

**EXPLORING THE RESILIENCE OF EARLY CAREER TEACHERS:
ENGAGING POSITIVELY WITH THE REALITIES**

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Abstract

This thesis reflects on the perceptions of resilience of more than fifty early career secondary teachers and is intended as the initial stage of a longitudinal research inquiry. It focuses on how the resilience of new entrants to the teaching profession is challenged and eroded, but also sustained and nurtured, in the initial year of teacher training and as a newly qualified teacher. Drawing on bricolage, the inquiry is qualitative in approach, using a range of methods, including a resilience test, questionnaires, interviews and a range of creative writing approaches, to explore deeper insights into the experiences and perspectives of early career teachers. This thesis complements important work in the field, including Gu and Day (2013) and Johnson et al., (2015), by adopting a wide-ranging and creative approach to gathering evidence from a group of early career teachers. The honesty and vulnerability of the participants has inspired me to consider ways in which resilience may be fostered at the beginning of a career in teaching. Clear implications for a more holistic view of the individual teacher at the heart of initial teacher education are highlighted as a result. Recommendations are made for changes to provision in initial teacher education, including a stronger focus on the emotional aspects of the teacher's role, and a re-thinking of reflective practice and mentoring as part of transformational learning in the teaching profession.

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Overview of Contents

| | |
|--|----------|
| Contents | page 3 |
| Figures | page 4 |
| Glossary of Terms | page 5 |
| Glossary of Abbreviations | page 6 |
| Chapter 1 Introduction | page 7 |
| Chapter 2: Setting the scene | page 13 |
| Chapter 3: Understanding resilience | page 21 |
| Chapter 4: Matters of methodology, methods and ethics | page 26 |
| Chapter 5: Research in practice – resilience tests | page 39 |
| Chapter 6: Research in practice – questionnaires | page 48 |
| Chapter 7: Research in practice - creative writing | page 68 |
| Chapter 8: Research in practice – NQT resilience | page 92 |
| Chapter 9: Impact on ITE provision and professional practice | page 100 |
| Chapter 10: Concluding comments | page 108 |
| References | page 115 |
| Appendices | page 132 |

Figures

Figure 1: Overview of Methods

Figure 2: Overview of i-resilience test responses

Figure 3: Summary of responses for confidence (level of worry)

Figure 4: Overview of aspects which may most hinder participants' resilience

Figure 5: Overview of aspects which may most help participants' resilience

Figure 6: Pre-PGCE situations requiring resilience by participants

Figure 7: Strategies used by participants to manage challenging pre-PGCE situations

Figure 8: Summary of challenges from questionnaires 2 and 3

Figure 9: Summary of support for resilience from questionnaires 2 and 3

Figure 10: Sources of significant social support through PGCE course as a whole

Figure 11: Summary of metaphor themes

Glossary of Terms

Emotional intelligence - I draw on the work of Goleman (1998 and 2006) in particular to consider emotional intelligence; recognising our own emotions and those of other people is a central part of reflective practice.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Initial Teacher Training (ITT) – The distinction I make between these two terms in my thesis is that ITE encompasses a more holistic view of the early years in the profession in contrast with the more technical ITT aspects of a professional training course.

Early career teacher - There are a numbers of possible terms to describe the participants in my inquiry: trainee / student / beginning teacher, pre-service teacher, as well as newly qualified teacher (NQT) and recently qualified teacher. In my inquiry, I use the term to encompass all participants from recruitment to a PGCE course to the end of the NQT year.

Reflective practice – The development of insight as a result of critical thinking about the links between theory and practice; this may be an individual or collaborative activity (Bolton, 2010; Boud and Walker, 1998; Brockbank and McGill, 2007).

Social constructionism – This is the belief that people are capable of change, as they interact with others in socially-constructed contexts.

Teacher educator-researcher - I have chosen this term, as I consider myself to be more than a 'researching professional' (Bourner, Bowden and Laing, 2001: 71), as the focus for my research inquiry is very closely linked to my everyday work, but I also embrace my own opportunities for educative growth in the process.

Note:

Throughout the document, the voices of individual participants in the research are given in italics and anonymised.

Glossary of Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|---|
| CPD | Continuing Professional Development |
| DfE | Department for Education |
| ITE | Initial Teacher Education |
| ITT | Initial Teacher Training |
| MFL | Modern Foreign Languages |
| NQT | Newly Qualified Teacher |
| OFSTED | Office for Standards in Education |
| PGCE | Post Graduate Certificate in Education |
| POET | Point of Entry Text (Kincheloe and Berry, 2004:108) |
| QTS | Qualified Teacher Status |
| SCITT | School-Centred Initial Teacher Training |
| SD | School Direct |

Acknowledgements

Through this research inquiry, I have sought ‘to enlarge the conversation’ (Smith, 1984: 390) about the resilience of early career teachers, drawing on the insights of the research participants and my own reading and developing understandings of the issues.

In the process, I am indebted to my supervisors for their wisdom and support; thanks to Dr Helen Boulton for her interest in my research, thanks to Dr Jane Ching for her pragmatic guidance and unflinching commitment to my progress throughout, and thanks to Dr Kevin Flint for encouraging me into previously uncharted philosophical territory and enabling me to emerge the richer from the experience.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

‘Any force that has the power to convince individuals that student well-being is not a central factor in improving education must be addressed.’ (Kincheloe, 2012: 16)

The well-being of students is perceived by many as vital for effective learning and progress (Kincheloe, 2012; Lucas, Claxton and Spencer, 2013). Such sentiments are firmly echoed in this research inquiry which explores the resilience of early career teachers who have considerable influence on the well-being of their students in schools. As part of the recruitment process for the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course at the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provider institution where I work, we highlight the emotional, physical and intellectual challenges involved in teaching as a profession. This is not intended to deter applicants, but rather to encourage them to engage with the inevitable demands of working in large institutions with a variety of colleagues and children with different and often challenging needs, dealing with constant educational change at a local and national level, as well as balancing their own personal lives. It is this complexity of teaching that makes it both a challenging and rewarding profession, with reflective practice at its core (Chapter 10) and where all those involved in ITE have a part to play in instilling in new teachers ‘a sense of confidence, resilience, and self-efficacy’ (Waddell, 2007: 125).

I began my doctoral research inquiry in January 2011 with the simple notion that I wanted to contribute to practice in ITE with regard to the well-being and positive professional development of early career teachers. My initial thoughts revolved around the word ‘turbulence’, but soon focused on a review of the literature around resilience (Chapter 3) and its potential application in the ITE context. Day, Edwards, Griffiths and Gu’s brief report on teachers and resilience concludes with the question: ‘How can teachers’ resilience be fostered?’ (2011: 27). My research contributes to this debate in relation to early career teachers in particular, using a variety of traditional and more creative methods (Chapter 4). However, challenged in particular by Kincheloe’s writing (2008 and 2010), I have become more critically reflexive about much of the discourse surrounding education practice, including the

viewpoint that resilience is achievable as a goal and will provide the answers to enable teachers to cope with the multiple demands of the profession. Like Chandler (2014: 47), I am more concerned to ‘approach resilience as a way of thinking about how we think about the being of being.’

Statement of objectives

In brief, the central aim for my research inquiry has been to consider how ITE provision might engage positively with the realities of teaching to foster the resilience of early career teachers. I view ITE provision in a holistic sense, including various stakeholders, such as university tutors, school-based mentors and the early career teachers themselves. My objective has been to explore, through various approaches (Chapters 4 – 8), the challenges to early career teacher resilience and the factors that nurture and support resilience. The outcome of the research is intended to provide new insights and knowledge about early career teacher development, focusing on projections of resilience at key transition points in ITE training and development in particular.

The research may also contribute to knowledge about patterns of career development pathways for teachers in the longer term. As Gu and Day (2013: 40) state, ‘teacher educators need to become engaged in future thinking with pre-service students on internal and external factors which influence resilience in teachers, so that they are better prepared for the realities of teaching’. In my mind, there is a contradiction implicit in this statement, as much educational research is rooted in the past or present, rather than explicitly focusing on future unpredictable and unknown possibilities. My thesis is a contribution to this field, as my research with participants and scholarly engagement in this field has already led to significant adjustments to the provision for early career teachers at my ITE provider institution (Chapter 9).

In recent years, there has been an increase in literature about teacher well-being and resilience, ranging from research-informed articles (Gu and Day, 2013) to practical guidance for teachers working on their own well-being (Holmes, 2005; Rogers, B., 2012; Singer, 2012). This research inquiry contributes to the debate by

narrowing the focus to the initial training period for teachers in particular and informing practice in ITE provision in a tangible and positive way.

At the heart of my research inquiry is a desire to support early career teachers to engage positively with the challenges of the teaching profession. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012: vx) define 'professional capital' in teaching as the combination of human, social and decisional capital, and my research inquiry as a whole sought to explore one aspect of human capital – resilience – within the broader contexts of teaching. Based on the research evidence, I reflect on the way in which various forces mediate each other in practice, so that I can contribute to the debate and influence both policy and practice in relation to the professional development needs of early career teachers. I hope, as a result, to have a positive impact on improving the lives of young people, acknowledging Day et al.'s (2006: 6) research findings that 'statistically significant associations were found between pupils' levels of attainment and teachers' commitment and resilience'.

Who am I?

It is important to outline my own sense of 'being and becoming' (Barnett, 2007: 13) as a teacher educator-researcher at this early stage in my thesis, as my research inquiry, including my choice of *bricolage* as methodology (Chapter 4,) is consistent with my ontological and epistemological stance throughout. I am conscious of the enormous responsibility of engaging with human beings (early career teachers) in the course of my research, as they inhabit an unfolding space in a new career, filled with uncertainty and disconnections, possibilities and opportunities.

I understand my ontology as a participant in a socially constructed educational context where my values, beliefs and assumptions about education in general, and ITE in particular, are a central part of the integrity of my research. Education should enable people to gain 'confidence and capacity to flourish' (Lucas, Claxton and Spencer: 2013: 3) in a constantly changing world, where a tool-kit of quick-fix approaches is unlikely to allow for as yet unimagined complexities (Kincheloe, 2008). I have been inspired by the work of Freire (1970, 1985 and 1996) as an underpinning thread to this thesis, as I seek deep-rooted and longer-lasting insights

to prepare early career teachers for more than Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) to ensure a sustained and enriching professional journey of continuous improvement and transformation in teaching. With this in mind, I consider space for reflection to be empowering for personal and professional growth, recognising that 'being' is always incomplete, an evolving part of 'becoming', and that education is part of coping with an unknown future. I also acknowledge the importance of engaging with inconsistencies and uncertainties that may arise rather than striving to find a swift solution or potentially illusory consensus. This standpoint is based on a premise of hope – 'hope is an ontological need' (Freire, 1996: 8) which 'demands an anchoring in practice' (Freire, 1996: 9) – in a positive, creative and empowering way. For example, my sense that new knowledge may emerge in reflective spaces has informed my choice of creative writing activities as an innovative method for the inquiry (Chapter 7). Although political thinking and practice were not an initial driving force for this research, chapters 9 and 10 give a clear indication of how research findings lead to inevitable choices about practice. Referring to teachers, Freire (1985: 180) comments 'The more conscious and committed they are, the more they understand that their role as educators requires them to take risks' and I suggest that this is my critical and creative (and possibly risky) response, as I propose some changes to the system rather than simply focusing on how to ensure that early career teachers conform to the existing system.

I approach my research from a social constructionist viewpoint, believing that people are 'multiple changing selves' (Bolton, 2014:73) and self-defining participants in socially-constructed lives (Lock and Strong, 2010). In this research context, identity is seen as 'the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past' (Hall, 1990: 225) and links to an understanding of culture and context. As Kincheloe and Berry (2004: 26) suggest: 'Culture is not merely the context in which the self operates, but it is 'in the self' – an inseparable portion of what we call self'. Burr (2004) and Lock and Strong (2010) note that social constructionism is an evolving field of inquiry and I am aware that I am placing more of the human into my interpretation than might usually be the case. I seek to explore the personal within the societal dimension of

an early career teacher's experience to observe how the person is both constructing and constructed (Harré, 1998); in this way, I am exploring the part that resilience plays in this process.

Epistemologically and ontologically, I am closely involved in the inquiry, aware that I cannot distance myself fully (McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 2003) as I am a stakeholder in the ITE context. I acknowledge that insights gained are simply contributions to a bigger picture, rather than any claim to a so-called truth, by drawing on Stolorow, Atwood and Orange (2002: 118-119) that we 'must attend to truth-as-possible-understanding and not truth-as-correspondence-to-fact'. I allow the research findings to inform developments in practice in my ITE work context, rather than seeking to discover so-called universally applicable objective facts about future ITE provision. I draw significantly on the 'critical pedagogy' espoused by Kincheloe (2008: 1), welcoming his commitment to highlighting all dimensions, including the affective and emotional aspects, of people. Although Kincheloe is particularly concerned with minority groups and the power dimensions that surround them, perhaps this is not very different from my consideration of justice for a small sub-section of teachers as they seek to find their place in a multi-faceted profession. As Kincheloe (2008: 60) urges, I hope that I am brave enough over time 'to construct rather than simply reinforce the status quo'.

Reflections on a Literature Review

Boote and Beile (2005: 3) emphasise that a 'substantive, thorough, sophisticated literature review is a pre-condition for doing substantive, thorough, sophisticated research' and literature is the cornerstone for all areas of my inquiry. Although it is more conventional to have a separate chapter for a literature review in a doctoral thesis as suggested in most research textbooks (Creswell, 1994 and 2003; McMillan and Schumacher, 2001; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003), this would run counter to the way in which my inquiry has unfolded. Literature underpins every aspect of my research, as I focus on the interrelationship between theory, method and overall research design (Hart, 1998), as well as varied lines of inquiry, that I consider it to be limiting to review all literature in one stand-alone chapter. Therefore, I have

chosen to include a detailed review of literature as a rich thread which permeates each chapter in this document. For example, I set the context for my inquiry with reference to government policy documentation and relevant academic literature (Chapter 2) and draw on literature around the use of creative writing to inform both my methods and the analysis of the data (Chapter 7). Boote and Beile (2005: 8) provide a challenging and critical analysis of the standard of literature reviews in research, reviewing a sample of thirty doctoral theses against their 'literature review scoring rubric'; although only one of these theses took the same approach that I have adopted 'in which the literature reviewed was interspersed throughout the dissertation', they note that they had 'no difficulty applying the rubric to this format; indeed, it scored fairly well against our criteria and standards' (2005: 10). This more holistic approach to a review of the literature permeates the thesis and seems in keeping with my search for a multiplicity of insights and diversity of approaches to explore the resilience of early career teachers using *bricolage* (Chapter 4); literature is a living thread through the inquiry at every level, not a closed chapter.

Chapter 2: Setting the Scene

‘Challenges to teacher resilience: conditions count’ (Gu and Day, 2013: 22)

This chapter provides the overall contextual landscape and conditions of the research inquiry, insofar as it informs my own work and the experiences of the research participants in relation to resilience of early career teachers. Resilience as a term has become increasingly common in discussions about workplace well-being in general (Holmes, 2005; Robertson, 2012; Zolli and Healy, 2012) and in government documentation around entry to the teaching profession in particular (Education Select Committee, 2011; DfE, 2012; Carter, 2015).

There is limited empirical work on resilience of teachers (Day et al., 2007; Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012; Gu and Day, 2013) and my research aims to contribute to knowledge with regard to new entrants to the profession. Carter’s review of initial teacher training (ITT) stresses on three occasions that it is ‘important that ITT includes explicit content on resilience and time management’ (2015: 15, 24 and 36). Carter also encourages ITT providers to emphasise to new teachers that they are joining one of the most valued professions, as this will be ‘an important motivating force that can build resilience and pride in new teachers, helping to sustain them in the first few challenging years of their career’ (Carter: 2015: 25). However, in spite of the frequent exhortations to the profession to focus on early career teacher resilience, there is no reference to resilience in the summary of recommendations in the review. It is therefore unsurprising that no mention of resilience is made in the government’s response (DfE, 2015) to Carter’s review. Indeed, Carter’s review seems to imply that building resilience with early career teachers will enhance their ability to manage the mechanics of the job and sustain them in their practice. My sense from this research inquiry is that building resilience is more complex than a simple cause and effect chain might indicate. A pivotal aspect in my inquiry has been to cultivate space for participants to feel empowered to express their sense of ‘being’ in the profession, as well as to refer to their practice (Chapters 6 – 8).

My interest arises from the opportunities that a focus on resilience may provide for individuals and a collective group of individuals, ‘docile bodies’ (Foucault, 1977:

136), to take control of their circumstances, rather than be controlled, as they manage the flow and uncertainties of being a teacher or, indeed, a human being. This is closely aligned with the debate about the relation between teacher characteristics and teacher effectiveness in ensuring positive outcomes for learners (Rockoff et al., 2011; Coe et al., 2014). In part, this explains my choice of a range of methodological approaches (Chapter 4) and a focus on reflective practice (Chapter 10) as I echo Bolton (2014: 2) that as many professionals 'face complex and unpredictable situations; they need complex and diverse reflective and reflexive processes'.

Published data from the Teaching Agency (now National College of Teaching and Leadership) about retention in teaching are somewhat limited and subject-specific data tracking individual teachers over time are not available. However, there seems to be a consensus from a range of sources (Hargreaves, 1994; Carlyle and Woods, 2002; Galton and MacBeath, 2008; Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012) that a significant number of early career teachers leave the profession within five years. Indeed, Burghes et al. (2009) refer to an estimated 30-50% drop-out rate within the first five years among early career teachers in England. A poor level of retention is also prevalent among the Teach First group of early career teachers, who have been selected from a very competitive field with resilience as one of the key competence criteria for selection. Considerable literature around teacher stress is available (Hartney, 2008; Singer, 2010; Rogers, B., 2012) and a recent independent survey of teachers' levels of job satisfaction and wellbeing, commissioned by a teaching union (Communicate Research Ltd., 2013) provided data indicating that 47% of respondents had seriously considered leaving the profession and 86% said that their workload had increased in the previous year.

Evidence from Finland and the UK Teach First programme is cited by Barber and Mourshed (2007) where interviews for applicants for teaching are required to assess candidates' 'motivation to teach, motivation to learn, communication skills and emotional intelligence' and 'resilience' (2011: 4 – 5). Resilience is also highlighted as a key characteristic in the House of Commons Education Select Committee report (2011) on attracting, training and retaining the best teachers,

which also notes that a range of personal and inter-personal skills are vital for teachers, expressing surprise at the 'lack of research into qualities found to make for effective teaching' (2011: 20). I would argue that this may be due, in part at least, to the fact that personal and inter-personal skills and qualities, such as resilience, are difficult to measure (Chapter 5).

The current educational landscape in England is one of change and uncertainty as the teaching profession faces a number of external pressures in terms of policy and the legislative environment. As Gu and Day comment (2013: 22), 'demonstrable performance and measurable outcomes' have become the central focus for judgements of quality by the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted and it may be that this climate is part of the challenge to teacher resilience in general.

Consideration of the ITE context alone shows that recent changes include the introduction of free schools in 2010 and teaching schools in 2011, new Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2012), the launch of School Direct (SD) routes into teaching in 2012, as well as a new Ofsted framework for inspection of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) (2014) and a review of ITT (Carter, 2015). Even if the context is broadened only slightly to include current significant changes to the curriculum and external examination requirements, then it is perhaps unsurprising that a focus on resilience of all teachers has assumed increasing attention, as they manage uncertainty and constant change.

A core aim of my research must be to guard against a concern for resilience solely in relation to meeting the demands of performativity (Kincheloe, 2008) rather than a genuine concern for the education of new teachers. For new entrants to the profession, there is a need to balance external demands and pressures at the same time as coping with the personal challenges that arise as part of training for a new career which can be mentally, physically and emotionally demanding. This is one of the challenges of the current climate in ITE:

... the first-order effect of performativity is to reorient pedagogical and scholarly activities towards those which are likely to have a positive impact on measurable performance outcomes and are a deflection of attention away

from aspects of social, emotional and moral development that have no immediate measurable performance value (Ball, 2012: 30).

As stated in the introduction, Day et al., (2011) and Gu and Day (2013) suggest that work on resilience with pre-service teachers is essential to ensure that they are prepared to cope with the realities of teaching. Although I agree with many of the points made in the short section on fostering resilience through ITE (Smethem and Hood, in Day et al., 2011: 9 – 10), I suggest that there is little that is new or different from current practice in ITE. For example, most (if not all) ITE providers ‘devise challenging targets for development which also recognise success’; ‘work together to improve teaching and learning’ and ‘establish mutually respectful relationships which challenge and support’ (ibid: 9). My research may be considered as a more practical contribution to precisely *how* we might ‘value teacher well-being’ (ibid: 9), providing concrete examples from practice (Chapter 9) to foster the resilience of early career teachers.

The work of Day and his colleagues (2006, 2007, 2011, 2013) underpins the contextual and literature framework of my research inquiry. However, at this point, it is worth highlighting some of the differences between my own overall research inquiry and the seminal work of Gu and Day (2013). Gu and Day carried out twice-yearly semi-structured interviews over a period of three years with 300 primary and secondary teachers and grouped the teachers into three broad groups, defining those with 0 – 7 years of experience as early career teachers. Although actual numbers are not given in Gu and Day’s article, one might estimate that approximately 25 secondary teachers with 0 – 3 years of experience may have been involved in the research. The research inquiry outlined in this thesis involved small-scale pilot projects (Gordon, 2013a and 2013b) with 19 participants, followed by a larger inquiry with more than 50 participants, in the first two years in the teaching profession. It draws on the experiences of participants at four key points in their ITT year and provides, therefore, a narrower and sharper focus of year 0, as well as including some NQTs at the end of their first year of teaching. As with Gu and Day’s research (2013), semi-structured interviews formed part of the approach in my research, but a much broader range of methods (including an online resilience test,

questionnaires and creative writing) has been used in this research inquiry to explore a deeper understanding of the experiences of early career teachers in a variety of ways. In chapter 3, I am also open to reflecting on whether it is the 'realities of teaching' (Gu and Day, 2013: 40) which may need addressing as much as the resilience of those involved, or perhaps it is some combination of factors as part of the complex interplay in the shifting worlds of early career teachers.

The participants in the research inquiry

The participants were PGCE secondary trainee teachers of shortage subjects (mathematics, modern languages and science) at one ITE provider in 2012 – 2013. The rationale for inviting these early career teachers to be participants in my research inquiry was pragmatic at one level, as I wished to broaden the scope of the earlier pilot studies with 19 modern language trainees. I was not yet ready to embrace the whole of the PGCE secondary cohort, although this development of my research has since taken place from 2013 onwards. The 'shortage subject' category suggests a degree of homogeneity among the participants, but it belies their varied prior learning and experiences. Some of the participants embarked on the PGCE course direct from undergraduate studies, whereas others had enjoyed successful careers in other fields and had significant family commitments. Clearly, this may have an impact on their levels of resilience, as personality traits and prior experience interact with the new context of teaching. Like Bajorek, Gulliford and Taskila (2014), I believe that the emotional aspects of teacher well-being must be addressed alongside the more technical-rational framework of Teachers' Standards to maximise teacher effectiveness and ensure better outcomes for pupils (Chapter 10).

Issues around liminality (Van Gennep, 2004), including transition through significant points in training and development, the 'betwixt and between' as Turner (1974: 233) describes it, are significant for early career teachers. These threshold points may include transition from first to second school placement during the PGCE course and transition to NQT school position, as well as future changes in roles and responsibilities. This explains the rationale for my methodological approach

(Chapter 4) and underlines the importance of this inquiry as the starting point of a longitudinal study (Chapter 9).

ITE and beyond

Although not a key motivation for my research at the outset, it may be that this longitudinal inquiry will contribute to tracking the development of trainee teachers beyond the relative safety of initial training into the wider world of NQT appointments and beyond; indeed, this is consonant with the expectations of the latest Ofsted inspection framework for ITT (2014). Although this Ofsted requirement has undoubted echoes of panopticism (Foucault, 1977) where ITT providers have considerable accountability with limited power, this move may also highlight the positive effect of ITE providers taking a longer-term view of the well-being of trainee teachers than might historically have been the case. This is to be welcomed, as long as funding and time pressures for ITE providers are recognised and provided for by the DfE as part of this development.

