

To summarise Sarah and Michael's narratives, both were white British nationals working as teachers *and* teacher educators in different school contexts within the UAE. Both contexts fuelled their learning but in very different ways. Whereas Sarah was driven to gain more professional competence and affect change within her setting, Michael was driven to leave his setting for the same reason.

Both Sarah and Michael could be described as “well-read” teacher educators who consumed research and actively sought it out but did not produce their own research. Perhaps if both of them had been skilled researchers, they could have demonstrated greater personal agency. Sarah's agency existed within her situation and was tied to the school owner, whereas Michael lacked the confidence to affect change within his setting so he left. If they had been in a position to produce research within the context and disseminate the findings, they may have positioned themselves differently. Both teachers displayed a few of the inquiry habits across the three dimensions, but not the majority (Kreijns et al, 2019). Although the ‘Dynamics of Professional Learning’ model is useful as a broad, and theoretical, concept; in order to be useful in terms of framing Sarah and Michael's situation, the behaviours that affect movement between the concentric circles need to be more explicit to the UAE context. Sarah and Michael were both performing as teacher educators in different settings and with different experiences, values, and skill sets; so their expertise was at a “dual level” (Kelchtermans et al, 2018). The potential to create a criterion to describe the profession of teacher educators in the UAE is evident (Verloop et al, 2001). Doing so is important because other teacher educators may similarly be operating in the UAE, conducting research and working with teachers that are adopting practices that are unique, and not yet researched.

Several different work related factors were driving my decision making at the time but the main factor was my awareness of my personal and professional position within UAE society, and the

education sector. At this time, I knew that I needed a new form of knowledge in order to strengthen my professional understanding (Philpott & Oates, 2017) and to become more personally empowered.

#### **4.5 Findings D: Transitioning to a different organisation**

This section of my findings is influenced by Gemignani (2011) Bolton (2010) and Bruce (2012) as I have worked reflexively between the data, contexts and the literature, I have embraced my own vulnerability, and I have used my emotions as sources of knowledge to be more transparent. After six years of working at Organisation 1, I joined Organisation 2: an Indian real-estate and construction company that was opening two new UK-curriculum schools in Dubai. I was appointed as the Head of School Development, and achieved my aim of working directly with a school owner. My role was very different from my previous roles and my KPIs were predominantly commercial, which meant I felt disconnected from the teachers. However, I had deliberately sought this type of role because I wanted to gain a greater understanding of the decisions that school owners make with regards to teachers, the curriculum, budgets, and other aspects of schooling in order to enhance my knowledge of the context. This, I felt would enable me to become a more rounded professional in the UAE, and ultimately strengthen my wider skill set. This is an example of different factors (structure, content, personal efforts, risk taking) coming together in my thinking about my professional self so that I could attempt to achieve agency (Priestly et al, 2015:626). For some people, this may seem like a risky professional decision, and perhaps it was, but I do believe that my “biographical trajectory” has enabled me to take decisions like this in order to further my personal knowledge (Philpott & Oates, 2017:319). For the purpose of describing my professional role, my key performance indicators are outlined below:

#### **KPIs**

Key responsibility: Dubai International School start-ups, namely to ensure that in this year Dubai International School is prepared on schedule and to the quality required, with all required licences, for opening at the start of September 2015; and to ensure that all necessary preparations for the opening of British International School in 2016 are made as well.

## **KPIs (until end of October 2015)**

### 1. Project

- a. Dubai International School is built and ready as a school, with licenses; and opening on time, including necessary regulatory approvals
- b. The project plan is set out clearly for all to follow, complete with deliverables, milestones, monitoring, and Risk—under weekly renewal
- c. Weekly report to Chairman identifying delays and issues
- d. Regular report, as requested, to Governors
- e. From December 2014, 100% of outstanding issues to be resolved within 2 weeks
- f. Monthly update of Risk Register

### 2. Marketing and enrolment

- a. Enrolment to school target
- b. Driving 3000 enquiries through telephone and email to School and Discovery Centre
- c. Delivering marketing effectively within the AED 3m budget assigned
- d. Weekly reporting on all data available indicating performance of the team through the enrolment/sales funnel

### 3. Financial

- a. Delivery of project budget within sums assigned, recognising planned shortfall of approx. AED 14m at start of December 2014
- b. Marketing spend to monthly budget, or with pre-agreed variances

### 4. Stakeholders

- a. Judged by internal team members to be communicating effectively and driving project plan well
- b. Good relationship with regulatory bodies that facilitate quick issue-recognition and problem-solving
- c. Effective communication with, and management of work assigned to contractors

If I compare my role as a consultant partnership teacher involved in planning and mentoring teachers, it is clear that my new role was vastly different. Whilst working full time in this role, I continued to interact with a network of educators through the UAE Learning Network, and re-kindled a relationship with Salem, an Arab expatriate teacher I had previously worked with in the PPP project for Organisation 1 in Abu Dhabi. When I first met him in 2010, he was a very enthusiastic teacher, and I was not sure how to read him because my awareness and knowledge

of Arab expatriate teachers was very limited at the time. Since then, he had moved to Dubai, where he was working in a private school, and—having progressed from the Lead Practitioner Accreditation to his masters’ qualification with the University of Warwick—Salem contacted me to request my support in this. Although I was working predominantly in a commercial role, I felt an emotional connection with Salem, and knew that he would be interested in working with me to share his narrative. I also felt that it would give me the opportunity to maintain my mentoring skills.

Salem worked in School C on a two-year contract. The school, which followed the US curriculum, was part of a group of schools owned by an Emirati family. The school, which had opened in 1979, had received a ‘good’ rating in its DSIB 2016 inspection, and the vast majority of the teachers were from Lebanon. The student population was entirely Arab, with some Emiratis also attending the school. A candidate for NEASC accreditation, the school had not yet been awarded the status as of 2016. In its 2016 inspection report, it was noted that “teachers have good subject knowledge and give clear explanations in lessons. They assess students’ attainment and progress effectively. Some teaching is of very good or better quality. Overall, teaching and assessment are good.”

Salem was committed to completing his Masters after completing the programme but he struggled with the Masters course, as the war in Syria had affected his family. I felt a sense of “responsibility and obligation” to support him (Huber et al, 2013) because of his personal situation, and because he was committed to gaining a qualification to create a better life for himself and his family. The experience of re-connecting with him exposed me to another worldview, and to a philosophical viewpoint that enabled me to gain a perspective of a teacher seeking support but who had ongoing personal struggles (Kelchtermans et al, 2018). I asked him how the war in Syria affected his personal and professional life as a teacher in the UAE, and he commented:

More than 300,000 Syrians have lost their lives and more than 11 million have fled their homes in seven years of civil war. The realities of day-to-day life for ordinary

Syrians tend to get lost amongst the depictions of the horrors of the conflict, the complicated fault-lines and political agendas. Of course, the war that is happening has lots of negative effects even on us, people who are considered away from the whole situation as bodies but our souls are connected deeply to homeland, the impact lead me to always have an anxiety, worries, frustration and even depression sometimes. Seeing all the loved ones in such a place full of hate and danger and watching them go away without being able to do anything is truly heart breaking, but my faith in Allah, close friends and holding on to hope helped me go through my learning journey, knowing nothing is impossible if you put for yourself an aim and work your heart and soul to reach it. Being positive all the time won't let you feel shallow when you face something that might bring you down. To overcome all hardship and severe circumstances is a great challenge I accepted remembering a good proverb, when there is a will there is a way.

Salem was very conscious that as a Syrian national, he might be perceived differently by others, and could be limited in where he could reside due to the political situation. I was aware that the stories he shared with me might be conditional, and that he might not have been telling me everything that sat beneath them, but I still considered his personal situation when I interacted with him because he decided it was important to tell me about it (Eraut, 2004:10). As my behaviour towards him was influenced by my “aggregated knowledge” of him, it could therefore have been both “biased and self-confirming” (ibid) because his story was “connected to human emotions” (Savin-Baden & Niekerk 2007:462). During a conversation, I asked Salem about the challenges of living in Dubai:

Finances are a major concern to anybody looking for a new life overseas and [the] cost of living takes...the vast majority of expenditure. The cost of education becomes the crucial point of discussion. I feel the heat of increased fees in schools and universities. Learners have no choice but to accept whatever the case might be because professional learning is needed regardless its costs.

As researchers, we become more “cultured when we take the time to learn the nuances of our research, including the people that form the focus of it” (Phoenix, 2013:74). This implies that I needed to be very clear about my position and awareness of myself with my participants, as I collected and analysed the data, and interpreted it from the perspective that I had already influenced the data from my presence and purpose.

When I worked with Salem, I was very careful not to repeat the mistakes I had made with Ahmed that I described in Findings A. I was careful to use language that was clear and coherent and I frequently checked on his understanding. Salem's most memorable professional experience was his visit to the UK; an activity I was involved in when I worked in Organisation 1. We organised a trip for teachers and school leaders from the UAE to visit schools in the UK and attend an education conference. Commenting on the experience, Salem noted:

The most memorable experience of learning [was] when my school sent me abroad in 2009 to [the] United Kingdom to attend [a] SSAT Educational conference, which was a turning point in my life and inspired me...to apply what I have seen through my field trips to some UK schools in London and Birmingham. I used to have motivations toward achieving more effective classroom management and a better learning environment. This experience changed me as a teacher. I came to understand that differentiation; critical-thinking questions are very important in education and have [a] positive impact on the students' attainment. I am committed to providing a safe, supportive and positive environment which promotes learning and [to] the achievement of successful outcomes following school welfare policies.

In my conversations with Salem, it was clear that his visit to the UK had a profound effect on his outlook and on his worldview. The trip enabled him to reflect on his teacher identity in various ways as well as on his beliefs about teaching. He was also strongly motivated to complete the accreditation programme prior to the visit, and then later his Master's in education. At the same time, Salem was acutely aware of his fragile place within UAE society—perhaps because of his personal struggles—and his position as an Arab working within the private sector in Dubai. As he explained:

I've been fortunate in my own university education; I had wonderful professors. I want to be that same kind of teacher—who not only encourages students to learn—but also sets an example that inspires others to teach. I can work and study effectively in most environments regardless of my age [and of any] sickness [or] disasters in my homeland that face me. I am ambitious to get high qualifications to extend my knowledge to [improve my] teaching in schools or colleges.

While working with Salem, often in the evenings, I worked side by side with the Chairman of Organisation 2. The school project was encountering serious commercial risks because insufficient children had enrolled in the pre-operations year. Although I held similar qualifications, and had similar cultural norms, I sensed that the education team on the project viewed me with indifference because I was representing the owner's interests, which they perceived as non-educational and culturally different. It was a strange feeling to operate "on the other side", but I knew the experience was important for my own understanding of education in the UAE. My learning in this role, with its different set of challenges was "situated" and I was changing my "identity through practice" but was not yet ready to make this new identity "explicit and codified" (Eraut, 2004).

As the pressures within the project mounted, we had already recruited a number of staff from the UK who had resigned from their positions to move to Dubai, and the school was set to open in September, 2015. Due to financial reasons, however; we subsequently took the decision to terminate their contracts before the teachers left the UK, which we knew would cause serious personal stress to them and reputational damage to us, but we decided that it was the better of two unfortunate options. I managed the situation, and was able to find the teachers other jobs, but the experience was extremely stressful. On the one hand, I was taking some very difficult decisions about teachers' careers, whilst managing the relationship between the Chairman and the education team; and on the other hand, I was meeting with Salem in the evenings to support his career development and learn about his personal struggles. In some way, I felt that helping Salem somehow compensated for my work that could put others in a difficult situation professionally. At the end of the pre-operations year and just before the school opened, I provided the Chairman of the company with a report on the project to highlight some of the significant learning. Here is an extract from this written report:

Terminating teachers within a pre-operations year carries significant reputational and commercial risk. Despite this, the financial implication of employing teachers to operate without [sufficient] children [enrolled] carries a greater commercial risk to the overall success of the School.

The timing of the decision did not work in favour of the teachers, due to the international recruitment cycle and impending summer term. We recognised this and set out to support the teachers as much as possible to find alternative employment.

The human element [involved in] terminating teachers—due to our limitations in planning and preparation—was the most difficult aspect of the process. As the process developed, we continually reviewed the communication that was being drafted to ensure that every line was consistent and did not infer a message that we did not approve of. We were flexible in our responses to teachers, particularly with Jane, as we knew she would feel particularly upset due to her professional seniority compared to the others.

If we were to repeat this process, I would recommend that we make a greater effort to identify similar job opportunities within the market and to reach out to specific school groups [in] relocat[ing] the teachers. When we initiated the communication plan, we intended to speak to the teachers verbally and in person, but due to their personal circumstances, [we] were not able to; so this meant that certain individual cases went on longer than intended. In future, this is something to be aware of, but at the time, we did not foresee this happening.

The strategy that we employed is transferable to other contexts. The process of conducting a needs analysis of the situation, evaluating the impact of terminating versus retaining teachers, developing a communications plan and process, executing it and [then] responding to the needs of the situation, are all dispositions that can be used in a range of settings.

### **Concluding thoughts**

In the process of writing this note, I have reflected on the pre-operations year from a wider perspective and from a personal standpoint. When we consider the problems that we have faced, there are multiple ways of seeing the problems. Firstly, a lot of this has taken place in the background; however, it is the behaviours of people that have manifested in the foreground. The unknowns from our perspective are: how did the behaviours manifest during interactions with parents? How did the behaviours manifest with other members of the team? We can't measure this, but there is sufficient anecdotal evidence to suggest that it negatively impacted...our outcomes.

It is important to note that although I have written about Robert's (the Principal) management, the issues with other members of the team would not have disappeared if another person was leading them. Another person may have held them accountable, managed them better and driven them forward; however, Robert's behaviour facilitated their behaviours that underpinned their attitude and skill set. For each and every appointment, each person should undertake a scenario-based interview to highlight the key dispositions required for a start-up—to bring out their attitudes and behaviours during stressful situations.

The importance of getting the right people is paramount to any project succeeding. From every aspect of the project from recruitment, procurement, marketing and admissions, we have valuable data and metrics for setting up a premium school in Dubai. Despite this...every aspect of [the] start up data and information has to be interpreted and acted on by people. Unless the people can function in a challenging environment, the data and efficiencies are limited.

From a personal standpoint, I have mixed feelings about the year and about my performance. I have stated this before and I still firmly believe that behaviours always determine outcomes. At times, I have felt over-stretched because I have overcompensated for other people throughout the year. By feeling compelled to attempt to solve a problem, you automatically position yourself to achieve something or nothing. My approach is to step up and to lead. On a school start-up project, decisions have to be made at speed and sometimes you have to accept that an acceptable decision is good enough for that particular situation.

On numerous occasions throughout this project, I have considered why were we not able to achieve what we [originally] set out to do and I continually come back to the people employed and the system. In the circumstances, what would I do differently? It's extremely difficult to answer because at several points in the year, I had to lose my temper and plead with certain people to simply share information; I had to demand that Robert met with Maureen to manage her; I had to demand that Rachel followed instructions to get to an event with 75 parents waiting; I had to complete Robert's work as he left to go on holiday, I had to purchase a catering system with my own cash because the purchase department would not follow my instructions to purchase it; I had to call parents back to apologise for school-related issues; I had to apologise to relocation companies because data had been lost. The list is endless. Everything was a battle and if you consider the storming phase of team development, everything that I have described fits firmly into that category. As an overall team, we have never moved outside of that. I have been frustrated by this because I have been acutely aware of this from a wider perspective and I have felt disenabled to change it. At no point has the team as a whole been in the performing phase.

I want to emphasise that I am not using this as an opportunity to moan or to attribute blame; [these are] simply my observations of the year and [of] how I have operated...I also want to emphasise that I do not see myself as separate to the problems or isolated from them. I am constantly questioning my own behaviour and how my behaviours are seen by the wider team. Back in December when Robert left to go on holiday, leaving behind the offers that had already gone out to teachers, you (the Chairman) asked me what my feedback was to you, as a manager. I said that I was unable to give you feedback because our relationship was and still is, hierarchical. However, I did ask you the question: how self-aware are you as a leader? I ask myself the same question and in asking this question, I can question my behaviours and how they are affecting the people that I work with. I have made mistakes this year and I have worked to rectify them and address them.

On every project and in every situation I have worked in, I have learned because I have dedicated myself to the learning process. I have learned things this year from a commercial perspective that I have added to my toolkit of skills. Without a doubt, I have learned things that I [hadn't] observed on other projects. My conceptual understanding of people and behaviours has remained the same and this project has validated my

previous learning in relation to leadership, management, team development, communication and systematic project management. In the future, I would like to incorporate all of these so that we can optimize people and systems within the school start-up phase.

When I reflect on this written extract, I know that my intentions for writing in this way were to convey a message to the Chairman about reflection, therefore, perspective making. I wanted to show him my vulnerabilities and my ability to be open about my own mistakes with the hope that he would reflect on his, and ultimately we would learn from them. This written extract acted as a boundary object in our relationship, which I would define within the literature on boundary crossing as between 'coordination,' as we were able to establish a sense of continuity despite our cultural difference, whilst we attempted to make and take perspectives in the process (Daskolia, 2014:3). As I was new to this professional role, and the Chairman was new to the education sector, the un-familiarity for both us may have prevented us from achieving a transformational space that maintained a uniqueness of intersecting worlds.

As the Chairman of Organisation 2 was an Indian expatriate in Dubai, and educated in India, I knew there would be inter-cultural challenges in communicating certain messages. I deliberately communicated in a very open way in the hope that he would mirror this because I wanted him to display his hidden thoughts and emotions. Within the organisation, there was an obsession with numbers as truth, and I wanted to re-shape this by creating a story with words about my perception of the project with this report. This report was an attempt to find a strategy that examined our shared "beliefs, behaviours, values, assumptions, prejudices and habitual actions" (Bolton, 2010:13) and an attempt to allow him to connect with a story beyond the numbers, and to ultimately "induce action" (Damodaran, 2017:23).

Compared to my previous role of supporting teachers in their learning, it felt strange working in a highly commercial role, as I mentioned earlier. I did, however, see the value of the role as it

allowed me to understand the nature of the sector in more depth. Indeed, I felt I could see the psychological drivers behind certain decisions, and learned something about the economic structures involved. In fact I seemed to be playing the role of the intermediary, or the bridge between the business and the education sector; navigating both. There were multiple problems within the start-up, and the head teacher was terminated three weeks before the school opened. The building only just received approval from the authorities, and negative talk about the school and the owner circulated within the sector. Further, when a newspaper ran a negative headline, I was contacted by several media outlets for comment. I remained consistent throughout the entire process and sought advice from a senior figure within the KHDA on how to re-purpose the image of the Chairman. I created a note including this advice, and shared this with the Chairman and the new head teacher so they could digest the advice in written form, rather than verbal because I assumed that it would have a greater impact if they were able to read it multiple times and reflect on it. The extract below is the specific advice on re-purposing the owner's identity:

At different points during the conversation, we talked about the Chairman's relationship with the school and Sandeep's position as an owner. She said that she would like to see the positions more clearly defined. She said that in the best schools around the world, the owners have organised 'meet the owners' events so that the parents can see the human side of the people that own the school. The perception out there, according to her, is that the owners are a corporate, contracting company with no history in education. She asked me who Sandeep's heroes were and who Sandeep looked up to. By looking at the characteristics and behaviours of Sandeep's heroes, people could unpick what sits behind the intentions, and therefore, develop the perception of the human side of the owners. She commented that the perception of Sandeep wasn't one that was warm...If we weren't ready for [a 'meet the owners' event], we should work back over and outline the necessary steps to get to that place. We should be doing more to demonstrate the human side of the owners. The positioning development of Sandeep and Rebecca is critical, and she would like it be defined so that Sandeep's position is: owner, supporter of Rebecca, positioning the school to serve the community; and Rebecca's should be: principal, innovator, decision maker and [should represent] the profile of the school. These two positions need to be more defined, in her opinion. She would like to know that Sandeep's intentions are to be the best owner in the business and for all educational matters to be Rebecca's business. She noted that this space had to be filled with this strategy and the behaviours of each role should be known and understood by both. She commented that in the past, roles and responsibilities between owner

and principal have been defined, but one of the parties has not understood their role because there has been a lack of clarity and understanding.

