The emergence of diffraction as part of a teaching and learning observation process: self and peer observation as pathways to pedagogical conversations and teacher development.

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Abstract

Observation of teaching in general colleges of Further Education is driven by a culture of performativity and auditing (Ball, 2017; O'Leary, 2020). This has led to an environment of high-distrust and risk-averse teaching (Donovan, 2019), where teachers are driven towards conformity to do what they are told works, suspending their own judgement (Mockler, 2011; Biesta, 2014).

This thesis investigates the impact of using a model of self and peer observation to support teachers in their second year of a CertED/PGCE teacher education course (and later in the study, two qualified teachers) to explore and develop their practice. It considers the role of pedagogical conversations in the development of teacher confidence and agency, asking teachers to adopt a diffractive analysis as an alternative to reflection when talking about their own and each other's teaching.

Thirteen trainee teachers and two qualified teachers told their stories through questionnaires, blogs and semi-structured interviews, recounting their experiences of participating in the study. Their narratives were interpreted using a reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) and read diffractively through concepts of trust and distrust (Donovan, 2019).

The findings indicate a disconnect between the theoretical concept of agency and the lived experiences of the participants, for whom agency is often interpreted at the micro level of classroom autonomy. The study demonstrates the necessity for (re)building trust with and amongst teachers in order for positive changes to be enacted. For those teachers that employed a diffractive analysis, there is disruption to the pattern of feedback as critique, leading to a development of self-awareness in the classroom and the noticing of the effect of differences in practices. The thesis concludes by discussing the potential impact of adopting a less performative dominated observation model, identifying it as a step to rebuilding trust and developing the optimism expressed by the participants, having been given a "safe space" to take risks.

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Chapter 1 – Context and Problem

1.1 Introduction to the research

Observation of teaching practice is a key component of the professional development of a teacher. It begins during initial teacher education and continues throughout a teacher's career. However, rather than being used to promote pedagogical dialogue and positive changes in practice, observations are more often associated with assessment of performance or as auditing tools (O'Leary, 2020) which use a checklist of external expectations to steer reflection and feedback.

This research developed out of a video-based self and peer observation project intended to support trainee teachers on a CertEd/PGCE course at a small General Further Education (GFE) college to develop their teaching practice.   I wanted to give the trainee teachers the opportunity to watch themselves and each other teach, without the performative baggage that often accompanies the concept of observation (O'Leary, 2020), and to talk to each other about what they had seen without those reflections becoming 'an object that can be assessed' (Tummons, 2011).

The aim of the study has always been to explore whether using video for self and peer observations followed by pedagogical conversations can support the development of teacher confidence and agency. However, as the research progressed, my interpretation of what these mean and whether their development can be 'supported' has adopted a more nuanced stance in recognition of the many complex factors that are at play when we start to look at the concepts of teacher confidence and agency (Iredale *et al.*, 2013; Priestley, Biesta and Robinson, 2020). The notion that has remained firm throughout the study, however, is that of the possibilities of empowerment through pedagogical conversations.   At the start of the research, I thought I knew what the barriers to those possibilities of empowerment were. Factors such as the relentless "policy churn" imposed on the sector (Norris and Adam, 2017), including the fragmented and haphazard approach to initial teacher education (Lucas, 2004); the pernicious effect of Ofsted with its "hegemonic influence and control over education policy and practice" (O'Leary, 2018, p170), factors that I explore in Chapter 2: Literature Review. Once I started the research however, more factors that I had not anticipated became apparent. The first was the stifling effect of the ubiquity of reflection throughout education, to the extent that it has become "institutionalised and routinely instrumentalised" (Mitchell, 2017, p.171). Teachers' reflections are

frequently used as a means of assessing progress on their course or to achieve a qualification. Reflective practice therefore becomes just another tool by which to measure performance, leading to teachers 'playing it safe' rather than giving a candid account of an incident and avoiding incidents that may be viewed as negative (Tummons, 2011; Myers, Smith and Tesar, 2017). This realisation resulted in me introducing diffraction as an alternative approach to teachers examining practice (see below for an introduction to diffraction and Chapter 2 Literature Review for an analysis of the relevant literature). By questioning, and asking teachers to question, what an alternative approach to the cycle of observation-reflection-feedback could look like, this study aims to defamiliarise the habitual and problematise that which is taken for granted (Lodge, 2011; Thomson, 2015).

A final factor, a thread running through all of the above, is the role of trust and distrust (Donovan, 2019). This only became apparent as a significant factor during the thematic analysis of the research data, beginning with questions of trust between participants, but leading me to consider the role of trust and distrust at institutional and policy level. Donovan's article highlights "the evolution of distrust" (Donovan, 2019, p.189) in FE and states that the division caused by the differing opinions regarding the "vision and purpose" of the sector "has created fertile ground for fractious, low-trust relationships to emerge between those that create policy, those that implement policy, and those that are the subject of policy." (Donovan, 2019, p.189). The notions of trust and distrust posited by Donovan resonated strongly with my own experiences and led me to question some of the conclusions I had been drawing during the coding stage of the reflexive thematic analysis process, detailed in Chapter 6: Themes and Findings. I therefore went back to the data and read diffractively through notions of trust and distrust, "A diffractive reading is a way of rethinking issues by reading theorists or different theories and data through each other" (Bozalek *et al.*, 2016, p.826). Despite the challenges faced by the sector: the political capriciousness that results in continuous policy change, the funding cuts, the disregard for students and teachers evidenced by those changes and cuts, the findings from this research are not a story of dismay. They tell the story of finding the possibilities of empowerment; when teachers feel they can make meaningful changes, if they can see the steps they need to take, this can "add(s) up to a powerful sense of hope" (McGowan and Felten, 2021, p.2)

1.2 Chapter introduction

 My experience of teaching in further education has impacted on my own sense of agency and my views about what agency for teachers means. These experiences help form who I am as a teacher and a

researcher, and the lens through which I view the key concepts addressed within this thesis. Therefore, this chapter will give a brief account of my background in order to situate my entry point into this research and will also give some details of events which impacted on my sense of agency during the study. In this chapter I will also briefly discuss those policies and levers which have had the greatest impact on my experience of FE and how these came to inform the initial concept and further evolution of this research. The chapter will conclude with the research questions which I have sought to address throughout this thesis.

1.3 My background – the researcher in context

I came into further education in 2000 as a teacher of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), after teaching in private language schools and the British Council in Spain for 10 years. I began working in the sector just as the major changes to both the inspection of colleges and the standardisation of initial teacher education (ITE) following the election of New Labour were being put into place, which will be discussed in greater depth both in this chapter to contextualise the research and also in the literature review. Marketisation of further education was already underway through the incorporation of colleges in 1993, colleges were responsible for their own budgets and were competing with each other as well as other post-compulsory providers to attract learners (Wallace, 2013). The policy 'levers' that Coffield et al. (2007) identified, used since the 1990's, were beginning to be "pulled harder (Coffield *et al.*, 2007, p278). The levers identified were funding, targets, initiatives, planning and inspection, and used in various combinations. Coffield et al. (2007) found that funding and targets were the two most powerful levers at a macro and meso level. However, inspections and the sway of Ofsted were to become powerful levers at meso and micro levels, with some colleges employing "unnecessary and extreme" levers in the form of financial incentives to teachers who got a grade 1 lesson observation and the potential of dismissal for teachers with a grade 4 (Burnell, 2017, p14).

The college where I first taught was a large, general further education college (GFE) in South-East London, frequently at the forefront of any New Labour initiatives in the sector. For example, it was amongst the first colleges to gain Beacon status in 1999 (BBC 1999) and one of the first "pathfinder

colleges" for the Centre of Vocational Excellence initiative (BBC 2001), benefitting from the additional funding and status accompanying such awards. The department I joined in 2000 had many experienced lecturers who had taught in a variety of roles within the sector and within the college, many had worked at the college since before incorporation. There was both strong sector and institutional memory in the department, and along with their experience and knowledge there was a tradition of union membership. They were, in short, a force to be reckoned with, and at that point, had a strong sense of agency regarding teaching and what happened in the classroom.

During my 16 years at the college, I held a wide range of roles: English for Speaker of Other Languages (ESOL) and English as Foreign Language (EFL) lecturer, tutor, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Champion, Advanced Practitioner, Programme Area Leader, Curriculum Manager, Improvement Practitioner and Teacher Trainer, both specifically for ESOL and EFL and for general teacher education. Throughout this time however, the political hold on education tightened its grip, discussed further in Chapter 2 Literature Review, and the 'policy churn' that Norris & Adam (2017) refer to began to erode the sense of agency I experienced when first arriving at the college. The department which had grown from just one Curriculum Manager when I arrived, to seven by 2010, of whom I was one, began to "consolidate" areas, reducing the number of Curriculum Managers and increasing their areas of responsibility and the number of teachers they managed. At the same time, there were major upheavals taking place in the Senior Management Team (SMT): a new principal, restructuring of the SMT, a merger with a neighbouring ("failing") college, further restructuring. The renamed, rebranded college was inspected and awarded a Grade 3 by Ofsted, triggering further restructuring and eventually the replacement of the principal with an interim principal.

One of the casualties of this microcosm churn at the college was the department I had moved to. I moved from being a Curriculum Manager to Improvement Practitioner (IP) in Teacher Education in order to work more in staff development and less with data analysis, which I felt the curriculum management of large areas had become. The Teaching and Development team at the college instigated an innovative approach (for the college) to staff development and observation of teaching, learning and assessment (OTLA). The college was to move to developmental observations (O'Leary, 2014), following college wide training on the new process and 1:1 coaching for each member of the teaching staff with an AP. For those teachers who were observed at the beginning, this was a liberating and truly developmental step. Reassured by the promise that observation feedback would remain within each department and not be audited centrally, some of the teachers, rather than playing it safe

and teaching a lesson they knew 'ticked boxes', genuinely used the observation to start a conversation about areas of their practice they wanted support with. However, following the "bad" Ofsted inspection and the appointment of an interim principal, the "developmental observations" became part of the college performance management regime and APs became involved in a punitive process. Despite the original reassurances, managers were ordered to review all previous observations and to submit them to the central quality team. Subsequent observations by APs or Curriculum Managers, although not graded, were used to "flag up" teachers "of concern" and those teachers were put on a 6-week improvement programme with an AP. This was an incredibly challenging change for both the teachers and the APs. What had started as a developmental and supportive process had been hijacked and was being used as a performative tool against the staff. There had been various times in my teaching career where I felt I had little agency, but none more so than when I had no choice but to collaborate with and enforce the shift from developmental observations.

By 2016, I had become disillusioned with my experience of further education at the college and had the opportunity to move from London to the northwest of England. This move gave me the financial security to be able to complete a part-time MA in Education. It was through doing the MA that I came to realise that I had not become disillusioned with teaching in the sector, but in how the sector had been politically subjugated and how education had become a "political football". We studied topics such as the hidden curriculum, professionalism, identity and the impact of policy on education. Topics that gave me a theoretical framework through which to articulate the anger and frustration I felt at having left a job I had been doing, in various guises, for over 25 years, because I could not continue to work where I felt I had no control and my values were not reciprocated. The move had given me a financial buffer, but I did have to return to work. I decided to go back into teacher education in FE because, perhaps ironically, my MA had given me a clearer sense of what agency could look like for me as a teacher in FE. I returned to teaching in 2017, to work as teacher educator in a small GFE in West Yorkshire as a main grade lecturer in Teacher Education, teaching on education and training courses from Level 3 to Level 7.

My own initial teacher education began in 1989 when I completed the RSA/Cambridge Certificate in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language to Adults, which later became the Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA). Although a short course (20 days from 9am to 5pm if done intensively over a month), each trainee teacher completes 6 hours of observed teaching, participates in about 30 hours of peer observation and 6 hours of observation of experienced English

language teachers, as well as attending input sessions and completing written assignments (CambridgeEnglish.org). I became a CELTA teacher trainer in 2002, and it was due to this experience, both as trainee and trainer, that I have always valued the benefits that can be gained from the observation of teaching. When CELTA trainees are being observed, they are being assessed and receive feedback from the tutor, this is always formative feedback, with the aim of supporting people who have never taught to understand and put into practice the basics of teaching English (EFL and ESOL). However, the observations are not just about the trainees who have taught. The trainees observing are required to give feedback, they complete observations tasks which help focus them on elements of the session, sometimes about the topic, sometimes on the trainee teacher (teacher talk, questioning, classroom management) but also on the learners, observing their participation in the session for example. In short, after each session, the trainee teachers participate in pedagogical conversations. As a trainer, this is often where I would see that "lightbulb" moment, where the trainees might have observed another trainee giving clear instructions and witnessed learners with very little English completing a task because they knew what to do. Or alternatively, observed a class become completely confused because the instructions were too complex. The trainees were able to discuss this and tell each other what they had seen and why it looked like something had or had not gone well and how this might inform their own teaching practice. I would also encourage trainees to video themselves at least once after the midway point in the course in order to give them an opportunity to see for themselves what they were doing well or needed to improve.

This is what I intended to recapture with the initial project, albeit strategically much more difficult because the trainee teachers were not on an intensive course, all teaching the same group of learners at the same time. I wanted to give them the opportunity to be observed by and to observe their peers in an environment as removed as possible from the high stakes, performative observations that they experience either through the course or as employees/volunteers at their various placements.

1.4 How the project began
Although informed by theory, I consider teaching to be a very practical activity. Teacher education courses do acknowledge this, the CertEd/PGCE course I taught had two modules each year: the theoretical module where teachers wrote about teaching and the practice module where teachers evidenced the requisite number of hours taught, along with the accompanying plans, observation feedback for the observed sessions and their own reflections on the observed sessions. Trainees on the

courses come from a diverse range of backgrounds, and their final qualification can range from a Level 5 to a Level 7, depending on their entry point. The trainees are often on the course because they want to teach adults the skills that they themselves have and are qualified in, these are frequently vocational skills. They represent any course that FE offers: Plumbing, Hairdressing, Drama, Construction, Social Care etc, and are asked (on a part-time course, such as I was teaching) to find themselves a teaching placement if they are not already in post as an unqualified teacher or trainer. The trainee teachers participating in this research have to teach a minimum of 60 hours over the duration of their course (30 hours per year on the two-year part-time course) and are observed a minimum of 8 times (or 4 times per year on the part-time course). There is no requirement for them to observe another teacher, other than their mentor, and this is a grey area with no specification of how many hours.

This approach might be sufficient if we simply want teachers to do as they are told and to put into place practices they are told 'work'. However, I wanted the trainee teachers I was working with to be able to decide for themselves what worked for them, in the environment they were teaching. Biesta writes: "teaching is impossible without judgement – judgment about how to do things and judgement about what is to be done" (Biesta, 2019, p. 269). However, how can teachers make an informed judgement and answer Biesta's question "What, in this concrete situation, is educationally desirable?" (Biesta, 2019, p. 269) with no knowledge of concrete situations beyond their own? I felt that by the end of their year with me I wanted the teachers to feel more confident that they were able to articulate their pedagogical judgements. For me, this was the first step of what Mockler describes as "The process of articulating one's professional identity is in essence about teachers developing their own philosophy of education out of who they are, what they believe and where they have been over the course of their careers, and finally, opening up to each other on whatever scale is appropriate." (Mockler, 2011, p. 524).

I was, and still am, of the view that it is not possible to develop one's philosophy of education in the vacuum of the traditional observation cycle, where the observee relies on memory of the (generally stressful) observation, and the observer makes a judgement based on a given set of criteria. I believed from my experiences from both the CELTA model and the 'hijacked' developmental model from my previous college that giving teachers the opportunity to move away from the cycle of observation described above, by asking them to video themselves, share the video with a peer, and watch both their own video and their peers would start the process of them being able to ask questions and form judgements.

1.5 How the project evolved

The study began as part of a module (Understanding e-learning) on my MA. The assessment task was to design a learning activity using a technology of our choice to address a pedagogical problem, and to use learning theories introduced on the course. I submitted '***Design project*** *- using YouTube as a platform for groups of teachers to share videos of their practice for the purpose of reflection and feedback'.* I address this in full in Chapter 4: Research Procedure, where I detail the underpinning theory of the different stages of the study. The focus at the start was in facilitating the self and peer observations and opportunities to discuss their practice. The design project became the basis for this thesis.

The first iteration followed the pattern of the MA project, asking the trainees to record themselves, share, watch themselves and each other, and then discuss what they had seen. I used questionnaires to gather data (Appendix 2), which asked the trainees about reflection and feedback. Although the trainees who participated said they had found the process useful, I was disappointed with the lack of analytical depth in the responses. It was at this stage that I investigated the concept of diffraction as an alternative to reflection. I explore these notions further in Chapter 2: Literature Review. However, I will give a brief introduction to the concept of diffraction and why I was drawn to it here.

Reflection as a metaphor for thinking has long been a cornerstone of teacher education and development, and in the latest iteration of the ETF Professional Standards (2022), it is the very first in the list of 20 standards:

> *1. Critically reflect on and evaluate your practices, values, and beliefs to improve learner outcomes.*

Hébert highlights the "prominence" of reflective practice in teacher education(Hébert, 2015, p.361), citing McLaughlin who commented "Who would want to champion the *unreflective* practitioner?" (McLaughlin, 1999, p. 9) However, reflective practice is ubiquitous throughout education, to the extent that it has become "institutionalised and routinely instrumentalised" (Mitchell, 2017, p.171). When we ask teachers to submit reflections as a means of assessing progress on their course or to achieve a qualification, the reflection "becomes an object that can assessed" (Tummons, 2011, p.472). Reflective practice therefore becomes just another tool by which to measure performance, leading to teachers 'playing it safe' rather than giving a candid account of an incident and avoiding incidents that may be viewed as negative (Tummons, 2011; Myers, Smith and Tesar, 2017). In an environment where

reflective practice has been appropriated to equate assessment, a teacher is far more likely to share an incident with a manageable solution than to expose a professional or personal vulnerability. I wanted to find an alternative approach with an alternative lexicon, to move away from the notions of holding up a mirror and examining perceived imperfections (reflection). The concept of diffraction offered this alternative.

 Reflection and diffraction are both physical phenomena, referring to the behaviour of waves: reflection describing how waves bounce back when they encounter a barrier, whereas diffraction describes how waves change when they encounter an obstacle.   Diffraction is the bending and spreading of waves, an obstruction creates an interference pattern, for example, when waves pass through a breakwater:
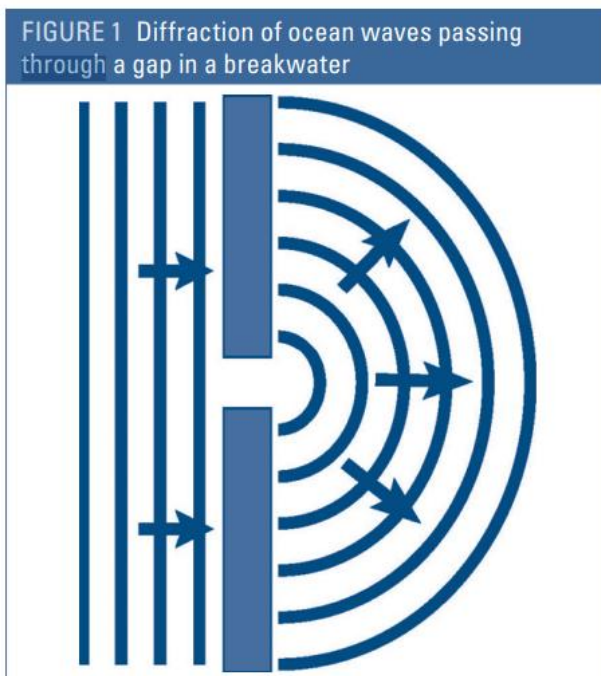
Figure 1: Diffraction of ocean waves passing through a gap in a breakwater

(Spector, 2015, p. 449)

In comparing the two, Barad writes "whereas the metaphor of reflection reflects the theme of mirroring and sameness, diffraction is marked by patterns of difference" (Barad, 2007, p.71). The concept of diffraction originates in quantum physics and its theoretical context is explored in greater depth in Chapter2. The metaphorical diffractive approach which has influenced this thesis is about looking at difference and looking at the impact of that difference, not looking to correct it. It "is a process of being attentive to how differences get made and what the effects of those differences are" (Bozalek and Zembylas, 2017, p.112), and I believe it supports teachers to ask the two questions that

Biesta (2019, p.270) states judgement in teaching require: "how" and "what for". In adopting a diffractive analysis with the self and peer observations, I wanted to see whether the trainee teachers moved closer to developing their skills of judgement.

1.6 Research aims and questions

This research aims to explore how using video for self and peer observations, and facilitating pedagogical conversations can support the development of teacher confidence and agency.

1. How can the use of video in self and peer observations help teachers (in further education) to explore and develop their practice?

2. What role can pedagogical conversations play in the development of teacher confidence and agency?

3. What impact can a diffractive analysis have when teachers talk about differences in their practice?

Chapter 1 Summary

This chapter has presented the context of the research, describing how the initial idea came about and evolved. I have indicated the factors that have informed my rationale for starting this study and those that have informed the changes that have been introduced along the way.

This chapter has included a brief biography of who I am and how that has impacted on the research decisions I have made. I have also included an introduction to the concept of diffraction, an important element in the formation of this study.

The following chapter, Chapter 2: Literature Review reviews the literature which has informed this thesis.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter explores the literature and concepts that impact on and influence the use of observation in teaching and teacher development in the UK FE system. The literature review was carried out thematically by identifying the key themes that informed the study initially and as it has evolved, and is presented under those themes. The first section looks at relevant policies that have led to growing government involvement in education, focussing particularly on FE, moving on to look at the introduction of professional standards and their impact on initial teacher education. The chapter then moves on to explore the role of Ofsted and its impact on how observations of teaching and learning are used in FE, with a section on different models of observations and the impact of pedagogical conversations. The chapter continues by looking at reflection in teacher education and exploring the concept of diffraction. The chapter concludes by looking at notions of trust, distrust and finally, hope.

2.1 Policy Background - Policy Churn

This section explores the political and policy reforms which form the background to the increased government intervention in education experienced since the 1970's. This informs the research by exploring the circumstances under which observation of teaching became a tool for auditing teaching, learning and assessment in classrooms.

Post-compulsory education has been subject to more than 30 key pieces of legislation, had over 40 Secretaries of State for Education (whose responsibilities have included skills) and has been managed by six ministerial departments in the last 35 years (updated from Norris and Adam, 2017). Pollitt's statement that "Since the early 1980s there has been no rest for the wicked or the innocent in the UK public sector" (Pollitt, 2007) remains true. Before looking at why this "policy churn" (Norris and Adam, 2017) is important to the context of this research, it is worth examining briefly how such a rate of change is possible. Much of the literature exploring the impact of policy on the public sector (Pollitt, 2007; Glatter, 2017; Norris and Adam, 2017) cite the British political system as facilitating this "vortex of permanent upheaval" (Webster, cited in Pollitt 2007, p530). They suggest that a system based on majoritarian government puts very few constraints on politicians and affords ministers discretion to

impose sweeping changes on the public sector, for example, Blunkett or Gove in their roles of Secretaries of State for Education, with very few checks and balances present to slow the "politician's hyperactivity over reform" (Glatter, 2017, p119).

The starting point for the ensuing policy churn in education is generally accepted to be the 1970's (Chitty, 2014; Aubrey and Bell, 2017). Amidst the economic crisis of the 70's (Three Day Week, high unemployment, the OPEC oil crisis and energy shortages, trade union disputes, rampant inflation) the "New Right" was developing and applying neoliberal concepts to education policy. Leading industrialists of the time were vocal about their belief that there was a lack of skilled and flexible workers and this was the fault of schools and teachers, and this view was disseminated by the right-wing media and those keen to undermine "progressive education" (Chitty 2014). In 1976, James Callaghan, Labour Prime Minister at the time, gave his *Great Education Debate* speech at Ruskin College. The speech, now considered to be a turning point in the English education system, was the first major speech on education to be given by a Prime Minister and was seen to be a way of signalling to the public that the Labour Party was aware of the "perceived public disquiet at the alleged decline in educational standards" (Chitty, 2014 p.45) and taking the argument away from the ownership of the Conservative Opposition. Callaghan addressed the concerns expressed by the industrialists and although stating that they should "carry the teaching profession with us. They have the expertise and the professional approach" (Callaghan, 1976) he referred to the concerns of industry that school leavers lacked the "basic tools to do the job that is required." (Callaghan, 1976.) Furthermore, in what O'Leary (2020) refers to as a "prophetic" speech, Callaghan highlighted areas of general concern, which are now familiar territories of political control and performativity:

> "There are the methods and aims of informal instruction, the strong case for the so-called 'core curriculum' of basic knowledge; next, what is the proper way of monitoring the use of resources in order to maintain a proper national standard of performance; then there is the role of the inspectorate in relation to national standards; and there is the need to improve relations between industry and education" (Callaghan, 1976)

Thereby presenting pedagogic choice, a national curriculum, standards, inspection and the requirements of industry as areas ripe for government intervention. Despite the Labour Secretary of State for Education, Shirley Williams, going even further in a speech at the North of England Conference in 1977, and stating that the problems were the fault of "poor teachers, weak head-teachers and headmistresses and modern teaching methods" (cited in Ball, 2017, p.83), the Labour government did

not make any substantial changes to education policy. Ball (2017) states that this was because they not only did not know what to do, but they had no means of enacting reforms. Callaghan's speech did however, pave the way for the Conservative government to bring in their neoliberal reforms, using what Keith Joseph would call "the levers" of reform (Ball, 2017, p.83

The first key reforms in education to be enacted following the speech took place in schools: Kenneth Baker's 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) introduced the National Curriculum, the Local Management of Schools (LMS) in 1991 gave schools more financial autonomy, followed by appraisal schemes in 1992 and a new inspection regime, with Ofsted replacing Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI). The first major policy aimed at further education was the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, which created the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and took control of further education away from local authorities, the colleges became independent corporations, referred to as the "incorporation" of colleges, and became businesses which "would be subjected to 'quango-funding and control through a privatised market' (Gillard, 2018, citing Benn & Chitty 1996, p. 14).

The FEFC made significant changes to funding in further education, introducing a complex system of financial units allocated to colleges, based on targets set for and met by student enrolment, retention and achievement. Colleges were only paid the full allocation if students stayed on the course and gained their qualification, thus introducing financial incentivisation to the sector. This was monitored through the taking of a student census three times a year, funding was released per student after the census, if a student had left, the college would receive no further funds for that student (Boocock, 2015). Along with the increased accountability, under the guise of increased autonomy in being released from local authority control, came the need for colleges to produce more data to evidence the enrolment, retention and achievement of students. Lucas (1998, p.304) writes of a belief in the sector that "auditing requirements had become out of control", citing a college manager who reported "having to report over 1.5 million data items to the FEFC annually" (Lucas, 1998, p.304).

Behind both the ERA and Further and Higher Education Act was the ideology that market forces, in the form of financial independence and private sector business values, would raise standards and improve provision in education. The resulting changes in how schools and colleges were managed has been termed "new managerialism". This style of management, originating in the private sector but adopted/imposed across the public sector during the Thatcher years was underpinned by a mantra of "Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness" (O'Leary, 2020). The required improvements in the quality of provision needed to be evidenced, and this occurred through increased accountability and auditing.

O'Leary describes this period as the start of a process of 'de-professionalisation' due to the number of policy reforms introduced which reduced the powers of unions and increased the administrative load of teachers (O'Leary 2020, p8). This 'de-professionalisation' and continuing policy churn was not solely the work of the Conservatives. New Labour, elected in 1997 under the banner of "Education, Education, Education" continued to implement changes intended to improve quality and standards which were to be measured and audited.

The quasi-market created by incorporation was already well formed when New Labour were elected, and there was no doubt that this would continue. The new government produced a White Paper within 3 months of taking power, stating "We are talking about investing in human capital in an age of knowledge" (DfEE, 1997, cited in Burnell, 2017), thus linking their agenda to Schultz's Human Capital Theory (Burnell, 2017) and their longer-term commitment to a "knowledge economy". O'Leary defines the "knowledge economy" as "the philosophy that the economic prosperity of a country was significantly determined by the effectiveness of a country's educational provision" (O'Leary, 2020, p11), that is, better education results in a stronger economy. New Labour invested heavily in education, including, more than any other administration, further education (Burnell 2017). In 1999 a Geen Paper focusing on post-16 education was published in which David Blunkett, the incumbent Secretary of State, wrote:

> 'The skill needs of the future will be different from those of today and it is clear that we will not keep pace with the modern economies of our competitors if we are unable to match today's skills with the challenge of the developing information and communication age of tomorrow' (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) 1999, 3).

Again, acknowledging the concept of learners as human capital, which Groll et al interpret as "symbolic violence" with learners being objectified as "repositories of skills required for the nation's economic needs" (Groll et al. 2018, p29).

This was the backdrop to the sector I entered in 2000, a time which O'Leary (2020) identifies as being notable for two developments in policy associated with greater implementation of lesson observations in colleges. These were, firstly, the introduction by the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) of the first iteration of a set of Professional Standards for the sector in 1999. And secondly, the increasing clout of Ofsted with regards to policy direction and development, evidenced by their 2003 report (Ofsted, 2003).

The following section explores more closely the literature regarding the lead up to the introduction of the standards, the impact (or lack of) of the standards on ITE, and Ofsted's role in changing the face of ITE following their report. It will also include a brief discussion on the current situation regarding further changes to ITE in FE.

2.2 Initial Teacher Education and Professional Standards

This section explores the role of the evolving framework and focus of Professional Standards in FE since their introduction, and the changing attitudes, and therefore policies, towards ITE in the sector from successive governments. This informs the research by mapping the impact of both to explain how the use of observations in education has become a key element in assessing teachers both in their formation and their ongoing development.

In 1995, the Association of Colleges (AoC) published a report which identified inconsistencies in the provision of ITE and teaching qualification (Young *et al.*, 1995). A succession of bodies were established to address this through developing a set of national standards, in consultation with colleges, which could be used as a framework for ITE and staff development (Lucas, 2004). Following extensive consultation, the first framework of professional standards was eventually launched by FENTO in 1999. There was a mixed reception for the FENTO standards, with Bathmaker (2000) noting that although there was a danger of them being used as a list of competencies, the inclusion of areas such as reflective practice, learning theory, consideration of the diversity of the sector was to be welcomed; others saw them as "overly instrumental, technicist and undervaluing wider professional development" (Tummons, 2014, p.418). When mandatory qualifications were introduced in 2001, HE providers and awarding bodies required FENTO "endorsement" for their programmes, generally a process of mapping existing programmes and learning outcomes to the standards (Holloway, 2009). Consensus was that prior to this, qualifications across the sector had been haphazard and fragmented, with the route into teaching considered "chaotic" (Hamilton & Hillier, 2006; Lucas, 2004; Lucas, 2007), thus mandatory qualifications were welcomed as a move in the right direction. However, that same year (2001), Ofsted, who were at that time jointly responsible for the inspection of teacher training in FE with the Adult Learning

Inspectorate (ALI), carried out a survey of the provision, which resulted in the "The initial training of further education teachers: A survey" report in 2003 (Ofsted, 2003) and a subsequent government report in 2004 (DfES, 2004).

Ofsted's report was highly critical of both the FENTO standards and the provision of training, claiming that teacher education remained inconsistent and variable, the standards were not appropriate as a tool to design teacher training courses and the sector was still not delivering enough subject-specialist pedagogy (Holloway, 2009; Tummons, 2014). The report also focussed on perceived inadequacies of observation of teaching and learning, again referring to inconsistencies across the sector and the lack of sufficient mentoring and observation of teaching by mentors (Ofsted, 2003). Although many of the findings of the report were valid, it also evidenced a lack of understanding of the sector through an over-reliance on the secondary school model of teacher training as a comparison. Holloway argues "Ofsted had not adequately understood the structure, culture, characteristics and diversity of the sector they were investigating" (Holloway, 2009, p.188) with the report highlighting a lack of subject specific training and mentoring input. The report stated that trainee progress on courses was "inhibited by insufficient observation and feedback on their teaching" (Ofsted, 2003, p.3) and furthermore, as observation was not given a "high enough profile" in assessing trainees, there was no guarantee that the qualified teachers were competent (Ofsted, 2003, p.3).

The government took the Ofsted report as the starting point for its *Equipping our teachers for the future* report (DfES, 2004) and the subsequent *New overarching professional standards* (LLUK, 2007) abolishing FENTO in 2005, and replacing it with the Lifelong Learning UK sector skills council, another employer-led body. As well as re-writing the professional standards, the LLUK delivered a new suite of national qualifications, aiming to create a system comparable with the schools sector. Following the 2003 Ofsted report, there was a notable increase in the prominence of observation of teaching in the assessment of the formation and continuing development of teachers, with a call for "more effective observation of teaching practice" in the 2004 DfES report. This was followed by a detailed specification of how observations should be utilised in the PTLLS, CTLLS and DTLLS (Preparing to Teach, Certificate in Teaching and Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector), the qualifications devised to be delivered in colleges and other providers, whilst universities continued to provide qualifications mapped to standards (Lucas et al, 2012;

O'Leary, 2020; Tummons, 2014). Further moves to raise the professional status were the introduction of the Institute for Learning (IfL) and the creation of Qualified Teacher Learning Skills (QTLS). However, the reforms, following the lead of Ofsted, introduced an unprecedented level of surveillance on both teachers and trainee teachers through the introduction of mandatory logging of 30 CPD hours per year and the grading of trainee teacher lesson observations (Aubrey & Bell, 2017). The new managerialism discussed above was being enacted in FE through a discourse of professionalism, beneath the veneer of 'improving standards' was a regulatory framework creating an agenda of auditing and performativity (Atkins & Tummons, 2017; Aubrey & Bell, 2017). The changes introduced by the LLUK did not have the impact anticipated, the standards and the competency-based qualifications were seen as a "reductive and instrumental model" (Aubrey & Bell, 2017, p.105). Teacher educators, whilst welcoming the elevated status of teaching in FE, did not welcome the restrictions of a competency-based model. The focus on performativity and compliance of the new policies was contrary to the more student centred, reflective, critical pedagogy focus favoured by teacher educators in the sector, who "were actively subversive in their response to the reforms" (Aubrey & Bel, 2017, p.107).

In 2012 the landscape changed again. The move from "benign neglect" (Lucas, 2007, p.93) to intense policy activity had not been able to homogenise such a diverse sector. Despite mandatory qualifications and the intention of parity with schools through QTLS, teacher education remained fragmented and uptake of QTLS was limited (Allison, 2023; Aubrey & Bell, 2017). The new Conservative led Coalition government moved to deregulate FE, the first step was through the Lingfield Report, *Professionalism in Further Education* (DfBIS, 2012). With its recognition of the diversity of FE, its relevance to economic growth, the importance of vocational education and recommendations to simplify ITE qualifications and continue working towards parity with schools, Aubrey and Bell (2107) suggest the report could have provided a route to a "need for less control and audit, reduced compliance, recognition of the complexity of the sector and an apparent trusting perception of teacher professionalism" (p.110). It did result in a restructuring of the ITE qualifications with the introduction of the Award, Certificate and Diploma in Education and Training in 2013. However, it also resulted in the revoking of compulsory qualifications and withdrawal of funding to support teachers to gain qualifications (Allison, 2023; Aubrey & Bell, 2017). The

report stated "we believe that its (FE's) future success depends upon placing trust in the professionals who work within it to direct it, take its decisions and promulgate its priorities" (DfBIS, 2012, p.ii). However, instead, it led to a "sense of disquiet" (Aubrey & Bel, 2017, p.110) regarding the future of ITE and "confusion and concern" (Allison, 2023, p.33) due to a failure to clarify how the education and training of teachers in the sector would take place. Writing in 2018, Groll et al. noted that there was "still an appetite for teacher qualifications in further education", however the ability of the sector to recruit teachers, particularly from vocational areas, becomes increasingly more difficult due to a combination of the complexity of the qualification system, the costs incurred in achieving a qualification and underfunding of the sector resulting in falling pay parity with schools and university teachers (Allison, 2023, p.34).

A further impact of the Lingfield Review was the eventual replacement of the IfL by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF), who went on to introduce a third iteration of Professional Standards 2014 (see below for further detail). Lingfield is clear in the report that the inquiry had been set up to review ITE and to resolve the dispute between FE lecturers and the IfL over the introduction of a compulsory membership fee once government subsidy to the organisation was withdrawn (DfBIS, 2012). The resolution was to render the IfL redundant by removing the mandatory elements of ITE and QTLS for which the organisation was responsible, and removing statutory support. The sector in general, and teacher educators in particular, were cynical about the intention of the report (Aubrey & Bell, 2017). On the one hand, the report expressed confidence in the potential of the sector: "Further education in this country is a developing and dynamic entity, naturally and properly diverse" (DfBIS, 2012, p.ii). Whilst on the other hand, through deregulation and ceding decisions from government to local negotiation, leaving the sector and teacher education "to return to the abuses and lack of professional aspirations for teachers so evident in the neoliberal marketisation that directly followed incorporation" (Aubrey & Bell, 2017, p.110).

As stated above, a new, simplified set of professional standards was introduced by the ETF in 2014. The "Initial Guidance for the users of the Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Education and Training – England" (ETF, 2014) described the standards as "aspirational" and "wholly owned by the sector" (p.3). The sector, however, was not

entirely convinced. In his paper of 2016 exploring the impact of the three iterations (at that time) of professional standards in FE, Tummons observes that the ETF standards had been accepted with "a degree of positivity" (Tummons, 2016, p.354) when compared with previous standards, with some respondents in his research describing them as providing a framework for discussion, more accessible and welcoming the "emphasis on creativity, innovation and collaboration" (p.354). However, others expressed concern that they were too aspirational and therefore not useful for trainee teachers and that despite explicit mention of dual-professionalism and subject/vocational specialisms, they were still focused on mainstream FE. In exploring their impact, Tummons also questions their purpose. The ETF's declaration that they were aspirational and "not focussed on assessing competence" (ETF, 2014, p.13) assumes an interpretation of the standards beyond their control. Tummons' contention that another set of top-down professional standards represents yet another checklist corresponds with my own experience both at the time of the introduction of the 2014 standards, and subsequently with the release of the updated 2022 ETF standards. Furthermore, Ofsted, in their revised Initial Teacher Education handbook (Ofsted, 2014), were already referring to "evaluating" provision in line with the 2014 professional standards, stating "The 2014 professional standards for FE teachers and trainers define the professional requirements of teachers, trainers and tutors of post-16 learners, and underpin good teaching practice in the sector." (Ofsted, 2014, p.30). The same document, in giving the breakdown of grade descriptors for Outcomes for trainees states that to achieve Outstanding:

> "**ALL** FE trainees meet the professional standards for FE teachers and trainers by the end of their training. Trainees demonstrate excellent practice in the majority of the standards…" (Ofsted, 2014, p.33).

However, there is no guidance as to how this will be evidenced against an "aspirational" standard. Lending weight to Tummons' argument that it is not a question of seeking the "'right set of standards" (2016, p.356), but that a standards approach will always be flawed because of the conflicting demands of the different stakeholders who require them to simultaneously embody professional knowledge, reify measures of accountability and frame professional qualifications (Tummons, 2016, p.356). This statement remains pertinent today. The revised professional standards were introduced in 2022, with so little impact on

the sector a literature search reveals no analysis of them or their impact. Even a Google search links only to the ETF and SET websites. The new standards were mapped on to the existing framework of qualifications with ease, retaining the three domains of professional values and attributes, professional knowledge and understanding and professional skills, accompanied by a document explaining the revisions (ETF, 2022) which states "Their aim is to inspire excellence, ambition and professional learning". However, beyond being used as a framework for reflection on teacher education courses and as a guide to gain QTLS through SET (the membership body of ETF), it is difficult to gauge the impact of the fourth iteration of professional standards in the sector. As Tummons asked in 2016, "if people don't read them and then make meaning from them, then how can they promulgate any particular process of professionalisation?" (Tummons, 2016, p.355).

The final point in this section is to mention the changes to Level 5 and above qualifications being implemented from September 2024. As the changes are yet to be implemented, there is no literature to review. The only documents I can access are from the ETF and the government, which offer a very one-sided view of the changes. The qualifications framework publication (ETF, 2023) states that the new Level 5 DET is a standards-based qualification and describe it as "an important milestone" in the sector, as the qualifications can now match what employers have "stated they want of successful trainees" (ETF, 2023, p.4). It is too early to know what impact the new structure is going to have. Anecdotally, HEIs and their affiliated colleges are very concerned at what are being described as unrealistic demands. The ETF document specifies an increase in the number of teaching practice hours, including a minimum of 20 hours of remote synchronous teaching. Each trainee must have placements at two locations and have two mentors.

As well as changes to the structure of ITT qualifications, there are major changes to who can deliver the courses. As of September 2024, pre-service FE ITT courses can only be delivered by HE providers, or partners who are validated by an HE provider. Private training providers will not be able to access student finance, unless they are validated by an HE provider, potentially affecting almost 4,500 students, as can be seen from Table 1 below, which shows snapshot data from the Student Loan Company (SLC) for the 27[th of] July 2023 (DfE, 2024, p.17). The 2024 response document (DfE, 2024, p.18) justifies this decision by referring to inspection reports of private providers that conclude "there is little or no evidence that

providers are adequately preparing their trainees to secure teaching employment in the FE sector".

Providers and/or organisations negatively impacted by the proposals

Provider and/or organisation type	Estimated number of trainees in receipt of student support funding per year[10]	Number of providers / organisations	Estimated average income per trainee (£)	Estimated total impact (£)
FE colleges who deliver awarding body-validated FE ITT qualifications	160	32	£6,000	£960,000
FE colleges who franchise awarding body-validated FE ITT qualifications to other organisations	340	< 5	£6,000	£2,040,000
Private organisations who deliver awarding body-validated courses	4,470	13	£6,000	£26,820,000

Table 1: Providers and/or organisations negatively impacted by the proposals (DfE, 2024, p.17)

At the time of writing, there is no available information on how this will impact on the provision of ITT in the sector, or whether private training providers will be able to meet the requirements for delivery. The assertion in the response document "The currently unregulated nature of the FE ITT system means that government has very limited levers with which to tackle quality issues when these emerge" (DfE, 2024, p.20) appears to confirm the prediction cited earlier from Aubrey and Bell (2017, p.110) regarding the abuses of neoliberal marketisation.

This section has explored some of the key policy changes impacting on initial teacher education since 1995, including the introduction and evolution of professional standards. Throughout, one of the areas of greatest impact has been the growth of the importance of Ofsted in the sector, and the power it wields to dictate what education and training in the sector should look like, and how that should be presented in order to be measured and audited. The following section looks specifically at the role of Ofsted in the appropriation of observation of teaching and learning as a performative tool.

2.3 Ofsted and observation of teaching and learning

This section explores the influence Ofsted has had on the observation of teaching and learning in FE since its 2003 report (Ofsted, 2003). This informs the research by examining Ofsted's impact on teaching and teacher education policy and practice, with specific reference to the changing requirements around observation; and by discussing the power Ofsted wields over shaping the formation and practices of teachers.

The role of Ofsted is to inspect the provision of education and skills for leaners of any age, it is also responsible for inspecting and regulating care services for children and young people. Their guiding principle, according to their latest strategy document, is: "We are a force for improvement through the intelligent, responsible and focused use of inspection, regulation and insights." (Ofsted, 2022, p.2). "Force" is an appropriate word to use in describing their role; force suggests power, it is also the root of "enforcer". This section will examine how, rather than a benign and supportive upholder of educational standards, their role has moved "beyond that of interpreting standards to one of defining them" (Gleeson et al, 2015, p.83), at times the enforcer of policy, at other times the catalyst for change that educational providers must comply with in order to be awarded Grade 1 (Outstanding) or Grade 2 (Good). Failure to evidence compliance can result in a Grade 3 (Requires improvement) or Grade 4 (Inadequate) judgement, and it is the pressure to evidence that compliance that authors such as Beighton and Naz suggest impacts on how senior leaders in schools and colleges interpret and enact Ofsted suggestions for 'best practice':

> "in England, the efficacy of pedagogical practices is established through the measurement and quantification of how well organisations and individuals demonstrate and especially document compliance with the prescribed criteria used during inspections" (Beighton & Naz, 2023, p.4)

It is beyond the scope of this review to examine in depth the impact of a "poor" inspection on individual teachers and leaders. However, before exploring the lasting, damaging effect Ofsted has had on the notion of observation of teaching and learning in education, it is important to give context to the darker side of this "force for improvement". The latest survey conducted by Education Support (2023), a UK charity working to support and improve the mental health of staff in education, found that of the more than 3000 education staff who responded to the survey, 73% thought Ofsted inspections were not fit for purpose, and 71% reported that their mental health and well-being had been negatively affected by inspections. Furthermore, 78% of schoolteachers reported being stressed, rising to 95% among headteachers. In 2018, Gallagher & Smith wrote about "fear, judgement and symbolic violence"

in a piece on their own experience of an Ofsted inspection, using the language of Bourdieu, they posited that "Ofsted delegates 'pedagogic authority' through inspection and legitimates and models 'symbolic violence' through authoritative judgment" (Gallagher & Smith, 2018, p129). I used this quote in an essay on policy for my MA in Education, qualifying it at that time as perhaps a seemingly exaggerated reaction to a statutory body for those who have not experienced an Ofsted inspection. However, after Ruth Perry killed herself in January 2023 following an Ofsted inspection, an article in the Guardian reported that over the past 25 years stress has been cited in coroners' reports as contributing to the cause of death of 10 teachers (Fazackerley, 2023). I would suggest that there is nothing symbolic about the violence.

As stated above, Ofsted were jointly responsible for the inspection of FE, adult and work-based education with the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI). However, from the outset, Ofsted did not restrict their role to inspection of provision. The report published following a national survey "to evaluate the quality and standards of ITT in FE" (Ofsted, 2003, p.1) was damning of both the provision and the (relatively) newly introduced FENTO professional standards, stating "The current system of FE teacher training does not provide a satisfactory foundation of professional development for FE teachers at the start of their careers" and that the standards did "not clearly define the standards required of new teachers" (Ofsted, 2003, p.2). O'Leary describes the report as the catalyst for the DfES 2004 report which set out expectations for how teacher educators should use observations. Ofsted published two further reports in 2014: "Why colleges fail" (Ofsted, 2004a) and "Why colleges succeed" (2004b), both reports make it very clear that Ofsted believed that observations should be graded. The first criticising colleges where observation was seen as developmental, not used as quality control and did not contribute to staff appraisal and the latter highlighting that successful colleges use the results of observation to contribute to appraisal. A later report (Ofsted 2012) also emphasized the importance of graded observations as a performance management tool. Ofsted had therefore set out its expectations of how to evidence improvements in teaching, it required 'hard' quantitative data as opposed to 'soft' qualitative data (O'Leary, 2020).

'Hard' quantitative data makes for straightforward comparison between individuals, departments and colleges, both locally and nationally. It can give the impression of valid and reliable evidence of whether an individual or an area are improving, or not (Burnell, 2017; O'Leary, 2020) and can simplify a process of target setting (Thompson & Wolstencroft, 2014). Ofsted stipulate what "best practice" looks like, and that is what they expect to see

on an inspection. Teachers and managers are interrogated as to how they can 'evidence' progress without hard data. In writing about an inspection experience, Gallagher & Smith explain that the observation of trainee teachers on their courses "were structured around a personalised critical dialogue between personal tutor, mentor and student that mapped across the students' journal entries" (Gallager& Smith, 2018, p.131). However, the inspector found this approach less effective than a clear grade, reported to comment in the final grading session of the inspection "There is a lack of evidence of trainees understanding what level they are at" (Gallager& Smith, 2018, p.132). Gallagher & Smith go on to state that Ofsted, as well as assessing evidence, "it polices what counts as 'evidence'" (Gallager& Smith, 2018, p.132). This concurs with the concept of the codification of knowledge and that in a managerialist culture only that which can be measured counts, if it cannot be measured it is irrelevant (Thompson & Wolstencroft, 2014). Despite a change in their stance on the grading of observations (see below), Ofsted still require 'hard' evidence to warrant a successful inspection. Beighton & Naz (2023) citing Bornemark describe this as an "empapered world", only that practice which is documented and therefore measurable and auditable, is accepted as compliant, going on to state "Effective pedagogy exists only in so far as it is displayed in data, spreadsheets, plans and inspection documentation" (Beighton & Naz, 2023, p.4).

The observation of teaching therefore became a performative tool by which to gauge the competence of a teacher against a set of criteria, such as professional standards (Burnell, 201; Gleeson et al, 2015). Prior to the 2003 Ofsted report, observation had not been a formal process in post-compulsory education, Burnell writes that her college produced a document informing staff of the OTL scheme that was to be introduced, describing the new policy as "radical and, to some, shocking" (Burnell, 2017, p.232). Ofsted had declared that 'good and outstanding' colleges graded observations and used those grades to inform staff appraisals and also to inform the self-assessment processes of colleges (Ofsted 2004a & b). Thus rendering observation a 'high stakes' event, inflicting stress and anxiety on teachers (Burnell, 2017; Gleeson, 2015; O'Leary 2006). The stress and anxiety is not simply about individual performance. Every teacher knows the consequences of a 'bad' Ofsted visit, the impact on funding, reputation, ability to recruit both staff and students, due to the public 'naming and shaming' of the inspection results (Burnell, 2017; Coffield, 2017). The power

wielded by Ofsted over the institutions it inspects can be seen in examples other than observations, for example, when Ofsted reported in 2013 that performance management and quality improvement were key to the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning, colleges rushed to record such improvements, a common approach was to RAG rate every students in every class (read, amber or green used as indicators of the level of risk for each student), still a common practice in many colleges (Gallagher & Smith, 2018). In staffrooms, this might be described as "the tail wagging the dog", O'Leary describes it as "hegemonic influence over education policy and practice" (O'Leary, 2018).