Given the current turbulence in the education system as a whole, even the most committed ITE tutor or senior school leader may be forgiven for experiencing concern when hearing Carr of the former Teaching Agency (at Westminster Briefing Event, 2013) refer to new routes into teaching initiatives in ITE as follows: 'We anticipate this being a bit of a rollercoaster; we're talking about major system change.' I would argue that any major system change needs a robust evidence base and a well-planned and coherent implementation plan if the well-being, at both a professional and personal level, of all those involved is not to be damaged. Without rigorous research behind current developments, there may be a danger of ill-informed, misguided or hasty change adding to the challenges for early career teachers. By highlighting some of the challenges and focusing on sustaining and nurturing resilience of early career teachers through this research inquiry, I hope to make a contribution to quality retention and well-being in the profession. I concur with Murray (2012: 20) that part of this may be a renewed focus on 'much "hidden" and sophisticated practice in teacher educators' support and guidance for student teachers, which is often on an individual basis'. Rediscovering the human being at

the heart of the complex world of the teaching profession is a key motivation for this inquiry, as I seek to give voice to early career teachers to inform future practice in ITE.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) suggest that teachers' commitment and effectiveness are particularly challenged at the start of their careers and this may lead to missed opportunities with regard to teacher retention and longer-term impact on learners' progress. As they (2012: 76) urge, 'We clearly need to find more strategies to keep teachers on until they reach peak performance around 10 – 20 years into the job.' The outcomes of my research to date (Chapter 9) begin to challenge dominant approaches to ITT (and research about teacher education) arising from a particular concern for the holistic development of early career teachers. At a time when there are diverse training routes for new entrants to the profession, it is particularly timely to review the increasingly patchwork ITT / ITE provision to ensure that the needs of early career teachers are effectively met whatever the context.

As mentioned earlier, the Ofsted framework for ITT inspection raises some points which are relevant when considering the resilience of early career teachers, as any inspection focus includes how ITT partnerships provide training to ensure good or better teachers, as well as 'the extent to which NQTs/former trainees were prepared for employment and induction' (Ofsted, 2014: 22). In addition, it is useful to note that Ofsted inspections consider how high-quality coaching and mentoring may enhance trainees' professional development. Chapters 9 and 10 propose a refreshed approach to mentoring with a focus on the holistic development, including resilience, of early career teachers.

In concluding this chapter, I should also state that I am cautious about a possible commodification of resilience as a construct, noting Kincheloe's (2004: 98) view that *bricoleurs* need to be alert to the 'silent and invisible ways that power operates via structures, narratives, and meta-narratives to constrain our understandings of the world'. Indeed, it may be that increased reference to resilience in policy around ITE means that it becomes part of a 'taken-for-grantedness' (Kincheloe, 2004: 98) at the heart of policy and practice in education. I am aware that researching resilience

may also lead to its commodification to a certain extent, but I feel that a lack of research and relevant guidance for providers may mean that there is a danger that a commitment to teacher resilience fails to translate into practice to benefit early career teachers. With this in mind, it is important to reflect on the meaning of resilience in a broad context and with specific reference to early career teachers.

Chapter 3: Understanding Resilience

‘Coping with life’s little wobbles’ (Bloom, 2013: 14)

Chandler (2014: 46) describes resilience as ‘an increasingly ubiquitous concept’ and this is supported by the number of resilience-related self-help books appearing on the market in recent years (Duggan and Solomons, 2014; McGuinness, 2013; Robertson, 2012). The nature of resilience is being explored in a number of other disciplines and forms of practice, including nursing and social care, in particular by people interested in employee engagement and well-being. Words such as ‘resilience’ and ‘grit’ have also become popular for teachers’ work with pupils in the constant drive to find new ways of raising academic standards (Hammond, 2015). Neenan (2009: 3) describes resilience as an ‘intriguing yet elusive concept’ as it resists definition, while Coutu (2003: 3) suggests ‘that we will never completely understand it’. My own epistemology and ontology indicate that a definition of resilience is difficult and consequently I focus more on possible descriptions to uncover multiple and complementary understandings of resilience in this chapter as a whole. I believe that the four key aspects identified by Cooper below are strongly located in the personal and professional identities and histories (Du Gay, Evans and Redmond, 2000) of participants in my research inquiry and are further discussed in chapter 5:

Contrary to popular belief, resilience – our ability to bounce back from setbacks – is not something that you either have or don’t have, it is a quality which can be developed. Because our natural resilience comes from various aspects of our personality, as well as our experience, a great starting point for building resilience for individuals, managers and whole groups is to understand which of these aspects we draw on for own resilience. The four key sources of personal resilience are: confidence, adaptability, purposefulness and need for social support (Cooper, 2012: no page).

Although this description is appealing in its simplicity and has formed the starting point for my work on resilience with early career teachers, I suggest that it may constitute a somewhat reductive view of resilience. In my mind, the term ‘bounce

back' conveys a sense of a straightforward and rapid process, whereas my experience of early career teachers facing uncomfortable challenges in their professional development tells a different story, often slow and painful, with additional setbacks along the way. This sense of coming back, rather than bouncing back, is supported by Grotberg (1995) and I am particularly interested in the transformative potential of a focus on resilience as early career teachers not only come back from adversity, but grow more (both professionally and personally) as a result (Chapters 6 - 8). My stance towards resilience throughout this research inquiry and in my interactions with early career teachers is a pro-active approach to vulnerability, rather than a negative one. This is in line with 'the deliberate cultivation of resilience and resourcefulness' (Lucas et al., 2013: 12) and seems appropriate as 'routine resilience' (Neenan, 2009: 7) is required of multidimensional people, in those times when teaching is uplifting as a profession as well as when it proves challenging and stressful. As Grotberg (1995: 3) maintains 'resilience is not ... found only in certain people ... All humans have the capacity to become resilient'.

As stated earlier, the motivation for my inquiry arises from a sense of personal, social and political responsibility towards early career teachers. Few would argue that people need to be adaptable as the world changes at a rapid rate, but I suggest that a focus on resilience may mean adaptation as a positive and reasoned response to change rather than just conformity to whatever dominant view appears to prevail as the order of the day. I sense that young people need resilient teachers with an inner stability now more than ever; a focus on 'certain uncertainty' (Bolton, 2014: 24) for early career teachers may enhance the learning of young people over time.

Zolli and Healy (2012: 5) explore the notion that constant disruption in many aspects of our lives, from political turmoil to natural disasters, has become the norm, and stress the importance of building 'better shock absorbers' to deal with the inevitable crises. They describe resilience as 'the capacity of a system enterprise, or a person, to maintain its core purpose and integrity in the face of dramatically changed circumstances' (2012: 7) and maintain that personal resilience is both 'improvable and teachable' (2012: 14). It is Zolli and Healy's premise that

resilience is rooted in our core values and beliefs, in our experiences and in our character, and in our 'habits of mind' (2012: 14) which we can cultivate and change. This echoes Neenan and Dryden's view (as cited in Neenan, 2009) that attitude (comprising thoughts, emotions and behaviour) lies at the heart of resilience, a thought echoed in my own findings (Chapters 6 and 7).

Similarly, in writing about teachers, Day et al. (2006: 8) note that their effectiveness is 'mediated by: ... the extent to which teachers sustain their commitment (i.e. are resilient)'. Furthermore, Gu and Day (2013) draw on the work of a range of authors (including Luthar and Brown, 2007) to discuss resilience as an unstable construct, which can be learned and acquired, and which leads to a positive response to adverse situations. The way in which individuals interact with their social environment, independently and together, contributes to resilience building. In this research inquiry, personality aspects of resilience are explored in chapter 5, whereas chapters 6 and 7 reflect more on the impact of experiences on the resilience of early career teachers.

Gu and Day argue that teacher resilience is:

not primarily concerned with the capacity to "bounce back" or recover from highly traumatic experiences and events but, rather, the capacity to maintain equilibrium and a sense of commitment and agency in the everyday worlds in which teachers teach (2013: 26)

While accepting that maintaining balance is an important outcome of resilience, it must be noted that the so-called 'everyday worlds' (Gu and Day, 2013: 26) of teachers are more complex than many writers acknowledge and some degree of stress is likely to be part of the experience. However, particularly considering the experiences of early career teachers, it is useful to note that 'you don't develop resilience by staying in your comfort zone' (Neenan, 2009: 75). Indeed, I have explored the potential link between resilience and vulnerability, as I reflect on my own learning journey through the professional doctorate process (Gordon, 2015).

Themes which have emerged from a review of the literature include the notions of self-efficacy, 'people's sense of personal efficacy to produce and regulate events in their lives' (Bandura, 1982: 122), and personal agency within broader social contexts. In essence, being critically reflexive and consonant with *bricolage*, this research inquiry explores more rounded and holistic understandings of developing personal and professional efficacy of the individual early career teacher, both for the present and the future, acknowledging that resilience is likely to remain a lifelong learning experience.

The impact of a review of literature around positive psychology (Dweck, 2006; Cooper, Flint-Taylor and Pearn, 2013; Seligman, 1990) has been significant in my developing understanding of resilience and illustrates one of the many benefits of the cross-disciplinary approach I have taken. The stance taken by positive psychologists focuses on identifying and developing strengths rather than considering weaknesses as the basis for change. This is in line with Dweck's (2006) writing about a personal growth mindset which encourages a flexible attitude to considering new ways of viewing situations to lead to positive change, and with Seligman's (1991) focus on the importance of learned optimism for personal growth.

One key area for exploration (Chapters 6 and 7) has been the relationship between the early career teacher and the school-based mentor, as this has emerged as a key finding at the heart of enhancing professional confidence and development. It is also alluded to in Gu and Day's analysis that 'conditions count' (2013:22) in relation to teacher resilience. A well-supported mentor relationship which encourages uncertainty may paradoxically strengthen the early career teacher when faced with varied demands and expectations. This echoes Luthar and Brown's celebration of the empowering impact that positive relationships (in contrast to negative relationships) may have on nurturing resilience:

Relationships lie at the 'roots' of resilience: when everyday relationships reflect ongoing abuse, rancor, and insecurity, this profoundly threatens resilience as well as the personal attributes that might otherwise have

fostered it. Conversely, the presence of support, love, and security fosters resilience in part, by reinforcing people's innate strengths (such as self-efficacy, positive emotions and emotion regulation) ... (Luthar and Brown, 2007: 947)

My concern is that the more affective dimension of early career teacher development may be overlooked and I concur with Garvey, Stokes and Megginson (2014: 112) that pressurised teachers need to have 'strong and stable personalities and to be able to tolerate complexity'. This is particularly challenging when considered alongside Phillion and Connelly's (2004: 468) observation that pre-service teachers 'want answers and methods. They want to be certain, to know; but certainty does not generate the flexibly enquiring attitude required by learning'. This is further explored in chapter 9, as the impact of the research to date is considered with specific reference to the PGCE secondary course at one ITE provider.

As I conclude this chapter, I wish to make it clear that I have no intention to reify resilience above other personal qualities. Resilience is just one of many threads which weave together in the evolving and complex tapestry of our lives; in part, this is why I chose *bricolage* for my inquiry and this is explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Matters of methodology, methods and ethics

‘A multi-faceted construct like resilience requires a multi-faceted approach’
(Cooper, Flint-Taylor and Pearn, 2013: 95)

Although this opening quotation refers to a multi-faceted approach to resilience, it also aptly describes my approach to methodology. This chapter explores the rationale for using *bricolage* (Lévi-Strauss, 1966), acknowledging that the overriding concern in the choice of methodology is to be able to embrace the inevitable complexity that I encounter at many levels – contextual, social, psychological and educational. Wibberley (2012: 1) suggests ‘the emergent nature of *bricolage* allows for bite-sized chunks of research to be carried out that have individual meaning for practice, but which can then be pieced together to create a meaningful whole’. I am, however, aware that this simplified view may run the risk of losing sight of the complexities of *bricolage* and I have immersed myself in the process to explore how the methodology might best evolve to meet the needs of my longitudinal inquiry. Indeed, Kincheloe’s *bricoleur* (2004) searches for the interconnections, as yet unimagined, and the links between knowledge and experiences, in order to fashion the research tools further, to influence change at many levels.

At this point, I acknowledge my genuine lack of desire to impose uniformity on a complex area of inquiry for the purpose of conforming to more common approaches to research. This arises from a growing recognition that a single method is unlikely to meet the varied demands of my research inquiry with its emotional and potentially value-laden dimensions, as the early career teachers encounter a range of experiences on the ITE journey. I am working from the premise that *bricolage* is part of broader critical educational research (Crotty, 2003; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009) and an understanding of social behaviour is enriched by an exploration of the political and ideological contexts which the research participants inhabit. Political and ideological neutrality may not be possible, as I am working within a context of constantly changing educational agendas and a ‘permanent revolution’ in schools (Laws, 2014: no page). Indeed, my research inquiry makes suggestions for transforming current practice

with regard to early career teachers (Chapter 9), so may be considered to be a positive contribution to an on-going agenda of improvement.

Mixed methods versus bricolage

I was certain that my inquiry would be in the qualitative paradigm, as my interest revolves around the lived experiences of participants and how their everyday worlds are constructed. I initially considered mixed method research, as this would allow me the freedom to use a number of methods to engage with my research focus, often combining different qualitative and quantitative methods (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; Lichtman, 2013). However, the standpoint for mixed method research is very different to that of *bricolage*, as it is based on the premise that mixed methods enable the researcher to ensure greater reliability and validity by using a variety of methods to arrive at some assumed truth. The purpose of utilising a mixed method approach, therefore, is primarily to enhance the trustworthiness of the evidence and any emerging theory from the research study, with the key purpose of arriving at some final understanding (or so-called truth) of a particular phenomenon under triangulation.

Although this methodology would allow some closure to my research at a given moment, it runs counter to the underlying ethos of my research inquiry (Chapter 1). Like mixed method approaches, *bricolage* is located within epistemologically structured framings of research, but it is far removed from the assumption that an absolute truth will emerge for the researcher who simply looks hard enough. Indeed, I am working from the premise that *bricolage* does not lead to justifying a supposedly truthful account of a phenomenon, but rather allows different and complementary understandings of a phenomenon to emerge through the research activities, only ever as a basis for further reflection and investigation.

An acknowledgement of a 'common system of axioms that transcends the narrow scope of disciplinary world views through overarching synthesis' (Klein, 2010:24) might also have led me to explore trans-disciplinary forms of inquiry (Gibbs, 2015), as I seek to find solutions through learning with others. However, it is the consonance of professional practice with working with what is at hand (Lévi-Strauss,

1966) in my own context that favours *bricolage* over trans-disciplinary forms of inquiry at this stage.

Kincheloe and Berry (2004: 39) note 'new knowledge is created in the collision of diverse perspectives' and it is this notion that underpins the approach to my research inquiry. *Bricolage* may serve to provide an alternative and challenging perspective on the possible hubris of knowledge generation that prevails in much educational research.

My approach to bricolage

Crotty (2003: 14) encourages researchers to find their own 'unique methodology' to respond to unique research questions. In this section, I trace my understanding of *bricolage* through various writers, before identifying my own particular stance in the context of this research. In brief, *bricolage* involves a multi-perspectival approach to research, combining diverse theoretical traditions as needed, leading to insights into sociological and educational phenomena. For these reasons, the metaphors of lace-making (Lévi-Strauss, 1966), collage, montage and patchwork quilting (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Kincheloe and Berry, 2004) are often used to describe *bricolage*, although I prefer something more exploratory in style (Gordon, 2013c) as I will illustrate in the conclusion to this chapter.

The origins of *bricolage* as a research concept are to be found in the writings of Lévi-Strauss (1966) and taken up by Denzin and Lincoln (2003), who locate *bricolage* firmly within the critical theory tradition, through to Kincheloe (2001; 2005) and Kincheloe and Berry's seminal work on the subject (2004). I must, however, confess a certain frustration with this strongly theoretical base for *bricolage*, as I felt inspired by the potential relevance of *bricolage* for my research inquiry, but remained unclear initially about how *bricolage* might unfold in practice, a point also reflected by Rogers, M. (2012).

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) emphasise the inventive skills and resourcefulness needed by the *bricoleur*, as well as the need to be knowledgeable about many research paradigms. Although daunted by my lack of knowledge of many research

paradigms, I was excited by the way that *bricolage* values an evolving and active approach, as I construct my research methods from the tools at hand and in response to emerging evidence, rather than adhering to a prescriptive and pre-defined approach to research. This is entirely in line with my stated position as a social constructionist (Chapter 1) and is consonant with my own reiterations of what is at hand in my practice (Lévi-Strauss, 1966). Given the complex and multi-faceted nature of the focus for my research inquiry, I need to work within a practice (rather than a tight research paradigm) that allows me the freedom to alter direction and explore tangents as needed, viewing methods as much more than just process. This continues to be relevant as my longitudinal inquiry unfolds beyond this document; the methods used are likely to change as I reflect on appropriate ways to explore resilience of early career teachers in more depth and over time.

The theories that underpin *bricolage* are 'far more complex than a simple eclectic approach' (Rogers, M., 2012: 1) and, from a philosophical viewpoint, I suggest that *bricolage* encourages the researcher to combine some attempt at theoretical coherence and epistemological innovation (Kincheloe, 2010). This is significant for my research inquiry, as I explore resilience which cannot be easily measured and which relates closely to our socially-constructed worlds as humans. *Bricolage* is 'grounded on an epistemology of complexity' (Kincheloe and Berry, 2004: 2) and, in many ways, my research seeks to illuminate the complexity of the processes and relationships in which the early career teachers are variously involved.

Although I draw on some philosophical insights in exploring the discourse and context of my research setting, including consideration of the multiple relationships of power (Foucault, 1977) which an early career teacher might encounter, I remain challenged by the more philosophical aspects within *bricolage* (Kincheloe, 2004, 2008, and 2012). This is, in part, due to my limited specialist knowledge in such fields, but I am also aware of the need to avoid 'intellectual fracking' (de Botton, accessed @alaindebotton, 14 March 2014) as I try, often in vain, to extract something useful from dense and seemingly impenetrable texts. I acknowledge that *bricolage* is located within the philosophical tradition of critical theory and I am not

ruling out a more overtly philosophical thread to my research in time; however, it has not yet emerged as a dominant force.

It is a social construction of being which lies at the heart of my motivation for the research inquiry and I concur with Clandinin and Connelly (2000) to challenge any reductionist method to exploring lived experience. *Bricolage*, it seems to me, does not aim to create order out of complex human experience, but seeks only to understand it more. I recognise that people (such as early career teachers) and phenomena (like resilience) do not exist in isolation, but rather in diverse, parallel and interconnecting ways and this is in line with my understanding of *bricolage* as an ontological approach to research.

According to Kincheloe and Berry (2004: 108), *bricolage* begins with a Point of Entry Text (POET). In my inquiry, this is not one particular text, but the language that my participants use to share their experiences and the language that surrounds them in their various contexts. Mindful of Gergen and Gergen's (1991) premise that the nature of language hinders empirical research from exploring the truth of a matter, it is important to stress again that I am not anticipating any 'magic answer' to the question of early career teachers' resilience, but rather exploring insights into their experience of ITE to inform future practice. The problem of representation moves centre stage in this regard (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009), as language is open to ambiguity and mis-interpretation, underlining the possible benefits of approaching my inquiry through a range of lenses (see chapters 5 – 7).

A pivotal moment on my research journey with *bricolage* occurred when I re-read Lévi-Strauss (1966) in the light of comments about the skills of the *bricoleur* made by Crotty (2003). My previous understanding of the *bricoleur* as someone who needs a depth of specialist knowledge about various approaches to research (feminism or Marxism, for example) to apply to the POET (Kincheloe and Berry, 2004) was challenged. I realised that the focus could be more on creative approaches to the materials at hand rather than a forced approach to the method of analysis to be used. As a result, my aim is to engage fully with the responses from

my research participants over time, and in various forms, to see what insights and possibilities they offer to my focus on the resilience of early career teachers.

Indeed, although my evolving plan for the research inquiry (Figure 1) included quantitative data, questionnaires, creative writing and interviews, Crotty's (2003: 50) comment that the *bricoleur* is someone 'who makes something new out of a range of materials that had previously made up something different' opened my eyes to the potential for an additional source of evidence for my post-doctoral research. This might include some of the reflective pieces written by the research participants as part of the general PGCE course requirements; new ethical approval would be needed, of course. As I conclude this stage of my research inquiry, new avenues for exploration are opening up and this seems entirely in line with my approach to *bricolage*. As Lévi-Strauss (1966: 20) notes, the *bricoleur* is always looking for 'messages' in materials and this is precisely the exploratory approach to *bricolage* which I have taken. The fragmented narrative of Markham's (2005) article about her research using *bricolage* further illustrated the potential of an exploratory approach. She explored a variety of viewpoints about an issue, gathered through language, 'because our lives are inextricably linked in a dense tapestry of interconnected threads' (Markham, 2005: 825), leading to deeper insights and a wider understanding of a particular phenomenon, and this is precisely what I seek to achieve through my research.

Although the data for my research inquiry has been generated through a variety of methods, I have largely relied on thematic analysis to review the data. There is some debate about thematic analysis as a rigorous approach to data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Denscombe, 2010), perhaps due to its relative flexibility from a theoretical standpoint. However, as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting on emerging patterns in rich and complex data (Chapters 6 – 8), it seems appropriate for this inquiry. Indeed, analysing data through thematic coding (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Miles and Huberman, 1994) has been part of the evolving process of organising data for reporting purposes, as the emerging themes lead to a developing argument rather than remaining little more than a summary of narrative data. This is further developed in chapters 6 – 8.

Issues of validity, replicability and generalisability

As I strive for a deeper understanding of resilience in relation to early career teachers, I acknowledge that objective reality cannot be captured and recognise that alternative principles, such as credibility and transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Cohen et al., 2007), are needed to support the trustworthiness of my findings. While I accept Pring's criticism that 'educational research is often too small-scale and fragmented to serve policy and professional interests' (2004: 40), I consider my research will have been worthwhile if it makes a difference to the professional development of even a small number of early career teachers. Indeed, in my more confident moments, I see potential for collaboration across the broader ITE network and, possibly, with those interested in early career development in other professional fields, such as nursing and social work (Chapter 10).

Like Maxwell (2010), I accept that validity in my research is relative: it is more of a goal than a product. As such, generalisability is relevant to the extent that it may allow me to make sense of other early career teachers and their various situations, but I am not aiming for any explicit sampling process as such, as this usually relates to a tightly controlled or specified participant group and involves statistical inference (Yin, 1984). Bailey (1994) espouses the value of pilot studies as the basis for a larger, longitudinal research inquiry, and my own pilot studies (Gordon, 2013a and 2013b) have formed a useful basis on which to develop the inquiry further.

All research has a number of limitations, as confirmed by Hobson et al. (2009), particularly in relation to the credibility of the data and findings and the representativeness of the participants. As Dingwall (1997) notes, there are also linguistic challenges for any research inquiry which is based on narratives and accounts of the participants' experiences. The problem of volunteer bias is intractable (Oppenheim, 1966) and perhaps of particular significance in my own research where the participants, for ethical reasons (as discussed later in this chapter), were self-selecting. In light of Doney's (2013) article about the resilience of four early career science teachers in the United States and the potential impact on retention, I also wonder whether my inquiry involved too many participants.

Although Doney used a wide range of activities for the research, the data may have been more manageable to analyse with only four participants. As my own longitudinal research inquiry continues to unfold, I am minded to reduce the number of participants and monitor whether the richness of data is lost in the process.