She also said that she did not care about the school in India or any CSR initiatives; she would like to know that we are focusing on the Dubai community. She would also like to know that the company is ethical; and because our core business has been contracting and not education, there has to be wider strategy to demonstrate that we are ethical. This has to be a real strategy that is acted upon, and as a result of that, the PR will be positive.

She asked what my relationship was like with Sandeep and how I have managed myself throughout the project. I was able to compare the previous chairmen and owners that I have worked for and draw similarities and differences. I highlighted some of things that I have done for the teachers, such as the remuneration packages and the induction we delivered at the Hotel, and how we were committed to their well-being. I explained that with any new business, there are different expectations and my role is to manage expectations because education is a very different line of business from others. She also said that the KHDA had considered holding a *What Works* event for owners, but their priority was parents so they have passed this agenda on to a third party who will look to organise something.

I was careful about how I wrote this note because I wanted to convey a strong message but also not to implicate myself in the process. I even went so far to hand deliver the note rather than sending an email, as I was concerned that others may use it against me. Once the school was open, my role merged into a mixture of commercial activities, day-to-day management and advice to the school team, as well as to the owner. My role was not defined, and the breakdown of relationships between team members meant that I was always acting as a mediator. In some ways, I felt incredibly distant from my roles in the past, so I turned to my online network to maintain my education relationships and my knowledge of the sector. By accessing my online network, I was able to move back into my teacher educator space outside of my day-job, and continue to explore the sector without any restrictions. This activity also coincided with my mentoring of Salem.

As the school project evolved, I continued to mentor Salem through his Master's degree, and as already indicated, I felt a sense of responsibility towards him because of his personal situation. I knew he would find it extremely difficult because he often struggled with academic writing, and also due to the nature of critical reflection. When I asked Salem about his motivation to learn and whether qualifications played a significant part in that because of his position as a Syrian national, he replied:

I'd like to work in a field related to education no matter if I travel or not. I am too interested in education to work at a well-known international school or a university, but I believe that teaching is somehow in my blood. I've been good at teaching because I took the time to educate myself and my students. Now I look forward to achieving higher education.

Salem's experience in the public-private partnership in Abu Dhabi, and his experience in completing the Lead Practitioner Accreditation instilled confidence in his teaching and in his approach to the children. He commented:

I have an outstanding record of successful teaching experience and improvement in student results in a range of communities and schools, teaching all levels of social studies and Islamic education in English to students with a diverse range of backgrounds and abilities. My experience teaching in Abu Dhabi and Dubai schools gives me significant knowledge and understanding of the content of these courses and the benefit for the students. My students have consistently achieved outstanding grades in my subjects.

Salem was considered one of the senior teachers in his school and had a leading role in developing programs within the school, a role that provided him with greater insight into the needs of the children:

I am an active member of the school team that designed and wrote the current teaching programs with a focus on the syllabus and curriculum. These programs are inclusive in nature and provide clear pathways for moving students to a deep knowledge and understanding of social studies and Islamic ethics, attitudes and manners. This has provided me with an in-depth knowledge of the curriculum and excellent skills.

When I visited the school, the common feedback from the children was on the family-like atmosphere. The children and teachers firmly believed that the community—and this family atmosphere—constituted the biggest strength of the school. It challenged my beliefs about constructivism because the teaching was largely by direct instruction and the learning outcomes, evidenced in lesson observation and in their iGCSE results were good, and the children enjoyed being there<sup>14</sup>. Salem recognised this and alluded to it in our conversation.

Communication, cooperation, and coordination are vital aspects of the collaborative process. No one can deny that the effect of family involvement on educational...makes a difference in students' academic achievement.

The school was popular, especially within the Arab community. There were waiting lists for entry, and the school sought validation from the KHDA to confirm the quality, as the owners felt that their overall approach to education was misunderstood by the regulator. Salem explained that the external validation from the KHDA was one of his biggest professional frustrations:

One of the most common causes of unfulfilled expectations is getting [the grade of] 'satisfactory' in the KHDA report for many years. Success starts with having a solid plan to guide school improvement efforts. My school improvement process consists of many critical components. These elements sound simple enough in theory, yet putting them into practice can be quite challenging. KHDA Inspectors have already blamed the school's unusual policy, which has now been changed, for low attainment among students.

His identity was a common talking point. When I tried to focus on his individual approach to learning, and his role, Salem said:

I consider myself as a teacher-leader because I played a wide range of roles to support my school and student success. Whether these roles are assigned formally or shared informally, they build the entire school's capacity to improve. Because teachers can lead in a variety of ways, many teachers can serve as leaders among their peers.

My role as a teacher is to guide and encourage. This vocation requires patience...perseverance and [a] strong commitment to professional learning through sharing the good practice.

I was not sure if he was being honest here or was just trying to please me.

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<sup>14</sup> See Appendix J for the section of the school review.

I also demonstrate my commitment to the quality teaching model by applying the framework in my lessons to ensure they are meaningful and engaging for students.

Salem argued that his role as an educator was:

...to counsel students, help them learn how to use their knowledge and integrate it into their lives so they will be a valuable member of society. Teachers are encouraged to really tune in to how each individual student learns and try to really challenge and inspire them to learn.

Salem was eventually awarded a master's degree from the University of Warwick. I sensed how important it was for him to gain the qualification. It made me question the purpose of learning for teachers like Salem, where there are very real implications for his livelihood and his family's life. He rarely spoke about the actual content of his work; and he viewed the experience as transmissive in nature but highly valuable in its outcome for his personal situation. His professional growth was entirely driven by external factors (Taylor, 2017), and achieving his qualifications enabled him to have agency. I asked him about the significance of the qualification to him personally and to his family, and then his professional life. He responded with:

Reaching a long life goal can be really tough. The path has been filled with pain, stress, endurance, almost giving up, nervous breakdowns, exhaustion, criticism, challenges, obstacles....yet, somehow for some reason - it feels like all that was meant to be. That it's all OK. Because, when I see a person in life I was able to make a difference -- all those concerns just vanish. A feeling of intense joy sweeps over me. The pain doesn't matter anymore. Spiritually I am a role model to my family members to get a master degree at the age of 50 regardless all hardship I faced.

It provided a variety of opportunities to internationalise my experience, and develop my professional skills and become more professional in my job as a successful teacher and by applying what I learnt into the real world. Teachers learn best by studying, doing, and reflecting; by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing what they see. This kind of learning cannot occur in college classrooms divorced from practice or in school classrooms divorced from knowledge about how to interpret practice. Professional development strategies that I gained through my learning through Warwick University led me to succeed and the good practice that has a positive impact on students 'attainment.

The relationships I have formed with my participants have involved nuanced communication and an “empathetic stance” because narrative research is “a way of approaching data that allows for discovery rather than confirmation of preconceived hypotheses” (Bruce, 2008:327). This involves verbal and non-verbal communication across social, cultural, and ethnic boundaries. Language, in all its forms, is a critical factor in this process, and the implications of how I have used language within my role have been wide-ranging. Squire et al (2013:9) argue that narrative is “a kind of language” in itself and perhaps this medium of representing Salem’s experience has enabled me to view our individual positions within the UAE education sector from multiple perspectives.

As a result of the new teacher-licensing regulations, Salem is mandated to complete compulsory teacher training and an exam to determine if he can gain a teacher license, and he must undertake a language course to remain in his position despite the fact that he has a Master’s degree from the University of Warwick. If he fails to fulfil these requirements, he will not be able to teach in the UAE, and it may affect his residency. I asked Salem how this would affect him personally and he commented:

The KHDA’s new teacher licensing regulations mean that every teacher must hold a KHDA-approved teaching qualification in order to be granted a UAE Teacher License. This requirement is most likely to affect negatively teachers who do not have a formal teaching qualification and those teachers whose qualifications come from a university or training institute which isn’t recognized by the KHDA.

Once the school opened, and in my efforts to re-gain some of my teacher educator identity, I issued a survey—using my online network—to the teachers in order to capture their feelings about the sector, including their views on professional learning. I anticipated that this would allow me to use the data in my role in order to demonstrate the importance of supporting teachers in the UAE. This enabled me to feel fulfilled, both personally and professionally. Surveys can offer important contextual information that could not be attained through reflexive or small-scale narrative

research; thereby raising awareness of the need for social action and policy, and serving as a background context against research that captures individuals' experience in depth and detail (Etherington, 2004:26). I knew I could access a large number of teachers, and potentially share the findings on a wider scale; hence bringing me closer to my research identity. This action confirms the importance of recognising research opportunities in complex situations (Eraut, 2004). I followed up on this research opportunity by conducting the teacher survey (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2014).

Once I had analysed the survey data (p313)<sup>15</sup>, I also wanted to use it within my role in Organisation 2 to share the impact of the teachers' voice, and their perception of the industry. I knew how, in Organisation 2, numbers created an "illusion of objectivity" and how a "sense of precision provide[s a] counterweight to storytelling" so I had to speak to my audience in the language they understood best (Damodaran, 2017:4). I emailed the Chairman and some other key stakeholders to highlight the findings of the data:

I'm writing to you on two fronts, both of which are inter-connected to the biggest asset we have at Dubai International—our teachers. I think we're all fully in agreement that staff retention is a high priority, and keeping the majority of the founding team would enable Dubai International School to generate a high level of buzz among parents. Consequently, our learning outcomes and teachers would become our marketing strategy because we have continuity in the curriculum, and ethos with staff remaining in the school.

I realise I'm sticking my oar in here and I fully expect a response to tell me to mind my own business but it would be ignorant of me not to share what I understand about teachers within Dubai and HR within schools.

For your information, I have recently conducted a national teacher survey across the UAE. Over 520 teachers and 25 principals have completed the survey and shared information about their salaries, working conditions, lifestyle, accommodation, career aspirations, CPD opportunities, promises made by their schools and much more. The full survey results will be published in the coming weeks on a national scale but I would like to share with you some headlines that are pertinent to how we plan to retain staff. Of the teachers surveyed,

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<sup>15</sup> Please see Appendix K for teacher survey data analysis

- 65% said their school did not deliver on salary expectations
- 72% said they would consider leaving their current job if a better opportunity came up
- 48% have two-year contracts, 7% have 3-year contracts
- 45% are currently seeking another job
- 58% said their school did not deliver on career development
- 33% said that their professional development was good; 32% said it was acceptable
- 55% think their school values their efforts;

I realise that I am just giving you the headline data but on the whole, it is grim for anyone concerned with staff retention.

If you look on the TES today, there are 189 jobs advertised for the UAE, more than in any other country in Asia. On a very rudimentary level, there are lots of jobs available for teachers who don't all necessarily feel valued.

This brings me to my next point. In the past two weeks, I have spoken briefly to Pradeep and Michaela with respect to various aspects of the UAE Labour Law and school HR. Whilst I haven't been involved in any of the discussions to date or in the policy development; I would like to simply highlight one very obvious observation.

If we are basing our HR strategy on UAE Labour Law, we are simply saying "We are the lowest common denominator of HR". The UAE Labour Law is in place to protect the vulnerable. When I think of the word 'protection' it conjures up images of people who need support. Whilst I agree, we do need to protect our organisation and our teachers and not break the law; I would prefer it much more if we were inspiring them by recognising that HR is about much more than the basics, and I am sure you'll agree.

Within the literature of narrative inquiry, there is a significant emphasis on moving away from numbers. However, on this occasion, numbers were integral to the story because they enabled me to capture my key audience in a language that speaks to their emotions. I conducted the surveys because I had access to the teachers, and could sense it would provoke wider dialogue within the profession, which it did<sup>16</sup>. A wider awareness of these dispositions—which are inter-cultural and driven by context—may contribute to improving the research base, both for teachers

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<sup>16</sup> See Appendix L for the CPD survey mentioned in the news.

and teacher educators here in the UAE. The significant database of teachers within the UAE I had already built, in addition to having organised events, provided the means for me to conduct this survey. I am not claiming that the data is highly reliable or always valid, but I know it has supported my professional understanding of the responsiveness of teachers to large surveys and how useful this data collection method can be in provoking discussion and debate about teachers in the UAE.

I wrote about the survey in my personal diary (see Figure 10) and writing about it helped me to see the value of sharing research for public discussion, as well as helping to make sense of my personal feelings (Huber et al, 2014). Conducting the survey enabled me to feel more comfortable in the teacher educator space; and the scale and response of the survey prompted a reaction within the local media that in turn provoked a wider discussion about the nature of teachers in the profession:

8<sup>th</sup> March, 2015  
Releasing the survey has given me a  
strong sense of disrupting the market.  
The response has been very strong and  
intensity at the same time  
by it, with reaching out to Debatte and  
PWC etc.  
I've realised in the past 2 weeks that I  
get bored very easily and that I need  
more.  
Uncertainty breeds boredom.  
The survey has enabled me to potentially  
influence policy change.  
This where I feel most comfortable.  
What have I learned from this?  
Uncomfortable truths are a little  
hard for some people to stomach.

**Figure 10 Diary extract 1**

Source: Author's own<sup>17</sup>

Writing about my situation also allowed me to reflect on and capture my context (Riessman, 2008:105). I was able to move “through successive stages of self-reflection” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:10), and reflect on my values and what I took for granted (Bolton, 2010:9). The complexity of my role, whilst juggling my personal beliefs, was challenging, and the role could not “be pinned

<sup>17</sup> Please see Appendix M for transcription of this diary extract.

down with certainty” (Taylor, 2017:102). My internal struggle of working within a challenging, and un-familiar environment, even though I chose to, was difficult navigate, and writing about it, whilst conducting the survey and sharing it, enabled me to regain some confidence that I could affect change. This tension may have enabled me to be reflexive and to conceptualise when my experiential knowledge increased, therefore allowing me to make professional decisions about my career and also about collecting data and conducting research (Bolton, 2010:33).

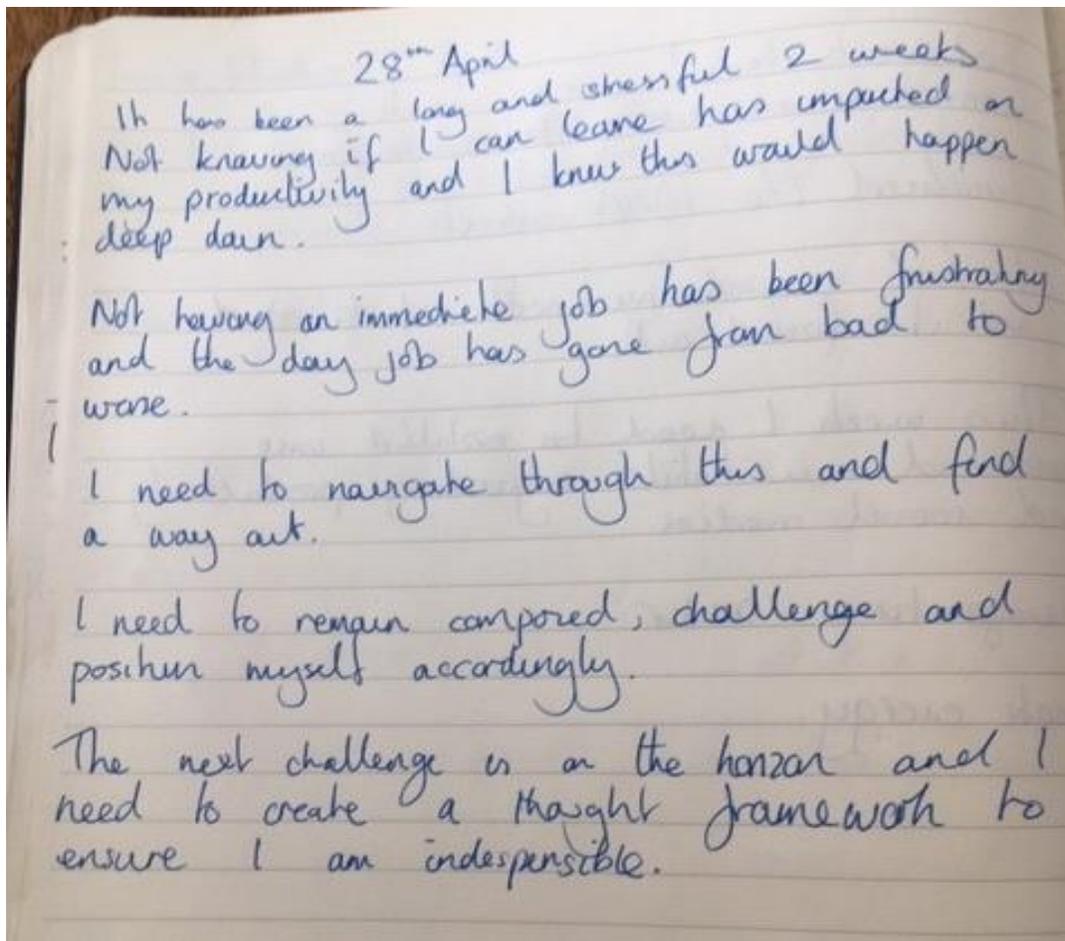
The demographic data about teachers’ contracts indicates that teachers and schools are potentially operating with short-term thinking, with 49 percent of teachers employed on 2-year contracts and 29 percent on 1-year contracts. From my personal standpoint, I was originally employed on a two-year contract in my own roles in Organisation 1, followed by a rolling one-year contract for 4 more years which has meant that I was always considering my next steps and the personal implications of moving jobs or potentially, countries.

The idea that 73 percent of the teachers in the survey were looking for jobs elsewhere; and the high number employed on two-year contracts; indicates an environment of uncertainty, in my opinion. Teacher educators planning to adopt professional-learning approaches need to consider these demographic challenges as well as the personal tensions I have described with Sarah, Michael, and Salem. Simkins (2005:22) warned of the danger to leaders who “ignore the central task of making sense of the complexities and ambiguities of a school’s organizational life.”

Because timing is crucial in the collection of data (Andrews, 2013; Eraut, 2004), I have been a responsive researcher and taken every opportunity to interact with the participants and gather data, whilst reflecting on the literature and the context. At the same time, I have learned to accept the messiness of the process, rather than follow a set research path. Additionally, I have learned to know when it’s time to change roles as well as understanding how to exploit research

opportunities in my professional roles. Although Eraut's (2004) mode of cognition addresses immediate decision making patterns, processes, and outcomes, the decision to move professional roles at a certain time, whilst conducting research, is not covered in the literature. The neo-liberal environment of Dubai, and the wider structures of the UAE may contribute to short-term thinking which therefore, heightens the sense of uncertainty, and creates psychological barriers that individuals have to grapple with, therefore, placing greater emphasis on time as a factor in career related decisions.

Having spent over two years working at Organisation 2 made me the longest serving staff member. The project had a variety of problems, and I started to think about leaving the organisation to distance myself from the issues. When I finally made the decision, I did not do it lightly. As a senior member of staff, I therefore felt a sense of responsibility to the school, its staff, and to the project as a whole. My daughter also attended the school, so I was emotionally invested in its success. As the academic year started to wind down and I felt that I had been part of its turnaround, I wrote about my feelings in my diary in order to make sense of how I could manage the transition out (Figure 11).



