THE HEART OF PRACTICE: KNOWLEDGE, LEARNING, AND CULTURE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

This research explores the complex interplay between occupational culture and vocational pedagogy within the context of Further Education (FE) in the United Kingdom. It investigates how vocational educators acquire pedagogical knowledge and practices, how workplace practices and customs are taught in the curriculum and the importance of subject-specific vocabulary in vocational education. The study highlights the layered and dynamic nature of occupational culture and its impact on lecturer identity and student learning. By examining how tacit knowledge and occupational culture are acquired, recontextualised, and taught in the FE sector, the research aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice and inform the development of more effective vocational education that values both practical skills and the deeper cultural and historical knowledge necessary for long-term success in the world of work.

This research addresses a critical issue in the field of vocational education: the need to balance employability-focused outcomes with preserving craft knowledge and traditional skills. It challenges the notion that vocational education should solely focus on meeting immediate market demands, emphasising the importance of cultivating a deep understanding and appreciation of crafts. The study utilises a qualitative methodology, incorporating creative and arts-based methods to gather rich and nuanced data on the experiences of vocational educators. Key findings highlight the critical role of subject-specific vocabulary in vocational education, underlining its importance for effective communication, workplace readiness, and the development of professional identity.

This research makes a significant contribution to the field of vocational education by addressing critical gaps in knowledge, providing practical insights for improving educational practices and offering a comprehensive perspective on the importance of preserving occupational culture in vocational education. It argues the need for a more holistic approach to vocational education that values both practical skills and deeper cultural and historical knowledge, preparing students for long-term success in their chosen fields.

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"In practice, nobody cares whether work is useful or useless, productive, or parasitic; the sole thing demanded is that it shall be profitable. In all the modem talk about energy, efficiency, social service, and the rest of it, what meaning is there except 'Get money, get it legally, and get a lot of it'? Money has become the grand test of virtue."

- Down and out in Paris and London - George Orwell (1940)

This quote by George Orwell in 'Down and Out in Paris and London' is a cynical critique of capitalism and the way work is valued in society. Orwell argues that most jobs are not judged by their usefulness or contribution to society. The primary concern is whether they generate profit.

Orwell criticises terms like "energy," "efficiency," and "social service" as mere facades. He believes they are ultimately just euphemisms for the pursuit of wealth. The quote suggests that society measures virtue by how much money someone accumulates. This, according to Orwell, is a skewed moral compass. Orwell is lamenting a society where financial gain trumps all other considerations, making work feel meaningless and morality a product of wealth.

The increasing marketisation of Further Education (FE) colleges, with its emphasis on measurable skills and immediate job placement, has created a tension between the demand for industry-ready skills and the preservation of traditional craft practices and knowledge. This tension is at the heart of the problem addressed in this research. The pressure to meet market demands often leads to a focus on skills development that can be easily quantified and assessed, potentially side-lining the more tacit, experience-based knowledge that underpins traditional crafts. While technical skills are essential, a deep understanding of the theoretical and historical foundations of a craft is crucial for adaptability, problem-solving, and the long-term sustainability of the profession. The focus on immediate job placement can overshadow the importance of cultivating a deep understanding and appreciation of the craft. This may have long-term implications for the profession's future.

Neglecting occupational cultures in FE colleges may lead to the gradual erosion of valuable knowledge, skills, and practices. The perception of vocational education as solely focused on skills training could devalue the importance of knowledge, critical thinking, and the broader cultural context of vocational education. This research contributes to the ongoing debate on the value of vocational education and its role in society. It challenges the notion that vocational education should be solely focused on meeting immediate market demands and highlights the importance of preserving occupational cultures and traditional crafts for the benefit of both individuals and the wider community.

1.1 Introduction

As an educator, I have always been fascinated by the intricate skills and knowledge required in various vocational fields. However, recent conversations with vocational educators and observations of curriculum changes have left me concerned about the impact of marketisation on these often historically rooted professions. The marketisation of education, with its emphasis on measurable skills and immediate job placement, seems to be pushing vocational education towards a purely 'productive' model, which George Orwell critiqued in his work *Down and Out in Paris and London*. This raises a critical question: are we, in our pursuit of a results-oriented system, inadvertently sacrificing the very essence of these professions - the deep knowledge, traditional

skills, and dedication to craft that have been honed over generations? This is a significant question that educators and policymakers alike should consider.

My journey began working for almost 15 years in the hospitality sector, steeped in rich craft traditions. These traditions encompass a blend of intuitive interpersonal skills and technical expertise. At the heart of front-of-house craft lies in intangible skills; the ability to anticipate needs, de-escalate situations with grace, and deliver genuine hospitality that creates lasting memories. Just like any craft, proficiency comes through experience, mentorship, and a deep commitment to excellence. After starting a family, I, like many, realised it was not a profession that suited having young children. I sought a career change and signed up for a teaching qualification at my local university to share my experiences with others. As part of the programme, I completed a one-year teaching placement in a city centre further education (FE) college in the South West of England and ten years later I am still there.

It is a multi-site organisation with campuses across the four corners of the city, with approximately 15,000 students and apprentices from age 14 through to adults. They can choose to study a wide variety of academic, vocational, and professional qualifications that range from pre-entry up to level 7, along with non-accredited part-time leisure courses. There are around 900 staff in total, approximately 350 in teaching roles. At the time of my joining, the college had a poor reputation with the majority of students from areas of deprivation. Many of these students had performed poorly at school and the college was seen as a 'second chance'. Despite the anecdotal view within the city that our college is not somewhere that people aspire to go to, its mission statement states that it prides itself on delivering the best possible support and guidance to every individual, from all levels of society.

This shaped my view of the sector, and I saw my younger self in many of the students that I taught. I come from a small ex-mining town where few school leavers went to college, let alone university and consequently was the first in my family to do so, desperate to seek a life outside of the town.

In my Hospitality Management studies, fondly recall my lecturer Dr Derek Cameron speaking so eloquently on 'chef culture'. To the outside world, the occupational culture of chefs represents a complex enigma. Fast forward a few years later and I can now understand that they are a cohesive cultural group, entrenched in traditional values. I became very interested in the idea of occupational culture, and it followed me throughout my later career.

1.1.1 Culture

"Culture is part of everyday life, evident in the people we meet and the places we go."

(Cross and Carbery, 2016, p285)

Building on this definition, I have personally witnessed the diverse range of occupational cultures present among lecturers at my college. Each professional brings with them their shared values, beliefs, social rules, and vocabulary associated with their previous occupation or type of work. Avis (2009) comments on the uniqueness of further education (FE) and that these cultures are pivotal to lecturer identity. While many notable authors and researchers are writing on the topics of identity, professionalism, knowledge, etc., (Colley *et al.*, 2003; Gleeson and James, 2007; Evans, 2008; Bathmaker, 2013; Broad, 2016; Hordern, 2021c) there is little in the literature on occupational cultures and how it impacts learning in the FE classroom.

On the one hand, this clash of occupational cultures in the FE classroom might lead to communication difficulties, differing pedagogical approaches, or even student confusion. However, it also presents a unique opportunity to create a rich learning environment that benefits from diverse perspectives and real-world industry knowledge.

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This research will have an impact on the wider sector as there is currently a strong focus on demand-led, employability-driven vocational education. While there is some criticism of the focus on skills and meeting economic imperatives, I argue that vocational education remains meaningful and beneficial. This research aims to address the challenges of teaching vocational education in a rapidly changing work environment. By reflecting on effective teaching practices and the occupational culture of a range of subjects, this research will help to develop a positive learning environment for students, promoting their academic success and ultimately preparing them for the workplace.

1.1.2 The Research Questions

This research, therefore, focuses on what occupational culture means for lecturers and how it can present itself in the curriculum and the classroom environment. The discourse is different for those who still currently work in their industries alongside those who work primarily in the college, and different again for those who are newer to teaching. The accounts of new lecturers or those still working in their respective industries will therefore illustrate how their occupational culture is shaped, while those who are solely educators will comment on how their culture is maintained. In that light, Hamilton (2007) has raised relevant questions about how teachers are prepared for their role and how they acquire their professional identities and values:

> "Where does that sense of values come from, and what sustains it, especially in the face of challenge from policy initiatives? How can we characterise as a single workforce one that contains many people who are primarily trained as vocational subject specialists rather than as teachers ...?" (p.255-6).

Hamilton's (2007) questions about teacher preparation and professional identity highlight the challenges of a diverse FE workforce, where many lecturers come from vocational backgrounds rather than traditional teacher training. This diversity contributes to the under-researched nature of the FE sector compared to schools and universities, as noted by Randle and Brady (1997). While there is more written about the professional identities and values of teachers in the school sector, lecturers in FE are now receiving much more research attention.

This research is located within this broad field and sets out to answer the following:

1. How do teachers acquire the pedagogical knowledge and practices associated with their specialist areas?
2. In what ways are workplace practices, customs and occupational cultures taught in the curriculum?
3. How important is subject-specific vocabulary and how is it reinforced within the vocational curriculum?

1.1.3 FE Policy and Regulation Frameworks

In this next section, I will explore the relevance and importance of the policy and regulatory frameworks within the FE sector. These frameworks shape the curriculum, funding structures, and student demographics within FE colleges, all of which can influence the occupational culture of lecturers.

Understanding the policy context is crucial for this research, which is situated within the complex and historically evolving landscape of Further Education in the UK. Put simply (as this is an extremely complex sector), Further Education in the UK can be traced back to the Victorian era when technical education was established by the philanthropists of the time (Simmons, 2014). It was developed and managed by local authorities to provide technical and vocational education beyond the school leaving age. However, many now have a diverse offer including 14+ provision, academic courses, vocational and technical programmes, and higher education. Many also offer part-time professional and leisure courses within their communities. FE is often seen as a second chance for learners who

have failed in or been failed by, the school system. In many communities, FE colleges play a significant role in supporting learners who have serious financial, family, and social issues.

Vocational education and training within an FE college is designed to provide the practical skills, know-how, and understanding necessary for employment in a particular occupation. It generally has a competency-based focus to meet industry standards. Despite its importance to the global economy, the vocational sector and the role of the FE college does not hold the same parity as more traditional academic institutions (Bathmaker, 2013). The reputation of the post-compulsory education sector as the 'Cinderella' sector due to its lack of funding (Baker, 1989) is well established in the literature (Randle and Brady, 1997; Spenceley, 2006).

The more recent history of the sector has been significantly shaped by the Further and Higher Education Act (1992) and the subsequent period which led to the 'incorporation' of colleges. By establishing FE colleges as independent organisations free from local authority control, the Government created a policy to marketise education which led to fierce competition. Simmons (2008) outlines that the Government sought to engineer quasi-market forces to increase central control, reduce costs and reproduce the conditions of the private sector.