Overview of approaches to bricolage in my research inquiry

Although each stage of my research inquiry, including discussion of the methods used, is considered in detail in subsequent chapters, a brief overview is provided here (Figure 1) to give a context for the overall work and to provide a background for the ethical considerations which follow. The pilot studies of 2011 – 2012 (Gordon, 2013a and 2013b) formed the springboard for the research in 2012 – 2013 which is reported in this document. I have included the subsequent stage of the research as it has developed from 2013 onwards, as this illustrates how my approach to *bricolage*, as outlined earlier in the chapter, is unfolding. Given the longitudinal nature of the overall research inquiry of which this document is a part, any emerging insights and understandings are only ever likely to be a springboard for further reflection and investigation.

| Time frame | Participants | Research activity |
|--|---|---|
| Doctoral research pilot studies: 2011 – 2012 | 19 participants from the Modern Foreign Language (MFL) Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) cohort | Pilot studies (reported in documents 3 and 4): 4 x questionnaires 4 x creative writing tasks > Some follow-up interviews |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Doctoral research study: 2012 – 2013</p> | <p>MFL, mathematics and science PGCE cohorts</p> <p>57 participants agreed to participate in i-resilience questionnaire</p> <p>45 participants agreed to complete questionnaires</p> <p>44 participants agreed to complete creative writing activities</p> <p>6 MFL NQT participants</p> | <p>i-resilience questionnaire (Chapter 5)</p> <p>Choice of: 4 x questionnaires 4 x creative writing tasks</p> <p>Resilience Reflective journals and interview (Chapter 8)</p> |
| <p><i>Post-doctoral research: 2013 onwards</i></p> | <p><i>All PGCE cohorts (MFL, Physical Education, Religious Education, Geography, Science and Maths) at the researcher's ITE institution, including SD trainee teachers on the PGCE programme; plus SD trainee teachers at one nearby SCITT provider</i></p> | <p><i>Choice of: i-resilience questionnaire 4 x questionnaires 4 x creative writing tasks > Some follow-up interviews > Professional Development Plan (PDP) tutorial and reflection activity records</i></p> |

Figure 1: Overview of Methods

Ethical Considerations

As will be clear from the discussion to date in this document, the overriding aim for my research is for it to be ethics-informed and evidence-generated, in accordance with VITAE's statement of professional conduct in the Researcher Development Framework (2015) and this underlines the importance of clear ethical guidelines (BERA, 2011; NTU, no date: online) to underpin the inquiry. This creates a challenge, as I seek to maintain passion and commitment to my research, including a strong sense of moral purpose (Fullan, 2003), whilst also remaining cognisant of the ethical canvas in relation to my participants and chosen methodology.

Research in education is essentially a social activity and there is a need for ethical reflexivity throughout the process; this is a 'complex, highly responsible social and political activity' (Bolton, 2010: ix), recognising that researchers are part of the social context of their research, bringing their own narratives, values and attitudes to the research.

Issues of bias and power

As the researcher, I recognise my own epistemological and ontological position (Chapter 1) within the context of my research, but am also open to the multiplicity of viewpoints that are likely to co-exist as a result of my methodological approach. My area of professional practice is closely linked with my chosen area of research and, as such, I cannot stand completely outside the research project; indeed, my own experience and background as a former secondary MFL teacher and local authority advisory teacher have shaped who I am today and bring a certain intimacy to the research inquiry.

In my research, many of the participants know me well in a professional context and may respond in a particular way as a result. The identity of participants is protected by maintaining anonymity throughout the reporting of the research and data is

stored securely and confidentially. In order to maintain balance, I have kept my own reflective journal alongside the research activities, allowing me opportunities to freely explore ideas and write creatively as appropriate, as my own narrative changes and I seek to develop confidence, remain focused on ethical issues as a researcher and grow as a person through my research activity.

The notion of bias is one that I need to consider carefully, as I acknowledge that many issues, such as sample size, selection of participants, choice of research methods and analysis of data, may draw on my values and preferences as researcher. I acknowledge Lichtman's comment (2006) that bias cannot be totally eliminated in qualitative research as the researcher is bound to have some views on the topic or would not have asked the question in the first place. In a similar way, the fact that the participants were self-selecting, possibly motivated by and interested in the area of research inquiry, may also have an impact on the data (Oppenheim, 1966). Any attempt to identify truths from the data as a result would be problematic, but this is not consonant with the *bricolage* approach as outlined earlier in this chapter.

A letter outlining the context and purpose of the research was given to potential participants, together with an ethical statement and a consent form (Appendix A). The letter provided a clear outline of all stages of the research and participants had the opportunity to opt out at any stage. All data collected are anonymous in any reporting of the research, but participants agreed to include a name on any returns, so that possible interviewees could be identified and longitudinal data could be tracked.

I have needed to be particularly mindful as an ethical researcher that participants are involved in sharing personal and professional experiences and reflections. This is a tension in narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) that, as we confront ourselves in our narratives, we may reveal vulnerability by sharing our stories with others. A verbal outline of my research and the written invitation to join the inquiry was given by me to participants, but I did not collect the replies immediately, choosing to wait for participants to return the consent form over the next few days.

As a result, however, I have to accept that the responses may be from early career teachers who were particularly interested in my research. For the research activities, I sought to minimise this risk further by allowing a free choice – some participants agreed to take part in the full range of activities, whereas others were more selective according to their preferences (Figure 1). There was, of course, also the opportunity for participants to opt out of the research at any stage and I was careful to ‘chase’ each research response only once in case participants were choosing to opt out by a non-response, accepting Oppenheim’s (1966: 34) view that a ‘non response is not a random process’.

As with any of the data, but particularly with the creative writing responses, I am aware that they are shaped by the participants as interpretations of their experiences and they were then further interpreted by me in the analysis of the data. From an ethical standpoint, I need to be mindful of the considerable challenges that this poses and of the need to stress that any research findings are necessarily ‘linguistically filtered’ (Kincheloe and Berry, 2004: 87). I recognise that much qualitative educational research inquiry is not about revealing people’s lives, but rather their interpretations of their lives as an essentially linguistic form of inquiry and this links with my choice of language as the POET for my research using *bricolage*. This, however, underlines another ethical tension for my research, as I wish to honour the voice of the participants, but also interpret and theorise from it, and this has required considerable ethical alertness and sensitivity (Chapter 7).

One of the ethical dilemmas I faced, particularly in running two research projects concurrently for the pilot studies, was the danger of overloading the research participants, as I invited a questionnaire response (Gordon, 2013a) and a creative writing response (Gordon, 2013b) at the same key points in the PGCE year from the same participants. For this reason, I opted to give participants in this inquiry free choice about which research activities to complete. Any additional workload stress generated by participation in the research would be considered unethical (BERA, 2011), especially given that one of the main challenges of the training year appears to be the enormous workload of an early career teacher. In part, this dilemma is resolved as those early career teachers who felt overwhelmed at any stage had the

option simply not to respond and this was clear in the ethical statement (Appendix A) provided for all participants at the outset. However, I also attempted to minimise any potential stress for participants by timing the research activities in quieter phases of the PGCE course.

Closely linked with bias are issues of power; 'power is a slippery, omnipresent thing, and does not necessarily do what it *appears* to do' (Bolton, 2014: 52). For the purpose of this thesis, I reflect briefly on two aspects of power in relation to resilience in particular – overall context and individual responsibility. In terms of context, Foucault illustrates the power of social control and organisation, commenting that, 'our society is not one of spectacle, but of surveillance' (Foucault, 1977: 216). This is relevant as the resilience of early career teachers may be challenged as they face expectations of conformity at many levels – Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2012), National Curriculum requirements and Ofsted criteria, to name but a few. As Giroux (1988: 4) rather starkly states, the role of teachers has been reduced to that of 'obedient technicians'.

A desire to be more than an obedient technician leads to consideration of individual responsibility in the discussion of power. There are undoubtedly considerable forces of power at work in education, but change is possible (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006) if we 'act wisely and ethically' (Bolton, 2014: 197) in our search for social justice at every level, including support for early career teachers. This grand sentiment is reflected on a small scale in my use of creative writing (Chapter 7) with participants. I agree with Bolton (2014) and Giroux (1988) that we learn as we write; writing is an example of an empowering reflective practice approach to enable us to engage with and manage issues of power with greater confidence and this is explored further in chapters 7 and 8.

In conclusion, I view my methodological stance as a form of exploratory *bricolage*, a way of embracing the many ways in which we make meaning from our experiences. A single approach to my research with early career teachers would, in its reductionist content, undervalue the complexities of the participants and their varied experiences. I am perhaps more in line with Lincoln's (2003) description of

the *bricoleur* as someone who improvises and allows circumstances to shape the methods employed, in contrast to another kind of *bricoleur* who engages with an in-depth analysis of theoretical disciplines with some grander purpose as the driving force. The chapters which follow illustrate how this methodological approach has unfolded in practice during my research inquiry, but as Kincheloe states (2008: 168): ‘... I do not contend that what I write is the truth; it is simply my efforts at these points in time and space to provide a fair and compelling view of the topic at hand.’

Chapter 5: Research in practice – Resilience tests

‘You will need to be hungry for a challenge, using patience and endless energy to persevere through the difficult times. When faced with obstacles you will need to be tenacious and versatile and maintain a positive mindset.’ (Teach First: online)

Although I had undertaken pilot studies with a small group of participants in 2011 – 2012 for many of the subsequent activities (Chapters 6 and 7) in this research inquiry, the online resilience test was a new quantitative addition as the research was expanded to a larger cohort of participants in 2012 – 2013. This brief chapter explores the potential of a resilience test to complement other approaches in my research inquiry, although I stress that I am not seeking to define resilience at any stage, but rather to understand it more insofar as it affects early career teachers.

In his novel, Mawer (2009: 303) comments that the ‘... trouble with scientists: they can’t quantify and measure common sense’ and perhaps this is also the case with resilience. This is echoed by Carter (2015: 44) who noted that ‘important competencies such as resilience can be difficult to assess, though some (ITT) partnerships felt that carefully designed interview questions can be effective.’

Gu and Day (2013: 29) refer to ‘Around 75% or more of resilient teachers ...’, but do not mention how the teachers’ resilience was measured. As part of the ESRC Research Seminar Series on teacher resilience in January 2011, Griffiths maintained that, until there is a precise and agreed definition of resilience, it is difficult to reliably measure it and study it scientifically. Findings from Hobson et al.’s (2009: 241) longitudinal research inquiry into teachers’ experiences of initial teacher

training, induction and early professional development are revealing, but also do not comment on how resilience was measured: 'For a minority of new entrants ... including some who appeared to be less resilient ... the sequence of peaks and troughs, and the low points in particular, could be too much to bear ...'. This review of the literature confirmed my decision to include a test of resilience (Cooper, online) as part of my inquiry. If one accepts Severs' (2014: 40) lament that we 'train teachers up just to break them down', consideration of the resilience test findings may be of value in ITE.

In recent years, there was a move towards the promotion of non-cognitive testing for applicants to teaching, as outlined in the Department for Education's (2011) implementation plan for training the next generation of outstanding teachers. The current Troops to Teachers programme (DfE, 2012) assumes that non-cognitive attributes (including resilience and social skills) are essential for the effective teacher. A range of tools (such as Pearson, online) to assess non-cognitive skills, including resilience, is available as part of selection to an initial teacher training course, but remains relatively underused by ITE providers. This may reflect that fact that ITE providers have developed a range of robust approaches to selection over time and feel that the costs of the commercial non-cognitive tests do not justify the expense. For example, the Teach First route into teaching identifies eight competencies, including resilience, which are assessed in a one-to-one competency-based interview and this practice is reflected by the majority of ITE providers. Another possible viewpoint, worthy of further investigation, is whether there is a need for teacher-specific tests, such as those being developed by Klassen, Durksen, Rowett and Patterson (2014) in line with similar situational judgment tests for recruitment into the medical profession. Although I support any approaches which enhance recruitment processes for teachers in the UK, selection using non-cognitive tests as part of the process may be more appropriate when applications for teaching exceed demand, rather than at a time of teacher supply shortages in many areas. In fact, as this research inquiry has evolved, I have become more convinced of the benefits of focusing on teacher resilience in a formative way as part of ITE

provision (Chapter 9) rather than expecting resilience (however defined and measured) as a pre-requisite from the outset.

I selected the Robertson Cooper online i-resilience test for the purposes of my research inquiry for a number of reasons. Unlike some of the other non-cognitive psychometric tests, the Robertson Cooper test focuses solely on resilience and is both free to use and openly available online. Drawing on four key components the authors suggest that individuals use for maintaining and building resilience – confidence, adaptability, purposefulness and the need for social support – (Appendix B), the online test uses a personality questionnaire to generate a personalised report which provides an awareness of the individual’s personal resilience and examples of how this might impact on the individual’s response to challenging situations at work. Of particular significance to my work with early career teachers, the report identifies the individual’s strengths and possible areas for development, but also includes a suggested reflection activity and action plan for personal development. This seems entirely consonant with the formative approach to professional development in ITE.

My initial concern with such a generic test for resilience was its suitability for the teacher education context; however, having completed the test myself, I was impressed with its format and its personal application. By way of a pilot, this was also confirmed by initial teacher education colleagues and teachers in partnership schools who completed the test and gave me positive feedback about its suitability for work with early career teachers. In fact, some of the senior school colleagues have also since used the test with more experienced teachers in school as part of a professional development programme for middle leaders, so its potential benefit and application within the teaching context is evident. The feedback of participants receiving their reports also confirmed my decision that this was a useful test, for example: *‘I found the results very interesting for me as I start teaching. The report highlighted things that I had not really thought about myself before. Let the reflection begin!’* Although overwhelmingly positive, a note of caution needs to be voiced, as the results of the online i-resilience test may have a negative effect on an early career teacher if not handled appropriately. As one participant, whose report

illustrated many possible hindrances to confidence in particular, expressed it: *'The results made me feel a bit rubbish, there's loads ... I need to work on!'* This highlighted clearly for me the importance of any such non-cognitive test being part of structured tutorial provision as part of the PGCE course (Chapter 9) and this is consonant with the language of *bricolage*, as I work with what is at hand as a researcher.

From an ethical and power perspective, it is worth explaining one decision that I took with regard to the participants' i-resilience reports. It is possible to arrange for a subscription licence with Robertson Cooper, so that the tests can be completed by individuals with the resulting reports being sent to a named person (such as me) for distribution to the participants. Although the research participants agreed to complete the online i-resilience test, I wanted there to be an additional level of consent, such that the participants received their own report for consideration before sending it to me. I felt that this gave a stronger level of ownership for the report than would have been possible under the licence option, as well as an opt-out opportunity by the participant, if desired. I have to accept that some participants may have completed the test, but not been happy to share the ensuing report with me for whatever reason. My overriding ethical concern throughout this research inquiry, however, has been to avoid any activity or approach that would de-stabilise a participant's resilience in any way.

Analysis of resilience reports

In total, 57 reports from 39 female (68%) and 18 male (32%) PGCE trainees were received across three shortage subject areas as outlined in figure 2 below:

| Subject | Male | Female | Total | % of total responses |
|-------------|------|--------|-------|----------------------|
| Mathematics | 12 | 14 | 26 | 46% |
| | | | | |

| | | | | |
|------------------|---|----|----|-----|
| Modern Languages | 3 | 14 | 17 | 30% |
| Science | 2 | 12 | 14 | 24% |

Figure 2: Overview of i-resilience test responses

In order to obtain as many insights as possible from the data in the resilience reports, I chose to collate the responses separately in each area of the four key components of resilience (Appendix B) as well as according to male / female responses and according to the three different subject areas represented. Each area of each key component was considered according to the extent which it is likely to help (+) or hinder (-) the person's resilience, as well as noting the responses which neither help nor hinder (=) the person's resilience. For example, when considering the component of confidence, the following results (Figure 3) were noted in relation to participants' level of worry in particular.

| CONFIDENCE: Level of worry | - | = | + |
|--------------------------------------|----|----|---|
| Overall responses | 28 | 23 | 6 |
| Overall female responses | 22 | 14 | 4 |
| Overall male responses | 6 | 9 | 2 |
| Overall mathematics responses | 12 | 10 | 4 |
| Female responses | 9 | 3 | 2 |
| Male responses | 3 | 7 | 2 |
| Overall modern | 9 | 6 | 2 |

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| language responses | | | |
| Female responses | 6 | 6 | 2 |
| Male responses | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall science responses | 7 | 7 | 0 |
| Female responses | 7 | 5 | 0 |
| Male responses | 0 | 2 | 0 |

Figure 3: Summary of responses for confidence (level of worry)

Having continued to collate all the data for the different aspects of each component of resilience (Appendix B) in this way, including according to gender and subject specialism, I was faced with a huge amount of data. There were few statistically significant variations in response in terms of gender and subject specialism, but age may have been a factor. Unfortunately, I had not collected this information as part of my inquiry and this may be worthy of exploration in the future. I chose to narrow my focus to those aspects where more than 20 of the participants' responses, based on their summary reports, highlighted factors which may be considered to have the potential to hinder resilience (Figure 4). The main area of significance arose in relation to confidence with 55% of women indicating that level of worry might have a negative impact on their confidence in contrast to 32% of men. However, the sample size was relatively small and limited to three subject areas. In this instance, the results are most significant for female early career teachers of mathematics. Although the figures are interesting, rather than focusing on the statistics to find 'truths' about resilience of participants, it seems more relevant for ITE tutors to be aware of these outcomes in relation to individuals in a particular cohort, so that intervention and support strategies can be integrated into the training provision.

My research inquiry aimed to consider the challenges to resilience for early career teachers, but also to highlight those aspects which nurture and support their resilience. In order to ensure a balanced picture of responses, I also note (Figure 5) the many areas where 20+ responses indicated that a person's resilience may be

helped by particular attributes. Overall, based on the summary reports of these participants, the component of personality which most appears to help the participants' levels of resilience is adaptability. This is to be welcomed, given the range of contexts that these early career teachers were likely to face during the PGCE and NQT years.

| | - | = | + |
|--|----|----|----|
| Confidence: level of worry | 28 | 23 | 6 |
| Confidence: dealing with distress | 23 | 25 | 9 |
| Confidence: reaction to pressure | 25 | 28 | 4 |
| Purposefulness: level of assertiveness | 25 | 20 | 12 |
| Purposefulness: activity levels | 29 | 18 | 10 |
| Purposefulness: level of ambition | 20 | 17 | 20 |
| Purposefulness: level of self-discipline | 21 | 32 | 4 |
| Social support: level of trust | 22 | 19 | 16 |

Figure 4: Overview of aspects which may most hinder participants' resilience

Ironically, although collecting and presenting this data has been an interesting backdrop to my research inquiry, I remain unconvinced about the quantitative value of collating aggregated data from the responses of participants' i-resilience tests in this way. The Robertson Cooper test considers resilience through a personality questionnaire and the ensuing report is aimed at a personal development activity. With this in mind, I view the resilience test as an additional means of opening spaces for early career teachers in which the possibilities of resilience are cultivated, and I feel that this is reflective of a complex epistemology consonant with *bricolage*.

| | - | = | + |
|---|----|----|----|
| Confidence: level of enthusiasm | 6 | 28 | 23 |
| Purposefulness: level of adventurousness | 10 | 23 | 24 |
| Purposefulness: aesthetic appreciation | 0 | 36 | 21 |
| Purposefulness: level of ambition | 20 | 17 | 20 |
| Purposefulness: level of deliberation | 15 | 3 | 39 |
| Adaptability: level of imagination | 0 | 24 | 33 |
| Adaptability: preference for variety | 3 | 29 | 25 |
| Adaptability: degree of openness to ideas | 8 | 27 | 22 |
| Adaptability: preference for order | 1 | 27 | 29 |
| Social support: degree | 10 | 20 | 27 |

| | | | |
|--|----|----|----|
| of personal warmth | | | |
| Social support: degree of sociability | 19 | 17 | 21 |
| Social support: degree of consideration for others | 5 | 29 | 23 |

Figure 5: Overview of aspects which may most help participants' resilience

One possible future research activity would be to prepare case studies of a small number of participants to consider individual i-resilience test results as part of a mapping of other contextual information, perhaps including questionnaire and creative writing responses (Chapters 6 and 7). This approach would be of particular value with early career teachers who may be most vulnerable in the initial training period and benefit from specific and targeted intervention and support.

The use of this resilience test has undoubtedly informed the practice with early career teachers in my own context (Chapter 9) and I agree with the moral imperative (Smethem and Hood, in Day et al., 2011: 8) that 'Increasing teachers' capabilities to be resilient is both a moral and a strategic concern which can impact on teacher recruitment and retention and on training and continuing professional development.' As I draw this chapter to a close, I reflect positively on the potential value of the resilience tests to inform practice in ITE as part of a coherent formative tutorial provision, more than as a way of providing useful quantitative data to inform my research inquiry. I am confident that richer insights and value for my research are gained from the other research activities which are outlined in the following chapters.

Chapter 6: Research in Practice – Questionnaires

“Now class! Who can tell me the answer?

Can anyone offer suggestions?’

Why is that teachers are paid to know,
yet they’re always asking us questions?’ (Turner, 2004: 14)

This short and humorous children’s poem is pertinent as I reflect on why we appear to know so little about the question of the resilience of early career teachers. This chapter explores my growing understanding of some of the issues by asking questions through the use of questionnaires. A small-scale pilot research project in 2011 – 2012 using questionnaires and follow-up interviews as a research method (Gordon, 2013a) served as an effective rehearsal for this larger research design and allowed for critical reflection on the methods used to ensure relevance, feasibility, appropriate objectivity and ethical rigour in particular (Cohen et al., 2007).

Participants were invited (Appendix A) to complete a short questionnaire (Appendices C-F) at four key points in the PGCE training programme between September 2012 and June 2013. The timing of the research activities was designed to capture some of the experiences at key moments for early career teachers in relation to resilience in particular, as they progressed through the PGCE course, both at university and on school placements:

- Questionnaire 1 – at the end of the first phase of university-based training in October, just before the start of the first school placement
- Questionnaire 2 – during the university-based training in January, between first and second school placements
- Questionnaire 3 – at the mid-point assessment during the second school placement, in March / April
- Questionnaire 4 – after the second placement and following the final week of university-based training in June

Follow-up interviews had been anticipated, as was the case in the pilot studies, with a small number of participants in late June 2013, but these did not take place for a number of reasons, mainly linked to my time constraints as a researcher. I also received a number of NQT journal reflections (Chapter 8) from participants in the pilot studies to analyse for my research at this stage and I had underestimated the time commitment while also working full-time. I was disappointed to miss the opportunity for follow-up interviews, but I felt that it would have been inappropriate to follow up at a later stage when too much time had passed. The pilot interviews had given particular insights from participants who had experienced real challenges to their resilience as a result of their experiences in schools (Gordon, 2013a), so I have learnt from the missed opportunity in this stage of the inquiry. I carried out one interview with a participant towards the end of the NQT period in summer 2014 and this forms part of later discussion (Chapter 8).

Questionnaire Design

Given that there are significant personal and professional challenges in learning to teach, my main concern as researcher was not to add to these pressures with daunting questionnaires that would be time-consuming to complete. Although common sense and good English does not guarantee a good questionnaire (Oppenheim, 1966), I took a pragmatic approach by using a very similar and simple format for each of the questionnaires (Appendices C-F). I asked the participants to identify a particular situation (pre-course, after first school placement, at mid-point of second school placement, and after the PGCE course as a whole) where resilience had been necessary and to reflect on what made the situation challenging for them, as well as to identify what nurtured and fostered their resilience in this difficult situation.

Forty five participants agreed to respond to the questionnaires and each response was only chased up once, where required. I took the view that further chasing of the questionnaires might add to the stress levels of the participant and would, therefore, be unethical, given that the priority for the participants had to be successful completion of the PGCE course, rather than positive participation in the

research project. Although a poor response rate is one of the major disadvantages of questionnaires (McNiff et al., 2003), the response rate for my research project was fairly consistent throughout with a response return rate of 43, 39, 36 and 27 for each of the four questionnaires. The reason for the lower response to the final questionnaire is almost certainly because I decided not to chase this response, recognising that the participants were tired at the end of the PGCE course. This underlines, for me, one of the tensions of wishing to be sympathetic to the participants (particularly as I did not want to challenge their resilience in any way) while also wishing to carry out my role as researcher as robustly as possible.

Each questionnaire consisted of only a small number of questions with space to respond. However, the electronic nature of the questionnaires meant that respondents could write within the space provided or expand the box to provide a lengthier response if needed, thereby allowing participants to express as broad a range of ideas, attitudes, feelings and opinions as they wished. As one might expect, some respondents were brief, whereas others used the expanding space to reflect at length (and, on occasions, vent their frustrations) about certain situations. The opening question required a descriptive answer, as the respondent identified a situation where resilience had been required. The following questions then required a more analytical type of response, as respondents reflected on why the situation had challenged their resilience and what had supported their resilience to manage the situation (Foddy, 1994; Oppenheim, 1966). In future, I plan to include a question about what the participant has learnt from the experience in relation to their resilience.