However, there are unintended consequences when external, top-down policies negatively influence the practitioners they affect. In articles spanning a decade, Gleeson et al. (2015), Thompson & Wolstencroft (2014) and Beighton & Naz (2023) all found that managers and teachers in various ways were 'gaming' the system, whereby practices are manipulated in order to comply. Gleeson et al. report of teachers being "encouraged to tailor what they do in the classroom during their graded observations to ensure that they comply with prescribed notions of 'good' or 'outstanding' practice, notions that are "largely determined though not explicitly defined by Ofsted" (2015, p83). Similarly, Thompson & Wolstencroft, citing Edgington (2013) write of the necessity to "conform when being observed" which casts doubt on the "accuracy and veracity of the judgements that are made" (Thompson & Wolstencroft, 2014, p.9). Finally, writing eight years after Ofsted clarified that they would no longer grade individual observations (see below), Beighton & Naz describe how some of the teachers they spoke to "game the system", in preparation for a classroom visit they "select, develop or otherwise inflect teaching practice for observation" (Beighton & Naz, 2023, p.7). The teachers they quote refer to strategies "to get through an audit" (2023, p.8) by changing the focus of an observed lesson or making it more high energy, one states:

> "It's about perception, it's about giving the perception that what is going on behind the doors is outstanding [students] are trained to pass exams. I think teachers are now just trained to pass inspections." (Beighton & Naz, 2023, p.8)

They posit that teachers "game the system" through selective compliance. It is the very documentisation enforced by an auditing culture which permits teachers to display one set of evidence

which complies with demands when under surveillance, then returning to their everyday practices when not. The evidence collected, therefore, during any audit process, is not a 'candid snapshot' of the workings of the college, more a *tableau vivant.* Beighton and Naz (2023) go on to state that teachers who participate in this game, rather than being oppressed by it, utilise their agency to go along with the "regime of power" instead of against it. The changes to practice brought about by an external 'enforcer' organisation imposing its demands on an organisation which is dependent on it are well documented. Dougherty et al. (2016) use the term coercive isomorphism to describe the impact of performance related funding on American schools, where pressure to perform results in ensuring targets are met by using "less legitimate means" (p.150), in other words, gaming the system. Gleeson et al., using the language of Foucault, refer to 'normalisation', defining it as "the adjustment of behaviour to fall into line with prescribed standards" (Gleeson et al, 2015, p.83).

Many teachers are still having to 'perform' for an observation, evidenced by research such as that of Beighton and Naz (2023), despite the fact that Ofsted ceased to grade individual lessons in 2015, following an extensive study carried out by O'Leary for the University and College Union (UCU, 2013). O'Leary (2020) attributes this to a failure of SMTs to make any meaningful shift of mind-set regarding their views on the purpose of observations. He suggests that it is difficult to change engrained practices, therefore they continue to see observations as a "performance ranking exercise". This is contrary to how quickly management teams implement any new practices demanded by Ofsted (see RAG rating above, for example). A more likely answer is that graded observations can be tracked on a spreadsheet, it can be "collected, codified and disseminated" (Beighton & Naz, 2023, p11). Developmental observations, no matter how important they are to the formation and continued development of a teacher are not so easy to quantify. Although the questions that an Ofsted inspection framework ask may change, the answers always needs to be measurable. Thus the performative shadow of Ofsted remains over observations when they are part of any Quality and SMT process. The stakes are too high if an institution cannot provide the answers the inspector is looking for.

This section has explored the appropriation by Ofsted of observation as a performative auditing tool and discussed how colleges have continued to employ this approach, despite Ofsted stating categorically that they do not.

The next section explores the wider use of observations as a process for development and sharing of practices in education.

2.4 Models and contexts of observation of teaching and learning

This section explores models of observation, the contexts in which they are used and the differing purposes of observations. The preceding section explored the impact of "managerialist positivism" (Smith & O'Leary, 2013, p246) on observation, detailing the negative effect of reducing TLA to a quantitative performance management tick-list. This section will not revisit that argument, rather, the model will be reviewed and compared with alternative models.

The purpose of classroom observation can be considered as on a continuum, at one end the purpose is appraisal and performance management and at the other, professional development (O'Leary, 2020):

Performance management/appraisal   Professional development
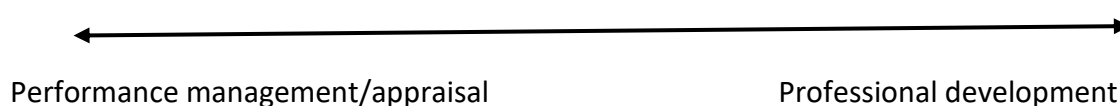
Figure 2: Spectrum of observation models/contexts

 (O'Leary, 2020, p.44)

The performance management end of the observation continuum includes the assessment of teaching such as planned observations and learning walks where the focus is on collecting data, whilst at the other end is the more collaborative, dialogic peer assessment, with a focus on developing the teachers and their teaching. A variety of typologies of observation lie along the continuum although there is limited research into them (O'Leary, 2020). However, there are two studies which offer different conceptualisations of observation, categorising them by either *models* (Gosling, 2002) or *contexts* in which they occur (Wragg, 1999).

Gosling categorises observation into three models of 'peer observation' (Gosling, 2002). Gosling's use of the term 'peer observation' has been described as "confusing and inaccurate" (O'Leary, 2020, p.44), as he uses 'peer' to describe all relationships within an organisation. Gosling clarifies this in his definitions of terminology used in the article, explaining that it is the purpose of the observation and the position of power of the observer that differentiates the models. Nevertheless, looking beyond the misleading use of the term 'peer observation' to describe all forms of observation where one person

observes another, the framework helps break down the factors involved when observations occur.

Models of Peer Observation of Teaching

Characteristic	evaluation model	development model	peer review model
Who does it & to whom?	Senior staff observe other staff	Educational developers observe practitioners; or expert teachers observe others in department	teachers observe each other
Purpose	Identify under-performance, confirm probation, appraisal, promotion, quality assurance, assessment	Demonstrate competency/improve teaching competencies; assessment	engagement in discussion about teaching; self and mutual reflection
Outcome	Report/judgement	report/action plan; pass/fail PGCert	Analysis, discussion, wider experience of teaching methods
Status of evidence	authority	expert diagnosis	peer shared perception
Relationship of observer to observed	power	expertise	equality/mutuality
Confidentiality	Between manager, observer and staff observed	Between observer and the observed, examiner	Between observer and the observed - shared within learning set
Inclusion	Selected staff	Selected/ sample	all
Judgement	Pass/fail, score, quality assessment, worthy/unworthy	How to improve; pass/fail	Non-judgemental, constructive feedback
What is observed?	Teaching performance	Teaching performance, class, learning materials,	Teaching performance, class, learning materials,
Who benefits?	Institution	The observed	Mutual between peers
Conditions for success	Embedded management processes	Effective central unit	Teaching is valued, discussed
Risks	Alienation, lack of co-operation, opposition	No shared ownership, lack of impact	Complacency, conservatism, unfocused

Table 2: Gosling's Models of Peer observation of Teaching

Table 2 *Gosling's Models of Peer observation of Teaching (Gosling, 2002, p.5)*

Gosling outlines three models of observation and the characteristics associated with each of the three. As can be seen above in Table 2, the 'evaluation model' corresponds with the characteristics associated with the performance management/appraisal end of the continuum in Figure 2 above. The salient points are those of the purpose – quality assurance to identify under-performance; the relationship of the observer to the observed - that of power; who benefits – the institution; and the risks associated with the model – alienation, lack of co-operation and opposition. This is the summative style of observation Ofsted favoured until recently (see above) and is still used extensively as an auditing tool in

many FE colleges. The second model, the 'developmental model', outlines a framework associated with ITE and CPD (O'Leary, 2020). Gosling's intention was that this model was distinct from the first, assuming both a formative and summative approach, with the observed benefitting from the 'expertise' of the observer. However, this view is contested and others suggest that the boundaries between the two are blurred, and the summative element takes precedence over the formative (McMahone, Barrett & O'Neill, 2007; O'Leary, 2020). The third model, the 'peer review model' is the closest to the model I have used in my research, with its focus on teachers observing each other, the preference for equality and mutuality, and its underlying purpose being to promote discussion – pedagogical conversations. The three models can be visualised along the continuum (Figure 2), with the 'evaluation model' firmly at the 'Performance management/appraisal' end and the 'peer review model' at the 'Professional development' end. The 'development model' is more difficult to place, depending on how their role is interpreted by the observer and system they are operating within. ITE observations, for example, are both formative (a discussion about how the teacher can improve) and summative (assessing and grading the session to ensure the trainee meets identified criteria). Thus concurring with McMahone, Barrett & O'Neill (2007) and O'Leary (2020) that the boundaries regarding this model are blurred.

The second major categorisation of observation is that by Wragg (1999), cited and summarised by O'Leary (2020) into Table 3 below. There are similarities between the two, Wragg's 'teacher appraisal' context for example aligns with some of the characteristics described in Gosling's 'evaluation model', such as the power imbalance between observer and observed and the focus on outcomes for the institution rather than the individual. However, Wragg, according to O'Leary is clearer and "avoids the blurred boundaries" (2020, p.47) of Gosling's models. Wragg makes a clear distinction between observation in ITE and CPD, highlighting the role of the mentor observation in ITE, and the importance of relationships of 'trust' and 'respect' for that relationship to be successful. Further differences of note in the 'teacher appraisal' context are Wragg's understanding that observation maybe used as 'data' and the problems associated with a mere 'snapshot' of teaching. Wragg's contexts of observation can also be visualised along the observation continuum, with 'Teacher appraisal' at the 'Performance management/appraisal' end, moving up through the contexts, the models move further towards the 'Professional

development' end. However, unlike Gosling's model, Wragg's contexts do not include a fully peer-to-peer model. Both the ITE and the INSET/CPD contexts refer to peer observation, but as one of a number of approaches that can be applied in those contexts. Gosling and Wragg both highlight the importance of 'respect' and 'trust' in the observation process, this is discussed further below in reference to peer observation models.

Major contexts of observation	Summary description
1. Initial teacher education (ITE)	• Value of observing others for trainee teachers' development • Peer observation in the context of reciprocal pair work, i.e. observer acts as 'another pair of eyes' • Supervision and mentoring – role of mentor carried out by teacher in the school where the teacher is placed and/or a tutor from the ITE institution • Importance of the mentor-trainee relationship, underpinned by 'trust' and 'respect'
2. In-service education and training (INSET) and continuing professional development (CPD)	• Very similar focus to ITE • The focus tends to concentrate on developing skills of self-reflection amongst practitioners • Teachers are observed by more senior staff, or by their peers and vice versa • Peer observation identified as the principal use • Can occur across institutions
3. Studying pupils	• Learner-centred focus, i.e. tracking pupil behaviour, ability to work in pairs/groups, etc.
4. Curriculum development t and evaluation	• Focus on how elements of the curriculum are being implemented by the teacher • Principal use it to 'match intent against action', i.e. 'Is there a mismatch between intention and strategies?' • Observer usually senior member of staff, e.g. deputy head
5. Job analysis	• Audit of what teachers usually spend their time ding in the classroom, e.g. how much time is spent on assessment? • Holistic view of teacher's role, i.e. observation forms part of a collection of different data
6. Teacher appraisal	• Observation forms an integral part of the formal appraisal process but part of a collection of different data • Appraisal of teaching competence must be both retrospective and prospective, looking back at what has been achieved and forward to what might be done in the future in order to make an impact • Most common form is 'supervisor-subordinate model'. i.e. more senior person observes junior colleague • Links with disciplinary action against 'incompetent teachers' • Problem of 'snapchat' observation highlighted

Table 3: Wragg's major contexts of observation (adapted from O'Leary, 2020, p46).

The observation model used by the participants in this thesis aligns more with Gosling's 'peer review' model than any of the contexts in Wragg's categorisation, although Wragg's categories typify the models of observation more commonly found in FE. Observation in FE, as explored above in relation to the influence and impact of Ofsted, tends towards the performative end of the continuum, even peer observation tends to be audited and quantified in some way. If it has not been appropriated and quantified, peer observation can be "a collaborative, often reciprocal model of observation where peers get together to observe each other's practice" (O'Leary & Price, 2017, p114). O'Leary and Dean describe peer observation as a "springboard" for reflection and discussion, and cite Tilstone, who refers to it as "partnership observation" and goes on to state that this approach, as any partnership, requires "trust, commitment, common understanding and the identification of individual needs" (Tilstone, 1998, cited in O'Leary & Price, 2017, p.115).

Small scale peer observation projects are not uncommon in schools and colleges, often introduced as versions of Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998) or 'teaching triangles' (O'Leary, 2020). O'Leary and Price (2017) give a detailed account of a peer observation case study at an anonymised FE college. This model was managed by the college Standards and Performance team, and although the process attempted to minimise structure and paperwork, it was the Quality team that matched peers, using previous observation reports to connect 'stronger' teachers to 'weaker' teachers, matching areas of strength of one with areas of weakness of another and there was still an element of 'accountability' built into the process. Walker, Patten and Stephens (2022) write about a voluntary peer observation model in a primary school, where the teachers involved were paired, one the observer, one the observed, it was not reciprocal. The observer used an observation framework and both completed a reflective log following Gibbs Reflective Model (Gibbs, 1988). Their findings indicated that the observer benefitted from watching a colleague and respondents talked of increased confidence to use new teaching strategies. However, they do not refer to the benefits for the observed teacher, other than through reflecting on their teaching. The limitations of each of the above reflect the limitations generally associated with peer observation in schools and colleges. These limitations include being overly prescriptive by allocating the peers, overly formalised by imposing a framework and focusing on procedures and documentation, not building in time for the teachers to complete the peer observations

and follow-up discussions, concern from managers that the discussion might be simply a friendly chat, rather than developmental and concern from teachers that it may be another invasive, performative ruse (Bell & Thomson, 2018; O'Leary & Price, 2017; Thomson, Bell & Hendry 2015)

Peer observation models employed in schools and colleges can become too focused on the documentation of the procedure and evidencing impact and counteract the benefits that peer observation can offer. Higher education settings, freer from the restrictions of the auditing of TLA in classrooms, can provide a more experimental approach to peer observations. Thomson, Bell and Hendry state that "academics are accustomed to learning with and from their colleagues – without documentation – through informal conversations in their own departments" (2015, p.1060) when warning against focusing on procedural aspects of pedagogical development. The authors define peer observations as "the process of a (university) teacher watching another colleague's teaching, *without* necessarily judging their practice or being required to give feedback" (Hendry, Bell & Thomson, 2014, p. 318, original emphasis).   This approach aligns more with Gosling's 'peer review' model, with its emphasis on 'equality and mutuality' and 'engagement in discussion about teaching'. Thomson, Bell and Hendry conducted a small-scale research project using a 'just watch' approach to peer observation (2015). They report that 95% (19/20) of the teachers who took part reported trying something new from the teaching they had observed. The authors confessed to being surprised at the results, but on reflection considered that 'just watching' enabled the teachers to "set the 'teaching problem' for themselves" (Thomson, Bell & Hendry, 2015, p.1061). They identify three ways that their 'just watching' approach might encourage greater engagement with peer observation and give teachers greater agency:

1. Teachers choose their own focus. Citing Bass "What matters most is for teachers to investigate the problems that matter most to them" (Thomson, Bell & Hendry, 2015, p.1061, citing Bass, 1998)

2. Teachers can observe the teaching of pedagogical content knowledge in context. Giving the teachers the opportunity to discuss problems in common and share solutions.

3. Teachers develop more practical strategies but do not need to evidence what they have learned.

A notable element not included in the 'just watch' approach is teachers giving each other feedback. This is a feature which teachers find difficult, both as the observer and the observed. Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond (2005) write about the feelings of vulnerability of both parties, with the participants in their research indicating that critical feedback can be embarrassing to give and can damage the confidence of the receiver. Training and preparation can be part of the process (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; O'Leary, 2020), however, this increases the focus on procedure and documentation that Thomson, Bell and Hendry (2015) advise against. Furthermore, if one of the challenges to implementing a peer observation scheme is a problem of time (O'Leary, 2020), requiring teachers to be trained to give 'constructive feedback' increases the problem.

A final model of observation to be discussed in this section is the use of video to facilitate the process. The videoing of teaching is not new; however, it has been made much easier as technology has improved and become more widely accessible (Hockly, 2018; O'Leary, 2020). As well as readily available technology such as smart phones, digital video cameras, there are also commercial tools that enable electronic annotation as well as videoing the teaching (for example, IRIS Connect and VEO – Video Enhanced Observation). The commercial tools, however, are expensive and if an institution makes such an investment, there will need to be an auditable impact trail. A large-scale video observation project, 'Best Foot Forward', involving 347 teachers and 108 senior leaders who were the observers, ran in four states in the USA. The teachers were given cameras and videoed themselves multiple times, uploading the videos they chose to a private platform, to be shared with their observers and teaching coaches. The teachers videoed on average 13 sessions each, and shared on average 5 of those lessons on the platform (Kane et al. 2015). The teachers were given control of the cameras and what they wanted to share and there were training packages put together to support the teachers in watching themselves and getting beyond the 'superficial' and to be able to reflect on their classroom practice (Kane et al. 2015). The 'Best Foot Forward Project' toolkit (2015), written as a practical guide for teachers participating in the research, suggests video for peer-collaboration as an activity to prepare teachers for the sharing the videos for assessment. The focus is on collaboration and dialogue; however the process they outline is highly structured, with a 'peer facilitator' and they suggest identifying challenges and goals. Overall, the key findings of the report

indicated that giving the teachers ownership in the process encouraged participation, being able to watch themselves resulted in the teachers being "less defensive and adversarial" (Kane et al. 2015, p.12) and more self-critical.

Lofthouse and Birmingham (2010) also carried out a study on the videoing of teaching, working with secondary PGCE students and their mentors. The videoing was part of their assessment and intended to support the student teacher develop as a reflective practitioner. The videos are viewed only be themselves and their mentor. 71% of the student teachers who responded to the researchers' questionnaire felt that the watching their video had "heightened reflection" (Lofthouse & Birmingham, 2010, p.11). Lofthouse and Birmingham found that the student teachers felt they were more self-aware and had greater confidence as a result of watching themselves. Although some of the student teachers reported feeling nervous about videoing themselves, Lofthouse and Birmingham report that the benefits outweigh the drawbacks. They suggest that the intervention gave the participants the opportunity to "engage in evidence-based studies of their own classroom practice" (2015, p15). They also state that using video in this way affords the participants the opportunity for "personal knowledge construction" and professional development.

A study carried out in the USA and published in 2011 brings together three approaches to using video for teacher development. Zhang et al. worked with 26 schoolteachers to research the impact of using published video resources (commercially available examples of teaching), using the teachers' own videos and using their peers' video. Teachers were trained in the use of the video equipment, were asked to give a written context of their own video and given specific prompts directing them on how to analyse the videos they watched (e.g. "What kinds of assessment are used? Are the assessments appropriate for the goals of this lesson?" and "What strategies does the teacher use to engage students?" (Zhang et al. 2011, p.455). Data was collected through surveys, written reports by the teachers and analysing recordings of panel and group discussions. The authors report that all three approaches to using video were valuable. However, the lack of context, and sometimes lack of relevance, in the published video resources resulted in limited follow up discussions, with the teachers reporting they preferred being able to talk with the teacher they had watched later. The study found that although some of the teachers felt uncomfortable with the

process, teachers found watching their own videos helped them to see their teaching from a different perspective and they were able to notice things in their teaching they would not normally see. Watching their peers gave them the opportunity to see them 'in action' and teachers reported learning new strategies to implement in their own teaching. A challenge that they identify is that, in line with other studies on peer observation models, teachers "were reluctant to make critical comments about their peers' practice" (Zhang et al. 2011, p.462). Zhang et al conclude that teachers benefitted from the reflective process and collaborative discussions around both their own and their peers' videos. Concurring with Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond that "Peer observation provides one of the few opportunities where tutors can come together and discuss learning and teaching issues in a meaningful way" (2005, p.222).

This section has explored models of teacher observation, including a look at the use of video. A common thread through this section has been peer observation affording teachers the opportunity to discuss teaching and learning. The following section will explore literature on the use of pedagogical conversations for teacher development.

2.5 Pedagogical conversations

As stated above, a thread running through the literature that talks about the positive impact of peer observation is that it is the conversations that happen around the observation that support the development of teachers and teaching practice (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Zhang et al. 2011). In this section I will explore the impact of pedagogical conversations in various scenarios, not solely related to peer observation.

This section therefore explores the different types of conversations teachers have about teaching. The literature explored refers to conversations teachers have in informal settings, conversations about teaching with researchers, as well as conversations dependent on peer observations. This discussion informs this research by exploring how pedagogical conversations impact on the everyday practices of teachers.

Conversations about teaching have the potential to change the way teachers think about teaching and therefore have an impact on their practice (Roxå and Mårtensson, 2009; Jarvis and Clark, 2020). Jarvis and Clark (2020) distinguish between discussion and dialogue,

drawing on the work of Bohm (1996), where discussion refers to an identification and analysis of one's own views and 'point scoring'. Whereas dialogue is about standing back from assumptions and "creating something new in relation to the topic" (Jarvis & Clarke, 2020, p.3). This resonates with the diffractive element of the peer discussions of my research (see Chapter 5). Furthermore, Jarvis and Clark cite Zeldin, who states "when minds meet they don't just exchange facts; they transform them, draw implications from them, engage in new trains of thought. Conversation doesn't just reshuffle the cards; it creates new cards" (Zeldin, 1994, cited in Jarvis & Clark, 2020, p.3).   Jarvis and Clark suggest that the goal of conversation should be the disruption of "ways of thinking and acting", echoing the stance of Southwood:

> "A dialogical orientation to academic staff development disrupts* traditional spaces of teaching and learning in diverse ways" ("*While it is recognised that disruption has the potential to damage, to disable, or to divide, it is used here to inspire, provoke and catalyse forms of critical and creative engagement") (Southwood, 2012, p. 91).

However, pedagogical conversations that have the potential to change practice require trust. Trust, or lack of trust, impacts on the quality of conversations, greater trust enables a more open conversation, whereas where trust is lacking, conversations are either avoided or minimal (Simon & Pleschova, 2021). Although writing about significant relationships between PhD students involved in teaching practice and their "significant others" to have pedagogical conversation, this echoes the work of Roxå and Mårtensson (2009) and Jarvis and Clark (2020).

Roxå and Mårtensson's (2009) research investigates their respondents' conception of previous discussions they had had about teaching and learning, asking how many people they had conversations with, where they found the partners and what the conversations entailed. The significant findings for this thesis pertain to three areas of importance given to the conversations:

1. Privacy – they are not part of a wider, public conversation in staff meetings etc and they are not overheard.

2. Trust – there is a strong feeling of mutual trust which enables teachers to talk openly about their teaching and also question the institution's stance on issues.

3. Intellectually intriguing – Roxå and Mårtensson state that these conversations are not "just small talk" (2009, p553), but an exchange of ideas and understandings about teaching. They state that despite not being explicitly informed by pedagogic theory this approach should not be dismissed as "the individuals try to make sense of experiences, where they deal with problems, and plan and evaluate actions" (2009, p.556)

Although writing about conversations that can occur at any point, not just as a result of peer observation, their findings concur with Thomson, Bell and Hendry's (2015) 'just watch' approach to peer observation in that teachers are capable of setting the 'problem', and therefore addressing it, for themselves (discussed above).

However, the conversations explored by Roxå and Mårtensson (2009) are dependent on teachers having a significant other to talk to and access to a private space to have those impromptu exchanges. Jarvis and Clark suggest enhancing these conversations through scholarship and encouraging "colleagues to purposefully prepare, plan and engage in the practice of talking about teaching" (2020, p6). They suggest a structure through asking questions, although their examples appear more aimed at meso rather than micro development e.g. "what is good/less good about current ways of doing things? Are these approaches aligned with our values and purposes? What issues are raised and by whom?" (2020, p6) and which could potentially invite evaluative comments at the micro level. Although they do go on to suggest questions could be focused more specifically on individual practice.

Jarvis and Clark (2020) raise the issue of the risk involved in encouraging conversations that question practices as it opens up the potential to disrupt and challenge the status quo. They posit that opening up space for these types of conversations requires an acceptance that the results are not predictable or controllable. They do not refer to concepts of trust here, but facilitating such conversations requires a level of institutional trust that is rare in an FE setting (see below for concepts of trust). A further consequence of encouraging pedagogical

conversations is that teachers take steps towards achieving agency (Biesta, Priestley & Robinson, 2017; Roxå and Mårtensson, 2009; Jarvis and Clark, 2020). Biesta, Priestley and Robinson (2017) have written extensively about agency and their ecological approach (see below) and posit that a theme running through many of their discussions is the role teachers' talk plays as a "*resource* for the achievement of agency". Biesta, Priestley and Robinson's article cited here refers to 'teachers' talk' as conversations teachers have about education generally and considers the language and vocabulary that the teachers they interviewed used to talk about education and teaching, not to the conversations teachers had between themselves. However, their findings remain relevant to this research in that they distinguish between teachers' knowledge *for* teaching, described as a narrow, evidence based, 'what works' knowledge, and knowledge *of* teaching, described as "the 'stock of knowledge' gained from a range of experiences and sources" (Biesta, Priestley & Robinson. 2017, p.39).

In each context discussed above, regardless of the language used to describe teacher interactions about teaching, the conclusion is that pedagogical conversations are empowering for teachers and "talk can make a crucial difference for teacher's agency" (Biesta, Priestley & Robinson. 2017, p.52)

2.6 Reflection in teacher education

This section explores reflective practice in teacher education and discusses the impact of teachers' reflections being assimilated into the assessment process of teaching qualifications. The section continues by exploring the notion of diffraction as an alternative metaphor to reflection. These discussions inform the research by exploring how teachers can be supported to engage more thoughtfully with their practice.

The concept of reflection as we understand it in teaching originates with the work of Dewey, who describes reflective thinking as "turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious and consecutive consideration" (1933, p9). His view was that teacher education should shift from merely providing techniques and skills to focussing on practice and experience (Hébert, 2015, O'Leary 2020). Dewey proposed that meaningful reflection comes from "a genuine situation of experience" (O'Leary, 2020, p.138 citing Dewey 1933) and broke the process down into a series of phases. Rodgers (2002) states that Dewey is inconsistent in

the number of phases and how he names them. However, Rodgers also states that despite the ambiguity, the phases consistently move from experience, to hypothesis to experimentation. O'Leary interprets that process as:

1. Identify the *problem*
2. Consider *suggestions* for dealing with the problem
3. *Hypothesis* building
4. *Reasoning*
5. *Testing* i.e. confirming or disproving the hypothesis
   (O'Leary, 2020, p138)

These phases have been reformulated by subsequent models such as Gibbs' reflective cycle (1988), Rolfe et al.'s Reflective Model (2001), Kolbe's Cycle of Reflective Practice (1984) and both experienced and trainee teachers are frequently mandated to use one of the many models as a framework for corralling and presenting their thoughts. Other influential concepts of reflection are Schön's work on professional knowledge and reflective practice, namely reflection-on-action, which refers to thinking about the action after the event, and reflection-in-action, which refers to the professional 'thinking on their feet' and adapting their practice (Schön, 1983). Brookfield's work has also been influential in teaching through his work on 'critical reflection' (Brookfield, 2017) and the concept of four critical lenses through which teachers can view their practice. Brookfield states that critical reflection has two purposes: to "illuminate power", that is, to question structures of power both outside and inside the classroom, and to "uncover hegemony", which he describes as pushing back against the structures of exploitation (Brookfield, 2017, p9). Brookfield's use of the term 'hegemony' is based on the concept developed by Antonio Gramsci, who founded the Italian communist party, and he defines it as "the process whereby ideas, structures, and actions that benefit a small minority in power are viewed by the majority as wholly natural" (Brookfield, 2017, p16). He goes on to state that "the subtle cruelty of hegemony is that over time it becomes deeply embedded, part of the cultural air we breathe" (Brookfield, 2017, p16). Examples of hegemony in current education include "the metrics-based dominance of performance management systems in education and the proliferation of the 'what works' movement in influencing pedagogic practice' (O'Leary, 2020, p.140). Although the term "hegemonic" is not used, reflective practice itself has been questioned by a number of authors.

The terms *reflection* and *reflective practice* are described as "overused" and "ubiquitous" in teacher education (Hébert, 2015; Mitchell, 2017; Myers, Smith & Tesar, 2017). Despite citing McLaughlin's quip "Who would want to champion the *unreflective* practitioner?" (McLaughlin, 1999, cited in Hébert, 2015, p361), Hébert goes on to propose that reflection "is overused in teacher education programs to the point that it has lost meaning" (Hébert, 2015, p370). Myers et al (2017) suggest that the cause of a lack of criticality in the reflections of trainee teachers is its being mandated with "sanctioned frameworks", leading to "reproduction, standardization, and forced universalities" (Myers et al, 2017, p 279). Biesta concurs by stating that in teacher education, reflection has become "formulaic" (Biesta, 2019, p.117).

These are not new fears about the efficacy of reflective practice in teacher education. In their consideration of how trainee teachers can be encouraged to reflect on their practice, Parsons and Stephenson (2005) consider the impact of assessing trainee teachers against prescribed standards (the students in their research were being assessed against the standards published by the DfEE in 1998 *High status, high standards).* They suggest that assessing practice against standards focuses trainees more on knowledge and understanding, and away from challenging current practice or consideration of complex situations that arise. They go on to assert that this creates the danger of trainees viewing professional development as "exclusively the acquisition and refining of performance skills and that reflection is only concerned with determining the extent to which practice meets the standards." (Parsons & Stephenson, 2005, p.99). Furthermore, that this results in reflection being merely an "evaluation of competencies" (p.99). Trainee teachers are very often required to write a reflective evaluation of their teaching practice as part of their course or portfolio of evidence. Parsons and Stephenson (2005) question whether a reflective piece can, or should, be assessed, asking how it can be marked without implying that there is a "right" way to teach and reflect on practice. Erlandson (2005), in a Foucauldian reading of reflection avers that "The 'reflecting' teacher interprets herself as an object for control" (Erlandson, 2005, p. 667) whilst Tummons describes that through the collecting of reflective texts into a portfolio "the reflective practice of the student teacher becomes an object that can be assessed" (Tummons, 2011, p. 472). Biesta concurs,

describing student teachers as "writing in socially desirable ways" when they do not write about what actually happened, but rather what they think is expected of them (Biesta, 2019, p.118)

Parsons and Stephenson (2005) trialled a collaborative approach to reflecting on practice, with trainee teachers working together on placement, based on a Finnish model (Kuplia, 1999, cited in Parsons & Stephenson, 2005). This model gives trainees the opportunity to observe each other and form "a critical partnership", thus enabling a move beyond surviving placement and merely thinking about "what am I doing", to discussing "why I am I doing it?". Parsons and Stephenson (2005) cite Comeaux (1991) in stating that peer interaction serves as a scaffold to the trainees' thinking and development, and ultimately, changes to practice. The authors felt that the collaborative nature of the model supported deeper thinking by the trainees and moved them beyond mere description of their practice.

This section has explored literature pertinent to the use of reflection in teacher education and development. It was the descriptive lack of criticality described above that led me to explore alternative ways to support a more 'thoughtful' approach to considering teaching practice with the trainee teachers I was working with when this project began. The following section explores the use of diffraction as an alternative approach.

2.7 Diffraction

This section explores the metaphorical use of the concept of diffraction. The section reviews how diffraction can be applied as an alternative approach to reflection which encourages teachers to value difference, rather than seek sameness. Going on to explore the application of a diffractive approach to reading.

2.7a Definition and application

To understand how the notion of diffraction as a metaphor for thinking is used as an alternative to that of reflection, it is necessary to understand what the concepts mean when they are used with reference to physical phenomena. According to the Nasa website, reflection occurs when a wave (light or water) "hits an object and bounces off", diffraction refers to "the bending and spreading of waves around an obstacle" (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) as shown in Figure 3 below.
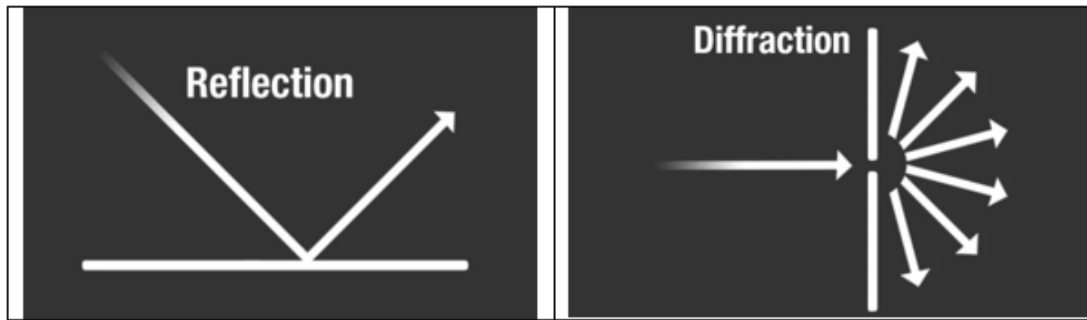
Figure 3: Wave behaviours

 (adapted from science.nasa.gov)

The first to write about diffraction as a metaphor was Haraway who wrote "Diffraction does not produce "the same" displaced, as reflection and refraction do. Diffraction is a mapping of interference, not a replication, reflection or reproduction." (Haraway, 1992, p.300), later explaining that reflection "only displaces the same elsewhere, setting up worries about copy and original and the search for the authentic and really real" (Haraway, 1997, p.16). This concept was further developed by Barad, who writes about diffraction "as an alternative to the well-worn metaphor of reflection" (Barad, 2007, p.29). Barad also describes reflection as being about "mirroring and sameness", whilst diffraction "attends to patterns of difference" (Barad, 2007, p.29).

The phenomenon of diffraction was first observed by the Jesuit priest, physicist and mathematician, Francisco Maria Grimaldi in the seventeenth-century. He carried out a series of experiments on the behaviour of light, including the two-slit experiment, and observed that rather than conforming to the corpuscular theory of light as particles, the light in his experiments behaved like fluid "which upon encountering an obstacle breaks up and moves outwards in different directions" (Barad, 2014, p.171), naming the phenomenon 'diffraction', from the Latin *diffringere* (*dis* meaning apart, and *frangere* meaning break) (Barad, 2014). However, Newton's corpuscular theory remained the dominant theory for understanding the behaviour of light until the nineteenth century, when Young's double-split experiment, apparently showing light formed by waves, marked the beginning of what would become the wave-particle duality paradox (Barad, 2007; Plotnitsky, 2022). This paradox was the question about the dual nature of light (and matter), and why electrons behave as waves or particles, depending on the apparatus used to observe them and which

Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg debated differing explanations (Barad, 2007; Barla, 2023).

Heisenberg formulated the uncertainty principle, postulating that it is not possible to know the position and momentum of a particle simultaneously. Furthermore, the act of measuring their characteristics results in a disturbance of their premeasurement values. Thus, the more we know about momentum, the less we know about position, and vice versa. Barad (2007) describes this as an epistemic principle, as the disturbance referred to by Heisenberg limits what we can know. Bohr, however, disagreed with Heisenberg's conclusions, he proposed that the entities, such as position and momentum, do not have inherent properties. Bohr's complementarity principle posited that "particles do not *have* determinate values of position and momentum simultaneously" (Barad, 2007 p.19, original emphasis), rather, they "*become determinate,* while others are specifically excluded" (Barad, 2007 p.19, original emphasis) depending on the measuring apparatus used. Barad (2007) describes this as an ontic principle, as the measurement is indeterminate, also referring to it as Bohr's indeterminacy principle. Bozalek interprets this as "it is impossible to know something about which there is nothing to know" (Bozalek, 2022, p5). This, for Barad (2007) called into question the nature of reality as understood by Western metaphysics, "which assumes that the world is made up of individual entities with pre-existing characteristics or properties" (Bozalek, 2022. P.5). Therefore, waves and particles do not pre-exist, it is the apparatus which determines their identity (Bozalek, 2022). Thus, the act of measuring or observing determines the entity, which can perform as particle or wave depending on the apparatus used "so that the observed and observer become inextricably entangled" (Fox & Alldred, 2021).

Barad, a physicist, explores the quantum mechanics of diffraction and the works of Heisenberg and Bohr in depth (2007). Barad applies these findings to social research, citing the works of Donna Haraway and her metaphorical use of diffraction and "uses this physical process of diffraction as a methodology that engages affirmatively with difference" (Bozalek, 2022, p.12) Barad states that their discussion of quantum physics and diffraction "promises a significant deepening of how we might understand diffraction both as a material-discursive practice and as a critical practice" (Barad, 2007, p94)

The draw to the notion of diffraction for the authors, many teacher educators, informing this review is the opportunity to shift from students churning out reflective summaries with little or no "thinking that brings about innovation, creativity, or difference" (Spector, 2015, p.448) to a focus on difference as positive, and thinking about the impact of those differences. Hill posits that "In reflection, the emphasis is on what is reoccurring, what is the same, whereas diffractive thinking attends to interferences and differences that are enacted" (Hill, 2017, p.3). Contrasting reflection with diffraction, Spector asserts "diffractions do produce differences; in fact, if a difference doesn't emerge, then diffraction hasn't occurred" (Spector, 2015, p. 448).

Contributing to the discussion, Moxnes and Osgood argue that "diffractive thinking holds greater potential to explore unforeseen, not-yet-known possibilities than critical reflection allows for" (Moxnes and Osgood, 2018. p298). Moxnes and Osgood describe using micro-moments from classroom observations, moments we notice and choose to consider. In a diffractive analysis we are not looking at these moments for their perfections/imperfections (examining the reflection), instead we consider the difference and the impact of the difference, small but consequential differences (Haraway, 1992). For Lenz and Taguchi, a diffractive analysis is "a wave-like motion that takes into account that thinking, seeing and knowing are never done in isolation but are always affected by different forces coming together" (Lenz Taguchi and Palmer, 2013). Spector (2015) explains this through a practical example from her own work with trainee teachers. Using the imagery of waves passing through a breakwater (see Figure 1, Chapter 1), she suggests that students' existing conceptions are like waves moving towards a barrier, they can either bounce back, as in reflection, or, using a classroom experience and a series of questions, such as Why? How?, as the breakwater, or diffractive gate, the conceptions are disrupted, causing the interference Haraway refers to. Diffraction therefore encourages new ways of thinking by looking at the impact of difference and disruption, it is 'a process of being attentive to how differences get made and what the effects of these differences are' (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017, p. 112). Furthermore, a diffractive process "engages affirmatively with difference" (Bozalek, 2017, p.46), Bozalek goes on to state that in valuing difference, we move away from the "replication and sameness" and we make space for "new insights that can come from the patterns of difference" (Bozalek, 2017, p.46).

2.7b Diffractive reading

The previous part explored the concept of diffraction as an alternative way of thinking to reflection. This part will look at how that concept has been applied specifically to the reading of texts, data and theories.

Hill (2017) posits that the form of diffractive analysis most used in educational research is diffractive reading. Barad states "diffraction involves reading insights through one another in ways that help illuminate differences as they emerge" (Barad, 2007, p30). Researchers have applied this process in various ways in order to come to new insights. Examples include reading theoretical texts through each other (Murris & Bozalek, 2019), reading sets of data through each other (Lenz Taguchi & Palmer, 2013), academics reading their writing through that of another on a writing retreat (Bozalek, 2017) and reading data through a theoretical lens or concept (Chorney, 2015, cited in Hill, 2017; Lenz Taguchi & Palmer, 2013; Mazzei, 2014).

It is the process of reading data through a theoretical concept that has been applied in the data analysis of this thesis. Mazzei (2014) asserts that researchers "pull back" from the data during the coding process (Mazzei, 2014, p.743) in order to generate themes and categories which will be reassembled into a narrative. However, a diffractive reading through theoretical insight(s) encourages the researcher to pose different questions and consider the impact of the different answers on analysis. Hill suggests that a diffractive reading exceeds the data (Hill, 2017, p. 4), which I understand to mean encourages the researcher to go beyond the data in order to produce new understandings.

This section has explored the concept of diffraction as an alternative to reflective thinking and the discussed the application of a process of diffractive reading of data in order to think differently and to map the impact of those differences.

The following section reviews the concept of agency before reviewing literature pertinent to the concept of teacher agency.

2.9 Teacher Agency

This section explores concept of agency, and specifically teacher agency. Considering the ecological understanding of agency and exploring the concept of teacher autonomy. This informs the research by exploring how teachers are theorised to enact agency in their practice.

Although the main focus in this section is teacher agency, in order to make sense of that concept, it is first necessary to understand what is meant by agency in its broader sense. Our current understanding of agency dates back to early Enlightenment debates around human freedom and the concept of religious and moral choices, and "the capacity of human beings to shape the circumstances in which they live" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p965). While the foundations of the concept of agency are to be found in the social sciences (Archer, 2000; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Eteläpelto et al, 2013; Giddens, 1984; Leijen et al 2020), the term is also used in the wider humanities of anthropology, psychology, and gender studies. Its interpretation therefore varies widely, "often applied loosely and uncritically" according to Priestley, Biesta and Robinson (2020, p.19), and it is a contested and "slippery" concept (Priestley Biesta and Robinson 2020, p.19).

From a social theory perspective, Lawy & Tedder (2009, p. 54) cite Calhoun (2002, p7) to define agency as "the capacity for autonomous social action" and the ability to "operate independently of the determining constraints of social structure". They interpret this as being able to control and direct one's life, including professional life. Eteläpelto et al (2013) identify the concept of education as a means of developing agentic capacities, particularly in relation to adult education and its empowering and emancipatory properties (Eteläpelto et al. 2013 citing: Freire, 1973; Habermas, 1984 and Mezirov, 1981). Eteläpelto et al go on to state that agency is both formed and constrained within social-economic structures "such as class, race, gender, economic, and occupational conditions" (2013, p48) and these factors cannot be divorced from agency. The sociological interpretation of agency views it as "residing in individuals as a property or capacity" (Priestley et al. 2015, p2). Emirbayer and Mische (1998), however, propose a more complex characterisation of agency, defining it as "temporally constructed" (1998, p.970), and refer to a "chordal triad of agency", in which agency is influenced by three dimensions, the past (the "iterational element"), the present (the "practical-evaluative element") and the future (the "projective element"). They assert

that through analysing the interplay between these dimensions we can begin to understand why agentic capacity may vary, dependent on the context in which the individual is acting.

Drawing on the work of Emirbayer and Mische (1998), Biesta has written extensively and with a number of co-authors about teacher agency as an emergent and temporal concept (e.g. Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Priestley, Biesta & Robinson, 2015; Priestley, Biesta & Robinson, 2020). For Biesta et al (2015, p.626), agency is something to be achieved, and is impacted on by "ecological conditions and circumstances". They define agency as "not something that people can *have* – as a property, capacity or competence – but is something that people *do*". Teacher agency, with the exception of the work of Biesta, Priestley and Robinson, has not been widely researched or theorized, according to Priestley et al. (2015 and 2020). Furthermore, according to Priestley et al, what literature there is does not focus explicitly on teacher agency, rather on concepts such as professionalism (citing Vähäsantanen, 2015) and accountability (citing Sahlberg, 2010). For the purposes of this thesis, and the question as to whether pedagogic conversations can support the achievement of agency of teachers training and/or working in an FE college, the ecological model (see Figure 4 below) provides a framework around which to develop the analysis of agency in this context.

The framework illustrates Emirbayer and Miche's "three-dimensional, temporal-relational perspective on agency" (Priestley et al, 2020, p.29) where the iterational element (the past) is influenced by the teacher's life experiences as well as professional experiences. The iterational dimension is ever changing however, Preistley et al. point out that today's experiences are tomorrow's histories, and therefore teacher education and CPD, if its purpose is to develop "agents of change and professional developers of the curriculum" (Preistley et al. 2020, p.31) should focus on encouraging innovation and "interrupting habitual ways of thinking" (Preistley et al. 2020, p.31). The practical-evaluative element (the present) is influenced by the context and the environment in which the teacher works, and this impacts heavily on the teacher's ability to make decisions. This dimension, according to Priestley et al. (2020), has the power to shape, even distort, the ability of the teacher to make decisions and take action, and therefore can either offer or inhibit agentic possibilities. The projective dimension, although concerned with the future and motivated by both short- and long-term aspirations regarding work, is informed by the teacher's

experiences and beliefs (Preistley et al., 2015; 2020). Furthermore, the aspirations are not necessarily positive for either the teacher or their students, they can be more a desire to maintain the status quo for 'an easy life', or to 'play the game' (Beighton & Naz, 2023; Gleeson et al. 2015).
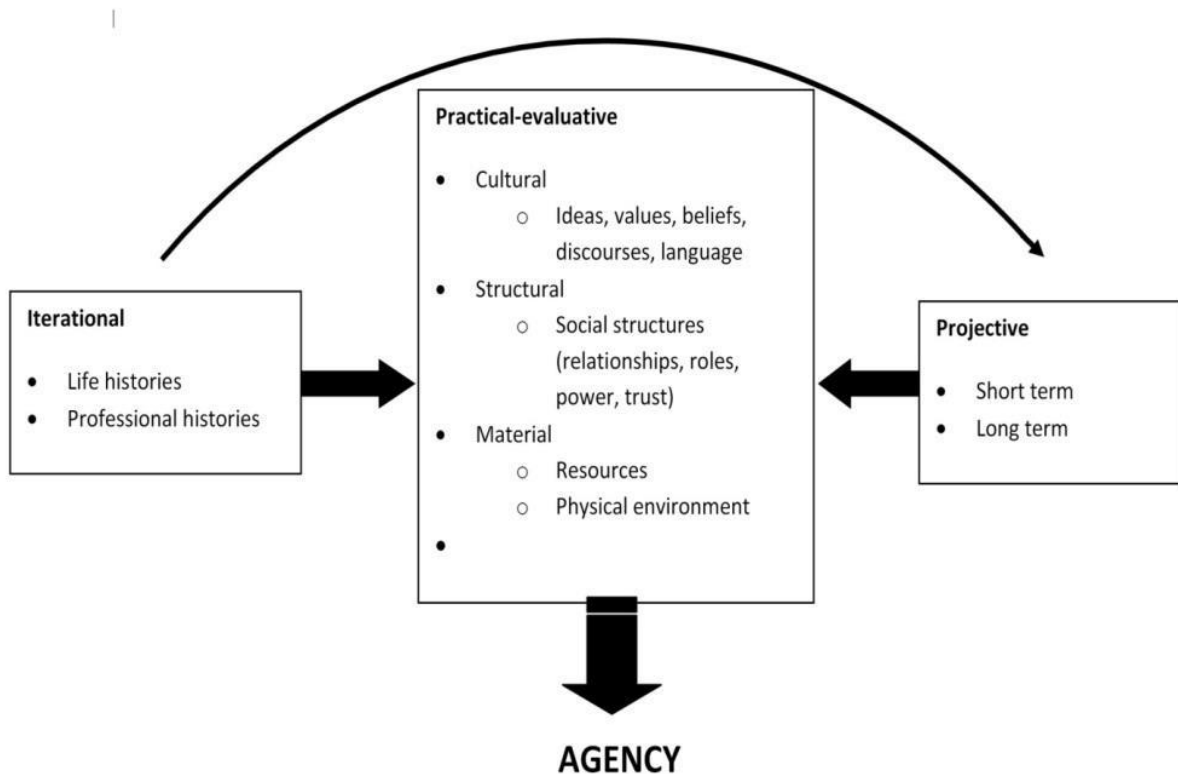
Figure 4: Ecological model for understanding teacher agency

(Priestley et al. 2015)

The ecological model for understanding agency therefore interprets agency as an emergent phenomenon, dependent on both the individual and the cultures and structures within which they are located. The temporal nature is a result of the changes that can and do occur in both the individual and their context. Kayi-Aydar (2019) offers a further level to consider within the practical-evaluative dimension by suggesting layers of context add to the complexity of understanding teacher agency. She refers to micro, 'mezzo' (referred to as meso elsewhere in this thesis) and macro levels of context in her discussion of language teacher agency (LTA), however here I interpret it in the context of FE. By 'mezzo' level she refers to the school environment, its cultures, policies and rules; this is readily transferrable to the college environment. By macro level she refers to language policies, ideologies,

globalisation of language education – factors external to the school but which impact on it; again, there are parallels with the FE context and the external impact of government policies, Ofsted and the ever-growing influence of 'employers'. Finally, at the micro level, Kayi-Adar posits that the teacher achieves agency in the classroom and decision making is informed by pedagogical knowledge and practices. This micro level of agency is transferable to most classroom situations, but whether it is agency or autonomy is dependent on the teaching environment. Priestely et al. define autonomy as "the comparative absence of regulation" (2020, p.142), but stress that just because a teacher may have autonomy, it does not necessarily follow that they achieve agency if they are simply repeating previous practices or enacting practices to which there is no risk. Which I interpret to further mean that the teachers are not being innovative or creative in their practice. Kennedy (2014) in her reflection on her framework for the analysis of CPD adds teacher agency to the updated model when talking about "increasing capacity for professional autonomy" (Kennedy, 2014, p.7), stating that "autonomy is only ever transformative if it is translated into agency, that is, it must be enacted in some way as to make a positive change to practice" (Kennedy, 2014, p.7). However, without investigating the specific context, identifying the behaviour as autonomy or agency is impossible, because without context, it is difficult to gauge how transformative the actions have been. It also raises the question whether transformation must be permanent or can be temporarily suspended; as is the case for the teachers in Beighton and Naz's study (2023), where teachers "game" the system by complying with the imposed documentisation and adapting their teaching for observations. Beighton and Naz state "There are no oppressed and trapped subjects in this game: the quality apparatus enables teachers to use their agency and work *with* rather than *against* the regime of power" (2023, p.853). How this translates beyond the individual's classroom is unclear however, suggesting that micro levels of agency, like autonomy, are likely to have little impact on meso levels of agency.

Where changes to micro level agency may begin to translate into changes to meso level agency are situations such as that researched by Wallen and Tormey (2019), where through sharing stories about their classroom practices, a group of teachers participated in a dialogic action research project. The aim of the research was to improve "teachers' sense of agency and expertise through a dialogic professional development experience" (Wallen & Tormey,

2019, p.131). Echoing Biesta et al. (2017, and discussed above), they assert that their dialogic inquiry gave teachers the opportunity for professional discourse which is often not available to teachers in schools and FE colleges. Their findings indicate that although for some of the participants it was "more difficult to see a role as an agent outside of specific autonomous zones" (Wallen & Tormey, 2019, p.137), the opportunity for interaction with other teachers awakened "their sense that they were activists with expert knowledge" (Wallen & Tormey, 2019, p.138) suggesting that teacher talk and constructing meaning together is a valuable resource in achieving teacher agency beyond the micro level.

Defining teacher agency, therefore, is not straightforward. Even theoretically, it is described as emergent and temporal. In practice, teacher agency can be removed or restricted through powers beyond the control of the teacher by changes in policy or imposed by Ofsted (as discussed above) which are enacted by SMT. The description of agency which I find most meaningful to teaching, given the persistent policy churn (Norris & Adam, 2017) and continued de-professionalisation (O'Leary, 2020) is that given by McGowan and Felten (2021) in their heuristic for hope (see Figure 5). They refer to personal agency, describing it as "I can change in meaningful ways despite the systems and structures constraining" (McGowan & Felten, 2021, p.2), which although simple, evokes a far more realistic image of what it means to be agentic as a teacher.

This section has sought to define teacher agency as viewed by theorists, despite being a contested concept (Preistley et al, 2020). The reality of agency for teachers however, as indicated by Beighton and Naz (2023) and Wallen and Tormey (2019), is where it becomes 'slippery' (Preistley et al, 2020). Agency is not something which is fixed, nor something that once achieved is retained forever (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). This discussion informs the research by outlining the fragility of teacher agency, bound as it is by context, and the difficulty teachers have in moving agency beyond the micro level.