Following a change in Government, the Kennedy Report (Kennedy, 1997) identified that the excessive emphasis on market competition inhibited collaboration and recognised the need for strong partnerships and efficient local strategies. However, as Avis (2009) points out, institutional competition continues to be a significant feature of education. To overcome this, many institutions have subcontractors, are subcontractors themselves, or have set up subsidiary companies to enable them to compete with the plethora of private training providers.

The marketisation and industry-based drive towards efficiencies have created a strong corporate culture within colleges. This can be seen from their branding and marketing, hierarchical organisation structures, and their workplace practices becoming more business-like. Instead of providing education and developing and nurturing the mind, education for the joy of learning has become more of a conveyor belt where qualifications are 'delivered' (Robinson, 2015).

The scale of the shift towards markets and quasi-markets raises many issues for leaders and managers in FE. There are hard choices to be made between acting as an effective responder to market forces and meeting wider societal and political goals and values (FETL, 2018). The responsiveness of the FE sector can be characterised by Anderson, Wahlberg, and Barton (2007) who argue that the sector can be viewed as having IADHD – Institutional Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder. This analogy helps to provide context to the ever-changing environment in which the sector operates, for example concerning changes in government priorities, funding, and legislation. To further demonstrate this point, within the last thirty years (at the time of writing), there have been 28 major pieces of legislation that affected the FE sector and over 50 secretaries of state with responsibility for FE (Orr, 2020). This has a significant impact on the culture within FE colleges as leaders and staff cannot effectively plan or operate. As soon as they become accustomed to a way of working, or a suite of qualifications, it is ripped apart and they must start again. This may cause frustrations for an FE professional who may have come from working in a sector where there is more stability.

The above highlights the challenges faced by lecturers within FE colleges, particularly those with backgrounds in more stable industries. Understanding how these lecturers navigate this ever-changing policy landscape is a key aspect of this research.

1.1.4 Inspection and Accountability

In addition to the funding pressures, changes in Government policy, and the pressures that come with working in an FE college (such as working long hours, low pay, and unstable contracts),

lecturers face additional challenges due to a heavy focus on Ofsted inspections. The Office for Standards in Education is a government body independent of parliament that inspects education providers to monitor and improve standards. They exist to hold leaders to account, providing challenge where needed but also sharing good practices.

Inspection informs stakeholders about the quality of the service provided through a range of indicators so that they can compare and contrast or track over time. A centralised system provides a national overview of the sector and can highlight areas that need to be improved on a provider, regional or national level. For example, in their Annual Report (Ofsted, 2021), providers reported that the number of learners with significant mental health problems had increased during the pandemic. In recent inspections, college leaders are anecdotally reporting an enhanced focus on the support being provided for those with mental health concerns but also if staff are equipped to approach these topics.

Ofsted changed the way it inspects providers in 2019 by introducing the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) which replaced the Common Inspection Framework (CIF). This new framework detailed the principles of inspection and the main judgements that inspectors make. The emphasis became more focused on the curriculum and 'curricular goals' as opposed to achievement and outcome data. One of the key changes affecting teaching staff was that inspectors would no longer grade individual lessons through lengthy lesson observations. When evaluating the quality of education, inspectors use a range of approaches through a 'deep dive' method that includes short lesson visits or learning walks, scrutiny of marked work, and interviews with students, staff, and employers where appropriate. Having worked in education as a teacher under both the CIF and EIF, I can see that the EIF is a far more 'FE friendly' model. It focuses on progress over time rather than what is observed at a single point in a lesson. This is far more appropriate in my view for practical subjects where topics may span over days, weeks, or the entire year in the case of arts subjects.

Despite the positive changes that Ofsted has implemented, they are still seen by many as a burden and have been reported as a key driver of workload, stress, and burnout. TeacherTapp is an organisation that regularly conducts polls of education staff. A recent pulse survey of teachers who use the topical news app TeacherTapp (2022) found that Ofsted was the largest influence on the way providers operate day-to-day out of a list of the DfE, Regional Schools Commissioner, Local authority, Ofsted, OfQual and the Standards and Testing Agency. While not a peer-reviewed study, it helps to provide insight where there is less in the academic literature. Arguments continue over the accuracy and fairness of judgements and how effective Ofsted are in raising standards in education (see for example Rosenthal, 2004), particularly in deprived areas. For example, the 2015 initiative 'London Challenge' partnered lower grade schools with higher to work together to improve their offering. The Government deemed this to be a success with many of the lower grade schools improving. However, some commentators argued that the real success came from school leaders working collaboratively to approach problems and produce solutions. Something that a grade and a few recommendations could not achieve.

Inspection in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland is carried out by their equivalent inspectorate. While their key aims and objectives are similar, there are also some differences in how they operate. For example, they put an increased emphasis on self-assessment that can be used in combination with other measures to be able to reach a grade. In Northern Ireland and Scotland, they explicitly promote a culture of self-reflection, openness, and transparency. In comparison with England, the Welsh inspectorate has created an inspection framework that aims to be more supportive. For example, giving 15 working days' notice for inspection instead of 48 hours for a standard inspection (longer for 'enhanced' where a provider's "Contribution to Skills" is also assessed). They also inspect over a longer period (8 days for a full inspection versus 4) which may help provide a deeper insight into the organisation and help with the credibility of judgements.

The perceived 'fear' of Ofsted that is anecdotally seen in the education sector has a significant impact on an organisation's culture. The emphasis that the leadership teams place on it may restrict teachers' agency, inhibit any professional risk-taking, or inhibit a culture where things are only done because it is 'what Ofsted want.'

1.1.5 Funding

Colleges and sixth forms have seen the largest falls in per-pupil funding of any sector over the past decade. Funding per student aged 16–19 fell by over 11% in real terms between 2010–11 and 2020–21 in further education and sixth-form colleges, and by over 25% in school sixth forms (Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2021). An extra £400 million was allocated to colleges and sixth forms in the 2020–21 fiscal year. With a 5% growth in student numbers in 2020, organisations have largely maintained their student numbers and their programmes (ibid). At best, this restores funding to 2018–19 levels, with the cuts of the last decade clearly still in place.

Since incorporation, colleges have been largely in control of their own finances. However, that has not always ended well, with many having to make redundancies and some organisations even finding themselves bankrupt. Staff in colleges are constantly living in fear of redundancies which has a detrimental effect on the cultures of the organisations. In the academic year 19/20, 51% of colleges reported having voluntary redundancies and 62% reported having compulsory redundancies (Association of Colleges, 2021)

As a growing number of organisations posted an annual deficit, the Government appointed the 'FE Commissioner' in 2013 to intervene with struggling colleges. Between 2015 and 2019, the 'Area Reviews' sought to create more stable and financially resilient organisations while reducing duplication in curriculum and making more efficient use of resources such as staffing, land, and buildings. This saw the number of FE colleges reduce from 241 to 193 and the creation of large trusts and college federations. Commenting on the Area Review process in London, Spours *et al.*, (2019) found that bigger is not always better. They believed that the newly formed large college groups would not be able to transform the FE and skills provision on their own. Their research unearthed concerns about whether larger and more geographically dispersed colleges would remain committed to particular local communities. They also questioned whether college leaders were sufficiently equipped to deal with more dispersed and polycentric organisations.

Colleges play a pivotal role in developing the workforce of the future and some do this with the most up-to-date, industry specification facilities. However, for many, the reality is tired buildings, broken equipment and making do. The National Audit Office's report (2020) on the financial sustainability of colleges found that 'the steps colleges take to remain financially sustainable can adversely affect staff recruitment and retention, the breadth of provision and the maintenance of assets'. Many staff are not able to provide their students with the skills or knowledge required due to a lack of resources and in my experience, this has a detrimental effect on their identity as professionals as they become frustrated with their situation.

The Skills and Post-16 Education Act (2022) (known as the Skills Bill) aimed to transform the skills, training, and post-16 education landscape and 'level up' opportunities across the country. It places a heavy focus on employability, by making it an expectation for colleges and similar providers to work with employers so that the training on offer meets the needs of local areas. While many colleges already engage with employers to support their curriculum, the Government's aspirations for a 'high-quality technical education' are a positive step for the sector but add burden to an already overworked and overstretched workforce.

With many large colleges operating on heavily reduced budgets and a much leaner staff profile, it may not come as a surprise that the national achievement rate for 16-19 funded qualifications (not including apprenticeships) in 2016-2017 was 84%, and this figure dropped to 82.6% in 2018-2019

(Gov.uk, 2021) (no data was published for 19/20 or 20/21 due to the impact of 'Centre Assessed Grades' and 'Teacher Assessed Grades' as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic). One of the main ways colleges have tried to recoup some of their losses is by reducing student/teacher contact time. At present, 16-17-year-olds on a full-time programme of study should receive a minimum of 540 hours of planned learning activity. For an average 36-week term, that only equates to 15 hours per week for a full-time programme and the main qualification may only be 9-12 hours of that. This means that teaching staff are making tough decisions about what to include in their curriculum to ensure that they pass, knowing full well there are crucial elements that they may not have time to teach.

Reduced instruction time has a negative and statistically significant effect on student achievement (Anderson, Wahlberg and Barton, 2007; Lavy, 2015; Bingley *et al.*, 2018). This is "considerably larger for pupils with low SES (families where both parents have no more than a lower secondary education) or a non-western immigrant background" (Bingley *et al.*, 2018, p34).

The issue of inequality runs deep in FE. The year-on-year decrease in Government spending and the churn of both policy and policymakers reflect its vulnerability and low perception in society. Broadly speaking, the middle classes do not send their children to FE colleges and vocational education struggles for recognition and esteem (Hodgson and Spours, 2015). Many areas of the country have a highly selective post-16 offer. School Sixth Form is the goal for many students and the FE college is for 'other peoples' children' (Keep, 2020).

1.2 Professional Identity and Dual Professionalism

1.2.1 Teacher Education

Until 2001, FE lecturers were not required to undertake any initial teacher education (ITE) or training. In the school sector, teachers are trained as 'pre-service' rather than 'in-service'. The former is normally undertaken full-time and before finding employment as a teacher, those in FE often have their first experience of teacher training when already in a post (Fulford, Robinson and Thompson, 2015). The Further Education Teachers' Qualifications (England) Regulations 2007 formalised the process and provided a framework of approved FE teaching qualifications and a process for professional formation 'Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills'. The QTLS status aimed to provide parity between the FE sector and 'QTS' that is gained following a school teaching qualification. The newly reformed teaching standards (Lifelong Learning UK, 2007) contained around 150 competence-based statements relating to professional values and practice, focussing on the skills required to be an effective practitioner.

Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) later became the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) which published its Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Education and Training (Education and Training Foundation, 2023). Like the LLUK standards, each domain is grouped into statements relating to professional values, attributes, knowledge, and skills. These broad statements about expectations for teachers and trainers include being a reflective and enquiring practitioner, maintaining exacting standards of ethical and professional behaviour, and maintaining a 'dual professionalism' in which expertise in teaching and learning is accompanied by subject and/or vocational expertise (Fulford, Robinson and Thompson, 2015).

Teaching qualifications were reappraised following the Lingfield Review (BIS, 2012) with the report concluding that the 2007 regulations had been ineffective. It highlights the low proportion of FE teachers who did not hold or were working towards a qualification at level 5 or above and cites the slow uptake of QTLS. However, it fails to acknowledge the continued underfunding that undermined the professionalisation of the workforce. Subsequently, in 2013, the Government removed the requirement for FE teachers to undergo formal teacher training and the qualification requirement became a matter for the individuals and the organisation. A shift in the rules indicates a shift of

power away from the lecturer towards the institution, therefore the professional identity, and exposure to learning about teaching practice may potentially be constrained by the organisations within which college lecturers work. As a result, they may ascribe to a particular attitude or approach toward teaching that is led by the organisational culture.

The vocational and work-based nature of the FE sector means that teachers are usually required to have experience of the world of work before, or alongside teaching. In my organisation, the need for lecturers with current industry practice is more of a priority than having a teaching qualification and this is commonplace in the sector. Teaching skills have been seen as something that can be 'picked up' through experience (Fulford, Robinson and Thompson, 2015, p19). Compared to teaching in schools or universities, working in FE once more appears to be a poor relation. Another important aspect of vocational teaching is the recent and relevant working experience. However, as Avis (2009) and others point out, that this erodes over time which leaves the lecturers' identities vulnerable to the inroads of managerialism and performativity. This is significantly important as the identity from the previous occupation forms a prevailing influence on the teaching practice of FE lecturers. Within research (see Robson, Bailey, and Larkin 2004), FE teachers describe a 'pride in their former occupation', as a value which they try to instil into their learners.

1.2.2 Identity

Many authors have attempted to define identity, while others claim it cannot be defined. Lawler (2009) writes about how identity is made up of a series of narratives, stories, traditions and family experiences told to us when we are young, and that these stories are enriched by stories from other cultures, that is, of other people's families in the form of our friends, teachers, and work colleagues (Feather, 2010).

Others have argued that identities are not static (Haywood Rolling and Brogden, 2009) and can be influenced as we experience life. This links to Heidegger's notion of 'Being and Time', that is understanding who we are at a given point in time, as our identities are not inert (Heidegger, Macquarrie and Robinson, 2013), but can be multiple identities to fit in with certain groups (Hofstede, 1991) Erving Goffman's The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959) provides the sociological perspective from which social life can be studied. The perspectives in the monograph are that of theatrical performance, that people behave differently depending on the 'part they are playing'. Within the research that follows, the identities of lecturers are a common thread, and their stories and narratives tie in with how they have developed both their occupational expertise and teaching careers.

The terms 'professional identity', 'professionalism', and 'dual professionalism' are widely used in education and have a myriad of meanings depending on the context they are used. In this section, I will outline how they intend to be used in this thesis as a brief introduction before discussing in more detail the literature review later.

In this study, I am adopting Bucher and Stelling's (1977) definition whereby professional identity can be defined as the perception of oneself as a professional and is closely related to the knowledge and skills one has, the work one does, and with who. Therefore, in this occupational rather than philosophical sense, what FE lecturers 'do' in their teaching practice stems from their identity. Their capacity to act or 'agency' is also underpinned by their professional identity. Identifying themselves as a professional provides self-confidence in any decision-making.

Feather (2010) found that many lecturers in FE identify themselves as 'practitioners', in my organisation the official job title is 'lecturer' which often has a higher status than 'teacher' as it is linked to university teaching as opposed to the latter which has more connotations with schools. Some organisations use the terms 'trainer', 'instructor', and 'tutor', and there are likely to be many others. Therefore, having so many job titles can be problematic when trying to understand

professional identity. Additionally, when combined with the culture of the vocational profession, some teaching staff may struggle to adopt some of these terms that appear to have more academic connotations.

1.2.3 Professionalism

Professionalism means different things to different people depending on the context in which it is being discussed. Many interpretations seem to focus on professionalism as being an externally imposed, articulated perception of what lies within the parameters of a profession's collective remit and responsibilities (Evans, 2008). Evans goes on to comment that external agencies appear to have the capacity for designing and delineating professions. The ETF Professional Standards are a good example of this. However, others argue that professionalism can be socially constructed as Boyt, Lusch and Naylor (2001, p.322) describe: "Professionalism consists of the attitudes and behaviour one possesses toward one's profession. It is an attitudinal and behavioural orientation that individuals possess toward their occupations."

Peel (2011) conducted a review of the literature and identified five 'principal characteristics of professionalism', as follows:

1. An extensive training which comprises a significant intellectual component and involves theoretically as well as practically grounded expertise;
2. The provision of an important public service;
3. An organisation of members and a process of licensing and regulation of practice;
4. A distinct ethical dimension which calls for expression in a code of practice;
5. A high degree of professional autonomy in one's work.

The latter point concerning professional autonomy is significant for teachers who, for the most part, work alone in the classroom and are responsible for the learning and resulting outcomes of their students.

1.2.4 Dual Professionalism

Within FE, in particular vocational subjects, most lecturers have had careers in their respective industries before (and in some cases alongside) teaching. They have dual identities; as occupational specialists and pedagogical experts. Many lecturers retain a strong commitment to their former profession and retain a sense of identity from their prior occupation.

Orr (2011) makes connections between dual professionalism and the very origins of FE where skilled craftsmen or artisans in the mechanics' institutes and technical colleges of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would pass on their knowledge. From this, we can deduce that occupational expertise is essential for vocational teaching. The emphasis on subject knowledge over pedagogy has continued through to more recent times where the many changes to qualification requirements have impacted professionalism as previously discussed. However, the 2013 report of the Commission on Adult Vocational Training and Learning (CAVTL, 2013) highlights the importance of teachers being dual professionals, commenting that 'the best vocational teachers and learners have dual identities' (CAVTL, 2013, p.20).

The CAVTL (2013) report identifies that dual professionals are not born, they need support to develop as their continuing identity with their former profession may prevent some from considering themselves professional teachers (Orr, 2011). Other authors add that this transition is not always linear (e.g. Robson, 1998; Robson, Bailey and Larkin, 2004; Gleeson, 2014), with many lecturers describing their entry into teaching as unplanned and for some even 'accidental'.

However, a more critical perspective reveals that this concept isn't without its tensions and challenges, often leading to a sense of conflict for teachers as they navigate these two worlds. Some

lecturers may prioritise developing knowledge or expertise in their subject specialism over developing pedagogical practice, or vice versa. For instance, a chef lecturer may prioritise a masterclass in a new culinary technique over a workshop on new teaching methodologies. This choice is understandable, as their occupational knowledge is a source of pride and a key part of their professional credibility with students. Lecturers may also want to maintain professional membership or accreditation in their subjects to demonstrate their commitment to their occupation.

While the term "dual professionalism" is frequently used, some scholars argue it oversimplifies the complex reality of a vocational teacher's identity. In their 2017 work, Esmond and Wood delve into this, finding that many vocational teachers feel a greater sense of allegiance to their original industry profession than to their new role as an educator. This may be particularly true for those who enter teaching later in their careers, as their professional identity has already been cemented by years of experience in their trade. This allegiance can lead to a devaluing of pedagogical expertise, with some teachers viewing themselves primarily as an "industry worker who teaches" rather than a "teacher who used to work in industry". This can result in the perception that teaching skills can be "picked up" on the job rather than requiring formal, continuous training.

Plowright and Barr (2012) further challenge the notion of a seamless dual identity. They argue that the two roles of "pedagogue" and "practitioner" are fundamentally different, with distinct values, knowledge bases, and professional networks. The pedagogical role requires expertise in curriculum design, student assessment, and classroom management, while the practitioner role demands up-to-date industry skills and knowledge. Juggling these two sets of demands can be overwhelming, especially in an FE sector often characterised by limited time and resources.

The preceding discourse outlines and alludes to the fact that professionalism has been impacted by a variety of distinct factors. These include changing legislation regarding teaching qualifications, the lack of a unifying professional body and the perception that FE is invisible with a low political profile (Hodgson and Spours, 2015). My view is that despite all of these, teaching in FE should indeed have the same status within the education sector in the same capacity as schools and universities, yet there is work to be done. Professional accreditations and memberships are a good starting point. For example, those teaching HE in FE can apply for HEA Fellowship, the Chartered College of Teaching welcomes applications from FE, and the Society for Education and Training is the professional membership body for the Further Education and Training sector. This will help to shape a professional identity as a teaching practitioner, and help to develop subject expertise, which as CAVTL (2013) points out, makes for a better teacher.

1.2.5 The Importance of Acquiring Educational Language and Vocabulary

This thesis argues that the acquisition of subject-specific vocabulary is crucial for students in vocational fields, as it serves as a gateway to professional identity and understanding. However his principle extends directly to the discipline of education itself. For a vocational teacher, mastering the language of educational theory, research, and practice is essential. For many vocational teachers who enter the profession from industry, their initial identity is rooted in their trade, a world rich with its own terminology and cultural norms. While they may be masters of their craft, they often need to learn a new, equally complex vocabulary related to teaching and learning. Acquiring this language allows them to articulate their teaching practice in a structured, professional way that is understood by colleagues, managers, and policymakers.

This transformation process is enabled by having a shared vocabulary to discuss instructional strategies, assessment methods, and student engagement. The absence of a shared language for educational concepts can hinder this process, making it difficult for teachers to move from intuitive practice to a more deliberate, theory-informed approach.

The acquisition of educational language reinforces a teacher's professional identity within the field of education. The thesis points out that terms like "lecturer" or "teacher" may initially feel alien to someone who identifies as a "practitioner" from a different field. However, by mastering the discourse of education, they begin to see themselves not just as a skilled tradesperson, but as a dual professional who commands respect in both their original field and their new teaching role.

This linguistic competence is a form of professional currency, signalling expertise and a commitment to continuous learning. Using terms from educational theory and research demonstrates this commitment and enables teachers to participate in professional discussions, such as those about curriculum reform, funding, and pedagogical approaches.

A deep understanding of educational vocabulary is essential for navigating the complex policy and regulatory environment of FE.   These frameworks are saturated with specific terminology and concepts that dictate curriculum design, inspection criteria, and professional standards. For teachers, a command of this language is critical for their professional autonomy and effectiveness. Without it, they risk being "done to" by external bodies, with little opportunity to influence important decisions about the curriculum or resources. Being fluent in the language of education allows teachers to engage with these frameworks, challenge them when necessary, and advocate for practices that truly serve their students. It helps them move from a position of "strategic compliance" to one of informed agency.