Oppenheim's (1966: 3) work on questionnaire design and attitude measurement offers the advice to 'First, let us decide exactly what conclusions we wish to be able to draw' in advance, so that researchers can then work backwards to identify the right questions to pose. This is diametrically opposed to my starting point where the only consideration was to design a questionnaire which might provide some insights through open questions into the resilience of early career teachers as they progressed through a PGCE course. No hypotheses had been considered and the method of analysis of the questionnaire data was left to emerge as the responses

were reviewed. I agree with Durrant and Holden (2005) that questionnaires can never be entirely neutral, as the way the questions are phrased can trigger particular responses, but they are useful to gain an overview and identify issues, particularly if open questions are posed, but I also acknowledge some of the issues of power potentially at play in the process (Chapter 4).

One potential disadvantage of the open question approach might be that some of the richness of the response may have been lost in the eventual analysis, as the comments were then further analysed and filtered by me (Oppenheim, 1966; Kincheloe, 2004). However, I felt it to be more beneficial for the purpose of the research to receive full and rich answers, rather than shorter and more formulaic responses, even if the latter might have been easier to classify. The advantage of open questions was that the respondent could write freely in their own spontaneous language, including thoughts and feelings. It is perhaps unsurprising that my main concern about the questionnaires was that open questions are relatively easy to ask, sometimes difficult for the respondent to answer, but perhaps even more difficult to analyse (McNiff et al., 2003).

The questionnaire responses have indeed proved time-consuming to analyse, as I have used thematic coding to identify emerging themes (Oppenheim, 1966; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Huberman and Miles, 2002; Bazeley, 2013) over time. In my attempt to be faithful to the voices of the participants, I derived the codes in response to the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), rather than approaching the data with preconceived ideas (Braun and Clark, 2006; Cohen et al., 2007). There is always the possibility that participants may have intended other or 'hidden' messages through their responses. Denscombe (2010: 284) refers to the possibility of a 'deeper-rooted and possibly unintentional message' and I sought to minimise misinterpretation by allowing the participants to respond at length and in open text format. As mentioned earlier, follow-up interviews would have been useful as a way of confirming interpretations, but the need to take account of individual's perceptions would also apply in this context. My approach to analysing the questionnaire responses was systematic, as I read and re-read the texts to identify codes for emerging themes. In this way, I was able to keep close to the data, but I

have also included a number of direct quotations from the responses in order to honour the voices of the participants in the reporting of the data analysis, particularly as a diverse range of experiences and perceptions were shared with me. As will be evident in the analysis later in this chapter, the emerging themes ranged from the general (such as concerns about behaviour management) to the specific (a difficult meeting with a mentor).

Analysis and Reflection on Findings

This section includes analysis and reflection on each of the four questionnaires and highlights some of the emerging themes about resilience of early career teachers for the research inquiry as a whole (Chapters 9 and 10).

Questionnaire 1

The first questionnaire (Appendix C) invited participants to provide a definition of resilience, without reference to a dictionary. Among the 43 respondents, there was a clear consensus, in line with Cooper's (2012) belief among others (Chapter 3), that resilience relates to the ability to cope with difficult situations (19 responses) and to bounce back when knocked down (11 responses) with the notion of perseverance (8 responses), surviving pressure (3 responses) and needing a '*thick skin*' (2 responses). This strong sense of resilience as the ability to overcome difficulty was evident in 41 of the 43 responses. As I reflect on the dominant discourse about teaching as a stressful profession with a very high workload, this has led me to consider the extent to which my own research inquiry may inadvertently be adding to this narrative. Early career teachers have access to books about surviving the first year in teaching (Cowley, 2013) and about teachers under pressure (Galton and MacBeath, 2008), as well as frequent articles on the subject in the educational media and related blogs and forums, so it is perhaps inevitable to find that participants regard resilience in teaching as more aligned with a sense of 'coping' rather than a developmental process leading to personal and professional growth. This has had an impact on how the outcomes of this inquiry translate into practice in the ITE context of my work (Chapter 9).

Perhaps surprisingly, given Zolli and Healy’s (2012) description of resilience which includes the capacity to maintain core purpose and integrity in the face of change and the notion that resilience is positive adaptation in spite of the presence of risk and challenge (Rutter, 2006), references to this aspect of resilience were less frequent. A sense of a personal and positive approach, combined with a sense of purpose and growth, was evident in only 18 of the responses. Two respondents expressed it as follows: *‘The ability to have an inner strength that allows you to achieve your goals, even if you experience setbacks or it seems like an impossible task’* and *‘I would define it as the strength and courage to keep going, even if some suffering and setbacks may be involved. Knowing the purpose and direction and aim of your actions helps’*. In an educational climate where accountability and target setting are prevalent and may contribute to ‘delimiting education’ (Flint, 2015: 9), the challenge for early career teachers may be to retain a sense of purpose, the so-called ‘bigger picture’, when faced with challenges. This underlines the importance of positive mentoring from tutors and mentors in this regard (Chapters 9 and 10).

The participants were also asked in the first questionnaire to identify a situation pre-PGCE course when they had needed resilience and how they had managed the situation. The purpose of this question was to introduce the theme of resilience in a previous context as a pre-cursor for reflecting on experiences encountered at key stages in the PGCE course. I was also interested to explore the range of strategies that the participants had used previously to manage the situations to identify if the same strategies were deployed in challenging situations during the initial stages of a career in teaching. The responses from the 43 participants can be grouped into the broad categories as shown in figure 6.

| Situation | Number of responses |
|---|---------------------|
| Relationship issues (e.g. divorce, challenging teenage children, death of relative) | 11 |
| Academic challenge, often relating to completion of dissertation or examinations, and including one | 10 |

| | |
|--|---|
| 'performance' situation | |
| Living / travelling / working in a foreign country (sometimes this was the UK for a non-UK national) | 9 |
| Work challenges, including one response related to unemployment | 7 |
| Juggling competing demands e.g. part-time work and university studies, work and family commitments | 6 |
| Health issues (of self or others) | 5 |

Figure 6: Pre-PGCE situations requiring resilience by participants

It will be clear from this table that some participants cited more than one situation and, indeed, such overlaps are inevitable as they illustrate the interconnectedness of human lives and the impact of one situation requiring resilience in other areas of a person's experience. This is relevant for my research inquiry, as the feedback from participants outlined in subsequent analysis in this chapter and in chapter 7 demonstrates the significant challenge of separating the personal and professional aspects of the early career teachers' lives, particularly in relation to the emotional aspects of relationships and the workload.

It is worth noting that, although 16 of the responses to the first questionnaire were from MFL early career teachers, only two of the challenges relating to the living and / or working in a foreign country related to university year-abroad study by these participants. The fact that 20% of responses referred to coping in a foreign country as a situation in which they had needed to be resilient was significant in my mind, especially as many of the 43 participants may not even have ever experienced a period abroad, perhaps because it was felt to be too daunting in the first place to consider. The idea of 'foreign-ness' continued to emerge as a sub-theme in the various research activity responses, as the participants grappled with changing contexts and varying expectations from a range of people. This is perhaps best encapsulated in the haiku poem (explored fully in chapter 7) written by one science participant who had cited juggling conflicting demands in her response to the first questionnaire:

New pupils and school

Quite foreign and challenging

But I still love it

The reasons cited for the various situations being challenging as far as resilience was concerned were numerous, but dominant themes included a sense of isolation or exclusion, difficulties in managing priorities, loss of confidence, fear of not meeting expectations, and difficulties adjusting to a new situation. These themes will be very familiar for anyone working in ITE with early career teachers, so the ways in which the participants managed the situations were likely to be significant for my research inquiry and are grouped together in figure 7 below.

| Strategy | Number of responses |
|---|----------------------------|
| Clear focus on goal, often requiring self-motivation and belief, as well as taking one step at a time | 25 |
| Support of friends and / or family | 18 |
| Clear lines of communication | 5 |
| Maintaining perspective, reflection and keeping calm | 5 |
| Support from an external person e.g. university tutor | 4 |
| Careful time management | 3 |
| Regular physical activity | 2 |
| Faith / spiritual support | 2 |
| Other (not listed in order to protect anonymity of | 2 |

| | |
|---|--|
| respondents, as they are very specific) | |
|---|--|

Figure 7: Strategies used by participants to manage challenging pre-PGCE situations

These responses demonstrate a range of tried and tested strategies which encompass the individual and social aspects of our lives. The ability to maintain a clear focus on the overall goal and take one step at a time, as well as maintaining perspective and reflection, continued as a theme in the questionnaire responses throughout the year and this links closely with careful time management to cope with numerous (and sometimes conflicting) demands (Rogers, B., 2012; Cowley, 2013).

The support and encouragement of friends, family and others was a key factor for many of the participants, which often included the importance of talking openly and honestly about a situation, underlining the value of clear communication channels to help resolve issues. This is explored more fully in chapter 10 when I consider the opportunities for more 'social' approaches to reflective practice than the more prevalent individual style of reflection (such as lesson evaluations) required by early career teachers; this is in line with Luthar and Brown's (2007) comments about the importance of relationships for developing resilience. This continued to be of enormous significance to the participants when reflecting on their school placement experiences, as timely and personalised support from school-based mentors and PGCE tutors (Figure 10) was often cited as a key factor in helping them to maintain resilience at challenging times.

Questionnaires 2 and 3

As is common with most PGCE courses in England, participants in this research inquiry experienced two school placements as part of their training. Whereas the first questionnaire had focused on pre-PGCE experiences, the second and third questionnaires (Appendices D and E) focused on school-based experiences during the PGCE course, taking place after the first placement and at the mid-point of the second placement. I have presented these responses to show differences in gender, as there were no significant differences in response from the three separate subject

groups represented. I received 39 (26 female and 13 male) responses to the second questionnaire and 36 responses (26 female and 10 male) to the third questionnaire.

The level of response is worth noting at this stage, particularly in light of the lower response to the fourth and final questionnaire, as there was a gradual decrease in questionnaire returns through the inquiry. This mirrored the pilot project and seemed to be for two main reasons. Two participants took leave of absence from the course, but the demands of the PGCE course are likely to have been the most significant factor, as the participants faced increasing teaching commitments and paperwork requirements for evidence for the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2012).

The analysis of the findings for questionnaires 2 and 3 are considered together, as they both relate to school placement experiences and focused on both the challenges to resilience and support for resilience in two different school settings. Appendices D and E illustrate the type of response to these questionnaires, together with evidence of my initial coding to identify emerging themes (Figures 8 and 9). Although the individual participants experienced two different placements, often quite contrasting in terms of context, the consistency of responses each time was striking with the same four key areas seen in figure 8 identified in responses to both questionnaires.

| Challenges | Questionnaire 2 | Questionnaire 3 |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| | Total of 39 responses (26 female and 13 male) | Total of 36 responses (26 female and 10 male) |
| Behaviour management concerns | 3 (male) + 13 (female) responses | 5 (male) + 9 (female) responses |
| Managing workload and other demands | 4 (male) + 2 (female) responses | 1 (male) + 7 (female) responses |
| Difficult relationship with | 1 (male) + 7 (female) | 0 (male) + 5 (female) |

| mentor (and/or other teacher) | responses | responses |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Over-focus on negatives / weaknesses in feedback | 1 (male) + 3 (female) | 1 (male) + 3 (female) |

Figure 8 Summary of challenges from questionnaires 2 and 3

Managing pupils' behaviour has been a key focus for the DfE and Ofsted for some time, so it is perhaps unsurprising that so many of the participants identified this as a concern, despite the considerable input on managing behaviour for learning as part of the university and school-based professional development programmes for early career teachers. Gu and Day (2013: 23) cite evidence that 'one phenomenon which may be associated with (challenge to teachers) is a perceived decline in pupils' classroom behaviour', as echoed by one participant: *'(Managing behaviour) was challenging because I lost confidence in myself as a teacher and felt like I wouldn't be able to cope in the profession'*. For early career teachers, issues involving pupils' behaviour are likely to affect many aspects of professional development and a sense of well-being in the profession generally. The variations in response from the male and female participants with regard to behaviour management in the two questionnaires were not hugely significant. However, the variations in responses are worth considering as there was an increase in concerns about behaviour management by male participants and a decrease in concerns by female participants. It may be that a male teacher had felt a perceived advantage in some classes in the initial stages, as expressed by one participant: *'When I took over, I was probably complacent and assumed that they would treat me like their class teacher'*. The whole area of teacher resilience (particularly in relation to level of confidence) and the impact on managing pupil behaviour merits a research inquiry of its own in the future.

Some concerns from participants about behaviour issues related to a perceived lack of experience in the school context, as illustrated clearly by two participants: *'I felt so far removed from the pupils as people because I do not know how to relate to*

them. I find this bizarre as in my previous career, people skills and relationship building was a strength and certainly does not feel like this now' and 'I had not come across such difficult behaviour before and so could not draw on previous experience to address it'. This also shows the importance of combining the theoretical with the practical as part of the PGCE experience, as early career teachers translate what they have been learning into the reality of school life. Pre-conceived expectations were challenged, such as this reflection by a participant who had completed a first placement in a more difficult school and was now at the mid-point in the second school placement: 'The situation was challenging because it was something I was not expecting at all, especially in a girls' school where the behaviour is supposed to be outstanding' and one participant who commented in her metaphor (Chapter 7) to describe the first school placement experience: 'It also felt like the children were more of a hindrance than a help to me when trying to improve my teaching style'.

Concerns around workload were actually a more dominant theme in the creative writing (Chapter 7) than the questionnaires, which supports the idea of approaching an issue from a variety of angles to gain deeper insights (Lévi-Strauss, 1966; Kincheloe and Berry, 2004). In fact, concerns about workload were often balanced in a more positive way in the creative writing activities. For example, in response to the questionnaires, one participant expressed the concern as follows: *'At this time I felt more than stretched to my limit, and as if I had completely 'met my match' with teaching ... I felt swamped and at breaking point as it was a matter of addressing my future life as a teacher'*, whereas the haiku (Chapter 7) of this same participant, written at about the same time as the questionnaire response, illustrates a more balanced picture:

*Always catching up
The work just never ceases
Yet I still love it*

As I speculated earlier, there is some evidence that age factors could be explored, particularly in relation to workload, as several participants contrasted their current

perceived high workload with previous careers. As one more mature participant reflected in relation to the challenging workload: *'I began to wonder if it is possible to 'teach an old dog new tricks ...' and close family 'had never seen me work so hard or so late before and their looks of 'she's made a big mistake', although never vocalised, added a different kind of pressure.'*

Although it may be human nature to focus more on the negatives than the positives of feedback, this area of concern was voiced by several participants. Three female participants describe the feeling clearly: *'It affected my confidence and I began to question my capabilities', 'My mentor wasn't giving me any productive feedback or advice, just general negative comments. This made me feel like I couldn't improve and was wasting a lot of time for nothing' and '... at this stage I doubted myself a lot and lost the confidence to deliver a lesson well'.* Disappointment in not meeting their own high expectations was frequently expressed by female respondents, for example: *'I was frustrated because on placement you dedicate so much time and energy to planning, that when it doesn't go well you think what a waste of time! You also feel like you have let the kids down and they have lost faith in you as a teacher. It's a lot of pressure to have weighing on you.'* The sample size is perhaps too small to consider any potential gender issue in a meaningful way at this point, but this may link to the relatively high numbers of participants (Figure 4) whose levels of confidence may hinder their resilience according to the resilience reports. There was a real sense that this kind of negative feedback soon became unconstructive, particularly when combined with lots of targets, such that priority areas were unclear. Several respondents also mentioned that they are very self-critical anyway which makes overly negative feedback acute. Unrealistic mentors also emerged as a dominant theme in this regard: *'It felt like there were unreasonable requests being asked of me and then I was being blamed for not managing to achieve them. It also felt as though no recognition was made of my trying to act on feedback.'*

Difficulties with a mentor and / or other teacher colleagues were often cited, for example: *'It was challenging because I didn't feel aligned with her way of teaching'* and *'No matter what I do, it won't ever fully satisfy the expectations of my mentor... My aim in teaching is not to satisfy my mentor'*. The latter comment was from a

participant who spoke elsewhere in the research inquiry about her motivation for coming into teaching to make a difference in young people’s lives, so the mismatch between an early career teacher’s sense of purpose and the realities of teaching may need to be more openly and honestly discussed as part of ITE provision.

Although the mentor / trainee teacher relationship is a complex one, only one of the responses alluded to the nature of power (Foucault, 1977) within the relationship: *‘The most difficult part of the situation was that my mentor was in a position of power over me and I did not want to ‘rock the boat’ with her in any way’*. In contrast, the overwhelming value of positive and constructive relationships emerged as crucial in terms of fostering and nurturing the resilience of an early career teacher at this stage in training, as can be seen in the summary groupings of the four key areas emerging from the responses in figure 9 below.

| Support | Questionnaire 2 | Questionnaire 3 |
|---|---|---|
| | Total of 39 responses (26 female and 13 male) | Total of 36 responses (26 female and 10 male) |
| Support from mentor and / or other teacher colleagues and / or university tutor | 5 (male) + 20 (female) responses | 5 (male) + 14 (female) responses |
| Support from family and friends, including PGCE peers | 4 (male) + 10 (female) responses | 3 (male) + 8 (female) responses |
| Self-motivation, time management and target setting for priorities | 3 (male) + 7 (female) responses | 1 (male) + 4 (female) responses |

| | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | | |
| Reflection, including maintaining perspective | 6 (male) + 3 (female) | 6 (male) + 6 (female) |

Figure 9 Summary of support for resilience from questionnaires 2 and 3

There were, of course, other sources of support identified (such as music, prayer, keeping a sense of humour, and support from the pupils), but only by a small number of participants in each case, so I have opted to focus on the more dominant themes emerging from the responses.

The overwhelming value of support from a variety of sources is striking and is consonant with the social support aspects of the participants' i-resilience reports (Chapter 5). It was reassuring to note that support from mentor and other teacher colleagues far out-weighed the challenge to resilience of early career teachers (Figure 8) by these same people, although this does not lessen the impact of poor mentor / trainee relationships on the professional development of someone in this situation.

No mention was made at any stage of the research inquiry of poor relationships with the university tutor and, indeed, it should be noted that three male participants and six female participants identified timely support and intervention from the tutor as particularly significant at key moments. While accepting possible issues of power (Chapter 4), this confirmed the value of the university tutor at this ITE provider which had also been noted in the pilot study, as vividly illustrated by one participant: *'... the intense demands of my mentor meant that I have become increasingly stressed and began to lose confidence in my ability ... I forced myself to put on a brave face, even though I was ... on the verge of collapse ... In the end, being open with (tutor) about this problem has been a relief, as I feel that being open and honest helps me to cope as I don't have to put on a mask ...'* Although dramatic in tone, this response demonstrates the emotional and physical responses involved for an early career teacher under pressure.

The three-way partnership of the PGCE course, involving the early career teacher, the school-based mentor and the university tutor, appears to be of particular value in challenging situations, as the university tutor is able to be an external voice and mediator, providing a further perspective, if needed. It should also be noted, of course, that where the early career teacher is challenging for whatever reason, this three-way partnership is also useful, as mentor and tutors are also in need of support on occasions.

The other strategies used by the early career teachers to foster their resilience were similar to those mentioned in the pre-PGCE responses outlined in the first questionnaire (Figure 6). Given that managing workload and target-setting are considered an integral component of most PGCE programmes, it is perhaps surprising that this was not mentioned by more of the participants. This could be due to the taken-for-grantedness of these strategies, but it may also be an indication that a higher level of skill and experience in these strategies is assumed than is actually the case for many early career teachers. This continues to be a focus for ITE, especially in the light of the new Ofsted inspection framework (2014) where a distinction is made between short- and medium-term targets to aid professional development and this may be a valuable way of enabling an early career teacher to keep the learning journey in perspective.

Questionnaire 4

The final questionnaire (Appendix F) was sent to participants in the week immediately after the conclusion of the PGCE course. Although this final questionnaire could have focused on the consolidation phase school-based placement in line with the approach taken in the second and third questionnaires, I concluded from the consistency of earlier responses that this was unlikely to bring new insights. I chose, therefore, at this stage to focus on the PGCE experience as a whole in the final questionnaire. As stated earlier, I decided not to chase these responses, but received a total of 27 completed questionnaires from 18 female and nine male participants.

The first question invited participants to identify five words which best described the PGCE experience. Numerous adjectives were used and this made me reflect on whether I should have followed Oppenheim's (1966) advice to use open-ended questions and then narrow the focus with multiple-choice answers. However, I feel that this approach was justified because I was interested to capture a range of emotions and many words were used by only one respondent, such as 'enlightening', 'surprising' and 'emotional'. If I had given participants a range of words to choose from, certain adjectives would not have emerged.

In total, 66 positive words and 47 negative words were given, as well as 16 words (such as 'busy' and 'eye-opening') which could be interpreted either positively or negatively. In fact, the simple task of sorting the words into positive and negative groups was more complex than anticipated. For example, for some participants, a 'busy' PGCE year could be a positive experience with an interesting variety of fulfilling tasks, and yet the same word used by another participant could convey a feeling of unrelenting pace without enough time to reflect on progress being made. One participant described the PGCE year as 'life', clearly all-consuming, and I only hope that it was a positive experience.

The most frequently used positive words were 'rewarding' (14 responses), 'exciting' (8 responses) and 'inspiring' (4 responses) while the most frequently used negative words were 'challenging' (12 responses), 'tiring/exhausting' (9 responses) and 'stressful' (5 responses). This summary of the most frequently used words, of course, belies the richness of the full range of responses, including words like stimulating, fulfilling, fun, feasible, enriching, sociable, positive, valuable, character-building and brilliant, contrasted with difficult, overwhelming, undermining, testing, scary, tough, relentless, repetitive, surreal and nerve-wracking.

This opening question in the final questionnaire produced the most significant differences in response between female and male participants. Even allowing for the fact that there was a 2:1 ratio of responses in the small sample, the results are worth noting according to gender. For example, there were 43 positive words used by female participants and 23 positive words by male participants, whereas there

were 37 negative words used by female participants with only 10 negative words used by male participants. This is particularly striking, as four of the negative words from men were provided by just one participant.

As indicated by the participants, learning to teach is rewarding, exciting and inspiring, but the relative cost of this early professional journey seems disproportionate on occasions and should be of concern to all involved in ITE. If the end of the initial training year finds early career teachers challenged, exhausted and stressed, then a review of practice may be required, especially if one considers that the Education Select Committee report (2012) highlighted workload as the main reason for teachers leaving the profession. As school-based training increases in the current ITT climate, there may be a danger of early career teachers being trained by over-worked teachers, whose main priority should be the learning of pupils, rather than the emotional and professional well-being of an early career teacher.

There was a much stronger degree of consistency in responses, both in terms of content of response and between male and female respondents, to questions 2 and 3 of the questionnaire (Appendix F) which also reflected the findings in the pilot studies (Gordon, 2013a). In particular, the importance of a strong personal and professional social network was identified. This included family and friends, university tutor and peers, as well as mentors and other teacher colleagues, as illustrated in figure 10.

| Source of support | Female participant responses (out of 18) | Male participant responses (out of 9) |
|--------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Peers | 12 | 6 |
| Family and friends | 12 | 5 |
| University tutor | 10 | 5 |
| Mentor and teachers | 6 | 3 |
| Pupils | 1 | 1 |

Figure 10: Sources of significant social support through PGCE course as a whole

At a time when a university-based approach to ITE appears to be under threat in current government policy (Carter, 2015), it is interesting to note the value of tutors and peers illustrated by two of the respondents: *'Peer and tutor support. I found I felt less stressed when I heard other people were in the same position too, the reassurance that 'it wasn't just me'' and 'Being told (by my tutor and some teachers) that the way I felt was completely natural was what reassured me most in what I was doing and kept me motivated.'*

Although social support was considered vital to many of the participants, a lack of support was also cited as the biggest challenge to an early career teacher's resilience. This ranged from overt difficulties in the mentor / trainee relationship to intense pressure to perform and meet high expectations, combined with a lack of guidance and support with managing workload. Some of the expectations were perhaps unrealistic and possibly self-imposed, but the fact that so many participants referred to these issues underlines the potential of the mentor to 'make or break' an early career teacher. Indeed, Furlong and Maynard's comment (1995: 195) many years ago, that 'the quality of the next generation of teachers will, in large part, depend on the quality of the mentoring they are given' still appears to hold true, but may need renewed emphasis and direction (Chapter 9).