**Figure 11 Diary extract 2**

Source: Author's own<sup>18</sup>

I was aware of my workplace pressures and my need to balance my personal situation and my professional life. As with all my experiences, writing enabled me to make sense of the situation; and to “think, interact and perform” at the same time (Eraut, 2006:1). Furthermore, I am aware how this text I am presenting is “a constitutive force, creating a particular view of reality” (Richardson, 2002); and is therefore only a representation of my perception.

I recognized the importance of the evolving understanding and skills I was developing to deal with the commercial and educational aspects of my role. I recognised that I was in a privileged position

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<sup>18</sup> Please see Appendix N for the transcription of this diary extract.

that afforded me greater agency, and therefore, potential to demonstrate what Tack and Vanderlinde (2019:4) term “growth and empowerment with self-regulation, and contextual responsiveness.

As I transitioned to a new role as chief executive officer of Organisation 3, and took on additional roles within Organisations 4 and 5, I felt comfortable with the challenges ahead, knowing that—due to my experience within Organisations 1 and 2—I was more informed about the context, more comfortable in crossing professional boundaries in my work with school owners, and more confident in navigating inter-cultural and commercial-educational situations. This, along with my commercial knowledge, were crystalized at this point, as I could see the value of positioning myself within these professional spaces without the feeling of uncertainty related to my own employment, or feel a lack of control over my residential status.

#### **4.6 Findings E: A communicative instrument**

This section has been influenced by Kreijns et al, (2019) research on inquiry habits and Huber et al (2013) intercultural competence and cognitive flexibility. The data within this section was collected when I was working within Organisation 3 (my current role) and with the school principal, a white British national, the owners of the school—who were Indian nationals—and from another senior school leader (also an Indian national) from a school within Dubai that followed the National Curriculum for England. The teaching staff in the school where I worked were from India. The average annual fee for the school was around three thousand pounds (sterling), which is low in the education sector of Dubai, where some schools charge up to thirty thousand pounds. The school was rated ‘good’ by the KHDA, but there were some tensions between the British principal and the Indian owners. The problem felt very familiar to me, considering the similar challenges I had encountered in Organisation 2. Following a meeting with the owners, I attempted to interest

them in some research that was relevant to the situation, to deepen their understanding of the challenges they faced (Kreijns et al, 2019), writing the following note:

I did promise you that I would share some literature on international school leadership and culture with some references to India and Asia. From listening to everyone today, it's clear that there are many moving parts but the culture and behaviours are consistent throughout.

I am by no means an expert in this; I haven't met anyone who is, but I enjoy learning about it and I do try to become more aware. Our conversation at the end about your role as owners and knowing when to ask the right questions has prompted me to share some literature that I feel may be relevant to your role and the challenges of managing personalities.

You may find some of the literature interesting or at least find that some of the themes resonate with you.

I highly recommend the paper by Manusco on teacher retention as a starting point. The conclusion of the paper is below:

“International school leaders striving to retain quality teachers for the sake of continuity and ultimately improved student achievement need to be aware of how their interactions with teachers on a daily basis impact the success of their schools. A more transformational and distributed leadership style and a willingness to share decision-making responsibilities with teachers were linked to reduced teacher turnover. We encourage leaders in international schools to develop these kinds of leadership skills because evidence suggests they may subsequently witness reduced turnover, improved continuity and improved student learning.”

The paper about an American working in India might also be of interest. Here is an extract:

“Meera: If you were to offer guidelines to help expatriates in leadership roles coming to India, what would those guidelines be? Please elaborate .

Matt: Although the language, accent, and food may be different and, yes, there are cultural differences, I think the universals of leadership are helpful for an expat. Respecting that there are differences is important. Persuasion is one of those universals, being really proficient at building relationships, convincing and moving people in one direction—that is a human universal and that's much more important than getting people to do things just because they have to.”

This paper isn't one-sided but contains a lot of messages.

Here is another section of the paper that relates to what we spoke about regarding the habits and cultural nuances of Western teachers:

“Understanding culture’s influence requires us to focus on a subtle interplay of foreground and background. Normally we are unaware of our own culture—it is just the way we do things around here. Consequently, our leadership theories typically make little mention of the cultural context in which leaders work. A cultural context exists, but our ‘acculturated lens’ blinds us to its effects” (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998).

I have also attached three papers on professional learning: two are academic papers and one is a chapter from my work. The chapter is the easier one and probably makes a good starting point.

I did not have an established or long-term relationship with the owners but I could empathise with their challenge of trying to manage a British Principal within their own Indian context, within the wider education context of Dubai. By sharing this research, and by being transparent about what I thought the challenge was, I was attempting to create a new professional culture so they could see my visible intentions (Huber et al, 2014). It is important to note that they were paying us to support the school, and therefore, they could have chosen to terminate the contract if they disliked what I was suggesting. However, I felt completely comfortable in sending this email to them, and having open conversations about culture, communication, and the challenges of managing the spaces between. I wanted to share research with them so they could engage with the topic in some depth, rather than just reading the surface-level information (Kreijns et al, 2019). I wanted my email to be an object or instrument of conversation to discuss the challenges in more detail (Huber et al, 2014:226).

A similar cultural challenge also needed to be addressed as the school owner and the senior leadership team were concerned that the teachers struggled to communicate the learning outcomes effectively to the KHDA’s inspectors, who were mainly from the UK. They were concerned that there was a cultural gap and their teachers were behaving subserviently instead of challenging the inspectors. In the school’s 2017 inspection report, one of the school’s strengths was listed as “Students’ very good achievement in English, mathematics and science in the

secondary and post-16 phases”. They were criticised for not being able to strongly articulate how the school’s vision was implemented within the classroom, however. I recognised that the teachers’ deficit in their practice was related to communication and not specifically related to the curriculum or to their understanding of any specific subject. When I worked with the principal and vice principal, it was apparent they had not fully exploited the learning skills indicators within the DSIB inspection, and they were not explicitly assessing the learning skills. As I had experience of this area in Organisation 1, I was able to approach the problem with confidence and shift the focus to language and a more communicative approach rather than attempting to show the teachers something more curriculum-focused. I felt it would be patronising to do so, as the school was already rated ‘good’ and also rated much more highly by regulatory standards than by the local parents. My main aim was to empower the teachers to create an instrument for discussing the learning skills, and then to use this knowledge in conversations with the inspectors, instead of engaging in a direct, face-to-face conversation because I was aware that within certain sections of Indian culture, this combative, confrontational approach was not the norm, and many Western inspectors exploited this cultural difference. I facilitated two training sessions with the teachers and focused on the language to discuss learning through teacher and learner behaviours. My slides show the progression of my thinking to facilitate the staff to arrive at the point at which they could design the learning skills framework within the school<sup>19</sup>.

Between the sessions, I asked the teachers to create their own learning-skills rubrics with which to assess the learning skills, and thereby develop a language to talk about this topic in the school through this boundary object I then asked them to consider the implications of this exercise. The teachers shared their rubrics with me and I provided them with feedback on their work<sup>20</sup>. Within my feedback, you can see that I have tried to focus on language at different points, and on getting

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<sup>19</sup> See Appendix O for my CPD presentation.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix P for the feedback I provided.

the teachers to think about their rubrics as instruments. In an email to the two senior leaders, I advised them of my intentions with regards to the rubrics:

I have attached some summary feedback and key messages for the teachers that I am happy for you to share. I would like the teachers to be able to talk about effective teacher behaviours and effective learner behaviours and to use the rubric as an instrument. As we have discussed before, if they have an instrument to refer to, it will help them with talking confidently to the inspectors, who will use nuanced and very 'British' approaches.

After the sessions with the teachers, my work with them was concluded and I subsequently moved into the more strategic role of advising the owners of the school. The feedback from the principal and vice principal was positive and they noted that my efforts "got teachers to dwell on learning skills as well as reflect on their roles in promoting these skills." In the same year, the school moved up from 'good' to 'very good' in two of the four areas of Learning Skills within the inspection framework. Whilst I am not claiming that my support directly resulted in the shift, I may have contributed to how teachers thought about their communications with the inspectors. The experience enabled me to focus on particular concerns regarding non-native English speakers of English working in UK curriculum schools in Dubai and their ability to communicate about professional practice that had been highlighted by the DSIB. The learning skills rubric served as a boundary object enabling teachers to communicate more confidently and effectively.

#### **4.7 Concluding thoughts**

Writing the findings section has given me further insight into my emotions and feelings because it has meant that I have engaged in a reflexive process (Gemignani, 2011). Working on each section of the findings enabled me to review my critical reflections, together with "the people I serve[d]," (Richardson, 2002:414). Writing provides me with an outlet and a medium through which to express, provoke, and convey the conceptual challenges I have faced. This process also reminded me of the changes I had made since first noting my reflections, and showed me how each set of findings related to the others. Each time I have looked through this section, reflecting

on my experiences once again, I have found new ways of looking at them; and identified the experiences as crucial points in my learning. The fresh insights gained are one of the advantages of narrative inquiry because old experiences “enable new perspectives, which in turn, allow us to make sense of the lives of others in context” (Andrews, 2013:205).

I am privileged to have been able to capture the lives of my participants and to re-present their narratives alongside mine (Bruce, 2008:328). I find that my interpretations deepen as the contexts, data, and experiences of my research become more meaningful to me (Gemignani, 2011:703). In addition, my position as a researcher within this study has been “fluid, constantly shifting between insider and outsider roles” (Chan, 2017:33).

By reflecting and writing about these experiences, I have grappled internally with many tensions, such as my own presence in the country as an outsider, potentially perpetuating stereotypes of the white, Western expert ‘helping’ to improve the system. Whilst I grappled with this tension, I was able to develop my own sensory toolkit of skills and psychological dispositions that have helped me see the bigger picture of where I sit as a foreign worker in UAE society, and as an education professional working at the boundary of the business and education community that form part of the private education sector the UAE. My experiences, both in the private sector and in Organisation 2, gave me confidence to navigate multiple boundaries whilst maintaining a complex exterior identity. I had also complemented my knowledge of education, with some commercial know-how. Ultimately, my experiences have given me the confidence to support and work with teacher educators and teachers within any context here in the UAE. The realisation of my legal status as well as my cultural and professional limitations, together with my position as a foreign national, has driven my motivation for autonomy and agency. The psychological need to be making my own decisions has emerged as a result; and therefore, this feeling of personal empowerment situates my learning, as well as my way of working with others, firmly at the

forefront of my approach to professional learning. Several substantive findings have come from this research that have personal value to me, and that may also have wider value in the research base for teacher educators.

#### **4.8 Substantive Findings A: Researching in a complex context**

In the process of drafting this thesis, I have been intuitively transparent about my participants in their contexts and the relationships that have enabled me to generate the data I have provided, and subsequently, I have related this to Kim Etherington's criteria to enable this thesis to be judged as a narrative (Etherington, 2004). I have been transparent about my choices, and the motivating factors that have driven my research actions in order to bring the story alive and provide depth about the choices made within the specific contexts. As this thesis is my narrative of personal and professional learning, I have shared demographic information, my personal thoughts and emotions to create a sense of continuity and history so that my individual narrative can be judged and determined within the context of this and time (Etherington, 2004:82).

My reflections have been multi-layered (Smith and Sparkes, 2005) as I have analysed themes of professional learning, language and interactions, including my emotions, whilst by critiquing my own writing to enable me to make sense of the context (Findings B). The analysis of participants' interview data in different research settings (Findings C and D) and my reflections on my decisions to conduct research whilst in a challenging professional role (Findings D) has added layers to the reflective process. This reflexive process has allowed me to shift between the "*whats* and the constitutive *hows* of social life" in order to construct reality (Smith & Sparkes, 2005:2014). I have aimed to illustrate through the data how I reflected on and responded to the participants' needs. As my professional roles evolved, so did my awareness of self, in context, and this meant that I became more assertive in my positioning of myself within the centre of this research. I changed my behaviour as the research evolved. I became more reflexive, developing a professional skill

that I did not possess when I started this research. The analysis of the dialogical process has challenged my values and made me more aware of my limitations as I have “been an active constructor of reality” (Gemignani, 2011:702). I have used my emotions as a source of knowledge and positioned myself at the heart of my inquiry (Gemignani, 2011:705).

The challenges in the micro-contexts of the research, from the Arab setting in Findings B, to the British School Overseas in Findings C, to working with Salem in Findings D, and my emerging identity, have impacted on my basic needs within my professional roles, such as the need to feel in control, so that I can make a difference, and feel that I have agency. The reflexive process has “been used to interpret the research rapport and the possibilities of data analysis as a relational endeavour (Gemignani, 2011:703). Notably, these experiences have enhanced my ability to take account of “subtle changes to school context [and] also in individuals and groups of teachers as they both shape and are shaped by their experiences in context” (Craig, 2010:109). When conceptualising the complexities of my narrative in the UAE (Squire et al, 2013; Trahar, 2013), I considered both the wider UAE context, and the smaller contexts I have operated in. I agree that knowledge is constructed in personal, shared, and public contexts (Bolton, 2010:52); and when all inquiry is viewed as narrative, it changes the perception of the boundaries and research traditions. As a result of this, my professional attributes have evolved to a point in my professional life where I need to feel in control of my professional situation in order to feel empowered to conduct research.

The challenge of conducting research as a teacher educator in the field within the complex context of the UAE has forced me to adapt to my surroundings. As an outsider to UAE culture, a non-Arabic speaker, and a Western expatriate, I am aware that my interpretations are from the perspective of my values and my perception of the context. Ryan and Daly (2017) describe the

UAE as an environment where engagement and critical thinking are lacking, due to the fact that UAE society is extremely private, and the country has existed in its current state for only forty-five years. By working in this environment, I have been fortunate enough to work with teachers, both in the public sector in Arab settings, and with Arab and Western teachers in the private sector. By conducting research in all these contexts, I feel privileged to have observed the different practices in all of them, and in turn, this experience has enabled me to evaluate my own limitations within the sector, and in the society at-large.

#### **4.9 Substantive Findings B: Personal agency**

One of the most significant attributes that I believe has emerged from this study is my capacity to demonstrate agency. As a result of my awareness of my standing as a UAE resident who is not able to gain citizenship to the country, and due to my awareness of the nature of limited term contracts, government funded projects, and the fragility and uncertainty of the sector, I have personally sought agency throughout this study.

This may appear to be an on-going personal tension, as on one hand, I have sought to be in control of my personal situation, as a result of my self-awareness, but at the same time, I have sought challenges in un-familiar roles, and workplaces. With each experience, I have learnt about the contextual and structural challenges of conducting research and working as an education professional in the UAE. This has motivated me to learn more about each dimension of the sector so that I am able to make informed decisions about my professional career, and therefore, more educated decisions about my learning, and the learning of others.

My decision making may have appeared risky at times but I have felt confident enough to step into un-familiar environments. I personally attribute this to my childhood experiences of playing basketball outside of my immediate community, and then through my experiences travelling. On

a broader level, I do aspire to work on a larger scale to affect change, and I see the path to achieving this by understanding structures in society, in education, in communities and with people through personal interactions.

I do believe that as a result of working in a neo-liberal context, driven by market led approaches to education, that I have personally sought empowerment and ownership of my own situation. I still maintain several personal conflicts about this, as my friends and family back in the UK see collectivism as the route to empowerment, whilst I believe that my own personal story has been driven by my own individual desire to be in control. Teacher educators in the UAE may have to decide where they wish to position themselves in the sector, in terms of their employment, in order to develop their skills. Although I have not discussed my current roles in Organisation 3 and 4, it is important for me to mention that in these roles, I am fully responsible for the work that I choose to undertake, and therefore, the income that is generated as a result. This personal sense of control is at times, exhausting as there is no support mechanism in place if for some reason I am not successful. I often consider the implications of going back to work for someone else in the sector, similar to my role in Organisation 2, but I usually arrive back at the same conclusion, and that is, that I would rather be in control, and able to use my full knowledge of the context, rather than be a by-product of someone else's economic decision, in an environment that is fragile.

This development allows me to see that knowledge is intimately connected with power and can sometimes be used to oppress, especially when it is withheld (Etherington, 2004:27). I believe that teacher educators and teachers need to be aware of the context, and specifically their statuses as non-citizens in order to fully empower themselves in the UAE.

At times, I have strategically anticipated opportunities and I have acted in an entrepreneurial manner in conducting this research, as my position as a business leader demands that I am alert

to opportunities and responsive to the sector, which is primarily market-based. I have also managed personal uncertainties as I have transitioned professional roles from ones that were primarily focussed on education to others that combined the commercial and educational aspects, therefore requiring a broad set of competencies.

#### **4.10 Substantive Findings C: The importance of workplace learning in the UAE**

One of the emerging themes of this study has been the nature of workplace learning, and specifically regarding qualifications. As the UAE teacher-licensing initiative expands; and the regulations force teachers and schools to take a specific route of professional learning, the situation may prompt teachers to look elsewhere in the international sector. As the vast majority of people living in the UAE are foreign workers, the idea of moving to another country for work is already familiar, and although the regulations are well-intended, the structure of education does not appear as the framework of the research on the professional development of teachers. The regulations could therefore be a contributing factor in a teacher's decision to look elsewhere, and this can result in lower retention rates within the international school sector.

For teacher educators, the new teacher-licensing regulations stipulate that the training and cascade model with prescriptive content is the mandated form of professional development. This indicates that the regulator believes that control over the type of professional learning should remain at the government level, rather than on a school level. In my opinion, this approach is fraught with limitations given the diversity of beliefs within the country. As a consequence, the professional learning space may in essence; become less diverse due to the pressure to commit to the government's prescribed professional learning. The implications of this mean that schools may be forced down the path of training and delivery to the exclusion of other models, even though a different model may match their specific school challenges more closely. For teacher educators, adherence to this behaviourist model could mean their roles become more training focused, which

should, in theory, prompt further training in communicative methods if teachers and school leaders are required to cascade their knowledge.

For Sarah, this would mean pursuing a formal teaching qualification in order to remain in her position, and may have a personal impact on her life in the UAE if she wishes to remain. For Salem, despite having a Master's in education, he is required to undertake the mandated training in order to keep his job. I do not doubt that he will achieve the intended outcome of the initiative, but he may need to build professional knowledge in the space. The same could be said for Stephen, who still teaches in the same school. A big question I am grappling with is the case of teachers like Sarah who have demonstrable expertise and yet are unqualified. Should developing countries like the UAE look at different approaches for teachers that harness expertise through professional workplace accreditation rather than forcing all teachers to attain academic teaching qualifications? Doing so might allow for the best outcomes due to the context of the UAE, as a country in the midst of its story and thereby, to build capacity within the system using the resources already available.

Several of the trajectories within Eraut's (2004) typology are translatable to my role as a teacher educator. These trajectories are: 1) the conditions under which the performer is able to work competently according to the degree of supervision, time pressure, crowdedness, conflicting priorities, and the availability of resources, and 2) the situations the performer has handled capably, covering such factors as client types and demands, tasks to be tackled, interpersonal events, and emergencies (Eraut, 2008:2). Within this research, I have highlighted the uncertainty of managing this research whilst moving professional roles, and being aware of research access, and opportunities. This has coincided with my need to feel competent in areas of the education sector that have been unfamiliar, working with different stakeholders, such as school owners, who

have different demands and ways of working. It has meant that I have changed my professional practice to adapt to this.