1.3 The Importance of Knowledge in Vocational Education

Current Government policy places a heavy emphasis on 'skills'. However, there is a growing interest in the types of 'knowledge' required from both teachers and students in vocational education. (Wheelahan, 2008) provides an outline of the knowledge and skills that form part of vocational education including:

a)   theoretical knowledge that is relevant to an occupational field of practice;
b)   knowledge that involves learning about the field of practice itself (e.g. what working in a science laboratory involves);
c)   knowing how for example to acquire practical knowledge or technical skills, and the application of those skills and knowledge, to solve problems;
d)   the application of theoretical knowledge;
e)   the application of practical knowledge; and
f)   a wide range of transferable, personal, and interpersonal skills and attributes that in themselves have 'underpinning' or related knowledge.

It is not enough for students to learn practical skills; they also need to understand the theoretical underpinning knowledge behind them. For example, childcare and play workers need to understand theories and models of child development. Wheelahan's work is underpinned by a concern for social justice and argues that access to knowledge is essential in helping learners transform their lives. The expertise and knowledge of the teacher is paramount in being able to recontextualise these theories and bring them to life in a way that is accessible to the learner.

1.3.1 Types of Knowledge

Digging a bit deeper into Wheelahan's summary above, theoretical knowledge (also known as declarative or propositional knowledge) involves knowledge of specific facts or 'knowing that.' In *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle describes this as 'episteme.' This is different to 'knowing how' which can be attained by practising a task or skill. However, as Sennett (2009) alludes to, the craftspeople of today require much more than just technique, which Aristotle described as 'techne'. They need to

be able to problem solve and use creativity and judgement. Aristotle described this as 'phronesis' which broadly translates as 'practical wisdom.'

Teachers need to have this practical wisdom not just to be highly competent in their field of expertise, but also when making decisions and judgements in a classroom environment. Teachers need to be highly responsive and adaptable. For example, adapting approaches for a smaller or larger group, recognising any misconceptions and reteaching, or responding to behaviours and external challenges.

Shulman's (1987) PCK framework for categorising the diverse types of knowledge required for teaching is still very influential in research and educational policy. The Venn diagram of subject matter and pedagogy shows Pedagogical Content Knowledge as the central space where all teachers can aspire to be. However, it is very dependent on context and situation and does not consider the wider aspects that cannot be easily codified such as 'phronesis.'
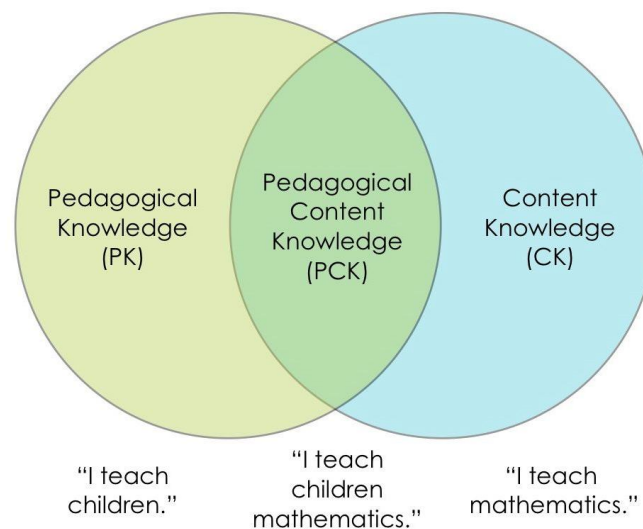
Figure 1: PCK Model (Schulman, 1987)

Broad (2016) discusses distinct types of knowledge and the idea that 'knowing how' vs 'knowing what' is not always so binary. This slipperiness of knowledge cannot easily be defined. Some knowledge can be codified e.g. course handbooks, learning materials, etc. However, workplace practices, customs, approaches, and latest ideas are difficult for teachers to keep up to date with and to teach. This forms the basis for the arguments in this thesis - that tacit knowledge is difficult to codify and transfer to others. Tacit knowledge is essential in vocational education as it provides a real-world view, but is mostly gained through experience. Herein lies the issue.

1.3.2 How is it Gained?
Knowledge is traditionally described as something someone 'has,' however, Heusdens *et al.* (2019) argue that an under-theorised aspect of vocational knowledge is the extent to which knowledge and action are sometimes related, and how knowledge is spread throughout occupational practices.

Jim Hordern (e.g. Hordern, 2014; Hordern and Tatto, 2018) and Chris Winch (2012) have written extensively on the relationships between the diverse types of knowledge and how they present themselves in an educational setting. They support the work of Bernstein (1999) who provides a distinction between vertical and horizontal discourse. Horizontal discourse is based on informal interactions where the pedagogy is tacit. Learning takes place through demonstrating, observing and experiencing. It is not formally sequenced but embedded in ongoing teaching practices or social situations.

The vertical knowledge structure is the formal propositional or specialist knowledge. This is explicit and systematically taught within the curriculum or a programme of study through principles of recontextualisation. Recontextualisation offers insights into the relationships between different disciplines and subjects and is a key element of curriculum design. It enables a more nuanced understanding of how knowledge is appropriated from earlier sources of knowledge for specific purposes (Hordern, 2021a). For example, when students learn to caramelise sugar for a crème brûlée, this can be explained as a scientific concept within the discipline of chemistry. Horizontal discourse, however, is based on informal interactions where the pedagogy is tacit. It is not formally sequenced but embedded in ongoing teaching practices or social situations.

Michael Eraut (2011) builds on Vygotskian theories of social constructivism and believes that learning is influenced by the context and setting in which it occurs. His work will play a significant part in this thesis. He uses the term 'cultural knowledge' that is 'acquired informally through participation in social activities, and much is often so "taken for granted" that people are unaware of its influence on their behaviour' (Eraut, 2011, p.2). Colleges that have realistic working environments with real clients e.g. hair salons and restaurants are best placed to develop this cultural knowledge as it gives the learners a feel for what it is like in those workplaces and deal with problems as they arise.

The following chapter will formally introduce workplace learning theory (e.g. Eraut, 2004) which makes distinctions between diverse types of knowledge. Within workplace approaches, there are debates which argue that vocational knowledge is overall tacit, non-formal and largely uncodified (Hordern, 2014; Broad, 2016). This raises the question that if vocational knowledge is difficult to codify, how can it be transported across contexts e.g. from industry to education? Broad (2016) and Hordern (2014) argue that CPD, membership of networks, and industrial updating are instrumental in enabling this process as it is developed in practice.

What counts as vocational knowledge in the world around us is constantly evolving in line with technologies, changes in practice and environment and so forth. We need to regularly reconfigure this knowledge however the constraints of curriculum design as mentioned above mean that this process is often too slow. Consequently, learners might be leaving colleges not adequately prepared for the workplace, whether that is having the right level of skills or knowledge or understanding the behaviours and the cultural norms of that occupation.

This research aims to address these topics and demonstrates the breadth of vocational education through working with participants from a variety of industrial backgrounds and subject areas. The impact of this will be an increased awareness of the importance of vocational education and training and may inform policy or organisational decisions, such as what types of teaching approaches or resources should be implemented, or what types of professional development teachers should receive.

1.4 Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Like identity, continuous professional development (CPD) is another concept that is difficult to define. Traditionally it would be used to determine any additional learning and development that takes place in employment and post-qualification. However, as we know in FE, many lecturers train 'in service' which makes this approach a bit more problematic. Additionally, Peel (2011) comments that 'the use, purpose and value of CPD will be variously interpreted depending on the particular circumstances and scenarios adopted'. Nonetheless, CPD is a contested concept, 'freighted with a range of expectations', and it is 'easily discussed and stated but much harder to do in reality'.

The shift away from mandatory CPD and the removal of the requirement for formal teacher training has weakened the professional development of FE lecturers. This lack of emphasis on continuous

learning and skills updating could lead to a disconnect between lecturers' knowledge and the evolving demands of their industry. Consequently, the tacit knowledge and practical wisdom that form the core of occupational cultures may not be adequately transferred to the next generation of learners.

CPD is an important aspect to consider for this study as there are often expectations around the amount of CPD, it is a topic that is very personal to each lecturer. As individuals, they will all have unique needs ranging from industry updating, developing pedagogical expertise, or keeping up to date with legal obligations.

1.4.1 Mandating CPD

Since 2012, it is no longer a mandatory requirement for FE lecturers to undertake CPD. Previously, all lecturers had to be members of the Institute for Learning and part of that membership involved submitting evidence to demonstrate a minimum of 30 hours of CPD per year. The approaches to CPD are a matter for the individual organisations to decide and again that will depend very much on their organisational culture.

That said, operational CPD such as safeguarding/Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE), health and safety, GDPR, fire training etc. are often a condition of employment and in the case of KCSiE is reported and audited through local authorities and Ofsted. These are usually delivered one-dimensionally through presentations, webinars, or online platforms where there is little opportunity for discussion or reflection and so differ from pedagogical and subject specialist CPD and updating.

1.4.2 Types of CPD available for vocational lecturers

The CAVTL (2013) report outlines that vocational teaching demands robust initial and continuous development of expertise as workplaces continuously change and evolve. It focuses heavily on the need for lecturers to keep their occupational expertise up to date. However, a balance must be found between the subject and the teaching of it.

Subject specialist CPD can include workshops, training, upskilling, or masterclasses with occupational experts and will often be on a particular topic. For example, if motor vehicle lecturers undertake training to enable them to work on electric vehicles. This can add value to the curriculum where a new course is being offered or as industries change. Lecturers can have focused time to gain new knowledge and skills in their field. This differs from industrial updating and experience where lecturers complete a placement or experience working back in their respective industries for example a chef lecturer spending a week in a busy restaurant. Both are extremely valuable but add different dimensions to the development of that lecturer. When completing industrial updating, the lecturer may or may not learn anything particularly new but may gain a better appreciation for current working practices and conditions.

1.4.3 Modes of CPD

There is a culture of managerialism in FE colleges that has also permeated down to how CPD and staff development are operated. In larger colleges, CPD events often take the format of large-scale, full-, or multiple-day events that are very corporate. Often beginning with an address or keynote, then workshops and talks that staff attend throughout the event. According to the Lingfield Report (BIS, 2012), these types of operational 'training' and corporate events impact lecturers' professionalism and identity by reducing them to a 'workforce'.