Apart from challenging relationships with mentors and / or other teacher colleagues, the following areas were also cited by more than a third of participants: workload (nine responses), behaviour management concerns (eight responses), and negative and / or unconstructive feedback (eight responses). On occasions, the mentor's own workload issues led to late or untimely guidance or feedback which added to the stress of the situation for everyone involved. One early career teacher expressed it thus: *'... two stars and a wish for all feedback to pupils, but not for me, where I am expected to perform in a way that my mentor does not even manage!'*

The final question related to the importance that the early career teachers felt should be given to a focus on resilience during their training and, if considered appropriate, how this might be best achieved. All participants responded very positively to this question, although one or two participants acknowledged that

everyone is different and that there are highs and lows in every job. The broad tenet of the responses was that a focus on resilience allows for an additional lens for reflection. In addition, several non-UK participants commented on how the pressure on teachers in the UK is higher than elsewhere in Europe and this is certainly an area which would merit some comparative international research in the future, particularly drawing on the work of Johnson et al. (2014) in Australia. The final responses were particularly striking, as reflective practice is central to the early career teacher's role and it was brought sharply into focus in a way that had not been the case in any of the other questionnaire responses. This is explored in more detail in chapter 10.

I remain mindful that the positive responses to the final question may have been due in part at least to the fact that the participants were returning the questionnaires to me and would have been well aware of my commitment to the resilience of early career teachers. However, this final question prompted some of the longer responses and several participants referred to the complex nature of teaching in their responses:

'From what I hear, a lot of teachers drop out of teaching very early these days and I think a focus on resilience would be useful. I doubt it would be a hundred per cent fix but it would help.'

'100% yes ... Teaching is a tough career, people need to learn the importance of managing their emotions, attitude, work-load and time ... we will all be thrown into challenging situations with such a people-oriented job.'

'I definitely think that resilience, confidence, work-life balance and so on are all big issues for early career teachers. I have often thought that getting off to a good start early on in a career, and feeling successful early on, is really important and can make or break a particular career. Given the stresses and extremely high learning curve in teaching, I think this is particularly relevant.'

In line with a framework of conditions which support early career teacher resilience in Australia (Johnson et al., 2014), my findings in this chapter also focus on issues

around policies and practice, teachers' workload, the importance of the school culture, the value of positive relationships and an awareness of teacher identity. Given that this thesis is part of a professional doctorate study, it is unsurprising that the potential impact on practice has been a key motivator for my inquiry; in this chapter, the participants have provided useful evidence in this regard and this is further illuminated in chapter 7 where participants provide rich insights through creative writing approaches.

Chapter 7: Research in Practice – Creative writing

‘To write is to measure the depth of things, as well as to come to a sense of one’s own depth’ (Van Manen, 1995: 127)

My approach to *bricolage* (Chapter 4) was intended to capture and explore the experiences of early career teachers through a variety of lenses; in turn, this has led to a broadening view of reflective practice in ITE and this chapter is an important contribution in this regard. Alongside the questionnaires (Chapter 6), many of the same participants also contributed their experiences as early career teachers through a variety of creative writing approaches. I begin by providing a brief definition of creative writing, as I have interpreted it for use as a research method in this inquiry. Influenced by the work of Hunt (2013) and Bolton (2010 and 2014) among others, I consider creative writing to be a form of personal and professional development for writers. In writing, we encounter ourselves and have the opportunity to organise and clarify our thoughts and feelings, so it is ‘a valuable method for getting in touch with ... inner life’ (Hunt and Sampson, 1998: 12). Different approaches to creative writing were used at four different points in the participants’ PGCE training year and each of these is explored in this chapter. Although I provided the participants with a structure for each writing activity (Appendices G-J), they were able to respond as they wished, free from any constraints or conventions that are required within writing for academic purposes. In line with my ethical approach (Chapter 4), I encouraged, but did not actively force, the 44 participants to contribute to these activities. As a result, there are different levels of response to each of the activities, perhaps due to a preference of style, to the timing of the writing or to the enthusiasm of the participant.

Many authors (Giroux, 1988; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Bolton, 2012) highlight writing as an epistemology and I hoped to gain a sense of current reality, as perceived by the participants, through the various stages in their training. Bolton (2010) draws on examples from doctors, nurses, social workers and teachers and, together with the work of Rolfe (2002) and Michelson (2011), this prompted me to consider creative writing as an alternative research tool to the more standards-

driven, technical-rational approach to reflection and evaluation (Chapter 10) that is prevalent in teaching and many other professions. Although there was no therapeutic quest as such in my choice of creative writing as a research method at the outset, I acknowledge that writing is a form of self-expression and that there has been considerable interest in some fields in the use of creative writing as a means of gaining personal insights and as a way to deal with difficult experiences (Hunt and Sampson, 1998).

The idea behind social constructionism that people are fundamentally storytellers (Burr, 2004; Bolton, 2014) forms part of the rationale for the choice of creative writing activities as a research method; we see our lives in narrative, relational and dialogic terms (Burr, 2004) and are able to explore our sense of agency, actual or perceived, through the language we use to tell our stories. Expressed simply, the research activities may be considered to fall under the broad narrative inquiry paradigm - 'Stories lived and told educate the self and others' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: xxvi) - but some of the individual activities (such as the use of haiku poetry) show an originality of approach to research methodology in ITE.

Creative Writing 1: Reflections on free writing

In the initial creative writing activity (Appendix G), I aimed to explore the thoughts, feelings and experiences of the participants after the first five weeks of the PGCE course. During this time, the participants had been mostly university-based but had completed some initial observations and were about to embark on their first school placement. The first research activity is perhaps less creative (and possibly less daunting) than the other three activities, and the opportunity to write freely was welcomed by the participants who engaged fully with the process.

Narratives may be full of ambiguities and gaps, but I agree with Freedman and Combs (1996) that creative writing may tell us much more than factual writing which may lack depth of reflection or critical analysis. For example, one of the richest pieces of free writing produced by a participant in this research, which was full of highly-charged emotion and perceptive insights about the way in which values about education were challenged during the early stages of a journey in the

teaching profession, could have been reduced to 'I started the PGCE course to prepare for my first placement'. Use of free writing allows me to observe how an individual career teacher strives to navigate the complex contradictions of everyday life, particularly in relation to their new profession.

At one level, from a social constructionist worldview, I acknowledge that there is no way of objectively knowing reality, so it has felt somewhat counter-intuitive to analyse the free writing pieces with the aim of identifying some universally applicable interpretations. Therefore, although I used thematic coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Braun and Clarke, 2006, Bazeley, 2013) to analyse the 24 pieces of free writing, I reflected on findings after five weeks on the PGCE course with an intentionally light touch under two headings which emerged as I read the responses many times: sense of enthusiasm and purpose in the new profession and the mixture of emotions expressed at the start of the first school placement.

Almost all of the 24 responses to the free writing activity made reference to a strong sense of enthusiasm and purpose in the first five weeks of the PGCE course, often at both a professional and personal level. There was a high degree of consistency among the respondents, especially considering that they were asked to only spend five minutes to write freely about whatever experiences they chose to mention in relation to starting the PGCE course. This is summed up well by two respondents, *'My life has purpose again!'* and *'I really enjoyed ... being part of a learning environment. It was refreshing to be with a real mix of people, different ages, interests, backgrounds, but all with a common goal ...'*. The focus on a positive start to professional development is perhaps to be expected, as the early career teachers learn much about the curriculum and aspects of pedagogy in the initial weeks of the course and I am reminded that, for Dewey (1933), experience is both personal and social, part of the interplay of a learning continuum. However, it also reflects the participants' definitions of resilience in the first questionnaire completed at the same time (Chapter 6) where an individual's sense of purpose about their chosen profession was highlighted clearly by the participants.

The focus on resilience in my research is closely linked to developing emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998 and 2006), emerging as an important strand in my review of literature (Hayes, 2003; Sutton and Wheatley, 2003; Mortiboys, 2005), and is re-visited in chapter 10. In particular, Hurley and Cammick (2014) highlight the place of emotional intelligence in the preparation of early career teachers for school placement experience. At this early stage, the range of adjectives was overwhelmingly positive with words like excitement, collaboration, engaging, stimulating, interesting, thrilling, positive, enthusiastic, refreshing and optimistic used by the participants. These responses are in contrast to the responses to the final questionnaire when participants have encountered more of the realities of teaching after two school placements and more negative adjectives are used to describe their experiences. I conclude that, as the early career teachers find themselves part of governmental and institutional apparatus, they may need support to draw on resilience as they strive to make sense of their experiences and to grow in confidence as professionals (Jarvis, 1987). Such adaptability as part of resilience may be a contributory factor to the way in which early career teachers cope with new situations and this has implications for a stronger or possibly different focus on reflective practice (Schön, 1983, 1987; Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985; Illeris, 2004) as part of the process (Chapter 10).

Some negative emotions were expressed at this stage, but these mainly referred to the challenges of adapting to a new working routine with childcare and other home issues cited by seven respondents. The importance of multi-tasking and managing a large amount of new information was also mentioned by several participants, as the requirements of the course proved more demanding than anticipated. As an ITE tutor, I was pleased to see how well supported the trainee teachers felt at the outset of their training and this was mirrored in the questionnaire responses (Chapter 6) when support from university tutors, mentors and peers was cited as a crucial factor in building confidence and nurturing the resilience of the participants.

The way in which the participants used the free writing to tell their story underlines the potential benefit for the research inquiry, as they shared their feelings and emotions in a way that a more factual questionnaire would not have achieved.

During this time, the participants had also begun to spend some days in their first placement school and 17 of the 24 participants made reference to this school-based experience in their writing. Although references to school were generally positive at this early stage, a few phrases from different responses indicate the challenges of making the transition from the relative safety of the university context to the more unpredictable and varied experiences in school:

'When in school, the reality hit me!'

'whirlwind of emotions'

'On 11 October I was in my first placement and to say that I had mixed emotions is an understatement.'

'... sometimes I feel more like someone in fancy dress than a teacher.'

'I think I've been prepped as much as I can before heading into the wilderness of proper teaching.'

'I'm not sure I would be feeling this confident and relaxed in a school with behaviour issues!'

Bolton (in Hunt and Sampson, 1998) underlines many of the benefits of creative writing in her work with doctors and patients. The links with my own research inquiry are most striking in regard to the way in which creative writing offers access to feelings as well as experiences and the way in which it can be a tool for learning. However, these benefits might be even more useful, if there was a mechanism to discuss the creative writing with the participants as part of a developmental process, but I felt this to be outside the remit of my research at this stage. It could, however, be considered as part of developing practice in ITE provision (Chapter 10).

Writing 'freely' without constraints of spelling, punctuation, grammar, handwriting or sentence structure may be liberating for some participants and the short time limit was also intended to ensure that the writing activity should not feel too burdensome. One of the possible advantages of this writing activity, in contrast to those with a more defined structure and no time limits, was that the writing was

messier and less inhibited, which more closely represents the complex and non-linear reality that is life for most people.

Creative Writing 2: Reflections on metaphor

Based on the experience of the earlier pilot studies, I considered the period between the first and second school placements to be an ideal opportunity for reflection and chose metaphor as the creative writing activity (Appendix H) at this stage in the research to prompt reflections from the participants on their journey as early career teachers. Indeed, following the pilot studies, the metaphor activity is now used as part of a whole cohort session at this stage in the PGCE programme, as metaphors have ‘a powerful influence on both what we perceive and what we do’ (Freedman and Combs, 1996: 1) and have proved a useful vehicle for the early career teachers to share their experiences. The fact that the metaphor creative writing activity had effectively been ‘rehearsed’ in a university session may account for the higher level of 30 responses, as participants had already formulated their initial thoughts prior to receiving the research activity by e-mail in the usual way.

When a concept, an idea or an emotion may be difficult to express, then metaphor, ‘an offering of perceived resemblances’ (Punter, 2007: 13), may be a useful form of language to enable us to better understand a particular issue. As Ricoeur suggests (1978: 190), ‘If metaphor adds nothing to the description of the world, at least it adds to the ways in which we perceive’. There is consensus in the literature I have reviewed that the use of metaphor focuses on the potential similarity between experiences (Ricoeur, 1978; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Way, 1991; Punter, 2007) and it is relatively straightforward to draw on the participants’ metaphors in my research to highlight similarities between the chosen metaphors (Figure 11) to describe their experiences of their first school placement. I am also intrigued by the idea that, as we look at the world afresh through metaphor, it may be that dissimilarity between experiences also becomes clear and this may provide additional powerful insights and increased self-awareness for the early career teachers. It has proved challenging to ‘reduce’ the richness of some of the

metaphors for the purposes of reporting and I have included two complete metaphors (Appendix K) to illustrate this point.

Metaphor may be about comparison at one level, but it cannot be assumed that there is equality in any comparison and this has raised a political and ethical dimension for my research. For example, a metaphor from the pilot study (Gordon, 2013b) compared the experience on school placement to being in a washing machine (often on fast spin setting), highlighting only the turbulent aspects of the experience. This may have been a one-sided representation of the school placement, as other aspects of support and moments of calm reflection for the participant may have been left unspoken as they did not fit with the chosen metaphor. In all forms of writing, both the writer and the reader have the power to limit and skew perceptions through use and interpretation of language, as well as the power to suppress or embellish aspects of the metaphor for particular purposes. Clearly, this has implications for any so-called veracity of a metaphor and its usefulness for research purposes. However, I am less interested in 'truth' *per se*, and rather more in any understandings that emerge from metaphors as 'an imaginative form of rationality' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 194) and any actions that may be considered as a result (Chapters 9 and 10).

The main focus of my analysis of the participants' metaphors was to consider how the resilience of the early career teachers in my research had been both challenged and nurtured during their first school placement. Metaphors are capable of giving us a new understanding of our experience and developing our self-understanding (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), often by inciting emotional responses (Way, 1991), but this becomes more significant if our future actions are guided by the new insights gained through metaphor. Providing new opportunities for reflection for early career teachers in response to the insights gained from metaphors may be useful, perhaps by creating the space for participants to reflect on realities in the first instance, but also by sharing metaphors with PGCE students to raise awareness of potential experiences ahead and to share strategies for addressing issues that may arise.

A striking feature of the choice of metaphors by the participants was the ability to combine the negative and positive aspects of their first school placement experience in a short piece of writing. Many of the metaphors referred to intense challenges and feelings of uncertainty, but also to the process of personal and professional growth, gaining confidence in teaching, and to the joys of the profession. Two short extracts serve to illustrate this feature:

'The observation period is like your way up to the (bungee) jump where you feel like you can do it, but the higher you go the more doubts creep in about your ability to jump. Then you jump and it's exciting and dangerous. Then near the end of the jump you feel the tug of the safety cord, you know you are going to survive and, even though there are still some more ups and downs, confidence is higher and you can really start to just enjoy the jump.'

'... learning how to drive a car ... involves learning some hands-off theory and watching others first ... when you first get behind the wheel it can be a bit alien and scary ... it can also be exhilarating, challenging and fun ... over time you learn how to drive in different environments such as motorways, in the dark, in bad weather conditions, with difficult passengers (!) etc ... finally, you reach your destination ... you are amazed at the progress you have made compared to the time when you didn't even know how to operate the gears and clutch!'

The metaphors provided for this stage of my research inquiry are summarised in figure 11 below and demonstrate considerable consistency in the choice of metaphor by the 30 participants. The choice of the journey metaphor is perhaps not surprising (and was a recurring theme in the pilot studies), as it appears to work particularly well to highlight one aspect of the early career teacher's experience, where the first school placement demands significant progress in a relatively short period of time, but where progress is rarely linear. However, I wonder if it also highlights one of the possible reasons for dissatisfaction with the profession in that it may relate to our obsession with achieving targets to reach a destination. As one

participant expressed it, *'There were also smooth roads which I sped along until I came to another sharp bend in the journey'*.

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Metaphor of a journey | Coastal train ride Travelator at airport Yacht trip Driving / road trip x 2 Alpine walk Camel safari Space mission |
| Metaphor of extreme sport | Bungee jump Running a marathon Climbing a mountain x 3 Trekking in Peru Tandem skydive Trip around a race track Unicycle ride Tough set in Grand Slam tennis match |
| Metaphor of creative activity | Conducting an orchestra Balloon modelling Circus acts Strictly Come Dancing contestant Cooking / baking x 4 Repairing a dry stone wall |
| Other | Like a lemon – sour at times Small fish in a big pond Searching for stars |

Fig 11: Summary of metaphor themes

The consistency of response from the participants with 27 of the 30 metaphors involving a challenging journey, some form of extreme sport or creative endeavour, is striking, as considerable resilience is required. Teaching, as in nursing and social work perhaps, is a profession where the initial year of training involves an assault

on the physical, emotional and mental well-being of an individual. The metaphors clearly capture the rollercoaster nature of the experience, with anxious lows and exhilarating highs:

'... fast-paced lifestyle that was and still is very alien to me'

'At times, the feeling of speeding across the lake (in a yacht) more or less in the right direction was truly exhilarating ... Just as I could see land in the distance, the tiller broke and I felt a feeling of helplessness unlike any other I had before.'

'At times the lead violin is playing too fast, the cello is out of tune, the trumpet is blowing at the wrong moment, the drums won't stop playing and the flute is mostly not playing at all. There is the odd moment, where all accidentally falls into place and all the instruments play in lovely harmony.'

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) point to the potential for different domains of experience in metaphor – spatial, social and emotional – and this is similar to my own analysis, using thematic coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) of the participants' metaphors, which also highlighted the mental, physical and emotional aspects of their experiences. The fact that the current Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2012) are all about the 'doing' of teaching is in contrast to these early career teachers' experiences of their first school placement, where adjusting to the emotional aspects – the 'being' of the profession - appears to be a particular challenge to their resilience.

Also of note in regard to the emotional challenges of teaching is the fact that over half of the respondents made explicit reference in their metaphor to the importance of support, such as *'feel the tug of the safety cord'* and *'The on-board manual (my mentor) was an invaluable source of information...'*. On the other hand, there was also reference in six of the responses to challenges to resilience posed by mentors in certain situations, including the sometimes overwhelming nature of constant observation – *'every move is watched'* – and conflicting advice – *'the plentiful signposts often seem to be contradictory'* – and difficult feedback – *'(mentor) identifies fairly brutally your specific weaknesses'*. The reality of a

mentor's ability to undermine the confidence, perhaps unintentionally, of a trainee teacher (Chapter 6) emerges clearly in these metaphors, too.

Another benefit of metaphor, highlighted by Ricoeur (1978), is not just the use of language to convey the metaphor, but the way in which it encourages deeper thinking at a conceptual level by the writer. Certainly, informal feedback indicated that the early career teachers found metaphor a useful way to reflect on their experience of the first school placement in a more holistic way. This may have been in part due to the relative freedom of the reflection tool, which was in contrast to the structured and more technical-rational evaluation formats used to evaluate individual lessons while on school experience placement. However, I would suggest that some kind of follow-up with the early career teacher to explore the metaphor more fully and discuss strategies for managing the identified challenges is needed, if use of metaphor is to be an effective tool for reflection (Chapter 10).

By way of conclusion to this section of the chapter, I acknowledge two concerns about the use of metaphor. A particular difficulty acknowledged by Black (1962) is the potential issue of trivial and forced metaphors, which may not move exposition of experiences beyond the banal and mundane. Although this may be the case with some of the participants' metaphors, I suggest that the main aim of using metaphor as a creative writing activity in my research was not to then judge the metaphors on their artistic or poetic merits. Indeed, all the metaphors are of value in the way that they inspired a depth of thinking in the participants and the way in which they provided insights into the everyday experiences and perspectives of the early career teachers, 'imposing some formed solidity on the flux of life' (Punter, 2007: 112).

The other frustration relates more to a generic issue surrounding the reporting of research evidence in qualitative inquiry. Through the metaphors, the participants shared their experiences and emotions with clarity and honesty, exposing both their vulnerability and clear sense of commitment to the teaching profession and revealing personal aspects of their worlds, and yet my analysis of the findings reduces their writing to a few pages of text in this thesis. The richness of the language used to illuminate their experiences is inevitably somewhat lost in the

reporting process and this is a source of regret as I am striving to use the language of the participants as the POET (Chapter 4) in my inquiry.

Creative Writing Activity 3: Reflections on haiku

Unlike the other prose creative writing activities for this research, the third creative writing activity (see appendix I) involves the use of the haiku poetry form, as a possible method to gain additional insights into the experiences of the early career teachers at the mid-point of their second school placement when their resilience was likely to be most tested. At this stage, the participants were teaching about 65% of a normal teacher's timetable and faced with their second master's level assignment submission, so many were experiencing the pressure of teaching and juggling different priorities.

As researcher, I was motivated to explore a range of creative writing activities for my research, including the use of poetry. However, mindful of the fact that some people do not like writing poetry and that it can be very time-consuming and mood-dependent, I deliberately opted for a short and structured style of poetry writing for the third creative writing activity and was pleased to receive 24 responses from participants, with some contributing more than one haiku.

Haiku poetry is an ancient art form, originating in Japan, where natural life and details of human life are the common focus for poetry (Cobb, 2002). I was keen to discover whether the way in which the haiku poet is able to make the obvious seem remarkable and the everyday seem extraordinary was transferable into the responses from research participants about their experiences of resilience as early career teachers.

The guidance to participants about the structure of haiku poetry was minimal (Appendix I) to avoid over-complicating the activity, but was needed for participants who had not encountered haiku before. My intention was to explore the extent to which the very brevity and compression of the poem through its limited syllable count might lead the participants to focus on the core experiences at this stage in

their training year; careful choice of words is needed by the writers to highlight feelings and experiences, thereby bringing key ideas sharply into focus.

One aspect of haiku poetry that particularly appeals to me as researcher is highlighted by Cobb (2002) in that the appreciation of haiku is said to be a matter of collaboration between the poet and the reader. Cobb borrows a metaphor from photography, describing how the poet exposes something to the light, which is then developed and possibly re-interpreted by the reader. Although I would argue that this may well be the case with any relationship between text and reader, the fact that haiku poetry is often plain and simple, almost under-stated, makes this perhaps more pertinent and relevant.

The guidance given to participants related only to the number of syllables generally used in haiku, but there are other typical key features of haiku which emerged in the participants' poetry, even without making these explicit in the research activity guidance. Haiku poetry is often about nature, but more specifically about the transience of life and the cycles of events in earthly life. In the contributions, participants echoed these themes, often combining a challenge with a more upbeat reflection that appears to be part of an early career teacher's cycle of experience of resilience. Generally speaking, haiku affirm life with a positive attitude. I cite the haiku from one research participant to illustrate this point:

Always something new

The work it never ceases

Worth it in the end

Having reviewed all the haiku in detail, I provide a deeper analysis of the three dominant themes which emerged from the data - progress and development, issues of workload and the relationship with the mentor - with examples of the haiku to illustrate each theme from the current participants. In this way, I hope to better capture and convey the richness of the creative writing responses as related to resilience.

Firstly, the potential for progress and development was conveyed strongly in many of the haiku, with a clear willingness to learn and strong sense of determination. Although this may be an indication of the hegemonic forces at work in ITE, where trainee teachers may simply be striving to conform to perceived expectation and demanding workload, the positive sense of excitement and commitment for teaching was evident, as shown in these examples:

Yes! Back to teaching

Wait, what?! This much work? Really?

Need to persevere

Always challenging

Finding new faults to work on

But getting better

In this context, one haiku merits further comment at this stage:

A train on a track

Can't go back, can I go on?

I'll do it but how?

The rhythm of this haiku reflects the relentless movement of a train (and by inference, an early career teacher) on its journey towards its destination. In some ways, it may also signal a possible loss of individuality and personal voice, as the individual is drawn into the group force. There is also an indication of the constant pressure felt by participants to respond to targets and aim for ever higher levels of performance. The development of teaching skills takes time and progress is not always linear, so this may pose a challenge to resilience at particular moments. Implicit in this haiku is the tacit acknowledgment, or perhaps fateful acceptance, of the perceived demands and challenges of teaching. If the conditions are right, progress for the train on its journey will be smooth, and yet in this haiku there is no sense of factors to ensure easy growth of the early career teacher. This participant

completed the course successfully, but it is relevant to note that this participant's short story in the final creative writing activity (Appendix L) also reflected the same sense of anxious concern about perceived difficulties in making progress which led to an unnecessary loss of confidence.