2.10 Confidence

This section explores definition and notions of teacher confidence, identifying through the literature what elements can cause confidence to grow or decline. This informs the thesis through discussing its impact on teachers' practices.

Discussions of teacher confidence tend to refer to confidence in oneself, rather than the more general dictionary definition of confidence as "the mental attitude of trusting or relying on a person or thing" (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). Craig's definition of confidence (2007) echoes Snyder's definition of hope (see below), describing it as being optimistic (hopeful) about the future, alongside a belief that one can achieve a specific goal. More specific definitions about teacher professional confidence refer to teachers' perceptions of themselves (Orr, 2012) and a "belief in one's ability to be effective and take on challenges" (Nolan & Molla, 2017, p.12). In their research with trainee teachers completing a PCET teaching qualification, Norman and Hyland (2003) found that the trainee teachers viewed confidence as having three distinct components: "cognitive, emotional (affective), and performance components" (Norman & Hyland, 2003, p.8). These do not contradict the more general definitions, rather, they give a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the significance of confidence to the trainee teachers.

Norman and Hyland (2003, p.9) give examples of the components of confidence their trainee teachers identified:

- Cognitive: belief in own knowledge, belief in own judgement, belief that others believe in you
- Emotional/affective: comfortable, self-assured, unafraid
- Performance: effective, competent, ability to support students to progress, deliver lessons well and with conviction.

They go on to state that without confidence, trainee teachers can be self-critical and question their abilities; however, as confidence develops, trainee teachers become more engaged and motivated, more willing to interact and adapt to new situations. Teacher education can support the development of confidence (Iredale et.al, 2013; Norman & Hyland, 2003; Orr, 2012) and according to Orr (2012), teacher confidence increases as the trainees' sense of themselves as teachers grows. There are further factors that can impact

either positively or negatively on teacher confidence. Factors that inhibit confidence include feelings of inferiority; fear of not having sufficient knowledge, doubting one's ability; fearing judgement; lack of support and lack of control (Norman & Hyland, 2003; Orr, 2012). Factors that increase confidence for trainee teachers include being able to apply newly learned skills, knowledge and strategies; receiving positive feedback and therefore feeling secure; ability to develop rapport with students and receiving positive feedback from them; interaction with other teachers such as peers, tutors, mentors; and realism in accepting they are learning and therefor will not know everything.

Confidence is an important factor for all teachers, not just trainees, Nolan and Molla identify "shared expertise, trust and openness to improvement" (Nolan and Molla, 2017, p.11) as resulting in increased confidence. They identify working collaboratively by observing the practice of others and being willing to discuss, question and reflect on practice as enabling teachers to grow in confidence, and   A dialogic approach is also recommended by Prince, Snowden and Matthews (2010) in their study on peer coaching as a way of improving trainee teacher confidence. Furthermore, confident teachers in a supportive environment, are more willing to take risks in their teaching, rather than playing it safe and not experimenting with new approaches and strategies (Iredale, et.al 2013).

Although the majority of the literature discusses the development of teacher confidence as wholly positive, there are caveats. Orr states "If it is arguable that good teachers are confident, it does not follow that all confident teachers are good" (Orr, 2012, p.59). He posits that unless confidence grows alongside the ability to evaluate one's own practice, it could simply signify a growth in the ability to cope with and feel more comfortable in the teaching environment. He suggests that challenging environments, such as FE colleges, "may be a good place to become confident in withstanding the vagaries of the FE sector, but they may not be good places to learn to teach" (Orr, 2012, p.59). This is not to say confidence should not be encouraged, but that through teacher education and interaction with other teachers, there is a "more subtle inculcation of confidence" (Iredale et.al 2013, p.201). However, Iredale et.al (2013) contend that as both teacher education assessment and student assessment in PCET are driven by a neo-liberal standards, competencies and outcomes focussed culture, unless there is a concerted push in ITT and CPD to bring together teaching theory and teaching practice in the workplace, we will not provide the

"shared space" necessary to encourage the "inculcation of confidence and risk-taking" (Iredale et.al 2013, p.206)

This section informs this research by examining the factors that affect teacher confidence and discussing the importance of ensuring that growth in confidence goes hand in hand with developing the ability to evaluate one's own practice. The literature indicates that this is best achieved through interaction and collaboration, and by ensuring that teaching theory and teaching practice do not become separated.

2.11 Trust

This section explores notions of trust, firstly by defining trust, then looking at the concept in relation to education and FE. Finally, by exploring notions of trust in relation to professional learning. This discussion informs the research by exploring the environment in which teachers are more or less disposed to participate in collaborative practices.

Definitions of trust used in education literature originate in the research, scholarship and literature of psychology and management (Carless, 2008; Donovan, 2019; Felten et al. 2023; Karacabey et al., 2022; Kharouf et al., 2014; Talebizadeh et al., 2020). Although there are multiple interpretations of what goes into the development of trust, many definitions lean towards the analysis outlined by Lewicki et al., who define trust as "confident positive expectations regarding another's conduct" and distrust as "confident negative expectations regarding another's conduct" (Lewicki et al., 1998, p.439). A key concept in the notion of trust is of vulnerability (Donovan, 2019; Karacabey et al., 2022; Lewicki et al., 1998), a further definition of trust is offered by Simon and Pleschová (2021), who define trust as "a psychological state of an actor (the trustor) who is willing to accept vulnerability to another individual (the trustee) on the basis of positive expectations regarding the intentions and the behaviour of the trustee" (2021, p.3). The decision to make oneself vulnerable, therefore, results from a judgement by the trustor about the trustee regarding a series of factors. However, the language used to describe these factors varies across the literature. Bottery (2016) refers to four stages in the development of trust (identificatory, practice, role and calculative), although he also identifies three "foundations of trust" (see below); Talebizadeh et al. (2020) refer to three dimensions of trust (calculative, relational and faith). For the purposes of this research however, the factors used to interpret the participants' decisions to trust or not are those posited by Donovan (2019) in her research based on

conceptualisations of trust and distrust in FE. Donovan identifies fours facets of trust: that the trustee has **ability**, or competence, in order to achieve a desired outcome; has **benevolence,** that is, has the trustee's best interests at heart; has **integrity**, that is, is honest and there are shared, or mutually respected, values; and finally that there is **reciprocity,** that is, the belief that trust will be reciprocated. The first three factors are often cited together (Felten et al., 2023; Lewicki & Brinsfield, 2012 citing Mayer & Davis, 1999; Simon & Pleschová, 2022); however, Donovan (2019) includes Stompka's concept of reciprocity as a moral bond that contributes to the notion of trust, and she links this to Möllering's description of trust as a "leap of faith" (Möllering, 2006, p.110), whereby the trustee 'suspends' uncertainties in order to make themselves vulnerable (Möllering, 2006, p.110).

Trust, however, is fragile (Cerna, 2014), and once lost, is difficult to rebuild. Carless (2008) asserts that surveillance and accountability in education have replaced trust. The policy churn in education in the last 30 years, and in particular in FE since incorporation, driven by neoliberalism and the shift towards adopting private sector management practices (Donovan, 2019; Thompson & Wolstencroft, 2018) has resulted in the audit culture discussed previously in this chapter. In such a culture, the values of the institution are sidelined by the need to adhere to top-down policies around key performance indicators, and so the values of the individual (the middle manager, the teacher) and the institution are no longer shared (Donovan, 2019; Thompson & Wolstencroft, 2018) and trust is eroded. Further damage to relationships of trust in FE has arisen from job insecurity and loss of autonomy, each as a direct result of government intervention (Carless 2009; Donovan, 2019; Thompson & Wolstencroft, 2018). Low trust environments result in teachers being reluctant to take risks (Carless 2009; Donovan, 2019), Avis refers to the teacher as a "trusted servant rather than an empowered professional", where performance management systems ensure that the teacher conforms to the "diktat of the state" (Avis, 2003, p.329). This, according to Carless, has fuelled the audit culture, and as staff strategically adapt their behaviour in response to the process (see gaming the system earlier in the chapter), they become less trustworthy in the eyes of the auditors (Carless, 2009, p2). This cycle is an example of the "social trap" described by Donovan (2019, adapted from Rothstein, 2005), whereby "distrust is perpetuated on the basis that all other actors also believe that others will choose to distrust" (Donovan, 2019, p.191). Donovan questions whether creating an

environment of high distrust has been a deliberate act by policy makers to control the work of teachers. This concurs with the interpretation of the impact of policy churn on the sector by other academics (Avis, 2003; Beighton & Naz, 2023; Bottery, 2016), who also note that, whether at a macro level (policy/government) or meso level (the institution), the enactment of neoliberal policies serves to destabilise the professional authority of teachers.

Whilst creating a low trust-high distrust workplace may appear appealing to policy makers as, in theory, it creates a compliant workforce, it also creates a workforce (in this case, teachers), where the focus is on individual survival of the system and meeting externally imposed targets. In such an environment, there is no space for creativity or collaboration and therefore innovation (Avis, 2003; Donovan, 2019). Avis (2003) states that in order for collaborative, creative work to occur, trust must be established; he reasserts that without trust, risks will not be taken, and innovative practice requires risk taking. Avis goes on to cite Leadbeater, who suggests that trust is "a lubricant for knowledge creation: people share and act on ideas when they trust one another" (Avis 2003, p.328, citing Leadbeater,1999, p. 150).

As well as being a "lubricant", trust is essential for professional learning and knowledge sharing to have an impact and change practices (Karacabey et al., 2022; Talebizadeh, 2020). Where professional learning involves teachers revealing elements of their own practice, as is required in peer observation, teachers are put in a vulnerable position, in order to make a "leap of faith", there needs to be trust (O'Leary, 2020; Talebizadeh, 2020). However, where trust has turned to distrust, as stated earlier, regaining relationships of trust is a difficult task. Bottery (2016) outlines strategies that educational leaders can consider in order to address the issue of eroded trust. He posits that educational leaders, who normally operate at meso level, either within their own institution with other similar institutions, need to be aware and become more proactive at engaging at the macro level. He goes on to suggest that in order to affect change at the meso level, leaders need to understand the foundations of trust, which he describes as being "generated in three different ways: by agreement over values and value priorities; through an individual's integrity; and by demonstrating competence" (Bottery, 2016, p.10). Bottery posits that this can be done through not only working to unify shared values, but recognising and respecting differences, such a move

would also evidence both integrity and competence. The (re)building of trust occurs where leadership works to reduce feelings of vulnerability (Bottery, 2016), where leadership is transformational, rather than transactional (Karacabey et al., 2022), and where leadership is focused on professional development in teaching and learning (Talebizadeh, 2020).

At the micro level of trust, where teachers have a trusting relationship with each other and their institution, and are therefore willing to work collaboratively and make themselves vulnerable to each other, both Karacabey et al. (2022) and Talebizadeh (2020) assert from their findings that teaching and learning focussed leadership increased levels of trust. Talebizadeh states that increased trust leads to willingness amongst teachers to share knowledge and also participate further in professional learning (2020).

This section has explored the definitions of trust when applied to education and has identified some of the factors that literature indicates are required for teachers to rebuild trust and participate in professional and collaborative learning. The next section explores the notion of hope and draws on the work of Ojala (2016) to bring together the concepts of trust and hope in discussing how current practices can be disrupted and transformed.

2.12 Hope

This section explores the concept of hope in the context of teaching. Much of the literature review thus far has explored areas of challenge to the pedagogical decision making of teachers in FE. This section informs the thesis by exploring notions of hope as a constructive approach for teachers to deal with the uncertainty of neoliberal education processes.

 Neoliberalism, as has been discussed earlier in this chapter, brought the concept of a market economy to education, with the objective of recreating free market competition in the sector (Aubrey & Bell, 2017; Donovan, 2019; Tett & Hamilton, 2021; Thompson & Wolstencroft, 2018). The emphasis on the success of the individual applies not only to the institution, but also to the individual teacher, as performance metrics are used to ascertain the worth of the institution, as they are of the teacher (Tett & Hamilton, 2021). Tett and Hamilton (2021) posit that this focus on learners and learning as a commodity is contrary to

a traditional understanding of education, it creates a tension with those values and is challenging for everybody who participates in it. Through its focus on competition and individual success, a neoliberal system of education threatens the building of communities, however, it is the building of communities that generates hope (Carolissen et al., 2011; hooks, 2003).

Currently, 'hope' is not necessarily a word associated with teaching in the UK, particularly in the FE sector. Teacher retention in schools is at its lowest since the DfE started publishing figures, with nearly 9% of the workforce leaving in the academic year 2021-22 (Adam, 2023). According to the "Further Education College Workforce Analysis" (DfE, 2021), over 50% of FE teachers who entered the profession in 2014/15 had left within 5 years, compared to 31% of schoolteachers over a similar period (Adams, 2023). It is beyond the scope of this section to analyse the reasons for these attrition rates, although many have been alluded to throughout the chapter. However, the impact of declining real-term earnings due to below-inflation pay rises is certainly one of the biggest factors (Bocock & McLean, 2023). Hope in this context is not the naïve hope that Freire warns against; that is, wishful thinking or hope for individual achievement without collaborative action (hooks, 2003; Freire, 2014). To hope is to want things to be different, wanting to achieve a goal no matter how unrealistic (Bourn, 2021; Ojala, 2016). Giroux states "Hope expands the space of the possible and becomes a way of recognizing and naming the incomplete nature of the present." (Giroux, 2020, p.227). However, hope alone is not enough (Freire, 2014). Hope without action can become an opiate, a "relief to the harsh reality" (Ojala, 2016). Hope is an "ontological need", but without effecting change, can turn to hopelessness (Freire, 2014, p.2).

Constructive hope, therefore, requires action. However, action requires an understanding of and engagement with the current situation and issues, along with a concept of a utopian future (Giroux, 2020; Ojala, 2016). Whether we call this "critical hope" (Bozalek et al. 2014; Freire, 2014; Ojala, 2016) or "educated hope" (Giroux, 2020), for it to be maintained, people need to be able to see a route to change (Snyder, 2005). McGowan and Felten (2021) developed a heuristic for the enactment of hope, based on the work of Snyder (2005) and Ojala (2016), and which concurs with the concepts of hope espoused by Freire when he states "hope, as an ontological need, demands an anchoring in practice" (Freire, 2014, p.2):
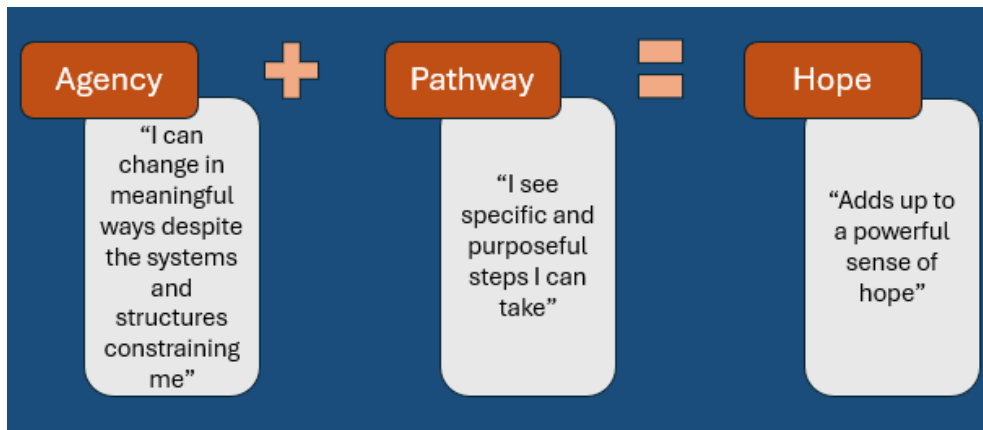
Figure 5: Heuristic for the enactment of hope

(Adapted from McGowan & Felten, 2021)

As stated above, critical hope is not about an individual achievement, hooks sees hope as built on collaboration and dialogue (hooks, 2003), Ojala (2016) states "with many people doing things together and supporting each other, hope furthermore becomes embodied and the sense of agency increase" (Ojala, 2016, p.80). Ojala refers to this as "collective hope" (Ojala, 2016, p.80) and posits that trust is an important factor in the development of collective hope. Individuals with high hopes identify pathways to their goals but are also able to adapt and change those pathways (Snyder, 2005). Collective hope requires shared pathways and any adjustments require a belief in the collective goodwill of others, in other words, trust (Ojala, 2016). Ojala goes on to state that with trust "disruption and transgression of habitual ways of being and acting become possible, and a seed of hope is planted" (Ojala, 2016, p.82).

It is this seed of hope that is required if teachers are to "enter the classroom with hope" (hooks, 2003, p.xiv) and have the "moral imagination" that will enable them "to think otherwise in order to act otherwise" (Giroux, 2020, p.186).

Chapter 2 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the key policies that have shaped FE and the relevant literature that has informed this study. The concepts have been presented thematically, beginning with the policy churn experienced in the sector and in ITE, before addressing the impact of Ofsted on TLA, and specifically on observation of TLA. The chapter has explored methods of observation and provided discussion on reflection in teaching and reviewed an alternative

approach, diffraction. The impact of pedagogical conversations on teaching practice has been explored. The section concludes by reviewing literature pertinent to the concepts of teacher agency, confidence, trust, and hope.

Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter aims to situate the research within my chosen methodology and detail the ontology and epistemology which have informed my choices. It will justify the research design and methods and outline my ethical considerations as a practitioner researcher. The chapter also details the theoretical models which informed the first iteration of the research.

3.1 Research aims and questions

The aim of the research is to explore the impact of having pedagogical conversations on teacher confidence, agency and practice; involving groups of teachers observing and discussing their own and each other's teaching. It is my belief that, as Stenhouse states "It is not enough that teachers' work should be studied: they need to study it themselves" (1975, p.143) in order to make sense of the pedagogical choices they make or could be making. As discussed in Chapter 2, the works of O'Leary, Biesta and Tummons, for example, have exposed the counterproductive implementation of neoliberal approaches to controlling education. Their works have influenced the introduction of changes such as individual lessons not being graded by OFSTED and many (although not all) schools and colleges have followed suit in internal observations (see Chapter 2). However, observation and reflection are still used as tools of managerialism, rather than for self-determined development. Through this study I wanted to see if the process I am proposing helped the teachers who participated to feel more in control of their own professional development. Rather than a feeling of pedagogical powerlessness, I want to provide an opportunity to be powerful in the context of our practice (mine, my students' my colleagues').   These are voices that do not get heard often enough (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990) and this small-scale study provides a place for participants to have their say. This chapter will contextualise the research in relation to the following research questions:

This research aims to explore how using video for self and peer observations, and facilitating pedagogical conversations can support the development of teacher confidence and agency.

1. How can the use of video in self and peer observations help teachers (in further education) to explore and develop their practice?

2. What role can pedagogical conversations play in the development of teacher confidence and agency?

3. What impact can a diffractive analysis have when teachers talk about differences in their practice?

3.2 Purpose and position – why am I doing this?

This is not an existential question, but integral to understanding the purpose of this research and my positionality within it. In order to ensure the credibility of this study it is necessary to examine both my purpose and positionality, effectively, my "worldview" (Mackenzie & Knipe cited in Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017) and identify how they impact on the methodology and methods selected in the undertaking of the research.

The purpose of any research will inform the methodology and methods deemed to be the most appropriate by the researcher Clough & Nutbrown, 2012). I believe that observing peers teach and talking about teaching is one of the keys to teachers having confidence in what they do and the courage to experiment with ways to do that differently. Sometimes differently might be better, sometimes not, but wanting to try different approaches and ideas needs to be a choice, not imposed. It also needs to come with the freedom to make mistakes and to talk about mistakes without the fear of judgement if every lesson is not "perfect". As explored in Chapter 2, observation of teaching can be used for various purposes (evaluative or developmental), however, in many settings these purposes overlap, to the detriment of the developmental purpose. Through this research, utilising and interpreting the stories told by the teachers in their interactions with me, I want to contribute to the body of work that seeks to expose the futility of appropriating the observation and reflection process and turning it into a performative exercise. This research seeks to explore the impact of transforming observation into a wholly formative and supportive experience, where teachers can experiment with new ideas and talk about the impact on students and their understanding. I would like to see teachers develop the confidence to challenge policies which infringe on their pedagogical decision making. This research is about looking at whether facilitating peer observation and a space for talking about teaching without critiquing or judging can make a difference to the evolving confidence, agency and practice of the teachers participating. The purpose of this research therefore is to influence change at the micro and meso level, through enabling the individual teacher (micro) to challenge the institutional interpretation (meso) of government policies (macro).

3.3 Positionality and worldview

I am researching issues which I live and work with every day, the participants in the study are students of mine (trainee teachers) and colleagues from my department. In researching this topic with this group of people, it is necessary to acknowledge the environment in which the data is collected and of my positionality. "Research takes place in the contexts of its community environment, in interaction with the rest of life" (Clough & Nutbrown p.10, citing Hannon 1998) and is formed by how we carry it out, the questions we ask and our "moral intents" (ibid).   I know that I come with a politically influenced agenda, that I feel angry at what I perceive as a lack of recognition and respect for teachers generally, and specifically in the post-compulsory sector. This is evidenced through numerous factors: legislative churn, the persistent upheaval in qualifications for learners, the removal of mandatory teaching qualifications in the sector leading to deprofessionalisation and the stunting of teacher agency (Atkins & Tummons, 2017; Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017; Norris & Adam, 2017; O'Leary, 2020). This influences the language I use in describing what I want to explore and achieve. This section explores and justifies my positionality and how that had informed the research approaches I have taken in completing this research.

3.3a Worldview – framework for the research

My worldview, outlined above, is the framework for this research and reflects the paradigm that shapes the research processes adopted (Lather cited Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). Paradigm, deriving from Greek and meaning pattern, is a term first used by Thomas Kuhn to describe "a shared belief system or set of principles" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2018, p8). It is, however, a contentious term with disagreement amongst academics regarding the ways research can be classified: a two-paradigm typology (quantitative/positivist vs qualitative/interpretative), a three-typology paradigm (quantitative/positivist vs qualitative/interpretative vs critical/emancipatory) and many further sub-divisions (Hammersley cited in Arthur et al., 2012). Cohen et al. question whether "paradigmatic thinking" (p9) is necessary to carry out research, stating that it is the purpose of the research which drives it, not the paradigm. However, they go on to say that paradigms can "clarify and organize the thinking about research" (p.9), but we must be aware that they can overlap and blur and are not necessarily mutually exclusive. They suggest that to view them

as mutually exclusive only serves to perpetuate a "paradigm war" (Gage cited in Cohen et al., 2018). Although this research sits within an interpretivist paradigm, I have been influenced by the concept of diffraction, most commonly associated with post human authors and researchers (Barad, 2007, 2014; Bozalek & Zembylas, 2016; Haraway, 1997). However, I do not adopt a post human stance, I have applied diffractive methods of analysis in order to privilege a discourse of difference over homogenous practice (see Methods below and Chapters 5 and 6 for discussion of the diffractive methods used). A post human methodology warns against interpreting data, for example Bozalek and Zembylas assert that an interpretative reading of data can form a "representational trap of trying to figure out what a participant really meant by what she or he said" (2016, p.118). However, this thesis is a story of teachers' own human experiences, "people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of their lives" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.10), and as a narrative inquirer, I have a responsibility to be "as alert to the stories not told as to those that are" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.10). Throughout my analysis of the data I have interpreted the lived experiences of the participants through the lens of my own experiences and by applying a diffractive method of reading the data through notions of trust and distrust (Donovan, 2019).

3.3b The interpretivist paradigm

The impetus for this research is to investigate whether the approach I am proposing for empowering teachers and developing confidence and agency can make a difference to their experience of being a teacher. Teaching is not a predictable, stable experience. It is not a laboratory where we can control the input to obtain consistent outputs and establish cause and effect relationships, it is unpredictable and 'messy'. These factors were the starting point when choosing a paradigm, that choice was informed by exploring what it means to adopt a positivist or interpretivist paradigm.

Positivism, a term first used by Auguste Comte, a nineteenth-century French philosopher (Cohen et al, 2018), applies scientific methods using observational evidence, and "assumes a straightforward relationship between the world and our perception of it" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.29). The positivist paradigm assumes the "investigator and investigated…to be independent entities" (Arthur, Waring et al, 2012, p.18), and neither exerts any influence

over the other. Research undertaken within the positivist paradigm takes a deductive approach, offering and testing hypotheses, which are interpreted quantitively and result in measurable outcomes and offer "the truth", as opposed to an interpretation of experienced truths. Usher (1996), cites Gadamer to argue against the universality of scientific truth, stating "there is more to truth than scientific method" (Usher, 1996, p.18), and notes that social research foregrounds "interpretation, meaning and illumination" (Usher, 1996, p.18). At the opposite end of the research continuum to the positivist paradigm is that of interpretivism, where this research sits. In taking an interpretive approach, I have endeavoured to gain understanding of the experiences of the participants and to interpret meaning from their differing realities. My understanding of those realities are that they are socially constructed and context dependent, and whilst my role as researcher is to understand and interpret meaning, I am cognisant of my own inflection on those interpretations (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018; Braun and Clarke, 2022).

As stated above, I have felt that there are factors outside of the interpretivist paradigm that have informed my stance, however, not strong enough to reject it for an alternative approach. I believe that the strength of this research lies in it being founded on the lived experiences of the participants; these are human, not posthuman experiences. The methodology of any research follows on from the paradigmatic choices and from the ensuing ontology and epistemology. The following section will detail the ontological and epistemological assumptions that have informed and shaped this research.

3.3c The building blocks of this research

All paradigms are underpinned by a set of beliefs and therefore a set of assumptions (Arthur et al, 2012) and these make up the "building blocks of research" (Grix, 2002, p180 – see Figure 6 below). This section justifies the ontology and epistemology which underpin this research.

Ontology, deriving from the Greek words *onto* (being) and *logos* (theory), refers to the philosophical study of the nature of being or reality. The researcher's ontological position informs their philosophical assumptions regarding the nature of being, existence and reality

(Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Lincoln & Guba (2013) refer to the ontological question, asking "What is the nature of reality?", similar to Grix's question "What's out there to know?" (Grix, 2002, p.80). The answer is dependent on the paradigmatic positioning of the researcher and the nature of the research. In positivist, quantitative research reality is separate from the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2013). As an ontological realist, the researcher believes that knowledge is "out there to be studied, captured and understood" (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017, p. 32). Furthermore, the researcher believes that their own values can be removed, or at least suspended, in their quest to find the one, quantifiable truth. Instead of a positivist ontology of "one reality, external to the mind, and capable of being studied in parts" (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p.88), interpretivism offers a relativist ontology, where multiple realities exist and meaning can be co-constructed and studied as a whole (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). In my research, I am talking to teachers and trainee teachers about their experiences of observing and being observed through a diffractive lens. Where positivism adheres to objectivity and measurable facts, interpretivism embraces subjectivity, where "knower and known are interactive, inseparable" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, cited in Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p88).

My qualitative research, located within the interpretivist paradigm, takes a relativist ontological approach. My answer to Lincoln and Grub's question is that there are multiple realities, not one single truth, and these realities are explored by the researcher through interaction with research participants, knowledge is socially constructed (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Epistemology, deriving from the Greek words *episteme* (knowledge) and *logos* (theory) and refers to the study of the nature of knowledge. It looks at how we define and understand knowledge, at what constitutes knowledge and "how we can know about it?" (Grix, 2002, p.18). My position then is that in order to make sense of this study I need to adopt an epistemology which is interpretive so I can understand the meaning behind our experiences in this context. An interpretive epistemology emphasises the importance of interpreting social practices, the focus of this educational research (referred to as "hermeneutic/interpretive epistemology" by Usher, 1996, p.18). Furthermore, in order to understand the social world, we must understand more than just observable facts, but be

able to make sense of "the meanings that construct and are constructed by interactive human behaviour" (Usher, 1996, p.18).

As a researcher and as a teacher, I have tried to make sense of practice in the classroom through an interpretive framework. Through this double hermeneutic, "both the subject (the researcher) and the object (other people) of research have the same characteristics of being interpreters or sense-seekers" (Usher, 1996, p.19). The interpretive epistemology is evidenced through the shared reality (decision making and autonomy in the classroom), actions and experiences that have been interpreted through the social context of the participants. The methodology adopted requires each individual to interpret what they observe against their own reality, giving rise to pedagogical conversations and interpretation of those narratives. This process is repeated throughout the project as teachers observe and discuss their recordings, aligning with Usher's assertion that in 'hermeneutic/interpretive epistemology' "Knowledge-formation is therefore conceived as circular, iterative, spiral – not linear and cumulative.." (Usher,1996, p.19). My research involves the shared realities and lived experiences of the participating teachers. Their realities and truths may have commonalities; however they differ according to their context. Ontologically, there is no one reality, or cause, that results in learning, and this research looks at ways of co-constructing new realities and making sense of them. The enquiry aim conforms with Coe et al that "everyone formulates more informed and sophisticated constructions", through asking the question 'does talking about teaching give teachers greater agency?', the purpose being not to identify a definitive truth, but to underscore that "Knowledge therefore is always a matter of *knowing* differently rather than cumulative increase, identity or confirmation" (Usher, 1996, p.19).

3.3d How do we find new meanings and knowledge?

Gadamer (cited in Usher, 1996) says that we cannot separate ourselves from our own interpretive framework or leave behind our "pre-understandings", but why would we want to? Gadamer suggests that it is through these, and the questions we are asking through our research, that new concepts (knowledge) are developed. Gadamer refers to our pre-understandings as prejudices, not using the word with the negative connotation we might associate with it, but as the sum of our experiences that inform who we are: "Prejudices are

biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something" (Gadamer, 1977/2008 cited in Bhattacharya & Kim 2020). Through our prejudices we understand others and can begin to interpret social practices. Therefore, through this approach, rather than attempting to remove oneself for fear of prejudices, those prejudices (values, experiences, interpretive frameworks), become the starting point for developing knowledge. Barad echoes this when arguing against representationalism, stating that "knowing does not come from standing at a distance but rather from *a direct material engagement with the world*" (Barad, 2007, p.49, original emphasis).

Gadamer also describes the starting point as the researcher's horizon, where the researcher stands and what s/he understands (Bhattacharya & Kim 2020; Usher, 1996). In order to develop understanding, horizons must connect, even collide, thus the prejudices of both researcher and participants must be exposed. Gadamer refers to this as a "fusion of horizons", which Usher describes as "an enlargement or broadening of one's own horizon." (Usher, 1996, p.22). Usher goes on to state that understanding can be achieved "despite – indeed *because* of differences". I believe this resonates with the concept of diffractive practice if we see horizons as entangling and enabling us to "know differently". Again, reinforcing my conviction that interpretivism and hermeneutics are the appropriate paths to follow for this research.

3.3e Insider/outsider concept

A further factor to consider in relation to positionality is the notion of insider/outsider researcher. A simple definition is that the insider researcher studies a group of which they are a member, whilst the outsider researcher studies a group of which they are not a member (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Breen, 2007; Hayfield & Huxley, 2015). However, this definition implies a binary of status that is often not the case, particularly in small-scale practitioner research, where research is often located in the researcher's own school or college (Mercer, 2007). Thus the insider/outsider concept has been described as more of a continuum than a dichotomy (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Mercer,2007).   This study, for example took place in the FE college where I worked, suggesting an insider researcher position as I have shared experiences with the participants, in that I teach in an FE setting and my work is impacted by the same national policies and performative college processes.

However, this is not a fixed insider status, I can position myself as more of an insider researcher when working with my colleagues as there was less power differential. Although the very act of researching one's colleagues' practice potentially moves the practitioner researcher a little further along the continuum referred to above. However, the relationship with the trainee teacher participants, who I taught and whose work I was responsible for assessing and grading presents a different status, had a more 'permeable' boundary, "as situations involving different values arise, different statuses are activated and the lines of separation shift" (Mercer, 2007, p.4, citing Merton, 1972). This is demonstrated by the shifts in the relationship boundaries at times such as my own classroom observations, where I became the assessed and graded, rather than the assessor and grader, with the trainee teachers being asked by the observer about my teaching and how they felt the session developed their own skills and knowledge. My status shifts again when considering the timing of the interviews from which the data is extracted. Although the peer and self-observations occurred during their course, all interviews took place after the course had ended, potentially reducing the power differential attached to the student-tutor relationship.

I do not consider myself to be an outsider researcher. Atkins and Wallace (2012, p49) reproduce a continuum produced by the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP, 2011, now inaccessible):

> The continuum produced by the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP, 2011) is helpful here. Are you:
>
> - a researcher who undertakes action research within his or her own classroom?
> - a researcher who undertakes research within his or her own school, university or education department?
> - an external researcher who is invited in to help a school by conducting some research on its behalf?
> - a researcher who is conducting research on behalf of, eg a local education authority with which a school is obliged to co-operate?
> - a researcher pursuing his or her own research interests and seeks the agreement of a school to participate?
> - a researcher travelling overseas to conduct some research in a community in which he or she is a complete stranger for an alien culture?

I position myself at points one and two along their suggested continuum, with the caveat that I am cognisant that my perception may not align with that of the participants, who may

perceive me as more of an outsider than I feel. However, in terms of this study, the key considerations are the impact of researching an area where I am inside the world of the participants, if not always an insider.

Those considerations bring both advantages and challenges. Advantages include access to participants, knowledge of both the environment and the context of the research, already established relationships with the participants can lead to more natural discussions and an ability to 'read between the lines' using prior knowledge of the participants (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Greene, 2014). Challenges to be considered and counterbalanced include a potential conflict or blurring of role (for example, as both tutor and researcher), the power differentials mentioned above and confidentiality (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). Further challenges suggested by Greene (2014) include insider bias and being too subjective through being too close to the research matter and the participants, and letting one's own beliefs, values and experiences influence the research, analysis or results. Approaches to managing the challenges, suggested by both Atkins & Wallace (2012) and Greene (2014), include drawing on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) to establish the trustworthiness of the research by following the criteria they introduced: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (see above and Chapter 4 for further details about establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research).   A further technique discussed by Greene is that of reflexivity, defined as "the researchers taking into account his or her own consciousness" (Green, 2014, p.9, citing Van den Hoonaard, 2002). Reflexivity is integral to the data analysis of this study through the use of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022), and throughout the exploration of the methodology of this research, my own subjective position has been discussed.

My status as an insider researcher is not fixed, but moves back and forth along a continuum. However, more important than my exact location on that continuum is the acknowledgement that my voice will be present in the research, and discussing this explicitly will help "to ensure that the participant's voice is heard in the narratives that the researcher shares" (Greene, 2014, p.12).

This section has outlined and justified my position as a researcher.   A relativist ontology and interpretive epistemology give rise to methodologies which are "ideal for coming to understand the lived experiences of the researched." (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p.88). The

following section explores the research methodology I have chosen to use, justifying and explaining the decisions I have taken.

3.4 Methodology

Methodology refers to the overall logic which underpins the procedures to be followed in carrying out the research. This include methods, but also the design and approaches to be used. Methodology looks at how the researcher will gather and analyse the data and knowledge required to answer the research questions posed. Using Arthur et al.'s (2012) continuum to contrast the two paradigmatic extremes, the positivist researcher tests hypotheses under controlled conditions and can extrapolate and predict based on immutable facts. The interpretivist, on the other hand, analyses interactions between the researcher and the participant. These "dialectical interchanges" (Arthur et al 2012, p.18) are analysed not to confirm or refute a hypothesis, but to co-construct or contribute to understanding of the topic. The question posed by both Lincoln and Guba (2013) and Grix (2002, 2019) to guide the researcher regarding methodological approach asks how we go about acquiring knowledge. The following section explores narrative inquiry, the methodology I have used in this study to acquire knowledge, and why this is the appropriate approach given my positionality.

3.4a Narrative inquiry

At the heart of this research are the teachers who participated and the conversations they had, with each other and with me, about their teaching and about their experiences. My intention was to ensure that the teachers had the opportunity to talk about those experiences, to narrate their lived experiences, and give voice to their understanding of their practice and development. Narrative inquiry is a methodology which privileges the voice of the participant, "honoring lived experiences as a source of important knowledge and understanding" (Clandinin, 2023, p. 7). This was an important factor in adopting an appropriate methodology for my research. Furthermore, it is "supported by the philosophical assumptions of interpretivism" (Smith and Sparkes, 2009, p. 3), thus reflecting the paradigm within which this research sits. A narrative inquiry methodology, in line with my own ontological and epistemological position, assumes multiple realities and

that "knowledge is socially constructed, fallible and subjective" (Smith and Sparkes, 2009, p. 3).

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) tell us that "that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives." (p.2) and that we study how humans experience the world when we look at narratives. McAlpine (2016) echoes this when she writes that we all tell stories and through narrative we construct who we are. McAlpine goes on to state that the narrator is not passive in a narrative process, they tell and re-tell their stories, and "provide a window into the process of identity construction" (p.33). From a different perspective, but still talking about the power of narrative, Gregory states that "Story is first of all a form of experience, not a form of intellectual discourse" (2009, p.21). Gregory also talks about the difference between experiencing and knowing, stating that experience alone does not lead to learning. This view reminded me of a quote I came across when I had been teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for just a few years. Penny Ur, an EFL author and teacher trainer wrote:

> It has been said that teachers who have been teaching for twenty years may be divided into two categories: those with twenty years' experience and those with one year's experience repeated twenty time. (Ur, 1996, p.317)

I felt this was harsh at the time, and still do, but it stuck with me. I never wanted to be a teacher who did not learn from my experiences. I think Gregory says something similar, although not as harshly. He talks of the need to "conceptualise" an experience and to be able to generalise from it. He uses the example of burning one's hand on a stove, "experience" tells us not to touch that particular hot stove, but in order to learn not to touch other hot stoves we have not yet come across we need to be able to generalise that any hot stove will burn. He says "knowledge about hot stoves lies in the concept, in the inductive generalization, not in the experience itself" (Gregory, 2009, p50). Like Ur, Gregory tells us that experience does not necessarily lead to knowledge. Ur's suggested solution was that teachers need to keep training, doing CPD and furthering their own development. Gregory is not talking about teachers specifically, and in the extract I have referred to, he mainly refers to fiction. However, I think his concepts apply to all of us, and stories are not always fiction, we can tell stories of our own lived experiences. It is in the telling and

hearing of stories that Gregory suggests experiences can be conceptualised and help us better understand the world.

Narrative inquiry then is how I went about finding out the answers to my research questions. Through asking teachers to talk to each other about their teaching and experiences and asking them to tell their stories to me, narrative inquiry gives the teachers the opportunity to tell their stories, conceptualise their experiences and, perhaps, better understand their world.

The following section explores the research methods available to me as a qualitative researcher, explaining the rationale for the choices I made in collecting the data I required.

3.5 Research Methods

Having outlined my worldview, which directs my choice of methodological approach and my underpinning ontological and epistemological assumptions (Grix, 2002), this section will now analyse some of the research methods open to me as a qualitative researcher and discuss which methods I have selected as best fitting the aims of this study.

Research methods are the techniques, procedures or instruments used to collect, collate and analyse data (Arthur et al. 2012; Grix, 2002; Cohen et al. 2018). As with the process of deciding which methodology is the most appropriate, selecting the most appropriate procedure for collecting data is "not a matter of preference, arbitrary or automatic decision making, but, like other aspects of research, is a deliberative process in which the key is the application of the notion of *fitness for purpose.*" (Cohen et al. 2018, p.469). Grix (2002) states that research methods should be led by the research questions and the sources of data. Using Figure 6 below, Grix illustrates what he views as the relationship and logical direction between the key parts of the research process. He states that although the table does not include the impact of the research questions on the chosen methods, it is the researcher's ontological and epistemological position that informs the questions and how we ask them.

The interrelationship between the building blocks of research

| Ontology | → | Epistemology | → | Methodology | → | Methods | → | Sources |

What's out
there to know?

What and how can
we know about it?

How can we go about
acquiring that knowledge?

Which precise procedures can we
use to acquire it?

Which data
can we
collect?

Source: Figure adapted from Hay, 2002, p. 64.
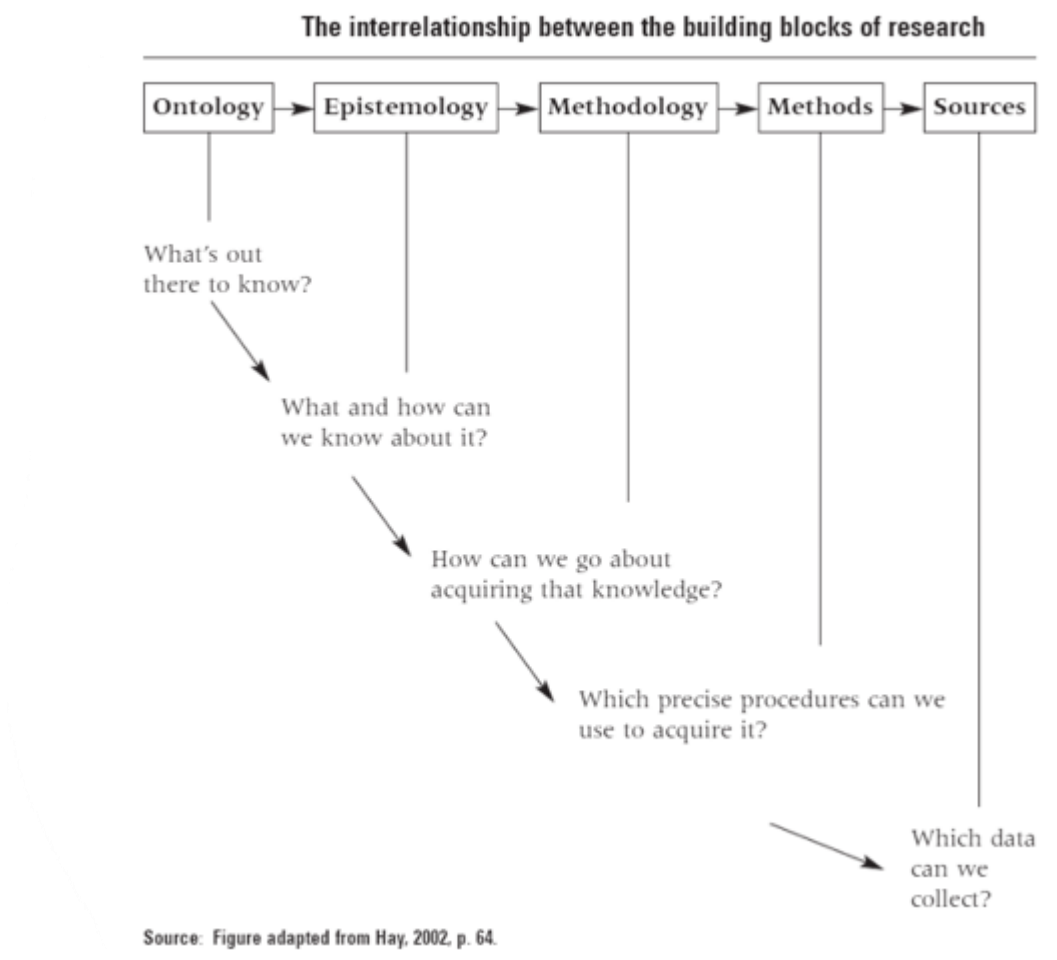
Figure 6: The interrelationship between the building blocks of research

(Grix 2002, p.180)

Grix considers that selecting research methods before having considered our ontological and epistemological positions not only disrupts the logical direction and connections of the research design process but will most probably lead to a poor choice of method. This resonates with me, as in its earliest stages, when this research was merely a project, I had not explicitly considered my ontological and epistemological position and was not led by a clear aim and research questions. I simply wanted my trainee teachers to observe each other and to find out what they had learned from that, and knew from the outset that the method I would use to collect the data would be questionnaires (see Appendix 1). In hindsight, this was a poor fit, which I discuss in more depth below in my analysis of which method I have selected as the most appropriate.

In re-examining my questions, I can identify key themes which have informed the method I have selected to collect data. These key themes are teachers talking about their teaching,

having pedagogical conversations and talking about who they see themselves to be. At this stage, I can see that asking teachers to complete questionnaires about their experience was never going to capture the "rich data" (Braun & Clarke, 2013) I was hoping for. I needed to choose a method that would enable me to 'dig deeper' and find the rich data that would tell the stories and bring to life the experiences of the teachers involved.

3.6 Data collection methods

There are a number of data collection methods available to the qualitative researcher, however not all are suitable for use in narrative inquiry. This section will discuss the qualitative methods I considered and explain my rationale for using the combination of methods employed.

3.6a Focus groups

I considered focus groups as an initial method of collecting data, intending to follow up with interviews. Focus groups on the surface appear to be an appropriate method as they could offer a facilitated environment for participants to share their stories and discuss their experiences together. Braun & Clarke (2013) suggest that focus groups can give a supportive space and maybe useful to access the views of underrepresented social groups. There are also drawbacks to focus groups, however. For example, some people may dominate, this can be difficult to facilitate them without silencing participants. Furthermore, it is difficult to follow up on the experiences of an individual without a follow up interview. Braun and Clarke (2013) conclude that focus groups are not an appropriate method for finding answers to questions about experience or obtaining personal narratives, stating that the individual narrative may be lost in the general dialogue. The voice of the individual is paramount in narrative inquiry, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) consider it is important that the practitioner "who has long been silenced in the research relationship, is given the time and space to tell her or his story so that it too gains the authority and validity that the research story has long had" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p.4).

Although there is opportunity to use follow up interviews as a means of returning to the individual narrative after a focus group, I decided that this was not a constructive way to

approach data collection. As the participants are already asked to talk in their groups about the observations and their experiences, I felt a focus group would not necessarily give the participants anything new, and as the researcher, I would want to interview them individually anyway. I therefore decided not to use focus groups at all.

3.6b Questionnaires

As discussed above, this research began as a very small project with a group of trainee teachers. I wanted to give them the opportunity to observe each other and collect data on what they felt they had learned from the experience. I chose questionnaires at that time (see Appendix 1). The main reason for choosing questionnaires was that I felt this would give the trainees more opportunity to answer freely and honestly and be less of an imposition on their time. They completed the questionnaires, but their answers were not as reflective as I had hoped for. I thought at the time that this was because I had not prepared them for the questionnaires, and that with the next cohort I would make sure they knew I wanted more depth.

At the start of this thesis, before considering my ontological and epistemological position, I had assumed that I would again use questionnaires to collect the data. However, after discussion with my supervisor, I realised that the reason the data I had collected from that initial group had been so "shallow" (Braun & Clarke, 2013) was not because the trainees had not thought deeply enough about the questions. Questionnaires alone are simply not an appropriate method to obtain a story. They are not one of the methods that Connelly and Clandinin (1990) describe in their illustration of ways to collect data when using a narrative approach to research. This is not to say questionnaires have no place at all in narrative inquiry, McAlpine (2016) describes the multiple methods she uses to collect data, including questionnaires. However, her use is very specific, she collects biographical data through questionnaires at the first stage of the process. Her second stage is for participants to keep weekly logs for a year, which the researchers collect regularly. The final stage in the cycle is an interview, but before they are interviewed, participants are sent a "pre-interview questionnaire", where they are asked to reflect on any significant moments, the researchers' aim is to obtain any information that might have been missed in the logs. The cycle is then repeated. The data collected through questionnaires is not the sole source of

data in McAlpine's research, the information gathered feeds into the interview process. Furthermore, McAlpine's research takes place over a much longer timescale, with a least two 12-18 months cycles, giving her time to seek out rich data that might be missed at earlier stages.

Given that the aim of this research is to explore whether having pedagogical conversation has any impact on a teacher's confidence and agency, a method which does not involve conversation and the possibility to probe for deeper answers or note the pauses and hesitations or indeed moments of verbal enthusiasm will not capture rich data, as I found in my initial attempts.

3.6c Interviews

Interviews are the most prevalent method of gathering qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Cohen et al. assert that an interview is "a social, interpersonal encounter, not merely a data-collection exercise" (2018, p.506). There are different ways to carry out interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Denscombe, 2017). Structured interviews have predetermined questions and sometimes closed or limited response categories, the intention being to standardise answers and enable quantitative analysis. In semi-structured interviews the interviewer has a prepared list of open questions, enabling the interviewer to direct the conversation, but also giving scope for the interviewee to develop their own ideas and contribute more widely. Finally, the unstructured interview places an emphasis on the interviewee's own thoughts and experiences. The interviewer may have themes or topics they want the interviewee to address, but the conversation is participant-led.

I decided that the most appropriate method to hear about the participants' experiences of taking part in the research was to interview them individually, using the unstructured approach with key topics as prompts to feed into the interview (see Appendix 2). It was important for me that the teachers were able to tell me about their experiences in their own words, Connely and Clandinin identify the unstructured interview as an appropriate tool for collecting data in narrative inquiry (1990). Finally, Gregory (2009) talks of the dramatic events in our lives that overshadow the smaller, cumulative events that rarely get talked about, but that it is these smaller events that we tend to have the power to make decisions about and control. In asking teachers to talk to each other, and choosing to have

unstructured interviews with the teachers to collect data, I hope to avoid missing "the important data that tells the story of how we become the person we turn out to be." (Gregory, 2009, p.29)

3.6d Data from 'reflective blogs' (autobiographical writing)

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) identify several methods of data collection that can contribute to narrative inquiry, including "autobiographical writing" (1990, p.5). They posit that "a sense of the whole is built from a rich data source with a focus on the concrete particularities of life that create powerful narrative data" (1990, p.5). As part of the Cert Ed/PGCE course that the trainee teachers were enrolled on, part of the assessment was to write a 'reflective blog' about observing a peer (or their mentor). I was familiar with the contents of the 'blogs' as I had read them, as the trainee teachers' tutor and once I started analysing the data from the questionnaires and interviews, realised that the 'blogs' could contribute to the narrative. I sought, and was granted, retrospective ethical clearance to contact the participants and request permission to use their writing as an additional data source (See Appendix 4).

3.6e Diffraction as a method

I describe my approach to using diffraction in my thesis as a method, rather than a methodology. As discussed above, this thesis sits within an interpretative paradigm, although diffraction is most commonly associated with posthumanism. However, I have used the concept of diffraction as a metaphor as an alternative to reflection with the participants when they think and talk about their teaching (see Appendix 7 for the participant framework which supports this). As discussed above, this was to facilitate a shift away from the tendency to give standardised answers and mirror the observation/feedback cycle that the teachers were mimicking initially in the project.

A further diffractive method is employed in the diffractive reading of my data through the notion of trust and distrust in an article by Donovan (2019). This is more than the interpretation of the data, "A diffractive reading is a way of rethinking issues by reading theorists or different theories and data through each other." (Bozalek *et al.*, 2016, p.826).