 Many argue that models of CPD that involve transmission or delivery of content are likely to be ineffective yet are often the norm. Given that as educators, we understand how learning happens, we should be leading by example. In my view, CPD sessions should be like teaching a lesson: with opportunities to ascertain prior knowledge, space for collaboration, discussion and reflection, and time to revisit content later down the line. Cordingley (2015) points to what is considered to be

effective: sustained and collaborative CPD, opportunities that are often absent in one-off CPD models.

In organisations where staff have higher levels of agency, informal communities of practice and peer-to-peer models are common. There are many examples of staff creating their own learning cultures both internally and across organisations. Some of these have attracted funding such as the ETF #APConnect programme for Advanced Practitioners or various research networks or TeachMeets that are run by volunteers.

1.4.4 Evaluating the Impact of CPD

Evaluating the impact of CPD is complex. Many factors impact a learner's education so it is important to understand that we can never get 'proof' that if we do x, y happens and so we cannot measure it in such scientific terms.

Timing is also a principal factor. The 'happy sheet' that is given at the end will give leaders a promising idea of the quality of the food or if the temperature of the room was not right, but the impact of changes in practice takes a long time to see. Meaningful evaluation involves giving lecturers time for reflection and to implement their new learning.

Guskey (2000) identifies five levels of potential impact including:

a) Participant satisfaction or reaction to the CPD;
b) Participants' conceptual change in terms of beliefs about teaching and learning;
c) Broader institutional changes;
d) Changes to participants' teaching practices;
e) Changes to students' learning and performance.

Spowart *et al.* (2017) demonstrate that where the evaluation of teaching-related CPD is undertaken, the tendency is to focus on the lower levels of Guskey's (2000) evaluation framework such as participant satisfaction with the CPD and conceptual changes in participants' beliefs about teaching and learning. Significantly, there is little evidence of a consideration of the top levels of the frameworks, particularly the impact of CPD on students' learning and performance. A solution to this would be to include the students in the evaluation. Opportunities for students to become involved with lecturer CPD are limited and could be explored further. If students were explicitly aware of the CPD that lecturers are undertaking, they may well be able to comment on its impact on their classroom experience.

Teaching is an art and a craft that is continuously changing with research, evidence, and developments in practice. Not to mention the various changing trends, buzzwords and suchlike. Therefore, it is essential for lecturers to not only know their topic, but they must also have a solid understanding of how to impart the knowledge and skills into the minds of others. Pedagogical CPD can come in many formats and can be formal and informal. Often informal interactions such as peer-observing can be more impactful than an online seminar or one-off workshops. Additionally, more lecturers are pursuing higher-level qualifications in education such as Master's degrees and Doctorates to demonstrate a commitment to their practice and to broaden their knowledge in a particular field.

1.5 The Vocational Curriculum

The term 'curriculum' is widespread in education. In the literature, it is broadly defined as a way of organising and structuring knowledge. Within an FE context, it can mean the overall curriculum offered by the sector (e.g. adult, apprenticeships, community, Higher Education etc), the curriculum offered by individual colleges, the content of specific courses or programmes, or an individual learning programme designed for individual students.

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Stanton *et al.* (2015) provide a helpful breakdown of the 'signature' FE curriculum that is integrated rather than subject-based and vocational in several senses, namely: a preparation for work, designed to up-skill or retrain those in work, a vehicle for providing continuing general education via an integrating vocational theme, modular to allow for flexibility but with modules that are designed to relate to one another, multi-level to allow access from different levels of achievement, concerned with learning processes as well as outcomes, and delivered by a course team able to manage the learner experience across the curriculum.

1.5.1 The Impact of Policy on Curriculum

For colleges to receive funding for their 16-19 cohorts, they must be enrolled on a 'study programme'. Study programmes are a curriculum model designed to be full-time with a minimum of 540 planned hours per academic year, although not all those hours are spent in classrooms. They were introduced in 2013 following the Wolf Report (Wolf, 2011) and typically combine qualifications and other activities linked to students' attainment and career goals. Within my setting, this is broken down into main qualification aim, work experience, tutorial/personal development programme, plus English and/or maths resits (where students have not achieved a grade 4).

There are many contentious issues and views on English and maths in FE. One of the most notable recommendations from the Wolf Report is that "students who are under 19 and do not have GCSE A*-C in English and/or maths should be required, as part of their programme, to pursue a course which either leads directly to these qualifications" (Wolf, 2011, p.15). It is commonplace within colleges for English and maths qualifications to be taught by specialists in separate departments to the main vocational curriculum. I argue that students should be taught by subject specialists, however, the constraints of the English and maths curriculum mean that students do not see the relevance, especially for those on vocational programmes looking to progress to work. In my organisation, this causes low attendance leading to conflict between the vocational teachers and the English and maths teachers over whose responsibility it is to ensure students attend and follow up if they do not.

In the report, Professor Wolf rightly highlights the importance of maths and English skills in securing progression within education and the labour market. It is written against the background of a rapidly changing economy, large-scale unemployment, and the virtual disappearance of jobs for young people aged 16 and 17 following the raising of the school leaving age. However, it is my view that simply resitting GCSE will not provide students with the industry-specific literacy and numeracy skills that are needed and for many, we are setting them up to fail by simply making them sit the same exam again and again. The Wolf reforms significantly changed the landscape of qualifications in England; however, Burgess and Thompson (2019) argue there is no evidence from the attainment data so far that these reforms have helped lower-attaining students.

Complementary to Wolf, The Report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education (Department for Education, 2016), also known as the 'Sainsbury Review' set out to "advise ministers on actions to improve the quality of technical education in England and, in particular, to simplify the currently over-complex system and ensure the new system provides the skills most needed for the 21st century" (p.2). This report provides the backdrop to what some argue as the biggest reforms to tertiary education and the streamlining of post-16 options. The main outcome of the report was that school leavers can choose an academic route (A Levels), a technical route (T Levels) or a work-based route (Apprenticeships). While most education providers agree with the ethos of the report which seeks parity between academic and vocational education, many have their reservations.

T Levels and the Skills Bill (2022) place a heavy emphasis on employer input in the curriculum. Providing employers with the opportunity to develop curricula may help to ensure that students are developing the skills and knowledge needed to become well-prepared for work.

However, a Pearson policy report (Pearson, 2021) suggests that limiting qualifications to employer-led standards will not allow for flexibility and agility to meet future demand. This provides an interesting contradiction as often college staff can be tightly constrained by the criteria set by the awarding bodies.

There is a great deal of anecdotal evidence around some vocational qualifications being outdated however little in the academic literature, awarding bodies appeared to be holding back from updating knowing that T Levels were in development and funding was likely to be cut for many qualifications. For example, in a food and beverage service qualification, students must demonstrate skills in silver service and table theatre. This puts the lecturer in a position of conflict as they can appreciate the historical and cultural value of these skills but unless the student is going to work in a classic fine dining restaurant, they are unlikely to ever use them. The relationship between knowledge, pedagogy, and the workplace is a fundamental curriculum issue that has an impact on the lecturers' identity as a professional. Young and Gamble (2006) ask whether standards and learning outcomes should serve as guidelines for the curriculum or whether they should become the curriculum. Despite their book being based on South African education, it is a very valid question for us in the UK.

Vähäsantanen (2015) found that curriculum decision-making has a significant impact on lecturer identity and agency. In strong management cultures, agency (the ability to act) is narrowed. As I have discussed, the work of teachers is increasingly controlled by external bodies. Vähäsantanen (2015) outlines that teachers have limited agency in developing education, and are often overlooked when important decisions are made concerning resources, the curriculum etc. They are 'done to' with insufficient opportunities to exert influence. They are not trusted with big decisions such as curriculum reform or planning at a local level, yet it must be noted that college staff feature heavily on T Level panels.

1.5.2 A Narrowing Curriculum?

Hordern (2014), Unwin (2004) and others argue that the vocational curriculum is being narrowed and has been reduced to the acquisition of skills or competency-based checklists. Bathmaker (2013) adds that along with the reduction in teacher contact time, this has transformed the nature of teaching and learning. With fewer hours available, teachers must make tough decisions about what the most important aspects of a course are to teach. Usually, those will appear in the assessment. In Broad's (2016) study, she claims that the formal curricula do not offer as rich of an experience as teachers would like to prepare learners for work.

Within my organisation, a colleague conducted a small-scale action research project where she approached the employers of construction apprentices on her Functional Skills English course (Jarvis, unpublished). The aim was to find out how English is used in the workplace and what more she can do to support the literacy development of her learners. She found that employers felt that apprentices had good skills and knowledge, however, were lacking in confidence, communication, and customer service skills. These are not explicit parts of the apprenticeship standards that the learners were undertaking so she put in a case to offer a short course in customer service and communication. This is a fitting example of a teacher going the extra mile and working in a culture where innovative ideas are welcomed, and agency is encouraged.

Student choices for courses are becoming increasingly narrow. A report commissioned by the Royal Society (Education Policy Institute, 2021) outlined that England already has one of the narrowest curricula in the developed world, with few other rich countries forcing learners to specialise in such a small set of subjects from the age of 16. The report shows that this uniquely narrow offer is becoming narrower still, with students increasingly unlikely to take a mix of subjects. The average student now takes subjects from fewer than two of the main subject groups of science, technology

and engineering, mathematics, languages, humanities, arts, and social sciences, vocational and professional (ibid, p.7).

Unwin (2004) argues that we should also provide people with the opportunity to study topics which have links to both practical skill and aesthetic appreciation. In her paper, she quotes the London College of Printing who offer a HND in Craft Bookbinding and its website says:

> "Having a book bound in leather is akin to having one's suit or shoes made by hand, and rather expensive. The number of trade binderies in London capable of producing work of this standard are getting less and less as the years go by. However, the number of binderies run as sole traders is on the increase, and there is no shortage of work. People will always want quality products."

> (Unwin, 2004, p.190)

She goes on to state that "rampant consumerism feeds on the inability of most people to create artefacts themselves, as a result of which, we are becoming domestically de-skilled" (p.190).

With the increased popularity of television shows such as The Great British Bake Off, the Great British Sewing Bee and The Repair Shop, our college plus local competitors have seen a growing interest in courses that may be seen as being part of the heritage industry. The surge in so-called 'cottage industries' (businesses operated from peoples' homes) and people seeking to learn a new skill for personal gain has had a positive impact on the curriculum offer. Within my college, the level one Furniture Making and Joinery course for adults has been hugely popular, so much so that a waiting list was established, and additional groups were created to meet demand. However, it is not yet enough to overcome the entrenched inequalities and harmful divisions in our education system.

1.5.3 The Great Academic Debate

In the *Craftsman* (2009), Sennett gives a historical account of how the craftsman's honour dimmed over time (he uses 'craftsman' and 'artisan' interchangeably as a term to describe a skilled tradesperson). He goes on to quote Aristotle saying:

> "We consider that the architects in every profession are more estimable and know more and are wiser than the artisans, because they know the reasons of the things which are done" (p.23).