My emerging awareness of the interaction between time and the mode of cognition has provided me with a lens for viewing situational understanding and seeing how routines, practices, and decision making can evolve over time. The links between decision making and overt actions within different cultural environments are complex, and there may be tangible risks connected to decisions. I have, for example, taken decisions based on my data collection in my professional roles that have been defined by the contract length; thereby adding a layer of structural time to my professional capacity. Eraut's (2004) research on cognition and time, and the relationship between the awareness of a situation and the ability to act on it, bears similarities to the sensory dispositions involved in teacher educator research, as outlined by Tack and Vanderlinde (2019). Although these processes can be viewed in isolation, the processes can be combined as decisions dependent on the conditions and constraints of individuals within certain contexts (Eraut, 2004). The meta-cognitive thoughts within complex situations result in constant monitoring and self-management.

Within this study, I have been transparent about some of the business decisions I have taken, and the uncertainties of managing aspects of projects. At times, I have demonstrated 'strategic anticipation' which is the "capability to determine and the ability to implement a strategy that is highly responsive to an unpredictable and potentially volatile environment" (The Economist, 2012: 16). Therefore, a different set of researcherly dispositions may therefore be more relevant to the UAE context because of the cultural, social, and economic differences within workplace settings.

Conducting this research has led me to reflect on my role and how my personal narrative has evolved. My research aims have emerged by reflecting on the professional attributes and

research skills I have gained, whilst considering Kelchtermans (2018) model which is broad, and dynamic in nature, and Tack and Vanderlinde's (2014, 2019) and Kreijn's (2019) researcherly dispositions which are accessible and they have enabled me to reflect on the psychological challenges of conducting research in the UAE. Other teacher educators may benefit from reflecting on these frameworks in a reflexive manner. This may help others to navigate un-familiar contexts whilst attempting to support teachers and teacher educators' professional learning. My personal learning agility framework addresses a gap in the research on teacher educators because it includes dispositions that I believe are relevant to the international sector and the wider context of the UAE, a country that is not widely known for its research culture (Ryan and Daly, 2017).

## **Chapter 5. My Personal Learning Agility Framework**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The process of reflecting between my data, the UAE education context, and the literature has enabled me to conceptualise a set of dispositions and a personal learning agility framework. This has emerged by reflecting on the context (Richardson, 2002, Riessman, 2005, Etherington, 2004), the inquiry habits of teacher educators, and the importance of research (Tack and Vanderlinde, 2014, 2019, Kreijns, 2019), workplace learning and the nature of time (Eraut, 2004), and inter-cultural learning (Huber et al, 2014).

### **5.2 My Personal Learning Agility Framework**

In order to create this framework, I drew on Kelchtermans (2018) 'Dynamics of Professional Learning' model, together with the Flemish Teacher Educator Development Profile (2012) and Killick's (2013) notion of self in the world as a means to develop cultural competence. Distinct areas of my professional practice have emerged and I have captured these within domains to indicate that progression of knowledge is possible across these development areas, which comprise:

#### **Inter-cultural competency**

I define context and relationships as the ability to navigate the different cultural, economic, and education settings of the UAE and interact with people within these environments. Within my professional roles, I have to demonstrate an ability to work not only with Emirati teachers, but also with Arab and South Asian expatriate teachers, and to recognise the educational and cultural nuances of each, within both the public and private sectors; and therefore to adapt my behaviour for each context. I have categorised the domains in Table 7 from beginner to master to indicate the various levels of the potential progression of knowledge (see Table 7).

**Table 7 Inter-cultural competency domains**

Beginner	Intermediate	Mastery
<p>Awareness of the different education settings within the UAE, public, and private sectors.</p> <p>Awareness of the different communities that exist within the UAE.</p>	<p>Awareness of the different education settings within the public and private sectors in the UAE, and ability to access key stakeholders in both settings.</p> <p>Awareness of the different communities in the UAE and ability to build relationships with people within these communities.</p>	<p>Ability to use knowledge of the diverse education contexts, and leverage key stakeholders in order to further personal and collective interests.</p> <p>Ability to access different communities and leverage relationships to further personal and collective objectives.</p>
<p>Awareness that different regulations exist for the public and private sectors.</p>	<p>Awareness of how different regulations exist and ability to respond to key stakeholders with support in light of the regulations.</p>	<p>Ability to provide tailored responses to key stakeholders within the context.</p>
<p>Awareness of some of the needs of Arab expatriate teachers working within the public and private sectors, and of the cultural differences that exist.</p>	<p>Awareness of some of the needs of Arab expatriate teachers working in the public and private sectors and ability to adapt one's thinking to support their needs in either sector.</p>	<p>Awareness of the needs, challenges and opportunities of working with Arab expatriate teachers within the public and private sector and ability to demonstrate cognitive flexibility to further their professional learning.</p>
<p>Awareness of some of the needs of Western expatriate teachers working within the public and private sectors.</p>	<p>Awareness of some of the needs of Western expatriate teachers working within the public and private sectors, and ability to adapt one's thinking to support their needs in either sector.</p>	<p>Awareness of the needs, challenges and opportunities present when working with Western expatriate teachers within the public and private sectors, and ability to demonstrate cognitive flexibility to further their professional learning.</p>
<p>Awareness of the economic structures and nature of employment contracts in the UAE.</p>	<p>Awareness of the economic structures and nature of employment contracts in the UAE, and the ability to write about the context.</p>	<p>Awareness of the economic structures and nature of employment contracts in the UAE, and the ability to make personal decisions that enable insightful decision making within the structures.</p>

### Access to people and information

I define 'access' as the ability to: 1) gain access to different groups of teachers within different settings, 2) to build relationships with them, 3) engage teachers in key issues within the profession in order to gain their insights, and 4) create opportunities for dialogue and engagement between teachers (Table 8).

**Table 8 Progression of the ability to access people and information**

<b>Beginner</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Mastery</b>
Awareness of different groups of teachers and ability to access some of them.	Ability to access different groups of teachers and conduct research with them.	Ability to conduct research with different groups of teachers and disseminate the research with different audiences to influence decision making.
Ability to engage in sharing others' research with teachers.	Ability to engage in sharing others' research, and ability to share organic research conducted with teachers.	Ability to create opportunities for others to conduct research within the sector.
Ability to work with different teacher educators and teachers to develop conversations around professional dialogue.	Ability to develop and create professional dialogue within the context.	Ability to create new professional knowledge within the context of the UAE and engage others in discussions.

### Uncertainty and Time

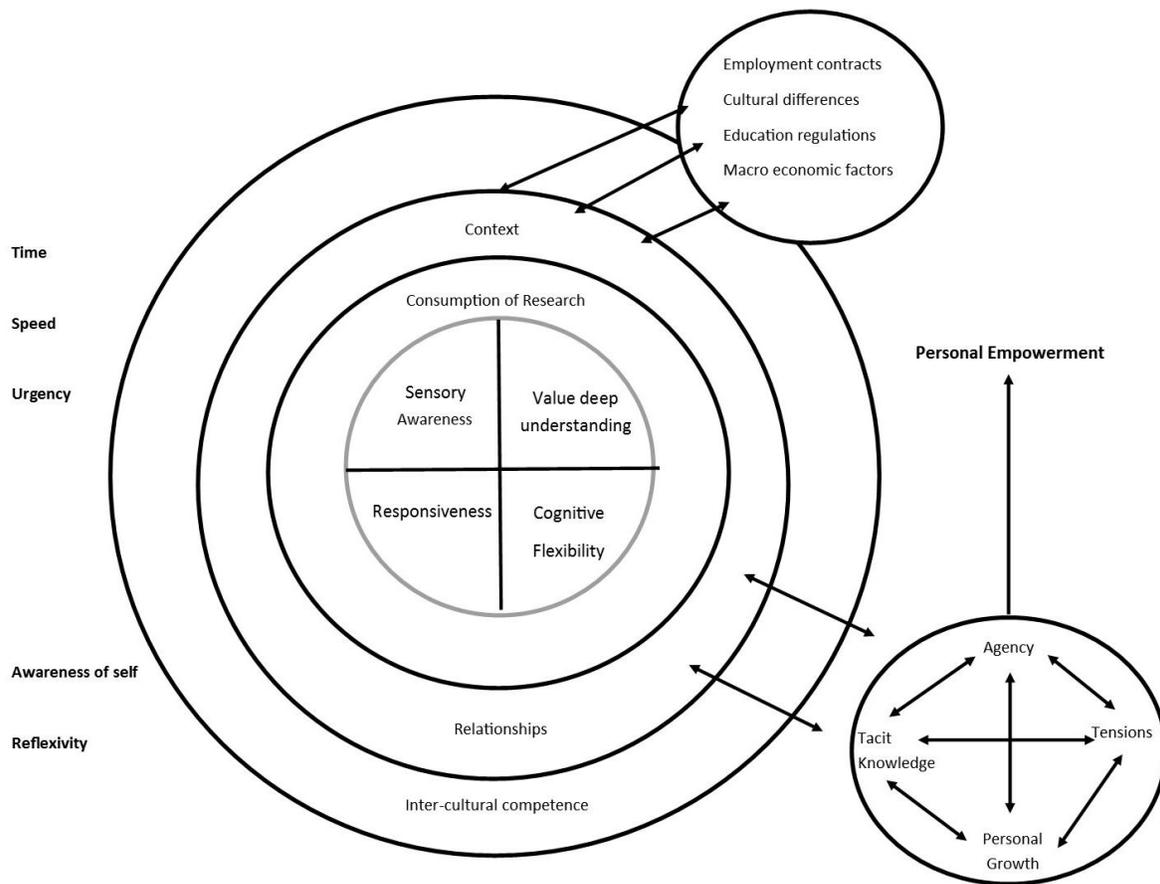
This ability involves recognising and strategically anticipating changes in the profession. I also define it as the ability to 1) adapt to different professional roles and maintain positive relationships with key stakeholders, 2) respond to opportunities in order to collect data that may have limited availability, and 3) adapt to changes within the sector and make an impact (Table 7).

**Table 9 Progression of the ability to develop awareness**

<b>Beginner</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Mastery</b>
Awareness of my organisation's funding model, how it generates income, and how my employment contracts fits in with this model.	Awareness of my organisation's funding model, how it generates income and how my employment contracts fits in with this model, together with the ability to plan ahead to benefit from my awareness.	Awareness of my organisation's funding model, how it generates income and how my employment contract fits in with this model, as well as the ability to plan ahead to benefit from my awareness, and to act upon this in time.
Awareness of how to change my employment situation within the UAE laws.	Ability to change my employment situation within the UAE laws without negatively affecting my personal situation.	Ability to change my employment situation within the UAE laws and navigate different professional settings with confidence.

Ability to recognise opportunities to collect data that may enable me to conduct research within the profession.	Ability to collect data within the various situations that may arise, and produce research reports that influence decision making with key stakeholders.	Ability to create research opportunities based upon situations that may arise and that require research to be conducted in order to influence decision making with key stakeholders.
Ability to recognize when changes within the profession may affect my organisation, my personal situation, or my employment.	Ability to recognise when changes occur within the profession that may affect my organisation, my personal situation, or my employment; and the ability to respond by strengthening my own personal situation through changing my employment position.	Ability to predict changes within the profession that may affect my organisation, my personal situation, and my employment; and the ability to respond by strengthening my own personal situation through changing my employment position and the personal situation of others.

The domains represent a hierarchy of knowledge of specific domains that have enabled my learning to develop in-depth. I chose the term ‘agility framework’ to emphasise the importance of a responsiveness to the context and of the ability to respond with urgency between the various components (The Economist, 2012). I present the agility framework in Figure 12. The concentric circles are inter-connected as they are inter-dependent aspects of developing personal empowerment. The applicability of each domain relies on my ability to be aware of the context and to build work with urgency.



**Figure 12 My Personal Learning Agility Framework**

*Source:* Author's own.

### 5.3 Summary of the framework

My learning has been iterative throughout this research, so this framework is intended to be understood as iterative, with movement between the concentric circles at a cognitive and behavioural level when greater awareness is gained. At the heart of the main circle are the researcherly dispositions that have been essential to my research and professional roles as well as to my personal learning. I have used descriptive headings for these dispositions that I believe are helpful for understanding them. The first one, 'value deep understanding', is modelled on Kreijns (2019); whilst 'cognitive flexibility' is an inter-cultural competency from Huber et al (2014). I have also added in 'responsiveness' and 'sensory awareness' which I believe are additional

dispositions that have emerged in this study. Whilst conducting this research I have been responsive to the context, the participants, and the data, whilst gaining a greater awareness of my place within UAE society. This has made me more aware, and therefore, I have sought to leverage my awareness by making strategic decisions about my career. The researcherly dispositions are explained below:

### **Researcherly Dispositions**

#### **Value Deep Understanding**

1. I am critical on whether I did the right thing.
2. I wonder if I can improve my work.
3. I watch how colleagues do things in order to learn from them.
4. I ask others for their opinion of my work.
5. I try to collect information so I can evaluate my work.
6. I can empathise with different teachers from different cultures.

#### **Cognitive Flexibility**

1. I can recognise myself in different contexts and how I may be perceived by others.
2. I try to view things from other perspectives.
3. I can adapt my thinking for different cultures and environments.
4. I can recognise power structures that have enabled others to view me, and can adapt my behaviours to cater for this and produce better outcomes.

#### **Responsiveness**

1. I can respond in a timely manner to changes in my context and situation.
2. I can respond to teacher educators, and teachers' needs in light of their contextual challenges.
3. I can respond to changes in my own personal situation and maintain positive relationships with all stakeholders.

#### **Awareness**

1. I am alert to research opportunities within all aspects of my context.
2. I can sense when research may be used to influence decision making or my own personal situation.
3. I can see when I need to work faster and leverage relationships to produce or consume research.

Context and relationships are critical factors outside these psychological dispositions, and the wider context and smaller micro-contexts have been critical to my learning. At the same time, I have been required to consistently examine and respond to the Ministry of Education, KHDA and ADEK regulations within the UAE education system. The public sector, for example, has a large number of Arab expatriate teachers who have chosen to work with Emirati children. This

professional setting is culturally different to the international sector within the UAE. The teachers that work within the public sector are in the midst of their own personal and professional stories and may not be aware of developments outside their immediate contexts. The skill set required to work with these teachers is primarily a communicative one, and at the same time, working within this context has challenged my worldview.

The private sector, which varies from emirate to emirate, is also diverse, with notable differences between the numerous education spaces. Western expatriate teachers working in the private sector are often operating within their own school communities. An awareness of the relevant regulations and political issues within the private sector has been an important feature of this research. Therefore, the decisions I have made in relation to my research were based on a wider view of the private sector's current status.

When working with individual teachers, it has been imperative to know their demographic details—contract length, nationality, and years of experience—to allow for more accurate decisions with regards to their professional learning. As the majority of teachers operate on two-year contracts, professional learning not only has to be impactful, but must also provide a return on investment. Without knowing the wider demographics of the country, together with the smaller demographics of the individual teacher, we are at-risk of making poor decisions that may be costly in the long run. As with narrative research, the knowledge base about the context is always evolving, so it is difficult to define the appropriate knowledge needed. It is nonetheless imperative, however, that teacher educators know about the public and private sectors, and how they operate, as well as the demographic details of the schools and teachers they choose to work with.

I believe that my learning within this research has been aided by my knowledge base of the context, and relationships with key stakeholders across the contexts, which has enabled my

personal and professional growth. As this knowledge—often of a tacit nature—has developed, tensions have arisen as a result of being exposed to different cultures, contexts, and situations. Although unsettling, the literature on boundary crossing (Akkerman and Baker, 2011, Daskolia, 2014) has enabled me to see these tensions as challenges to my worldviews, and therefore, further my own personal knowledge.

Building networks is a valuable method of forming relationships, either in person or online. Professional networks have proved invaluable to me, as teachers have often relayed regulatory changes ahead of time, and as such, helped me to respond appropriately. These networks have also provided me with valuable insights into the lives of teachers in different locations across the country. In turn, these insights have enabled me to empathise with teachers and learn about the specific challenges arising within the profession in the UAE.

### **Time and Urgency**

I acknowledge the importance of time and urgency as psychological factors that influence my professional roles (Eraut, 2004). As I have moved roles, as a result of my awareness of my position and self within UAE society, this has meant that I have taken decisions about my data collection methods from the perspective that my access to people and places may have an expiration point (Sparkes and Stewart, 2016). This has meant that narrative research is better suited to research in this context, rather than a traditional approach which favours a structured research design. The fluidity of movement—both with and between the agility domains—is reliant upon these factors. As I have gained knowledge about teachers, schools, regulations, and sector-specific information, I have needed to build momentum in, and awareness of, all the components in order to respond to challenges as well as gain further work.

Researcherly dispositions lie at the heart of the framework. This is underpinned by an understanding of the importance of time, and relationships, and an appreciation of the contribution of tacit knowledge and agency to my personal growth. Working through tensions may and discomfort as I navigated boundaries discomfort has led me to feel personally empowered, and with greater knowledge about myself.

This agility framework may not be a finished framework or a scalable model yet. It does, however, represent a potential area of future research. In constructing this framework, I have synthesised the components and created themes that provoke movement and agility, which I define as the ability to respond to change and make an impact.

## 6. Conclusion

As I conclude this thesis, I note that research on teacher educators' professional learning within market-driven, Arabic settings is still an emerging field. The focus of this research has been the nuances of my professional curiosity, and the process of researching my experience and practice in a range of professional contexts. I have chosen to contribute to the research field with a narrative inquiry into my own professional learning in the context of my role as a teacher educator in the UAE.

The process of conducting this research, underpinned by earlier life experiences and reflections has shaped my emerging identity. Whilst I started out in a role that adopted a mainly behaviourist model for supporting teachers, the inter-cultural experiences I gained challenged my self-perception and role within the education sector in the UAE. Given the interconnectedness of the world, and the diversity of the contexts I have operated in, I have come to recognise the importance of intercultural competence as an essential skill. A sense of competence underpins the ability to feel comfortable and confident in working with colleagues from other cultures and contributes to my personal and professional identity and sense of self in the world (Killick, 2012).

When I began this research, whilst working in Organisation 1, I did not imagine that I would be progress to roles with the level of responsibility I now have. My career has developed as a result of seeking personal agency and empowerment, by committing to learning about and navigating all aspects of the UAE education sector. This has involved crossing several professional boundaries, and operating in highly commercial, somewhat volatile spaces. This led me to the literature on boundary crossing (Akkerman and Baker, 2011) which has helped me to interpret my data and recognize that discomfort, reasoned risk-taking and challenge are key aspects of professional growth.

As the UAE's education sector is unique in its design, structure and stakeholders, the necessity to cross boundaries has been apparent to me, in order to be in control of my own personal situation. The implication has meant that at times, the cognitive load I have sought has been significant, as professional spaces that were un-familiar has meant that I have taken on the additional responsibility of learning within that space, whilst maintaining an identity from another.

Operating between these spaces has meant that I could have been be rejected from all of them, and not fully accepted for not adhering to the tacit rules of professional practice. However, as I have committed to operating in all of these spaces, I personally feel empowered because I see how the sector is structured, and how decisions are made. Further search on my personal boundary crossing might be an obvious future development of this research, which I could not foresee at the start of this research.

Research on teacher educators in the UAE is sparse, despite the size and growth of the sector. Without the capacity to access teachers, and therefore, form relationships, I would not have been able to explore the themes within this study. Without the experience of managing uncertainty in my professional roles, I may not have developed my awareness of the context, or of the limits of my knowledge and influence within it. Taken together, these professional attributes, I believe, form the connecting bridge between my roles as teacher educator and academic researcher in the UAE.

As a matter of my own personal responsibility, I have striven to acquire these attributes, which include the ability to conduct research, a sense of opportunism and urgency, and a set of more highly tuned sensory skills. Together, these have enabled me to conduct effective research and produce meaningful findings, whilst working in multiple professional roles in the UAE.