Bozalek and Zembylas describe a diffractive methodology as "not setting up one approach/text/discipline against another but rather a detailed, attentive and careful reading (of) the ideas of one through another" (Bozalek and Zembylas, 2018 p.51). Although primarily referring to human and non-human entanglements, they go on to posit that a diffractive analysis is a study of interdependence. Diffractive methodology is most frequently associated with post-humanism. However, in this study, I have worked within an interpretivist framework because although I concur with many of the post-humanists when they assert that a reflexive analysis can be about mirroring, looking at sameness or identifying differences, I believe that even using a diffractive analysis, the researcher cannot be completely decentred, and certainly not in the scenarios I have presented, where I am in conversation with the participants and then analysing the data without them. My approach to a diffractive analysis of the data has been to read the data through the theories presented by Donovan (2019), I have taken my understanding of what the participants said and identified themes by reading one through the other. This approach does not privilege one stance above another, as with the diffractive conversations the participants had following the peer observations, this approach enables the concepts and themes identified to build on each other and offer a new direction of thought.

I view the data as one of the diffractive gates and notions of trust and distrust as the other, as with the overlapping waves in Figure 7 (below) new patterns emerge. Haraway states that a "diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the *effects* of difference appear." (Haraway, 1992, p.300).
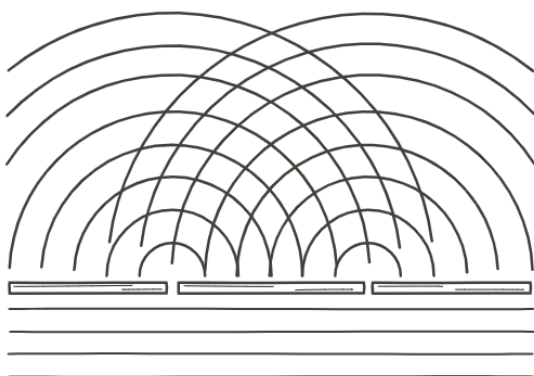
Figure 7: Diffraction – the phenomenon of the interference of waves

Diffraction – the phenomenon of the interference of waves (Norton, 2022)

3.7 Ethical considerations

This section explores the ethical considerations of carrying out educational research, both generally and when researching in one's own institution. It includes an outline of the British Educational Research Association ethical guidelines (BERA, 2018) and steps taken to ensure I abided by the guidelines of BERA and the University of Sunderland, where I am a doctoral student.

As a teacher educator the concept of ethics is discussed each course with trainee teachers. We define the term, usually agreeing that it relates to concepts of right and wrong, good or bad. We talk about the ethics of being a teacher, the responsibilities we have to ensure we are ethical in our approach to dealing with students, carrying out our roles as educators and that we model appropriate behaviour. As a researcher, I considered ethics to relate to similar concepts, but with the added responsibility of being aware of the potential vulnerability of participants sharing their experiences with me. In order to carry out this research it was necessary to submit a research proposal to the university through which I am completing this study (See Appendix 3a), which was approved (see appendix 3b). As stated above, during the process of analysing the data, it became clear to me that the 'blogs' the trainee teachers had written held further narrative detail which could contribute to the story. I therefore contacted the participants to ask their permission to use their 'blogs', and sought retrospective ethical approval, which was given, to use the data (see Appendix 4). The research was agreed with no additional requirements imposed. As a novice researcher, I was aware of the need to obtain ethical clearance from the university in order to proceed with the study, and understood that there are generally accepted ethical principles, such as those listed by Hennik et al. (2020): gaining permission and informed consent, participation is voluntary, minimise harm, ensure anonymity and confidentiality. These echo the ethical principles set by the Academy of Social Sciences which underpin the BERA ethical research guidelines (BERA, 2018 p4). However, ethical principles and gaining ethics approval are just the starting point for ethical research, Atkins and Duckworth (2019) remind us that no set of rules can be exhaustive and situations will arise that have not been considered. They express concern that ethical rules need to also give space for reflection and reflexivity, citing Greenbank (2003, citing Glen, 2000) that "simple adherence to ethical codes or rules discourages researchers from reflecting upon the morality of their actions

and working out for themselves what they need to do in particular circumstances". Atkins and Duckworth refer to "the moral dimensions of research" (2019, p67), where morality is defined as the belief system influenced by variables such as values, culture and habitus. They go on to discuss how our concepts of morality develop overtime, asking us to consider how although we establish a moral compass of right and wrong as children, this re-forms over time.

As discussed above, my position along the continuum of insider outside researcher (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Greene, 2014; Mercer, 2007), through working with trainee teachers on the courses I teach on, was an ethical consideration. I addressed this explicitly when I introduced the research to the trainees, stressing that they were under no obligation to participate and they would never be asked to share their videos with me. I explained that I would ask them to talk to me about what, if anything, they had learned, but that they could share as much or as little, or indeed none, of the experiences. This was also specified in the participant consent forms, stating that they could withdraw from the study at any point (Appendices 5 and 6). At an interim stage of this research, I delivered workshops and wrote a paper which was published (Warren, 2022) and I became aware that in order to ensure the promised anonymity, I needed to be less specific about the courses the teachers were delivering and avoid reference to whether the teacher was a man or woman as this made them more identifiable given that the participants were all from the same college. Furthermore, as the manner in which I interacted with the participants to hear the stories they had to tell evolved during data collection stage, I realised that as well as the ethical principles I was endeavouring to adhere to, I had moral obligations that were not in my original considerations. Another moral question arose when one of the participants, Lee, told me they had felt judged by their peer, Erin, during their initial conversations. I considered whether to intervene and remind Erin of the remit of the task set, or whether to accept this as part of the process and another aspect of the research. However, I decided I should intervene by talking to Erin about the students Lee works with, and how that might result in a very different approach to that required in Erin's groups. Also, Erin was a more experienced teacher, completing a higher-level qualification, and I did not want Lee to feel their experience was less valuable or valued. I feel this was the correct moral decision.

BERA state that "all educational research should be conducted within *an ethic of respect* for: the person; knowledge; democratic values; the equality of educational research; and academic freedom." Not to intervene would have been a dereliction of my responsibilities to Lee as a participant. This research does not sit within the positivist paradigm (as discussed above) and I do not need to stand by and observe the discomfort of a participant if intervention could remedy this. In adopting a relativist ontology and interpretivist epistemology, my values (my axiology), and therefore my moral interpretations (decisions), are an integral part of my research. I do not believe this undermines its ethical standing. On the contrary, as Atkins and Duckworth (2019) argue, research with a social justice purpose needs to acknowledge that it is value-laden, and the researcher must take a reflexive approach. Therefore, there needs to be an acknowledgement that the feelings and emotions of the participants cannot be ignored in the context of the research, Canella and Lincoln (2013, p172, cited in Atkinson and Duckworth, 2019, p70) assert that "An ethical perspective that would always address human suffering and life conditions, align with politics of the oppressed, and move to reclaim multiple knowledges and ways of being certainly involves complexity, openness to uncertainty, fluidity and continued reflexive insight". Atkins and Duckworth go further by stating that researchers must be ready to reinterpret their ethical approach as situations can change and events may not unfold as we expect. It is here, the ethical principles may not have a stated role, that our axiology, our values and morals must guide us.

BERA

As a researcher in education, I adhere to the British Educational Research Association (BERA), of which I am a member, and I have used the BERA guidelines to consider and plan for ethical issues.

BERA follows the principles set out by the Academy of Social Sciences, (cited in BERA, 2018, p4):

a. Social science is fundamental to a democratic society, and should be inclusive of different interests, values, funders, methods and perspectives.

b. All social science should respect the privacy, autonomy, diversity, values and dignity of individuals, groups and communities.

c. All social science should be conducted with integrity throughout, employing the most appropriate methods for the research purpose.

d. All social scientists should act with regard to their social responsibilities in conducting and disseminating their research.

e. All social science should aim to maximise benefit and minimise harm.

Following on from these 5 underlying principles, BERA have developed their own set of extensive and comprehensive guidelines, divided into 5 categories of researcher responsibilities, which I refer to specifically below where relevant.

Power and responsibility

Practitioner research involves research into one's own environment, whether that is the institution, students or colleagues, or any combination of the three. My research into the lived experiences of both the trainee teachers I am teaching and the colleagues I work with has raised several ethical questions to consider. One question is around how to maintain the anonymity of the college where the inquiry is based, both to protect the identities of the participants, but also in order to address any "unwelcome truths" (Kemmis 2006, cited in Mockler 2014, p148). The "unwelcome truths" in this case being the experiences of the teachers, both specifically to the institution, and generally in PCET, and my interpretations and thematic analysis of the stories shared.

Mockler (2014) writes of research ethics becoming "everyday ethics", arguing that high-quality practitioner research demands critical engagement with practice and this "relies upon the enactment of ethical practice" (Mockler, 2014 p148). She outlines a "framework of ethics" based on five broad ethical guidelines which she asserts can be used as a "framework for quality". The five areas identified are:

- Maintaining ethical "protocols and processes", such as consent and trustworthiness
- Transparency, which she relates to both the processes used and "auditability" and "plausibility"
- Collaborative goals and opportunities for participants
- That there is an intent to transform practice and this benefits the institution, not just a few participants
- That it can be justified to the community involved, including funders.

The first three I believe concur with the BERA guidelines referred to above. The fourth I believe is what most practitioner researchers would hope for, but in PCET, currently, is this a realistic outcome? As part of a community of post-compulsory practitioner researchers (SUNCETT, FEResearch, informally on Twitter), I would say that we are working to achieve maximum impact and to inform and change the system. However, the reality is, in a neoliberal education system, practitioner intent does not equate to impact. As individuals, working on small scale projects, it is easy for our voices to be ignored,

Lofthouse (2018) outlines three ethical principles which have underpinned her practitioner research: an allegiance with her students, that practice can be improved through reflection and recognition of the strategic priorities of her employers. She goes onto explain "Thus, I believe that my research is grounded in the ethics of the improvability of practice, the desire to meet the needs of the professional communities and my deep understanding of the demands and cultures of their workplaces." (Lofthouse 2018, p.254).

A further key ethical consideration is my dual role of teacher educator and practitioner researcher. The majority of participants are trainee teachers that I teach. I assess and grade their assignments and teaching practice. When I was presenting the project to each group of trainees, I was very careful to explain that participation in the research was optional. The participant agreement form also made it clear that all information would be anonymised before inclusion in the write up and that they could withdraw from the study at any point. The ethical issue of course is that a trainee may feel obliged to participate. I am not alone in identifying this as a potential ethical dilemma. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2007), writing as teacher educators, see practitioner inquiry as a stance not a "bounded activity or project" (p35). They go on to assert that such a stance is a disruption of the hegemonic assumptions of what teacher education is about – that is, transmitting knowledge about "latest theories" and "best practices" which can be emulated by trainees in their own teaching. Instead, inquiry as stance lays bare the (perhaps unwelcome) truth that learning to teach is a career long challenge and to achieve this we must examine our own and each other's practice. Where is the ethical dilemma as teacher educators? They talk about

"imposing" their ideas on their students, albeit unintentionally through their enthusiasm for practitioner inquiry. They refer to a "fine line" between an invitation to engage and a requirement to do so to gain a qualification, I would further suggest that this distinction needs to be made explicit. Indeed, as stated above, I make this very clear to trainees in my classes, there is no expectation that they participate in the research. They may choose to participate as much or as little as they wish. Some of the activities they participate in can contribute to their assessed work (2 out of 4 of the 600 words blogs they produce and work they do on reflective practice), but they can also use other examples from their practice, not related to my research. Furthermore, as tutor to some of the participants I must be conscious of the possibility of assuming a position of privilege at the expense of the research participants (Denscombe, 2017, p337).

This section has outlined the steps taken to ensure that this research upholds the standards of educational research required by BERA and the University of Sunderland.

Before concluding this chapter, the following section lays out how this research developed from its first iteration. Detailing its origins, the theoretical models which underpinned its structure and how it evolved.

3.8 The first iteration of the research
3.8a Laurillard and Salmon
The first iteration of this research was a short MA project, part of a module on e-learning in which I was required to design a learning activity using technologies of my choice and provide a rationale which analysed the design of the activity, the pedagogical problem it was addressing, as well as its possibilities and limitations using learning theories relevant to mobile and e-learning. My project was entitled '*Developing e-communities of practice - Using YouTube as a tool for peer observation and reflective practice*', which I also delivered as a 45-minute workshop at a SEDA (Staff and Educational Development Association) in 2019.

The problem I chose to address, as discussed above as the impetus for this thesis, was to meet the needs of trainee teachers who would benefit from peer observations but who had limited access to observing each other as the majority did few teaching hours and worked in

different settings. A peer observation project without the use of technology would not have been possible as the teachers were simply unable to visit each other's classrooms. The solution was therefore to explore how best to exploit the available technology in order to address the pedagogical problem identified, aligning with Laurillard's position that we need to ensure that "pedagogy exploits the technology, and not vice versa" (Laurillard, 2009, p6).

The key points I wanted to include when I started to design the project were that the trainee teachers were able to build a collaborative, dialogic relationship, and share their reflections in a non-judgemental arena. The E-learning module on the master's course introduced us to a number of frameworks seeking to map the learning process when technology was included in the equation. The two that informed my design project, and indeed form the backbone of the 'peer observation framework' that I went on to develop, are Laurillard's Conversational Framework (Laurillard, 2009) and Salmon's model of teaching and learning online (Salmon, 2011. p32).

Figure 8: Laurillard's Conversational Framework

 'The Conversational Framework: instructionism, social learning, constructionism, and collaborative learning combine to provide a simplified representation of what it takes to learn. Numbers show a possible ordering of the successive activities of learner, teacher, and peers.' (Laurillard, 2009. p11)

Laurillard devised the Conversational Framework as a guide to analysing and evaluating how we may embed new technology in our teaching. The Framework maps the process of learning, bringing together four key pedagogical principles: instructionism, constructionism, socio-cultural learning and collaborative learning. Laurillard asserts that each principle gives rise to different methods of teaching as each looks at a different element of the learning process. The Framework presents a visual representation of how a learning activity will engage the learner. Furthermore, Laurillard states that the "iterative cycles" of the Framework, with cycles overlapping at times, are motivating and engaging for students. As well as the mapping of learning activities for students, I saw the Framework as a way of tracking the dialogic approach to peer observation I wanted the trainee teachers to engage in. Although originally designed to incorporate and evaluate technology in teaching, Laurillard describes the Framework as providing "a technology-neutral way of stating the user requirements on any teaching method" (Laurillard, 2009. p12). This is further evidenced by "Annex 1: A summary of the conversational framework" Figure 8 above, which Laurillard says serves to emphasise the importance of the iterative cycles of collaborative learning. Using the Framework and the questions in Figure 9 together enabled me to emphasise to the trainee teachers the interplay of theory and practice at the different stages of the cycles. Questions 6 and 8-10 were particularly pertinent both in my original design project and in the developments to the setting up of the project in later iterations, made explicit in my own *Peer Observation Framework* (Appendix 7) introduced in the latter stages of data collection, as they highlight both the dialogic and collaborative nature of teaching and learning that informs my own pedagogical approach.

Figure 9: 'A summary of the conversational framework' (Laurillard, 2009. p19)

Peer observation models and theories have been discussed at length elsewhere in the Literature Review. However, two approaches that particularly informed my MA design project were those espoused by Gosling and O'Leary (Gosling, 2002; O'Leary, 2014). Gosling asserts "It is important for a fully successful peer review model that staff are regarded as genuine peers, in which there is real mutuality and respect for each of the participants as equal" (Gosling, 2002. p2). Mutuality and respect cannot be manufactured, and for trainee teachers who were at different stages of experience (some employed as teachers, some working voluntary hours to gain teaching practice experience), they needed support to develop those relationships. I used Salmon's 5 stage model (Figure 9 below) to help the participants build relationships and try to develop the mutuality and respect needed in order to create a space where they would feel confident to share and discuss their teaching practice. Salmon's 5 stage model was built to facilitate online interaction and the model indicates what technical support learners may require at each stage:
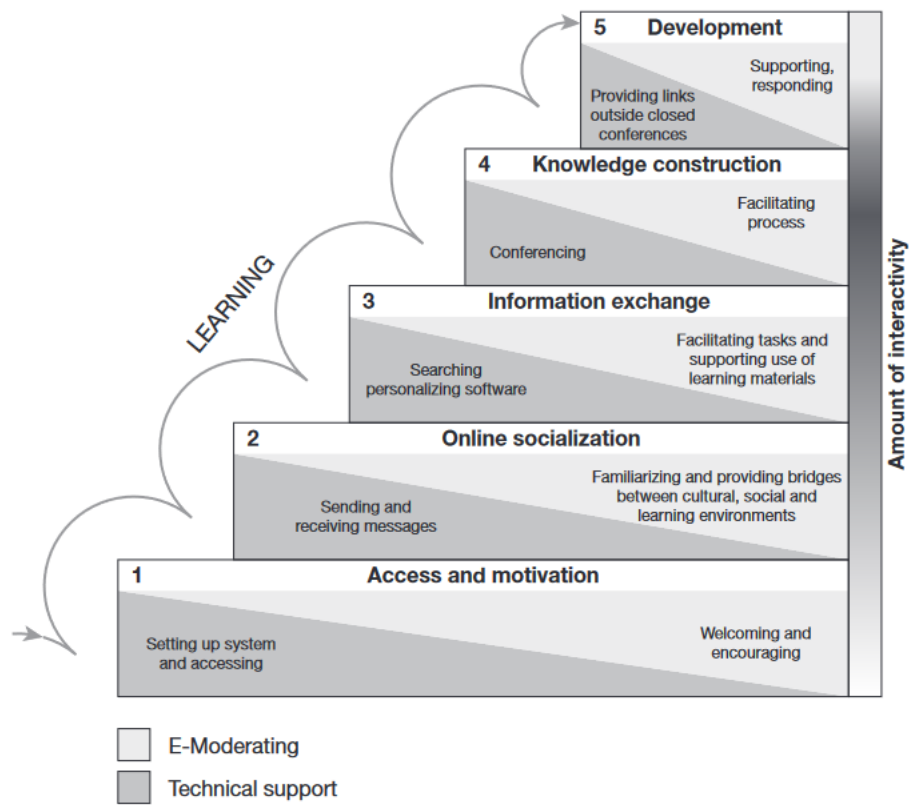
Figure 50: Model of teaching and learning online (Salmon, 2011. p32)

When I introduced the project to the first cohort, I presented each of Salmon's stages individually with examples of what that behaviour would look like (see Figures 11 and 12 below and Appendix 8 for the complete PowerPoint presentation)

Stage 1 – setting up

Scaffolding: 5 stage model

- 12 teachers – to work in peer observation groups of 3 (a community of practice- Wenger)
- Draw up contract of agreement reobs etiquette (non-judgemental feedback, only share with e.o. etc)
- What should you be looking at/for?– Harvard "Best foot forward", Teacher Selfie
- Set up a YouTube account, register to upload videos longer than 15 min, check your privacy settings

Figure 61: Presenting the design project to Cohort 1 Stage 1

Stage 5 - development

Scaffolding: 5 stage model

- Identify your next steps in light of your own analysis and feedback from peers
- Reflect on the process using a reflective model e.g. Rolfe, Kolb, Gibbs.)
- Upload your reflection to PebblePad

Figure 72: Presenting the design project to Cohort 1 Stage 5

Initially, both these models were shared with the trainee teachers (participants in the project) and the staging was made explicit to the teachers as a potential model for their own use of technology in teaching. As the project developed however, my focus moved from the structure of the model being used and concentrated more on shifting from reflection and feedback to a diffractive analysis and collaborative dialogues. Thus, whilst the models are very much at the core of how the project began and developed, they ceased to be something I made explicit to the participants.

Chapter 3 summary

This chapter has explored the philosophical foundations of my research and the ontological and epistemological stance which ensues from those foundations. It has detailed the use of narrative inquiry as the appropriate methodology and the methods used to collect the data. The ethical considerations and decisions taken have been addressed. Finally, the theoretical models which informed the early stages of the research have been outlined. This provides the methodological foundation for the following chapter, which details the how the research was carried out.

Chapter 4: Research Procedure - Approaches to data collection and study design

This chapter details how the approaches to data collection and therefore the study design for this qualitative research evolved over the collection period. Firstly, it gives a detailed description of the different cohorts who participated, and details of the individuals, without compromising their anonymity. This is followed by an explanation of how the data was collected, the research design and the steps to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. The final section details the use of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2023) to analyse the data and generate the themes explored in Chapter 5.

4.1 Participants overview

There were 16 participants in the research, grouped into 4 cohorts (see Appendix 9 for participation overview):

Cohort 1 - 7 trainee teachers (19-20) - the first cohort were part of a study for a research project I carried out as part of my MA in Education.

Cohort 2 - 4 trainee teachers (20-21.)

Cohort 3 - 3 trainee teachers (21-22).

Cohort 4 - 2 qualified and experienced teachers, both teaching students at Level 4 and above.

The sampling approach taken was purposive (Patton, 2002), the participants were required to have a role teaching adults and to have knowledge and experience of being observed. This approach, also known as *purposeful sampling*, enables the researcher to select "information-rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 2002, p230). One of the benefits of this approach is that as the participants are not randomly selected they can give "insights and in-depth understanding" of the issues being researched (Patton, 2002, p230). Each of the cohorts were part of larger groups (see cohort details below and Appendix 9), participation in the research was voluntary and not all of the trainee teachers and teachers approached chose or were able to participate, again, more detail is given for each cohort.

The majority of the participants for the research (14 of the 16) came from the Certificate in Education (Cert Ed) and Post Graduate and Professional Graduate Certificate in Education

course that I taught in a general college of further education, all trainee teachers were in their second and final year of the course. The two who were not on the courses were experienced colleagues who were teaching at the college.

As part of their course, I taught a session on the benefits of peer observation and ensuing pedagogical conversations. However, as this was a difficult task to complete in person due to the commitments, both professional and personal, of trainees, I asked them to video themselves teaching, watch themselves and then share the video with a named peer/s, these videos were not to be shared with me and did not form part of the data. It was integral to the study that the participants were only observed by their peers. Furthermore, as discussed earlier in both Chapter 1 (Context) and Chapter 2 (Literature Review), as well as facilitating the opportunity to observe each other, a key factor in prompting open pedagogical discussions is the observation of oneself. Thus moving away from reflection as an exercise in memory of what occurred and towards a discussion of what genuinely took place. I made it clear to all trainees that this was beneficial to their teaching, but not mandatory, and if they did participate, they were under no obligation to participate in the research. Throughout this chapter, I attempt to capture how although the research processes evolved as a result of rereading the initial rationale through the distinct methodological lenses of narrative inquiry and diffraction, at its core, the thesis retains the initial concept of using observation as a tool for teachers (peer observation), not just of teachers (performative, hierarchical observations).

The evolution of the underpinning pedagogical rationale for each stage of the research is summarised in the table below and is explained in more detail throughout the chapter.

Research structure	Cohort	Theoretical underpinning/pedagogical approaches	Mode of data collection
Iteration 1	**Cohort 1**	• Salmon's 5 stage model (2011) for scaffolding online communities • Laurillard's Conversational Framework (2009)	• Questionnaire • Blogs

		• Feedback and reflection	
Iteration 2	**Cohort 2**	• Barad – diffractive analysis • Pedagogical conversation not feedback	• Interviews • Blogs
Iteration 3	**Cohort 3**	• Barad – diffractive analysis • Pedagogical conversation not feedback • Connelly & Clandinin – Narrative Inquiry • Framework for peer observation	• Interviews • Blogs
	Cohort 4	• Barad – diffractive analysis • Pedagogical conversation not feedback • Connelly & Clandinin – Narrative Inquiry • Framework for peer observation	• Interviews

Table 4: Underpinning pedagogical rationale for each iteration

4.1a Cohort 1

Of the 7 trainee teachers forming the first cohort, all of the participants videoed themselves and watched a video of a peer, however 2 did not share their own videos, each said they felt too self-conscious to share their teaching with peers. The first cohort were asked to complete questionnaires (see Appendix 1) about the video project towards the end of their course, 5 people submitted the questionnaires. As part of the ITE course the trainees were required to write a blog about observations, 6 wrote about their peer observation experience, 1 did not (they wrote about observing their mentor). It is pertinent to note at

this point that this cohort were significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The cohort had begun the second year of their course in September 2019 and the country went into lockdown in March 2020.   Although they had videoed their teaching in the autumn term, they were struggling to adapt to the shift to teaching and learning online. Thus, initially enthusiastic about the peer observation project, by the time they were required to complete the questionnaire and blogs, for some of the trainees it was one task too many at the end of a very difficult year.

The design of the research was informed by Salmon's 5 Stage Model (2011) and Laurillard's Conversational Framework (2009), see Chapter 3 for details, and this was shared with the participants. The responses in the questionnaires and blogs, although useful and have still informed the research, lacked depth. I was able to thematically analyse and interpret their responses, but felt there were questions I would have wanted to ask to elicit further information. This informed my decision to adopt a diffractive approach with the future cohorts.

4.1b Cohort 2

There were 6 trainees in the class, 4 of whom participated in the research. 3 of the 4 participated fully, 1 did not video themself or watch a peer's video, however, they did agree to be interviewed and discuss the course, what they had gained from the course and why they had not participated in the videoing. All 6 had initially declared an interest and said they wanted to participate, but the reality for this cohort was that in the middle of a pandemic, the demands of managing jobs, families and studies was incredibly stressful and the 3 who did not participate in the end had significant issues external to their studies which prevented their participation. The three who did participate all had paid teaching posts and continued to teach throughout the pandemic, sometimes online, sometimes blended teaching (with some students in class and some joining from home) as well as in class employing social distancing, being masked etc, as required by the Department of Education at the time. The three participants all videoed and watched online teaching, as we went back into lockdown in the January of 2021. This cohort wrote a reflective blog as part of their course. After the course had finished and the trainees had received their grades, as well as the three who had videoed themselves, I also interviewed Rowan, one of the

trainees who had not videoed themselves.   Rowan was the only one of the three to agree to being interviewed.

The following academic year, I asked two of the participants who were now colleagues if they would be willing to complete a second round of observations. Initially both were keen and willing, however the reality for each of them was that they did not have time to participate in my research. I did request that their participation be counted as part of their compulsory CPD hours, mandated by the college we were both employed by. However, this request was turned down, resulting in the tutors being unable to commit the time.

I had introduced the notion of diffraction to the participants through a workshop with them. They were keen to try the approach, however some of them found it difficult not to resort to giving each other feedback. I therefore designed a framework for subsequent cohorts to use (Appendix 7) which broke down the stages of the process, explaining what to do and why.

4.1c Cohort 3

There were 5 trainees in the class, 3 of whom participated in the research. The three who participated were very keen to do so, the two who did not expressed reservations from the start, and I made it clear that it was not a mandatory part of the course and they did not need to. The teaching videoed by this cohort was all face-to-face. There was a good relationship between the three, they had become friends over the duration of the course and were very supportive of each other throughout the course, they all watched all 3 videos. The three felt that their relationship was a significant contributing factor to their positive experience of sharing their videos, this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. This cohort opted to record a 3-way conversation as their reflective blog for their course, discussing what they had seen and learned about their own and each other's teaching. I interviewed them after the course had finished and they had received their grades. Despite their good relationship, one of the trainees told me they had felt uncomfortable during the follow up conversation because they were not sure what to expect and generally struggle to respond to unexpected questions. This is discussed further in Chapter 5, however it is relevant to this section regarding the cohorts, as the comment indicates that it is not

necessarily the existing relationships between the participants that contribute to the success of the process, rather a shared understanding of how the process will unfold and what each stage will look like.

The cohort used the framework to ensure they used a diffractive approach when thinking and talking about the teaching they had observed.

4.1d Cohort 4

This cohort of participants was made up of two experienced colleagues from the Higher Education department at the college. Both taught students at Level 4 and above, teaching on BA or Foundation degrees. Initially, there were 6 experienced colleagues who came forward when I asked for volunteers to participate in my research. However, a combination of factors resulted in four of the participants withdrawing from the project. The key factor was being able to find time to work out the logistics of recording themselves and sharing their videos with their allocated group. In retrospect, and from talking candidly with one of the participants who did continue, this was in part my fault. I did not want to put pressure on my colleagues, knowing how stretched they were, and so did not give a timeline by when the necessary activities should take place (i.e. record yourself, watch yourself, share the video, watch your peers, meet to discuss), which resulted in the tasks being pushed to the bottom of their to do lists (real or mental) and them not co-ordinating to get started.

As well as work overload, I think there was an anxiety amongst the experienced tutors around being observed by their peers, preventing them from making a start on the project. The observation process has been appropriated for the purposes of auditing, as discussed in Chapter 2, and many teachers have had a negative experience of observations. I believe that the teachers were possibly reluctant to put themselves into what might be considered a vulnerable position in being observed by and observing a peer and discussing their pedagogical decision making. I consider this further when analysing the interviews with the two experienced teachers who took part, cognisant that these were teachers either willing to make themselves vulnerable, or confident in their own pedagogical abilities, or both. Furthermore, as mentioned above regarding cohort (2), my request for participation in the

project to be counted as CPD was denied, and colleagues had to evidence other CPD activity, making participation in my research an added "chore".

The cohort used the framework to ensure they used a diffractive approach when thinking and talking about the teaching they had observed.

4.1e Cohort overview

Of the 16 people referred to in this study (15 participants and 1 who did not participate but agreed to be interviewed), 12 were female and 4 male. As explained below, all names have been changed to gender neutral names and the pronouns used throughout are they/them in order to preserve anonymity.

The participants came from a variety of vocational and educational backgrounds, representative of the typical make-up of trainees completing the Cert Ed/PGCE courses. If an applicant does not have an Honours degree in the subject they are specialising in, the highest level they can graduate at is the Level 5 Certificate in Education, 8 of the participants fell into this category. If the trainee does have an Honours degree in their subject specialism, at the end of the first year they decide, in conjunction with the tutor, whether they will study the final year at Level 6 Professional Graduate Certificate in Education or Level 7 Post Graduate Certificate in Education. Four of the participants graduated at Level 7 (one already had a master's degree in a different subject area) and one graduated at Level 6. The two experienced teachers were both educated to master's level.

I believe the educational background of the trainees is relevant to how they participated in the research and how they felt about discussing their own and other's teaching. In the first year of the course, all trainees are expected to work towards at least Level 4, this is how the teaching is pitched and what is expected to be evidenced in their writing. However, the trainees are aware of each other's different educational backgrounds and academic experiences/confidence. For some this is the first time they are being asked to write formal, academic texts and to reference their work. The academic disparity becomes more evident in the second year, when the class are working towards different goals (from Level 5 to Level 7). Generally, the groups have been working together for a year and have developed relationships, if not friendships, and this can help support with feelings of

inferiority/superiority.   Furthermore, in terms of teaching practice, the groups are encouraged to share and discuss their teaching experiences. However, it is evident from the data gathered that for some, whether they articulate it explicitly or implicitly, that when participants felt they were being, or might be, judged by someone who they thought considered them "less", they were anxious about the process, or decided not to share their videos.   This is analysed further in Chapter 6, where using the teachers' own words I tell some of their stories of unease and unhappiness at the level of control exerted over their teaching and assessment practices, and in Chapter 7, where I link these to the pervasive impact of a culture of performativity in education, particularly further education.

4.2 Data collection

   From the very beginning, even before this was a doctoral thesis, the rationale for the videoing project has been to give teachers an opportunity to take control of their own professional development. The purpose for collecting data from the teachers was to find out if facilitating self and peer observation could give teachers a sense of agency and support them in developing and articulating their professional identity. Along the way, my own thinking has evolved, influenced by academic reading and my own pedagogical conversations with my students, colleagues, supervisors and through describing the work I am doing both informally to interested friends and formally in presentations, workshops and seminars I have given. This research has not been static nor formed by one idea which I have taken forward, regardless. I have re-read each iteration of the project and the data collected, and in the light of my developing understanding of becoming a doctoral researcher, I have applied the new knowledge. Below, I explain how each iteration was formed and reformed in order for me to better capture the teachers' stories.

The process of collecting data evolved throughout the study. The first cohort were asked to complete a questionnaire and further information was taken from their reflective blogs. However, this approach rendered less depth of analysis than I had hoped for from most of the participants.   Initially I was disappointed and surprised, however subsequent reading shed light on why this was not unusual. The trainee teachers were writing reflective blogs to be uploaded for assessment to their online portfolio. As presented in the literature

review, reflective practice in initial teacher education and academic development is a ubiquitous concept (Mitchell, 2017), however its efficacy is questionable when the reflective pieces are assessed, thus dissuading some teachers from exposing personal or professional vulnerabilities (Tummons, 2011; Myers, Smith and Tesar, 2017)   This same argument applies to the answers for the questionnaires. I believe for many they were "playing it safe", if the participants were not answering the questions openly, and I had no way of checking this with them, I felt it brought into question the validity of this method of collecting data (Denscombe, 2017), I wanted to use a method that would give me a more personal contact with the participants and I would be able to interact with them and ask for more detail.

In analysing the first set of data, I realised that not only were the reflections lacking depth, I had asked the trainees to give each other "feedback"(see questionnaire used for Cohort 1 Appendix 1). They were therefore inevitably identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Having come across the writing of Karen Barad on diffraction (discussed in the literature review), I decided to reframe the research and move away from reflection and feedback and ask teachers to look at what they could learn from watching themselves and each other, to ask questions about their pedagogical rationale and to identify what they were taking from the process. I chose to use unstructured interviews to gather data from the participants, wanting to be able to ask the teachers questions and to give them more freedom to talk about their feelings about the process. The second cohort were therefore asked to watch themselves and their peers' videos with this in mind. This gave me the opportunity to have a relatively informal conversation with participants and gave much richer data to analyse. One of the participants still gave feedback initially, which their partner was unhappy about and came to me for advice. After talking to the teacher in question, they went back to the recorded session and watched to see what they could learn, rather than correct. This resulted in a very satisfying exchange for both teachers involved. Following on from this experience, I realised that despite the classroom session on what the purpose of the project was, observation and evaluative feedback are almost synonymous in the minds of teachers and trainee teachers. I therefore decided to devise a framework for teachers to use to guide their thinking away from reflecting and evaluating, to adopting a diffractive lens. (see Appendix 7)

4.3 Research design

The tables below (Tables 5 - 8) give an overview of the type of data collected from each cohort, along with the level of the course they were completing, with the exception of Cohort (4), where the level shown refers to the highest level of qualification the participants had at the time of interview. All names have been changed to preserve anonymity, and due to the small numbers involved, I have chosen to use gender neutral names and all participants have been referred to by the pronouns they/them to ensure anonymity.

Cohort 1 – 7 students on the course, all 7 agreed to participate

Name	Level	Shared video	Questionnaire	Blog	Framework
Mel	Level 5	Yes	No	Yes	NA
Morgan	Level 5	No	Yes	No	NA
Sam	Level 6	Yes	Yes	Yes	NA
Alex	Level 5	Yes	No	Yes	NA
Amal	Level 5	No	Yes	Yes	NA
Tatum	Level 5	Yes	Yes	Yes	NA
Nicky	Level 7	Yes	Yes	Yes	NA

Table 5: Cohort 1

Cohort 2 - 6 students on the course. All agreed to participate. Only 3 students videoed themselves and shared the video. 2 of those withdrew and 1 agreed to be interviewed to talk about the course.

Name	Level	Shared video	Interview	Blog	Framework
Lee	Level 5	Yes	Yes	Yes	NA
Kai	Level 5	Yes	Yes	Yes	NA
Rowan	Level 6	No	Yes	No	NA
Erin	Level 7	Yes	Yes	Yes	NA

Table 6: Cohort 2

Cohort 3 - 6 students on the course. 4 agreed to participate, one of the 4 withdrew from the course and therefore the research. 2 declined to participate.

Name	Level	Shared video	Interview	Blog	Framework
Drew	Level 5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Taylor	Level 7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jo	Level 7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 7: Cohort 3

Cohort 4 - of a department of 15 teachers, 6 agreed to participate. The first attempt failed. 4 withdrew. 2 agreed to try again, Reese and Ali.

Name	Level	Shared video	Interview	Blog	Framework
Reese	Level 7	Yes	Yes	NA	Yes
Ali	Level 7	Yes	Yes	NA	Yes

Table 8: Cohort 4

The questionnaires used open-ended questions (see Appendix 1), inviting participants to consider the process, how they had felt and whether they had learned anything. They were completed by 5 of the participants in cohort (1), even where they generated thoughtful answers, I felt that more information would have been forthcoming in an interview. I was able to supplement the answers with the blogs they had written, however as described above, both the questionnaires and the blogs felt limited by participants' "reflection fatigue". In order to explore each individual's story, a story I had not realised I needed to hear, my approach to collecting the data needed to change. In line with recommendations found in Connelly and Clandinin's seminal article on narrative inquiry (1990), I chose to use interviews in order to capture the lived experiences of the participants.

Cohorts (2), (3) and (4) all agreed at the outset to be interviewed at the end of the process. The interviews were unstructured and lasted between 17 and 44 minutes. Two participants, Kai and Reese, were interviewed twice. Kai's first interview was the scheduled interview following the completion of their participation during their Cert Ed course. The second interview was conducted as they had agreed to participate in a second cycle of videoed observations, however this had not transpired due to various external pressures. Reese's first interview was conducted after the collapse of their first attempt to participate in the study with departmental colleagues. The second was after the successful completion of the process with Ali.

Initially, the interviews were conducted online, using Microsoft Teams, due to Covid restrictions. Due to the proliferation of online meetings, classes, even social events as a result of the pandemic, the interviews worked well. We were able to conduct them when it was convenient for the participants, sometimes this was at home, for one it was in their car during their lunch break at work. For this reason, I elected to continue the practice and all interviews were videoed. This had the added convenience of automatic transcription. The

transcriptions can be downloaded separately into Word documents, which can be amended as necessary. Although generally very accurate, MS Teams can struggle to accurately transcribe accents. It was therefore necessary to watch the videos and amend the transcriptions to ensure they were *verbatim* and no changes were made to the language or grammar used by the interviewees. I watched the videos several times, the first time to check the transcripts and the subsequent times to actively listen to the interviews and familiarise myself with the data I would be going on to analyse.

4.4 Trustworthiness criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and audit trails

It is important to be able to ascertain whether a piece of research is of good quality (Braun & Clarke (2013) and is "understood to be legitimate" by others (Nowell et al. 2017, p.3). However, the concepts by which this can be gauged in qualitative research are different to those associated with quantitative research. In writing about narrative inquiry, Connelly & Clandinin (1990) state that reliability, validity and generalisability are not appropriate for qualitative research. Nowell et al (2017) reiterate this and offer criteria that can be used to establish trustworthiness in thematic analysis. I have used their criteria to guide my research and outline the process below.

Credibility refers to the researcher ensuring that the participants' views and experiences are represented and recognizable. Suggested ways to ensure this include "prolonged engagement, (…), data collection triangulation" (Nowell et al. 2017, p.3). I addressed these issues by carrying out the research over 3 years with 4 cohorts and being able to return to the participants. Peer debriefing is also recommended as an additional check. I have done this through discussing themes and findings with fellow teacher educators and through sharing and discussing preliminary findings in a number of presentations.

Transferability refers to whether the results of the research can be transferred to other contexts. Qualitative research is context specific, the descriptions given by the researcher need to be detailed enough for the reader to decide for themselves whether it is transferable to their own context (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In events where I have shared the approach I have taken, there have been expressions of interest from other teacher educators and academic developers that they would like to try out the

process. The transferability would be dependent to a large extent on the culture of the institution and management attitudes to observation.

Dependability is achieved when the process is "logical, traceable, and clearly documented" (Nowell et al, 2017. P.3). This is evidenced in my research by the availability of anonymised samples of the raw data gathered, and included in the thesis (see Appendix 11).

Confirmability refers to demonstrating that all findings come from the data and that interpretations and conclusions can be justified. It is recommended that "theoretical, methodological and analytical choices" are made explicit throughout (Nowell et al. 2017, p.3). I have ensured that my choices have been narrated throughout this thesis and I have tracked the evolution of its design, data collection and data analysis.

Audit trails refer to establishing a trail through data, notes and transcripts which, if reviewed by another researcher, would lead them to "comparable, but not contradictory results" (Nowell et al., 2017, p3). I have kept a clear trail of the data sets, how I have interacted with them and interpreted them. However, in using a reflexive thematic analysis and reading the data diffractively through notions of trust and distrust, my interpretation of the data is subjective, which is "the fuel that drives the engine" of RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.12). Furthermore, my research is informed by beliefs, which may not be comparable with another researcher's. The key point here, however, is that my interpretation is clear through the evidence I present.

This section of the chapter has outlined the research design and processes followed for this thesis. It has given information about the cohorts and non-identifying details about the individual participants in order to give a detailed context for the research. This detailed context is one of the criteria used to convey the trustworthiness of the data and related findings. The following section outlines the method used to analyse the data and generate the themes which narrate my interpretation of the experiences of the participants for this thesis.

4.5 Reflexive thematic analysis

The data analysis has followed the reflexive thematic analysis framework devised by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022). This method aligns with my interpretative approach and my relativist ontological and interpretivist epistemological position.

The interpretative inferring of meaning does not necessarily sit well with the post humanism often associated with a diffractive analysis (see Chapter 2). However, this "mash-up" (Braun & Clarke, 2022) is not a result of "methodological incoherence" (Braun and Clarke, 2023. p2), Braun & Clarke are not averse to mash-up per se. However, they are very much against researchers claiming to have adopted a reflexive thematic analysis approach who then write about "reliability" or adopting positivist procedures. They state stridently and in several articles that if a researcher is claiming to have taken a reflexive thematic analysis approach, any "meaning divergences or mash-ups should be equally thoughtful" (Braun and Clarke, 2023. p2). This chapter outlines the approach I adopted, very much informed by the methodology and format of Braun and Clarke's RTA, and how I align their reflexive approach with a diffractive reading of the data.

4.5a Phases of analysis

In their seminal article introducing their approach to thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke provided a step-by-step guide, outlining six phases to follow in order to perform a thematic analysis of a data set analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Although initially stating that thematic analysis was a theoretically flexible method, Braun and Clarke later wrote (Braun and Clarke, 2019, 2022, 2023) that they had not expected their approach to receive so much attention nor for the approach to be so widely adopted, and in their view, misinterpreted in many cases. They therefore went on to define their approach more clearly and have adopted the term *Reflexive Thematic Analysis,* describing their approach as "an example of a Big Q or non-positivist qualitative approach" (Braun and Clarke, 2023. p2). Braun and Clarke also wanted to clarify their approach, distinguishing it from other forms of thematic analysis, and emphasising "the researcher's subjectivity as analytic *resource*, and their reflexive engagement with theory, data and interpretation" (Braun and Clarke, 2021. p330). It is this recognition and celebration of the researcher's subjectivity and interpretation of the data that informed my decision to use this approach. As a researcher located more towards the insider end of a continuum (Atkins and Wallace, 2012) I do not believe that an

objective analysis of the data, the conversations and reflections of the people I was working with (either as a teacher or a colleague, in some cases both), would have been possible. Each time I watched the videos or read the transcripts, I was interpreting both what was said and what was left unsaid. I knew the backgrounds of the participants, their hopes and to some extent their fears. I was also conscious of the concepts, frameworks and theories that had informed my decision to undertake the research and others that I had discovered along the way. To say that this was anything other than my subjective reading of their words through my own experiences would not be honest.

I have followed the six phase process detailed in *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide* (Braun and Clarke, 2022), where they have developed their ideas more fully and explained their process more clearly, see Appendix 10 for Braun and Clarke's summary of each phase . Although there may appear to be little difference between the phases described in the original article outlining their thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.87) and those described in their later work (Braun and Clarke, 2022), one of the keys to understanding their amended approach is in the wording of Phase 3; in 2006 they wrote about "searching for themes" which they later refined to "generating initial themes" (Braun and Clarke, 2022, p.35). "Searching" implies that the themes are already there, waiting for the researcher to unearth them. However, Braun and Clarke assert that themes do not emerge in RTA. They are not "diamonds scattered in the sand" (Braun and Clarke, 2016. p740), they do not pre-exist. Whereas "generating" emphasises the role of the researcher in reading into the data and bringing out the thoughts, ideas and feelings of the participants reformed through their (the researcher's) own experiences and onto-epistemological stance.

4.5b Phase 1: Familiarise yourself with the data.

This phase of the analysis is about becoming immersed in the data, but also critically engaging with it (Nowell *et al.*, 2017; Braun and Clarke, 2022). According to Braun and Clarke, critical engagement involves "reading and interpreting the data to produce insights into your dataset that go beyond the obvious or surface-level content" (Braun and Clarke, 2022 p.44). At this point the researcher is asking questions about the data but also about their own reaction to the data.

The dataset for this study was gathered in three ways: questionnaires, interviews and blogs. The rationale for this approach has been discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, along with an outline of which cohorts contributed which mode of data. The 'intended audience' for the questionnaires and interviews was always the thesis; the blogs were originally written as part of the trainee teachers' assessment for their Cert Ed/PGCE with permission granted for their inclusion in this study after the trainees (students) had completed their course. I was familiar with both the questionnaire data (as I had worked with this data before deciding to take a reflexive thematic approach to analysing the dataset) and the blogs (as I had "marked" these as pieces of students' reflective writing). The largest part of my dataset, and the area I was least familiar with, in the sense referred to in this phase, were the interviews. I therefore chose to begin this phase by working firstly with the interviews.

The interviews were initially carried out on Teams out of necessity, the first cohort of trainee teachers to be interviewed were completing the second year of their PGCE in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdowns which occurred as a result. Using Teams afforded the advantage of being able to record the interviews and for the transcripts to be generated automatically

Firstly, I watched each video without reading the transcripts, focussing on the content and my interactions with the participants.   I then extracted the transcripts into a Word document and for the purposes of making them shorter and easier to follow, removed the timestamps (I kept copies of the originals, with the time stamps). The only changes I made to the transcripts were those where the transcription software misinterpreted what the participants said, I made no changes to the grammar, redundancy, repetition or hesitation within the speech. The transcripts are verbatim. I printed them out in order to be able to read them and make notes on the pages as I went along. I also printed out the questionnaires and the reflective blogs, although I felt I was very familiar with this data, I wanted to ensure my approach to how I was interacting with the data was consistent.

Although I had intended to take notes, I found that after reading and re-reading the dataset, my notes were actually codes. I was already beginning to identify the codes that would go on to inform my themes.

4.5c Phase 2: Coding

As identified above, Phase 1 merged into Phase 2 for me. Once I realised I was coding rather than just annotating the print outs I needed to create a systematic approach, I therefore created a table in Word for each participant, noting the codes and location (see Table 4 below)

The table identified the participant, the code and the page number (for ease of finding later). This initial coding was semantic, in that I was focused mainly on what the participants said or wrote. The next step was to put the codes together from the different participants and begin to generate initial themes. However, at this stage, re-reading the data and the codes, I began to interpret latent codes, using both my knowledge of the setting and the individual participants to interpret further meaning beyond the semantic meaning initially identified.

I adopted a predominantly inductive analysis of the data, that is to say, data-driven as opposed to theory-driven (deductive analysis). A deductive approach would have involved the use of a codebook or framework to adhere to whereas an inductive, or open-code, approach focussed on the meanings I interpreted from the participants' responses. It was not an exclusively inductive analysis however, I was mindful of the reasons I had undertaken this research, the theoretical and political questions that had sparked my desire to challenge the hegemonic approach to observations in FE, and the research questions that shaped how I approached my research. Thus giving an element of deductive analysis to the approach I took (Braun and Clarke, 2022; Byrne, 2022).

At this point I was looking at capturing meaning in the context being analysed. I was not attempting to find similarities or overlaps between participants, Braun & Clarke stress that during this phase "you're using coding to parse out the diversity of meanings from the data; codes should not capture multiple meaning" (2022, p53).

The tables of codes gave me an overview of the concepts raised by the participants. However, the codes alone did not give me the depth of meaning required to generate themes.

Table 9 illustrates how I recorded the codes in a table for each participant:

Taylor	
1a, 1b, 2a, 5a,	Noticing own practice
2b, 3b,	Own pedagogical rationale
2c,	Feelings about pedagogical conversations
3a, 4a,	Discussing each other's ped decision making
1c, 3c,	Focussing on the physical
3d,	Looking for negatives in own practice (self-critical)
4b,	Gaining confidence from conversations
4c, 5b,	Learning from other's practice
6a,	Classroom autonomy (as agency)
6b, 7a,	Feelings about agency
7b, 7c, 8a, 8c, 9a, 10a, 10b,	Feelings about the project
8b, 8d,	Using diffraction with own students
10a, 11a, 11b	Feelings about pedagogical conversations

Table 9: Participant codes

During coding, I did not try to "answer" my research questions, I wanted to engage with the words of the participants and look for the meaning they were conveying. I did not want to come to the data with preconceptions of what I would find, although arguably the researcher will have some expectations, that is why they are doing the research. As stated above, at times coding was semantic and the code simply summarised the meaning, other times I read the words through my existing knowledge of the participants and their experiences, and inferred latent codes.

Once the entire data set was coded, I extracted the relevant sections from the transcripts, blogs and questionnaires and put them into a table to print out and cut up (see Appendix 11). Once I had completed the initial coding phase, I collected the strips of data together in code categories and laid them out on a large table, ready for a last coding review (see Appendix 12). This was a useful process as I found I had sometimes used slightly different wording for the same code, e.g. "*learning from each other's practice*" and "*learning from other's practice*", which could indicate different meanings. Upon rereading the extracts it was clear I was referring to the same thing I therefore changed the codes so that the labels being used were consistent.

4.5d Phase 3: Generating initial themes

Moving from generating codes to generating themes is potentially challenging when using reflexive thematic analysis. There are many articles that stridently affirm what constitutes an acceptable way to use RTA, both from Braun and Clarke themselves as well as advocates of the approach, including one entitled "*Thematic analysis*: *The 'good' , the 'bad' and the 'ugly'* (Finlay, 2021) where the author describes what, in her opinion is good, bad or ugly in the qualitative world of thematic analysis. Finlay (2021), despite insisting that "there is no one way to do thematic analysis. There is no magic formula. Thematic analysis comes in many shapes and guises." (2021, p.114) places great store on finding "literary resonance" (2021, p115) in themes, and those lacking such resonance are "ugly". However, for Braun and Clarke, generating initial themes is about finding patterns in the data that tell a story.

Braun and Clarke define codes as capturing one thought or facet, whilst "themes, in contrasts, are like multi-faceted crystals- they capture multiple observations or facets" (2021, p.340). However, neither are themes to be confused with topics or topic summaries. Initially I identified themes such as 'hope' and 'confidence', but these are not themes as defined by Braun and Clarke (2021). 'Confidence', for example, is a topic and does not tell a story. By returning to the data and rereading the codes in context, I began to create patterns of meaning, for example, 'confidence' became 'many pathways to (developing) confidence'.