James Relly (2021), argues that the structure of the labour market, the qualification system, and an outdated class system contribute to a cultural divide and confound parity of esteem. Historically, formal education was a luxury for children of the rich, while those who were less well-off attended schools run by churches or charities (UK Parliament, 2023). Consequently, the less educated were more likely to end up in manual, lower-paid jobs. Workers in jobs that involve getting their hands dirty were and still are faced with stigmatisation and negative stereotypes. Jobs that involve physical dirt are often designated as low-status and low-skilled and are seen to be carried out by groups who are deemed to be potentially inferior and less socially valuable (Dick, 2005).

On the other side of the coin then, professional occupations require specialist knowledge that is usually gained through a university, leading to a formal qualification. Once qualified, practitioners will be able to gain access to professional associations that, through competency tests and strict membership criteria, can claim overarching authority in their fields of knowledge. This division and hierarchical nature of some industries can also cause a divide. The 'brigade de cuisine' in professional kitchens demonstrates this well with the most senior chefs at the top, kitchen porters and pot washers at the bottom (Cameron, 2001). This system centralises power control by creating

a clear picture of authority and allows for specialisation but can also create a structure of unequal treatment.

The perceived divide between academic education and vocational is evident in other countries but is deeply rooted in the UK. The otherness and secondary status of FE can be summarised by Richard Sennett (2009) who says, "History has drawn fault lines dividing practice and theory, technique and expression, craftsman and artist, maker and user; modern society suffers from this historical inheritance" (p.11). Sennett's statement above draws attention to a binary framing of theory and practice that is evident in FE colleges where it is assumed that vocational courses are largely practical. However, they are both and require multiple lenses on learning and knowledge and distancing from the overly simplistic dichotomy of theory and practice.

There is an innate snobbery in the world of education. From an early age, children in the UK school system are labelled as 'academic' or 'non-academic'. As they reach their teenage, the process of sifting and sorting students into either an academic or vocational pathway then contributes to social division. Hyland (2019) refers to this as a 'bifurcated curriculum' - in which vocational studies are subordinate to academic pursuits.

Those who do not measure up to the demands of the academic routes quickly find themselves at the doors of a local FE college, with the schools keeping their brightest students for their own Sixth Form provision. Additionally, the House of Commons Education Committee (2004) reported that it was the most disadvantaged pupils (those in receipt of free school meals) who were most likely to study vocational programmes.

In 2017, legislation was passed that required all schools and academies to ensure that there is an opportunity for education and training providers to be able to gain access to pupils to inform them about approved technical education qualifications or apprenticeships. Despite this, it is notoriously difficult for FE colleges to gain access to school leavers and so many young people simply do not know what is out there or do not know what they want to do when they leave. The Sutton Trust (The Sutton Trust, 2022) found that students with less well-educated parents were less likely to receive better career support. Additionally, schools in more deprived areas were less likely to have a dedicated careers advisor.

This is a major disadvantage to the colleges not only in terms of recruitment but also retention. Where vocational courses aim to provide a direct line of sight to an occupation, this curriculum may be too narrow, or the student may reconsider. Funding rules mean that most students can only access free full-time education until their 19th birthday, so they need to choose wisely.

Dr Rob Smith's blog (2016) argues that if someone at the DfE sat down to plan a structure designed to reinforce divisions like social class, they could hardly produce a better structure. He alludes to the point that has been reinforced by many others that many policymakers in Government all come from an 'academic' background and many argue have little understanding of what happens in FE colleges and their importance to the economy and communities.

If we revisit the T Level argument briefly, they were designed to give parity to A Levels. Yet by having two binary pathways, they could be instrumental in continuing the divide. Additionally, with the rapid pace of change around qualification reforms, it is usually the academic qualifications that remain stable. Specifications and curricula for A Levels have broadly remained unchanged for several years apart from minor updates. Conversely, vocational qualifications are always changing which is incompatible with the slow pace of qualification development by awarding organisations and OfQual (Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation). The curriculum should lead the qualification and not the other way around.

1.5.4 Is There Even a Difference?

John Dewey (1916) did not see vocational education as separate from other forms of education.

> "To split the system, and give to others less fortunately situated an education conceived mainly as specific trade preparation, is to treat the schools as an agency for transferring the older division of labour and leisure, culture and service, mind, and body, directed and directive class, into a society nominally democratic ... But an education which acknowledges the full intellectual and social meaning of a vocation would include instruction in the historic background of present conditions; training in science to give intelligence and initiative in dealing with material and agencies of production; and the study of economic, civics and politics to bring the future workers in touch with the problems of the day" (p.318).

The term 'vocational' stems from the Latin 'vocatio' meaning a call or summons. It could be defined as the inclination to undertake a certain type of work, for which they are suited, trained, or qualified. Given that context, there seems minor difference between medicine, law and suchlike that are vocationally underpinned by a practice. Husband (2019) believes that the delineation is misleading and founded in a systemic, historical, cultural, and political misconception that is no longer relevant or useful in the twenty-first century. He argues that all vocational subjects require an academic and theoretical underpinning. Husband argues that the two are linked forms of knowledge, some physically enacted others that support those physical enactments. The fact that surgeons are more revered and celebrated than mechanics is not to do with the motor skills or theoretical underpinning (and how they are enacted), it is to do with 'who' does those jobs and the contextual nuances of the society in which they sit.

This concept resonates with John Dewey's description of vocational work as "any form of continuous activity which renders service to others and engages personal powers on behalf of the accomplishment of results" (p.139). Dewey recommended a holistic approach to learning in vocational education in an attempt to break down the 'antithesis of vocational and cultural education' based on the false oppositions of 'labour and leisure, theory and practice, body and mind' (p.306).

1.5.5 Can We Overcome the Divide?

I argue that one of the key things we can do to overcome the divide is to improve quality and demand. Research shows (see for example CAVTL, 2013) that high-quality vocational education should have a well-structured curriculum and recognised qualifications, diverse forms of participation, pedagogical expertise, meaningful employer involvement, and opportunities to progress to higher levels of study or employment.

Overcoming the divide relies not only on the quality and quantity of career information and the best quality teaching and learning but also on the quality of work and the increased availability of expansive education and employment opportunities. Dewey's (1916) argument for a vocational education that recognises the intrinsic values and occupational expertise of both the individual and society is one ideal that we can aspire to.

Another perspective is that of Ronald Barnett (2004). He called for a turn away from a focus on knowledge and skills to a 'pedagogy for a human being'. A 'pedagogy for a human being' seeks to develop the human qualities needed to thrive in a 'future that is not merely uncertain, but radically unknowable'. He outlines that a pedagogy of this kind will be a pedagogy that engages students 'as persons, not merely as knowers' which is a welcome shift away from the 'competence-based checklists' and the heavy focus on skills that have previously been discussed.

Improving the status of vocational education more widely needs to be addressed and we can look to our European neighbours for inspiration. For example, Germany has recently re-introduced its gold standard 'meister' qualification for master craftspeople and they must achieve this standard before they are allowed to set up their own businesses.   The traditional model of apprentice to master, novice to expert seems to have fallen out of favour (Sennett, 2009) as the younger generation are less inclined towards a job for life, with more wanting to explore 'portfolio careers'. This is important to this study as for vocational FE teachers may not have the commitment from students, therefore their professional identity and occupational culture could be compromised. The following literature review shows that culture is something that is developed over time, therefore longer models of learning may be more appropriate.

1.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter sets the stage for an exploration of the occupational cultures of lecturers in Further Education (FE) colleges, particularly within the context of vocational education. It highlights the complexities of a system grappling with the competing demands of marketisation, skills development, and the preservation of valuable knowledge and traditional craft practices.

The chapter begins by examining the concept of occupational cultures within FE colleges. These cultures are shaped by numerous factors, including shared values, beliefs, and practices among lecturers within a specific vocational field. However, the recent emphasis on marketisation in education has significantly impacted these cultures. Policy shifts like the Skills Bill (2022) prioritise measurable skills and employability, potentially leading to a more utilitarian and narrowly focused curriculum. This raises concerns about the potential erosion of the broader knowledge base and traditional skills that have long been hallmarks of vocational education.

Literature suggests that effective vocational education requires a multifaceted approach to knowledge formation. While technical skills are essential, a deeper understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of a profession is crucial for critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability. However, there is an ongoing debate about the balance between theoretical and practical knowledge. Furthermore, the chapter explores the role of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in equipping lecturers with the necessary knowledge and skills to stay current in their fields. Despite its importance, some argue that current CPD practices may not adequately address the development of tacit knowledge, which is often at the heart of vocational expertise.

These interconnected topics form the basis for the research presented in this study. Understanding the interplay between occupational cultures, knowledge formation, and CPD is vital to delve deeper into how FE colleges support lecturers in developing and teaching the multifaceted knowledge required for effective vocational education.

Building on the foundation laid in this chapter, the next section will delve deeper into the existing literature on these key themes. I will explore the concept of occupational cultures within education and examine various perspectives on knowledge formation and pedagogy in these contexts. The review will also consider the effectiveness of current CPD practices and the ongoing debate surrounding the balance between academic and vocational education. Through this comprehensive literature review, I will establish a robust theoretical framework for analysing the data collected in the subsequent chapters.

2. Culture, Identity, and Knowledge in Vocational Education

"You must linger among a limited number of master-thinkers, and digest their works, if you would derive ideas which shall win firm hold in your mind."

- *Moral Letters to Lucilius, Letter 2 -* Seneca (approx. 4 BC-65 AD)

Seneca, one of the great Stoic philosophers, often emphasised the timeless value of wisdom and the need for deliberate engagement with foundational ideas. To study philosophy, in his view, was to annex the past into our own time, allowing ancient insights to guide present understanding. This approach resonates deeply with me, not only because of my personal admiration for Stoic philosophy but also because of its direct relevance to the process of conducting a literature review.

In this section of the thesis, I emulate Seneca's advice by focusing on the seminal works and thinkers who have shaped the foundation of my research area. The phrase "digest their works" serves as a reminder to engage actively with these texts—not merely to read them but to immerse myself in their ideas, critically reflect upon them, and let them influence my intellectual framework.

For me, Stoicism offers a lens through which to approach intellectual challenges with discipline and clarity. "Derive ideas which shall win firm hold in your mind" emphasises the intention behind this process. The goal is not just to consume information but to extract ideas that resonate deeply and become firmly rooted in one's thinking.

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter of this thesis introduced the topic and problem while providing an overview of the key historical and legislative issues that affect the Further Education sector.

In this chapter, I will provide the theoretical context to the study and review the existing literature relating to the topics of culture, identity, and knowledge.