## **6.1 Strengths and Limitations of this Study**

One of the strengths that I believe has arisen from this study has been my awareness of narrative as a research methodology, and how the open-endedness, and fluidity of narrative has enabled me to use a variety of data to address my research questions. Due to my perception of the context, and the need to act with urgency, I would argue that access to data and participants superseded research design; narrative inquiry enabled me to capture the challenges of the context, perhaps leading to richer findings than other methodologies could have done. Within other research contexts, narrative may be more appropriate for teacher educators who need to work at speed with limited access within their professional roles in order to build relationships, rather than dwell on a specific research design, and potentially lose out.

The first limitation I wish to acknowledge is the time I have taken to complete this research. In the six years that I have spent conducting the research, change has been a dominant theme in my life, both personal and professional. And so the nature of continuously reflecting on data, whilst learning new ways of thinking and adjusting to new ways of living, means the experiences I have presented have been tempered with the changes in my values and world views.

My ability to interpret my experiences and my personal writing have evolved during the reflexive process of writing this thesis. In re-visiting my writing, I have added new understandings to the story; and this may have implicitly changed how I articulated it. At times, my writing was emotive, and by writing my experiences up in various forms, I have tried to capture the essence of the emotions and interactions.

With the questionnaire I used in Findings B, I assessed the teachers at the start of the qualification. I asked them to complete the questionnaire in a room together but without any consultation between them. The teachers may have perceived this as threatening, and so the

questionnaire may not have yielded the kind of in-depth results it could have done otherwise. On reflection, the questions should have been shared with everyone publicly and explained in depth, so that the teachers were fully aware of the intentions. At the time, I was aware of the opportunity presented through having gained access to the teachers, and therefore wanted to benefit from this. But in retrospect, I should have taken a more interactive approach to gaining their trust, and discovering their beliefs about professional learning and their awareness of the context. If I were to use this kind of questionnaire again, I would focus on the teachers' values, their relationships, and their understanding of the place, context, and nature of their work so I could draw out their perceptions of professional learning more effectively through a much more personal approach.

My use of the prompt for teachers to create a visual representation of their action research project was a useful way to engage in a dialogue about their work. The task itself brought the teachers out of their comfort zones, but the nature of me being an outsider and, as the course leader, in a higher position in the hierarchy, may have influenced their visual representation and caused them to modify their views in the interview. I could have adopted an open-ended interview without the prompt, and simply discussed their learning without the representation, and this may have produced a different set of findings. The visual representation task was entirely new to the teachers, and it may have yielded a different result if they had known what was coming next. In that case they would have felt more comfortable with the objective of the task and may have been more responsive in the interview. I did not anticipate their ability to manage this uncertainty. Regardless of these minor defects, I would use this approach again, as it promoted a conversation that forced me to reflect on this method, and enabled me to engage with the teachers on a professional level more effectively than before.

The narrative data I generated may have several limitations. The participants may have been performing for me, for example; and so my representations of their behaviours may not be

accurate. I had professional relationships with all of them, and therefore, my representations were based on our interactions and on my evolving understanding of them. This means that my interpretations were constantly changing, as I was also changing with them. Because Salem's personal situation was often in turmoil and there were stressful issues in his life, the nature of our interactions was sometimes transactional, in the sense that he knew that I was conducting this study; and he adjusted his behaviour for the interactions. Likewise, Sarah needed professional qualifications, and I was a gatekeeper for the qualifications she was studying, so she may have changed her behaviour during the interactions; and therefore represented a version of herself that was influenced by these circumstances. Nevertheless, I attempted to represent a version of the interactions as truthfully as possible.

By revisiting the data and rewriting, I have contended with the notion that nothing is ever static, and therefore, nothing is objective. I recognise that experiences can be interpreted and different understandings developed, and that these understandings may not be misinterpretations or misunderstandings, but new understandings; and this has meant that the data is never static.

As narrative data relies on the narrator interpreting the interactions, there is always a risk of misrepresentation, so it is important for me to acknowledge this possibility. The fact that narratives are fluid and always ongoing is a challenge in presenting this study; and the narratives of Sarah, Michael, and Salem suggest that we are always in the midst of the story, and that our stories are never static. Consequently, the data presented may be different to data from research conducted today with the same people. As writing has been my way of reflecting, and of re-purposing my professional learning, it is important to question whether I have really understood the context in the way that others have, and if my description of the context is accurate. A wider limitation of this study may be in the form of the participants I selected to engage with. The choices made regarding

my participants have been based on their accessibility, on my judgments about their stories, and on the value of telling their stories as part of my story.

Furthermore, the participants have also gained numerous benefits by telling their stories and by working alongside me at different times. I am not making any great claim to have singularly effected change for them, or to have contributed significantly to their professional growth, but feel that my interactions with them may have prompted new thinking or enabled them to pursue a different direction. I empathised with them, listened to their experiences, and offered my support; and have attempted to give them a voice and share their stories. I have worked with them diligently and in a professional manner, while at the same time raising issues that may have needed to be raised for the sake of their professional careers and for those of others. As the research progressed, I changed along with it, and at times, I needed to take advantage of the access and opportunities that appeared; hence I have used some survey data and a range of collection methods all within the framework of narrative inquiry. These decisions were often connected to my forward thinking about where I would be next, and what position I would be in.

Some unexpected and unintended benefits have arisen from this study that may highlight the benefits of post-graduate research to education professionals. At times, I have felt that my professional roles have been chaotic and the uncertainty involved has caused a lot of stress. The space in which I have been able to write and reflect on my experiences has provided me with something I have felt in control of, and is a space that has remained consistent over the past six years. By developing the discipline of writing, I have been able to fall back into this position in order to make sense of my experience.

An additional limitation that I must note is my in-ability to communicate in Arabic. The contexts I worked in for Organisation 1 meant that I was often limited in my day-to-day communication, and

I would have been able to gain much greater access to the schools, teachers and the community if I could understand and communicate in Arabic.

## **6.2 Building on this Research**

There are multiple ways in which this research could be developed in the future, and which I believe would contribute further to the research base on teacher educators. Firstly, my research aims and methodology may be useful for teacher educators in other contexts to deepen their personal, professional knowledge and knowledge about their context. My research aims were personal to me, and my professional roles, and they have driven my data collection, which in turn, has enabled me to reflect on the dispositions and inquiry habits relevant to my professional learning.

In addition to this, a further study exploring how other teacher educators understand their practice within the UAE could be a natural starting point. In future studies, there is potential to explore different teacher educators' beliefs about their roles as well as their awareness of research to inform research-led practice.

There may also be Arab teacher educators operating within the field who may be able to tell stories that Western teacher educators cannot. As a high number of Arab expatriate teachers work within the public sector with Emirati students—as teacher educators and teachers—the stories of these teachers may provide culturally nuanced, insider perspectives and insights. My experiences with Ahmed were unsettling because I was the outsider working within Arab culture. The incident I described could have been a one-off, but it may also be a common phenomenon in specific communities within the public sector. Likewise, a number of Western teachers are employed in more senior positions in the public sector, where they are seen as more influential

than their Arab colleagues. Their stories and experiences may reveal further insights and perspectives reflecting the benefits and limitations of their positions.

As a Western teacher educator, my access to data could have been enhanced by working collaboratively with an Arab native speaker. This would have enabled me to explore different themes within different belief systems, and look at how these beliefs manifest in decisions about learning and life in the UAE, to add richness and depth to the data. As the private education sector in the UAE is so diverse, and the teacher-licensing initiative in a highly regulated and structured sector takes effect, the professional learning needs of all teachers would be worth examining in greater detail. Their voices about their own careers need to be heard, and their experiences of working in a sector that is highly regulated and structured in a way that encourages short-term thinking are invaluable.

One of my primary motivating factors was the desire to address the lack of research on teacher educators' professional knowledge. As far as I am aware, no other narrative studies in the field of education within the UAE exist. In a region that has become preoccupied with quantitative, measurable targets in education, narrative studies can encapsulate the rich tradition of oral storytelling in a valuable methodological approach to educational research. Building a network of narrative researchers within the region would enable a novel data pool to be developed that is quite different from the quantitative dominant approaches used elsewhere. The expansiveness and entrepreneurial nature of narrative inquiry has potential to capture the complexities of other contexts.

One of my frustrations within this study was the lack of cohesion and professional space within the sector to support my research intentions. Developing his professional space may open up new possibilities for research and training. As a future development of this study, I envisage

conducting workshops with teachers on writing and on narrative as a research and professional development tool, in order to engage them in narrative approaches. This could lead to a meta-study of narratives of teachers and teacher educators across a spectrum of cultures, communities, and sectors. It could provide more nuanced understandings of teachers and teacher educators' experiences here in the UAE to inform regulatory decisions, and help shape future decisions about teachers and their status in the Emirates. As the UAE is a relatively young country, and anyone wishing to conduct research here must first build trust with stakeholders and demonstrate a commitment to improving the existing practices by first working within the local cultural norms.

One of the most significant personal findings of this study has been my capacity to be reflexive. Through the experiences I have gained, I have developed an awareness of my limits as a professional, and of my position within the sector. I have gained the confidence to respond to certain challenging situations, as well as the capacity to see where and when problems will arise. When I initially began to develop the agility framework, I thought about developing a cultural sensory framework or a cultural competency model because I was not aware of any model that was developed in an economic and cultural environment similar to the UAE that includes Arabic and Islamic environments, with neo-liberal economic policies. This started from thinking about my professional space, and how I respond to people, events, and experiences. I often encourage colleagues within my team to be agile, and emphasise the need for us—as a collective—to be responsive and interactive in our relationships with teachers, school leaders, and school owners.

I would argue that the concept of reflexivity is congruent to the literature on researcherly dispositions, that is; to be aware and to act upon this awareness. The process of conducting this research has enabled me to examine my beliefs, values and assumptions and how I relate to people from other cultures (Bolton, 2010:13).

Finally, this study has been of one of the most challenging pursuits I have undertaken so far. Conducting research, whilst working and managing life's many other challenges, has not only been stressful, but has also meant that I have compromised in other areas of my life. Whilst it has provided me with a professional space to reflect, it has been an ongoing tension at the same time.

Despite these difficulties, the process of researching, reflecting, and adopting a new and unfamiliar research approach has enabled me to acquire new knowledge and, at the same time, has allowed me to consider my wider place and position within the sector. The experience has been truly enriching for me, and I feel privileged to have been able to conduct this study. Despite the challenges of conducting research within this context, as well as the career changes I have made, I am committed to furthering my research as I believe I have a responsibility to do so, in view of my role within the sector here. I am also committed to improving the education sector as a whole in the UAE. I anticipate that this study, once shared, will provoke productive dialogue amongst my peers and stakeholders and look forward to being part of this ongoing process.

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## 8. Appendix

### Appendix A. The UAE National Agenda Education Targets



**PISA:** to be among the 20 highest performing countries in PISA



**TIMSS:** to be among the 15 highest performing countries in TIMSS



**Completion of high school education:** to ensure that 98% of Emirati students complete their high school education



**Attending pre-primary:** to ensure that 95% of children in the UAE attend pre-primary education



**High skills in Arabic language:** to ensure that 90% of Grade 9 students develop high skills in Arabic language in the UAE NAP assessment



**Highly-quality teachers:** to ensure that 100% of schools have high-quality teachers



**Highly-effective school leadership:** to ensure that 100% of public schools have highly-effective school leadership



**University foundation programme:** to ensure that no students need to join the university foundation programme.

## Appendix B. Action Research Template

### Starting Points for Enquiry

I would like to improve...

I want to change...because

I am perplexed by.....

Some people are unhappy about.....

I'm really curious about.....

I want to learn more about.....

An idea I would like to try out in my class is...

I think... would really make a difference to.....

Something I would like to do is to change.....

I'm particularly interested in.....

### Action Plan

- What are you going to do?
- How are you going to do it?
- Have you tried to limit the variables?
- What do you think the result will be?
- How will you know if you have been successful?
- How can you validate your findings?

### Research Log

- What happened?
- What was successful?
- What would you change?
- What was un-expected?
- Did you change anything as it progressed?
- How did the students react?
- What was the key learning opportunity?

# Making Sense of Your Findings

## Key information to Consider

### Context

- Context of students
- Gender, nationality, age, SEN, EAL
- Number of students in class
- Characteristics of class
- Targets and achievement

### Rationale/Strategy

- Reasons for project or innovation
- Needs of the pupils
- Relate to interests and backgrounds

### Findings

- Have your findings achieved your initial aims?
- What evidence do you have to support your claims?
- What were the unexpected effects?
- What were the benefits to you and the students?
- What did the students think of your innovations

### Discussion

- Did you change anything as the project developed?
- What were the limitations of your project?
- If you used this method again, what would you change?
- How would you make this work on a larger scale?
- How could it work in other contexts?
- What would you suggest to improve it?
- What are the 3 most important findings?
- What has been the overall impact?

# Summary

Context

Strategy Rationale

Research question:

Findings

Discussion

## Appendix C. Learning Skills Indicators

### 1.3 Learning skills

Proportions of students: except where specifically stated, the descriptors that follow do not make reference to proportions of students. It is expected that the learning skills described will be typical of those generally displayed by students in different phases of a school.

#### Elements

- 1.3.1 Students' engagement in, and responsibility for, their own learning
- 1.3.2 Students' interactions, collaboration and communication skills
- 1.3.3 Application of learning to the world and making connections between areas of learning
- 1.3.4 Innovation, enterprise, enquiry, research, critical thinking and use of learning technologies

#### Brief descriptors

Outstanding	Very Good	Good	Acceptable	Weak	Very Weak
<b>1.3.1 Students' engagement in, and responsibility for, their own learning</b>					
Students are enthusiastic and take responsibility for their own learning in sustained ways. They focus well and reflect on their learning to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses accurately. They take targeted actions to improve.	Students are keen to learn and take responsibility for their own learning. They know their strengths and weaknesses and act purposefully to improve.	Students enjoy learning and take increasing responsibility for their own learning. They know their strengths and weaknesses and take steps to improve.	Students have positive attitudes toward learning and can work for short periods without their teachers' intervention. They may be positive learners, but they know what they have learned and how to improve their work in general terms.	Students are easily distracted and work only with their teachers' direction. Students rarely reflect on the quality of their learning and consequently they do not know how to improve their work.	Students are very easily distracted and work only with constant teacher direction. They do not show interest in learning. They do not evaluate the quality of their learning and consequently they do not know how to improve their work.

## Appendix D. My Personal Poetry

### Judgement Day

Independence day, independence day  
The celebration of separation  
The colonizer de-colonizes the  
no longer perceptually oppressed

The retraction of thoughts, themes and systems  
leaves the minds of the colonized with a tainted vision of success

Exploitation, manipulation and suffocation.  
The knowledge acquired through the experience of victimisation  
would ultimately support the process of emulation

And now both the colonised and the colonizer  
stand shoulder to shoulder on the so called 'war on terror'

Creating a culture of fear and consumption  
to channel the thoughts and votes of the people  
in the worldwide quest for domination,  
not liberation.

So what now for the collaborative colonizers?

Do the Iraqis want to be liberated?  
The only weapons of mass destruction  
are held by the same men whose countries refused us tax deduction

Funding continues whilst Joe Bloggs and Jon Doe  
struggle to make ends meet on either side of the Atlantic

A revolution would end this  
but how can it be televised if the general public are programmed to unquestionably  
internalise  
the lies.

**Shaun Robison © 2005**

# Appendix E. UAE Learning Network

The screenshot shows the UAE Learning Network website. The header includes the logo, navigation menu (Home, News and Updates, Groups, Events, Contact Us), and user options (Login, Register). Below the header, there are links for Advertise on UAELN, Links, Privacy Policy, and Terms & Conditions. The main content area features a 'Latest Events' section with two event listings:

- European Autism Congress**  
Front End Event Submission | March 14, 2019 | 0 views  
Date/Time Date(s) - 14/03/2019 - 15/03/2019 9:00 am - 5:00 pm Location TBD Categories Conference Education Expo International EUROPEAN AUTISM CONGRESS: Understanding Autistic Mind & Raise Autism Aw... [Read More](#)
- Developing Medical Educators of the 21st Century 2019**  
Front End Event Submission | February 25, 2019 | 0 views  
Date/Time Date(s) - 25/02/2019 - 27/02/2019 8:00 am - 5:00 pm Location Holiday Inn Golden Gateway Categories Conference Join us for the 2019 'Developing Medical Educators of the 21st Century... [Read More](#)

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## Appendix F. Transcription Findings of the Interview with Teacher A

SR: Right, do you want to just talk me through your ... How you visualize this and explain what each, sort of, area or symbol or color stands for, how you visually represented it?

Teacher A: Okay. Well, um, I thought it was an interesting challenge, because I'm really, as you can see, not very artistic. Um, and not only do I have [inaudible 00:00:29] skill in art, but [00:00:30] probably not very good at communicating my ideas in a picture type of way. So, um, but I've done my best. So I think it means something, and I'll explain it to you. Uh, yeah, but the colors may not be all that significant. But anyways, just try to make it kind of-

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: So, it starts here. This is what I think the current situation is that I wanted to change.

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: And that led to my hunch, of what I felt things could be.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: And how they could be better. And that has led to, [inaudible 00:01:00] [00:01:00] way I decided to present it, what I'm doing at the moment-

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: And, combined with how I feel that could lead on to other things, so it's sort of like a [inaudible 00:01:11] dive-

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: [inaudible 00:01:12] coming from the idea is leading to change at the moment. And how I think it would then lead on to further [inaudible 00:01:18]

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Okay. So, let's go back to the first [inaudible 00:01:23] and what ... What was the initial thing that triggered some sort of, uh, motivation to change?

Teacher A: [00:01:30] Um, well, I'm not sure what it was, um, probably from an [inaudible 00:01:43] course I would have [inaudible 00:01:44] this summer. We're watching, um, as part of that [internet 00:01:48]course, um, an interview by [inaudible 00:01:51] William. I think. I'm not sure. But, anyway, I've-I've ... What I want to do, essentially, is to reduce the amount of talking that I do in the classroom and increase the amount of working [00:02:00] that students do collaboratively, or independently. But, at least, they're learning, rather than listening to me so much.

Um, but I've been aware that I want to try to accomplish within that better quality of learning in the classroom. More collaborative learning, and creating more opportunities for me to be not the focus of attention, but the students' have been the one who are doing it, so it's [inaudible 00:02:27] of learning, where I'm actually freed up, so to speak, [inaudible 00:02:30] of [00:02:30] that [inaudible 00:02:31].

I think what really sparked that off was talking to Mark on the way back on the bus from [inaudible 00:02:37], Mark [inaudible 00:02:38]. He was talking about a similar issue he has with [inaudible 00:02:40]-

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: Where a lot of time is spent telling kids what to do, explaining what to do before they actually begin the learning. And I [inaudible 00:02:48] felt that very similar [history 00:02:53]. So I wouldn't say the kids are passive, but when you've got 22 kids looking at you, listening, there must be moments within that where they're not really fully keyed-in [00:03:00] to what's going on.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: Um, the way I started explaining is not completely didactic, but it's more didactic than I want. It's not completely me telling them-

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: [crosstalk 00:03:09] a lot of interaction with the students, asking questions. It's not totally [victorian 00:03:13], but it's definitely not ideal.

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: Um, and I want to move to a [inaudible 00:03:18] area where I can just [inaudible 00:03:20]-

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: Work with them, like they're working together-

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: And [inaudible 00:03:26]

SR: Okay. So, you said you got [00:03:30] that sort of, that trigger from having a conversation with Mark.