Furthermore, as stated above, themes are not waiting to be found they do not pre-exist, they are generated by the researcher through a "creative and active process" (Braun and Clarke, 2021. p343). They also state that to start generating themes "compile a cluster of codes that seem to share a core idea or concept" (Braun & Clarke, 2022 p35). I did not want to use software to analyse my data, I wanted to engage fully with the stories of the participants myself. I therefore decided to follow Braun & Clarke's advice literally, and revisited the tables of codes, inserting the participants' words. I then cut the new tables into strips, and compiled clusters of concepts on a large table. As I compiled the clusters, it became clear that whilst not attempting to directly answer my research questions, they were at the core of the themes I was developing. I therefore began to view the questions as 'hooks' on which to hang the themes. (Appendix 13).

4.5e Phase 4: Developing and reviewing themes

This phase is about checking the themes, reviewing the codes and the data and ensuring that the themes tell a coherent story. It was at this stage that I introduced a diffractive reading of the data. This is more than the interpretation of the data, "A diffractive reading is a way of rethinking issues by reading theorists or different theories and data through each other." (Bozalek *et al.*, 2016, p.826). I am not the first to bring diffraction into a reflexive thematic analysis, Falks et al. (2023) and Helps (2020) write about diffracting their data. However, they rename the approach as 'diffractive thematic analysis'. I have not used this term as I do not think the approach I have taken reworks Braun and Clarke's version enough to warrant such an appropriation. I have read the data diffractively through Donovan's article on notions of trust and distrust (2019). Notions of trust and distrust are explored more fully in Chapter 2 and summarised in Chapter 6 to give context for the themes.

Rethinking and developing the themes diffractively involved going back to the dataset and interpreting the experiences of the participants through the theories Donovan discusses in her article. This is not a question of changing the meaning of what people said, but reviewing those stories through a different lens. Rather than taking meaning at face value, I stepped back from the words and thought about the individuals, the cohorts and their contexts. For the purpose of clarity in this section, I will give a small example from Chapter 6. Amal, a participant from Cohort 1 had videoed themselves but not shared the video, explaining it was because they felt nervous and unsure of what the others would think of their teaching, going on to state later that it was about confidence, and they felt more confident now, so would be happy to share if they did the project again. Initially, I interpreted this as Amal lacking confidence but gaining confidence as a result of the course. However, this is a very blinkered interpretation, if I were to call it a reflection, it is possible to see it as "the same displaced elsewhere" concept that Haraway (1992) posits. A diffractive reading enabled me to interpret the words differently by asking 'why' through the concepts of trust and distrust, producing not the same answer that Amal gave but a disrupted answer (see Chapter 2 for more detail on diffractive reading).

4.5f Phase 5: Refining, defining and naming themes

As identified at Phase 1 and 2, the phases are not clearly boundaried stages, Phases 4 and 5 also overlapped. Themes were reviewed and refined, and during these phases it became clear that not all of the coded data was relevant to the themes that I had generated. Braun and Clarke prepare the RTA researcher for this, warning that "you've got to be prepared to let things go" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p234). Braun and Clarke state that theme names "should capture the essence of the theme and engage the reader" (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.112) and should avoid being a topic summary, as discussed above regarding 'confidence' compared with 'many pathways to (developing) confidence'. My naming and renaming of themes continued into Phase 6.

4.6g Phase 6: Writing up

The final phase of the framework involves bringing the themes together to form a coherent narrative. Using the research questions to construct the framework of my narrative gave the themes a logical order, beginning with a theme about how teachers felt about videoing themselves and sharing the videos, concluding with a theme focussing on diffractive analysis. As stated earlier, a thread running through the write up was my diffractive reading of the data through the article by Donavan on trust and distrust (2019) in order to interrupt the "same displaced elsewhere" approach of reflecting the words of the participants, and instead to map the patterns of difference when the stories of the teachers and the notions of trust and distrust passed through metaphorical diffractive gates and produced new understandings:
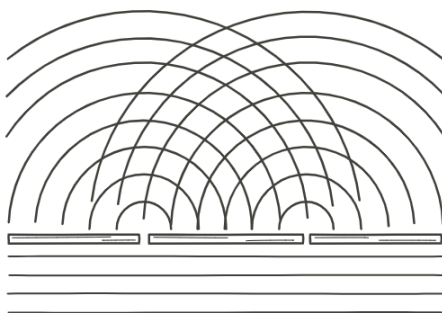
Figure 13: Diffraction – the phenomenon of the interference of waves (Norton, 2022)

The blurring of the phases, referred to by Byrne (2021) as a recursive element of RTA, was evident throughout the analysis, as detailed above. Further blurring of the phases occurred during the Write Up phase. Once I had written up the five themes I had identified as relating to my research questions, I felt there was still a part of the story that I was leaving untold. I had not conveyed the optimism that came through when the teachers talked about what they wanted for themselves and their students. I returned to the data and reread the transcripts, interpreting a sixth theme, 'glimmers of hope through collaboration'.

Braun and Clarke (2022) emphasise the importance of telling the story when completing phase 6 of RTA. The six themes that I identified in my analysis, detailed in the following chapter, narrate the participants' experience as I have interpreted them.

Chapter 4 Summary

This chapter has detailed the research design and processes which have been used and the reflexive data analysis approach taken to interpret the data informing this thesis. The following chapter explores the themes and findings that I have interpreted from the data collected.

Chapter 5 Data Analysis and Research Themes

This chapter details the themes and introduces the findings that have been identified through a reflexive thematic analysis of research data taken from 16 participants (see Appendix 9 for participant details). The previous chapter details the phases of the RTA process, this chapter presents the themes identified in relation to the research questions this thesis has set out to address. The findings are introduced and will be discussed in depth in Chapter 6.

The research questions, which are used and referred to throughout the chapter as are listed below for ease of reference:

This research aims to explore how using video for self and peer observations, and facilitating pedagogical conversations can support the development of teacher confidence and agency.

1. How can the use of video in self and peer observations help teachers (in further education) to explore and develop their practice?
2. What role can pedagogical conversations play in the development of teacher confidence and agency?

3. What impact can a diffractive analysis have when teachers talk about differences in their practice?

5.1 Introduction to themes

As explored more fully in Chapter 3, this research sits within an interpretative methodology.

In that chapter, I outlined how I used what I have referred to as diffractive methods, rather

than a diffractive methodology. Diffraction as an alternative to reflection and feedback was

introduced to the participants, more explicitly with each cohort, and through a framework

to support their observations (of self and other see, Appendix 7). Barad (2007) describes

reflection as mirroring sameness whilst diffraction is more focused on exploring the impact

of differences. Participants were asked to watch the videos, not looking for improvements,

but to consider the pedagogical choices the teacher (themselves or their peer/s) made and

to discuss why those choices were made. They were informed, verbally initially, and finally

through the framework (Appendix 7) that *"We are not looking for the "right" answer but*

looking at the impact different choices and decisions have on teaching and learning." This

was a significant shift for the teachers, accustomed to a model of observation that required

them to reflect on what had worked and what had not worked in their observed sessions,

and to hope that their reflections coincided with the critique and feedback from their

observer. This mirrors the "socially desirable" reflections referred to by Biesta (Biesta, 2019,

p.118) and discussed in Chapter 2. The observer in that model, familiar to most teachers in

any educational setting in the UK, would then give the teacher a list of 'strengths' and 'areas

for improvement' (or to work on, to enhance etc). The diffractive method I introduced them to was intended to proffer an alternative to the hegemonic assumptions of the reflective practices ubiquitous in teacher education and teacher development, to move "beyond the confines of the models" most commonly utilised (Hébert, 2015, p370), and to afford the opportunity to discuss their teaching without the performative baggage of observation as assessment (Moxnes & Osgood, 2018).

A further diffractive method utilised in this chapter is a diffractive reading of the data, as discussed in Chapter 2. As discussed in Chapter 4, once I had coded the data and moved to stages 3 and 4 of the RTA process: generating, developing and reviewing the themes, I analysed the data by reading it diffractively through the theoretical lens of the work of Christine Donovan in her article on trust and distrust in FE (Donovan, 2019). I read more widely on the notion of trust, including the key references Donovan cites in the article (see Chapter 2), but kept returning to her work as one that echoed my own experiences of the FE sector and gave a framework and language to my interpretation of the (trainee) teachers' stories. This framework and language supports the capturing of the experiences of the participants and my interpretation of those experiences at the micro (individual teachers), meso (institutional) and macro (policy) (See Chapter 3 for further discussion on micro, meso and macro concepts addressed within this study).

Definitions of trust and distrust and their role and ramifications within the context of FE are explored in Chapter 2. However, I will reiterate the key concepts that reoccur in definitions of trust by researchers and authors and through which I have diffractively intra-acted with the data. To trust is to accept a position of vulnerability. The decision to trust is based on whether the trustor believes that the trustee has **ability** in the relevant area, has **benevolence** toward the trustor, has **integrity** and has values that are shared or accepted by the trustor, and finally, that there is **reciprocity**, that the trustor believes that trust will be reciprocated (Donovan, 2019; Felten et al., 2023; Lewicki & Brinsfield, 2012 citing Mayer & Davis, 1999; Simon & Pleschová, 2022.   Throughout the themes in this section, I have interpreted the words of the participants through the notion of trust, including areas where the trust required was not in their peers, but in me, as the tutor/researcher, such as in Theme 2 Lessons from the classroom: watching oneself, where they have been willing to make themselves vulnerable to me.

5.2 The Themes

I have used my research questions as hooks on which to hang five of my themes, with a sixth theme identified as a concept which straddles all three questions. As documented in Chapter 4, once I had coded the data I reviewed the codes and aligned them with the research questions I saw a connection with (see Appendices 11-13). The final themes are detailed below, with a short summary of the content and an introduction to the findings:

Q1. How can the use of video in self and peer observations help teachers (in further education) to explore and develop their practice?

> **Theme 1** – Videoing teaching: trust and vulnerability as obstacles and spurs

> **Theme 2** – Lessons from the classroom: beyond the discomfort of watching oneself and watching others

There is not an assumption that peer and self-observation necessarily help teachers to explore and develop their practice. As discussed above and reiterated below, trust and distrust, in whatever manner that is interpreted by the individual involved, is a key factor in whether peer observation can support the enhancement of teaching practice. In the first theme I discuss the conditions under which, according to my interpretation of the data gathered, teachers felt able to participate in the self/peer observation process, and for those who did not fully participate, or, as in the case of Rowan, did not video themselves at all (see Appendix 9 for the participant overview), the obstacles they identified (some explicitly, some implicitly) to full participation. The second theme brings together what teachers have said they have learned from watching themselves and from watching each other.

Findings summary:

- Sharing videos with peers required trust and an openness to vulnerability
- Self-observation was challenging but valuable and teachers identified specific areas for improvement
- Watching their own teaching gave insight into aspects of their practice that reflection alone would not have
- A shift away from feedback allowed teachers to independently identify useful practices from their peers, supporting the development of innovative teaching methods

- Combining self and peer observations, and emphasising discussion rather than evaluation, helped teachers to scaffold their professional knowledge and practice.
- Teachers who fully engaged were able to integrate insights from their own and their peers' teaching which promoted collaboration and creativity

Q2. What role can pedagogical conversations play in the development of teacher confidence and agency?

Theme 3 – many pathways to developing confidence

Theme 4 – the fragility of agency

I have discovered that qualitative research based on narratives from participants can be fraught with pitfalls and unexpected turns. The second research question was written to explore whether pedagogical conversations, anticipated to be facilitated through the self/peer observation project, played a role in developing teacher confidence and agency. Even as I was reading questionnaires, blogs and interviewing teachers, I knew that addressing this question would not follow the path I had expected.   I found that the teachers identified a variety of pathways to confidence, rarely a solitary journey, but not always through pedagogical conversation, and these pathways are explored in theme 3.

Agency, at the outset, appeared a straightforward concept to research, and the question as to whether one can feel greater agency through pedagogical conversations seemed reasonable. However, as discussed in Chapter 2 Literature Review, this "slippery" concept is far from straightforward (Priestley et al 2015, p.19), and in the chapter I question whether it is currently more a theoretical concept in the lives of teachers than a reality. Theme 4, 'the fragility of agency' brings together what the participants believe improves or depletes their sense of agency, which I further analyse through the diffractive reading of trust and agency (Donovan, 2019).

 Findings summary:

- Teacher confidence increased through facilitated pedagogical conversations, but also through developing their academic and theoretical understanding, and through positive performance data
- Teachers did not spontaneously discuss agency, their comments often related more to autonomy or micro (classroom) level agency

- Pedagogical conversations helped teachers identify meaningful changes they could implement despite systemic constraints, fostering a sense of personal agency.
- Trust was identified as a critical component for effective pedagogical conversations.
- The study highlighted a symbiotic relationship between trust, confidence, agency, and pedagogical conversations, and indicated that strength in one element could support the development of the others.

Q.3 What impact can a diffractive analysis have when teachers talk about differences in their practice?

Theme 5 – talking about differences, not looking for perfection

This theme explores how the conversations changed as the concept of diffraction was introduced and subsequently made more explicit across the cohorts. This theme addresses how the teachers moved away from feedback and 'looking for perfection' to discussing their own and each other's pedagogical rationale and how those discussions impacted on the teachers' practice. It also includes comments regarding 'traditional' observations that were made and are relevant as a juxtaposition of the feelings engendered by the two approaches to observation. I have used data from the questionnaires, the blogs, the interviews and also a transcript of a 3-way conversation which the three participants from Cohort 4 recorded. I elected to use mainly data from the interviews when quoting from the three participants as much of what they discuss was repeated to me in our conversations. However, I wanted to capture the energy, trust and generosity that their discussion generated, which was difficult to do in selected soundbites. I do refer to and quote from their discussion within this theme, but I have also included the transcript (Appendix 14). This conversation is also returned to in Chapter 7, the conclusion to this thesis.

Findings summary:

- A diffractive analysis shifted teachers' focus from critiquing and assessing their peers to questioning and understanding differences in teaching practices.
- It encouraged teachers to consider their own and their peers' pedagogical choices, leading to greater self-awareness about their teaching methods.
- Teachers became more conscious of their teaching strategies and were motivated to make specific changes.

- The approach promoted a sense of ownership and collaboration among teachers, reducing the feeling of judgment and fostering a supportive environment.
- Teachers felt more empowered to experiment with new strategies and make changes in their practice.

Theme 6 - glimmers of hope through collaboration

The final theme identifies moments of hope that I have interpreted from the comments of the participants. I did not start out looking for 'hope' in the data, but some of the comments from the participants gave me hope that despite the incredibly difficult conditions and environment FE teachers work in, teachers still expressed optimism about the future. Initially it was more of a topic than a theme, I could not see a connection between the comments. However, I returned to the notion after writing up Themes 1-5, aware that I did not want to omit the sense of hope that I felt when I engaged with this part of the data. On rereading the data, I identified that this sense of hope arose in different contexts: talking about teaching, talking about sharing ideas, talking about students and supporting the students to be the best that they can be. This concluding theme identifies the sense of hope that I interpreted when teachers talked about collaborating with others.

Findings summary:

- A collaborative, dialogic approach to teacher development enabled participants to believe in their capacity to enact meaningful changes, essential for sustaining hope

The following sections detail the thematic analysis of the research data, the voices and lived experiences of the teachers who participated in this research. As outlined above, Themes 1-5 address the research questions, Theme 6 brings together expressions of hope I interpreted in the research data. The themes are structured around the codes I identified in my reflexive thematic analysis (see Appendix 13), using the words of the participants to exemplify the interpretations I have drawn. The findings, summarised above, are reiterated below in relation to the relevant research question. Thus, for example, the findings relating

to RQ1 are presented at the end of Themes 1 and 2, mirroring the presentation of the discussion presented in Chapter 6.

5.4 Theme 1 – Videoing teaching: trust and vulnerability as obstacles and spurs

When this study began, I was a teacher educator in a small GFE, and as discussed above (Chapter 1 and Chapter 2), the initial objective was to enable the trainee teachers to enhance their practice through videoing themselves, watching that video, sharing it with a peer and the peers to watch each other's videos. My experience of learning to teach, and also learning to teach teachers, began with the CELTA model, where trainees observe each other throughout the course, have to observe experienced teachers and sometimes (nearly always on my courses) get the opportunity to video themselves and watch that.

I wanted the CertEd/PGCE trainees to watch themselves and each other without the pressure of the observation being part of the assessment of their course, neither the actual session nor any resulting reflections of the teaching. I refined the process before beginning with each new cohort, I was more explicit about not giving each other feedback and adopting a diffractive approach to considering their own and each other's practice. However, my underpinning belief that the people who have the privilege to observe teaching (managers, teacher educators, advanced practitioners, inspectors etc, in other words, experienced teachers already deemed to be "good" or "outstanding") are not the people who would benefit most from the opportunity, remained the strongest spur for carrying out this research. This first theme brings together what I have interpreted to be the obstacles to either participating or fully participating, and the reasons the teachers were spurred on to share their videos, despite feeling "uncomfortable".

As the starting point of this research was enabling students on the CertEd/PGCE course to observe themselves and each other by asking them to video themselves, it is therefore appropriate to begin this analysis with why people did or did not complete the process I presented to them. I have named this theme "trust and vulnerability as obstacles and spurs" because the teachers who agreed to participate but then did not share their videos (Morgan and Amal) or said they would but didn't get to the videoing stage (Rowan) spoke about the things that prevented them from completing the process, obstacles they could not surmount. Potential obstacles were also discussed by those who did share their videos,

but these were in relation to obstacles they overcame. There are fewer explicit reasons given for participating, what I am calling the "spurs", the positive comments were more frequently in reference to feelings and perceived gains at the end of the cycle, these are addressed in themes 2 and 5.

Morgan and Amal, the two people who videoed and watched themselves but did not share their video with their respective groups were both from the same cohort, Cohort 1. This was the largest cohort to participate, and the only one where all the trainee teachers in the class agreed to take part. The project began in the autumn of 2019, just before the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in lockdown and we moved to teaching online. Before and during coding I had assumed that Covid had impacted on Morgan and Amal's decision not to share their videos as both talked about not having time to share them: Morgan said:

> "..in all honesty we were tied up with so much other work that I haven't found the opportunity to share my video"

and Amal said:

> "I did keep meaning too (sic) but completely forgot and it wasn't on my priority list".

I also attributed the pandemic to having fewer willing participants on Cohorts 2-4. However, reading the data diffractively through the notions of trust and distrust, I began to question this assumption. Neither Morgan (questionnaire) nor Amal (questionnaire and blog) mentioned the pandemic as an obstacle, although Rowan did in their interview. Morgan, answering a question on how they felt watching themself, focussed on the physical deficits they noticed:

> "I was focusing too much on my appearance initially, after watching it a few times I noticed that I was speaking at a fast pace"

and in answering why they had not shared the video said:

> "I wasn't too keen on my appearance".

Amal did not focus on their appearance:

> "I found it very strange at first as I have never watched myself teaching but it actually helped me a lot"

 and despite noting:

> "I learnt that I have a great relationship with my learners…. I am also able to have a laugh and enjoy the lesson with them"

went on to explain that they did not share the video because:

> "…. I suppose I was a bit nervous. I didn't know what my peers would think of my teaching skills as I wasn't confident in myself….".

I began to question why Morgan and Amal were reluctant to share their videos, but the other 5 on the cohort had done.

Cohort 1 was an anomaly in a number of ways, they were not interviewed and were asked to give each other feedback. I introduced interviews to the process due to the lack of depth in the writing of the blogs and questionnaires they completed, and I introduced diffraction because I felt the feedback students were giving each other (I had used the word 'feedback' in the questionnaire) and the resulting reflections were not moving them beyond replicating the observation/feedback cycle they were accustomed to. However, the biggest anomaly was one I had not considered until I began to read the data diffractively through the notions of trust and distrust. The course itself was unusual, there were seven trainee teachers, five of whom were employed at the college within the same department in various student support roles, this had not happened before, at the most, we might have two or three from the same department.

Sharing a video of one's teaching is an act of making oneself vulnerable, it is a 'leap of faith' (Möllering, 2006. Cited by Donovan, 2019). In considering the responses of the participants, and also thinking about those who were asked but did not participate in the later cohorts, I realised that my previous experience of asking trainee teachers to video themselves was in a very different context. I had not asked them to share the videos as they did not need to. On the CELTA course the trainees observe their peers teaching in class, in real time, as part of the course requirements (see Chapter 1). Signing up to the course is signing up to making yourself vulnerable, and the trust required is in the tutor who manages and monitors the peer interactions following teaching. It was not until I began to generate the themes and read the data through notions of trust that the impact of this difference became clear. This is addressed in the concluding chapter, in considerations for refining this project and taking it forward.

The five trainees from Cohort 1, who had a relationship outside of the course, were friends and colleagues who shared staffrooms, some taught (as part of their CertEd/PGCE placement) or supported (their paid role) the same students. Like Morgan and Amal, Sam

and Tatum also commented on physical aspects of watching themselves that they found uncomfortable: Tatum noted:

"*At first I felt a little embarrassed over the initial watching myself [……] my body language showed my students I was maybe nerves (sic) as I was fiddling with things*"

 and Sam noted:

"*I felt very nervous and was surprised to find out I sounded like my daughter!!!*".

Despite this, both shared their videos, indicating that some, if not all, of the key concepts required to trust their peers were in place, they were able to make the "leap of faith". Amal goes on to say in the questionnaire that:

"*I wasn't confident in myself at the time but if I was to do it again, I would feel a lot more confident*".

I interpret the feeling of confidence that Amal speaks of as not having developed trust in their peers at the start of the year, but that this had developed towards the end of the course. A significant challenge in the second year of the course is a research project (explored more in Theme 3) which requires the students to choose and research a pedagogical issue in their subject area, they work together closely on this, supporting each other to prepare for delivering a paper to peers from other colleges. Amal had been very nervous about presenting the paper and had got a lot of support from peers, who had been positive both about the content and Amal's presentation skills. I interpret this as Amal opening up to being vulnerable to the others and developing a sense of their benevolence and integrity. Donovan states "it is the willingness to be vulnerable that makes trust such an elusive concept" (Donovan, 2019, p. 13). A reluctance to be vulnerable can also be interpreted in Rowan's interview. When asked why they and another student in the class had not managed to video themself, Rowan answered:

 "(we) *were the only students in the class, let alone our group that had a separate full-time job as well as our placement and as well as our our course. So it was, you know, being able to manage that on its own was an incredible feat*"

This was the reference to the impact of the pandemic that I initially took at face value. However, rereading Rowan's interview diffractively through the concepts of trust and distrust, I identified other comments made which I have read as a reluctance to be

vulnerable, and therefore obstacles to participating. At the beginning of the interview, I asked Rowan to talk about how they had found the course and teaching, Rowan said:

> *"at the end of the first year I was feeling pretty much… I was feeling quite overwhelmed. I was feeling like I'd stood in something that was a bit too deep for me"*

later they continued:

> *"I wasn't very confident in my abilities at all, until, you know, probably quite deep into the second year"*

Rowan expressed these feelings several times:

> *"I always I always struggle to to believe that I deserve to be where I am. Uh, which was a problem that I was having at the mid to late section of the first year I've I I felt like I just walked into the wrong room. I was in this room with a with really intelligent people and I'm just like heh, I just, I I, I didn't feel like I fitted in at all"*

> *"I didn't feel like I was smart enough. (…) I didn't believe that I had the subject knowledge. I didn't believe that I was smart enough to understand, let alone apply the the what was being taught to me"*

Rowan did develop confidence over the year however, this is discussed in theme 3 below.

Although a clear common denominator between Morgan, Amal and Rowan is their lack of confidence in themselves, this alone is not the key obstacle to participation. In later themes, the positive relationship between the peers who shared their videos is made explicit. Despite running the project over three academic years and four cohorts, it was only upon interpreting the data through the lens of trust and distrust that I fully appreciated the importance of developing positive relationships before asking people to take "a leap of faith". Amal and Rowan both expressed concerns about being compared negatively with or by their peers, indicating that they did not believe their peers would be benevolent towards them and thus could not make the "leap of faith" required to fully participate at the time of asking. However, other participants also lacked confidence and felt uncomfortable watching themselves, but they were able to overcome this because they were working with people they trusted. People who they felt met enough of the tenets of trust for them to make themselves vulnerable.

However, I do not think merely working in the same department engenders sufficient trust to make oneself vulnerable. Cohort 4, made up of two colleagues from my department, was the second attempt to run the project with experienced tutors. At the first attempt, six tutors volunteered, but the programme never managed to get off the ground. I did not interview any of the tutors who dropped out of the first attempt, however, I believe an institutional lack of trust impacted on the six. I was refused my request to use mandatory CPD time for participation in the self/peer observation cycle. Reading through notions of distrust, I interpret this decision by the quality manager as related to the "'low trust-high distrust' tactics" (Donovan, 2019. p. 196) employed by the college, evidenced by actions such as the continued use of an observation framework which persisted in using language that mirrored the language of graded observations ('exceeds expectations', 'meets expectations', 'does not meet expectations'). In the end, four of the six potential participants withdrew.

I interviewed one of the two who continued, Reese, twice. Firstly after the collapse of the first attempt, and then later, after the successful completion of the Cohort 4 cycle. I knew Reese had videoed themself and watched the video, but the sharing and dialogues had not happened. I wanted to find out both what they thought were the obstacles and whether they had gained anything from watching themself. Reese attributed the failure of this attempt to lack of time and energy due to the pandemic:

> *"I think I think it was the point in time too. It was having that residual energy to do anything more. You know when you were also dealing with COVID, often dealing with like home schooling. You know, all those added pressures, and I think our our I was just a bit spent and I imagine lots of other people felt the same way and so I think that that's why it never kind of happened."*

A further obstacle suggested by Reese was that I had not given the groups deadlines by which to complete each stage of the process. I had been reticent to pressurise colleagues, aware of the pressure everybody was under at the time and had not considered that the trainee teachers who participated were bound by the timelines of the course. The trainee teachers who participated were able to use their conversations about the self and peer observations to inform a blog they had to write as part of their qualification, my six colleagues had no extrinsic motivation, I was reliant on their intrinsic desire to help me as a colleague. Reese said:

"Every week you'd be on my to do list, oh I must contact (2 colleagues) and get, get this meeting going and and then it and then there would, yeah it was just like overwhelming [……….] But then it it it didn't, I t didn't happen. So my apologies for that."

Although it was not a conscious decision, reading my approach to working with colleagues through concepts of trust, I interpret my unwillingness to make demands of them through imposing deadlines as my distancing myself from the low trust-high distrust tactics manifested by the institution. Continuing with a diffractive reading into my subconscious decision process, I believe I assumed their volunteering to participate meant they were willing to make that "leap of faith", and that they believed in the competence, benevolence, integrity and reciprocity of me and their peers. I cannot know whether they did or did not. Reese and Ali, who became Cohort 4, did, certainly sufficiently to proceed with the process. Reese commented when I queried whether a timeline would have been helpful:

"It would've, it really would because I'm I always really worked really well to deadlines. (…) So so yeah, that would have been really useful actually. (…) but I suppose, yeah, maybe being a bit more involved would have been more helpful. Yeah, to make it move along."

Reese also alluded to feelings of guilt when the first group were not managing to liaise:

"And also cos then the other thing is, you don't, you don't get it done and then it it, I'm the kind of person well pop into my head oh gosh I haven't done that thing for Francine."

I therefore must consider whether in not giving more structure and a timeline for completion, I weakened the initial trust that tutors felt towards me. Rather than reducing the pressure on my colleagues by leaving the organising of the videoing, exchanging, meeting to discuss etc, this increased the pressure as it required someone to take on the role of organising the others. And whether this in fact led to some of the tutors questioning their perception of me as competent. I had emailed them with the relevant information about the project and who they would be working with but had then left them to make the arrangements. What I viewed as an act of trust and faith in their ability, was perhaps read as an act of 'passing the buck'.

Having explored the obstacles to participation, the next section will explore the factors that spurred people to participate. As stated in the introduction, there are fewer explicit

references to why people agreed to participate, positivity was mainly expressed in reference to outcomes, not expectations.

A spur to participate for Cohort 4, my colleagues, was a willingness to support my research. Reese stated:

> "I was pleased to be involved with it because I thought would be a useful process and and it sounded like a really interesting project. And I like you, Francine, so I wanted to help you out"

However, as described above, ultimately only 2 participated and I related this to intrinsic motivation. Both colleagues who participated, Reese and Ali, were experienced, well qualified teachers and both taught higher-level courses in the university centre of the college. Although still tethered to the college quality cycle, as HE lecturers they were outside of the OFSTED inspection framework and therefore have fewer performative demands imposed on them than FE colleagues within the same department.

Another of the few explicit reasons given for participating came from Drew. In later themes I analyse Drew's responses in relation to confidence and the conversations they had with their peers, where they talk of lacking confidence and not being able to participate fully in a conversation (see themes 3 and 5). However, they never doubted their participation in the research. Drew is one of the few who continued to video themselves after the completion of the project. And in explaining how they felt about sharing their video Drew says:

> "I felt confident enough that it weren't that bad. You know, it weren't my greatest session, but I don't know. I wanted them to see one out of my comfort zone. That's why I chose a theory session. I didn't want them to see me doing practical 'cause I know that quite well. So I put myself out of my comfort zone, especially them two being teachers a lot longer than me. They can give me some feedback on what I need to kind of improve".

For Drew, the spur to participating was a strong desire to improve. Drew is not the most confident student, they have dyslexia and had a poor experience at school. However, Drew has a strong bond with the two trainee teachers in their peer group for the observation, and rather than share a video of them teaching an area of strength, chose instead an area that they know they need to develop. I view this as one of the moments of greatest vulnerability in the project, absolute trust is conveyed in this particular leap of faith.

The analysis of the participants' feelings about making and sharing their videos, notions identified as obstacles and spurs, indicated a willingness to participate. However, it also highlighted the importance of the relationships of trust required to take the 'leap of faith' and make oneself vulnerable. Where a relationship existed, or developed, there was a greater propensity for the teachers to be willing to explore their practice with others.

5.5 Theme 2 - Lessons from the classroom: beyond the discomfort of watching oneself and watching others

The second theme also addresses the first research question: *How can the use of video in self and peer observations help teachers (in further education) to explore and develop their practice?* I have called this theme "lessons from the classroom" as I have isolated teacher comments on what they said they learned from watching themselves and watching each other. I have not included comments which refer to conversations the teachers had following the observation process, I have analysed these separately, either in relation to research question two or research question three. This has been in order to maintain the dialogic aspect of the research as a distinct stage in the process and to be able to evaluate whether the opportunity for pedagogical discussions with their peers had an impact on their practice, either through what the teachers said or my interpretation of their comments.

I have approached this theme by presenting the 'watching oneself' and 'watching others' extracts separately, although they are part of the same concept of 'lessons from the classroom'. I believe this is important as self-observation is far less commonly used to support teacher development than peer observation and I want to analyse the distinct benefits of each as the teachers described them.

One of the codes I identified during the earlier stages of data analysis was 'focussing on the physical'. Some teachers commented on feeling uncomfortable about how they sound. Sam told me:

> "*the most nerve-wracking thing for me was listening back to the recording*"

and Jo mentioned:

> "*it's the old voice thing*"

Drew stated:

"*at first it were hard, obviously I don't like my voice, so that were difficult*"

Others commented on the language they used. Kai commented:

"*listening to yourself back it's..you realize how many times you say certain words*"

and *Reese* said:

"*I hate how inarticulate I can be, and I think oh gosh, are they understanding what I am saying*"

There were comments about how they looked, for example Ali joked:

"*I hated it, you know, really, really hated it because I would look at myself and say, oh, I thought I was quite good looking until I saw myself on there*"

For teachers to focus on "irrelevant" aspects when they first watch themselves is to be expected, the Harvard 'Best Foot Forward' (2015) program (see Chapter 2 for further details) anticipated this when preparing teachers who participated in their programme. However, for the majority of participants in this research, despite their discomfort, they were still able to watch the videos and were able to share them with their peers, evidencing a level of trust that I had not anticipated they would need, but has become clear as I consider the conversations and comments through a diffractive reading of trust. They were willing to make themselves vulnerable to peers, anticipating that their trust would be returned (reciprocity) and their peers would have their best interests at heart (benevolence) whilst watching their video and preparing for their pedagogical conversation. 'Focussing on the physical' therefore became part of the 'lessons from the classroom' theme because as well noticing issues that they did not, could not, offer solutions to, there were also occasions where they 'focussed on the physical' but were able to move beyond their discomfort and identify areas of their practice that they wanted to explore and develop as a result of what they noticed. Lee observed that:

"*it were a good thing to watch because things that you might not be conscious that you're doing like [.....] turning your back to your class more to look at your board*"

and when asked if they had made any changes to their practice after watching this answered:

"*Yes I'm more conscious now of facing my students rather than when I'm doing PowerPoints, just stood looking at a PowerPoint rather than, you know, turning and speaking to them.*"

Drew made a similar observation, they had continued to video themself beyond the project as they found it helpful, and had videoed themself teaching a practical session. Drew had noticed that they needed to:

> "look at them more than looking at the food, I normally keep my head down like I'm at work and I'm not at work. It was like I was at work. You know, I didn't say a lot. There was a lot of silence. Whereas I was trying to be too serious for what I were doing. Uhm. And it worked, obviously the job got done, but it could have been better and I've got another one tomorrow and I know what to do. Since watching that I know how to approach it a lot better this time".

Taylor on the other hand noted that:

> "I did think that actually, maybe sometimes I do need to stand back a little bit. That's just me positioning myself in the classroom, I realise. Yeah, physically step back."

All three teachers noted the importance of their physical interaction with their students. For both Lee and Drew this was regarding the building of rapport with a class and being able to interact with students, and being able to observe their students' reactions and interactions. In my experience as an observer, when teachers reflect on what happened in their session, they can only remember what they saw and felt. If Lee or Drew had been recalling their session from memory, they may have remembered the students as getting distracted, perhaps chatting, and attributed this to student behaviour rather than a lack of teacher focus on the students or having missed cues from the students that they were losing concentration or not understanding. By watching their videos, the teachers could see the importance of engaging more with the students. "Remember to speak to the students, not the board" and "try to look at your students, make eye contact" are comments I have made and discussed with countless trainee teachers, but seeing it happen for themselves definitely makes the biggest impact.

As well as feelings of discomfort, some of the teachers commented on the satisfaction of seeing the students engaged in the sessions and themselves interacting well with their students. For example, Nicky said:

> "I felt comfortable watching the video [….] I learned that the learners look relaxed and engaged and was pleased with this"

and Amal commented:

> *"I learnt that I have a great relationship with my learners [....] I am able to have a laugh and enjoy the lesson with them"*

Others noted that their interaction with students was an area to improve. Taylor noticed:

> *"Maybe I stood back a little bit too much erm when I could have actually give some prompts"*

Reese said:

> *"I'm doing a lot of talking [.....] I think maybe I do talk too much".*

An area of teacher-student interaction that several of the trainee teacher participants commented on was their questioning techniques. This is an area that would have been discussed many times on their CertEd/PGCE course, both in the taught sessions, teaching the trainees about different approaches to questioning and its importance in Assessment for Learning, as well as extensively in feedback on their own teaching – "questioning" has its own criteria on the lesson observation feedback forms (see Appendix 14)

Tatum and Nicky were both part of Cohort 1 and their comments are taken from the questionnaires. Tatum wrote:

> *"I used direct questions only on students I felt would give me an answer, on reflection this made me realise I need to direct my questions at all students"*

and Nicky wrote:

> *"I recognised that some learners answer frequently during whole group questioning and I find it difficult to deter and involve others. One idea I have learned is that I could allow the learner to answer and ask others for their opinion or name quieter students to give an opposing answer".*

Although it is apparent from their comments that watching themselves helped them to consider their practice and they suggest improvements, these 'sanitised' reflections on what happened are a reminder to me of why the data gathering methods I used evolved. Their words told me what they did, but not how they felt about it. The following extracts, taken from interviews, convey much more of a sense of achievement and satisfaction of having solved a 'problem' for themselves.

Kai:

> *"But once I got into it and then looking back on it, it's bit was really, really useful. Because you don't realize at the time when you're teaching or you know, even though it's in your head to do maybe certain types of questioning or feedback, or I think it*

becomes automatic and you do it, and until you listen back to it and you think I actually didn't realise I did it in that way or I didn't give them long enough to respond"

Kai goes on to talk about what they learned from observing their peer, Erin, and the impact on their questioning, this is discussed in more detail below in 'learning from others'.

Drew also talked about how observing their own practice helped them to adapt their practice:

"I can see the way if I'm asking a question to a to a student if it makes them feel uncomfortable or if they don't know the answer or am I targeting the same person too much. You know, instead of bringing it round as a group or as a whole. Uh, and that helped, it helped me, especially for their next session. Once I had watched that how to kind of interact more without putting people under pressure or making anyone nervous."

Drew is particularly sensitive to the needs of their students, which is highlighted in later themes.

Two of the participants taught classes where support staff were required. After watching their videos both commented that the support staff appeared to be unclear regarding what was expected of them. Nicky stated:

"I noticed the support staff were unaware of the instructions or questioning I had given [….] resulting in a little confusion"

and Mel wrote:

"while my sitting (sic) plan was followed by the students, the support staff did not sit where they were advised to"

Also going on to say that the support staff had not understood the activity or what was expected of the students. Neither Nicky nor Mel tried to blame the support staff, both were able to see from their videos that the support staff were trying to play their role, Mel said the activity had not worked as she had wanted it to:

"despite their (support staff) best efforts"

Both took responsibility for the lack of communication, I believe as a result of observing both themselves and the actions of the support staff. Nicky concluded:

"I should have more discussion with support staff"

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and Mel admitted:

> "I made a mistake of not explaining the aim of the activity to the personal skills assistant prior to the session"

going on to conclude:

> "I am going to focus on utilising support staff more effectively by giving them a specific guidance relating to each lesson activity".

The teaching points above are things that I would have noticed had I been an observer in their class. However, the important difference is that the teachers noticed them for themselves. They were able to identify something they saw as an area for improvement and find a solution. Many of the points discussed are relatively minor issues, but the changes that follow make "small but consequential differences" (Haraway, 1992, p.218) in the practice of the teachers and the impact on their students and can only be noticed by the teacher if they are afforded the opportunity to watch themselves.

The following section looks at 'lessons from the classroom – learning from others'. All the cohorts were able to identify practices in the teaching of their peers that they would like to try out in their own teaching. However, as discussed above, due to the way I had initially set up the project, that is, the language I used in the questionnaire (for example "*Have you learned anything from watching your peers – if so, what? Did you feel comfortable giving feedback*? "see Appendix 1) and I had not introduced a diffractive approach, there were more descriptive comments and more of a focus on what had not worked in Cohort 1's comments, which is not present in the later cohorts' data (with the exception of one teacher in Cohort 2, discussed below). For the first cohort, rather than opening up a new way to experience observations, they were placed in the traditional observer's chair. And although they did identify ways to explore and develop their practice further as a result of observing peers, the mirroring of a traditional observation/reflection cycle resulted in some comments that lacked depth. For example, commenting on the teaching in an SEN class, Tatum wrote:

> "*There was a lot of white board teaching as such, by this I mean the tutor spoke a lot to the class and wrote on the board the answers he was given. There was very little independent work with the students at all, but I understand why*"

Tatum does go on to comment that this was because of the needs of the learners but does not analyse why it was necessary or indicate that there was a discussion with the observed teacher to identify what the pedagogical rationale might have been.

Amal, who did not share their own video (see Theme 1), was either descriptive when writing about the teaching of their peers or evaluative (see Theme 5). Amal watched two videos and in the blog stated:

> "Both of these observations were very interesting and I gained a lot of knowledge from them"

In the questionnaire they wrote:

> "I have watched my peer's videos and they are amazing teachers. It was so lovely watching them teach as we all started together with no experience and everyone has just turned out to be fantastic".

Amal does not refer to anything that they have learned from the observations, in the reflective blog they describe two incidents that are similar to issues they have with their classes, but rather than identify any observed practices that may be useful, describes feedback they have received from their mentor or tutor. I do not interpret this as a lack of insight by Amal, rather a further example of their lack of confidence, explored in Theme 1, and a lack of clarity regarding the intention of the activity. Proposals on how to address these issues are presented in Chapter 7.

Across the cohorts there were similarities in the areas the participants identified as practices to learn from. Some of these are explored in this theme, as they were standalone comments made by the observing teacher, others are explored in later themes, where they come out of the conversations that the teachers had following the observations.

One of the areas the participants highlighted was seeing how creative their peers were and looking for ways to incorporate that creativity into their own teaching. Ali talked about how creative Reese had been:

> "(they) had a reflective quiz that (they) used as a way of engaging the learner [….] (they)'d used a story to actually do it, and I'm not very good at using storytelling [….] I'd said, can you send me the story because it was I was so interested in what they'd

done. I wanted to see what, yeah, so, using storytelling as a as a learning tool I thought was was a really great way of teaching"

Drew, Taylor and Jo worked together as a three and shared a lot of ideas and activities (detailed in later themes). Jo and Taylor were both keen to adapt Drew's approach to reluctant learners in their own teaching. Drew had a Level 2 class who would not engage with topics that they thought they were not interested in. Jo explained how Drew's class would not engage with a PowerPoint presentation for a lesson:

"so (they) introduced a kind of bingo thing. But it's done with a bit of prior learning, which was a bit of a flipped learning thing I suppose".

Drew had set a task for the students to complete at home and the 'test' was in the form of a competition, a game of bingo with a prize. Jo went on to say:

"I'm still trying to think how I could make it work as well as (they) did in my sessions, but it was a great it was"

Taylor, in their interview commented:

"Drew's got some really good creative ideas which I really like, erm some really fun, creative ideas. So I'm taking that"

Tatum and Drew both talked about learning new ways to start their lessons. Tatum had already used an activity with a group which had not worked. However, observing it being used by another tutor with a less able group of students, realised it had not been challenging enough for their learners commenting that it:

"showed why it was so important to choose the correct audience. I think I will give it a go with my younger group".

Drew stated:

"I normally just do an activity and then we move straight on. Whereas like Taylor kind of brings it all together which I thought were quite good. So I kind of want to make more of a flow of a lesson instead of just spreading it out too much and going on about too many random things."

There are countless websites and areas for shared resources where we are encouraged to access activities to engage students and 'make learning fun'. However, for new teachers this can be overwhelming, and as Drew points out, can result in confusion from trying to include too many "random" activities. The comments from the teachers portray the importance of being able to see how other people might adapt activities, and as Tatum

decides, give something another go even if the first attempt was not successful. This leads me to my first diffractive reading of the data in this section. Even when considering activities such as starters, teachers are taking a step into the unknown if it is merely something they have been told about or read about. The starter can set the tone for the session, and good introductions are engaging and pertinent to the session. However, if it goes wrong, if it does not engage the students, it may be difficult to get the class back on track. In a supportive environment where mistakes are embraced as part of the learning process, this would potentially be a discussion point, a stepping stone to enhancing practice. The teachers who shared their videos were able to see things working, or not working, in action and discuss those with their peers. However, in most FE colleges, observation, whether part of a CertEd/PGCE course or part of the quality cycle, is a high stakes activity. A 'poor' observation can result in performance management, even where it is an ostensibly 'supportive' observation (see Chapter 1). Analysing this diffractively through Donovan's work on trust (2019), where teaching is taking place in an environment of high risks and high stakes environment (see Chapter 3 Literature Review), trust is low, and low trust can impede collaboration.

Although collaboration may be impeded by the low trust-high distrust tactics employed by an institution where performative management is the norm, re-reading the comments from the participants, I feel hopeful that their trust is not lost in one another. Some of the participants talked of wanting to continue videoing their teaching and sharing with their peers, Kai and Erin had agreed to another cycle of the process in order to give me even more detailed data on the impact of such collaboration.

The concept of trust and collaboration runs through further examples of the participants learning from watching each other's practice. When the teachers talk of adopting and adapting practices that they have observed, I have read this as trusting in the competence of their peers. Kai explained:

> *"(Erin) did a bit where (they'd) ask a question and be quiet for a good 20 seconds. It might have even been a bit longer, whereas I reflected on that and sometimes when I ask a question in class, I'm so quick to within a few seconds ask something else, or because I don't, I suppose I get a little bit nervous with the silence. So I really learned from that that actually silence is good because it's allowing the students to think about their answer."*

Kai also added later:

> *"It's just building that confidence to know that silence is OK, whereas I used to think that if it was silent, I felt like if someone walked in and it was silent, they'd be thinking well why, what're they doing? [….] I think it... with my own kind of self-confidence, but because I've watched Erin do that, I thought actually yeah, you know I don't need to be constantly talking all the time. They need time to check, to be on task. If I'm setting them an activity, they need to be doing it."*

In the interview, I was pleased that Kai had developed the confidence to let the students work silently if that was required. Rereading this through a concept of trust however, I also see what an impact that trust in their colleague's practice has had on their own practice. Without seeing how Erin used silence to give students thinking time, and without the trust that this was good practice, Kai would only have had the input of an observer. Kai's trust in Erin enabled them to take the risk of trying it out in their own teaching.

 Another area where the participants felt they had benefitted from observing their peers was in classroom management. Lee noted that they were more accustomed to teaching adults, where a "*more relaxed and kinda chilled out*" approach was required, but this was not working with the younger students they'd recently been given:

> *"I need to be a bit more like Erin, a bit more authoritative and you know you are in a lesson. You are here and you are here to learn"*

 Lee went on to say:

> *"(Erin) will tell (their) students what's expected of them from a lesson. Uh, but that has been stamped down right in the beginning, which I've started doing"*

Tatum also felt that their colleague had developed strategies that they would be able to utilise:

> *"I have learnt to stay calm is key [….] Maybe a hand signal like my colleague or just silence until it stops, I've seen this work"*.

As with Kai, observing the practice, seeing it work, not just a description of strategies for classroom management, and taking a diffractive approach to thinking about their practice, gave Lee and Tatum the confidence to take a different approach.

The final aspect of the 'Lessons from the classroom' theme is the comments the participants who shared their video made on how the process had made them feel. I had hoped that the participants would learn from each other, I know that this model works with CELTA trainees

(see Chapter 1), however observation as most of these teachers have ever experienced it is generally nerve-wracking, and as stated above, tends to be high stakes. Those who did see the cycle through to the end (those who did not have been discussed in Theme 1) were extremely positive about the experience. Alex wrote:

> "I felt excited to complete this observation, as I have a very limited experience of engaging with lessons outside of my subject specialism, and of observing other teachers in general"

Tatum echoed these sentiments:

> "I thoroughly enjoyed it, as well as learning different teaching styles I have also had the chance to see what goes on in other departments"

The teachers also talked of their satisfaction at being able to support their colleagues. Erin (an experienced teacher completing their PGCE) had felt they had reconsidered their questioning techniques (discussed in Theme 3) after watching Lee's video. Lee told me:

> "It was nice getting a compliment from (them) [….] Erin is a fantastic teacher [….]so it were nice that (they) were able to take something from what I were doing as a new teacher"

This mutual support that the teachers felt can be seen more markedly in the discussion between Jo, Taylor and Drew (Appendix 15) and analysed in Theme 5. Through the concept of trust, I interpret the feelings expressed here as further building of trust between colleagues, the leap of faith has already been made by sharing the videos, but that trust has been returned, evidenced by the positivity in the comments.

This theme has highlighted the feelings of discomfort that watching oneself can often cause, and that for some of the participants they were unable to overcome this discomfort and share their videos. The responses from the participants also indicate however, that once they can move beyond those feelings of discomfort, watching themselves and their peers can support them to explore their practice through specific incidents in the teaching observed. Furthermore, teachers identified ways to collaborate and share their ideas and experiences.

Summary of findings for themes 1 and 2, RQ1:

- Sharing videos with peers required trust and an openness to vulnerability

- Self-observation was challenging but valuable and teachers identified specific areas for improvement
- Watching their own teaching gave insight into aspects of their practice reflection alone would not have
- A shift away from feedback allowed teachers to independently identify useful practices from their peers, supporting the development of innovative teaching methods
- Combining self and peer observations, and emphasising discussion rather than evaluation, helped teachers to scaffold their professional knowledge and practice.
- Teachers who fully engaged were able to integrate insights from their own and their peers' teaching which promoted collaboration and creativity

5.7 Theme 3 – many pathways to (developing) confidence

The theme 'many pathways to (developing) confidence' brings together the different routes that the teachers talked about taking to becoming more confident, both in the classroom and also in their identities as teachers. When the teachers talked about what they had learned from watching themselves and each other, some of the outcomes led to increased confidence. However, as I analysed the data, I saw that the teachers talked about other influences on their levels of confidence, besides the conversations that followed the observations. Therefore, this theme represents my interpretation of the teachers' narratives about becoming more confident.

The second research question *What role can pedagogical conversations play in the development of teacher confidence and agency?* is the starting point for this theme. However, as stated above, the teachers identified more routes to confidence than I had anticipated would come out of the interviews and these are an important, if unexpected, element of the teachers' lived experiences, which I committed to tell at the outset of this research. The pedagogical conversations analysed in this theme are not those that followed the observations. When I analysed the codes, I interpreted that they gave more illustrative examples of how the diffractive analysis that I had asked participants to adopt impacted on the conversations they had and their feelings about the study. This theme does address the

research question, however there is a greater emphasis on confidence than pedagogical conversations.

The first element of this theme requires some context to illustrate the role pedagogical conversations, unrelated to the self and peer observation, played in the development of some of the participants' confidence.

Students on the CertEd/PGCE had to produce four short reflective blogs as part of their assessment, each with a different focus. One was to reflect on an observation they had done of a peer or their mentor. This was the assessment where I expected participants in my research to write about the self and peer observations they had completed. Another was to consider a teaching, learning and assessment theme of their choice to reflect on. For this latter assessment I gave the trainees the choice of writing it or recording a reflective conversation in a coaching pair or triangle, using coaching prompt questions. These pedagogical conversations became very popular as they happened during class time, and for the trainee teachers, they felt they had one fewer assessment to work on at home. Cohort 3 recorded their peer observation 'reflection' – their diffractive analysis, which I have referred to in Theme 5. From the interviews it has become apparent to me that for Cohort 2, they became an important part of how they coped during the course.

The second cohort of participants (Erin, Lee and Kai who had completed the videoing cycle, and Rowan, who had not, but agreed to be interviewed) had a particularly difficult CertEd/PGCE course. They started in 2019, so halfway through their first year went into lockdown, teaching and being taught online. They then came into the second year, only to go into the second lockdown, with more teaching and being taught online; with the added complication of hybrid teaching, necessitating the acquisition of a whole new set of skills, teaching (or participating as a student) in sessions where half of the students were in class and the other half were joining online due to Covid restrictions. The opportunity to select a TLA theme to discuss gave the teachers a reason to share some of the issues they were having.