A second strongly emerging theme was the intensity of the teaching workload and the related time constraints that affect resilience in other aspects of an early career teacher's life mentioned by 15 of the 24 participants in some form or other. Sometimes, this was very explicit with lines such as *'Workload has increased'* and *'A million things / On a never ending list'*. On other occasions, reference to workload was more subtle, but no less striking: *'With unfinished days'* and *'Time is never on my side / Must get organised'*, confirming that workload is one of the key reasons for teachers' stress (Singer, 2012).

Workload is part of what Gu and Day (2013:40) describe as the 'realities of teaching' and must be of real concern for all involved in ITE if such feelings are already dominant in the training process for early career teachers. The first haiku below clearly shows how the normal everyday world of the individual is suspended because of the individual's sense of what is required in teaching. The second haiku below conveys the same message, but shows that some early career teachers can still maintain their sense of humour in challenging times.

*Goodbye social life
Required to juggle tonnes
To learn to teach well*

*There is a reason
Why we get 13 weeks off
When else would I sleep?*

Drawing on the questionnaire and creative writing responses, the importance of preparing early career teachers with some sense of the priority of establishing a

work/life balance has emerged as an area for consideration for its likely impact on practice as a result of my research (Chapter 9).

A third significant theme to emerge in many of the haiku was the role of the mentor in supporting or undermining the development of the early career teacher. The impact of the mentor on the confidence of the participant is clear and the consistency of responses from the participants in this regard to both the questionnaires and the creative writing activities was striking at this stage in the professional learning journey. I was frequently reminded of Furlong and Maynard's (1995) references to the importance of mentoring support in nurturing future generations of teachers. The power of the school-based mentor to challenge or support an early career teacher's resilience, intentionally or not, was powerfully conveyed in the participants' responses. The early career teachers who were struggling with their mentor express this strongly, citing uncertainty, ambiguity, self-doubt, frustration, as well as fears over assessment.

Although there is a real sense of the hegemony of performativity (Kincheloe, 2008) in the first haiku below, it is unclear whose expectations are so high. Given additional information I know about this participant, a competent and self-motivated individual, it most likely refers to mentor expectations in a high-achieving and demanding department (in a high-profile teaching school), but it could also refer to the participant's own desire to achieve the best grades as a high achiever throughout life.

The issue of assessment grading at key points in the PGCE course seems to cause concern to trainees and is well expressed in the second haiku below, where the grading challenges resilience and may lead to a loss of confidence. Coping with different expectations from colleagues was cited by participants in the questionnaire responses (Chapter 6) and the third haiku below clearly expresses this dissonance felt by one participant as a result. It should be noted that this participant contributed another more positive haiku, beginning '*Best job in the world ...*'.

Sick, nervous, churning
Expectations are so high
Midnight strikes again

The dreaded grading
Suffered a knock in belief
Over and sorted

Worst job in the world
So many people to please
I am not at ease

Those participants who have positive experiences of mentoring support are equally vocal in both questionnaire and creative writing responses, referring to their sense of progress, self-belief, commitment and enthusiasm. The haiku below reflect the 'professional capital' which Hargreaves and Fullan (2012: xv) promote, particularly striking as the participant's self-belief is achieved with the mentor's support and encouragement.

Tired, tears and doubt.
"You can do it", mentor said.
Self-belief, vital.

A mentor's support,
My increasing confidence,
The end is in sight!

The final line of the latter haiku merits discussion, as a similar sentiment was expressed in almost identical language by three other participants in their haiku. At one level, this positive-sounding expression is an entirely appropriate way to end a haiku to express confidence and positivity. However, it may also indicate a

potentially misplaced optimism that successful completion of the PGCE course is sufficient to ensure a successful career in teaching. In many respects, as the NQTs involved in this research inquiry (Chapter 8) report, the end of the PGCE course is just the start of the next stage in an early career teacher's professional learning journey and resilience will continue to be needed in the future.

In conclusion, the haiku illustrate well the issues around identity as an early career teacher, where professional and personal lives may clash in new and unanticipated ways. The participants' sense of self-doubt and anxiety about their chosen profession is brought sharply into focus, underlining the need for resilience and a positive support network. These are all issues that emerged from the questionnaire data (Chapter 6), but it has been insightful to see how clearly the same themes are captured in this short poetry form.

Creative Writing Activity 4: Stories

Clough's (2002) comment that any research findings that can be expressed in mathematical terms are unlikely to be a sophisticated representation of the myriad variations that are involved has provided some solace for me as I have sought to analyse the creative writing provided by participants in this research inquiry. Even the summary of genres and key themes (Appendix M) of the stories written for the final creative writing activity (Appendix J) feels reductionist; the themes are relatively easy to identify, but in the process of distilling a well-written story and reducing it to key headlines, much richness is lost. As Bolton (2014: 126) comments: 'All stories are perspectival; no story has only one meaning. They are essentially ambiguous and resist singular interpretation'. However, it is the opportunity afforded by storytelling to explore the emotional aspects of a teacher's resilience that is particularly exciting in this regard and this complements the questionnaires used in parallel in this research project (Chapter 6). Therefore, this final creative writing activity has been no less challenging to analyse than the other creative writing tasks, but the literature cited in this chapter indicated the potential for some useful insights by using this approach and this has proved to be the case. As with

the metaphors, I have chosen to include one story in its entirety (see appendix L) and to provide a more detailed analysis of the story later in this chapter.

Clough (2002) used stories as a means of sharing research, whereas my approach invited participants to share their stories to inform my research. Wallace (2010) illustrates the potential for creative writing by early career teachers as a way of encouraging greater depth of reflection on professional experiences. Issues of power and ethical considerations have continued to play a part in this sense (Chapter 4), as I strive to honour the voices of the participants and reflect on implications for practice in ITE that may emerge while also being conscious of personal issues that may arise in the telling of the story.

Wallace (2010) encouraged a group of early career teachers to reflect on their experiences of the PGCE course (in the post-compulsory sector in her case) in the form of a fairy tale. The outcomes provided some useful insights into the experiences of the participants, but this particular genre of storytelling with its 'goodies' and 'baddies' may perhaps have polarised and exaggerated the responses from her participants, so I was keen to allow freedom of genre for my participants' story telling. However, the range of story genres chosen by the participants (Appendix M) was fairly limited and included fairy tales and fantasy stories, as well as detective stories and an adventure tale.

In the end, 12 participants concluded their PGCE year by sharing a short story with me as part of my research inquiry. At one level, the response rate was perhaps slightly disappointing, but this was by far the most challenging and time-consuming of the creative writing activities, so may not have appealed to everyone. It was also conducted at the end of the course, when the participants were moving away from the PGCE course and turning their attention to a well-deserved break and the challenges of NQT status. Perhaps of particular note is the fact that this was the least favourite creative writing activity for male participants in the research inquiry with just one autobiographical (non-fiction) response. I think that this serves to underline the value of different research methods to suit different people's ways of responding and gaining insights into their experiences.

Drawing on thematic coding again (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), I share the main thoughts emerging from the stories in three areas – managing behaviour, relationships with mentors and the value of support mechanisms. In all but one of the stories, there is a continuing narrative of hope. However, the extremes of experiences and emotions of the early career teacher are very clearly expressed in the stories. The fairy tales generally conformed to expectations in the genre, by describing a challenging situation, combined with positive support, leading to a successful and happy ending. The two science fiction stories illustrate the contrasting emotions well: one is an uplifting story about an astronaut who is on a positive and successful mission to fly a space ship, whereas the other is about a mysterious and potentially deadly virus infecting a number of trainee teachers with disturbing consequences. These two stories may highlight certain aspects of resilience, as a clear sense of purpose and positive guidance may help to nurture and sustain an individual in challenging circumstances, whereas physical and mental ill-health and erratic behaviour may result when an individual's resilience is severely challenged (Cooper, 2012).

The fact that behaviour management is a significant concern for early career teachers is well-known to every ITE tutor and had emerged particularly strongly in the questionnaire responses about challenges to resilience (Chapter 6), so it was perhaps unsurprising that a vivid portrayal of challenging pupils and the ensuing emotional turmoil experienced by the main characters emerged in the stories. By contrast, it only emerged as a concern for one participant in the haiku responses, but this has been included with a commentary in Appendix N as it is particularly evocative of some of the emotions which challenge an early career teacher's resilience.

Although the behaviour of pupils is portrayed as challenging in several of the stories, it is the potentially destructive role of the mentor that is particularly striking. In some ways, I hope that the participants used the stories in a cathartic way to begin to make sense of unpleasant experiences, as the language used is often quite violent: *'Mr Minotaur (mentor) didn't like (name) very much ... She felt his hatred in her heart, and every time he was around, she felt herself shrinking.'*

Furthermore, one participant describes a particularly challenging phase as a *'mentor-filled snow storm'*.

Participants had experienced a range of mentoring styles, such as: *'She met ogres along the way and realised that instead of slaying them, it was more beneficial to be friendly to them; she met kindly giants who helped her with their great wisdom.'*

There were also many examples of positive mentoring relationships, such as the astronaut whose mentor in her second placement school *'didn't seem so focused on 'space-silence' and after her first flight told her that she was going to make a fine astronaut – just what (name) needed to give her confidence'*.

If support were needed for a PGCE university route into teaching, then the stories provide positive evidence of the value of university tutors as part of the training and development partnership for new entrants to the profession. Four of the stories make overtly positive references to university tutors, particularly in challenging situations for the characters when tutors are described as 'princes' and 'caring parents'. Eight of the story writers make reference to the joy of returning to university between the two school placements, relishing the time at university to re-charge batteries, benefiting from the opportunities to share each other's experiences and to learn more about many aspects of teaching. This is summarised well by one participant: *'Returning to university in the new year was brilliant, and everyone was able to share stories – good and bad – and remember why they were doing the course in the first place ... that little fact often seemed to hide itself away amid piles of planning and marking.'*

As stories are told, the reader is also an active participant in the storytelling process, as s/he also brings experiences to the story and uses these reflections to make sense of assumptions and question previously held beliefs. It is this mutual construction that may unlock the real power of stories, not to identify any supposed truth as such, but rather to raise awareness and broaden perspectives. Indeed, this aspect of storytelling may be of most benefit to inform practice, as I plan to share some of the stories with future entrants to the profession and highlight ways of coping with situations that may arise (see chapter 10).

With these ideas in mind, I now explore one story in more detail (see appendix L for the complete story). The participant has adapted the well-known children's story, *'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'* by Rosen (2014), to reflect her experiences of the PGCE course. The repetitive, almost nursery-rhyme style, is an inspired choice to reflect the ups and downs of the participant's experience combined with the relentless workload. The story begins with the optimism of someone who has been successful both academically and professionally prior to starting the PGCE course. Each stanza of the story then highlights a phase in the journey, beginning with a challenge (*'long wavy grass'*, *'fast deep river'*, *'deep dark forest'*, *'a mentor-filled snow storm'* and *'a big dark cave'*) and followed by a moment of re-grouping, with the familiar refrain, *'We're not scared'*. The challenges are familiar to anyone involved in ITE – lesson planning, creating resources, writing essays, reading academic journals, marking, parents' evenings, assessment profile completion, NQT job applications – and underline the workload and the steep learning curve which is part of the early career teacher's experience.

As the journey becomes more challenging and the mentor's demanding expectations are relentless, the positive moments become less and gradually disappear altogether in the participant's story. Everyone involved in ITE strives for the highest standards, but this story vividly illustrates the detrimental cost that may be involved to an individual's well-being. The refrain, *'We're not scared'*, which for some time had reinforced the feeling of (perhaps slowly diminishing) confidence, changes to *'We won't give up'*, perhaps underlining a key challenge to resilience for the writer. Although the story reflects Rosen's original text, the use of the collective pronoun 'we' throughout may illustrate the collegial nature of teaching, where an individual's identity and sense of purpose becomes an integral part of a larger body. *'We're going to have a great time'* at the start of the story gradually changes as the story unfolds to *'We've survived the first phase now'*, signalling clearly that the anticipated enjoyment of teaching has not materialised or is diminishing rapidly. In the same way, *'We're going to catch a big one!'* in the original Rosen (2014: no page number) text becomes *'We're going to catch – well any size would do now'*, as the writer faces up to the fact that the highest grade is perhaps beyond her reach. The

need to shift or adjust expectations has been a theme through many of the questionnaire and creative writing responses and, clearly, the university tutor has some kind of mediating role to play in this regard to ensure that there is limited negative impact on the resilience of the individual.

There is one striking omission in this story – any mention of the pupils. This is perhaps due to the fact that the writer experienced relatively few behaviour management issues, as her placements were carefully chosen by the university tutor to match her needs and preference for working with higher-achieving pupils. This explains, in part, the writer's reaction to her first interview at a more challenging school: *'oh no! really don't want that job ...'*.

There will be many times when participants in this research inquiry will have felt like hiding *'under the covers'* and asking *'Will I ever go on a bear hunt again?'* like this participant. However, I draw hope from the fact that this open-ended and questioning ending to the story is more positive than the original text which concludes *'We're never going on a bear hunt again!'* (Rosen, 2014: no page number).

This story in particular has raised one issue for me, as I sense the need to talk with some of the participants about their stories in more detail in order to gain further insights about the perspectives taken and to offer more guidance and personalised support where appropriate. Wallace's (2010) participants were given the opportunity to share and de-construct their stories with peers. However, I am also aware that this may detract from the original richness of the stories and may re-awaken vulnerabilities in the participants if not handled sensitively. For all the potential benefits of creative writing as a research method, there are important ethical considerations which have emerged through this final creative writing activity in particular. I would argue that, as PGCE tutors for these participants, my colleagues and I are in a better position than a detached researcher to guide participants where needed, particularly as concerns that have arisen in the creative writing tend also to emerge in tutorial discussions. However, on occasions, deep feelings and emotions have been revealed through the writing, which may need

support from a skilled counsellor or further follow-up support. This indicates some of the blurring of the boundaries which is perhaps inevitable in this kind of research inquiry.

I conclude this chapter with some reflections by the participant who wrote her story as an allegory, likening her experiences to many aspects of playing in and conducting an orchestra. Like most of the other stories, references to her resilience are implicit throughout; she refers to moments of extreme challenge and absolute joy on her journey, as well as the benefits of collaboration with peers and other colleagues. However, there is one short section of her story that highlights the potential benefit of creative writing as a valuable additional tool for reflection, as she comments:

'Whilst I had been learning much about rhythm, one essential thing was missing. That is the beauty of the music. This beauty might have been missing because so much focus was put on rhythm, counting the beats, respecting the pause, which are all important elements in an orchestra of this size. By now, I knew that what I would be looking for when putting together my own orchestra was beauty above all.'

I suggest that there is a heart-warming level of emotional awareness and engagement with the ITE process in this extract that may not have emerged in more typical lesson evaluation formats, for example. Perhaps a sense of beauty is an important and under-estimated aspect of an individual's resilience and it is important to ensure that the beauty of teaching and learning remains at the heart of ITE provision, perhaps even above the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2012). This brought to mind the musing of Foden's fictional character: 'How in a world of disintegration and endless renewal – a continuum, a world of flow – one must find one's own rhythm exactly by recognising the incompleteness of the melody' (Foden, 2010: 315). It is perhaps the incompleteness of the melody, or losing sight of the beauty of the music, that particularly challenges the resilience of the early career teacher, including as a newly qualified teacher (NQT) (Chapter 9). As I outline in chapter 10, reflective practice and relationships are vital to appreciate the melody and beauty of teaching.

Chapter 8: Research in practice – NQT resilience

‘Why should I not publish my diary? I have often seen reminiscences of people I have never heard of, and I fail to see – because I do not happen to be a ‘Somebody’ – why my diary should not be interesting.’ (Grossmith, 2014: 7)

These opening words from ‘The Diary of a Nobody’ encapsulate my rationale for including NQT reflection journals as part of my inquiry. A NQT is an important member of the profession – definitely ‘Somebody’ rather than ‘Nobody’ – and deserves to be heard to inform practice in ITE and beyond. The 19 early career teachers who had participated in the pilot studies in 2011 – 2012 (Gordon, 2013a and 2013b) were invited to participate in the next stage of the research as NQTs, starting in September 2012. The large majority agreed to participate, but only three actually found the time to maintain any kind of substantial ‘resilience reflective journal’ to capture their experiences, thoughts and feelings in relation to resilience throughout their first year of teaching. Two other participants provided a lengthy report of their experiences at the end of the year, but had not kept an on-going journal due to lack of time. Guidance was provided for participants at the outset (Appendix O), drawing on relevant literature (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985; Moon, 2004 and 2006), in line with ‘trying to make sense of life as lived’ (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 78).

Although the insights gained from the NQTs’ resilience reflective journals are extremely valuable, I accept that my expectation as researcher for commitment from the participants was rather ambitious. I am now more careful of not adding to the challenges to a NQT’s resilience by expecting completion of a reflective journal in an already demanding year. As a result, as part of my on-going longitudinal study, I decided to narrow the focus with a semi-structured interview in July 2014 with one NQT who had experienced real challenges and considerable support for resilience in different ways during the NQT year; some analysis of this interview is provided later in this chapter. This is an example of my research inquiry evolving in response to my reflections as researcher and to reflect the needs and time constraints of the participants.

Resilience reflective journals

Although time-consuming, all three journal respondents commented positively on the value of the journal as a reflection tool (Moon, 2006) and the two who sent in a report at the end of the year both wished that they had kept a journal for this reason. The journals provide many insights into what challenges and what nurtures the resilience of a NQT and I have chosen to focus on two themes which were in common for all the respondents – the challenges of workload and the support of colleagues.

The overwhelming workload, combined with an acute awareness of the increased solo responsibility for pupils' learning and, more specifically, their examination results as a NQT, emerge as the dominant challenge. As one NQT ruefully commented, *'... it is accepted that you will have no social life and be stressed throughout the duration of the NQT (year)'* and another exclaimed early in the journal, *'There aren't enough hours in the day to get everything done!!'* It is important to note that the three journal writers were extremely conscientious and committed PGCE trainee teachers who were likely to continue to strive for the highest standards for themselves and their pupils. However, the destructive language used by the three journal writers – *'overwhelming workload clouds enjoyment'*, *'it becomes a vicious cycle of late nights and tiredness'*, and *'exhausting, stressful, emotional, worrying and grey hair inducing year'* - must raise concerns for everyone involved in teaching about the demands for new entrants to the profession. Indeed, one NQT who realised that her love of teaching was being lost due to the challenging behaviour of pupils concluded her journal with the comment, *'... I can understand why lots of NQTs and teachers new to the profession would be tempted to give up'*. Fortunately, this NQT moved to a different school and is now thriving as second in department after just two years of teaching. Again, Gu and Day's (2013) emphasis on the importance of the right conditions for each teacher are relevant in this regard and this is even more poignant in the analysis of the interview with another NQT later in this chapter.

Related to concerns about workload is the more deep-rooted vocational sense of purpose which, when combined with the nature of the *'self-confessed perfectionist'*, can lead to feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction with regard to workload. This is expressed clearly by two participants: *'I feel like I've let some of the 'good' pupils down'* and *'distraught ... as there were students in lessons who weren't achieving their potential'*. Comments about behaviour issues never referred to the need for more training on strategies for managing behaviour per se, but rather to the emotional impact on the NQT, as expressed by one participant: *'It's shocking how bad a student can make you feel'*. One of the report writers noted that dealing with the poor behaviour of some pupils affected workload, as it was *'... emotionally exhausting. It was very hard to motivate myself to put time into planning engaging lessons when the voice in the back of my head was telling me it was going to be ruined anyway'*. I think this is of significance for everyone involved in early career teacher development, as it underlines the importance of acknowledging and supporting the emotional needs of new teachers, as well as providing the pedagogical tools for effective teaching and learning.

All five respondents made explicit and complimentary references to the tremendous support of colleagues, identifying intervention and guidance at key moments as *'vital for survival'* in the NQT year. Holiday periods were also cited by all participants as moments to re-calibrate and re-charge the batteries. The importance of having an upbeat and positive colleague was cited by three of the five respondents, indicating the infectious nature of relationships on the well-being of the NQT.

The relative lack of lesson observations, in comparison to the PGCE year, meant that any formal feedback as a NQT attracted a heightened sense of importance. Although positive for these five participants, this added to the stress of any *'learning walk'* by the senior management team or formal NQT observations, along with the perceived *'permanent cloud of the Ofsted threat'*. This underlines the importance of observation and feedback sessions as positively-managed experiences for the NQT with the support of the NQT mentor.

The benefits of careful and constructive mentoring of trainee teachers is well-documented (Furlong and Maynard, 1995; Kerry and Mayes, 1995; Stephens, 1996; Fletcher, 2000; Pask and Barrie, 2007) and yet the impact of busy colleagues can be detrimental for even the most resilient and independent early career teacher: *'Whilst I have ... a supportive department, I feel that everyone is so busy that there isn't enough time to clarify my various (endless) queries!'* Similar sentiments were expressed by all the respondents, raising the question of whether additional dedicated time (and possibly training) should be given to the mentoring of NQTs at such a crucial early stage in their professional development. There is little doubt that teaching is a busy profession, but the relentless activity and workload appears to detract from important time, alone and with colleagues, to reflect on progress and the emotional experiences of the NQT experience in order to plan for continuing development. This may, in turn, lead to a loss of perspective and enjoyment in the profession. This was well expressed by one of the participants: *'As teachers are so busy and most, in my experience, are struggling to complete all their own work and often appear stressed themselves, it can be difficult to ask for help. ... I believe that there should be more timetabled support for NQTs'*.

The themes of workload and mentors mentioned by the NQTs in their journals echoed the responses given through different lenses in the questionnaires (Chapter 6) and many of the creative writing activities (Chapter 7). In my mind, this underlines the potential of *bricolage* to provide rich and multi-layered insights into the practice of working with ITE early career teachers and to explore the impact of their resilience on their professional journey.

Semi-structured Interview

One semi-structured interview took place with a NQT participant, who had previously engaged actively with the pilot study questionnaires and creative writing activities (Gordon 2013a and 2013b). The purpose of the interview was to explore significant challenges to resilience that had arisen during the NQT year, recognising that a questionnaire may not reveal the depth of views and experiences in as rich detail as a focused conversation (Clough and Nutbrown, 2002). Transcribing the

interview was time-consuming, but proved to be a useful way of familiarising myself with the data (Riessman, 1993) and beginning to make connections between the interview and data gained by other means from other participants. An initial reading of the transcript indicated that many of the themes that had emerged in the analysis of earlier data (Chapters 6 and 7) were also evident for this NQT, so I approached the analysis of the NQT interview transcript from a different perspective. This is consonant with my exploratory approach to *bricolage* (Chapter 4), as I used a different approach to the POET (transcript), where appropriate, to gain additional insights. I chose to reflect again on the four aspects of resilience identified in the literature (Robertson: no date) for the online resilience test (Chapter 5) to analyse the transcript. This also served as an additional way to assess the relevance of the online test as part of a focus on resilience in ITE provision (Appendix P). On reflection, it would have been useful to refer back to the NQT's i-resilience report as part of the interview to obtain deeper levels of understanding of the NQT's experience. If more time had been available, I would have welcomed the opportunity to interview more participants about their NQT experiences and this remains a potentially valuable area for future development (Chapter 9).

This particular NQT had a very negative experience of starting in a new school as a NQT and made the unusual decision to resign during the first half-term. In order to preserve anonymity, I am not providing a detailed account of this experience, but focus rather on the emotional and affective aspect of the experience for the NQT, as these were the source of significant challenges to resilience. Ethically, I was keen not to re-awaken some difficult experiences for this participant, but also knew that there was a 'happy ending' to the story. As discussed earlier (Chapter 4), issues of confidence, purpose, adaptability and social support permeate the experiences of this NQT and clearly highlight the importance of resilience.