Teacher A: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

SR: Now, after the, um, after the second session we had here, before we went to the [SOK 00:03:43], we looked at the, the sort of, the actual research cycle, um, and the cycle of reflecting, evaluating, and then making a small change. Now, after that session, what-what did you do after that session? How did you internalize that?

Teacher A: [00:04:00] Well, actually, that was based on a different type of change. So, I-I went through that learning cycle, or I-I planned a learning cycle based on something slightly different actually.

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: [crosstalk 00:04:14]

SR: Yeah, that's fine. Yeah, so, what was ... What was that?

Teacher A: Um, that was based ... What-what sprung to my [inaudible 00:04:21] which was dealing with [inaudible 00:04:22] that very week, which is not really related to this at all. It was, um, in my capacity as not just being a teacher, but also [00:04:30] in coordinator for charity committees-

SR: Mmm.

Teacher A: The job is quite different. Um, the students ... Wh-what the charity [inaudible 00:04:41] students, about 50 of them, people want to get involved in charities, and they want to do good things, and they want to, um, sell cookies and do bake sales and whatever-

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: Um, last year, and now this year, I'm trying to refine it. What I've tried to do with this, um, got a big group of people is not just have a [00:05:00] group of kids who are selling cakes. I want to make it into a much more effective thing.

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: For their benefit. So, I've organized them into team, or actually, I've appointed two presidents, which [inaudible 00:05:12]. Um, I've given a job description to those two individuals, one of that ... Part of that job description was to organize those 50 kids into eight, different teams and identify the charities they want to [inaudible 00:05:26] charities, and appoint specific roles in each of those teams, [00:05:30] such as the leader of each team, the [inaudible 00:05:33] person, the researcher, person who contacts outside charities, bring them in to kind of [inaudible 00:05:39]. Person who communicates with [inaudible 00:05:42], so they all have specific roles. And then once that was established in September, they then had to start planning things that they would do.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: They were going to bring in, uh, what activities are they going to plan, [inaudible 00:05:56], and the focus that I've tried to establish is the [00:06:00] students are leading it with my oversight.

SR: Mmm.

Teacher A: And the emphasis should be on them being the leaders and them having as much ownership as possible.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: So they're growing, developing from it.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: And so it's more than just raising money for charity. It's them developing those important skills. Um, the issue that, uh, that occurs to me when we're doing this learning cycle thing, was, uh, that the students had wanted to have a non-uniform day-

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: On a [inaudible 00:06:30] [00:06:30] day. Um, and it ... And then what happened was they came to me, these two, [inaudible 00:06:38] students and said, "We would like to have

a non-uniform day in two day's time." Um, and I said it was probably too late [inaudible 00:06:46] too late to actually [inaudible 00:06:48] each to not wear uniform.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: Um, and then I recommended they should go and speak to Martin [inaudible 00:06:59].

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: See [00:07:00] what he thinks. And Martin was non-committal. Pretty much, that meant he wasn't really interested, that he just wanted them to draw that conclusion.

SR: Mmm.

Teacher A: So they came back to me, and I think [inaudible 00:07:08] I went to speak to Martin, uh ... I went to speak to Martin, and I agreed with him. It was too short notice. We couldn't really get it done in short of time. It was four days actually [inaudible 00:07:17]. Um, then I reflected on it, and I thought [inaudible 00:07:25] maybe I was little bit too accommodating with Martin, and, uh, the students were quite [00:07:30] determined. They [inaudible 00:07:31].

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: And I was just too accommodating toward Martin's needs of just not making too much of a hassle for him.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: And maybe I should have said to the students [inaudible 00:07:40] "If you think you can do it, let's get it done."

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: So, [inaudible 00:07:43] ... So, in hindsight, looking at that, I realized that this would be [inaudible 00:07:48] learning thing.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: That I think pretty much exemplifies the dilemma, which is within this charity committee.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: Which is how much input should I have saying, yes, no, do this, do that. How much do I stand back [00:08:00] and say to the students, "Go ahead with it, if you think it's going to work."

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: And-and the solution to that dilemma is basically to-to make sure the students are doing [inaudible 00:08:09] in the right timeframe.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: Without telling them what to do.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: So, the-the circular thing I think would be something like [inaudible 00:08:17], um, is trying to establish a system whereby they know what they've got to do without having to be told to.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: So, [inaudible 00:08:29] job description. [00:08:30] And their job descriptions include whenever you're planning things, make sure you do it within two week- ... Minimum of two weeks.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: Uh, and then try it out [inaudible 00:08:40], so what I did was, in hindsight of-of that dilemma of disappointing the [inaudible 00:08:45] make sure they can actually organize it [inaudible 00:08:48] that they've got all the [inaudible 00:08:50], they've got everything in place to get going. They've got the letter [inaudible 00:08:54] students, "I think it will work, [inaudible 00:08:56], yeah, okay, let's do it."

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: And it worked. Um, [00:09:00] so, the next time around when we did it, um, the students were set up. They knew what they were doing, and they made sure that they saw all the correct people in time, so [inaudible 00:09:13] what I ... What I did, was I reflect on the situation, make sure they [inaudible 00:09:17] without ... Without me being overbearing and controlling. Um, and they did it. They planned it correctly. They reflected on that, and I spoke to the students involved and said, "How did [00:09:30] you [inaudible 00:09:31]." We modified it slightly.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: In terms of me just having a bit more communication with them to see whether or not things were actually being done. Um, that comes back to modify the job description.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: So not only [inaudible 00:09:47] able to plan things [inaudible 00:09:48], they have to make sure [inaudible 00:09:50].

SR: Okay, so in terms of this and that cycle, you said this one was triggered with Mark on the bus from [inaudible 00:09:58]?

Teacher A: Yeah.

SR: So, what, in terms [00:10:00] of significance, which one do you feel would be more significant? This one or-

Teacher A: This one.

SR: This one?

Teacher A: This relates to my [inaudible 00:10:08] every, single day.

SR: So what ... Explain the next part here, when you've got a hunch. Collaboration monitoring.

Teacher A: So, my hunch, my-my idea is that [inaudible 00:10:20] we have this homework diary here. All students have a homework diary where they record what their [inaudible 00:10:28] homework on the, on the day where it's due [inaudible 00:10:30]. [00:10:30] Very simplistically, I suppose, and maybe too simplistically, the hunch is that if I put more thought into their homework and design each homework in a different way, it would accomplish what I want it to accomplish, which is that they will be less focused on me at the start of each lesson. Less time will be taken up by me talking, telling them what to do-

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: And [inaudible 00:10:54] what they need to know.

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: So, I started to do this, but then what the hunch is that their homework will [inaudible 00:11:00] the [00:11:00] following lesson. Not just by, I suppose this is traditional homework, they just continue with what they're doing with [inaudible 00:11:08], but they have something else to do, which is prepare notes to explain something to the rest of the class next time. Uh, and that's ... The lesson would be me just reminding what have they done.

SR: Mmm.

Teacher A: [inaudible 00:11:20] the groups and [inaudible 00:11:22] explain it to each other. Now, that's sort of fairly vague description, because that could take very many forms. [00:11:30] It could be an individual talking to a whole class [inaudible 00:11:34] found out, we're a team [inaudible 00:11:36] to the entire class.

SR: Mmm.

Teacher A: Or pairs telling each other some things that they don't already know. Or the class coming together and sharing knowledge with each other before presenting it, or perhaps simply the class coming together and forming an opinion about something and [inaudible 00:11:53] working co-constructively, based on what they know. And then turn that into something [inaudible 00:11:59] thinking.

SR: [00:12:00] Mmm.

Teacher A: So, so basically, that will involve the students working together, and me being an observer-

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: [inaudible 00:12:07] monitor of what they're doing.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And then you've got another arrow from here to here to [inaudible 00:12:12]-

Teacher A: Yeah, so [crosstalk 00:12:15]

SR: [crosstalk 00:12:15] then you've got a diagram.

Teacher A: This is what [crosstalk 00:12:18]

SR: [crosstalk 00:12:18] you've gone quite sequentially from one to the other to here, but from here, you're saying that there's going to be lots of different components, potentially.

Teacher A: [00:12:30] Yeah, the way I ... This may not be [inaudible 00:12:38] probably very different to [inaudible 00:12:39] people, but the way I thought I could present it would be to look at [inaudible 00:12:42] 10, [inaudible 00:12:44] 12, [inaudible 00:12:45] 13, your 11-

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: These examples of what I've done, so that I could look at the different types of, um, different approaches I've used to try [00:13:00] and accomplish-

SR: Okay. So explain what-what this [inaudible 00:13:04].

Teacher A: [inaudible 00:13:04] 10, for example, if they're looking at [inaudible 00:13:08], maybe it was a [inaudible 00:13:09] course, um, I've got them to work in five, different groups and each group will look at a different element of [Stalin 00:13:17] rule, so just a [inaudible 00:13:19] the personality cults, the re-envision of history, educational policies in British, uh, [inaudible 00:13:26] policies.

They've gone away, and they've actually worked in pairs [inaudible 00:13:30] homework. [00:13:30] Um, and they will come back ... One group came back today's lesson. They're all ... They'll come back tomorrow [inaudible 00:13:42] classes, and they need to work in two, large groups, um, having collected [inaudible 00:13:48] they'll get together, and they'll form [inaudible 00:13:50] form an opinion, [inaudible 00:13:52] about Stalin, which will then get them into a debate about. So, rather than me telling them what they need to know about Stalin, they will [inaudible 00:14:00] equipped [inaudible 00:14:00] [00:14:00] knowledge, and they will be using that and, hopefully, deepening their understanding about [inaudible 00:14:06], discussing it in preparation of the debate.

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: Identifying [inaudible 00:14:10], and then actually arguing [inaudible 00:14:12].

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: Uh, so I started that, [inaudible 00:14:18] and yes, it has achieved the kids working together, and I [crosstalk 00:14:21].

SR: Okay. All right, so that's what I was going to ask you next, what ... How will you know if this has been successful?

Teacher A: [00:14:30] Well, I can, I can see and experience the success [inaudible 00:14:36] if I'm able to move around the room, discuss with the stu-students and see ... Gauge their level of understanding, [inaudible 00:14:45].

SR: Okay. And how do you envisage that your, your professional identity or your identity will evolve with it?

Teacher A: Well, my teaching approach ... Um, well, I'll try [00:15:00] to [inaudible 00:15:01] group and probably wouldn't be appropriate for every single homework [inaudible 00:15:04].

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: More and more I'm trying to do this, and I think, with the students, they need to be sort of conditioned into this new approach.

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: I [crosstalk 00:15:15] to be something that they would get straight away, but putting the emphasis on them.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: The expectation being that they are responsible for [inaudible 00:15:24] giving it to them.

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: So, I-I don't think it's going to be an instantaneously successful thing. But I think it's [00:15:30] going to be something they'll get better at, and so I'll attempt to do it.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: [inaudible 00:15:35]

SR: Okay. And how-how ... (clears throat) Describe how this-this type of-of learning, uh, for you is perhaps similar or different to how you've approached, uh, a problem or a hunch in the past.

Teacher A: [00:16:00] Well, I think [inaudible 00:16:06] similar [inaudible 00:16:07] um, they're always lots of things that could be done better. I'm always aware of [inaudible 00:16:15] things that I do with teaching or with, um, other sort of [responsibilities 00:16:19] in the school could be improved on, and I've sought to improve them. But I think this approach actually gets me to think it through in a more sequential way, [inaudible 00:16:28] more structured way.

SR: [00:16:30] Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: Um, whereas, in the past, I might just [inaudible 00:16:36] has actually got me to reflect sort of carefully and actually come up with a proper strategy rather than just doing something quickly.

SR: Okay, and what ... You know when you ... When you say you reflect on something, how ... Explain to me, or just describe, what you're actually reflecting on to envisage these things?

Teacher A: [inaudible 00:17:00] [00:17:00] what do you mean?

SR: So, when you're actually reflecting ... When you're reflecting on your hunch, when you're reflecting on this situation in class, the didactic teaching, what are you thinking about for you to visualize these sort of things?

Teacher A: [inaudible 00:17:19] remembering what happened in class, and, uh, thinking, um-

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: Could it be [inaudible 00:17:25] be better?

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: [inaudible 00:17:26] um, I'm not really reflecting on their level [00:17:30] of academic achievement. I'm not reflecting on tests or anything being [less 00:17:34] than I think they ought to be, because I think they're all pretty good anyway.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: It's more reflecting on [inaudible 00:17:41] experience [inaudible 00:17:41] I can remember from the lesson, where-

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: [inaudible 00:17:44] talking [inaudible 00:17:44] kids asking questions.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: Um, [inaudible 00:17:48] lot of time where, particularly, the youngest students are relying on me to give them what they need to know.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: Than asking questions throughout the lesson. [crosstalk 00:17:57]

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: To [inaudible 00:17:59] put the ownership of the things [crosstalk 00:18:00]

SR: (clears throat)

Teacher A: [00:18:00] Change their attitude toward what a lesson's about.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: And visualizing me, actually speaking to them on a one-to-one [team 00:18:11].

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: Uh, for example, with [inaudible 00:18:16] 12's, this morning ... No, yesterday morning, um, I wanted to give them feedback on essays, but everybody's essay was different. [inaudible 00:18:22] kids in the class.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: Um, and it would have just have wasted their time if I talked in general about all of the things [crosstalk 00:18:29]

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: About [00:18:30] their essays and actually had some sort of marking system where they had to think about what their marks meant.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: Discuss it with each other, but that did free me up [inaudible 00:18:38]. It did free me up to actually speak to [inaudible 00:18:41].

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: And reassure them if they got a C [inaudible 00:18:44] about that.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: Or, if they got an A, [inaudible 00:18:47] things to improve, that they would have [inaudible 00:18:50].

SR: Right. Okay. In terms of developing this, (clears throat), you've sort of, [inaudible 00:18:58] sort of, put potential [inaudible 00:19:00] [00:19:00] here, what do you think would be most significant to you and to your professional learning out of ... Out of all of this? And what do you think would be most significant to school, out of all of this?

Teacher A: Well, that's the different thing for me, [inaudible 00:19:25] would be, um, what I think I should see, is that there will be a better quality of [00:19:30] learning, in terms of skills and knowledge, but it will take time, maybe just a few weeks for them to be ... To develop their new attitude toward [inaudible 00:19:39] lesson's about. Uh, and I don't think it's entirely alien to them. I'm sure this happens occasionally in other lessons, or maybe quite a lot [inaudible 00:19:48], but I think with ... Over a space of maybe half a term, maximum, what I should see, and what would be immediate benefit to me [inaudible 00:19:56] would be the quality of their understanding [00:20:00] will be better, and their sense of ownership and sense of responsibility towards learning will definitely be changed.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: And I think I've seen it gradually over a ... Over a few years, when I've been using more [inaudible 00:20:12] methods in class.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: Kids are becoming much more, um, conditioned to automatically reflect on their grades and [inaudible 00:20:21] their grades [inaudible 00:20:22], um, but they've become far, far more responsible [inaudible 00:20:28] because I'm actually giving proper feedback [00:20:30] without-

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: Knowing what good feedback means to [inaudible 00:20:34]. So, I've seen that curve gradually, and I, and I think that this approach will happen more quickly.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: [inaudible 00:20:41] students will learn better, and they will [inaudible 00:20:42] what's the word, um, they'll be learning about [learning 00:20:43], [inaudible 00:20:48] better learning [inaudible 00:20:50] more quickly.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Right.

Teacher A: For the school, I think that's going to benefit the school. I think that's definitely [00:21:00] more [inaudible 00:21:01] towards, so [inaudible 00:21:02] part of the big, school policy.

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: Um, but that's going [inaudible 00:21:12]. Well, I mean, I'd be happy to [inaudible 00:21:13] explain or describe this to people, although I do think [inaudible 00:21:15] very simple [inaudible 00:21:16] won't be saying anything new [inaudible 00:21:18].

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: [inaudible 00:21:21] something which is quite simple.

SR: Yeah. But, the difference between actually going through this process that [00:21:30] you went through (clears throat) to [inaudible 00:21:33] teacher say I've heard that before is quite different. Um, I mean, just by, you know, mapping out this whole process and all the different [inaudible 00:21:42], but, um, how many ch- ... I mean, just in your opinion, do you think many teachers are actually doing that with a particular [inaudible 00:21:49] structured ... Structured way?

Teacher A: Probably not. Some teachers probably have quite detailed lesson plans, and they may reflect, [00:22:00] sort of [inaudible 00:22:00] modify them [inaudible 00:22:02]

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: Which is [inaudible 00:22:04], um, probably a lot of teachers do what I do, which is they have a-a lesson plan, a lesson [inaudible 00:22:10] think about it, modify it [inaudible 00:22:13] very ... I'd be very surprised if [inaudible 00:22:18] teachers went through this structure.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Um, now just in terms of this, this activity, what would you do to improve this if you were going to do this again?

Teacher A: [00:22:30] If I was to create a [inaudible 00:22:33]-

SR: Yes.

Teacher A: I think I'd focus very much on the situation, what I want it to be, what I'm doing right now, as not really scope for me to look up the next stage, so, at the moment, all we've got really is what's happening now.

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: And it doesn't [inaudible 00:22:55] through to the evaluation of what's happening.

SR: Mm-hmm [00:23:00] (affirmative).

Teacher A: To then inform me about [inaudible 00:23:03] If I was to do it again, I'd try to [inaudible 00:23:06].

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: So, [inaudible 00:23:07] something here about, you know, how to modify my plan.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And in terms of drawing and visualizing, did you find any benefits of doing it like this? Because, even though you've said that you're not, you're not a great artist or anything like that, but in terms of doing it like that and visualizing, you know, where you were,

where you are now, were there any ... Were there any tangible or conceptual benefits [00:23:30] for you?

Teacher A: Well, I had to [inaudible 00:23:34] ... I really had to think about what to do for this bit.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: So, okay, saying, where are we now? What's my hunch? I wasn't sure what to do here, that's why I've probably done it a bit differently [crosstalk 00:23:44]

SR: (clears throat)

Teacher A: What I'm doing right now. Um, so it was a bit vague, but getting me to think about it, I'm sure, was beneficial. Getting me to overcome [inaudible 00:23:54] to do, so probably gone off track in terms of [inaudible 00:23:59] came up [00:24:00] with.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative). But do you think that sometimes going off track is, that's a good thing, because you might [inaudible 00:24:06] something by doing this, that you might not have previously thought of? Because, just, it sounds to me like you-you've kind of described this bit here, which is possibly the journey into the unknown?

Teacher A: [inaudible 00:24:18]

SR: Which might be something that you haven't previously thought of?

Teacher A: Yes. I mean, I think that teachers [inaudible 00:24:31] [00:24:30] people, but they like to think that they know best, don't they? So I think giving them a scope of doing it their way-

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: It's probably better. And what I was thinking of saying a few moments ago is, it would be maybe easier, if I was given a clearer path, [inaudible 00:24:45], but then [inaudible 00:24:45] this box [inaudible 00:24:46] this box [inaudible 00:24:47].

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: But that maybe would be too restrictive, and I think that having it open-ended like this one and this one. And then, these [inaudible 00:24:57] ... I don't know how you [00:25:00] describe [inaudible 00:25:01], um, what is your project [inaudible 00:25:05]. How is it ... You know, what are your thoughts around that?

SR: It's quite open.

Teacher A: Maybe having something open is better for provoking, or to [inaudible 00:25:25] actually think about it.

SR: Mm-hmm [00:25:30] (affirmative).

Teacher A: Um, if I was to change it, I [wouldn't 00:25:34] do it exactly the same way, I would maybe [inaudible 00:25:36] smaller [inaudible 00:25:37] have space, but then what I've done here would be [inaudible 00:25:40], then [inaudible 00:25:41] better space to evaluate it.