Lee gave an example of how the facilitated pedagogical conversations had helped develop their confidence. Lee was telling me about their teaching now that the course had finished and that they were having fewer problems with a more senior colleague at work, who

during our course had wanted them to teach an area outside of their specialism. I remembered this had been the theme of the reflective conversation they had recorded with a peer and asked if that had helped. Lee recounted how initially they had been made to teach a mandatory Health and Safety course but had not felt confident about the topic and students had complained about the classes. Lee had not known how to approach the problem. After explaining the dilemma to the peer, they had talked about possible solutions and what the peer would do in a similar situation:

> *"Yeah, (peer) was supportive he gave me…he said, you know about writing things down and maybe keeping a track of what's being said and then going, you know, if you can't speak to that person you speak to your manager. (…) So now I've started making a log of everything that's being said. (…) and I've I've made a point of saying, you know, I don't feel happy and what I'm being told I've got to do by a staff member."*

Although the solution was not classroom based, this issue impacted on Lee's teaching and they had lacked the knowledge or confidence to tackle it. Discussing the problem with their peer gave Lee options on how to approach it and also the reassurance that this was not a situation they needed to continue with, and therefore the confidence to deal with it.

Kai, from the same cohort, talked about the importance of the opportunity to discuss their teaching with a peer, in this case, with Rowan :

> *"…(it) helped in regards to the pedagogy side because it allowed me then to reflect, 'cause you sometimes try and go oh that didn't go well so I'm not gonna do that again. And then you kind of forget the impact it had of why you're not doing it again because you move forward, (…) Yeah yeah, it helped massively with everything really with the whole emotional side of it, the teaching side"*

It is easy to dismiss these moments as trivial, however trainee teachers are very often volunteers in a college in order to get the hours required for their course, or on precarious contracts with training providers as they are unqualified (with the exception of Cohort 1, as noted above). They are frequently isolated as teachers and certainly not part of a staff group with whom they can chat, where they can air concerns and hear that they are not alone and so build their confidence as teachers. As well as affording the trainees the opportunity to share their concerns and find solutions together, I believe the 'reflective blog' conversation gave them space to develop trust in each other and they continued to have these conversations beyond the assessment window. Rowan, who had not videoed

themself (see obstacles, theme 1), was Kai's partner for the reflective blog assessment, Kai had talked openly about their concerns and had felt that the conversation with Rowan had helped them. I interpret this as one of the stepping stones to Rowan developing confidence in themself as a teacher and beginning to trust their peers.

Analysing Rowan's interview during the RTA process, I was able to identify other points in their narrative that I interpreted as confidence building. And later, through the diffractive reading, also as trust building. As seen through quotes in theme 1, Rowan did not feel confident in their academic ability and compared themself negatively with peers. Rowan's closest relationship at the beginning of the second year was with a student who, like Rowan had a full-time job. Both were juggling this with their voluntary teaching at the college and managing course work. When the second lock down happened, the area where the peer taught moved the teaching of the subject to asynchronous resources. Consequently, they lost their teaching practice (they were able to extend their end date until teaching of the subject resumed and achieved their teaching qualification) and were unable to participate in the videoing project. I cannot say that Rowan would have participated if they had been able to work with this peer, but I believe Rowan had more trust in them, which I now understand to be a key factor in sharing the videos. Rowan told me:

> "*I spoke with with (peer) a lot, palled up with (peer) quite well to be fair [….] even though (they're) the specialist in maths, I've got an interest in maths as well so we always had that in common, yeah? And we were talking about like trying to, you know, trying to make it more relatable for for the students*"

Rowan went on to give an animated account of the discussions they had around teaching maths, and ideas they had suggested to make the topic more relatable for the students. Rowan was able to open up to this peer about their own difficulties in teaching:

> "*and likewise, it was like I had trouble with like differentiation and stuff in my classes because I was actually part of the HE team at xx College, so I was teaching Level 4 on the foundation degree. It's like the first year of uni equivalence and I found it difficult to keep bringing my level of teaching up to their level of learning, especially in the early days and and he was giving me advice on like, well, you know like questioning tactics and ways you can try and look at it and trying to look at like social learning and peer to peer. And all these kinds of things and and and that was just based off*

conversations that we had talking about what works, what we've done that's worked for us. And you know what difficult difficulties we were having"

For this cohort, learning to be teachers during a pandemic could have had a significantly negative impact on their confidence, and at times it did. However, they felt that talking to each other helped them. For example, Lee said:

"We were all in the same boat [....] we all supported one another and gave each other ideas. [....] It were a support group and especially through the pandemic. I think nearly every single one of us at one point said that were it, no, we weren't doing it. But everybody, you know, in their own, in their own way, really came out and we were just there"

This sentiment is echoed by Kai:

"I was able to talk about my journey right from the beginning and I think it allows you then 'cause obviously COVID impacted a lot, you can lose your way a little bit because you're stuck in home. You're not seeing anyone [....] So those reflective conversations helped massively because it kind of put you back where you needed to be really."

As well as interpreting these conversations as boosts to their confidence, I see how they were able to develop trusting relationships. They believed in each other's benevolence, they were not competing to be 'the best', they wanted to support each other and help each other 'get through'. They took the time to help each other, and this was reciprocated. For example, Rowan stated:

"And again we discussed practices of what we were going to do and what difficulties we'd had, and if one or other member of the group come across a similar thing, what we'd done [....] I do think they had a massive positive erm effect on like our practice, these conversations and being able to discuss you know, and and I don't know if compares the right word, but just discuss what had gone on in each of our practices and get used to applying that"

As stated above, analysing the interviews also gave me insight into the other ways in which the participants had developed confidence in their practice and ability. One of the areas that gave them confidence was doing the CertEd/PGCE course. For example, Lee said

"Kai, when (they) first started (they) were a lot quieter and (they) didn't seem to speak out as much [....] but (their) confidence has grown and yeah, just taking a bit of everything from everybody really. And you know, this is what we've we've trained to do and all them hours and hours of work that we've done we should be able to put that into practice"

Lee also added later, after talking about another area that had helped develop confidence (see below re specialist conference):

> "*and the fact that I've just done a two-year course and learned, and learned from others, and taken all that on board, what they've been doing*".

The second year of the course can be daunting for some of the trainees as it introduces far more theoretical concepts than they had in the first year and they are expected to read academic journals and carry out a small research project. I always explain to the trainees that they need the theory to inform their practice and to be able to give a pedagogical rationale for whatever they are doing in their sessions. For some of the topics I tell the trainees if they do not leave my classroom angry, I have not done my job. An example of this is the topic of social justice in education, where initially the trainees are doubtful that this is relevant to their practice and not something they would address with their own students because it feels political and not something they are confident to address. I always hope by that the end of the topic they have been able to apply what we have discussed to their own practice, although I very rarely get to know whether they do. Kai, gave an example of how they have had the confidence to introduce social justice in their sessions:

> "*I seen Erin actually the other day and we were talking about us work and stuff and I said, you know, I never realized how much I loved the social justice assignment. I said when we first got told about it, we were like, oh, it's going to be massive. But I said with all the social justice I absolutely loved it, and I'm loving having these discussions with my students about it.*"

I strongly believe that teachers need to learn more than just how to teach their specialism. They need to find the confidence to challenge and question an educational system that is increasingly unfair, especially to many of the students we see in FE. Many of Kai's students are care leavers or students who had a poor experience of education at school. The social justice issues that Kai identified are not part of the curriculum, but Kai having the confidence to introduce them to the students gives me hope that there are teachers willing to take risks in their teaching.

A further example of the CertEd/PGCE course supporting the trainees to become more confident was the assessed research project which they have to present at the 'specialist conference' to trainees from other colleges who teach in similar areas to their own. I have referred to this above in relation to Amal developing confidence, when they stated they felt

more confident by the end of the course and would have shared their video at that stage. I was able to relate that statement to the specialist conference because I knew Amal and how they had developed during the course. Another example of the impact of the specialist conference on confidence was given by Lee, who had researched dyslexia amongst hairdressers:

"I got really passionate because especially with the dyslexia, you know there's a lot that do go, they go under the radar, and then they're just classed as lazy and then they don't continue with what they want to do because they just think that everybody has got it in for them basically"

I asked Lee how it had felt to present the paper to peers:

"Good, I felt confident in what I was saying because I've I've researched it so in depth. Uh, yeah, I felt I felt quite confident. And I felt like I were making a change to their teaching that they were picking up on things that they wouldn't have picked up on to start with. So yeah, I did really, really enjoy my special.., I think that I've got to be one one of the best parts of my course, which at first I thought were going to be my worst."

Lee went on to talk about the changes they had made in their own practice as a result of the paper. Rowan also discussed the impact of the specialist paper on their confidence, both academically and pedagogically. As discussed above, at the start of the interview Rowan talked about their lack of academic confidence at the beginning of the second year. Later in the conversation Rowan talked about the satisfaction they had felt when their students successfully completed a project for the unit they had taught:

"it was such a great feeling 'cause students were making decisions on how to take their final projects based based on, you know material that they had researched and learned in my classes and would, and were thriving on it as well"

At this point, Rowan was not considering how their levels of confidence had shifted from feelings of inferiority initially and that they were in the 'wrong place' to feelings of almost euphoria and positivity about the impact they had had on their students. When I asked what had caused this shift, Rowan instantly identified one of the modules of the course:

"(Specialist conference yeah yeah) and that was that was brilliant. And for the first time in my entire life I was up all night reading (…) That's not the kind of learner or person I am. And I've put, I did some research into it all […] we had to present it and everything. And when I was doing the like the Q&A with my peers as part of the conference, and they're asking me questions about it. I knew it like I knew the

answers to the questions they were asking and and and things and it's like and it was just like, Holy hell, am I intelligent? [….] Am I doing the learning? And it was that was big and there's the crazy part is Francine is I enjoyed it. And the next module where we had to do, you know, policies and curriculum and all that crazy stuff. It was like I got to meet that with a sense of, well I've got one badge on my case that says I can do it, so if I could do it before I can do it again"

Rowan clearly saw this success as a turning point in their confidence in themselves and in being able to tackle the academic element of the course. As a teacher, as a teacher educator, I know the importance of theory to our practice, I drill trainees at the start of the course to be able to say "my pedagogical rationale", trying to establish with them the importance of being able to explain, and at times defend, their pedagogical decision making in a system which consistently questions and undermines teachers' professionalism. Rowan gave an example of this happening:

"and then, because I knew the theory, I could then confidently teach the theory and and then relay that. Also, you know I could not only could I say right, we need to do it this way. I could tell them why we had to do it that way and and I could say why and then back it up and say if you want to know more about it, look at this guy and this book, it will tell you why. [….] you know, that was a that was a brilliant moment for me, [….]that was kind of a big moment in in learning how to teach"

A further factor that I identified within this theme was the teachers developing confidence through their students. This came across in two ways. Firstly, through feeling validated as a teacher through their students' success, as Rowan described above. Kai also wanted to tell me about their students' achievements:

I don't know if I told you, I got amazing results in my students in year one as well. [talks about the grades achieved] Yeah, I did. I got them students through. I got them through a pandemic with teaching online and I got them all through and nobody failed, and they all got really good results. So that's why I'm moving. That's why I feel so more positive this year because I think I achieved that, me, I did that, you know? Obviously, they got, they worked hard, but I was their tutor. I supported them through as well as trying to study myself. [….] But because I'm reflecting on what I've gone through this past couple of years, you know I can tackle anything. It's just in your mindset."

Secondly, through student feedback and having the confidence to take new practices further as a result of positive feedback from students. Lee talked about setting very clear boundaries with a new group:

"Well I got a new class and it were purely my class right from the start to the end. They were my students. They were new. I were new. But with the group.. my class that I had erm, they gave me some really good feedback and when they qualified, I didn't actually know, they'd set up one of the offices and they put a banner saying thank you [....] and I asked them for feedback and they said that you've been fair throughout. You've you've always said what were expected. You supported us when we've, you know, when we've not been able to do anything. And I think that's given me the confidence"

This last element, which some of the teachers identified as instrumental in building confidence, is the one area that concerns me for the future confidence of the teachers. Validation through student successes and feedback aligns with the control mechanisms Donovan (2019) describes as "inherent with a neoliberal environment" (p199). Reading their comments diffractively through a lens of trust and distrust, I see this as tutors working towards "extrinsic rather than intrinsic goals" (Donovan, 2019, p.200). My concern is that a focus on extrinsic goals, such as achievement rates, will push these teachers into the social trap that Donavan describes (see Chapter 2 Literature Review), where teachers in a low trust environment lose trust in each other and teaching becomes about survival within the institution. There is hope however, in what I have interpreted as evidence of green shoots of reciprocal trust. Donovan describes how teachers can find others with shared values outside of their institution through teacher networks, and "reclaim their identity and exercise their agency to believe and act differently from the *status quo*" (2019, p.200). Kai talked about reaching out to other teachers:

"I'm researching among groups on Facebook and things to do with health and social care and T levels, and the people are sharing ideas and resources, and I think that's really good because then .... I feel a lot more confident if someone walks into my classroom"

In summary, my intention with facilitating pedagogical conversations was to research whether they had a positive impact on developing teacher confidence and whether they would be able to take pedagogical risks and defend them. My rereading of the data through the concepts of trust and distrust has widened my perspective to consider the importance of supporting the development of teachers' confidence in ways that work for them. Donovan questions whether it is in the institution's interest, in the neoliberal world of performative models of education, to encourage teachers to take risks (Donovan, 2019a)

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and discusses this in the context of environments of low trust/high distrust tactics inhibiting risk taking. My interpretation of the experiences of the trainee teachers is that alongside the key concepts required to build trust, teachers need to simultaneously build their confidence in order to experiment in their practice and to take risks.

5.8 Theme 4 – the fragility of agency

Unlike the subject of confidence, agency was never a subject that came up spontaneously for the participants. There is therefore no mention of agency in any of the responses from Cohort 1. The topic only came up when I interviewed participants and asked them directly about agency. Their responses depended on their understanding of the term, and given that even Priestley, Biesta and Robinson (2020) refer to it as a slippery concept in their book entitled "Teacher Agency", and still never really get to a pithy definition, it was difficult for me to define succinctly. I described it to the interviewees as "the power to make changes in your teaching". This does not convey the extent of the ecological approach to agency which is explored in the Literature Review, but does align with McGowan and Felten's interpretation 'I can change in meaningful ways despite the systems and structures constraining me' (McGowan and Felten, 2021, p.2). My original idea was to ask whether participation in the research, talking to their peers about teaching, would support them to develop a greater sense of agency and therefore feel able to uphold their values. However, a simplified definition gives little room for nuance, and when I analysed the data I interpreted some of their responses as referring to autonomy ("*comparative absence of regulation*" (Priestley, Biesta and Robinson, 2015)*,* and the 'freedom' to decide what happens in their classrooms.

Ali and Reese both felt as teachers in the HE sector they had agency as they had control over their modules and could deviate from the curriculum if they felt inclined to. For example, Ali said:

> "*I can let go of that framework a little bit because I am more skilled [….] but always connecting back to the curriculum".*

There were further examples of feelings of autonomy, however, they often came with a caveat that suggested that the "power to make changes" was not assured and not

permanent. An example of this from Kai suggests the anticipation of needing to defend their decisions, but being ready and confident to do so:

> *"Someone comes into my classroom is like you're making such a mess what are you doing? Well, this is what they'll be doing if they're working in the hospital ward, this is the things they're going to be need to be doing, so I need to make it as realistic for them as possible so I feel a lot more confident moving forward that"*

Jo spoke about having "quite a lot of autonomy", explaining that the awarding body for the course they were teaching only gave course specifications and guidelines for the mandatory units:

> *"There's nothing for most of the other units (…) so I've I've made resources. I've done lesson plans. I've done you name it for stuff I've never taught before. So that's left me a lot of scope to think right, this is how I'm going to do it. Yeah, as long as I'm as long as they're learning what they need to learn to to get through the assignments"*

I interpret Jo's comment regarding "get through the assignments" as an indication that they are also aware of being monitored by an outcomes driven employer and therefore the fragility of their ability to make decisions. I know, as in presumably most colleges, that at set points within the year, Jo will sit in a room with members of SLT explaining the grades for each student. Jo went on to talk about the impact of Minimum Target Grades (MTGs) on their agency, explaining that students come into the college with their MTGs already set:

> *"But MTG's they're not movable [….] we've got a number of first years already who have come through with MTG's of distinctions, with merits distinctions [….] and they're not working at that sort of level. [….] You know, but one, one young man who's lovely. But you know, we're struggling to scrape him passes. But we've got to pass him. It's difficult. It's really difficult. Can't fail him. So you're really looking for the passes you and you you're giving as much feedback as you can [….] we're not teaching to exams, but teaching to assess, you know, for them to pass these assessments"*

Reading this diffractively through Donovan's article, I see a clear example of what she calls "the externalisation of quality assurance" (Donovan 2019, p.193), where the fear of falling achievement rates and inability to meet externally imposed penalties, results in the institution creating a low trust environment in order to shape the behaviour of teachers. Jo was very uncomfortable recounting this scenario, concluding:

> *"It's difficult, really difficult. So that yeah, agency in that respect is is…very difficult. Very, very limiting"*

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Ali gave a similar example, stating that they felt they lost agency when education became a:

"*transactional process*" going on to explain "*it occurs when the curriculum becomes too mechanistic, but also because of the nature of students paying for their degrees*".

A final example of the fragility of agency was given by Reese, not regarding the low trust environment of the institution, but as a result of fear of students' responses to lesson content:

> "*It scares me that I'll do or say the wrong thing, and then I'll be like publicly shamed on social media or something like that. 'cause there's, I know, but it's, it's really a common thing and. And I think actually going back to the agency thing I think that does allow you less agency and I and I find myself erm, if I revisit lesson plans now going over it and and editing it. [refers to specific controversial content, removed for anonymity] and I think often now I find myself not not introducing them to those works, because I worry that the it would be too, things might be too triggering*"

As stated at the beginning of this section, addressing this question through the data and the themes I identified did not go in the direction I had expected. There was a temptation to avoid the themes, change the questions. However, they do give me insight into how I want to develop this project in the future. Confidence and agency are precarious in the low-trust high-distrust environment of the neoliberal education system. The intention of this research has always been to investigate how to support teachers to challenge and to make "small but consequential differences". The stories the teachers told in answer to these questions are an important part of how this might be achieved.

Summary of findings 3 and 4, RQ2:

- Teacher confidence increased through facilitated pedagogical conversations, but also through developing their academic and theoretical understanding, and through positive performance data
- Teachers did not spontaneously discuss agency, their comments often related more to autonomy or micro (classroom) level agency
- Pedagogical conversations helped teachers identify meaningful changes they could implement despite systemic constraints, fostering a sense of personal agency.
- Trust was identified as a critical component for effective pedagogical conversations.

- The study highlighted a symbiotic relationship between trust, confidence, agency, and pedagogical conversations, and indicated that strength in one element could support the development of the others.

6.9 Theme 5 – talking about differences, not looking for perfection

The fifth theme addresses the third research question: *What impact can a diffractive analysis have when teachers talk about differences in their practice*? The title of the theme refers to my view of the traditional approach to observation, where the observer grades how well the teacher is teaching, often against a checklist and gives feedback on how to do better, become more perfect, compared to my view of developmental observation, where we move away from seeking the elusive perfect lesson, and observe to learn, not to critique practice.

In this theme I use data from the different cohorts to demonstrate the impact of moving away from a framework based on reflection and feedback to an increasingly more explicit focus on using concepts of diffraction to frame the way the teachers approached both the observations (of self and other) and the ensuing conversations. I have also included comments from two of the participants who juxtapose experiences of traditional observations with a diffractive approach.   As detailed in previous chapters, the core of the research has remained consistent: what, if anything, can teachers gain if we shift observation from being a tool for performance auditing to being a means of supporting development? However, I have refined both the structure of the task set for teachers and the research methods used. I believe this has enabled me to address this question more effectively through being able to analyse the comments the teachers made through the different iterations of the project. In order to discuss what impact a diffractive analysis might have when teachers talk about differences in their practice, this section analyses the responses from the teachers in chronological order in order to map how their narratives change as the focus on a diffractive approach became more explicit.

As discussed above, the teachers in the first cohort who shared their videos were positive about the experience, for example, Alex wrote in their blog:

> *"The process of completing the video observation itself was fulfilling and interesting, allowing me to consider new ways of sharing good practice with colleagues"*

Nicky noted in their blog:

> *"Additionally, I feel that our mutual communication, readiness to share ideas and discuss issues has improved"*

However, a disappointing result from the manner in which I had set up the project was that the focus on reflection and feedback resulted in comments that sometimes lacked depth, for example Amal wrote:

> *"I have watched my peer's videos and they are amazing teachers. It was so lovely watching them teach as we all started together [….] and everyone has just turned out to be fantastic"*

The participants were also evaluative in their comments on each other's teaching. In the blogs and questionnaires, the teachers wrote evaluations of the teaching of their peers and also reported what their peers had fedback to them. For example, Alex wrote about a peer:

> *"For the most part, negative behaviour was challenged quickly and effectively, and the tutor maintained good control of the room"*

and Nicky reported that:

> *"The peer stated that I used the learners' names well and this was and effective method to reinforce positive behaviour"*

Peers also made suggestions for improvement, for example Sam wrote

> *"Amal also suggested that my learners discuss their answers with each prior to answering. This is a good point and I have now implemented this in my classes where appropriate".*

The comments were not 'wrong'. However, my intention had not been to replicate the observation process used both in the CertEd/PGCE qualification and the college quality cycle. I had wanted to give the participants the opportunity to learn from watching themselves and each other without judging what they had seen against the Ofsted style standards they saw in their course and college feedback. Reading these comments through Donovan's trust and distrust article, as stated in Theme 1, I believe   I only had the collaboration of the majority of the trainees because they already had an existing relationship of trust through work. Furthermore, the trainee who wrote most extensively in their blog about how their peer could improve was Amal, one of the trainees from Cohort 1

who did not share their video. As noted earlier, I interpret this as their lack of willingness to be vulnerable to their peer due to their expectation that the process required them to judge and be judged. Amal did not feel confident to open themselves up to peer judgment, which is totally understandable. The structure of the project at this early stage led the participants towards commenting on what went well and what areas could be improved, and furthermore, given the methods of collecting data I had chosen, I was not able to follow up on any of the statements they had made in order to unpack any further insights.

The results from the first iteration led to me rethinking the process I wanted the participants to follow and the method for collecting data. As a qualitative study, I wanted to be able to gather the experiences of the participants and narrate their stories and experiences. To this end, I began the use of unstructured interviews, starting with Cohort 2. Furthermore, I was frustrated that 'reflection' has been appropriated as a tool of assessment (see Chapters 1 and Chapter 2) and wanted an alternative approach for thinking and talking about making changes in our teaching. Therefore, I introduced the concept of diffraction (see previous chapters for how this came about – Chapter 1, definitions – Chapters 1 & 2 and the implication for my research methods Chapter 3).

 Cohort 2 were therefore the first group of participants to be introduced to the concept of diffraction. This was done explicitly during a session on reflection, where I also discussed the research and whether they would like to participate. As discussed above, three trainees participated in the project, Erin, Lee and Kai. They each observed the other two's videos, however only Kai makes reference to this in the interview, talking about the conversations they had with each. Erin and Lee only talk about each other, which I had not realised until analysing the data.

I found analysing the interviews and interpreting the impact of a diffractive analysis with this cohort enlightening and it further informed changes to how I approached the project with Cohorts 3 and 4. Despite what I thought had been absolute clarity regarding my rationale for completing this study, Lee approached me after their first meeting with Erin as they were upset that they had received feedback and suggestions for improvement. Later, in the interview Erin admitted:

> *"Rightly or wrongly, and I think we had this conversation, I gave (them) some feedback"*

and went on to explain:

> *"Yeah, we had we had a good dialogue to be fair and I said that the only kind of thing I picked up on, and I didn't want it to come across as in like I was assessing or anything like that, and it was just you what you asked you asked a really good question, there's some really good discussion but was there an opportunity, that's how I tried to frame it, was there an opportunity there to ask or question more, to really kind of stretch some of those learners"*

When Lee had come to me to say they were upset I asked them about the session and asked them about the pedagogical rationale for the type of questioning (mainly closed) they had chosen. I then had a conversation with Erin, discussing the profile of Lee's learners and reiterating the premise of the study was to learn from each other and not to look for how the other could improve. Erin did reconsider and looked at their own extensive use of mainly higher order questioning and the potential benefits of making more use of closed questioning, writing in their blog:

> *"I have started to question how I structure my questions with my lessons and the level at which I currently teach* [….]it is important for teachers to consider the level of questioning they use".

Remembering those conversations with Lee and Erin and rereading the interviews diffractively through a lens of trust and distrust, I can see that my assumption that participants understood that the study was not about giving feedback was naïve. Erin was a full-time teacher at the college and it was not a straightforward task to move away from evaluating teaching. Observation is routinely used to assess performance and to move away from this is perhaps in itself a leap of faith that requires trust. Erin was also far more experienced than Lee, and completing the Level 7 qualification, perhaps leaving them questioning whether Lee had the competence (in reference to the key concepts of trust) to warrant their trust. This is an area I discuss in Chapter 7 Findings and Recommendations.

The diffractive approach I wanted the participants to take was not merely about resisting the desire to give 'constructive feedback', but to move away from descriptions of 'what' and to start asking 'why'. Although there was not a wholesale move to a diffractive approach with Cohort 2, for example, Kai described their conversation with Lee as:

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> *"less productive [….] we didn't really go into a lot of detail [….] we just discussed what we did"*

there were movements in that direction. Later in their interview Erin said:

> *"it was interesting to listen to how Lee shaped those questions based on the level of the learners in the room"*

I interpret this as an acknowledgement that they were able to learn from a less experienced teacher.

The conversation between Kai and Erin did adopt a diffractive approach however, and Kai commented:

> *"we spoke about why (they) it in the way (they) did it and what (they) hoped to achieve from that [….] So it wasn't a conversation of where I felt (they) could improve owt or anything like that. It was more like, oh, actually Erin I really liked how you did that I'm gonna use that in mine"*

The impact of asking participants to take a diffractive approach now starts to become apparent in the analysis of the data, Kai talked about not critiquing Erin's practice, but learning from it and later talked about the difference this made to them:

> *"It didn't ever make me feel like I was being judged doing it, didn't feel like.. it didn't make me feel vulnerable doing it because it was always, it was really supportive and we used it as a reflective tool if you like for us to to look at right, well you do it that way and you do it that way"*

The final iteration of this study involved Cohorts 3 and 4. Following the issue of two of the participants giving feedback on areas for improvement in the previous iteration, I introduced a framework that outlined the stages of the study in a much more structured way (see Appendix 7). I was not changing what I asked the participants to do in any way, but I wanted to give something tangible that would support clarity and consistency, and not rely on the participants' interpretation of a classroom presentation to introduce the concept (as for Cohort 2). It did appear to help, Reese commented:

> *"we had such a fantastic discussion and what was useful was that we had the questions that kind of helped prompt us and lead the discussion [….] so it was useful to have the questions because then it helped to steer us back into the sort of zones we were supposed to be talking about"*

As stated above, shifting away from an ingrained, performative approach to observation is a leap of faith. For the participants, it was a leap of faith to trust in the approach I was asking

them to take, for some this was a risk they were unwilling to take (see theme 1). My diffractive reading of this through Donovan's article has lead me to consider that in asking the participants not to look for 'perfection' but to talk about the different choices made in the teaching observed (their own and peer's) I am asking them to participate in my rejection of the apparatus of control that leadership teams weald over teachers and to trust in the competence, benevolence, integrity and reciprocity of their peers, and of course me, as the researcher.

Where the participants did not move away from an observation model of reflection and feedback, as stated above, the comments from the participants were far more descriptive and evaluative of the practices they saw. One of the differences that a diffractive analysis had was to shift the narrative from one of critique and assessment to questioning and sharing of ideas. For example, Reese commented:

> "It was like a a conversation where we talked around things [….] and we'd talk about our practice in a kind of wider sense [….] It did feel like it wasn't just about going here's some feedback about yours and here and you go oh thank you very much. Oh yeah, OK, that's interesting. I I'll think about that and then go and here's your feedback and then they respond to that. If it felt somehow more fluid than that. And I think that that was the the most kind of successful part of it"

This shift was also noticed by Taylor who stated:

> "but this one, like I said, were really positive. It weren't... you weren't looking for faults, there were no faults and and actually for me it kind of give me ownership but also the questions that I asked Jo and Drew, it provided some ownership for them as well because they could work it out for themselves and and run with that which were really good really good"

In our conversations, the participants made little reference to the typical observations experienced at the college. However, Jo compared the diffractive model of observations with the annual college observations:

> "I don't like observations. I don't like being watched. I don't like being potentially criticized, but I think what I'm getting my head around now [….] is less of the criticism and more of this, it can actually make me do things better"

In contrast, Reese, one of the experienced, qualified teachers to participate, commented:

> "I never really mind being observed to be honest, but I always do quite well, and I think that's because, you know, I know how to plan a good lesson"

Jo also compared the college observation cycle in relation to a colleague, whose observation 'window' was that week:

> "He's panicking. You know…I think there's a lot of stress attached to annual observations, isn't there, and pressure and things? And this way [….] somehow it just feels more productive"

Jo's comments indicate their preference for the diffractive model of observation, which they state clearly at several points in the interview.

As Reese had made the point about a 'good lesson plan', I asked them whether they changed their practice when they knew they were going to be observed. Initially they responded that they thought everybody did, they then modified their answer:

> "I don't change my teaching. But I carefully design my lesson plan [….] I just make sure I've got a really clear lesson plan and I'm ticking all the boxes that they want me to tick in terms of what is required [….] education trends or whatever, so I make sure I do that stuff"

As an experienced teacher, Reese knows how to 'play the game' and ensure that what they are observed doing is in line with current expectations. Through the lens of trust and distrust, I interpret this to indicate that Reese does not trust the college observation process enough to take the risk of teaching a 'normal' lesson, and therefore enabling an honest conversation. Rather, they tailor the session to ensure the observer can tick the boxes that result in positive feedback. This is not a criticism of Reese's actions, it is exactly what I have done for performative observations, and part of the impetus for this research.

Reese went on to talk about colleagues' experiences of "internal observations", evidencing that although they know how to manage within the system, they recognise it is unhelpful:

> "but when I hear of other teachers and they get failed. They failed on something and they say they failed me on this. And I think oh my god, christ, like I'd fail straight away and I think that's really terrifying actually. And it does feel like a kind of unfriendly process in a way."

A further comment regarding the college observation process from Reese indicates their growing sense of unease about being able to 'game the system':

> "I don't think I understand the process that well currently because also the other thing is, it seems to change all the time with every new quality manager that comes

in [....]) they want to put their own stamp on it, and so that process changes and the things they're looking for changes"

Given that Reese had stated they did not mind being observed, I asked explicitly whether they would prefer the college model or a diffractive approach, aware that the diffractive approach is more time consuming for a tutor, their response was unequivocal:

"I'd choose this approach because [....] there's less pressure, it's more interesting, it's not just somebody it's less about hier..., something sort of hierarchical, you know, so it isn't somebody above you coming to watch what you do and saying whether you're doing it well enough, [....]But it still allows you the space to to reflect"

Other participants also talked about the benefits of not giving each other feedback. Taylor told me:

"when it's feedback, it's all what's negative and what's positive and but actually the way that they ask questions and what were your reason why you did this and things like that, it actually gave you that opportunity just to focus on positive aspects as well as erm or not always negative aspects or development areas. So it were the way they questioned things, so I know Jo, if I remember rightly, (they) questioned, you know, what were your reason for using that? Why did you do it that way? And then Drew asked a question, for example, (they) said, you know, Taylor, you talked about, you felt like from watching it back, you could involve more students, what what makes you think this? And so actually it got me thinking and I kind of solved my own problems without knowing"

In asking the participants to talk about the differences they noticed, I wanted them to ask themselves and each other about their pedagogical rationale. In the framework I wrote:

- The aim is to help you to have a discussion about teaching decisions through watching yourself and others. These can be conscious or subconscious decisions, but **why** did you make them?
- We are not looking for the "right" answer but looking at the impact different choices and decisions have on teaching and learning.

In our interview Jo told me:

"it was such a useful experience to do to to talk to each other about it and and say why, you know, why did you do it like that or what do you think about it? How might you do it differently and and just get some ideas? It was, I mean, Drew's bingo, I was,

I'm still trying to think how I could make it work as well as (they) did in my sessions, but it was great"

The discussion that Jo refers to here was part of the recording the three made for the 'reflective blog' assessment (see Appendix 15). They had asked if they could record their conversation and use it for the assessment. I reminded them that this would mean their conversation would no longer be private, as had been the case for all other participants. They were happy for this to be the case.

The following extract from the part of the recorded conversation that Jo refers to demonstrates how the trainees ask each other questions to explore the differences:

> Jo: *I loved that bingo starter. It was...they were all engaged. I loved the idea of it.*
>
> Taylor: *Why did you choose to do that? What were your strategy? Why did you choose to do bingo then?*

The three went on to have a discussion about why and how Drew uses games or "fun" activities to capture the interest of a group who struggle to engage.

The objective of the study is to support improvement in teaching, but with the teachers themselves driving that. I wanted the participants to consider how they might do things differently, not with the aim of 'exceeding expectations' on a checklist, but through considering the pedagogical choices made for or in a session, and whether different choices would have a different outcome. This is demonstrated at several points in Appendix 15 their 3-way conversation, one example, following on from the conversation about Drew's bingo game demonstrates the group having that discussion:

> Taylor*: "Is there anything that you kind of…when you've watched it back yourself then…"*
>
> Jo: *"yeah, would you do anything differently with that activity or not?"*
>
> Drew: *"yeah I'd do a layout differently. Maybe kind of have not as tricky answers as what I did [….] So when I do look back, yeah, you can see certain bits of confusion"*
>
> Taylor: *"But I don't think you really see that sometime, until you do, like we've had this opportunity to watch it back"*

In theme 2 'lessons from the classroom' I have analysed what the participants said they had learned and were taking from participating in the study. Although the earlier cohorts did have a positive experience, the impact of a diffractive approach becomes apparent in the

way the participants talk about their interactions with each other. The positive shift from feedback to discussing rationale and how those strategies might work in their own teaching is apparent in both the interviews and the three-way recorded conversation (Appendix 15). For example, Taylor says in the interview:

"And they also gave me a lot of reassurance if I'm honest as well, because just knowing that other people have different scenarios, different development areas and trying to work around things as well. So for example, Drew were talking about some suggestions of… in (their) cooking class and then actually that sparked conversation of, well, I might try that. So it were, it were contextualizing it in a way of all that different learning what we've just got from one one question we've now sparked a whole... erm strategy for all of us. So yeah, it were really positive, really positive"

Jo describes a similar experience:

Jo: *"it was a positive. It was a positive experience and a very useful experience and made you reflect, but in a different way, perhaps because you are…"*

Francine (laughing): *"That's diffraction"*

Jo (also laughing): *"There you go. You see? It works. There you go. It did, though. It is though, isn't it? Makes you think about pressing the slightly different perspective than just you reflecting on something. They've looked at something you've done and also reflected on that, and then you've come together and talked about it like you say, you know that ripple effect isn't it"*

Each time I set up the peers and explained what the study entailed, I was very clear that I did not want to see the videos, I did not need to hear their conversations, I just wanted to be able to ask them about the experience later. Reviewing the data diffractively through Donovan's article, I see that this was a bridge to building trust with the participants. I was demonstrating that I believed in their competence, I hope demonstrating my benevolence and demonstrating that I believed in their integrity and this would be reciprocated. This is not how I would have described it at that time, but it has helped me to understand how to develop from this, and how trust is crucial when we talk about supporting teachers. Reese refers to this in her interview when I asked her if she would consider this approach again:

"Yeah, I think I would because I think that what was great about the process is that there wasn't an emphasis on being judged. It was about just a sharing and a and a conversation [….] what I liked about it too was that you hadn't asked to see any of

that. You hadn't, you didn't ask to see our conversation, so it was just between Ali and I, and so that's that's a safe space, isn't it?"

This theme has been both the most difficult and most rewarding to write up. Difficult because I felt that almost everything that Drew, Jo and Taylor said was something I wanted to share. They were the cohort to have the most direction regarding how to approach the diffractive analysis I wanted them to try out. Reese and Ali had the framework, which they used and found useful; however they did not have the further guidance of the session I did with the trainees. Rewarding because both cohorts talk about the difference the approach made to how they felt about being observed. I had hoped that participants would feel supported and be able to offer support through discussing their teaching and how they might make "small but consequential difference" to their practice. From the data, I believe they did.

> Francine: "*If there was a choice between doing this and having a, you know, the annual observation. Which would you choose?"*
>
> Jo: "*I think most people would choose this, don't you?"*

Summary of findings for theme 5, RQ3:

- A diffractive analysis shifted teachers' focus from critiquing and assessing their peers to questioning and understanding differences in teaching practices.
- It encouraged teachers to consider their own and their peers' pedagogical choices, leading to greater self-awareness about their teaching methods.
- Teachers became more conscious of their teaching strategies and were motivated to make specific changes.
- The approach promoted a sense of ownership and collaboration among teachers, reducing the feeling of judgment and fostering a supportive environment.
- Teachers felt more empowered to experiment with new strategies and make changes in their practice.

5.10 Theme 6 – glimmers of hope through collaboration

The final theme in this analysis brings together the moments of hope that I have interpreted from what the participants wrote and told me. As has been discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), over 50% of people who started teaching in FE in 2014/15 left the profession within 5 years. Witnessing colleagues' growing disillusionment and eventually leaving the profession is not an environment that fosters hope. However, this section discusses the hope that I saw in the data as I analysed it.

I have taken this as a standalone theme, not linked to the individual research questions, but as a notion that threaded through the responses from the participants. As noted in Chapter 5, 'hope' was an early concept I explored, although initially it appeared to be more of a topic than a theme. However, returning to the concept having generated themes 1-5, I was able to establish the theme that connected the moments of hope I had identified. I realised I was hearing hope from the teachers when they talked about collaborative practices, not only with peers, but also collaboration with students.

Although 'hope' was not a concept the participants mentioned explicitly, I interpreted it in their desire to improve and become better teachers. This is evidenced in their willingness to collaborate with their peers, to share their ideas and learn from each other, as discussed in Theme 2 above. I interpreted their desire to experiment with and implement different practices as the action required for the constructive hope discussed in Chapter 2. Kai expressed this when they told me about why they thought it was important to be part of different online teaching communities:

> *"I want to be the best I can be so that my students can be the best that they can be as well. So just keeping up with my knowledge keep my training up and researching, just not being you know, just keep developing that way."*

Jo echoes this desire to improve when talking about their initial feelings of discomfort in participating in the project, explaining why they had persisted, said in reference to their teaching:

> *"And like I've said to you many times I want I want to be good at it. I want to do OK, you know, I wanna do well at it."*

I also detected glimmers of hope when the participants talked about their students and their hopes for them. Ali, an experienced teacher of higher-level students (HE in FE courses), talked about the feeling of joy and satisfaction when a session spontaneously develops at a tangent:

> *"You know because you know that you're all going to learn something together. You know that something new is going to come out, not something new to the world but something new to us in that group at that time that is important. And if someone goes away carrying that with them and bringing it back and using it somewhere, then wow, it's just such a reward."*

Kai, newly qualified at the time of the interview, talking of the Level 2 and Level 3 students they teach, describes collaboration with their students through sharing their industry expertise:

> *"I can support you in your pathway for where you want to be. …. I'm enjoying embracing it and enjoying those students coming in because they want to be here as well …. I've got all the work side like what I used to do in my previous job, so sharing all that with them and giving them a bit of a flavour of what they want to do."*

I find these comments uplifting, the teachers have not lost hope, despite the performative environment in which they teach. As discussed elsewhere, teachers in FE are not encouraged to take risks or experiment, and the low trust environment cultivated by SMT and external bodies reinforces this. However, when the teachers talked about the steps they were taking to encourage their students, they sounded hopeful and optimistic for the future.

I also saw hope in how some of the teachers talked about ways of 'challenging the system'. Kai talked about teaching their students about social justice (discussed in Theme 3), and encouraging their students to be confident in their ability to achieve whatever they want to:

> *"You know everything that's in the news and everything that goes on in society, and I'm absolutely I'm moving forward with that. And you know, you can be anything you want to be. Doesn't matter, you know. Regardless of whatever is going on, you can achieve what you want to achieve."*

Taylor, in their work with Early Years practitioners, had encouraged them to adopt a diffractive rather than reflective approach to facilitate collaboration between peers when they did their mandatory peer observations. Taylor uses language that evidences their view of the previous model as performative, explaining that:

"you have your positive, but you also have your development areas and the they don't feel like there's any erm there is no collaboration in that …. Whereas the diffraction where I've talked to the students about it erm is trying to give that ownership back to the practitioner. …. A few have tried it and it worked really well. And I think it's just coming away from that negativity all the time."

There were few examples of teachers explicitly expressing a lack of hope, even where I interpreted a lack of agency (see Theme 4), those same teachers exhibited hope through their attitudes to their teaching and their students (for example Kai and Jo). One teacher was explicit in their interview about not being hopeful for the future, a view they had expressed in sessions when talking about social justice. Rowan (who did not video themselves but agreed to be interviewed), was pessimistic about changes being made to the education system:

"I don't feel we're in a position where the people want to come together to make a strong enough effort to force a change. I don't think we're that invested."

Rowan had developed a lot of confidence in themselves as a teacher (see Theme 2) during the course, and whilst analysing their interview transcript, it struck me how much they had developed, and furthermore that they had recognised that. I emailed them to tell them how much I had enjoyed listening to our conversation again, they emailed back to say:

"I remember one of our classes where we were talking about the government's approach and appreciation for teachers and you corrected my opinion that was, 'why fight the machine, why would they change it because a small minority isn't happy?' and you taught me the value of fighting for change and how the first domino is usually the smallest but can make the biggest changes. This is an outlook I use to this day"

I prefer to think that I encouraged debate, rather than 'corrected' their opinion. However, I conclude this theme with this quote because although Rowan expressed a lack of hope for the possibility of change initially, the seed of hope was planted (Ojala, 2016) and I see green shoots of hope in Rowan's comment.

Summary of findings for theme 6:

- A collaborative, dialogic approach to teacher development enabled participants to believe in their capacity to enact meaningful changes, essential for sustaining hope

Chapter 5 Summary

This chapter tells the stories of the teachers who participated in this research through a reflexive thematic analysis of their responses. Those stories are interpreted through my knowledge of them and through adopting a diffractive method of reading their responses through the work of Donovan (2019) on trust and distrust. The following chapter will discuss the themes and findings in relation to the literature that has informed this thesis.

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Chapter Six: Discussion (relating themes & findings to literature)

This chapter discusses the findings introduced in the previous chapter. The findings are discussed by addressing each question in turn and providing a contextual analysis of the data and literature explored in previous chapters. A further finding is drawn from the sixth theme identified in the thematic analysis (Chapter 5) on the concept of hope. The findings, as explored in Chapter 5, have been constructed through the application and analysis of the diffractive practices which have informed this research, both through the diffractive framework I developed and the diffractive reading of the experiences of the participants.

A diagrammatic summary is provided before each discussion to highlight the key findings presented.

6.1 RQ1. How can the use of video in self and peer observations help teachers (in further education) to explore and develop their practice?

RQ1

Themes

Theme 1: Videoing teaching: trust and vulnerability as obstacles and spurs

Theme 2: Lessons from the classroom: beyond the discomfort of watching oneself and watching others

Findings

Impact of Self-Observation

Teachers often found self-observation challenging but valuable, identifying specific areas for improvement such as better student engagement and clearer communication.

Watching their own teaching provided an evidence-based study that highlighted aspects of their practice not easily noticed through traditional reflection methods.

Role of Peer Observation

Sharing videos with peers required trust and an openness to vulnerability, fostering a supportive environment that encouraged honest, non-evaluative discussions about teaching practices.

Unlike traditional models, where feedback is given, this approach focused on diffractive analysis, allowing teachers to independently identify useful practices from their peers, supporting the development of innovative teaching methods.

Combining Self and Peer Observations

The combined approach of self and peer observations, with an emphasis on discussion rather than evaluation, helped teachers to scaffold their professional knowledge and practice.

Teachers who fully engaged in this approach developed their practice, they were able to integrate insights from their own and their peers' teaching which promoted collaboration and creativity, despite the restrictive FE environment.

Figure 14: Findings for RQ 1

I originally asked this question because through the various roles I have held in teacher education in FE (see Chapter 1), I was aware that teachers do not feel encouraged or supported to take risks by experimenting with pedagogical approaches. This personal observation concurs with the literature, explored in Chapter 2, which identifies the adoption of neo-liberal principles and the ensuing audit culture (Ball, 2003; Donovan, 2019; Thompson & Wolstencroft, 2018) as well as policy churn within the sector (Norris & Adam, 2017), as being instrumental in curbing collaboration, creativity and innovation in FE (Avis, 2003; Donovan, 2019). When observations of teaching form part of a teaching qualification or an internal quality process, the stakes are too high for teachers not to conform to the expectations set out by standards created as a purported means to professionalise the sector (Bathmaker, 2000; Tummons, 2014) or by Ofsted as a means of policing and measuring quality (Beighton & Naz, 2023; Gallagher & Smith, 2018). My findings indicate that when observation was not part of a performative process and instead adopted a diffractive approach, teachers were more open to identifying and experimenting with innovative practices. Where the participants made explicit reference to performative observations, they talked of the fear that can be experienced when anticipating such observations, relating this to the fear of being judged (*Jo*) and the impact of 'failing' an observation (*Reese*). Furthermore, *Reese's* comments regarding "ticking all the boxes" are consistent with the concept of 'gaming the system' and conforming to the expectations of the observer, which is identified in the literature (Beighton & Naz, 2023; Thompson & Wolstencroft, 2014).

As discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, several models of observation of teaching can be found in the literature (Gosling, 2002; O'Leary, 2020; Wragg, 1999) and these can be placed on a continuum, ranging from performance management/appraisal to professional development (see Fig. 2, Chapter 2. O'Leary, 2020). The model used by the college where the research took place, and referred to by *Jo* and Reese above, sits at the performance management end of the continuum, and as stated in Chapter 2, benefits the institution more than the teachers (Gosling, 2002). The model used in this thesis (that of teachers videoing and watching themselves, then sharing the video with a peer and watching each other's video) aligns most closely with Gosling's peer review model (although he does not include self-observation in his model), placing it firmly at the professional development end

of the continuum. The fundamental form of the model used remained constant, as discussed in Chapter 4, however, the procedure evolved with each cohort, the biggest shift being a conscious move away from feedback and reflection to a diffractive method of analysis and the introduction of a framework to support teachers to not revert to traditional observation approaches (see Appendix 7). This finding upholds my hypothesis that performative observations do not support the development of practice or encourage innovative approaches to teaching, and concurs with Donovan's assertion that the persistent surveillance of teachers restricts teacher creativity (2019) and aligns with O'Leary and Dean's (2017) description of peer observation as a 'springboard' for discussion, and I will discuss this further below.

The use of video to enhance practice is not unique to this study, however, using the videos for both self and peer observation (with a diffractive analysis, rather than reflection, the specific impact of which is discussed below in relation to RQ3) is an approach that is under researched, I could find no reference to this approach in my literature search. In order to discuss my findings in the context of the existing literature, I will explore each element separately, before discussing the impact of using self and peer observation together.

My findings in relation to teachers videoing themselves are consistent with the literature I reviewed in Chapter 2. I found that teachers often found it challenging to watch themselves (e.g. *Amal, Sam, Morgan*), however, the majority of the participants identified areas of their practice which they intended to explore and develop, such as *Lee* and *Drew* both becoming aware that they needed to look at their students more, *Kai* noting that they should wait longer after asking students a question or *Mel* realising they had not shared the outcomes and expectations of the session with the support staff. This is consistent with the findings of Lofthouse & Birmingham (2010), who posit that giving teachers the opportunity to observe themselves gives them an evidence-based study from their own practice, and also with Zhang et.al (2011) who found that the process enabled teachers to notice elements in their practice mere reflection would not permit. In the thematic analysis, I found that through watching their own videos and using the diffractive framework, teachers did consider their teaching and identified changes they intended to make in their practice, for example *Taylor* noted that they need to be more directive with the students and *Drew* and *Lee* both felt

they needed to make more eye contact with their students. Furthermore, watching their own teaching gave them a window on their students' reactions, as noted by *Lee* and Drew.

After watching their own teaching, the teachers were asked to share their video with a peer (or peers), as noted above, this requires a willingness to make oneself vulnerable and to take a 'leap of faith' (Donovan, 2019). I found that a major factor, consistent with O'Leary and Price (2027, citing Tilstone, 1998), was the requirement of a relationship of trust to be established in order for teachers to successfully explore and develop their practice. As explored in Chapter 5, in order for teachers to share their videos, they needed to feel safe enough to make themselves vulnerable to their peers

In contrast to Zhang et al.'s (2011) findings, which indicated that teachers were reluctant to be critical, I found that before I asked the teachers not to give feedback, the participants' comments about their peers were evaluative and/or descriptive, for example *Tatum* and *Amal* from the first cohort. This is not to say they did not learn from observing their peers, but as noted previously, I wanted them to think about developing their own practice, rather than mirroring traditional observation models by suggesting improvements for their peers. Although I was increasingly more explicit with the subsequent participants about not giving feedback and using a diffractive approach (see Chapter 4 and 5), I was also conscious of not overburdening them with documents or procedures, but to give them a guide to ensure they understood the process (see Appendix 7). In not asking teachers to look at particular aspects of each other's teaching, but instead, letting them identify areas of difference for themselves, the teachers were able to take from their peers something that was useful to them. This is consistent with the findings of Thomson, Bell & Hendry's (2015) 'just watch' peer observation study with a small group of university lecturers, where the majority of the educators identified new practices they had tried out. Examples of this from the teachers in this study include *Lee* saying they have started to be more authoritative in sessions and *Kai* stating that they now make a conscious effort to allow some silence in the class for thinking time.

One of the barriers, as explored in Theme 1 (Chapter 5), to participating in the study, is the fear of making oneself vulnerable to one's peers. This requires trust, it is a 'leap of faith' and involves taking risks that are rarely encouraged in FE (Carless, 2008; Donovan, 2019; Thompson & Wolstencroft, 2018). One of the limitations of this study is that I did not

interview any of the trainee teachers who chose not to participate, or the experienced teachers who originally said yes, then opted out. I can interpret this to mean there was a lack of trust in their peers or in the institution, but it could have been they felt it would take up too much time. I will discuss this, and also steps that I would use to build trust, in the final chapter.