The use of interviews is in keeping with socially constructionist, qualitative research; conversations are a basic mode of human interaction and, through conversations, we learn about people's feelings, experiences and attitudes to their situation (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). For example, this participant summarised the devastating effect of the initial negative experience as a NQT as follows: *'It's taken months and*

I'm still processing in my mind just how damaging those three weeks were ... bruised by experience ... massively destroyed my enjoyment of being in the classroom, my ability to function However, perhaps of greater significance is the fact that the word 'bruised' was used a further four times in the course of the interviewing, reflecting just how violent the experience was at the time, particularly when considered with the later comment, *'only literally just been able to go past the school on the bus recently'*. It is worth noting here that, based on PGCE school placement reports, the participant was a confident and sociable person, with a strong academic record (including excellent grades on the PGCE course) and almost 20 years of valuable experience of work in a variety of settings prior to the PGCE course. Peers on the course, tutors and former PGCE mentors were shocked by the NQT's rapid resignation. For these reasons, I was particularly keen to explore what had challenged the NQT's resilience so abruptly and how the NQT managed to re-find resilience over time.

As knowledge is co-constructed in the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee, it is the interdependence of human interaction and knowledge production that is a key tenet of this aspect of my research inquiry. Although an interview might appear to be a conversation between equals, I acknowledge that the interviewer leads the interaction and must be ethically aware, as it is 'an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009: 3). For this reason, I chose to ask an open-ended question to start the conversation: *'As you know, I am interested in the resilience of early career teachers, what challenges resilience and what nurtures resilience. With that in mind, please can you talk me through your experiences in the NQT year?'* I then only intervened on a few occasions with additional probing questions or for points of clarification. The NQT spoke for almost an hour, fluently and in a measured and reflective tone throughout. The participant was self-effacing and acknowledged that mistakes had been made on both sides, but the fundamental issue appeared to be that the school which has a distinctive teaching style *'wanted me as a square peg to*

fit into a round hole without explaining it to me ... there was a lack of understanding which I can't fathom ...'.

In analysing the transcript, I have been struck by the destructive force of such a short negative experience: *'I didn't have anything left to rally round, in spite of huge support from so many people ... this was doubly bruising ...'*, later acknowledging that positive words of encouragement from others, including colleagues from the PGCE school placements, may have gone unheard at the time. Listening to these words affirmed in the strongest terms my motivation in conducting this research inquiry, particularly as I then heard how subsequent experiences have slowly enabled this participant to re-gain resilience and a love of teaching. The participant was encouraged to return promptly to a former PGCE placement school, initially as a teaching assistant and later as a NQT, where *'teachers have worked to my strengths'* and support has been evident from so many colleagues, including the head teacher. I was struck by the way this school created a personalised approach for the NQT, reflecting Gu and Day's research findings that *'conditions count'* (2013: 22), gradually providing opportunities for teaching and drawing on the NQT's wider skill set in the extra-curricular context in particular to re-build confidence. It is worth noting that, Hobson et al.'s (2009) research findings indicate that early career teachers mention a decline in support from colleagues as each year in the profession passes and this may well be counter-productive with regard to nurturing resilience of early career teachers and sustaining them in the profession in the longer term.

As discussed (Chapters 6 and 7), it has been challenging to distil the richness of participants' responses into short chapters for this thesis. I hope, through the writing and analysis, to have conveyed some sense of how *'one size fits all'* approaches are inadequate to address the varied professional development needs of early career teachers. The responses to my inquiry indicate clearly that this applies to issues of nurturing resilience as much as to other aspects of progress as a new entrant to the profession. Participants have responded to many and constant demands – some perceived and unreasonable, some expected and manageable – which add to the pressure of the teaching role. I now turn attention to the impact

on practice, actual and anticipated, as a result of this research inquiry, hoping to show commitment to the participants' voices as a result.

Chapter 9: Impact on ITE provision and professional practice

‘The department went on with the momentum it had gathered through its tradition and the mere fact of its being.’ (Williams, 1973: 81)

The opening quotation in this chapter is taken from a novel about the life of a university lecturer and underlines the potential challenge for my role as a teacher educator-researcher. In an educational context, where constant change is prevalent at so many levels, it may be difficult to find time to stand back and reflect about the ways in which early career teachers are prepared for the profession. There is a danger of simply repeating well-rehearsed and apparently successful approaches to ITE in a manner which becomes formulaic and where the conception of the individual at the heart of the matter may be overlooked. This may seem rather contradictory at a time of considerable upheaval in ITE with a much broader range of routes into teaching and the Carter Review of ITT (2015). Although these initiatives may lead to some change, I am concerned that the overall approach will remain largely unaltered, regardless of whether the training is school-based or involves close partnership with a university provider. An opportunity to radically change the approach and structure for teachers in the early years in the profession and secure the longer-term wellbeing and retention of early career teachers may be missed, unless research-enriched evidence forms the basis for changes in practice.

This chapter focuses on actual and recommended actions for practice as a result of my inquiry. I consider impact on practice at my local institutional level, but then move on to reflect on the potential for wider impact for ITE at a national (and possibly international) level. Although not a key driver for this research inquiry, the outcomes may contribute to a ‘significant strategic contribution to the quality, supply and retention of new teachers’ (Ofsted, 2014: 47). As the initial stage of a longitudinal inquiry, the findings prompt serious consideration of more formative approaches to ensuring a smooth transition from ITT, through NQT induction and onwards to continuing professional development in particular, as part of coherent ITE provision.

Impact on practice at one ITE provider

The outcomes of my research have already prompted a clear focus on resilience as part of ITE provision in my practice context, as we have adopted new ways of nurturing confidence and growth of early career teachers. In line with the mission statement of the institution, the well-being of students is considered of paramount importance, as well as preparing them effectively for the workplace, so there has been little difficulty in persuading education colleagues of the value of focusing on resilience. As a result of my doctoral research to date, I have led an initiative across all undergraduate and postgraduate ITE programmes (and one undergraduate programme outside of ITE provision) to embed a focus on resilience in lectures, workshops and tutorials. The non-ITE undergraduate programme is one where many students complete a work-based module and move into ITE after their degree, so an early focus on resilience was deemed particularly beneficial.

Currently, the approach to resilience as part of ITE provision is most developed within the PGCE secondary provision, where the whole cohort (including SD trainees on our PGCE programme) considers a focus on personal and professional resilience in the induction programme. The early career teachers are encouraged to complete an online resilience test (Chapter 5) which may be considered as a form of self-study learning or a focus for shared discussion with a mentor and / or tutor. This initial focus is followed by another session between the first and second school placements. This has proved particularly useful to review both positive and more challenging aspects of the first school placement, with a view to learning from the experiences in preparation for the second placement. In addition, throughout the PGCE course, each of the four tutorials includes a resilience reflection activity, as a starting point for discussion as appropriate with the tutor. This has ensured that the sessions for the whole cohort are not seen as stand-alone lectures, but also part of an integrated approach within tutorial provision. It is this integrated approach that seems to be particularly successful and one that I hope to encourage across other ITE provision over time. One positive aspect of these developments from a research perspective is that several of the approaches used as research methods in this inquiry have now become embedded in the ITE provision; as a result, resilience

activities may be monitored over the coming years to inform an approach to resilience that evolves in response the needs of early career teachers.

Considerable challenges remain about how to measure the impact of these changes on provision and practice and this will clearly concern me as I continue with this longitudinal research inquiry in the coming years. However, for the moment, the feedback from the early career teachers has been overwhelmingly positive and the approach has led to considerable interest both within and beyond my own institution. In the final questionnaire (Appendix F), participants were asked whether a focus on resilience was important and I allow some of their comments to illustrate the potential impact of this focus as an integral part of ITE provision:

Definitely. Teaching is a job that requires enormous psychological strength and stamina. To a certain extent this will always be inherent in any role so engaging and responsible, especially one working with children. However, it seems to me that the steep entry for new teachers and the ever-shifting accountability environment they work in place excessive and perhaps unnecessary emotional burdens on teachers. I wonder if a better long-term approach would be to look at why teaching requires such extreme amounts of resilience and think of ways to improve the situation. However, in the medium-term new teachers certainly require help developing the resilience needed to cope ...

I would say that my impression is that (name of ITE provider) actually shelters its trainees from the destructive nature of the process better than other courses, but it still seems wrong to me that entry to a career should require periods of such genuine distress... To feel over-challenged for so much of the time could imply many things: perhaps that we trainees are too 'weak' and must be selected primarily on the basis of inherent resilience; or that we need more help actively developing this resilience...; or that the current entry routes into teaching place excessive emotional demands on new entrants. Essentially, in the long-term, I think entry to the profession should perhaps be longer and more gradual, especially in terms of taking on all the responsibilities of a

school teacher, but this is simply not going to happen in the current climate of de-professionalisation, where universities and training are seen as at best useless and at worst untrustworthy, and where it is believed that excellent teachers are already out there in society waiting to be found rather than needing to be trained.

These lengthy extracts from participants' responses reflect the thoughtful approach and genuine commitment to the profession of many early career teachers; such voices need to be heard to ensure that early career provision avoids continuing 'with the momentum it had gathered through its tradition and the mere fact of its being' (Williams, 1973: 81) as highlighted at the beginning of this chapter.

At a practical level, participant responses to the final questionnaire provided thoughtful suggestions for focusing on resilience. Twenty three (out of 27 respondents) valued the resilience reflection activities and solutions-focused discussions which were an integral part of their ITE provision and eight participants made specific reference to the strong and positive support of their tutors as part of this process. Three participants felt that resilience could have a stronger focus at the recruitment and selection stage, but acknowledged that this is difficult to assess and may mean losing some good potential teachers who would thrive with the focused support provided through the PGCE course. Two other areas were raised by participants and are already being considered by my ITE provider – a greater focus on nurturing the resilience of early career teachers in collaboration with school-based mentors to complement the university provision and an on-going commitment to longer term support for NQTs. Both of these suggestions are relatively easy to implement, although the wider issues of time and cost implications are challenging for the ITE provider.

Potential for wider impact on practice

I am excited about the potential credibility and transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of some of the research activities and findings with education colleagues internationally (Johnson et al., 2015; Le Cornu, 2013; Pearce and Morrison, 2011) to explore comparative studies into the resilience of early career teachers working in a

range of contexts globally. I am also enthusiastic about collaboration with other professions (social workers, nurses and lawyers, for example) where there is some interest in the literature about developing early career resilience (Eraut et al., 2004; Jackson, Firtko and Edenborough, 2007; Jack and Donnellan, 2010; Bolton, 2010; Kearns and McArdle, 2011; Vines, 2011).

However, in the shorter term, my main focus is likely to remain in the educational context due to time and energy constraints. My intention will be to maintain a focus on resilience as a form of knowledge and being, rather than an exercise of power in the organisational settings of my participants. In agreement with Cooper, Flint-Taylor and Pearn (2013), I am vigilant that any focus on resilience should not become a manipulative tool for merely ensuring that early career teachers are better equipped to cope with more and more challenges in their work.

As I continue on my research journey, I am aware of many other possible lines of inquiry and sources of interesting data, and this seems to be entirely in the spirit of *bricolage* as originally intended by Lévi-Strauss (1966). For example, I would be interested to explore the literature around workplace learning in greater depth to consider a 'day in the life of an early career teacher' style case study (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995), as the context where learning happens is crucial (Brockbank and McGill, 2007). The benefit of this approach is that observation would take place in the temporal and contextual space of the participant, thereby allowing deeper insights, including some nuances (non-verbal behaviour, for example) that may not have emerged through the questionnaires and interviews, or indeed the creative writing activities, to date (Bailey, 1994).

Close tracking of some early career teachers from the relative safety of the ITE PGCE course through their NQT year and beyond would be in line with current Ofsted expectations (2014). More importantly, it would offer insights into the challenges facing early career teachers, as well as how best to nurture them, acknowledging that it is vital to make an investment in the profession if it is to be sustainable and vibrant (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). Indeed, Day et al. (2007) note that the most

effective teachers have spent at least eight years in the job, so long-term tracking would seem to be essential to gain further insights in this regard.

To conclude this chapter, I summarise my immediate plan of action for developing this research inquiry in practice as follows:

1. Continue to review an integrated focus on resilience in all ITE programmes at my own institution, as a practical response to the outcomes of my research inquiry which also reflect many of the recommendations made by Hobson et al. (2009), including:
 - a) review of recruitment and selection processes to further emphasise resilience as an important aspect of teaching from the outset, as reflected by participants in their responses to the final questionnaire (Chapter 6);
 - b) continued clear commitment to developing the emotional (Eraut et al., 2004) and interpersonal (Oberski, Ford, Higgins and Fisher, 1999) preparedness of our early career teachers for their work in schools (Chapter 6);
 - c) exploration of creative and varied approaches to reflective practice (Chapter 10);
 - d) on-going extensive input and support for early career teachers in relation to managing pupils' behaviour and workload, identified as key areas of concern in chapters 6 – 8;
 - e) further development of partnerships with schools and collaboration with mentors, in particular, to ensure a more integrated and sustained approach (Cooper, Flint-Taylor and Pearn, 2013) in relation to nurturing the resilience of early career teachers. This is an evidence-informed response to the participants' reflections on the importance of positive relationships with the mentor to nurture resilience in the early stages of teaching (Chapters 6 and 7);
 - f) increased attention on the transition from PGCE to NQT, including follow-up continuing professional development (CPD) sessions and support where needed, as part of the longitudinal development of this

research inquiry. Although it is relatively easy to include a focus on resilience in the ITE university-based programme, this is more challenging to maintain with NQTs. However, the responses for NQTs (Chapter 8) illustrate the need for and value of on-going support as an early career teacher.

2. Having established a research-informed basis for further work on nurturing the resilience of early career teacher, explore opportunities to broaden the scope of this work beyond my own institution in the following ways:
 - a) disseminate research outcomes and impact on practice with others, including both university- and school-based ITE providers, to consider potential wider application of my work. As part of this, I have been commissioned by Routledge to write a book on being a resilient teacher (anticipated publication early 2017);
 - b) seek to be more actively involved in discussions about teacher well-being at an institutional, national and international level, aiming to share the voices of early career teachers as discovered through my on-going longitudinal research inquiry. As one participant commented as part of a response to questionnaire 4 (Appendix F): *'Ultimately seems that the overall system of (initial teacher) education in the UK needs a bit of a re-jig ..., as it's a bit of a case of managing the symptom rather than dealing with the cause of the problem.'* I am part of a small research group at my university working in collaboration with colleagues at a university in Australia to share comparisons and impact of approaches to well-being with early career teachers. The initial part of this study will be presented at the British Education Research Association conference in September 2015;
 - c) in addition to my own ITE-based research, consider joint research with schools who are interested in nurturing the resilience of teachers and departments to explore benefits for teachers at a range of levels and experience. Over the last six months, I have begun a small-scale research

inquiry with the modern language departments in three schools as a pilot for potential larger scale work in the future.

There are considerable implications from my research and the work of others (Hobson et al., 2009; Gu and Day, 2013; Johnson et al., 2015) for initial teacher education and CPD policy at a national level. Recent evidence (Bajorek, Gulliford and Raskila, 2014, for example) about the impact of teacher wellbeing, including resilience, on teacher effectiveness and learner outcomes is likely to inform the debate in this regard. If an increased focus on resilience as a result of my research inquiry leads to more positive teachers and more effective learning for young people, then it will have been a worthwhile endeavour.

I conclude this chapter by challenging a well-known expression: *'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose'* (Karr, 1849). My inquiry has involved the interplay of practice that is informed by education and research; I hold on to the notion that change is possible, in collaboration with others, as I am shaped by my inquiry and continue to shape its future direction to better meet the needs for resilience of early career teachers. As a result of this inquiry, I draw my thesis to a close with reflections on the empowering potential of reflective practice.

Chapter 10: Concluding Comments

‘Change in education is easy to propose, hard to implement, and even harder to sustain’ (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006:1)

As stated in chapter 1, the starting point for this research inquiry was not to focus unduly on the stresses of teaching, real though they are for many early career teachers, but rather on more positive and productive ways of fostering and nurturing resilience in the initial stages of a career in teaching. This has led me to consider changes to PGCE and NQT provision in ITE (Chapter 9). It has, however, also led me to consider a re-thinking of reflective practice and a renewed focus on relationships in ITE as an integral part of professional learning for early career teachers.

Re-thinking reflective practice

The Teachers’ Standards (DfE, 2012) have a clear focus on the ‘doing’ of teaching. Teachers’ Standard 4 requires that teachers ‘reflect systematically’ (DfE, 2012: 6) and this mechanistic language may add to the feeling that reflection is something to be ticked off a list of things to do. However, Neenan (2009: 55) comments that the importance of being able to think and act flexibly when facing challenging circumstances is ‘a key resilience quality’ and, in my view, this requires a more thoughtful and sociable approach to reflective practice. This is in line with Boud and Walker’s (1998: 193) idea that there ‘are no reflective activities guaranteed to lead to learning, and no learning activities guaranteed to lead to reflection’. As a result of my inquiry, I sense that there is a need to avoid constraining the development of the early career teacher with reductionist approaches. In an era of constant policy reform, as well as accountability and compliance measures (DfE, 2012; Ofsted, 2014), this may involve re-thinking some of the dominant discourses and concomitant machinery in ITE in order to focus more strongly on each early career teacher as an individual, with particular prior experiences and needs. In this regard, there are echoes of the ‘reflective posture’ (McLaren and Leonard, 1993: 31) espoused by Freire in his writing, as educators are encouraged to engage critically with experience to avoid the risk of ‘authority-dependence’ (ibid: 29) which means

that transformation is unlikely. As an early career teacher, and indeed as an experienced teacher, it can be easy to lose sight of the importance of reflection time; time to think and discuss are vital elements of any ITE programme that must not be lost in a system that is concerned with the practice of teaching.

As Brockbank and McGill (2007) assert, the potential for reflective practice and learning, both in action and on action (Schön, 1983), as a dominant discourse in ITE tends to be influenced by our habitus, field and disposition. However, the findings of this small-scale research project have raised questions about the way in which the discourse relating to reflective practice (Kolb, 1984; Van Manen, 1997; Loughran, 2005; Dymoke and Harrison, 2008; Pollard, 2008; Boud, Cressey and Docherty, 2006; McGregor and Cartwright, 2011) is in danger of being reduced to a rationalistic and mechanistic approach. This is supported by Johnson et al. (2015: 103) who maintain that ‘teacher resilience is enhanced when early career teachers successfully engage in processes of self-reflection and self-understanding that sustain a coherent sense of personal identity, while at the same time allowing for the emergence of a robust teacher identity’. Given that much of the writing around resilience (Zolli and Healy, 2012; Cooper, Flint-Taylor and Pearn, 2013; Gu and Day, 2013) stresses the importance of drawing on experience, core values and purposefulness to deal with challenging circumstances, then reflective practice in its current form in ITE must be re-visited as part of my on-going research. Indeed, part of the rationale behind some of the creative approaches to my research inquiry has been to explore ways in which reflective practice might avoid becoming mechanistic for early career teachers, ensuring deeper reflective learning, a more ‘informed heart’ (Bettleheim, 1971), leading to professional growth and confidence of teachers in the longer term. Indeed, the Teachers’ Standards (DfE, 2012) apply to all members of the profession and promote the requirement for teachers who are ‘self-critical’ and who ‘reflect systematically’ (2012: 6). There is perhaps a need for the whole system to stop and take stock in relation to resilience through a refreshed approach to reflective practice. Teaching is an interconnected individual and social endeavour, and resilience is unlikely to be developed in isolation from colleagues (Neenan, 2009).

Current reflective practice for early career teachers in the PGCE training year tends to revolve around individual lesson evaluations, combined with mentor meetings to review progress and set targets on a weekly basis. I am prompted to consider whether this short-term, 'quick-fix' approach to reflective practice lessens the perceived value of reflective practice over time. It becomes a systematic activity, ticking off the required lesson evaluations and completing training sheets, without ever really prompting the early career teacher to re-visit core values and to reflect deeply about why certain practices are deemed better or more appropriate than others. Dewey (1933: 12) describes 'a state of doubt, hesitation, perplexity, mental difficulty, in which (reflective) thinking originates, and ... an act of searching, hunting, enquiring, to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose of the perplexity' and this process will demand considerable resilience for early career teachers embarking on a challenging professional journey.

Horn notes that professionals rarely

'engage in reflective thinking that entails a consideration of the origins of their culture, the way their knowledge is produced (etymology), the deeper, more complex systemic realities of their situation (pattern), the apparent certainties of their professional lives (process), and the intricate context of their setting (contextualization). When educational change or an educational problem occurs, how often does the community pause and converse about the relationship of their culture to the problem, the ways in which the problem is embedded or will affect the sub-systems in the schools system, the need to rethink what they believe to be certain, or the importance of place and time to the change and the problem?' (Horn, 2000: 84 – 85)

This lengthy quotation strikes to the core of my research endeavour, as there is a need to probe more deeply beneath the current approach to what is identified as reflective practice in ITE. Several participants in my inquiry commented that the research activities have served as an additional, often cathartic, tool for reflection and helped them to make more personal sense of reflective practice in the PGCE

course as a whole. Two comments from participants illustrate this point: '*... it has helped me to refer to activities from our resilience lecture when things have got tough during placements*' and '*I think there could be more sessions that deal with ways to improve resilience. It could focus on the fact that it is normal to feel like the pressure is too much and that it isn't a personal weakness.*' These responses are consonant with feedback from participants in Hobson et al.'s (2009) report and underline the need for a variety of approaches to reflective practice (Bradbury, 2010) to meet the needs of different early career teachers.

While the above comments are encouraging at one level, I have a growing sense that reflective practice needs to become more of a 'community' (Horn: 2000: 85) and 'social, collective' (Boud et al., 2006: 7) venture if the resilience of teachers is to be nurtured more effectively, perhaps as a form of community of practice (Wenger, 1998). This may mean revisiting the POET for my inquiry using *bricolage* (Chapter 4) to gain new insights, perhaps through more shared creative writing activities as part of a PGCE course or a departmental approach to developing resilience as a team.

Reflexivity is a widely-used term in social constructionism (Burr, 2004; Lock and Strong, 2010) and the connection between its use as a description of a past experience and part of on-going developmental practice itself merits consideration. Kemmis (in Boud et al., 1985) promotes the notion that reflection, like language, is a socially located and oriented process and is political in the sense that it has the power to liberate or restrict, so an awareness of the cultural context for early career teachers is central to exploring their resilience. If coping with change and ensuring continuity are brought together by human agency (Bateson, 1994), then the ability to tell and reflect on the story must be central to the whole notion of reflective practice. This may bring the emotional side of professional life into focus, as Boud (1985: 11) states: 'The affective dimension has to be taken into account when we are engaged in our own learning activities, and when we are assisting others in this process'. In its richest sense, reflective practice is an on-going way to construct knowledge and test ideas, but it also bound up in the unique development of the individual and the group from a cognitive, conative and affective perspective. In some ways, I cannot help wondering if vulnerability needs to play a larger part in

reflective practice, as an antidote or complementary stance to the current target-driven approaches. This is likely to be an area for future reflection on my part, but links closely with the importance of positive and trusting relationships in ITE.

Relationships matter for reflective learning

It is clear from the data in this research inquiry that relationships matter at all levels, personally and professionally. Gu and Day (2013: 37) are clear about the importance of relationships: 'Staff collegiality and mutual trust and support are of profound importance in sustaining ... morale, sense of efficacy, well-being and effectiveness', underlining the crucial dynamic between early career teachers and mentor colleagues. Mentors in this sense must be seen as essential leaders of reflective practice in the development of early career teachers and Henry and Milstein (in Gu and Day, 2013: 39) refer to school leaders as 'weavers of the fabric of resiliency initiatives'. Therefore, there may be as much need to focus on resilience with mentors as with early career teachers if the impact is to be positive across the profession (Chapter 9). If this is possible as a result of this inquiry, I feel that I will have contributed to the 'total quality care' espoused by Barnett (1992: sub-title).

The key factors cited by Gu and Day (2013) – personal, relational and organisational – often appear to be in conflict in many of the situations cited by the participants, but a strong sense of emotional intelligence in working with others was required to maintain equilibrium. As Goleman (2006: 8) notes '... intellect cannot work at its best without emotional intelligence'. Dymoke and Harrison (2008) suggest that the place of emotional intelligence is missing from much of ITE and, indeed, Brockbank and McGill (2007) cite emotional intelligence as an essential attribute for the promotion of reflective learning. It is also worth noting that Freire and Macedo (1995: 53) stress the importance of teacher education to create 'pedagogical spaces where students become apprentices in the rigours of exploration' through opportunities for reflective learning. This links well with Csikszentmihalyi's notion of 'flow' (1990), the idea that people achieve best when they draw positively on their emotions to develop performance and learning. I believe that 'flow' (or lack of it),

shared with colleagues, in a measured and positive way may enhance resilience and well-being of teachers as an integral part of transformational and 'double-loop' (Argyris, 2002: 206) learning, as individuals within an organisation make sense of and learn from their own environment.