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: There's [inaudible 00:25:43] for things I've been put in, which is [inaudible 00:25:47] a bit more innovative than compared to what someone would do. And with year 12, um, I've [00:26:00] been getting to do research. I-I've ... I've actually year 10 [inaudible 00:26:05] more and more homework [inaudible 00:26:06] on the, on the [inaudible 00:26:09] website. So they've left the classroom knowing that their homework is to go and log on to these two websites and their work is there. Probably [inaudible 00:26:16] in the UK. We haven't go that set up in school.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: [inaudible 00:26:21] um, but, doing their homework and then posting their answers on the screen, so the other kids can see it. So, this is something I want to develop [00:26:30] a bit more. The idea that they don't just arrive in class, and then find out what the other kids have done. They ... Their homework is to work and then see what the other people do when they get to class, knowing something about what they've each done.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: [inaudible 00:26:43] for the lesson.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: Um, and I'm sort of bringing that in with year 10, year 11. With 13, that ... I'm teaching them, um, coursework, and that is about researching and independent work, and so that's using books.

SR: [00:27:00] Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: But that's actually quite successful as well, it's-it's ... From the very beginning of that [inaudible 00:27:05], which is the end of year 12, I've been getting them to see that they are the source of information [inaudible 00:27:12] clarify what they've found out and talk about it.

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: So, if I was to do it again, I would then have additional [boxes 00:27:19] here where I could actually put down my thoughts about how it's working [inaudible 00:27:26].

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: Does that ... Does that [inaudible 00:27:27] reasonable?

SR: Yeah. No, no, no. No, that's great.

Teacher A: [00:27:30] But I-I do think that what you've ought to do is [inaudible 00:27:32] because when you [inaudible 00:27:33] asking me, um, how to reflect on [inaudible 00:27:35] I-I actually remember, uh, the sort of playback of what's going in the classroom.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: So, I must be a visual person, but getting me to explain things in visual way, was quite unusual [inaudible 00:27:54] really, apart from the [inaudible 00:27:56].

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: But I think it did [00:28:00] get me to think.

SR: Okay.

Teacher A: [inaudible 00:28:04]

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: [inaudible 00:28:05] would not want to. [inaudible 00:28:07] visual work.

SR: No, some people wouldn't, but, um, I'm quite, um, of the belief that I think pushing people out of their comfort zone is a good thing.

Teacher A: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

SR: Um, I'm not a huge, uh, fan of just labeling people as particular learners.

Teacher A: [inaudible 00:28:26]

SR: I think we all learn in multiple ways in different [00:28:30] times of the day, in different activities, so, if I'm a particularly bad, hands-on learner, that doesn't mean I shouldn't have the opportunity to-to develop, you know, that type of thing.

Teacher A: No, I agree that [inaudible 00:28:45] a bit over-hyped.

SR: Yeah. But, yeah, I think, uh, I think, in my opinion, I think intelligence is a lot more than just simply labeling someone in that way. I think it's quite a bit too simplistic. [00:29:00] Um, but, um, unfortunately that still exists in a lot of people's, uh, perception.

Teacher A: I know. I've seen it. Lesson plans, actually, the school's done.

SR: Mmm.

Teacher A: Um, [inaudible 00:29:15]

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I challenged [inaudible 00:29:17] teacher in here about that because I said, "Look, [inaudible 00:29:21] the [cinema's 00:29:21] on visual auditory, when I'm working with people, I'm interpersonal. Interpersonal-emotional. When I'm playing football, [00:29:30] I'm kinesthetic, but I'm also spatial." I said, "So, it just depends on what I'm actually physically doing at the time and what muscles I'm exercising in my brain." But to simply label someone as being, "You're this, so therefore-"

Teacher A: Oh, I definitely agree. We did this survey [inaudible 00:29:47] week in school, did it about [10 00:29:48] years ago, [inaudible 00:29:49] to identify what's their learning strength. [inaudible 00:29:51] We didn't get quite so far as [inaudible 00:29:54]

SR: Oh.

Teacher A: I did [inaudible 00:29:56] my class, and I wasn't terribly cynical about it with [00:30:00] the kids, and I thought ... But I did say to them, "All right, do the test now." Then we did it the next day.

SR: Mmm.

Teacher A: And it was also quite different.

SR: Yeah. Yeah.

Teacher A: And I just said, "Please, bear in mind, that you have strength in all three areas, and [crosstalk 00:30:13]

SR: Yeah.

Teacher A: More than just three. And I said, "You should be developing more than [inaudible 00:30:19] skills."

SR: Exactly.

Teacher A: Because one boy wrote, "I don't like math, because it's not visual enough." And that's [inaudible 00:30:26]

SR: Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

Teacher A: The reason why he's [inaudible 00:30:27] at math, was because it wasn't-it wasn't visual, therefore, [00:30:30] he was ... He came to [fail 00:30:31] at math.

SR: And then you also get teachers who say, well, "Yeah, I'm just a visual learner, so that's how I teach." Well, that's also ... You know? That's [inaudible 00:30:41].

Teacher A: Yeah, no I ... I agree with you on that. Uh, I remember also watching this thing where [inaudible 00:30:49] William, it was part of that [intercept 00:30:51] course I did a few months ago, where he was talking to all these head bosses, and he was saying, "Well," things like, [00:31:00] the best advice he could give to a teacher, he says, "One thing is spend more time planning and less time marking."

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: Another thing he said was, uh, "There's lot of education initiatives which are good ideas, but they're oversimplified, and they don't work [inaudible 00:31:14]."

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: And then he said, that, um, "The idea that we should lesson [observations 00:31:21] and try to model each other is [learning 00:31:22]," he thinks is a real fallacy.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teacher A: He believed, [inaudible 00:31:28] think about it before, that every [00:31:30] teacher has an individual way of thinking, I suppose. Different way of communicating information, different way of getting all the kids, and it doesn't really work for them to try and become like the head of department, or-

SR: No, it's true. Yeah. It's true.

Teacher A: We can get ideas from each other, [inaudible 00:31:48] but we don't necessarily [inaudible 00:31:49] this is the way you should be doing that, [inaudible 00:31:52], so, hence, I think having freedom for teachers who are generally [inaudible 00:31:57] creative people, I think it works.

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative). [00:32:00] Okay.

Teacher A: [inaudible 00:32:01]

SR: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative). Okay. Thank you very much.

Teacher A: Thanks for your time.

SR: Yep.

Teacher A: So what-what-what should I do with this then? Should I feed this back to Natalie and tell her.

## Appendix G. Action Research Rubric

Criteria	Developing	Emerging	Consolidating	Established
<b>Rationale and Purpose of the enquiry</b>	1-4 marks The rationale indicates a limited motivation to enquire and explore. Enquiry-line may not be clear.	5-14 The rationale displays willingness to explore and enquire a valid area of school based practice. Enquiry-line may be too broad or not focused enough.	15-18 The rationale has a clear focus and defined enquiry line. The reasons for enquiry are authentic and the intended outcomes are stated.	19-20 The rationale and enquiry is clearly defined and authentic. The intended outcomes are stated and there is an awareness of unintended outcomes and impact on learners.
<b>Triangulation of Policy, Practice and Research</b>	1-4 The project begins to triangulate policy and research with school-based practice.	5-14 The project shows an awareness of policy, research and school-based practice. The location of the project is stated in-line with its themes and underpinning concepts.	15-18 The project is clearly triangulated and the implications of school-based research are discussed in-line with wider themes and underpinning concepts.	19-20 The project is clearly triangulated and the implications of the research are synthesized with wider themes, underpinning concepts and school based developments.
<b>Reliability and Validity</b>	1-4 The project displays limited reliability and validity. Evidence suggests that prejudices may have influenced outcomes.	5-14 The project's reliability and validity is recognized and the project indicates that similar outcomes would be achieved if repeated by someone else.	15-18 The project is generally reliable and valid. The research methods are reliable and they have produced authentic outcomes. The research outline matches the data collection.	19-20 The project is securely reliable and valid. The research methods are clearly structured and considered based on the research outline.
<b>Critical Reflection in Summary of Research</b>	1-4 The participant's critical reflection is uni-structural. It is limited to a singular critique and analysis of the project.	5-14 The participant's critical reflection is multi-structural. It shows an awareness of the impact of the project, the implications on a contextual level but lacks a wider awareness of the project's hidden outcomes.	15-18 The participant's critical reflection is relational. It shows an in-depth awareness of the impact of the project, the implications on a contextual level and a wider awareness of the project's hidden outcomes.	19-20 The participant's critical reflection is an extended-abstract response. It shows an awareness of the impact and wider implications of the project and the unexpected outcomes. The participant suggests alternative approaches and themes within to explore.
<b>Presentation</b>	1-4 The presentation of the project is un-clear. There is no structure and ideas do not link together.	5-14 The presentation of the project is inconsistent. The structure does not compliment the content. The ideas are not consistently linked together.	15-18 The project is well-presented. The structure compliments the content. Ideas are linked together and the work clearly connects and flows.	19-20 The project is very well presented. The materials are consistently clear, structured and the entire projects links clearly.

## Appendix H. School C's Inspection Rating Summary

### Key strengths

- The Kindergarten provided a caring, positive and stimulating environment for learning;
- The effective response of the school leaders, staff and governors in addressing most of the recommendations from the last report;
- Good arrangements to ensure students' health and safety in the school;
- Good links between parents, school and the local community.

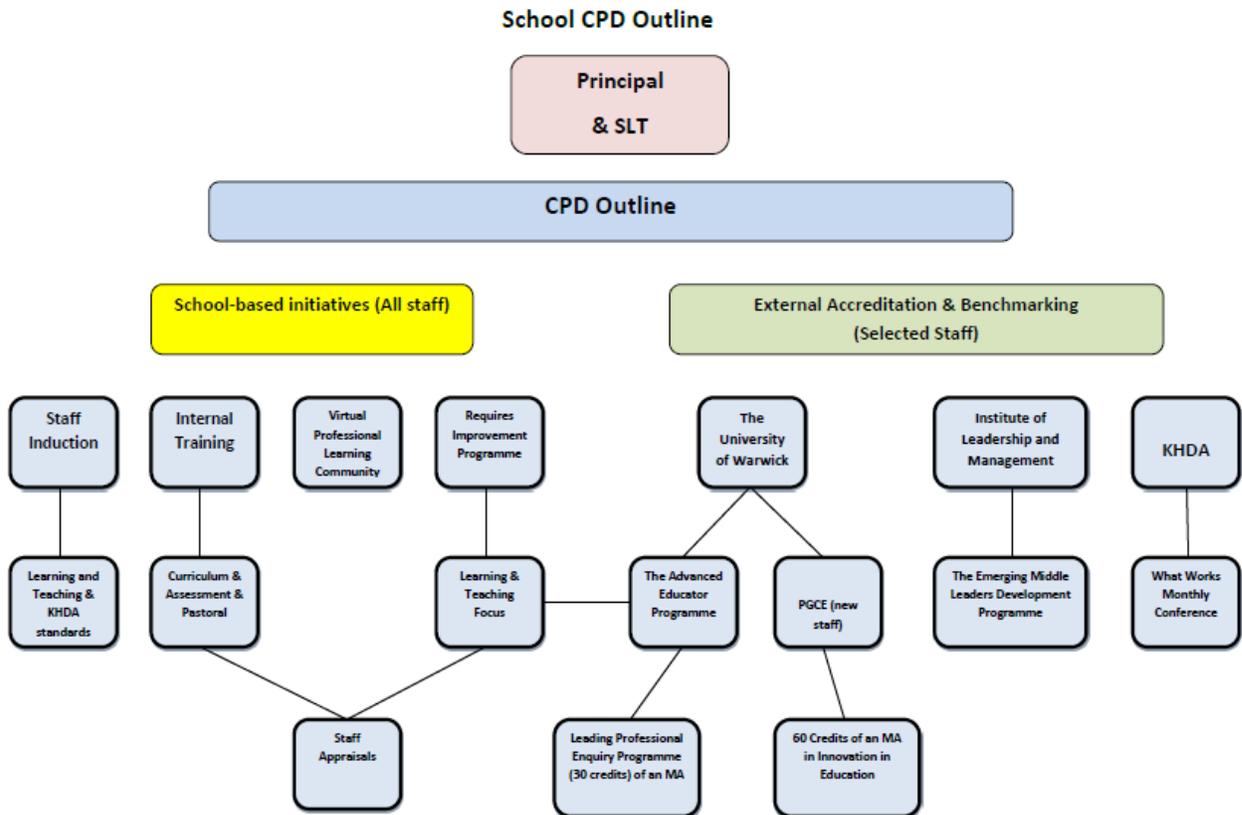
### Recommendations

- Improve the progress of those students who speak English as an additional language by accurately identifying their needs and providing the appropriate support;
- Further improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that lessons provide sufficient challenge to the more able students, particularly those in Grades 6 to 12;
- Review and improve the breadth and balance of the curriculum and ensure that it meets the requirements of the Ministry of Education in Islamic Education and Arabic;
- Make more regular and effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool to facilitate students' learning;
- Develop the systems for self-evaluation and improvement planning to include more rigorous and systematic processes to monitor academic standards.

## Appendix I. Strategy for Improving Underperforming Teachers

Signed by Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed by Observer: \_\_\_\_\_



Phase 4	Status
<p><b>In addition to securing phase 3, the teacher can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate a range of learning opportunities within the lesson for a number of different learning styles</li> <li>• Differentiate the learning by readiness, ability, interest, expertise etc</li> <li>• Use his/her relationship with the students in a positive way to promote a positive climate for learning</li> <li>• Use a consistent questioning strategies so that nearly all learners can access higher levels of thinking</li> <li>• Facilitate student questioning and enquiry through effective activity design and management of tasks</li> <li>• Provide constructive real-time feedback and praise to improve student performance</li> <li>• Change the pace and direction of the lesson based on the needs of the learners</li> <li>• Ensure that nearly all learners needs are met and nearly all learners make progress within the lesson</li> </ul> <p><b>Nearly (90%) all of the learners can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain how they would apply new knowledge or skills to another situation</li> <li>• Articulate how the content fits in with the bigger picture (scope of work) and what they will do next</li> <li>• Navigate different resources within the lesson (teacher, peer, lesson materials, ICT)</li> <li>• Work independently and inter-dependently whilst communicating effectively with others</li> <li>• Collaborate in small groups and with the teacher with a clear purpose</li> <li>• Self-assess their progress towards the learning objectives and act upon this</li> <li>• Pose higher order thinking questions about the lesson and about the learning process</li> <li>• Act upon their identified strengths and weaknesses</li> <li>• Rate their progress towards the learning objectives throughout the lesson and provide evidence towards their rating</li> <li>• Reflect upon their progress and learning within the lesson and explain the actions required to move forward</li> <li>• Predict future learning based upon the lesson content</li> <li>• Explain what their current targets are and what they have to do to improve</li> </ul>	
Targets for Improvement	Status
<p><b>Signed by Teacher:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Signed by Observer:</b> _____</p>	

**Teacher CPD action plan for \_\_\_\_\_**

**To be completed by \_\_\_\_\_ 2014**

**Aim: To assist \_\_\_\_\_ to improve his/her teaching assessment from Phases 1 & 2 to Phase 3**

Intended outcomes: by the end of the CPD programme, \_\_\_\_\_ should be able to:

- Explain the characteristics of 'Good' learning
- Develop the skills and understanding required in order to teach a 'Good' Lesson
- Design and deliver consistently Good Teaching and Learning

Stage	Objectives	Evidence & Resources	Who?	Timescale
1	Understand the gap between current performance and 'Good' Observe and explain the characteristics of Good teaching and learning Demonstrate an understanding of learning phases within school action plan	Lesson observation notes KHDA Criteria Video examples Phases within T & L Pathways	Key personnel/assigned mentor	3 hours
2	Establish an action plan for improvement with clear targets based upon phases of improvement	Action Plan Phases within T & L Pathways	Key personnel/Assigned mentor	2 hours
3	Plan a 'Good' lesson and have the lesson plan signed off by assigned mentor	Lesson plan	Key personnel/Assigned mentor	2 hours
4	Receive formal lesson observation with mentor and feedback session. Teacher to complete reflection sheet	Lesson observation notes Lesson review by the Teacher Lesson plan	Key personnel/Assigned mentor	2 hours
5	Set progress targets with the teacher for next formal observation	Action Plan	Key personnel/Assigned mentor	1 hour
6	Peer observe 'Good' Teaching from another colleague Attend lunch time CPD briefings Observe modeling of approaches Review teaching and learning action plan and phases document	Lesson observation notes CPD notes Teaching and learning action Plan	Teacher	2 hours
7	Plan a 'Good' lesson and have the lesson plan signed off by assigned mentor	Lesson Plan	Teacher and mentor	1.5 hours
8	Receive formal lesson observation with mentor and feedback session. Teacher to complete reflection sheet	Lesson observation notes Teacher reflection sheet	Teacher and mentor	2 hours
9	Set progress targets with the teacher for next formal observation	Action Plan	Key personnel/Assigned mentor	1 hour

10	Peer observe 'Good' Teaching from another colleague Attend lunch time CPD briefings Observe modeling of approaches Review teaching and learning action plan and phases document	Lesson observation notes CPD notes Teaching and learning action Plan	Teacher	2 hours
11	Plan a 'Good' lesson and have the lesson plan signed off by assigned mentor	Lesson Plan	Key personnel/Assigned mentor	1.5 hours
12	Receive formal lesson observation with mentor and feedback session. Teacher to complete reflection sheet	Lesson observation notes Teacher reflection sheet	Key personnel/Assigned mentor	2 hours
13	Set progress targets with the teacher for next formal observation	Action Plan	Key personnel/Assigned mentor	1 hour
14	Peer observe 'Good' Teaching from another colleague Attend lunch time CPD briefings Observe modeling of approaches  Review teaching and learning action plan and phases document	Lesson observation notes CPD notes Teaching and learning action Plan	Key personnel/Assigned mentor	2 hours
15	Plan a 'Good' lesson and have the lesson plan signed off by assigned mentor	Lesson Plan	Key personnel/Assigned mentor	1.5 hours
16	Receive formal lesson observation with mentor and feedback session. Teacher to complete reflection sheet	Lesson observation notes Teacher reflection sheet	Key personnel/Assigned mentor	2 hours
17	Set progress targets with the teacher for next formal observation	Action Plan	Key personnel/Assigned mentor	1 hour
18	Peer observe 'Good' Teaching from another colleague Attend lunch time CPD briefings Observe modeling of approaches Review teaching and learning action plan and phases document	Lesson observation notes CPD notes Teaching and learning action Plan	Key personnel/Assigned mentor	2 hours
19	Plan a 'Good' lesson and have the lesson plan signed off by assigned mentor	Lesson Plan	Key personnel/Assigned mentor	1.5 hours
20	Receive formal lesson observation with mentor and feedback session. Teacher to complete reflection sheet	Lesson observation notes Teacher reflection sheet	Key personnel/Assigned mentor	2 hours
21	Set progress targets with the teacher for next formal observation	Action Plan	Teacher and Mentor	1 hour
22	Peer observe 'Good' Teaching from another colleague	Lesson observation notes	Teacher and Mentor	2.5 hours

	Attend lunch time CPD briefings Observe modeling of approaches Review teaching and learning action plan and phases document	CPD notes Teaching and learning action Plan		
23	Plan a 'Good' lesson and have the lesson plan signed off by assigned mentor	Lesson Plan	Teacher	1.5 hours
24	Receive formal lesson observation with mentor and feedback session. Teacher to complete reflection sheet	Lesson observation notes Teacher reflection sheet	Teacher and mentor	2 hours
25	Review performance of the teacher	Lesson observation judgments Progress against targets	Mentor and SLT	1 hour

## **Appendix J. Excerpt from the school review demonstrating the students and context of the school**

29. The students expressed trust in their teachers and schools to nurture their talents, aspirations and ambitions. They were very well behaved in lessons and around the school. There was a strong collaborative and supportive culture amongst the student body which provided strong foundations on which the schools can build.