To summarise the findings of this section, peer observation of teaching is a well-researched area, with its benefits outlined both above and in Chapter 2; research on observing oneself is less prevalent, however, available research details the benefits (see above and Chapter 2). In bringing both elements together and by taking an approach that rejected a reliance on documentation and procedures, and asked the teachers instead to talk to each other about what they had seen (see RQ2 below for findings on pedagogical conversations), this research has shown that the teachers who participated fully in the study, and trusted each other enough to share their videos, were able to use what they saw, both in their own teaching and that of their peers to scaffold exploration and development of their professional knowledge (Karacabey et al., 2022; Parsons & Stephenson, 2005; Talebizadeh).

6.2 RQ2. What role can pedagogical conversations play in the development of teacher confidence and agency?

Research Question	RQ2	
Themes	**Theme 3:** many pathways to developing confidence	**Theme 4 :**the fragility of agency
Findings	**Development of Teacher Confidence**	**Teacher Agency**	**Building Trust and Professional Development**

Development of Teacher Confidence

Pedagogical conversations provided a safe space for teachers to discuss and resolve pedagogical issues, significantly improving their confidence through collaborative peer support.

Teachers' confidence was further enhanced by developing their academic and theoretical understanding, empowering them to take more pedagogical risks and experiment with new strategies

Teacher Agency

Teachers did not spontaneously discuss agency; their comments often related more to autonomy or micro-agency, constrained by institutional and policy limitations.

Pedagogical conversations helped teachers identify meaningful changes they could implement despite systemic constraints, fostering a sense of personal agency.

Building Trust and Professional Development

Trust was identified as a critical component for effective pedagogical conversations. Teachers needed to feel safe to engage openly, which facilitated deeper discussions and shared learning experiences, leading to professional growth.

The study highlighted a symbiotic relationship between trust, confidence, agency, and pedagogical conversations, suggesting that strength in one element could support the development of the others. This interdependence underscores the importance of creating supportive environments for teacher development.

Figure 85: Findings for RQ2

The impetus for this area of the study came from a belief that talking about teaching has the power to change the way teachers think about teaching and themselves as teachers. This view concurs with the works of Roxå and Mårtensson (2009) and Jarvis and Clark (2020), who write about the impact of pedagogical conversations on practice. At the outset of the study, I wanted to find out whether the pedagogical conversations that followed the self and peer observation process would support the development of teachers' confidence and agency. In this section I will discuss the disconnect I believe exists between theoretical concepts of teacher agency and what the teachers I spoke to perceive as agency. I will then

discuss my findings on the development of teacher confidence. As addressed in Theme 3 (Chapter 5), the teachers identified multiple pathways to developing confidence, not solely through the observation project. Finally, this section will draw together my findings on agency and confidence in relation to the concept of trust.

Upon analysing the data, I realised that the concept of agency did not come up spontaneously from teachers. When it was discussed because I had asked a direct question about agency, I interpreted their comments to relate more to autonomy (Kennedy, 2014) or micro agency (Kayi-Adar, 2019). Or the kind of agency Beighton and Naz (2023) refer to in their work on teachers 'gaming' observations, where teachers' pedagogic agency occurs 'behind closed doors'. This is hardly surprising when we consider the definitions of agency (Chapter 2 – Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), where we expect to enact some control and become empowered to make decisions, but the reality in teaching is that many decisions have already been made for us, imposed by Ofsted or SMTs implementing central policies (Beighton & Naz, 2023; Gleeson et al., 2015; Thompson & Wolstencroft, 2015). This was evident in my analysis when comparing comments from the HE teachers (*Ali* and *Reese*, whose courses are not audited by Ofsted) to those of the FE teachers (for example *Kai* and *Jo*), where the HE teachers felt they had more control over their curriculum and were freer to make pedagogical decisions. Whereas the FE teachers' comments, which I interpreted as inferring a need to defend any decisions taken, indicate how fragile the agency they described is. This is consistent with the findings of the research of Wallen & Tormey (2019), cited in Chapter 2, which indicated that whilst dialogue can support teachers to feel more agentic, this was at the micro level (classroom), and teachers found it difficult to see themselves as agentic beyond that environment.

My findings indicate that while teacher agency is an area of interest and debate to theorists (see Chapter 2), it was not a concept that the teachers, particularly the FE teachers, I was working with gave much consideration to. They were too aware of their own lack of power, even at a micro level, and the lack of institutional trust, to see themselves as agentic. Which leads me to question the validity of the concept of teacher agency, in particular the ecological model discussed in Chapter 2 (Priestley et al. 2015), given the control exerted over teachers and teaching. If the practical-evaluative element (the present) is influenced by past experiences and future expectations, but the present inhibits agency due to the

constraints of the neo-liberal education system, to persist with a view of agency as something to strive for (whether to 'achieve' or to 'do') seems futile. Like the White Queen explaining the confusing rules about when she can have jam to Alice in 'Through the looking glass', it appears to be something promised, but never attainable:

> 'You couldn't have it if you **did** want it,' the Queen said. 'The rule is, jam to-morrow and jam yesterday – but never jam today.
>
> 'It **must** come sometimes to "jam to-day,"' Alice objected.
>
> 'No, it can't,' said the Queen. 'It's jam every **other** day: to-day isn't any **other** day, you know.'

(Carroll and Jaques, 2022, p.64)

However, to suggest that agency is always out of reach might indicate a lack of hope, which was not what my findings indicated. As will be discussed below, teachers were hopeful, evidenced through their desire to improve their practices and to encourage their students to be curious and ambitious. Therefore, when I interpret agency through the description of personal agency given by McGowan and Felten (2021, p.2): "I can change in meaningful ways despite the system and structures constraining me", my ambivalence about the concept of teacher agency is tempered by my findings, which indicate that the pedagogical conversations played an important role in helping the teachers to identify how they could change, and also the pathway, the "specific and purposeful steps" (McGowan & Felten, 2021. P.2) they could take to make a difference (see Figure 5, Chapter 2).

The second element of this research question asked about the role of pedagogical conversations in the development of teacher confidence. As explained in the introduction to Theme 3 (*Many pathways to developing confidence*) in Chapter 5, I found that the teachers talked about a variety of ways their confidence had developed, which I wanted to capture. I therefore analysed the conversations that followed the observations separately from the impact of diffractive analysis, which is discussed below in relation to RQ3. I maintain this separation in this discussion of my findings.

Unlike the concept of agency, teachers did talk spontaneously about their confidence levels and factors which had an impact on their confidence. In my data analysis the three pathways that I interpreted as leading to greater teacher confidence were:

- via facilitated pedagogical conversations (coaching conversations)
- via developing academic and theoretical understanding
- via performance data such as student results and student feedback

As described in Chapter 5, I found that the facilitated pedagogical conversations gave the trainee teachers a safe space to discuss, and in many cases resolve, pedagogical issues they were having. This concurs with the work of Nolan and Molla (2017) regarding working collaboratively with peers and Prince et al. (2010) who recommend a dialogic approach in their study on peer coaching. When the teachers talked about the pedagogical conversations, they were able to give concrete examples of where their confidence had improved as a result of talking issues and ideas through with a peer (see Theme 3, Chapter 5). They gave examples which aligned with Norman and Hyland's (2003) components of confidence in trainee teachers, identifying points relating to cognitive components (e.g. *Kai* and *Rowan* talking about their developing confidence in their own knowledge and judgement), and emotional/affective components (e.g. *Lee* talking about becoming more self-assured to challenge unprofessional workplace practices).

The second area impacting on the teachers' confidence was their developing pedagogical knowledge and belief in their own ability to apply knowledge, skills and strategies. As discussed in Chapter 5, both *Rowan* and *Lee* identified the research they had to undertake for the specialist conference element of their course as being a turning point in their academic confidence. Again, concurring with Norman and Hyland's (2003) cognitive and emotional/affective components of confidence and also Orr's (2012) assertion that as trainee teachers' sense of themselves as teachers grows, their confidence increases. My findings indicated that as a result of their increased confidence, the teachers were willing to take more pedagogical risks and experiment with alternative approaches and strategies (Iredale, 2013), for example *Kai*'s desire to include concepts of social justice in their course, *Lee's* inclusion of strategies for dyslexic students and *Rowan* feeling able to explain their pedagogical rationale.

The third area which I identified as impacting on teacher confidence was when the participants talked about their students' results and feedback. This concurs with Norman and Hyland's (2003) performance component of confidence, where teachers develop confidence through feeling able to support the progress of their students, also with the cognitive component, through the belief that others believe in you. However, as I noted in Chapter 6, this reliance on extrinsic factors for validation as a teacher can lead to a distorted focus on results and, as *Jo* commented (Theme 4), on teaching students to pass the assessment. This concurs with Orr's (2012) observation that the ability to survive in an FE teaching environment is not necessarily a good way to develop as a teacher and in such an environment teachers risk falling into the social trap created by a low trust environment, as identified by Donovan (2019) and discussed in Chapters 2 and 6.

The trainees I spoke to were able to identify pivotal moments where their confidence improved, but would they have noticed these moments so explicitly without their conversations with me? An impossible question to answer. However, I believe the time to consider and talk about what had changed for them was crucial, Iredale et al state: "For developing teachers, time and space are fundamental for the journey into praxis. Confidence is reinforced through the discovery and development of new teaching strategies" (Iredale *et al.*, 2013, p.204).

  As stated in Theme 4 in Chapter 5, confidence and agency, are precarious in the low-trust high distrust environment of neo-liberal education systems; however, my findings indicate that pedagogical conversations can serve as a stepping stone to building trust between teachers. There are many examples in the interviews with the participants where they talk about the changes they made in their practice as a result of the conversations they had with peers (e.g. *Lee*, *Kai* , *Drew*, *Erin*), concurring with the findings of Roxå and Mårtensson (2009) and Jarvis and Clark (2020) discussed in Chapter 2, regarding the potential of conversations to change the way teachers think about teaching. However, a conundrum raised here is that in order to have effective pedagogical conversations, there needs to be a level of trust in place, or a willingness to take the 'leap of faith' required to begin to trust. My findings indicate a symbiotic relationship between the four elements, they feed into each other and off each other (see Figure 16). The participants had differing starting points, for example, Cohort 2's relationships developed from the pedagogical conversations they

relied on to support each other through the pandemic, which helped them to trust each other, grow in confidence and develop personal agency. Cohort 3 had an existing relationship of trust which enabled them take risks in their teaching and share those with their peers.
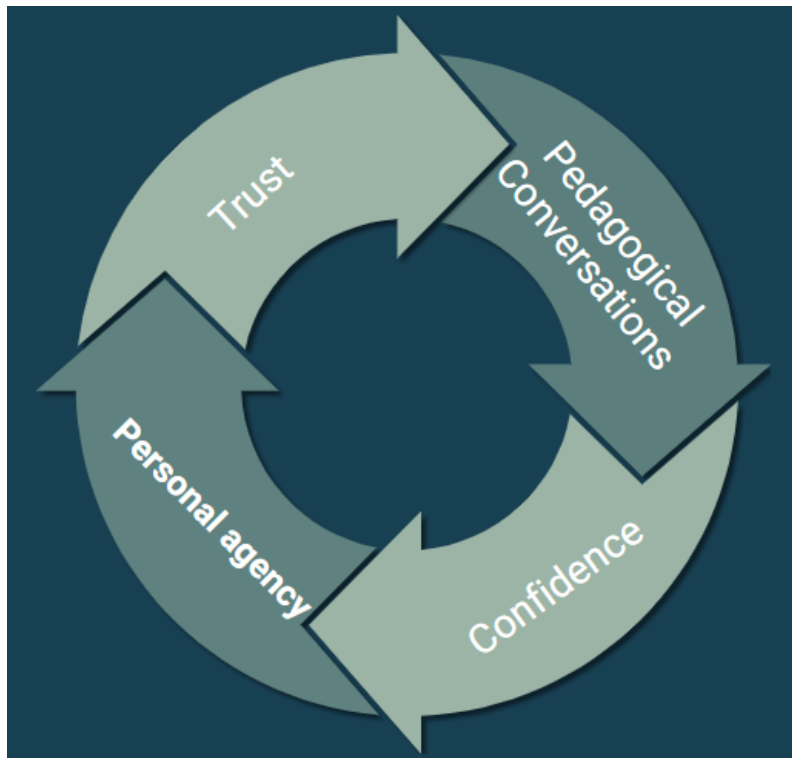
Figure 96: Symbiotic relationship

In summary, in addressing RQ2, I have found that pedagogical conversations have a crucial role to play in the development of confidence and personal agency, but they are not necessarily the starting point. In a symbiotic relationship, the starting point is not the key to maintaining or developing the relationship, the key is to identify what is missing that will prevent its growth. For example, *Rowan's* lack of confidence prevented him from videoing himself and sharing it with a peer; *Amal's* and *Morgan's* lack of trust in their peers (at the start of the project) prevented them from sharing their videos. Through analysing the data, I have identified that in order for the pedagogical conversations to facilitate changes and risk taking, all four elements must be brought together. My suggestions for how I would address this in future iterations of this project are addressed below, in my conclusion.

6.3 RQ.3 What impact can a diffractive analysis have when teachers talk about differences in their practice?

Research Question	RQ3
Themes	**Theme 5:** talking about differences, not looking for perfection
Findings	**Shift from Critique to Understanding Differences** / **Developing Self-Awareness and Professional Growth** / **Increased Collaboration and Ownership**

Shift from Critique to Understanding Differences

A diffractive analysis shifted teachers' focus from critiquing and assessing their peers to questioning and understanding differences in teaching practices.

This led to more meaningful reflections, moving away from formulaic assessments towards genuine insights about teaching methods and their impacts, encouraging a more inquisitive and open-minded approach.

Developing Self-Awareness and Professional Growth

The diffractive approach encouraged teachers to consider their own and their peers' pedagogical choices, leading to greater self-awareness about their teaching methods.

Teachers became more conscious of their teaching strategies and were motivated to make specific changes, developing professional growth and creativity in their teaching practices.

Increased Collaboration and Ownership

The approach promoted a sense of ownership and collaboration among teachers, reducing the feeling of judgment and fostering a supportive environment.

Teachers felt more empowered to experiment with new strategies and make changes in their practice. This ownership and collaborative mindset were crucial in encouraging continuous professional development and fostering a positive, innovative teaching culture.
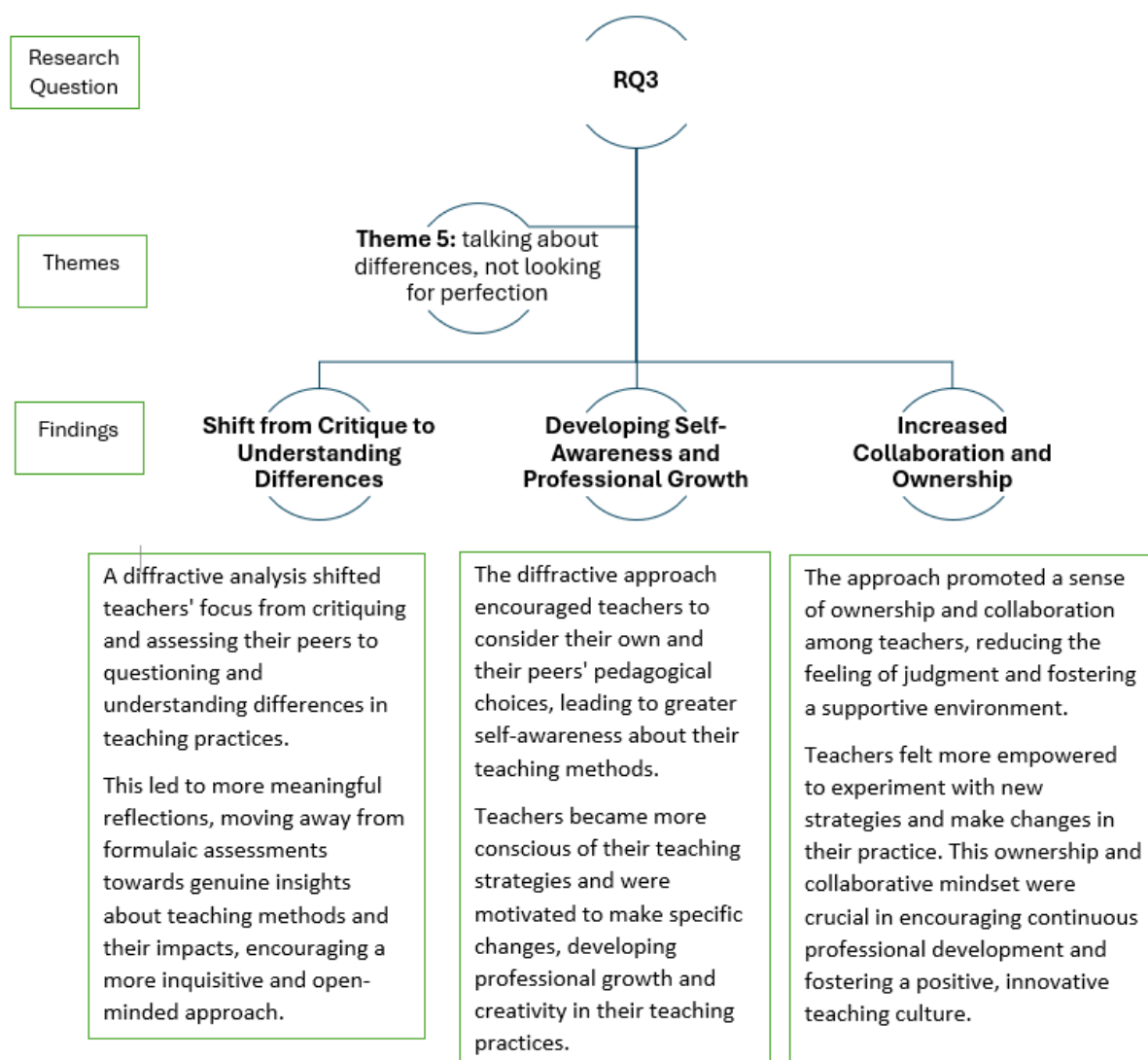
Figure 107: Findings for RQ3

I introduced diffractive analysis to my research after the first iteration of the project. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, my initial reading of the data collected from Cohort 1 showed that the participants were mirroring the kind of observation processes they experienced, they were looking for positives and areas to improve and giving each other feedback. Furthermore, in their comments (gathered through questionnaires and student reflective blogs), their reflections felt written for assessment and lacked depth, rather than capturing true moments of doubt or clarity. This concurs with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 regarding reflection and reflective practice being terms that have been overused in teacher education and CPD (Hébert, 2015; Mitchell, 2017; Myers, Smith & Tesar, 2017), leading to

reflections that are formulaic and focussed on demonstrating how well the teacher has met the expected standards, not focussing on innovation or difference (Biesta, 2019; Parsons & Stephenson, 2005; Spector, 2015).

From the data, I found that when the teachers adopted a diffractive approach to thinking and talking about teaching, they moved away from critiquing and attempting to assess what they had seen, and instead asked questions in order to understand differences in practice, whether their own or their peers'. This can be seen in the change of focus discussed by *Erin*, who initially tried to give *Lee* feedback, but then, in adopting a diffractive approach, began to question their own practice and made changes. The diffractive analysis steered the teachers away from looking for the perfection of an 'outstanding' lesson and encouraged instead a focus on difference and the impact of difference (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017). The teachers noticed the impact of difference, often "small but consequential differences" (Haraway, 1992, p.218), for example *Lee* and *Drew* both noticed the importance of looking at their students, *Kai* noticed the impact of wait time after asking a question.

As discussed above, a unique factor of this study is the importance of teachers observing their own as well as peers' teaching. The diffractive analysis, asking to teachers to consider the pedagogical choices they made and those of their peer(s), and to discuss the impact of the different choices, led to greater self-awareness of what they were doing, and why, in the classroom/workshop. This was evident from the interviews with both the more experienced teachers: *Ali* wanting to be more creative, *Erin* noting they wanted to use closed as well as open questions, and the less experienced teachers: *Drew* articulating their rationale for using games to engage students, but noting that the questions used had been too "tricky", and *Jo* observing that they would like to use more engaging activities, such as the time line used by *Taylor* and the games used by *Drew*.

As well as the changes to practice that the teachers identified, a further impact was how the teachers felt about the observations and the ensuing discussions. The diffractive approach removed the feeling that they were judging each other, according to *Kai*, and gave the teachers a sense of ownership of the process (*Taylor*). *Taylor* referred to 'ownership' explicitly when talking about adopting a diffractive approach to peer observation with their own students (Early Years practitioners), which encouraged a more collaborative approach, they refer to their practitioners "*coming away from negativity*". Furthermore, this is

evident throughout the 3-way conversation between Taylor, Jo and Drew (see Appendix 15), where the sense of ownership came from the teachers questioning their own practice, asking each other 'why' and considering changes they would make to their practice in the future. There were numerous examples in their conversations of the teachers identifying an aspect they would like to change in their practice, and going on to identify for themselves how they would go about making that change. The three teachers asked each other about their strategies and took ownership through identifying differences that they would like to experiment with in their own practice. The teachers also noted areas of their own practice that went well, but where further 'tweaks' would improve the experience for the students. These moments can be mapped to the diffractive framework (see Appendix 7) that Cohorts 3 and 4 used, indicating that the explicit focus on a diffractive analysis enabled the teachers to see and discuss differences in a positive light, echoing the concepts of difference and disruption in the literature on diffraction reviewed in Chapter 2 (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017; Moxnes & Osgood, 2018; Spector, 2015). My findings also show that the diffractive analysis created a disruption to the traditional reflection/feedback pattern following observation, opening up space for the "critical and creative engagement" Southwood (2012, p.91) calls for when highlighting the benefits of dialogue in teacher development. It is, however, important to note that, as discussed above, a relationship of trust is a vital component in facilitating disruption and enabling participants to open up to their peers.

An important aspect of the diffractive analysis that I asked the teachers to adopt was that I would not be 'checking up' on them by asking to see the videos or evidence of their conversations and I would not tell them what to focus on in the observations, that was their choice, similar to the approach taken by Thomson et al. (2015) in their 'just watch' approach. This, with hindsight, was a gesture of trust that is not normally associated with observations, and as such served to reduce feelings of vulnerability (Bottery, 2016), noted explicitly by *Reese*, in their comment about the conversation having taken place in a "safe space". The diffractive analysis therefore enabled a space for trust to develop, albeit at a micro level, and as discussed in Chapter 2, trust needs to be established in order for teachers to collaborate, innovate and take risks (Avis, 2003; Donovan, 2019).

In summary, the findings of my research indicate that through taking a diffractive approach when thinking and talking about differences in practice, the participants began to take

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control of their professional development. Through exploring the impact of difference, rather than critiquing each other's practice, the teachers were able to share and encourage innovation and creativity, planning how they would bring the differences discussed into their future teaching.

6.4 Finding Hope
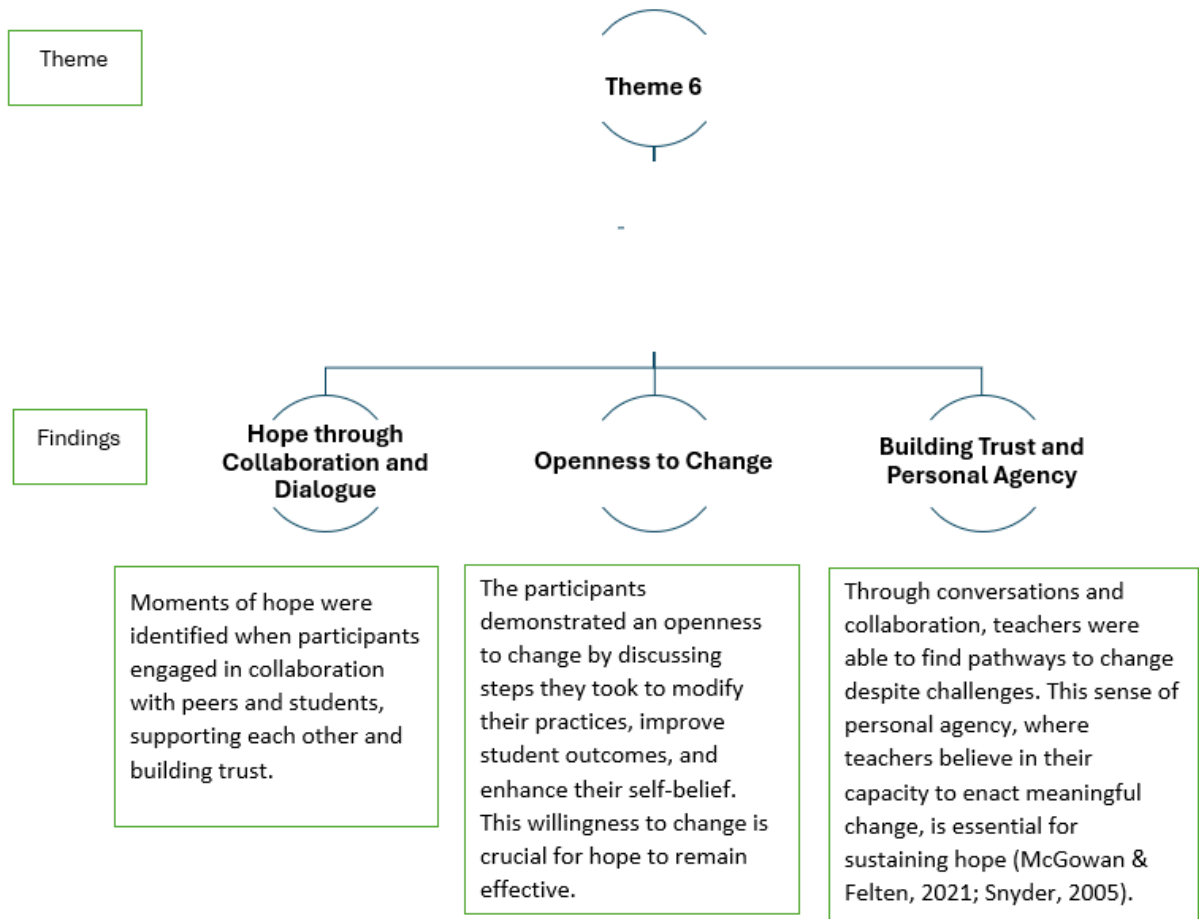
Figure 118 - Findings for Theme 6

The final finding to be discussed addresses the glimmers of hope that I interpreted in the conversations I had with the participants.

As discussed in Theme 6 (Chapter 5), I identified moments of hope when the participants talked about collaborating with others, both peers and students. This aligns with the concepts of hope explored in Chapter 2. Ojala (2016) refers to collective hope through people working together, supporting each other and believing in the goodwill (or trust) of others. For hooks (2003), dialogue and collaboration are key to building hope. These concepts draw together the different aspects of this research: the dialogic element through

the conversations the teachers had, the support they gave each other which helped develop their confidence, and the willingness of the participants who shared their videos to trust each other. These aspects have been discussed in the previous findings, but together they indicate that the teachers were open to change. The literature in Chapter 2 identifies change as a crucial element when we consider hope, without effecting change, hope becomes hopelessness (Freire, 2014). The heuristic for the enactment of hope developed by McGowan and Felten (2021, see Figure 5, Chapter 2), equates personal agency with the acknowledgement that change is possible, despite difficulties which may hinder this. In order to enact change we need to be able to find a pathway (McGowan & Felten, 2021), or a route (Snyder, 2005) to change.
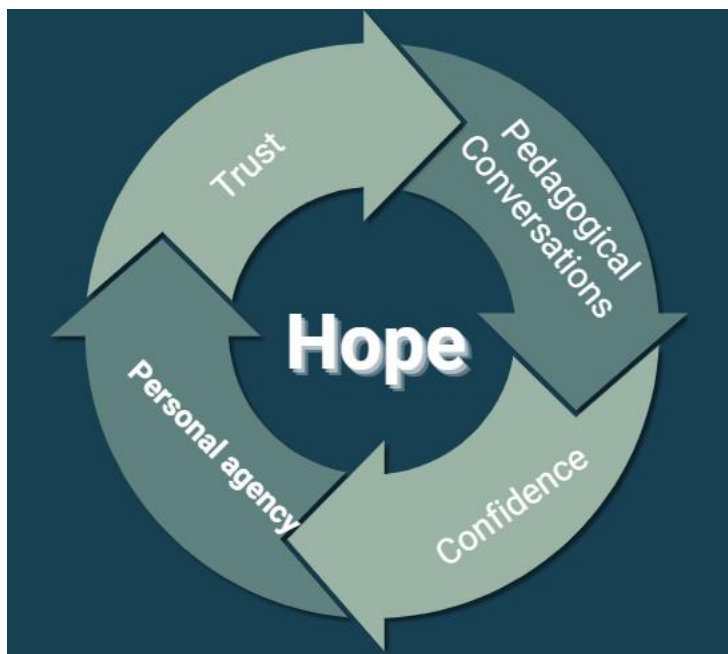
Figure19: Glimmers of hope

Throughout the data, I identified instances of the teachers talking about the steps they took to make changes: to change their practice, to change outcomes for students, to change their belief in their own abilities. Linking these steps are the conversations that they had with each other, and to some extent with me. The final finding, therefore, is that through talking to each other, through collaboration, enacting personal agency through change and through building trust, the participants in this research showed glimmers of hope, represented above (Figure 18).

Chapter 6 Summary

This chapter has presented the findings of the research by addressing the research questions, bringing together the reflexive thematic analysis of the data and the literature which informed the study. The next chapter presents the conclusions of this research, its implications for practice and my recommendations.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

This final chapter presents the conclusions to this study, addressing the original aims and research questions, and discussing further insights that developed along the way. It will discuss the study's contribution to knowledge, as well as its limitations. Finally, it will make recommendations on how the findings of this research can be implemented.

7.1 Introduction

This has always been a very personal project for me. In Chapter 1 I explored the background to and impetus for the first iteration of this research. I wrote of my feelings of disillusionment, what I would now, at the end of this study, perhaps call hopelessness, due to the incessant changes to education and the undermining of teachers through policies that had more to do with auditing and measuring results than pedagogical practices. I spoke of the erosion of my own sense of agency, but how studying for an MA in Education helped me to identify where that feeling of hopelessness had come from and identify what I could do to change that, the "specific and purposeful steps" that McGowan and Felten refer to (2020, p.2). This gave me hope, as explored in Chapter 2, the hope that Giroux (2020) states helps recognize when the present is not enough, better is possible, but we must have the imagination to act.

I stated in the introduction to this thesis that I wanted to *defamiliarise the habitual and problematise that which is taken for granted* through exploring the potential impact of asking teachers to observe their own teaching and that of a peer, using video to facilitate the process, and to talk to each other about what they had seen. I wanted to gain an understanding of whether pedagogical conversations between teachers would have a positive impact on their confidence and agency as teachers. A further aim was to explore how moving away from feedback and reflection when talking about what they had seen in the observations, and instead adopting a diffractive approach, might impact on how they talked about differences in practice, and what this could lead to.

7.2 Summary of the findings: fitting the pieces together and their implications

This section concludes the study by drawing together the findings detailed in the previous chapter, which were drawn from the analysis of the narratives collected from the

participants and my interpretation of their experiences, and exploring their implications for teachers and teacher development.

To be asked to video oneself, watch it and then share it with a peer (RQ1) can be daunting. Through analysing the data, it became clear that to do so for the participants was potentially uncomfortable, and it required the teachers who shared their video to make themselves vulnerable to their peer, it was an act of trust. As has been discussed throughout this thesis, trust has been eroded in education as a result of neoliberalism and an audit culture (Carless, 2008; Donovan, 2019; Thompson & Wolstencroft, 2018). The findings indicated that for those teachers who were able to take that leap and trust their peers, they were able to see themselves and others 'in action'. It gave the teachers the opportunity to observe the impact of their practice on their students, what Lofthouse and Birmingham (2015) refer to as using their own classroom practice as an evidence-based study. It was important to the study that teachers observed their own practice as well as observing their peer(s) because simply attempting to remember what happened in a session does not give a true picture. By watching themselves, questioning their rationale for pedagogic decisions made and taking a diffractive approach rather than reflecting on practice (RQ3), they were able to notice moments that would otherwise go undetected. Seeing their peers 'in action' supported this, again by questioning the pedagogical rationale and making a shift away from feedback (RQ3), they were able to notice differences in practices and explore what impact those differences had. Examples of this from the research include *Kai* noticing how little 'thinking time' they gave students after asking a question, and how much more time *Erin* gave, and the difference this made to the students. The diffractive analysis used by Cohorts 2-4 facilitated a disruption to the status quo, to the hegemony of the traditional observation cycle of reflection and feedback. Through my research, I found that facilitating self and peer observation can provide a rich source of professional development, which can help teachers to identify for themselves areas of practice they want to explore and develop. Unlike the traditional cycle of observation-reflection-feedback, the approach to observation explored in this study encouraged teachers to talk about experimenting in their practice and taking risks and gave them confidence (RQ2) to want to try out approaches they had seen and discussed.

The research has also highlighted that the teachers talked about developing confidence from sources beyond the focus of the study: through facilitated coaching conversations with their peers where they talked about issues of their choosing, through enhancing their academic and theoretical knowledge, and through student performance data and feedback. Developing teacher confidence is, as explored in previous chapters, an important factor in supporting teacher engagement and motivation; where confidence is lacking, teachers can become self-critical and do not trust their own judgement (Norman & Hyland, 2003). This research began out of a desire to encourage teachers to make informed judgements about their practice and to be able to think about answering Biesta's question regarding what is "educationally desirable" in a given situation (Biesta, 2019, p.269) and to have the confidence to develop and articulate their "their own personal philosophy of education" (Mockler, 2011, p.524). The diffractive observation model trialled in this study provided a structured way to facilitate teacher dialogue and professional development, the findings indicate that for the teachers involved it was successful in providing a safe space to collaborate, a contributing factor in developing teacher confidence (Noan & Molla, 2017). In conjunction with the different pathways to confidence that they identified, the teachers were able to make informed judgements about how they want to develop their practice and enact differences they had identified. The implications of these findings are that successful developments in practice for the individual teacher are brought about through facilitating an open environment, where teachers are trusted to work together to learn from their successes and mistakes. Rather than relying on performative tools to identify 'weaknesses' and impose corrective measures.

A further conclusion arrived at through the findings was what I interpreted as a disconnect between theoretical concepts of agency (see Chapter 2) and agency as experienced by the teachers in the study. Whilst teachers did talk about confidence spontaneously, agency was only discussed where I asked a direct question. Teachers were aware of their "limited capacity to shape the circumstances" in which they practice (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p965) and of the fragility of agency in a low trust teaching environment. However, despite this, the teachers enacted personal agency through their willingness to make meaningful changes (McGowan & Felten, 2021, p.2), and this, along with the conclusion above regarding their steps to identifying their own professional development, gave rise to the

final theme in the analysis: 'glimmers of hope through collaboration'.   Ojala (2016) writes of the trust that develops, as well as hope, when people work collaboratively. As discussed above, establishing trust is necessary if teachers are going to fully engage in a process that asks them to step away from the familiar. In my findings I interpreted a symbiotic relationship between trust, confidence, personal agency and pedagogic conversations, and that together these indicated an optimism I had not expected from the teachers, glimmers of hope.

One of the barriers to implementing this approach, however, was a lack of trust. The concept of trust and building trust runs through all of the themes and findings. Pedagogical conversations have the potential to change how teachers think about teaching, and some of the teachers were able to use the facilitated pedagogical conversations to build trust in each other, others built trust through the support they shared during their CertEd/PGCE course. However, trust cannot be assumed, and the implication therefore is that in order for the benefits of the observation process I have explored to be exploited, trust needs to be established, or at least initiated, before the first steps are taken. These will be discussed below in the recommendations section.

The implication for future iterations of this self/peer observation model is to ensure there is a build up to the process through facilitating sessions where teachers begin to work collaboratively and which introduce the concept of self/peer observations, clarify the difference between this and a performative observation, and give the teachers the opportunity to question and discuss it both with the organiser and the peer(s) they will be working with.

7.3 Limitations of the study

A limitation of the research was that I did not interview more of the people who decided not to participate in the study. I interviewed Rowan, and this was a rich source of data regarding trust and confidence. However, it would have been useful to interview some of the experienced teachers who initially agreed to participate but later withdrew. This would have given more definite data regarding the role of trust and distrust within an institution.

A further limitation is that there were just two qualified, experienced teachers who volunteered and completed the process. They were self-selecting and therefore

predisposed to being open to experimenting with their pedagogy and consequently more positive about the diffractive analysis.

A final limitation was that it was not possible to conduct a follow up iteration of the process with teachers as the institution in which the research took place was unwilling to permit them to use their mandatory CPD time to participate. This would have been a useful contribution to the study to explore whether teachers continued to find the approach developmental and how this impacted on their practice.

7.4 Contribution to knowledge

This study contributes to the body of knowledge about observation through questioning the hegemony of the traditional observation-reflection-feedback cycle and exploring the impact of a diffractive and dialogic approach. This research takes a very familiar concept and 'defamiliarizes' it. Lodge (2011, p.55), writing about works of fiction, defines defamiliarization as:

> "What do we mean – it is a common term of praise – when we say a book is "original"? Not, usually, that the writer has invented something without precedent, but that she has made us "perceive" what we already, in a conceptual sense, "know", by deviating from the conventional, habitual way of representing reality."

This study has problematised the concepts of observation and reflection, asked teachers to deviate from the conventional process and instead take ownership of their pedagogical development through exploring difference and the impact of difference.

A further contribution is the development of a diffractive framework which supports teachers to use diffractive analysis to develop their practice. The framework serves as a prompt to ensure teachers question rather than critique practice. This is an important stage in the creation of the safe space that is required for teachers to explore their practice and develop trust and confidence.

Finally, this study contributes to research through utilising a diffractive reading of theory (that of trust) to interpret and extend the reflexive thematic analysis of data. Through interpreting my data through the analytic lens of trust theory, this study has modelled an alternative approach to constructing a narrative, one which moves beyond the data and produces new understandings.

7.5 Recommendations

The key recommendations to come out of this study are detailed below. I have divided them into macro, meso and micro level recommendations.

Making recommendations at a macro, that is policy level, can appear futile. However, mine is not the only voice questioning the efficacy of performative observation and a system of

excessive auditing which leads to gaming the system (Beighton & Naz, 2023; O'Leary, 2020). Furthermore, there is at least one precedent of research from the classroom impacting on policy (O'Leary's work for the UCU on graded observations). Therefore, my recommendation at this level is that the research into observations should be utilised to inform policy. In order to recruit and retain teachers, greater emphasis needs to be put on developing their confidence and their ability to make pedagogical judgements, a complete rejection of observations as a tool for measuring performance would be a very positive step in this direction.

At a meso level, ITT has a crucial role to play. Pre-service ITT courses will now be delivered through HE providers or validated partners, these consortiums are in a position to challenge the hegemony of performative observations and reflection as assessment. Through encouraging teachers to question and discuss their pedagogic rationale, ITT can model the relationship of trust and development of confidence that a dialogic, diffractive approach can support. Part of the dialogue in ITT must be about the rationale for the use of this approach to observation. Educators should make use of the framework to avoid feedback and the timelines to remove decision making pressure, but there must be absolute clarity that this sits outside of any quality/management observation process.

Another meso level recommendation is for institutions to build trust through transformational rather than transactional leadership (Karacabey et al., 2022) and ensure that senior leadership is focussed on developing TLA first and foremost as a route to delivering better outcomes for students. For this to happen, institutions need to foster collaboration and communication, and see this a way for staff to rebuild trust, and not as a threat to the institution.

At a microlevel, the individual teacher, a key recommendation is to recognise the power of personal agency and pathway thinking, as defined by and McGowan and Felten (2021):
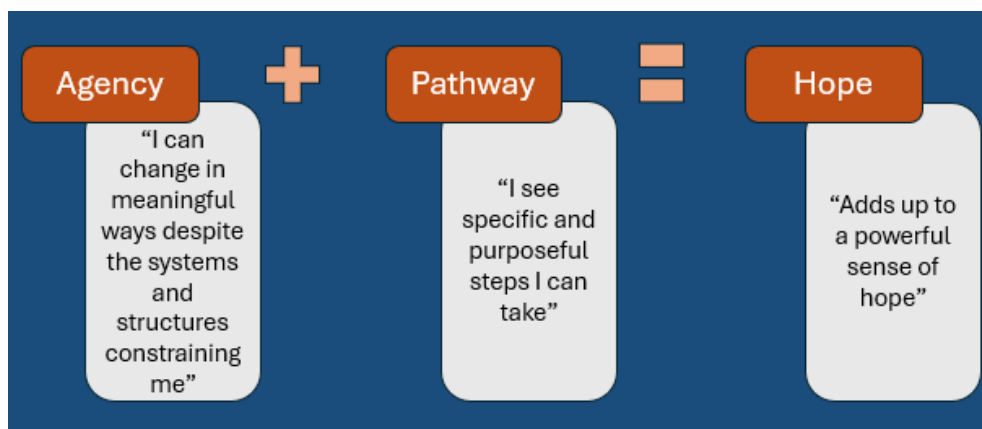
In order to be able to make a judgement about what is educationally desirable in a concrete situation (Biesta, 2019) teachers need to develop confidence, trust, a semblance of control of their own professional development, but they also need hope.

7.6 Further study

The next iteration of this study is to disseminate it further. The model so far has been used in FE, with two teachers based in HE in FE. The next steps will be to redesign the diffractive framework in order to use it in other settings. I currently work in an organisation that has business units in FE, College Based HE (CBHE), prison education and working with apprenticeships. I intend to work with the managers of these business units to adapt the framework so that it can be used effectively in their settings.

I intend to continue the work started in this study by researching whether the benefits of using a diffractive analysis of self and peer observation identified in this thesis can also be found in other settings.

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Videoing your teaching

1. Have you videoed yourself teaching yet?

   Yes – see Q2   No – see Q5

2. How did you feel watching yourself? DO you feel you learned anything from this kind of reflection – if so, what?

3. Have you shared your video with anybody else?
   Yes – see Q4   No – see Q 6

4. How did you feel about sharing the video? If you got feedback, do you feel you have learned from the feedback you received?

5. Why haven't you videoed yourself yet – try to be honest?

6. Why haven't you shared the video – try to be honest?

7. Have you watched any of your peers' videos?
   Yes – see Q8   No – see Q9

8. Have you learned anything from watching your peers – if so, what? Did you feel comfortable giving feedback?

9. Why haven't you watched any of your peers' videos?

Appendix 2: Interview question prompts

Interview Guide – question prompts to consider

How did you feel about watching yourself?

How did you feel about sharing your video?

Did you enjoy watching your peers?

How was it talking to your peers about each other's teaching?

Did you discuss your pedagogical rationale?

Do you feel you have agency in your teaching (explain if necessary)?

What, if anything did you gain from the process?

Would you do it again?

Would you prefer this approach to a normal college observation?

Appendix 3a: Ethics application

University of Sunderland

Application 006713

Section A: Applicant details

Date application started:
Thu 26 March 2020 at 12:32

First name:
Francine

Last name:
Warren

Email:
Francine.Warren@research.sunderland.ac.uk

Programme name:
Customised ETF MPhil Programme

Module name:
– not entered –

Last updated:
17/07/2020

Department:
School of Education

Applying as:
Student

Research project title:
Pedagogic conversations and teacher agency: can talking about our teaching give us greater agency?

Similar applications:
– not entered –

Supervisor

1. Supervisor

Name	Email
Prof Margaret Gregson	maggie.gregson@sunderland.ac.uk

Risk Assessment

Suitability

Adheres to BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2021)?
Yes

Takes place outside UK?
No

Involves NHS?
No

Healthcare research?
No

ESRC funded?
No

Involves adults who lack the capacity to consent?
No

Led by another UK institution?
No

Involves human tissue?
No

Clinical trial?
No

Social care research?
No

Risk Assessment

Does the study involve participants who are potentially or in any way vulnerable or who may have any difficulty giving meaningful consent to their participation or the use of their information?
No

Are participants to be involved in the study without their knowledge and consent (e.g. through internet-mediated research, or covert observation of people in public places)?
No

Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited?
No

Does the research methodology involve the use of deception or activities which are conducted without participants' full and informed consent at the time the study is carried out?
No

Are there any significant concerns regarding the design of the research project?
No

Does the research involve any of the following groups?

   a. children under 18 years of age?
   b. vulnerable adults (eg people with learning or communication difficulties)
   c. individuals who have a dependent or subordinate relationships to researchers
   d. people in custody (eg young offenders or people in prisons)
   e. individuals unable to give consent
   f. individuals involved in illegal activities
   g. therapeutic interventions

No

If the proposed research relates to the provision of social or human services is it feasible and/or appropriate that service users or service user representatives should be in some way involved in or consulted?
No

Are there payments to researchers/participants that may have an impact on the objectivity of the research?
No

Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?
No

Could the study induce unacceptable psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life? Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?
No

Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics? For example (but not limited to): sexual activity, illegal behaviour, experience of violence or abuse, drug use, etc.)
No

Are drugs, placebos or other substances to be administered to the study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?

Will research involve the sharing of data or confidential information beyond the initial consent given?
No

Is there ambiguity about whether the information/data you are collecting is considered to be public?
No

Will the research involve administrative or secure data that requires permission from the appropriate authorities before use?
No

Will the research involve the use of visual/vocal methods that potentially pose an issue regarding confidentiality and anony
No

The Data Protection Act 2018 will apply to any data-processing activities entailed by this research. Is there any cause for
uncertainty as to whether the research will fully comply with the requirements of the Act?
No

Are there any particular groups who are likely to be harmed by dissemination of the results of this project?
No

Do you have any doubts or concerns regarding your (or your colleagues) physical or psychological wellbeing during the rese
period?
No

Will the research involve accessing security-sensitive material, such as material related to terrorism or to violent extremism
kind, including, but not limited to, Islamist extremism and far-right extremism?
No

Summary

The aim of this research is to explore the impact of having pedagogic conversations on teacher agency.

Research questions:

How can teachers achieve agency?

How do teachers form a professional identity?

What factors support the development of identity?

What can teachers gain from pedagogic conversations?

What difference does a diffractive analysis make to thinking/talking about teaching?

Teachers rarely get the opportunity to see each other "in action" and without further points of reference, thinking an
talking about teaching (reflection) can be simply descriptive; peer observation can be a valuable tool for addressing
narrow perspective. This study aims to move away from mere reflection, towards diffraction "as a process of being
attentive to how differences get made and what the effects of these differences are" (Bozalek & Zembylas 2017, p.11

Methodology

This research is interpretive, using ethnographic research methods.

The research is small scale, using qualitative methods such as focus groups, questionnaires and interviews to gather
data. Over the course of the research there will be 30-40 participants comprising of trainee teachers from the PGCE/C
Ed course I deliver and qualified, experienced teachers from the University Centre Calderdale team.

Section B: Basic information

Proposed project duration

Start date (of data collection):
Tue 31 March 2020

Anticipated end date (of project)
Wed 1 December 2021

Indicators of risk

Involves potentially vulnerable participants?
No
Involves potentially highly sensitive topics?
No

Section C: Summary of research

1. Aims & Objectives

The aim of this research is to explore the impact of having pedagogic conversations on teacher agency.
Through the use of digital platforms to record, observe and share teaching episodes, this study seeks to explore whether supporting teachers have conversations about their teaching can help develop their confidence in their pedagogic content knowledge and emerging/developing identities as teachers, adopting a diffractive, rather than a reflective analysis.

2. Methodology

This is a practitioner researcher project, using ethnographic methodology. This research adopts an interpretative paradigm.
Methods will include questionnaires, focus group discussions and 1:1 interviews for more detailed information.

- What about how the data will be analysed?
  Fri 10 July 2020 at 11:57

3. Personal Safety

Raises personal safety issues?

No

Section D: About the participants

1. Potential Participants

The participants will be volunteers from the PGCE/Cert Ed course I deliver and colleagues from my department at college.

2. Recruiting Potential Participants

Participants from the PGCE/Cert Ed course will be informed about the project and given the opportunity to participate, this is voluntary, not mandatory. I will present my research proposal at a team meeting and ask colleagues to participate, I know from informal conversations there are several teachers willing to participate.

3. Consent

Will informed consent be obtained from the participants? (i.e. the proposed process) Yes

I will use the consent form (see section F) to gain consent from participants.

4. Payment

Will financial/in kind payments be offered to participants? No

5. Potential Harm to Participants

What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm/distress to the participants?

Trainee teachers may feel they need to participate in the research.

How will this be managed to ensure appropriate protection and well-being of the participants?

Section E: About the data

1. Data Confidentiality Measures

compliant with GDPR 2018
compliant with BERA Ethical Guidelines Paragraphs 40 - 51.

2. Data Storage

compliant with GDPR 2018
compliant with BERA Ethical Guidelines Paragraphs 40 & 49

Section F: Supporting documentation

Information & Consent

Participant information sheets relevant to project?
Yes

Document 1012165 (Version 2)	All versions
participation and consent form	

- Information sheet although it tells the participant what is expected of them in terms of the data that they are to collect it also needs to tell them more about the data collection methods you will be expecting them to participate in.
  There needs to be a time limit on when a participant can withdraw and expect their data to be extracted both in the information sheet and on the consent form.
  At the end of the information sheet there needs to be your contact details and your supervisors details as well as the Chair of Ethics

  Fri 10 July 2020 at 12:05

Consent forms relevant to project?
Yes

Document 1012793 (Version 1)	All versions
Amended consent form	

Document 1012166 (Version 1)	All versions
participation and consent form	

Additional Documentation

External Documentation

- not entered -

Section G: Declaration

Signed by:
Francine Warren
Date signed:
Tue 14 July 2020 at 12:31

Offical notes

– not entered –

Appendix 3b: Ethical approval letter (1)

University of Sunderland

Approved: 17/07/2020

Francine Warren

School of Education

Programme: Customised ETF

MPhil Programme Dear Francine

PROJECT TITLE: Pedagogic conversations and teacher agency: can talking about our teaching give us greater agency?

APPLICATION: Reference Number 006713

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 17/07/2020 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 006713 (form submission date: 14/07/2020);
- (expected project end date:
- 01/12/2021).

Participant information sheet 1012165 version 2 (13/07/2020).

Participant consent form 1012793 version 1 (14/07/2020). Participant consent form 1012166 version 1 (31/03/2020).

If during the course of the project you need to deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation please email ethics.review@sunderland.ac.uk

For more information please visit: https://www.sunderland.ac.uk/research/governance/researchethics/

Yours sincerely

Veronique Laniel

Ethics Administrator

University of Sunderland

Appendix 4: Ethical approval letter (2)

University of Sunderland

Francine Warren
School of Education

Dear Francine

PROJECT TITLE: Diffracting peer observation: talking about differences, not looking for perfection
APPLICATION: Reference Number 012478

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 31/05/2022 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 012478 (form submission date: 19/05/2022); (expected project end date: N\A).