I have chosen to begin with culture as it is the central theme of this study. If I am to attempt to find out if and how occupational culture can be taught in the FE classroom, it is important to discuss some of the underpinning theoretical frameworks first. Culture is something that you cannot always describe, see, or 'put your finger on.' As Schein (1999) articulates:

"Culture matters because it is a powerful, latent, and often unconscious set of forces that determine both our individual and collective behaviour, ways of perceiving, thought patterns, and values" (Schein, 1999, p.14).

2.1.1 Definitions and key writers in the field of culture

One concept of culture is derived from the field of anthropology and can represent the transmission of beliefs and behaviours of one group to another (Cross and Carbery, 2016). Individuals can be aware of it, often it exists without their knowledge, but it can impact behaviours regardless. In management literature, organisational culture has been widely studied and became popular in the 1980s, defined broadly as a shared pattern of values, beliefs and practices that are prevalent in an organisation and its members (Schein, 2014).

An early definition offered by Jacques (1952, in Martin, 2005) suggests that culture is a customary and traditional way of thinking and doing things, which is shared by members, and which new members must learn and at least partially accept to be accepted into that cultural group. This led to

the popular and simple definition of organisational culture as being 'the way things are done around here.'

Hofstede (1991, p.48) uses the phrase `the collective programming of the mind' as being like Bourdieu's (1980) concept of *habitus* that evolves as a system which is collective, orchestrated, permanent and transferable. They form components that are often held together by such things as norms, beliefs, and customs (Cameron *et al.*, 1999). Hofstede's research builds upon Bourdieu's notion of habitus and proves incredibly useful in showing how different formative experiences, such as those influenced by gender, race, ethnicity, or class backgrounds, deeply shape how people know how to act or behave in different circumstances.

Hofstede's (1991) view is not that everyone within a particular culture is identical, but that there is a tendency for similarities to exist. His research makes links between organisational and national cultures, by implying that preferred ways of managing organisations will be based on national tendencies, however this is not directly tested in his work. Martin (2005) adds that Hofstede omits a detailed consideration of how cultures form, change, or are maintained. Hofstede regards culture as consistent over time and only changes slowly. Later work such as that of Alvesson (1993) which comes from a more sociological perspective, and views culture as a more dynamic process, representing the balance between social and economic pressures that act on a society.

Understanding culture is a complex process within an organisational context. Hofstede (1991) describes 'layers' of culture, inferring that people have cultural identities. Martin (2005) summarises three levels of cultural analysis following a review of the literature available at the time:

Level 1: Perceived culture – This is the constructed physical and social environment, including physical space and layout, the written and spoken language, any physical artefacts and creations, and the overt behaviour of group members.

Level 2: Espoused values – How members of a group deal with a new task or problem is based on their 'convictions of reality' and values. If the solution works, the value turns into a belief and therefore becomes part of a conceptual process where members can justify actions and behaviour.

Level 3: Basic underlying assumptions – In a stage further than level 2, these unconsciously held learned responses become taken for granted. Implicit assumptions guide behaviour and determine how group members think and feel.

This approach is based on the 'visibility' of culture. With perceived culture being the most visible, and basic underlying assumptions being the least observable. It was created from the belief that culture develops over time as employees use basic assumptions to solve internal and external problems. In an organisational context, the least observable is the most important for leaders to understand but also the hardest to change. Cameron (2004) adds that managers often misunderstand the management of cultural dimensions within an organisation, seeing the term 'culture' as being a single or, at its best, a narrow mental programming entity that requires little, or no, consideration.

Schein's (2014) model further breaks down these levels, each distinguished by their visibility and accessibility to individuals.
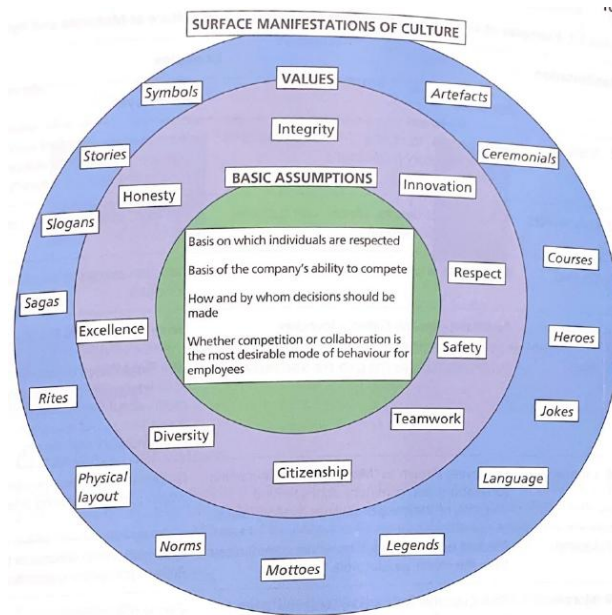
Figure 2: Schein's three levels of culture

As discussed, culture is multifaceted and can also be subjective. People assume that their own culture is logical and makes sense but that is not always the case for any outsiders. Looking at these concepts broken down further (as above) is important as they support the later research by providing materialistic examples of the culture of the participants. Buchanan and Huczynski (2010) summarise Schein's manifestations as:

Surface Manifestations

1. Artefacts: material objects created to facilitate culturally expressive activities e.g., tools, furniture, appliances, clothing.
2. Ceremonials: formally planned, elaborate sets of activities of cultural expression e.g., openings, prize giving, graduations, and religious events.
3. Courses and workshops: used to instruct, induct, orient, and train new members.
4. Heroes: characters living or dead who personify cultural beliefs, and may be referred to in company stories, myths, or jokes. They represent role models.
5. Jokes: humorous stories intended to amuse but underlying themes carry a message for the expected behaviour or values.
6. Language: form or manner using vocal or written means to convey meaning. E.g., specialist technical vocabulary, jargon, acronyms, as well as general naming choices.
7. Legends: handed-down narratives about wonderful events but embellished with fictional details. These fascinate and invite them to admire or deplore certain activities.
8. Mottoes: maxims adopted as codes of conduct.
9. Norms: expected modes of behaviour that are accepted as 'the way of doing things'.
10. Physical layout: things that surround people, providing immediate stimuli as they carry out culturally expressive activities.
11. Rites: elaborate, dramatic sets of activities that consolidate various forms of expression into one formally planned event e.g., appraisals or performance reviews.
12. Sagas: historical narratives describing the unique accomplishments of groups and their leaders. Often describing a series of events that unfold over time and constitute an important part of history.
13. Slogans: short, catchy phrases that are continually changed. E.g., customer advertising, and phrases to motivate employees.

14. Stories: narratives describing how individuals acted and the decisions that affected the future. Can include both fact and fiction.
15. Symbols: any act, event, object, quality, or relationship that serves as a vehicle for conveying meaning.

I have chosen to include Schein's models in this thesis as they can be easily adapted to a variety of different contexts. Many of the cultural models in the literature focus heavily on organisational culture but do not then provide the opportunity to differentiate when there are different sub-cultures within an organisation such as that of the different occupations within it. Sociologist Aviad Raz (2006) identified two issues with the distinction between stated culture and underlying assumptions, criticising the vagueness of cultural characteristics. Consequently, Raz suggested a modification to Schein's levels by considering the attributes solely as the tangible elements of the organisation and assessing the strength of the culture. Thus, measuring how strong the culture is based on the difference between what the company values and what employees really understand. As a result of this critique, I intend to give participants guidance and examples of what counts as an occupational culture but will also question what they believe the culture of their occupation to be.

2.1.2 How Cultures Are Formed

The question of how culture is generated is widely discussed in the literature, some argue it is by individuals mapping out cognitive routes (Smircich, 1983), or by observing, familiarising and learning and eventually conforming to a given set of norms and standards (Goodenough, 1981; Hofstede, 1991). These may be shared by others, but not necessarily by all within an organisation, wherein there is the potential for conflict, especially if there is a sub-group with its 'own way of seeing' (Cameron *et al.*, 1999; Parker, 2000).

The earlier definitions describe a process of acquisition by individuals and assume that individuals will either possess the same culture as the group before joining it or that it will be subsequently acquired through forms of training and socialisation. Martin (2005) suggests that within organisations, it may be in the management's interest to design or engineer on the premise that cultures may be more supportive of management objectives than others. Schein (2004) agrees and believes that cultures begin with leaders who impose their own values and assumptions on a group. If that group is successful and the assumptions come to be taken for granted, we then have a culture that will "define for later generations of members what kinds of leadership are acceptable" (p.2).

Management theorist Charles Handy (1993) outlines a number of factors that can influence an organisation's culture including history and ownership, size, environment, management approaches, goals and objectives. He does not imply that any specific approach to these variables is better than another but explains how each can contribute to a culture. For example, a small independent and family-owned business may have a vastly different feel to a large multinational organisation.

In contrast to Martin (2005) and Schein (1999), Handy outlines that if management tries to enforce a culture unacceptable to employees, there will be a reaction. For example, strikes, low productivity, high labour turnover and a need for tighter management control. This is important to consider within this study as the research participants will come from a range of occupational backgrounds that will be influenced by the organisational culture of their previous employers but also that of the college. Within the study, it is also important to note that lecturers may be actively trying to enforce a culture within their classrooms in terms of professionalism, work-ready behaviours of students, and the wider culture linked to the college behaviour standards and values. The college lecturer needs to find a careful balance between raising awareness of the occupational culture of their subject and not imposing it on their students too soon before they have had the opportunity to be gradually exposed to it through socialisation and training.

2.1.3 Occupational Culture

Trice and Beyer's (1984) opinion is that while organisational culture was very much *en vogue* in management literature in the 1980s, occupational cultures were overlooked. However, occupational culture was discussed far earlier, just under different terminology. Ernest Greenwood's (1957) essay outlines one of the distinguishing attributes of a profession as having a 'professional culture'. When discussing this further, he refers to networks of formal and informal groups that operate within professions. He describes small, closely knit clusters of colleagues where membership can be based on a variety of affinities such as specialities within the profession that generate a social configuration. Like Schein (2014), he also uses examples of values, norms, and symbols linked to the professional group to illustrate his point. However, he uses these to differentiate the professionals from the non-professionals.

Trice's (1993) view is that all occupations (even within sectors) have their own beliefs, values, and manifestation of culture and not just those deemed as 'professional'. Based on a comprehensive review of the field, Trice, and Beyer (1984) conclude that an occupational culture is composed of two interdependent components:

(1) its substance or the networks of meanings contained in its ideologies, that is the beliefs, values and norms of conduct that allow members of an occupation to make sense of the world in which they work; and
(2) its cultural forms or how an occupation conveys its ideologies to its members, such as rites, rituals, ceremonies, symbols, physical artefacts, stories, and myths.