31. Students spoke of 'their school' with a passion and eloquence that is rarely heard. They gave evidence of how they were welcomed into the schools when they first arrived, supported in their learning, encouraged to develop lasting friendships with their fellow students, and challenged to foster ambitions that would make them active citizens in the world.

## **Appendix K. The UAE Learning Network Teacher and Educator Survey 2016 Results**

The survey has highlighted some key findings that will provoke discussion and debate within the education community. Some of the data is extremely sensitive and should remain confidential as personal information about salaries, living conditions, workplace satisfaction, career aspirations and HR allowances have been disclosed.

This section will highlight the key demographic data relating to the participants of the survey. In total, 525 teachers/educators have completed the survey. The majority have been teachers from Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The overall participant data illustrates that a high percentage of the teachers are highly educated and hold a master's degree. A significant number of them are highly experienced in the profession and have taught for over twelve years.

### **Key Demographic Data**

- 525 Teachers within the UAE completed the survey;
- Of the 525, 22% have between 4-7 years' experience; 23% have between 8-11 years' experience; 18% have between 12-15; 14% have between 16-20; 15% have over 21 years' experience;
- 50% of the teachers surveyed worked in the government sector back in their home country; 30% in the private sector; 20% have worked in both at some time in their career;
- 44% of the teachers surveyed were classroom teachers; 22% were middle managers; 5% were principals (24 in total)
- 49% of teachers are currently on 2-year contracts; 7% are on 3-year contracts; 29% are on 1 year contracts;
- 52% of the teachers surveyed have a masters' degree; 4% hold a PhD.
- 35% of the teachers surveyed are between the ages of 25 - 34; 38% between 35-44; 20% between 45-54
- 48% of the teachers surveyed teach in Dubai' 44% teach in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi;
- 48% of the teachers surveyed are primary school teachers; 46% are middle and high school teachers;
- 42% of the responses came from teachers within British curriculum schools; 20% came from teachers in American curriculum schools; 15% came from teachers within public schools;
- 75% of the teachers surveyed were female;
- 30% of the respondents taught in the UAE before their current job.

This data indicates that teachers within the UAE are somewhat happy; however, a lack of career development and salary increases suggest that a large percentage of teachers are considering leaving the UAE altogether. 73% of teachers would consider leaving their current job and 43% are currently seeking a new position. 80% of teachers would remain in their current school if they were offered a better salary.

## **UAE Teacher Wide Headlines**

- 52% of teachers left their previous job for a new challenge, compared to 45% who left for a better salary. When asked what the biggest reason was for leaving your previous job, 27% said for a better salary compared to 28% for a new challenge.
- 60% of teachers said that their previous school did not deliver on its promises in relation to salary, 59% said that their previous school did not deliver on its promises for career development and 44% said that their previous school did not deliver on CPD opportunities.
- 39% of the teachers said that they were not happy with their current salary compared to 38% who were somewhat happy, and 24% of teachers who said they were happy with their current salary.
- 44% of all teachers surveyed said that their salary did not increase at all last year. 35% of all teachers surveyed said they were happy with their overall package excluding their salary. 20% of teachers surveyed get no additional benefits other than their salary.
- 29% of teachers surveyed said that their school's performance appraisal system was linked to their salary.
- 73% of teachers have said that they would consider leaving their current role to another country, if a better one came up and 43% are actively seeking another job.
- 80% of teachers surveyed said they would stay in their current job if they had a better salary whilst 44% wanted better allowances, 45% want better school leadership and 44% want better career development.

## **British Curriculum Schools**

British curriculum schools represent the largest curricular within the private sector across the UAE. In Dubai, British curriculum schools are most in demand; however, the data from this particular section of teachers suggests that teacher retention may be a critical issue within this segment of the market. 72% of British Curriculum School teachers are prepared to leave the UAE if better opportunity came up with the USA, Australia and the UK as the most desirable destinations followed by Hong Kong for teachers who are looking to leave the UAE.

## **British Curriculum Schools**

- 58% of teachers working in British Curriculum schools come from the state sector;
- 48% worked in the UK before moving to the UAE;
- 62% of British curriculum school teachers left their previous job for a new challenge;
- 42% of British Curriculum school teachers left for a better salary;
- 62% of British Curriculum school teachers said that their school did not deliver on salary promises;
- 60% of British Curriculum school teachers said that their school did not meet its promises on workload;
- 55% of British Curriculum school teachers said that their school did not deliver on its promises on CPD;
- 38% of British Curriculum school teachers were 'somewhat' happy with their salary compared to 35% that weren't and 25% that were;

- 35% of British Curriculum school teachers are 'somewhat' happy with their current overall package, compared to 25% who are happy and 35% who are not happy;
- 72% of British Curriculum school teachers are prepared to leave the UAE if better opportunity came up;
- USA, Australia and the UK are the most desirable destinations followed by Hong Kong for teachers who are looking to leave the UAE;
- 50% of British Curriculum teachers are 'somewhat' happy in their job
- 38% of British Curriculum school teachers said that working in the UAE neither helps nor harms their career; 24% felt that it harmed their career; 37% felt that it helped their career.
- 62% of British Curriculum School teachers are currently looking for another job;
- Of this 62%, 52% are un-happy with their current salary and 45% did not receive a salary increase last year. 50% of this number is also un-happy with their additional allowances whilst 28% are somewhat happy.
- 86% of this group, are looking to leave the UAE if a better opportunity comes up within the USA, UK and Australia as the top destinations.
- 78% of British Curriculum School teachers would stay with their current employer if they had a better salary;
- 63% of British Curriculum School teachers think that their school does not value their efforts – 54% of these have a master's degree and are aged between 35-44. One teacher commented "I want to stay in UAE but have a better job. With 14 years' experience and an MA, the scale (pay scale) here stops at Step 8 in Dubai. They prefer cheaper, less experienced teachers here."

### **American Curriculum Schools**

This section will highlight the findings for educators who are working in American curriculum schools in the UAE. Overall, 20% of the survey respondents are working in this type of curriculum and are highly educated (52% of them hold a masters' degree). Almost half of them left their previous position (48%) for a new challenge and a better salary (45%). 28% of American curriculum survey respondents receive 8000-12000 AED per month. Salary was highlighted as an area their school did not deliver on followed by career development.

- 42% of American Curriculum School teachers taught in the private sector back home compared to 38% in the public sector and 20% in both
- 48% of American Curriculum School teachers left their previous job for a new challenge and 45% for a better salary;
- The biggest reason for leaving their previous job was for a better salary;
- Salary was the biggest area that their school did not deliver on followed shortly by career development;
- The majority of American Curriculum School teachers (28%) get paid between 8000-12,000 AED per month.
- 42% are un-happy with their current salary; 34% are somewhat happy and 23% are happy with their current salary;

- 42% of American Curriculum School teachers are un-happy with their additional allowances excluding their salary; compared to 30% that are somewhat happy and 28% that are happy.
- 46% of American Curriculum School teachers are un-happy with their professional development opportunities, whilst 13% described them as un-satisfactory. 31% described them as 'good'.
- 86% said they would consider leaving the UAE to another country if a better opportunity came up;
- Qatar, USA, and Australia are the most desirable destinations;
- When asked why they would be interested in moving to one of these countries, a teacher said "I feel maybe the management structure would be more pleasant and transparent and also the cost of living will be much lower than in the UAE. Thus allowing me to make a bigger saving than i am doing right now."
- 60% of American Curriculum School teachers are actively seeking another job
- 77% said that a better salary would enable them to remain in their current job;
- 56% of all American Curriculum School teachers do not feel like their school values their efforts;
- 48% of American Curriculum School teachers have a masters' degree and 42% are aged between 35-44;
- Of the 86% of American Curriculum School teachers who would consider a move to another country for a better opportunity:
- 45% are unhappy with their current salary;
- 45% did not get a salary increase at all
- 38% are not happy with their allowances; 32% are somewhat happy; and 30% are happy.
- 28% describe their staff accommodation as acceptable; 11% un-satisfactory; 23% good and 22% very good;
- 54% of American Curriculum School teachers who would consider moving to another country are actively looking for another job
- 79% said they would stay with their employer if their salary was better;
- 53% of teachers considering a move to another country do not feel like their school values their efforts;
- 52% of this group holds a masters' degree and 38% of them are aged between 35-44;
- 45% of American Curriculum School teachers describe their CPD as "Acceptable" compared to 13% that describe it as unsatisfactory and 31% describe it as 'Good'.

### **Principals' Headlines**

- 62% of principals left their previous job for a new challenge;
- 72% of principals said that their previous school did not deliver on its promise in relation to workload;
- 50% of principals are somewhat happy with their current salary, compared to 40% that are happy and 10% that are not;
- 70% would consider leaving to another country if a better opportunity came up;

- 35% of principals are interested to move to the USA, 22% for Qatar, Oman, UK and Australia;
- 67% of principals would remain with their current school if they had a better salary;
- 85% think that their school values their efforts;

## Appendix L. Survey Data Highlighted in the News

### Teacher training under spotlight in first of its kind survey



Teachers in the UAE have been voicing their opinions about their development and training programmes, in a first-of-its kind national survey.

The study looks at learning opportunities within the education sector and also aims to understand what teachers think about their own professional growth.

## **Appendix M. Transcription of Diary Extract**

8<sup>th</sup> March, 2015

Releasing the survey has given me a strong sense of disrupting the market.

The response has been very strange and interesting at the same time.

Is it worth reaching out to Deloitte and PwC etc?

I've realised in the past two weeks that I get bored very easily and that I need more.

Uncertainty breeds boredom.

The survey has enabled me to potentially influence policy change.

This is where I feel most comfortable.

What have I learned from this?

Uncomfortable truths are a little hard for some people to stomach.

## **Appendix N. Transcription of Diary Extract**

28<sup>th</sup> April, 2015

It has been a long and stressful 2 weeks. Not knowing if I can leave has impacted on my productivity and I knew this would happen deep down.

Not having an immediate job has been frustrating and the day job has gone from bad to worse.

I need to navigate through this and find a way out.

I need to remain composed, challenge and position myself accordingly.

The next challenge is on the horizon and I need to create a thought framework to ensure I am indispensable.

## Appendix O: CPD Presentation

Slide 1



Introduction – welcome back –  
overview of the day – refresher of  
yesterday – summary of key  
learning points

Norms of the session – no mobile  
phones, C3 B4 U C ME

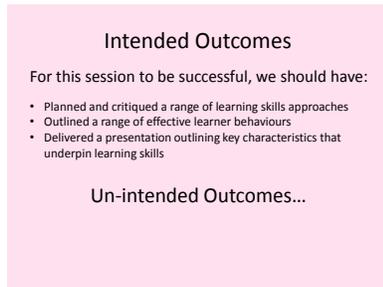
Introduce learning outcomes for  
the day and the road map of the  
session with timings

Slide 2



“Big” question to begin with –  
we’ll get them to talk in pairs  
about it but we won’t have a  
whole group discussion...

Slide 3



I’ve listed some intended  
outcomes and we can share that  
there may be some un-intended  
ones as well.

Slide 4

KHDA Priorities?

- Thinking and Learning Skills
- Students' interactions and collaboration
- Enquiry, research and critical thinking
- Connection to the real world
- Innovation

I'm not sure if we should share this at the start or towards the end. We could share it towards the end and use it as a plenary activity.

Slide 5

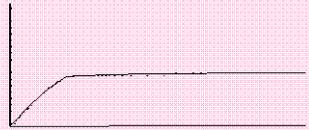
What frustrates you the most about the way your students approach their learning?

What do you see them doing or not doing?

Key questions to consider. We want them to talk about learner behaviours and then we can lead into teacher behaviours.

Slide 6

What does the research say?



Learning reaches a plateau if:

- Components are taught in pure isolation
- Thinking creatively throughout isn't incorporated
- Climate isn't authentic or challenging
- Lack of classroom talk (TEEP, 2012)

Quick summary about what TEEP and Hattie's research tell us.

We can talk about the visual learning work from before.

## Slide 7

When students hit a plateau, they:

- rarely contribute ideas
- don't think about the meaning of what they read or heard
- don't link different lessons
- don't think about how or why they are doing a task keep making the same mistakes; don't read instructions carefully or learn from mistakes in assessment tasks
- won't/can't take responsibility for their own learning
- have no strategies when they are stuck
- don't link work with the outside world are reluctant to take risks
- are reluctant to edit or check their own work

Summarise of this with the teachers

## Slide 8

What would you like your students to be doing instead?

## Slide 9



In groups, create a visual representation to answer the question: what would you like your students to be doing in class instead?  
Represent 5 skills or attitudes

First major activity. We'll ask the teachers to create a visual representation of the learner behaviours that they would like to see their students doing more of in class. We'll give them 20 minutes to create this and then present and feedback to the group.

### **Activity Visual Representation**

Get the teachers to create a visual representation of what they would like young people to be doing in an ideal world – 5 attitudes and 5 skills

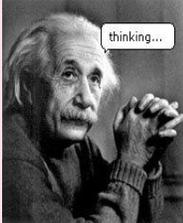
We'll debrief this with the teachers so that we're in agreement about where to go next.

Slide 10

**What do you think are the most significant characteristics of lessons with opportunities for learning skills?**

What did you come up with?

- Pupil-led
- Group work
- Questioning
- High challenge
- Thinking time
- Open-ended
- Cross curricular
- Engaging
- Meta cognitive
- Innovative

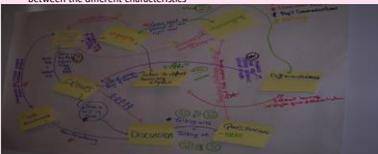


We'll ask them to write these down on post-it notes in their groups or tables and then we can share this list. They will come up with more but we'll try to bring out the key points.

Slide 11

**What does a vibrant, learning skills classroom look like?**

- Work in groups and create concept map
- You can add more post-it notes if you wish to represent key characteristics of learning skills
- Add annotated links between the key ideas to demonstrate the relationships between the different characteristics



Second major activity.  
Concept Map.

In groups, the teachers will create a concept map with linking relationships between the key words, and we'll get them to generate 'what will happen if..?'" questions. This will be a challenge for them but it will position them as learners, and bring them out of their comfort zone.

Slide 12

Mediating through debriefing  
(THE ARMY ANALOGY)

- What have you done?
- How did you do it?
- What have you learnt about?
- What have you learnt to do?
- How did you learn together?
- What were you good at?
- What was most difficult?
- Can we learn something from this for another time?



We'll debrief the activity together.

Probably time for a break.

Slide 13

Experts' Challenge

- Split a topic into smaller elements.
- Each team is challenged to become an expert in their element.
- This will involve research and a presentation.
- The teacher defines the success criteria.

Experts' Challenge Question: What are the key elements that underpin *very good* learning skills across the school?

### **Activity – Group Challenge – Experts' Challenge**

**We share with them the following resources:**

**Effective Learner Behaviours**  
**Effective Teacher Behaviours**  
**KHDA 1.3 Learning Skills**

Each group will be the expert's challenge sheet.

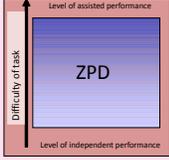
The purpose of the activity is to explore these concepts in depth so that they can establish a solid grounding to move to the next stage.

Peer assessment activity using the rubric.

## Slide 14

**Zone of Proximal Development**

- ZPD:  
The difference between what a learner can do unaided and can do with appropriate support.
- Good teaching:  
Identifying where this potential for development lies and providing the right kind of support.
- Appropriate support:  
Often best provided by more able peers.



ZPD – Vygotsky: In classroom where thinking skills approaches are being used, not only are the pupils able to move forward but there is potential for development created by all the partners in learning - teacher to teacher as well as pupil to pupil.

## Slide 15

*How confident are you that a learning approach makes a substantial difference to learning outcomes?*

Get in line:  
1 = not at all confident  
10 = complete confidence

What reasons do you have for this?



Group Activity to get everyone standing up and engaged.

## Slide 16

**The Diyafah Framework**

What should the Diyafah framework look like?

What are other schools doing?

At this point, we could share the other school's rubrics and ask them to review them and feedback with ideas and to think about it for next week.

Slide 17

Similarities and Differences



Appoint a group ambassador. The group ambassador will move clockwise to the next group to summarise the similarities and differences and to respond to questions.

At this point, we could share the other school's rubrics and ask them to review them and feedback with ideas and to think about it for next week.

Slide 18

The Diyafah Framework

- How can we assess these skills?
- How can we evidence these skills?
- How can we define these skills for students and teachers?
- How can we create different levels of challenge?
- How can we create subject specific descriptors?
- How can we ensure that children understand their purpose?

At this point, we could share the other school's rubrics and ask them to review them and feedback with ideas and to think about it for next week.

Slide 19



We'll summarize the session and discuss next steps for next week.

Development of AI Diyafah Rubric Evaluation

I Can statements

Roll out and implementation within phases and subject areas

Slide 20

September 17th

Design a draft learning skills rubric for:  
Foundation Stage  
Key Stage 1, 2, 3,4 & Sixth Form

Create a list of evidences that will demonstrate  
the learning skills.

Present and Review

At this point, we could share the other school's rubrics and ask them to review them and feedback with ideas and to think about it for next week.

Slide 21

Implications

- Language – accessible yet still demonstrating challenge
- Levels
- Descriptors
- Challenge
- Outcomes

At this point, we could share the other school's rubrics and ask them to review them and feedback with ideas and to think about it for next week.

## **Appendix P: Feedback to the senior leadership team**

### **Statement of Intention**

The learning skills rubrics have been developed by the teachers at Al Diyafah to refine our approach towards learning skills. We are taking a closer look at effective learner behaviours and how we can design learning around critical skills for life beyond school.

*Our learning skills rubrics are instruments to facilitate the effective planning, teaching, and evaluation of learning skills.*

### **Key Questions to consider in relation to the rubrics**

- What is different about learning skills at Al Diyafah?
- What would be the best evidence for each indicator?
- Can staff and children confidently explain the language used in them?
- What is the progression of levels, age stages, and key stages? (Some key stages are using 3 levels, some are using 5)
- What is our rationale for different learning skills for different phases?
- How do the rubrics ensure challenge?
- How will the learning skills rubrics evolve?

### **Summary of Feedback**

- The Sixth Form rubric is very, very specific and challenge orientated. The right amount of levels and as a starting point, excellent for teachers to use and to start looking for greater evidence of learning skills;
- The Key Stage 4 rubric is also excellent, simple and effective. I would challenge the teachers to focus on the children looking for evidence with their statement to justify their self-assessment.
- The Key Stage 2 and 1 rubrics feel quite big, and complicated as a starting point. I would start by asking the teachers to just look for evidence of those learning skills in each area before attempting to level them.
- The foundation stage rubric is very, very good. I'm very impressed by this. I would go back to the FS teachers and challenge them on their moderation of the observations and ask how they are assessing the children.

### **Key Message**

- We're thinking differently about teacher and learner behaviours;
- We've designed key stage specific instruments to plan, teach and assess learning skills;
- As a starting point, we're looking for "evidence of learning skills in these key areas".

### **Our next steps are:**

- moderation,
- re-development,
- re-plan,
- check for appropriate challenge,
- build student feedback into them.