If during the course of the project you need to deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation please email ethics.review@sunderland.ac.uk

For more information please visit: https://www.sunderland.ac.uk/research/governance/researchethics/

Yours sincerely

Appendix 5: Consent form and participation sheet (1)

Consent Form & Participant Information Sheet

University of Sunderland

Study title:

Pedagogic conversations and teacher agency: can talking about our teaching give us greater agency?

Participant code: _____

I am over the age of 18	
I have read and understood the attached study information and, by signing below, I consent to participate in this study	
I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time during the study itself.	
I understand that I also have the right to change my mind about participating in the study for a period of 2 weeks after participating in the questionnaire, focus group or interview.	

Signed: _____ _____

Print name:

_____

(Your name, along with your participant code is important to help match your data from two questionnaires.
It will not be used for any purpose other than this.)

Date: _____

 Witnessed by: _____

Print name: _____

Date: _____

University of Sunderland

Study Title:

Pedagogic conversations and teacher agency: can talking about our teaching give us greater agency?

What is the purpose of the study?

Through the use of digital platforms to record, observe and share teaching episodes, this study seeks to explore whether supporting teachers have conversations about their teaching can help develop their confidence in their pedagogic content knowledge and emerging/developing identities as teachers, adopting a diffractive, rather than a reflective analysis.

Who can take part in the study?

In-service or pre-service trainee teachers enrolled on a PGCE/Cert Ed course and qualified, experience teachers.

Do I have to take part?
No, this is completely voluntary.

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you change your mind about taking part in the study, **you can withdraw from the study without giving a reason and without penalty**. Once you have participated in an interview, focus group or questionnaire, you can still change your mind. If you notify me within two weeks your answers and data will be removed from the study. After this, it will no longer be able to extract your data because the data will have been analysed and anonymised.

What will happen to me if I take part?
I will ask you to video episodes of you teaching, reflect on it, share your reflections with a small group of people known to you, who will do the same. I will ask you to discuss together what you have learned from observing yourself and each other.
I will also ask you to complete a questionnaire and participate in a maximum of two focus group discussions. I will be asking some people to participate in a 1:1 interview regarding their experience and views.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
None that I am aware of.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
I hope you will gain a different perspective on what happens in your classes, and those of your peers, and be able to discuss what happens in the classroom based on fact rather than memory.

What if something goes wrong?
You can speak to me or you can withdraw from the project.

If you change your mind about participation, please contact me by email to cancel your participation. If you feel unhappy about the conduct of the study, please contact me immediately or the Chairperson of the University of Sunderland Research Ethics Group, whose contact details are given below.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?
Any information about you which is collected will be strictly confidential. Data will
be anonymised before being used. It will comply with GDPR and BERA ethical research guidelines and principles.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

If suitable, the results may also be presented at academic conferences and/or written up for publication in peer reviewed academic journals.

Who is organising and funding the research?
This is an independent project which I am undertaking as part of a research MPhil programme.

Who has reviewed the study?

The University of Sunderland Research Ethics Group has reviewed and approved the study.

Contact for further information

Francine Warren (conducting this MPhil research)
Email: Francine.Warren@research.sunderland.ac.uk

Doctor Lawrence Nixon (Supervisor)
Email: lawrence.nixon@sunderland.ac.uk

Doctor John Fulton (Chair of the University of Sunderland Research Ethics Group, University of Sunderland) Email: john.fulton@sunderland.ac.uk

Phone: 0191 515 2529

Consent Form & Participant Information Sheet

Study title:

Diffracting peer observation: talking about differences, not looking for perfection

Participant code: _____

I am over the age of 18	
I have read and understood the attached study information and, by signing below, I consent to participate in this study	
I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time during the study itself.	
I understand that I also have the right to change my mind about participating in the study for a period of 2 weeks after participating in the questionnaire, focus group or interview.	x

Signed: ___ _____

Print name: ___ _____

(Your name, along with your participant code is important to help match your data from two questionnaires.
It will not be used for any purpose other than this.)

Date: _____

Study Title:

 Pedagogic conversations and teacher agency: can talking about our teaching give us greater agency?

What is the purpose of the study?

Through the use of digital platforms to record, observe and share teaching episodes, this study seeks to explore whether supporting teachers to have conversations about their teaching can help develop their confidence in their pedagogic content knowledge and emerging/developing identities as teachers, adopting a diffractive, rather than a reflective analysis.

Who can take part in the study?

In-service or pre-service trainee teachers enrolled on a PGCE/Cert Ed course and qualified, experienced teachers.

Do I have to take part?
No, this is completely voluntary.

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you change your mind about taking part in the study, **you can withdraw from the study without giving a reason and without penalty**.   Once you have participated in an interview, focus group or questionnaire, you can still change your mind. If you notify me within two weeks of participation in any of the aforementioned data collection methods, your answers and data will be removed from the study. After this, I will no longer be able to extract your data because the data will have been analysed and anonymised.

What will happen to me if I take part?
You signed a consent form agreeing to participate in this research by videoing yourself teaching, sharing those videos and having conversations with your peers about what you saw. You answered questionnaires and/or had 1:1 interviews with me to talk about the process.

This additional consent form agrees to the anonymised use of the blogs you wrote/recorded for your CertEd/PGCE qualification.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
None that I am aware of.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
 I hope you will gain a different perspective on what happens in your classes, and those of your peers, and be able to discuss what happens in the classroom based on fact rather than memory.

What if something goes wrong?

You can speak to me or you can withdraw from the project.

If you change your mind about participation, please contact me by email to cancel your participation. If you feel unhappy about the conduct of the study, please contact me immediately or the Chairperson of the University of Sunderland Research Ethics Group, whose contact details are given below.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?
Any information about you which is collected will be strictly confidential. Data will be anonymised before being used. It will comply with GDPR and BERA ethical research guidelines and principles.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

If suitable, the results may also be presented at academic conferences and/or written up for publication in peer reviewed academic journals.

Who is organising and funding the research?
This is an independent project which I am undertaking as part of a PhD programme.

Who has reviewed the study?

The University of Sunderland Research Ethics Group has reviewed and approved the study.

Contact for further information

Francine Warren (conducting this PhD research)
Email: Francine.Warren@research.sunderland.ac.uk

Dr. Kate Duffy (Supervisor)
Email: kate.duffy@sunderland.ac.uk

Dr. Gary Husband (Supervisor)
Email: gary.husband@stir.ac.uk

Doctor John Fulton (Chair of the University of Sunderland Research Ethics Group, University of Sunderland) Email: john.fulton@sunderland.ac.uk

Phone: 0191 515 2529

Framework for peer observation

What?	Why?

Getting started	
Participating in this project involves a shift away from reflecting on practice and giving feedback, to talking about teaching and asking questions about differences in practice and the choices we make when we teach.	The concept of reflection brings with it a process and vocabulary which we have become used to. It is also associated with the assessment of teaching. I want to see if there is an alternative lens through which we can view what we do. Moving away from assessment and judgement, to talking about what we do, why and asking if talking about it helps us and our students.

Groupings	
Work in groups of 2 to 3	Smaller groups will make it manageable in terms of time and follow up discussions.

Video self	
You might want to video a specific part of a session (introducing the session, questioning, feedback...). Or, if you're not sure, just put the video on for half an hour to see what you get.	Watching a lesson is very different from remembering what happened. Rather than reflecting on action, you see yourself in action - this can sometimes give quite surprising information.

Watch your own video	
Watch your video – think about both you and the students. Watch for the choices you are making as you teach. Ask yourself: *Were you conscious of the choices at the time? *Do you know why you made those choices? *Would you do things differently having watched yourself? *Is there anything that surprises you or you didn't expect to see?	This is not about watching with a critical eye, more with an open mind. This gives you an opportunity to see what you and your students actually do in class, not what you think you do/remember doing. You are not watching it just to find areas to improve (although we do tend to focus on these areas initially). It is about looking back on the choices you made with those students and thinking about why.

Share your video with your partner(s)	
You can ask your partner(s) to watch a specific part of your video (give time ref) if there is something you particularly want to talk about. Or you can let them decide for themselves. If it is longer than 15 minutes, it is a good idea to give a summary of what happens so they can decide which bit to watch if they are not going to watch it all (e.g. first 10 mins is a warmer, from min 17-25 questioning and feedback etc)	You can choose what you want to share, you are in control. You may want to discuss a particular aspect of your teaching or be happy to talk about whatever your partner has noticed. You do not need to edit the video.

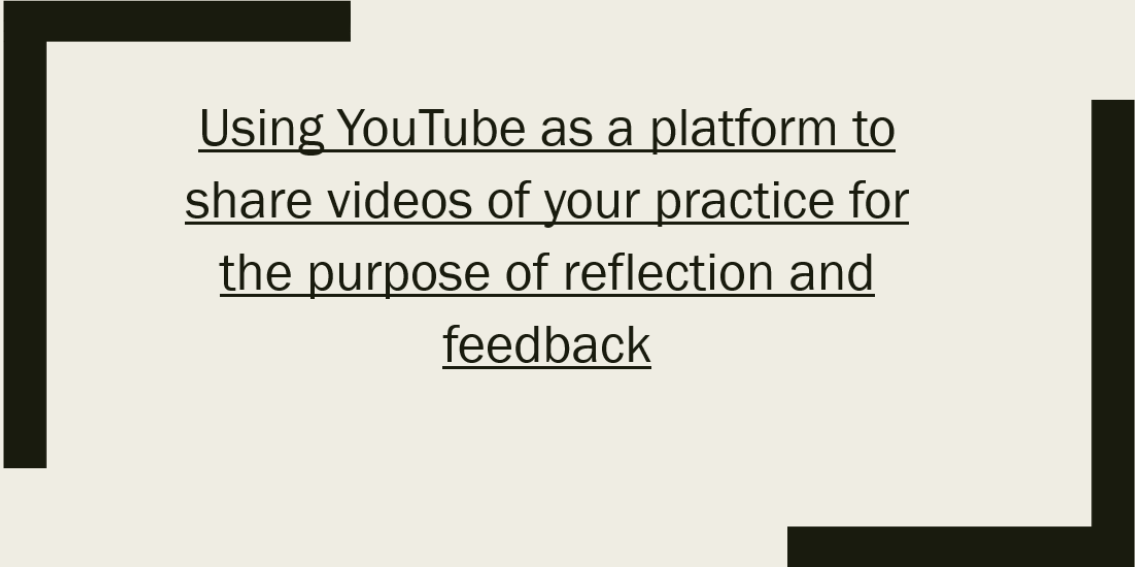| Watch each other's videos	
As you are watching, consider the choices being made. *Ask why the teacher made those choices. *Are they the same choices you would have made? Remember, this is not about worse/better, just different.	Peer observation can be a great way to consider how to use different ideas and approaches. We are watching to learn, not to critique or tell others how they can improve.

Talking about teaching	
Arrange a time to talk (F2F or online). You do not need to discuss both/all videos in one meeting, this is up to you. Discuss the questions you were asking yourself as you watched yourself and each other. The key questions are "why" and "what do/would I do?"	The aim is to help you to have a discussion about teaching decisions through watching yourself and others. These can be conscious or subconscious decisions, but **why** did you make them? We are not looking for the "right" answer but looking at the impact different choices and decisions have on teaching and learning.

Finally
As part of my research, I will arrange to interview you after you have discussed the teaching with your partner(s) to ask you how the process went. There are no right or wrong answers.

DESIGN PROJECT

Francine Warren

Using YouTube as a platform to share videos of your practice for the purpose of reflection and feedback

Using YouTube as a tool for peer observation and reflective practice

Driver → issue raised in tutorials:

■ Opportunities to observe others is limited because of your work commitments

Solution

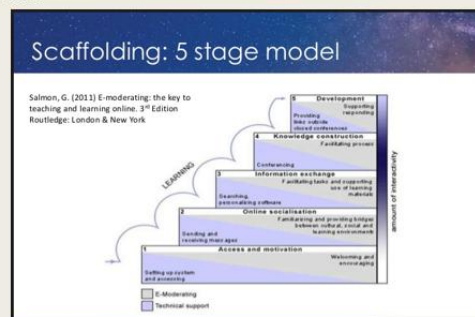■ video segments of teaching and share online with an identified group

Result

■ a window on your own teaching and a framework within which to analyse and reflect on it

■ a window on the teaching of peers, an insight into their self analysis and an opportunity share what you have found useful from their clip(s)

Overview of the task and related theory

■ Salmon's 5 stage model

Scaffolding: 5 stage model

Stage 1 – setting up

Scaffolding: 5 stage model

- 12 teachers – to work in peer observation groups of 3 (a community of practice – Wenger)

- Draw up contract of agreement re obs etiquette (non-judgemental feedback, only share with e.o. etc)

- What should you be looking at/for? – Harvard "Best foot forward", Teacher Selfie

- Set up a YouTube account , register to upload videos longer than 15 min, check your privacy settings

Stage 2 – forming an online environment

Scaffolding: 5 stage model

- Create a trial video and share (by next week)

- Identify areas of your own teaching you want to look at initially (based on FB from previous observations, areas you've identified for development through ETF or areas of interest) and share with your group

- Remember the Harvard model of obs

- Choose the model for reflection that you will use

Stage 3 – information giving and receiving
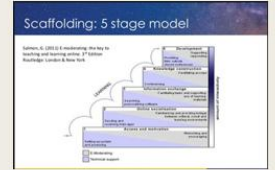
■ Video yourself – watch it and identify particular areas to focus on, following Harvard model

■ Share your video via YouTube and email your analysis to your peer group

Stage 4 – knowledge construction
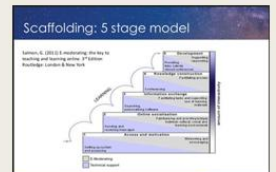
■ Watch each other's videos

■ Provide feedback to colleague by answering these 3 questions:

1. What teaching and learning skills/activities did you enjoy?

2. How could you apply these skills/activities to your own teaching?

3. Do you have any other comments to make?

   (Hilltop College, quoted in O'Leary 2017, p121)

■ Reflect on the feedback received from your peers

Stage 5 - development
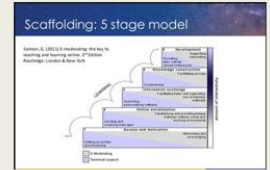
Scaffolding: 5 stage model

- Identify your next steps in light of your own analysis and feedback from peers
- Reflect on the process using a reflective model (e.g. Rolfe, Kolb, Gibbs..)
- Upload your reflection to PebblePad

Pedagogic approach

Laurillard's Conversational Framework:

- Gives a framework through which to map the processes of learning

- E.g. sharing practice with peers for comparison and comment (13, 14, 15, 16, 17 in fig 5.)

Click icon to add picture

Fig. 5 The Conversational Framework: instructionism, social learning, constructionism, and collaborative learning combine to provide a simplified representation of what it takes to learn. Numbers show a possible ordering of the successive activities of learner, teacher, and peers

Appendix 9: Participant overview

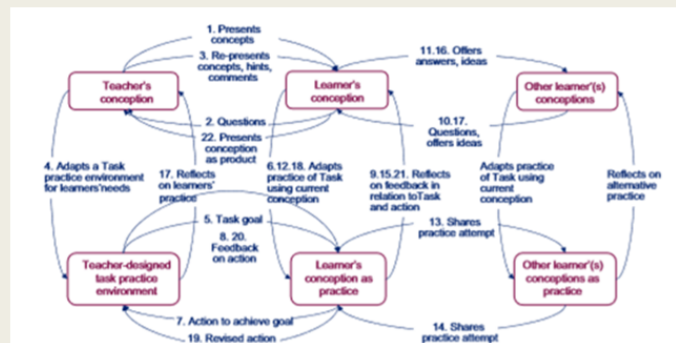| Cohort	Code	Level of qual	Questionnaire	Video inter	Video length	Diffractive Framework	Blog
1 (18-20)	Mel	Level 5 Cert Ed	No	No			Yes
1 (18-20)	Morgan	Level 5 Cert Ed	Yes	No			No
1 (18-20)	Sam	Level 6 PGCE	Yes	No			Yes
1 (18-20)	Alex	Level 5 Cert Ed	No	No			Yes
1 (18-20)	Amal	Level 5 Cert Ed	Yes	No			Yes
1 (18-20)	Tatum	Level 5 Cert Ed	Yes	No			Yes
1 (18-20)	Nicky	Level 7 M	Yes	No			Yes
2 (19-21)	Lee	Level 5 Cert Ed	NA	Yes	26' 33"		Yes
2 (19-21)	Kai	Level 5 Cert Ed	NA	Yes x 2	23' 20" 22' 40"		Yes
2 (19-21)	Rowan	Level 6 PGCE	NA	Yes	44'		No
2 (19-21)	Erin	Level 7 M	NA	Yes	21'		Yes
3 (20-22)	Drew	Level 5 Cert Ed	NA	Yes	17'	yes	Yes audio
3 (20-22)	Taylor	Level 7 M	NA	Yes	24'	yes	Yes audio
3 (20-22)	Jo	Level 7 M	NA	Yes	28' 20"	yes	Yes audio
4	Reese	Qualified	NA	Yes x 2	19' 44" 34' 08"	yes	NA
4	Ali	Qualified	NA	Yes	44' 03"	yes	NA

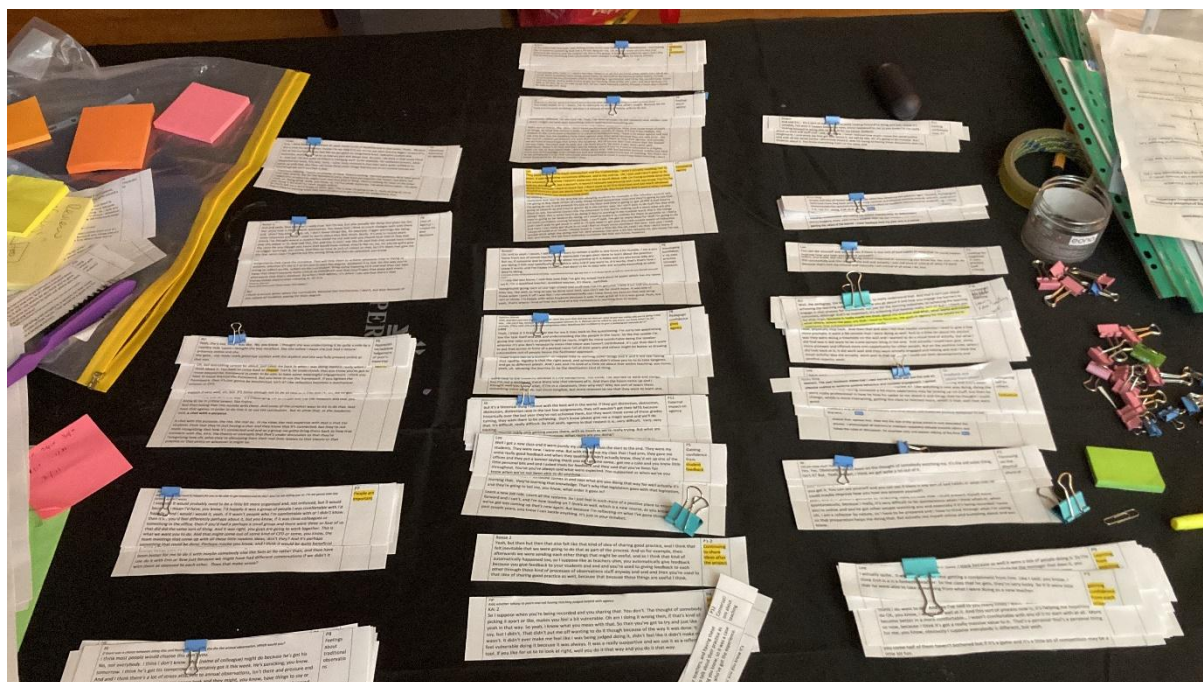## Appendix 10: The six phases of Reflexive Thematic Analysis

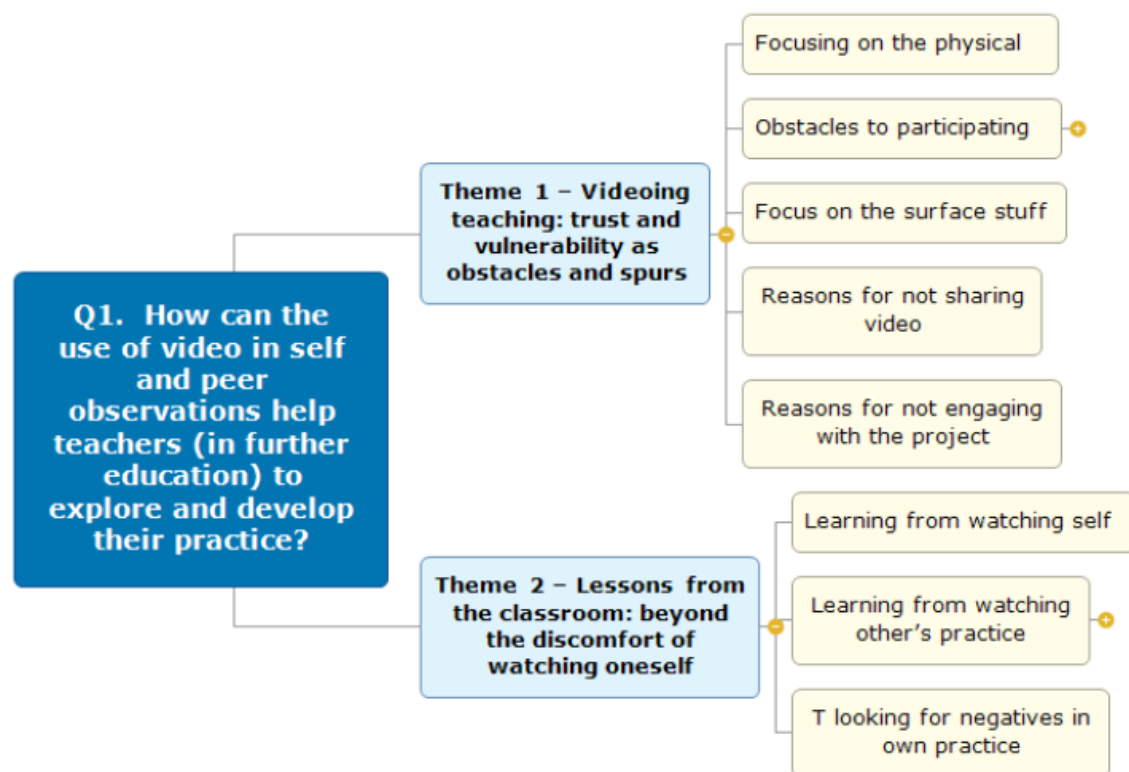| Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarising yourself with the dataset	This phase involves reading and re-reading the data, to become immersed and intimately familiar with its content, and making notes on your initial analytic observations and insights, both in relation to each individual data item (e.g. an interview transcript) and in relation to the entire dataset.
2. Coding	This phase involves generating succinct labels (codes!) that capture and evoke important features of the data that might be relevant to addressing the research question. It involves coding the entire dataset, with two or more rounds of coding, and after that, collating all the codes and all relevant data extracts, together for later stages of analysis.
3. Generating initial themes	This phase involves examining the codes and collated data to begin to develop significant broader patterns of meaning (potential themes). It then involves collating data relevant to each candidate theme, so that you can work with the data and review the viability of each candidate theme.
4. Developing and reviewing themes	This phase involves checking the candidate themes against the coded data and the entire dataset, to determine that they tell a convincing story of the data, and one that addresses the research question. In this phase, themes are further developed, which sometimes involves them being split, combined, or discarded. In our TA approach, themes are defined as pattern of shared meaning underpinned by a central concept or idea.
5. Refining, defining and naming themes	This phase involves developing a detailed analysis of each theme, working out the scope and focus of each theme, determining the 'story' of each. It also involves deciding on an informative name for each theme.
6. Writing up	This final phase involves weaving together the analytic narrative and data extracts, and contextualising the analysis in relation to existing literature.

https://www.thematicanalysis.net/doing-reflexive-ta/ (last accessed 22.09.23)

Appendix 11: Codes in tables
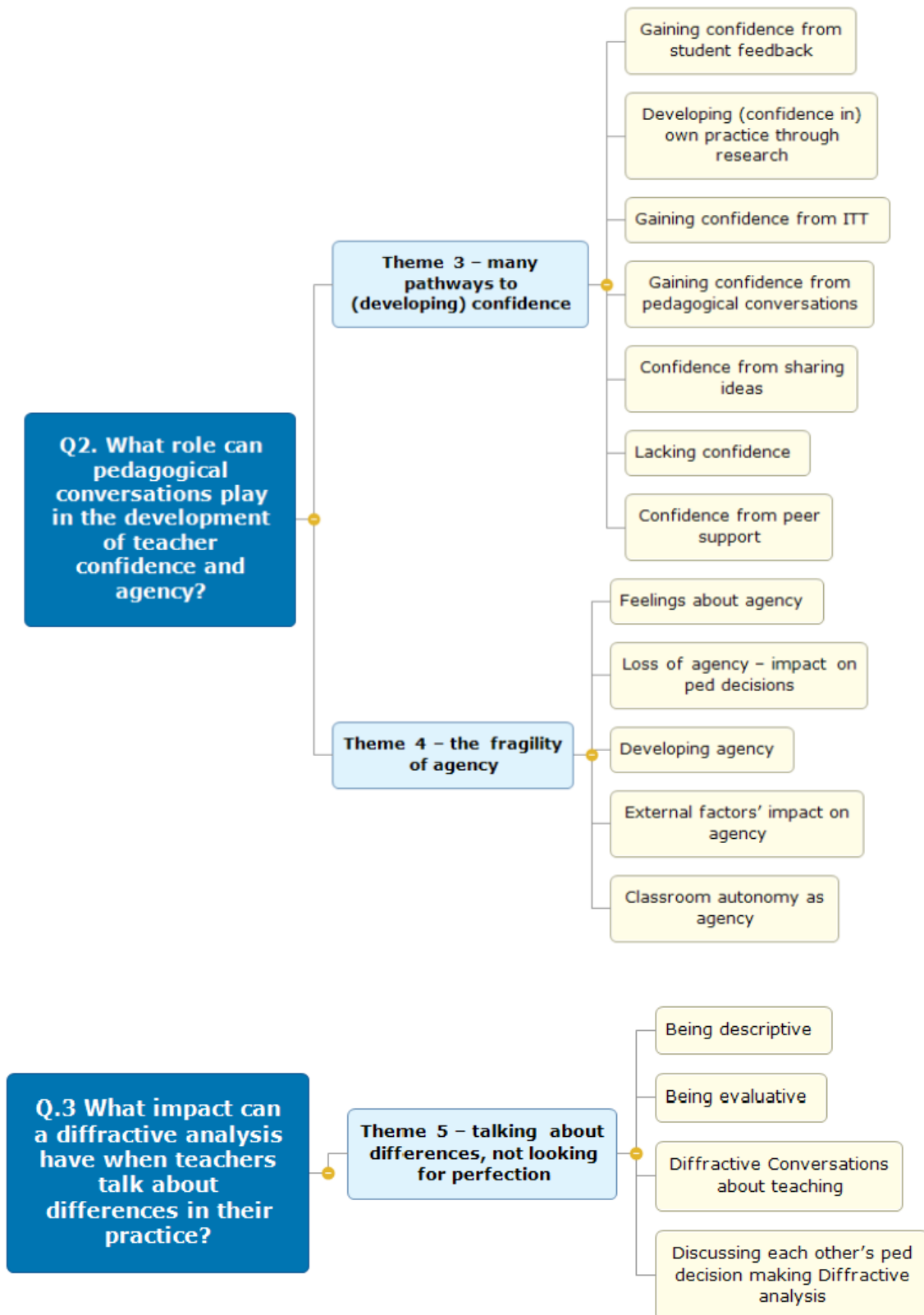
Taylor And they also gave me a lot of reassurance if I'm honest as well, because just knowing that other people have different scenarios, different development areas and trying to work around things as well.	P4 Gaining confidence from conversations
Taylor So for example, *Drew* were talking about some suggestions of in his cooking class and then actually that sparked conversation of, well, I might try that. So it were, it were contextualizing in a way of all that different learning what we've just got from one one question we've now sparked a whole... erm strategy for all of us. So yeah, it were really positive, really positive.	P4 Learning from other's practice
Taylor *What are you taking away?* Um and actually incorporate more activities within that and taking away erm I think it's understanding your students a bit more as well and knowing when when to make yourself involved. So sometimes, like when I watched that video back, sometimes maybe I stood back a little bit too much erm when I could have actually give some prompts.	P5 Noticing own practice
Taylor *And what about from watching the others as well? What are you taking from them?* Yeah, I'm taking...*Drew's* got some really good creative ideas which I really like, erm some really fun, creative ideas. So I'm taking that. And then there were some aspects of British Values from *Jo*, which I felt, actually that could work for mine, around quizzes and different strategies like that. So if anything, I think the whole theme for me, what I'm taking from it, is actually the creative side of it, and the innovative strategies, for me personally.	P5 Learning from other's practice
Taylor	P5

Appendix 12: Code categories

Q2. What role can pedagogical conversations play in the development of teacher confidence and agency?

Theme 3 – many pathways to (developing) confidence
- Gaining confidence from student feedback
- Developing (confidence in) own practice through research
- Gaining confidence from ITT
- Gaining confidence from pedagogical conversations
- Confidence from sharing ideas
- Lacking confidence
- Confidence from peer support

Theme 4 – the fragility of agency
- Feelings about agency
- Loss of agency – impact on ped decisions
- Developing agency
- External factors' impact on agency
- Classroom autonomy as agency

Q.3 What impact can a diffractive analysis have when teachers talk about differences in their practice?

Theme 5 – talking about differences, not looking for perfection
- Being descriptive
- Being evaluative
- Diffractive Conversations about teaching
- Discussing each other's ped decision making Diffractive analysis

Observation of Teaching Form O3

Name of Observer:	Date of observation

Please indicate below the capacity in which you are observing the session (more than one box can be ticked)

Subject specialist	Teacher trainer	Mentor	Other please specify

Subject Specialist Feedback Subject Specialist observers should complete the form with particular attention to subject to specialist planning and preparation, curriculum knowledge and understanding and in particular, how effectively up to date knowledge of subject specialist/vocational area is demonstrated and its impact on the learning progress and development of learners in the subject.

Trainee	Location of session
Subject	**Course/level/year being taught**

Title of session

Time from and to	Duration of observation	No. of students in group

Module 2 Becoming a Subject Specialist teacher (please circle number of observation)

1st	2nd	3rd	4th

Module 3 Being a Subject Specialist Teacher (please circle)

1st	2nd	3rd	4th

Module /Level (please tick)	Foundation(F)	Intermediate(I)	Higher(H)	Masters(M)	Pre-Service	In -Service
Module 1 Micro lesson						
Module 2 Becoming a Subject Specialist Teacher						
Module 3 Being a Subject Specialist Teacher						

Strengths

Development points

Subject Specialist Comments
Including overall quality of learning, effectiveness of planning, preparation, learning activities and assessment in developing the learners' knowledge of the subject**,** employability skills and up to date subject/ industry standard practice**;** motivation and inspiration of learners to achieve and develop their skills to enable progression in their subject**;** health and safety related to the specific curriculum area; English and maths skills in relation to their specialist subject.

Subject Specialist comments on the session and suggestions for development

General Comments on the session and suggestions for development
Including overall quality of learning, effectiveness of planning, preparation and learning activities, impact of trainee's communication skills on learning, integration of English, mathematics and ICT, how the trainee's approach to equality and diversity impacts on learning, effectiveness of assessment and feedback, differentiation and the achievement of individual learners.

Important notes: The statements in the boxes refer only to the session being observed and not to the trainee's general abilities as a developing teacher

The comments boxes can be used to provide additional points from the observer. If you are a subject specialist observer the comments box can be used to draw attention to practice relating to the specialist nature of the lesson

Tick appropriate box to right				
Reasons **may** include:				
Planning	Lack of detail Learning outcomes for lesson not sufficiently defined Inappropriate level for learners and subject	Relevant learning outcomes but could be more clearly expressed Content sufficiently develop all learners' knowledge and understanding/skills	Detailed Clearly expressed learning outcomes deepen learners' knowledge/understanding/skills Lesson content supports learners' development	Appropriate, relevant and challenging outcomes for learners Session planned to enable learners to achieve these challenging outcomes
Comments as appropriate.				
Preparation *Eg of strategies, resources, equipment, environment and any available learning support.* *Takes account of subject being taught*	Under- or unprepared in strategies, resources, environment. Lack of attention to detail	Lesson is adequately prepared, although level of attention to detail impacts adversely on the teaching and learning taking place	Detailed preparation which takes account of the learners ,the context and teaching and learning in the subject	Preparation enables a degree of flexibility in anticipation of the needs of learners, the context and teaching and learning in the subject
Comments (as appropriate)				
Structure and sequencing *eg recap, intro, chunking and linking of content, , opportunities for application of learning , mini plenaries, plenary etc*	Lesson did not show appropriate structure and sequence. Insufficiently linked to planned outcomes	Structure and sequence is evident but does not take sufficient account of individual learners and context	Lesson is organised structured and sequenced appropriately to enable learning outcomes to be achieved	Organisation of the lesson content is thoughtfully and intentionally structured and sequenced to a high level to achieve planned outcomes. Flexible and able to make responsive adjustments to learners' needs and context
Comments (as appropriate)				

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Tick appropriate box to right				
Reasons **may** include:				
Communication *Verbal, non-verbal, instructions, questioning, interactions, briefing, debriefing, plenary*	Communication is ineffective. This may be because instructions or teacher exposition are unclear, and/or because interaction between teacher and learners is absent or very limited	Communication is mostly adequate but interactions between teacher and learners are limited and some opportunities for promoting learning are missed	Good. Communication is clear and encourages learners to interact with teacher and other learners	Excellent. Highly effective dialogue between teacher and learners in all phases of the lesson
Comments (as appropriate)				
Resources	Resources are not sufficiently matched to learners' needs	Resources are mostly appropriate but do not meet all needs and/or limit the quality of learning possible	Appropriate resources are used effectively to support most learners	Resources are well-judged and used effectively to support learners in achieving learning outcomes
Comments				
Subject knowledge	Subject knowledge is limited, ineffective, inaccurate and/or at a level which does not support the learners' development	Demonstrates secure subject or vocational knowledge that is relevant to developing learners' understanding and skills.	Uses secure subject or vocational knowledge to find and underpin different teaching and learning strategies and ways of explaining/demonstrating key concepts and skills.	Applies depth of subject or vocational knowledge to support learners in acquiring appropriate understanding and skills, ensuring expected progress for all through a range of approaches.
Comments				
Management of lesson and classroom behaviour	Learners' lack of engagement/low level disruption reduce learning and/or lead to a disorderly environment	Occasional low level inattention/disruption. Nearly all learners respond positively. Clear	A good climate for learning is maintained. Activities, interactions and behaviour managed consistently well.	A positive climate for achieving high standards of learning exists throughout the lesson. Teacher manages activities,

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Tick appropriate box to right				
Reasons **may** include:				
Behaviour issues, classroom management, emotional intelligence, interactions		procedures for managing interaction/behaviour but not always used consistently		interactions and behaviour skilfully and with great consistency
Comments				
Questioning *Level, distribution, clarity, stretch and challenge. Assessment for Learning strategies*	Learners are not engaged through questioning and other assessment for learning strategies. Poor use of questions to support teaching and learning	Inconsistent use of questions to support teaching and learning. Nearly all learners are engaged through questioning	Secure and consistent use of questioning strategies which supports all learners to develop appropriate understanding.	Understanding is checked systematically and effectively throughout the lesson. Teacher anticipates where to intervene and impacts on the quality of learning.
Comments				
Safety, wellbeing, e-safety	Teacher does not actively engage with safety issues and/or learners do not understand risks and may endanger themselves and others	Learners know (or are made aware of) the risks they face and this is reflected in their behaviour	Teacher supports learners to identify unsafe situations and understand how to keep themselves safe	Teacher supports learners to identify and understand unsafe situations very clearly. Learners are (or are made) highly aware of how to keep themselves and others safe
Comments				

Tick appropriate box to right				
Reasons **may** include:				
Differentiation, Interventions and support	Little differentiation. Support and interventions have little or no impact on learning	Some impact but not always timely or consistent in meeting individual needs	Good impact on learning. Appropriate interventions which reflect learners' individual needs	Notable impact. Sharply focussed and timely interventions. Where appropriate, learners' individual needs accurately identified before and/or during lesson and teacher acts positively to meet these needs
Comments:				
Expectations/challenge	Not high enough. Progress is limited	Expectations sufficient for learners to make satisfactory progress towards meeting the requirements of their course	High and realistic expectations for learners in most aspects of the lesson.	Consistently high but realistic expectations of learners, including identification of learning outcomes, engagement in lesson, behaviour and achievement
Comments				
Functional skills Reading, writing, communications, maths and ICT	Personal knowledge and skills in English/mathematics/ICT are limited, ineffective, inaccurate and/or at a level which does not support the learners' development.	Personal knowledge and skills in English/ mathematics/ICT needs some development. Occasional opportunities are taken to embed functional skills in learning sessions.	Demonstrates secure personal knowledge and skills in English and mathematics. Identifies and uses opportunities to embed these skills in learning sessions.	Demonstrates secure and confident personal knowledge and skills in English/ mathematics/ICT. Consistently uses depth of knowledge and skills to embed opportunities for learners to develop in functional skills
Comments				

Tick appropriate box to right				
Reasons **may** include:				
Equality, diversity and inclusion	Overlooked, ignored and/or opportunities missed.	Demonstrates an understanding of social and cultural diversity, equality of opportunity and inclusion. Occasional opportunities are taken to develop skills knowledge and understanding	Demonstrates a secure understanding and application to teaching of social and cultural diversity, equality of opportunity and inclusion. Most opportunities are taken to develop skills knowledge and understanding	Promote learners' understanding by exploiting the potential provided by social and cultural diversity, equality of opportunity and inclusion and show a depth of understanding of their implications for teaching and learning.
Comments				
Assessment, Feedback and/or marking	Assessment is not used effectively to help learners improve. Feedback and/or marking is minimal	Work is monitored during the lesson. General misconceptions are picked up. Plans are adapted but this is not always timely or relevant. Feedback and/or marking is inconsistent	Progress is assessed regularly and accurately. Teacher listens to, carefully observes and skilfully questions learners to reshape tasks and explanations to improve learning. Learners know how well they have done and how to improve. Feedback and/or marking is regular.	Understanding is checked systematically and effectively, anticipating interventions Consistently high quality of constructive feedback and/or marking
Comments				
Progress and Learning	Some or all are making weak progress. Learning is limited. Learners underachieve	Learners engage consistently with the learning activities. Progress is broadly in line with the intended outcomes of the session.	Most learners make good progress and achieve intended outcomes by the end of the session. Learning activities are effectively completed and support achievement.	There is a clear focus throughout the session on learner achievement. Most learners achieve intended outcomes and make sustained progress towards appropriately high standards.
Comments				

Tick appropriate box to right				
Reasons **may** include:				
Has the trainee, on the basis of the session observed demonstrated acceptable practical teaching for this stage of their course? Please select: Yes/No				
Observing tutor:		Observing tutor's signature:		Date:

Appendix 15: 3-way conversation transcript

Taylor:

So I've watched my video. Yeah, go on, see.

Jo:

That. Go on, it's. Alright, come on.

Taylor:

Of my teaching and lesson and and. I think when I look back at myself, I think there is some opportunities of development there as well. I've questioned now with the timeline that I used. Well, the next time I think I'd do it differently, we used the timeline activity in a sense of all of the students and there were around 14 students and we did it as a big group activity. I think now going forward and if we're to do this again, I'd break it down into smaller groups so that everybody were engaged.

Jo:

Yeah, I like. I really like that timeline. It's something I think I'd like to try myself. Actually. I'm not sure just in what context, but I do like the idea they did look engaged. They looked like they were enjoying the activity. I something I I was going to ask you anyway was because one person sort of seemed to be taking charge of putting up all the things. So would you, you know, would like you say, would you do it differently and try and be more inclusive for perhaps some of the quieter ones in the group? Erm they were all discussing it, but. I for me, I don't think that would work with my groups. Because I don't think I could trust them to discuss sensibly in such a big group, I'd probably have to break them down into smaller groups somehow. But I love the activity.

Taylor:

 Yeah, I think looking back, there was one student that did take charge of it. So she were actually put in the things up on the wall while the rest of the group were deciding what should go where and I I have noticed that there were some quieter ones in the group and I think that actually I need to probe a little bit more into that, but like you. Say, maybe splitting the groups up.

Jo:

It can be hard though, because the the confident, more confident ones do tend to, you know, take the take the lead, as it were. But it's just it is sometimes hard to include. It's like finding the quieter ones a little role, isn't it? Within the activity.

Taylor:

and I think that's what. I'll do next time.

Jo:

Yeah, but I look at the activity was good. So nice. It's a really nice idea with how to break something down.

Taylor:

Yeah. And I think the reason why I did that was because sometimes it can get boring just talking about legislation, how it's changed over time, so I wanted it to be a quite hands on activity, hoping that the information would go in better as well.

Jo:

Which it probably did.

Taylor:

It probably did, yeah.

Jo:

To the fair, rather than you just, you could have just PowerPointed it and yeah. They may or may not have taken something in, but that's a nice way of doing it, isn't it, for a topic like that?

Drew:

When you say you could have had more inclusion from other students, especially certain students doing more than others, how could you develop that? Because when I watched it, you can sort of notice these things. So in your reasoning and you say you want to change it, how would you change it next time?

Taylor:

so next time what I'm thinking about doing is thinking about the stronger and and the more quieter students and having more than just one activity going on, so maybe having three groups doing the same activity, but strategically putting them in groups where they can all support each other, so the quieter ones do get involved a little bit more, but actually watching the video back as well I did notice that maybe me as a teacher I could have prompted that a little bit more, so for example. I did give cues about dates and you know, give examples and give them little like which government would at that time to help them out. But maybe what I could do is rather than having one person I could have then switched it about a little bit more so that all students were involved.

Drew:

Yeah. Yeah. Well, yeah.

Jo:

No, it's OK.

Taylor:

Good so. I were watching yours as well, (Jo). And about your British values. And just wondered what your reasoning for was to start off with British values. Because I do know that after that you then went on to the values with with services, were that intentional, what were your pedagogical rationale for that.

Jo:

And she's got the word. Yeah, it was the unit was, it was part of the E&D unit that they they have to do on the mandatory units. Part of that unit requires them to, you know, we'll learn about and cover the British values, so it is actually in there that they have to cover them. The fact that we cover them in college anyway, or they are covered in progress coach sessions. I was aware of having done it myself with groups of students and what I wanted to use, what I did really was use that as a recap rather than teach it to them or you know, it was more of a recap of what do you actually remember about doing this? Most of them remembered quite a lot, some maybe less so. So it was it was good to see what they've taken in. But I was aware that they have done it before and I didn't want to lose them straight away, so we broke it down and went back into what it means to be British. So you know what does it mean to be British? Just to engage them. And we got answers like fish and chips or the queen or cups of tea or whatever it was and that that kind of drew them in, if you like, that was the idea. They did seem to enjoy that. It did seem to take part. After the.... after we'd sort

of recapped on British values they wanted to make it relevant to them and what they were studying. So we looked at the values of the uniform services, because that's quite a big thing with the services anyway. So how do British values sort of compare and contrast with those of, say, the RAF or the police or whatever...

Taylor:

Yeah, I really liked that. Yeah.

Jo:

...which made it irrelevant to them. I could have. Yeah, I suppose some of my questions, I always question my own questioning, but there were one or two which maybe I should have used some more direct questioning I think just to pull those students out a little bit more.

Taylor:

Like, did you think that you you used quite a lot of open-ended questioning then?

Jo:

Yeah, I do try to, but I think maybe a bit of I suppose a bit like a triangulation question. So ask one student that then ask another student to elaborate on what the other student said. But sometimes I do find that quite hard to do depending on the answers they give, but there were one or two that sat a little.

Taylor:

I saw that.

Jo:

There were one or two that sat a little bit quiet and maybe that..it's the usual thing of the more confident ones sort of come to the front more, isn't it? Yeah. So, yeah, did some directed questions to the quieter ones, but maybe a bit more peer reviewing, chatting kind of like on that kind of that was, that's what I would probably do next differently next time.

Drew:

You said you did a recap on it, did the recap work like you said for some of students already said they've done it before.

Jo:

Yeah, because I I think if I'd just gone in and said right, the sessions around British values, basically they've all gone ugh and wanted to just leave the room and I've probably lost the lost them before we even start. So like I say, stripping it back to what do we even mean by being British and and that kind of thing? And there was. I don't know if you noticed a little element of some dates of things that have happened within Britain.

Drew:

Yeah, that was where we've been.

Jo:

Yeah, right now I'm pinching, next time I'm pinching (Taylor's) idea of that timeline cause that to me would have worked really well and I should, I should have done something like that really to think about them getting them to do a timeline, because I think they would have enjoyed that more than just sort of discussing it, It would have meant more.

Taylor:

But I thought the dates that you used were good in the sense that I thought that were really good to use because it actually brought it to life.

Jo:

It does. But like I say, I could have engaged them better I think, by getting them to put it into a like a a timeline would have been a bit more fun for them so pinch your idea on that, if that's OK. But yeah, it was it, it went, it went OK. But that was my reasoning behind the British values is they do have to cover it but I didn't want to lose them straight away and also linking it to to their future vocations made it more relevant, so yes, this exists but why is it important in the services so?

Drew:

That was a good session. It was a good session. It was a good watch.

Jo:

Yeah, you didn't see it all.

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Drew:

Saw most of it.

Jo:

10 15 minutes is enough, isn't it? So what about yours, (Drew)? I love that bingo starter. I did. I love that bingo starter. It was. They were all engaged. I love the idea of it.

Taylor

Why :did you choose to do that? Where what were your strategy? Why did you choose to do bingo then?

Drew:

Well, on Wednesday we have a group, the Entry 3s. They struggle with engagement. They struggle with PowerPoints, cause they're boring, I find them boring. They find them boring. So I needed to come up with some way of getting the plant based unit across to them. But in a fun way. Especially with what we've been doing, none of them really agree with the plant based way, they don't understand it. So if I can do that through a bingo game with a prize at the end of it on a lesson before this, then they're going to know exactly what to do, and they're going to want to learn.

Jo:

When you say they don't understand it, is it because they don't perhaps want to eat plant based, they think, well, that's nonsense so?

Drew:

They don't want to do it, they. Don't. Yeah. Yeah, basically.

Jo:

They don't wanna learn about it. Is that what you mean? But in reality, as chefs, I suppose that's something that they're gonna have to....

Drew:

They are going to have to learn.

Jo:

...cater too, isn't it? It's massive. Yeah, massive.

Drew:

It's big now. So if you tell them the week before we're doing Bingo game and I'll put out some some sheets on their online blogs and they have a read through that cause that will give you the answers to the bingo.

Jo:

So you did a bit of preparation before because it did work really well. Yeah. And that's good for checking who's actually bothered to look at it and who hasn't. Yeah.

Drew:

Exactly. But you telling them the week before that there's a prize, and then they engage with you then so.

Jo:

Yeah, yeah, there's always a bonus isn't there, if you know there's a prize.

Drew:

It did work, it did work well.

Taylor:

Yeah. Do you think when, when, when? Cause when they were doing that they seemed really enthusiastic. Do you always get that then when it's kind of reward related and there's bit of competition in it?

Drew:

Yeah, I mean, I've done a few things where there's a couple of rewards. Obviously I can't do that all the time, but if I can come up with games and we do a I do a thing called CRI. So it's Catering Related Incidents that's happened in the week and when we start most lessons off like that. So even if they've cooked I don't know a family member's tea or even eaten at a restaurant as long as it's related to catering and and just kind of excites them and sparks them for the day leading on to the lesson.

Jo:

So they report back to you on something they've done or participated in.

Drew:

Yeah. And we write that down and put it on the blogs and that they have their own little diaries about what they're eating, what they've cooked, where they've been, what they've seen. Even if you watch TV show on cooking.

Jo:

Yeah.

Drew:

You know if it links to a unit we can do it, it works well.

Jo:

So it engages them. Yeah. Yeah. Especially with the low levels, I suppose as well, isn't it? So, yeah, it's hard to engage them.

Drew:

It's just finding that balance between the right...

Taylor

Is there anything that you kind of when you've watched it back yourself then.....

Jo:

Yeah would do you do anything differently with that activity or not?

Drew:

Yeah, I'd do a layout different. Maybe kind of have not as tricky answers as what I did. And try and try and put more things more related to the plant-based cause had to trick them in a way of putting things that I want to deal with like this on, they can kind of take them off and do it strictly all of it. then they might have more of an understanding. I might have done a bit of confusion there, which I didn't really think about. So when I do look it back, yeah you can see certain bits of confusion.

Taylor:

But I don't think you really see that some time until you do. Like we've had this opportunity to watch it back. Yeah, I've noticed from watching my video back that I think maybe sometimes I didn't realise, but when it's independent activities, I do stand back a bit too much. Where actually now I need to be getting involved a little bit more and prompting others. And what did you say, Jo and what you've noticed in your in your video when you watched yours back.

Jo:

Apart from the the horrible voice? I think we've all said.

Drew:

No, it's awful.

Jo:

I think I wave my arms around a lot as well, which is I didn't know I did, but , yeah, I think it's more...it depends how they're sat as well I think. I do move them around. I do move them around to sit with different people, which always is met with the resistance with my lot but. I think I ought to perhaps do that a little bit more sometimes because they get very comfortable and maybe I let things slide a bit. It allows the quiet ones to be quiet. So yeah, sometimes I don't even. Sometimes I maybe not pair up a strong with a, you know, a chatty one with the quiet one. Or maybe put all the chatty ones together. It's managing that, but because then the quiet ones do have to come up with something, they can't just sit back and be and let the other ones lead. I think I've gone off on a tangent there. But it's something that might work across the board anyway. so. Yeah. Yeah. So, no, it was good with that. It was interesting to. I liked. I liked seeing.

Drew:

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Yeah. Yeah. Yes, it was good. Yeah. It was good to watch other teach.

Jo:

I don't like seeing myself. I like seeing other people.

Taylor:

Yeah, I I like, yeah. It gives you ideas. And the stuff that you've brought up as well about how you change it to your practise.

Jo:

But it does. It does actually. It does make you think, doesn't it? And talking to each other about why you've done something you. Think well, yeah, that is why I did it. But maybe I'd do it differently, maybe I wouldn't.

Taylor:

It's not so much. Yeah, it's not so much as this went really well and this didn't. It's more of a conversation around actually this is what I've noticed. So why did you do that? What, what happened? So yeah, I quite liked it.

Drew:

Yeah. So yeah, quite like it. Brilliant.