And finally ...

The starting point for this research inquiry was the belief that educational and social research has the capacity to influence change at many levels, including policy, practice, professional development and possible further research (Clough and Nutbrown, 2002) and I have outlined the impact of this research on practice to date in chapter 9. As I conclude this thesis, discussions about a centralised curriculum for ITT are taking place. While there are some merits in this approach, Freire and Faundez (1989: 41) would warn of potential dangers: 'Any educational practice based on standardization, on what is laid down in advance, on routines in which everything is predetermined, is bureaucratizing and undemocratic.' Within the context of my research inquiry, I am concerned that the individual teacher at the heart of practice remains the key focus in any policy change.

As resilience is one of the characteristics which is challenged throughout a teacher's career, particularly at various threshold stages such as the start of a new school placement on the PGCE course (or even a move to a new school as head teacher), it seems likely that the findings of this research will be of significance to the ITE community as a whole. It may shape the debate, inform policy and influence practice in relation to recruitment, training, support, CPD needs and retention of early career teachers in the longer term with a clear focus on pro-active and preventative approaches to nurturing their resilience. However, I am also acutely conscious of Evans and Reid's (2014: 102) comment that 'Resilience ... is more a code for social compliance than a political ambition to transform the very sources of inequality and injustices experienced by marginalized populations'. I remain vigilant in the face of any factors which may 'delimit education' (Flint, 2015: 9) and, specifically, the learning of early career teachers, who are in a state of perpetual

'becoming' (Barnett, 2007: 52) in the profession. In particular, at a time of challenge with regard to teacher recruitment and retention in England, perhaps early career teachers should be considered an oppressed minority to be valued and nurtured by policy makers? In some regards, this is counter-cultural in the current educational content, where the focus is on those things which can be measured above all else (Biesta, 2008). However, a more bespoke and personalised approach for early career teachers may bring enhanced benefits in the longer term. For example, a 70% (rather than 90%) timetable for some NQTs would allow time for detailed reflection and coherent planning for on-going improvement as a teacher. More attention in terms of providing skilled mentoring and coaching for early career teachers in the first five years or so may lead to better retention and enhanced appreciation of the profession, too.

As I have engaged with *bricolage*, I have generated claims to knowledge about the resilience of early career teachers but, more importantly, I have worked for justice for new entrants to the profession through understandings and practices involving resilience. Resilience building may 'enhance productivity' and 'foster workplace well-being and engagement' (Robertson, Cooper, Sarkar and Curran, 2015: 559), but the over-riding focus of this inquiry has been at a more personal level. If the impact of my research in the longer term is beneficial to the wellbeing of early career teachers, with a positive impact on young people's lives, then it will be a story worth telling. After all, '... stories matter. So ... do stories about stories' (Geertz, in Turner and Bruner, 1986: 377); this thesis tells my particular story about the resilience of early career teachers in anticipation that more stories with happy endings might unfold in the future as a result.

I draw this thesis to a close with Logue's (1969: 65) poem, 'Come to the Edge', as it describes the fears and joys of the early career teacher, as well as my own anxieties and aspirations as a researcher. All of us require resilience!

Come to the edge.

We might fall.

Come to the edge.

It's too high!

COME TO THE EDGE!

And they came,

And he pushed,

And they flew.

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Appendices

Summary of contents

Appendix A: Letter to participants and ethical consent

Appendix B: Four Key Components of Resilience (RobertsonCooper, online)

Appendix C: Questionnaire 1

Appendix D: Questionnaire 2

Appendix E: Questionnaire 3

Appendix F: Questionnaire 4

Appendix G: Creative writing activity 1

Appendix H: Creative writing activity 2

Appendix I: Creative writing activity 3

Appendix J: Creative writing activity 4

Appendix K: Examples of full metaphors from two participants

Appendix L: Example of short story from one participant

Appendix M: Summary of short story themes

Appendix N: Haiku – managing behaviour

Appendix O: Briefing for NQTs about reflective resilience journal

Appendix P: Extract of interview transcript

Appendix A

8 October 2012

As part of my Professional Doctorate studies, I am researching aspects of resilience as they relate in particular to early career teachers. Key research questions are:

- To what extent do early career teachers think that resilience has an effect on their professional confidence and development?
- What challenges the resilience of early career teachers?
- Which approaches might support and promote resilience in early career teachers?

As trainee teachers of shortage subjects, I would like to invite the modern languages, mathematics and science trainee teachers in the current PGCE(S) cohort to participate in the research project.

Clearly, your involvement would be appreciated by me as the researcher, but I hope that your participation might also inform your own reflective practice throughout the year.

I have attached an ethical statement in relation to this research project.

I have also given a range of options for participation in the research. Please tick as many as you would like to be involved in – hopefully, there's at least one approach for everyone!

If you are happy to participate, please complete the permission sheet and return to me as soon as possible.

Thanks in advance for your help.

Best wishes,

Anna Lise Gordon

PGCE Programme Director

ETHICAL STATEMENT

This statement is to assure you of good ethical practice throughout the research activities.

This means that:

- The research activity has been approved by Nottingham Trent University and St Mary's University College;
- An outline of the research has been provided in a letter to participants;
- Written consent of the participants will be secured before the research commences;
- Confidentiality will be observed at all times and no individual will be identifiable at any stage of the research;
- Participation in the research activities will have absolutely no effect on final course gradings;
- Participants will have the right to withdraw from particular research activities or the research as a whole and all data relating to them will be destroyed in the latter case;
- Participants may contact me at any time with questions or for clarification about any aspect of the research;
- Participants will have a choice of a range of research activities;
- No recording of interviews will take place without prior consent of participants;
- Participants agree to the use of any responses, anonymously, in the reporting of the research and in any related publications;
- All participants will be provided with a brief overview of findings in late 2013.

Anna Lise Gordon

PGCE(S) Programme Director

St Mary's University College

8 October 2012

Appendix B

Four Key Components of Resilience (and related areas), as identified in Robertson Cooper's online resilience test

| Confidence | Purposefulness | Adaptability | Social Support |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Dealing with distress</i> | <i>Activity levels</i> | <i>Degree of emotional awareness</i> | <i>Degree of consideration for others</i> |
| <i>Degree of modesty</i> | <i>Aesthetic appreciation</i> | <i>Degree of openness to ideas</i> | <i>Degree of personal warmth</i> |
| <i>Degree of resourcefulness</i> | <i>Level of adventurousness</i> | <i>Impulse control</i> | <i>Degree of sociability</i> |
| <i>Level of compliance</i> | <i>Level of ambition</i> | <i>Level of frustration</i> | <i>Level of straightforwardness</i> |
| <i>Level of enthusiasm</i> | <i>Level of assertiveness</i> | <i>Level of imagination</i> | <i>Level of trust</i> |
| <i>Level of social anxiety</i> | <i>Level of deliberation</i> | <i>Level of sympathy</i> | |
| <i>Level of worry</i> | <i>Level of self-discipline</i> | <i>Preference for order</i> | |
| <i>Reaction to pressure</i> | <i>Sense of duty</i> | <i>Preference for variety</i> | |
| | <i>Social values</i> | | |

Appendix C

Questionnaire 1 (October 2012)

Name: _____

How would you define 'resilience'? Please do not refer to a dictionary.

Describe a situation in your pre-PGCE life when you needed to be resilient.

In what way(s) was the situation challenging?

What helped you to manage the situation?

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Appendix D

Questionnaire 2 (January 2013)

(Note: This is an example of a completed questionnaire with my initial coding to identify emerging themes. The responses shown in appendices D and E are from the same participant and are given in italics. Identification of emerging themes is given in brackets and colour-coded to indicate whether it challenged (yellow) or nurtured (blue) resilience in each case.)

Name: _____

Describe a situation in the foundation phase when you needed to be resilient.

In one of my mentor meetings, we went through and discussed only things that I needed to work on from that week, without looking at ways in which I had improved (negative focus in feedback). This was then followed with the setting of six different targets for the next week (lots of targets, hard to prioritise).

In what way(s) was the situation challenging?

Having only criticism for an hour (negative focus in feedback) meant that it stopped being constructive (loss of perspective), and as I am already quite critical of myself it made me think that I was doing as badly as I thought (loss of confidence). With so many targets I felt like I didn't know what I had to do (loss of direction / hard to prioritise) when teaching my next lesson.

What helped you to manage the situation?

I asked advice from my uni tutor (external support) and from my parents (external support) on what to do next (target setting). I then spoke to my mentor (pro-active approach to professional development) explaining that I felt like I had too many

targets for the next week (reflective practice), and could we have another meeting to narrow them down. This was then followed by a much more productive meeting (positive mentor support).

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Appendix E

Questionnaire 3 (Easter 2013)

(See note on appendix D)

Name: _____

Describe a situation in the developmental phase when you needed to be resilient.

Following a week where I felt I had worked all the hours there were (workload) and was exhausted, I was asked by a class teacher to re-plan a lesson (workload). Having re-planned it to what I thought they wanted, I then taught the lesson and was then told how rubbish it was (negative feedback)! This was for the whole of break time (unhelpful timing of feedback), before I then had to go and teach straight after break – trying really hard not to cry (emotional impact)!

In what way(s) was the situation challenging?

I think it was the cumulative effect of tiredness (workload) and feeling like I wasn't making any progress (loss of perspective). I know I also struggle (self-awareness) in situations where I just get negative feedback (negative feedback) (I am very self-critical of myself). In addition I thought I had changed the lesson to what the class teacher wanted (challenge of responding to different demands / expectations) – and then was criticised for some of the content which I felt was unjustified (challenge of responding to different demands / expectations) – which didn't help!

What helped you to manage the situation?

As much as it was difficult to teach straight away (self-motivation), it meant that I didn't have time to dwell on it and meant I could get straight back on the horse (enforced perspective)! My mentor was really good at breaking down what was said from the class teacher (mentor support) and what I could do to implement some of their targets (perspective on target setting). She also forced me to look back at the lesson and find some things that went well (positive focus on feedback / perspective), rather than just accepting it had all gone badly.

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Appendix F

Questionnaire 4 (June 2013) Name: _____

Which 5 words best describe your experience of the PGCE course?

What things have most challenged and eroded your resilience during the PGCE course?

What has supported and promoted your resilience during the PGCE course?

Do you think that a focus on resilience as an early career teacher is important? Why / Why not?

If you think that such a focus is important, how do you think that this might best be achieved in the PGCE course?

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Would you be prepared to take part in a follow-up interview, if required? Yes / No

Would you be prepared to take part in on-going research with NQTs? Yes / No

Appendix G

Creative writing activity 1: 'Free' writing task

Name: _____

Title: 3 September – 26 October 2012

Please write 'freely' for about 5 minutes on your experiences and feelings relating to the time period specified. There is no need to worry about spellings, punctuation, grammar, or sentence structure, just write 'freely'!

Appendix H

Creative writing activity 2: Metaphor writing task

Identify a metaphor to illustrate your experience of the foundation phase of the PGCE course. Please explain why you have chosen the metaphor.

Thank you.

Appendix I

Creative writing activity 3: Haiku (Easter 2013)

Write a short Haiku-style poem to summarise your developmental phase experiences.

Haiku poems have three lines: line 1 (5 syllables), line 2 (7 syllables) and line 3 (5 syllables). No need for rhymes!

Appendix J

Creative writing activity 4: Short story (June 2013)

Write a short story about the PGCE year!

Will it be a fairy tale? A detective story? Sci-fi genre? A romance? An action-packed adventure story? In the style of Harry Potter? Any story is fine - you choose!

Appendix K

Metaphor writing task (example 1)

'I will use the metaphor I created during the lecture as I still think it is correct.

My foundation phase felt like being a brick repair to an old stone wall.

At first I felt like I stood out, that I was out of place. Everyone else fitted together, and supported each other, so well yet I knew no one. I was fresh out of the factory with sharp edges and smooth sides whereas everyone else was weathered, rounded and covered in moss.

It was clear that there was a gap in the wall and I was expected to fill it. No one knew if I would be able to take the strain once I was in place. I knew the other bricks would support me but I also knew that I was supporting them and together we were protecting the students. I knew that if I crumbled the students would suffer and more strain would be placed on the rest of the wall.

Over time more pressure was placed on me and I managed to hold it together. Sometimes a storm would hit the wall and small cracks would form but we all believed that we would pull through in the end.

I was so focused on defending my gap in the wall from the constant wind that time passed without my knowledge. It was only when my time in the wall was near the end that I could look beyond my own small world and see the wall as a whole. I realised that I was no longer an ugly quick fix that stood out, but I was now also weathered and covered in moss. I was still made of brick, whereas the rest were stone, but only those with a keen eye would notice I was any different.'

Metaphor writing task (example 2)

'Blasting off into space.

You start with a vague idea that you would like to do it.

Then comes a period of massive information overload – you know you may need some of it (potentially to save your life) but aren't quite sure at this stage which bits are more important.

Terrifyingly, you blast off into the unknown (very fast and confusing).

The support engine drops away – you are alone (in contact with mission control but they feel very far off).

You float (observations, this is alright, I can do this), and a relative calm sets in.

Missions. You must make a few tentative steps of a space walk (what looked easy is technically very difficult).

Man the ship. You have to take control of the ship and quickly put all the training into practice.

Dark side of the moon. There are a few hair-raising moments (lesson planning, teaching and MA work).

Re-entry. What seemed far away suddenly starts to hurtle towards you (deadlines and end of placement).

Landing. The huge relief of landing and weird feeling of bobbing around on the sea (did I really just do that?)

Are you crazy: signing up for another mission!'

Appendix L

Creative writing task example

'We're going on a bear hunt

We're going on a bear hunt,

We're going to have a great time

What a beautiful day

We're not scared

Uh-oh, long wavy grass

Can't go over it, can't go under it,

Got to go through it!

Lesson planning, lesson planning, all our own resources

We're going on a bear hunt,

We're starting sharing resources

What a beautiful day

We're not scared

Uh-oh, a fast deep river

Can't go over it, can't go under it,

Got to go through it!

Essay writing, reading journals, essay writing

We're going on a bear hunt,

We've shared ideas with friends now,

Enjoyed the research too,

We're not scared

Uh-oh, a deep dark forest

Can't go over it, can't go under it,

Got to go through it!

Teaching, marking, marking, marking... teaching, marking, marking... profile

We're going on a bear hunt,

We've survived the first phase now

Really on the way

We're not scared

Uh-oh, a snowstorm, a mentor filled snowstorm

Can't go over it, can't go under it,

Got to go through it!

Ticks and crosses, crosses, crosses, why was that?

We're going on a bear hunt

We're going to catch – well any size would do now

What a busy day

We won't give up

Uh-oh, a cave, a big dark cave

Can't go over it, can't go under it

Got to go through it...

...

60% timetable, M2 due in, reports, parents evenings, more reports, you did that wrong again!

Oh no, it's... yet another phase

Quick!

Quick, back through the snowstorm

Mentor meetings, mentor meetings

Back through the forest

Marking, marking, marking, marking

Back through the river

Lesson planning, lesson planning

Back through the wavy grass

Profile, portfolio, profile, portfolio

In through the door, do an interview,

Up the stairs, oh no! really don't want that job, shut the door

Back upstairs, under the covers.

Will I ever go on a bear hunt again?'

Appendix M

Summary of short story responses

| Genre of story | Key themes |
|-----------------|--|
| Fable | Goat in search of new pastures Challenging journey through fields and across bridges Trouble with mentor on journey Changed expectations led to successful outcome |
| Science-fiction | Story of new career as an astronaut, involving training and test flights Overwhelmed by amount of multi-tasking skills required Relief of periods of earth-based training without practice in space Gradual development of skills and 'more complicated manoeuvres' to become qualified astronaut |
| Science-fiction | Horror story about deadly virus gradually infecting cohort of trainee teachers Virus triggered by overwhelming workload and school placements Near fatal incident with a school pupil |
| Fairy tale | Girl in search of new career, supported by the 'famous White Witch' Quest through forests and up mountains, treacherous at times, meeting lots of strange creatures and requiring 'protection potion' Gradual emergence of sunlight and increasing |

| | |
|---------------|--|
| | <p>confidence</p> <p>Successful end of quest, but only the beginning of the journey</p> |
| Fairy tale | <p>Story about growing up</p> <p>Challenges due to poor progress and a 'villain' as mentor</p> <p>Value of support to nurture confidence and growth</p> <p>Happy ending, as confidence grew</p> |
| Fairy tale | <p>PGCella's story of working with an evil step-mentor and overwhelming workload</p> <p>Visit to a Ball in another school context was challenging and uplifting</p> <p>So busy, she needed a period of rest and recuperation, but all ended happily</p> |
| Fairy tale | <p>Little girl who always wanted to be a teacher</p> <p>Busy journey to reach her goal, often challenging and overwhelming, but lots of supportive people around</p> |
| Fairy tale | <p>Story of a princess who wanted to turn frogs into little princes and princesses</p> <p>Overwhelmed by scale of the task, but happy to work with others in the 'transformation project'</p> <p>Successful outcome, as princess sets off to continue her task</p> |
| Autobiography | <p>Story about standing in front of year 6 pupils as future form tutor</p> <p>Lessons learned and experiences gained in previous year</p> <p>Sense of purpose and adventure together</p> |
| Autobiography | <p>Desire to find new career direction</p> <p>Enjoyed learning about teaching, but found the practice</p> |

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| | <p>more challenging</p> <p>Rollercoaster journey of emotions, but successful outcome</p> |
| Allegory | <p>Enjoyment of playing as part of an orchestra</p> <p>Challenges of trying to conduct an orchestra in a difficult situation, combined with moments of joy</p> |
| Adventure story | <p>Excitement at start of adventure</p> <p>Lots of challenges en route, but moments of joy and support from others</p> <p>Increasing sense of being overwhelmed by whole experience</p> <p>Unsure of outcome, mixture of emotions as conclusion</p> |

Appendix N

Haiku: managing behaviour

Other than workload, one of the other clear challenges for early career teachers to emerge from the questionnaires (Chapter 6) at this equivalent stage in the PGCE course was the management of pupils' behaviour for learning. It was, therefore, rather surprising to find this theme in only one of the participants' haiku at this stage. However, the haiku response was richer and more emotionally-charged than the questionnaire responses:

I'm the one in charge

I said, I'm the one in charge!

Please listen to me ...

The voice of confidence, clearly misplaced, in the opening line, followed by a sense of helpless desperation in the voice of the poet in the second line of the haiku, result in a tone of resignation and disappointment in the final line. Even the closing punctuation used in this haiku conveys the feeling of unfinished and unsatisfactory business. Such raw emotions must surely challenge the resilience of any teacher, underlining the importance of maintaining a strong focus on managing behaviour during initial training provision. However, there may be a need to move beyond the quick-fix strategies that have become so prevalent in books for teachers and Ofsted / DfE guidance to explore some of the more emotive aspects for the teacher in dealing with challenging behaviour (see chapter 9).

Appendix O

NQT Resilience Reflective Journal

Thank you for agreeing to continue your involvement in my research project to explore the impact of resilience on early career teachers. I hope that your NQT year will be enjoyable and rewarding!

Please use this notebook as a 'resilience journal' throughout your NQT year. I hope that you will be willing to share your journal with me in July 2013.

A few comments in relation to the journal:

- Your journal is intended as an important and essential counterpart to experience: reflection.
- Your journal is a personal document and it will be your decision to share it with me in the future. I confirm that it will remain confidential and any reference to it will be anonymised in my research writing.
- As a personal document, there is no right or wrong way to keep it, although it would be helpful to date any writing to provide some context.
- Use it as you feel best – scribbled notes jotted on a hurry, bullet points, paragraphs of more thoughtful reflection at key moments, highlighting, underlining, arrows back and forth, doodles, any language etc - anything goes!
- Write about your experiences as they are, not as you would like them to be or as you think they should be.
- Please be RESILIENT! Persevere in keeping the journal as regularly as seems appropriate. You may find it easiest to record things quickly as you go along and then expand in more detail at a later date. If there is a gap in writing, please don't give up, just start afresh.
- Your journal will be of great interest to me as researcher, but I hope that it may also help you to reflect on your experiences and progress as a NQT. The journal will be like a mirror to reflect yourself, hopefully allowing you space to clarify your experiences, to foster the ability to work with those experiences and draw out potential learning.

- Don't take the journal too seriously – it is fine to use it to have a laugh about your experiences, too!

Any questions at any stage, you know where I am!

Many thanks,

Anna Lise (annalise.gordon@smuc.ac.uk)

Appendix P

Extract of interview transcript

Note on transcription: In order to protect the anonymity of the NQT and the schools involved, I have chosen to only include extracts from the full transcript in this appendix.

Thematic coding according to Robertson Cooper's (Chapter 5) identified sources of resilience for the online i-resilience test was used as the basis for further analysis:

Issues of confidence

Sense of purpose

Adaptability

Social support

Beyond the highlighted sections, the remainder of the transcript falls into two categories: narrative about the experience and emotional language to describe the impact of the experience.

I finished the PGCE year on a high, flying in a balloon, and my confidence was up. I'd had a successful and enjoyable final placements and I was excited about, open to the challenge of the learning curve ahead.

Then, I started as a NQT and the balloon popped dramatically. The first three weeks were very damaging to my confidence. I felt bruised and battered. This massively destroyed my previous enjoyment as a teacher, made me question my ability to deliver lessons, I wondered if I had made a mistake coming into this career late. In such a short time, I

found that **I lost my sense of purpose**; there was nothing left to motivate me. I was drained emotionally in a way that I had never experienced before.

.....

My NQT mentor made me feel that **everything was my fault, that I was inadequate, not up to the task**. **X had the ability to make me feel really small all the time** and I felt irrationally guilty about two minor subject knowledge mistakes. To be honest, with hindsight, I realise that X never wanted me to get the job, but the way X treated me was inhuman. It has taken me a long time to recognise this and come to terms with it.

.....

I am usually pretty self-aware and know that I am partly to blame for what happened ... The school did not seem to be the right fit; **there was a conflict of ethos** with regards to approach to teaching for me. The school wanted me to fit as a **square peg into a round hole without explaining it to me** ... there was a lack of understanding which I can't fathom ... **expected me to be able to do things exactly as others were doing things (people who had trained at that school)**. The lessons had to follow the same formats, same routines for **every language and every lesson**. This was **counter-cultural** to me, as previous schools had encouraged my creativity and a variety of approaches to meet different needs of pupils. **I realised that I didn't cope well when a colleague clearly didn't like me for whatever reason**. This biggest challenge to my resilience at this stage was **definitely confidence ... or rather the sudden and dramatic loss of confidence** ... It's taken months and I'm still processing in my mind just how damaging those three weeks were ... bruised by experience ... **massively destroyed my enjoyment of being in the classroom, my ability to function** ... **only literally just been able to go past the school on the bus recently**.

.....

I took advice from my wonderfully supportive and encouraging university tutor, PGCE peers and previous school placement mentors. Initially, I was resistant to trying to be positive, and this must have been wearing for everyone. I was just drained, bruised, shaken ... I didn't have anything left to rally round, in spite of huge support from so many people ... this was doubly bruising ...

.....

The head teacher at my second PGCE placement school encouraged me back, not to teach, but to simply be in school. This is a school allows teachers to get on with the job, and the department was v supportive – teachers have worked to my strengths and they helped me to get back into teaching and rebuild confidence. I've been involved in a range of jobs over the year, taking a few lessons from a teacher to begin with and then taking on more lessons; working with two autistic boys and mentoring 6th form students on university applications; lots of involvement with drama department, drawing on my previous work and making use of my wider skills. There is no doubt that working alongside others helped to build confidence back up and I was slowly able to actually hear positive feedback again. I am so grateful for this personalised approach with me, working to my strengths rather than trying to mould me. In fact, I was so much more confident by the end of the year that I was asked to apply to be head of year 7. I declined, not ready for that level of responsibility yet, but a real sign of progress on my teaching journey, welcome professional affirmation. Next year, I'll teach more ... and complete my NQT year!