Occupational cultures are often a sub-culture of an organisation and will usually represent groups that have mastered and applied specialised knowledge about the performance of specialist tasks relating to their trade. Often these can transcend the place or company in which they work as people may identify more with their occupation rather than the employer. Trice (1993) outlines that occupational cultures have strongly held ideologies that add to the cohesion of a particular group, however, they also make for a rigidness between groups which can often hinder collaboration. It is possible that these ideologies may clash with those of others within the organisation or the management, and therefore deviate from the overall organisational culture.

The distinctiveness of an occupational culture comes from the possession of a unique knowledge base that members must be able to understand and put into place. Trice (1993) adds that often members of a particular occupational culture have an unusual trait and gives the example of an architect who must be artistic and creative, as well as having underpinning knowledge around the principles of building, engineering, and project management.

Diverse types of specialist knowledge can support the development of occupational cultures. For example, craft occupations such as construction trades, manufacturing, and creative industries will require knowledge of specific techniques for performing a task. Whereas some occupations such as medicine and law will require a more abstract form of knowledge that will inform their practice. Greenwood's (1957, p.53) view is that "mastery of the underlying body of theory and acquisition of the technical skills are in themselves insufficient guarantees of professional success" and that one must navigate their way through the 'labyrinth of professional culture' through a process of acculturation.

The French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1893) saw modern life revolving around occupations, he suggested that in a modern society, work organisations and the traditional institutions of family and religion were too distant to provide individuals with a sense of place. There are many studies on the occupational cultures of uniformed public services, for example, the police force, prisons and the judiciary system, and the armed forces. Additionally, there is a quantity of scholarly work published on the cultures of seafarers and dockworkers, IT, and computing specialists, and catering and

hospitality staff. As will later be discussed, there are significant links in how they view themselves, how they view others outside of their group, and there are similarities in the manifestations of culture in terms of language, symbols, rituals etc.

When discussing attributes of professions, Greenwood (1957) describes how work-life invades after-work life, and the sharp demarcation between work and leisure time disappears so that to the professional person, their work becomes their life. An observation of most of these occupations is that they would usually work together for long hours, unsociable hours, or spend periods away from home. Therefore, it is logical to assume that people working in these occupations would form strong bonds in terms of their identities and cultures, what Deal and Kennedy (1982) would describe as 'strong cultures'.

They define a strong culture as having a widely shared philosophy, well-understood informal rules and expectations, recognition and belief in heroes, rituals and ceremonies, and a concern for individuals. Schein (2004) outlines that culture can be a stabilising force in an organisation and that many management theorists assert a 'strong' culture as being more desirable. However, strong cultures are hard to change and in an increasingly turbulent world that requires more flexibility, Schein's opinion is that strong cultures will increasingly become a liability.

In the following sections, I have chosen a small selection of the occupations listed above to provide a more detailed view. They are occupations seen as having a strong culture and there is enough literature to make comparisons and contrasts. I have chosen to discuss occupations that are linked to courses offered at my FE college workplace and are indicative of the sector so that I will be able to compare my findings in relation to literature when the time comes.

2.1.4 Occupational Culture of Chefs and Hospitality Staff

Existing research demonstrates that chefs possess a strong self-identity that comes through their craft and tradition (e.g. Gabriel, 1988; Fine, 1996). This view is supported by Cameron (2001) who provides evidence that chefs can be temperamental should their values be challenged, especially where these challenges undermine their professionalism. His qualitative study was based on structured interviews with eight head chefs and was analysed using a grid-group analysis. Cameron adds that the culture of chefs is 'intensely cosmopolitan,' and that these values build autonomy from the rules and policies set by the organisation.

The work of Fine (1996) in the USA analyses chefs through a sociological lens, the participants use other occupations to describe themselves as scientists, artists, accountants, surgeons, psychiatrists, and handymen. Cameron (2001) further discusses the art vs science argument. 'Artist' suggests creativity and flair which come from craft-based occupations, whereas 'scientist' connects the tools and resources, technology, and ingredients.

The above studies provide a view that is situationally dependent and context-specific. While the works of Gabriel and Fine are somewhat dated, they provide a significant contribution to literature and are still relevant today. However, their research does not consider chefs working in fine dining establishments or restaurants within hotels, which are both very prevalent in the UK hospitality industry.

Cooper *et al.* (2017) seek to address gaps in the literature pertaining to fine dining through their qualitative study involving 54 Michelin-starred chefs from across the UK. Their work conceptualises how the occupational culture and identities of chefs are constructed and maintained through both work and social interaction. This more contemporary research supports the early ideas shared by Smircich (1983), Goodenough (1981), and Hofstede (1991) among others. In addition to the strongly held values and beliefs previously discussed, the authors make links to being in the military, where there is a clearly defined rank within the kitchen, intense discipline, and a powerful sense of

camaraderie, but also instances of bullying and violence. Especially where new, or younger chefs are concerned.

The sense of community that Cooper *et al.* (2017) describe, ties in with the work of Cameron (2001) and identifies that the chefs' shared worldview, together with unsocial working hours contributes to their exclusion from 'normal' social occasions and a deeper commitment to colleagues. Many of the participants in this study describe that their friends are all chefs and only socialise with those in the same profession, which Cameron (2001) describes as the 'in-group' (those who share the same occupational beliefs and values).

Pryce (2009) studied occupational cultures and communities in more detail, arguing that the two concepts are related but identifies possible differences. Her work recognises that a common occupational culture exists amongst hotel workers in Australia which transcends the organisational culture within which the participants work. She found a similar level of camaraderie which she categorises as 'collegiality,' which arose from having similar approaches to work and shared skills and knowledge.

2.1.5 Occupational Culture of the Police and Military

Much literature has been published on the culture of policing and the military. Historically, these organisations have had a higher proportion of men in the workforce which may bring gendered stereotypes and a masculine culture. Hofstede (1991) states that in a masculine culture, you are expected to be assertive, competitive, and focused on material success. This tells us that these types of occupations will value heroism and strength. This is important in relation to this research as this dimension does not apply to literal masculinity but rather the tendency toward more masculine values.

Butler and Cochrane's (1977) early work found that police officers were likely to become cynical, authoritarian, hardened, conservative, loyal, secretive, suspicious, and isolated. Paoline (2003) describes that these manifestations of culture are like to come from the environment e.g. presence of, or potential for danger, and the unique coercive power and authority that police officers can exert. Cox and Kirby (2018) link this power and authority to the use of discretion. Police officers often must make decisions based on judgment rather than a standard operating procedure. This differs from other organisations in that the level of discretion *increases* as it moves *down* the hierarchy.

Like the professional kitchen, most uniformed services place significant importance on the chain of command. For example, in policing and the military, a rank/grade system indicates position and authority. Waddington (1999) draws attention to the different sub-cultures between police officers engaged in routine patrols and those who would be more involved in criminal investigations. He also highlights complexities between those who police inner cities versus more rural areas and those who have specialist roles e.g., armed units, special operations, or dog units. Redmond *et al.* (2015) provide a comprehensive review of military culture and found that like policing, the culture is very institutionally oriented and found differences between occupational subgroups e.g., engineers, medics, pilots, and reservists.

While cultures may accept new members, the process of integration for uniformed services usually begins with comprehensive basic training. In these occupations, there is a need for a collective, strong, and cohesive culture that can operate functionally during dangerous situations or crises (Redmond *et al.*, 2015). Through this initial training, recruits are expected to adapt to new norms very quickly, such as language, codes of conduct and identity. They will form a group through eating, sleeping, exercising, and training, common dress, and sharing all the highs and lows that come from being away from home.

This early group formation helps to sustain the desired culture. In her 2016 study of PCSOs (Police Community Support Officers), Cosgrove (2016) found that for those in their first 12 months of being in post when policing skills were still in their infancy, the culture, particularly the solidarity and sense of mission supported PCSOs in carrying out their role. Redmond *et al.* (2015) emphasise the use of core values to create uniformity and a shared sense of purpose, linking to Pryce's (2009) ideas around collegiality.

2.1.6 Occupational Culture of Information Technology (IT) Workers

The importance of studying those working in IT-related roles has been clearly articulated by Orlikowski and Baroudi (1988). Their early work identified that in contrast to uniformed services and hospitality occupations, many IT workers will work within a range of organisations providing a support service e.g., hospitals, insurance companies, retailers etc. as well as those who will work in specialist technology companies.

IT workers will often have frequent exchanges with the end users within their organisations. Several studies have revealed that communication problems can occur between IT workers and other colleagues (e.g. Hornik *et al.*, 2003; Guzman *et al.*, 2004; Guzman, Stam and Stanton, 2008). A key problem with this argument is that there is an underlying assumption that IT workers are lacking in communication skills which can perpetuate stereotyping. However, there is little evidence that IT workers have lower communication skills than any other occupational group.

By using a critical discourse analysis approach to further examine the communication between IT workers and end users, Alvarez (2002) found that the IT worker has a distinct style of diplomacy, assertiveness, direction, and non-verbal communication. However, a limitation of this study is that due to its critical and interpretive approach and focus on the critique of knowledge gained through social interactions, it is not easily replicated and therefore the data cannot be interpreted as generally applicable across other organisations.

It has been suggested that communication failures do not occur because of a lack of communication skills, but because of different normative communication strategies (see for example Franz and Robey, 1986). These communication approaches may arise from the strong manifestations of the IT worker culture for example, their specific knowledge and expertise, specialised tools and equipment, language and vocabulary, shared frustrations with end users, and the need to be adaptable and forward thinking.

The existing research on IT workers discusses the characteristics of IT workers and how they work collaboratively with others in an organisation. However, it fails to address how IT workers see themselves, and each other, and how they collaborate within their subgroup. Therefore, it is difficult to explicitly ascertain whether the same levels of camaraderie and collegiality extend to those in these types of occupations versus policing, the military and hospitality occupations.

2.1.7 Occupational Communities

From reviewing the literature on a selection of different occupations, it is possible to conclude that these distinct subcultures can be characterised as occupational communities. They are bound together by socially constructed rules and ethics and shared ideologies. Salaman (1974) also adds physical proximity as another influencing factor although notes that this is more important in more working-class occupations. Where occupations involve spending long hours together, often communities are formed that then spill out beyond the workplace. They find themselves socialising with people in similar professions as they have a shared sense of identity. Within the workplace, their sense of camaraderie supports the development of these identities.

Salaman, (1974, p.27) identifies several key factors that determine whether an occupation derives a sense of community.

1. Involvement in work tasks: Materialistic manifestations such as uniforms, tools, equipment, and language as well as non-materialistic values and beliefs will be enacted and used throughout the working day. They can all be used in a way to bring the group members closer together as one, but can also serve to exclude others.
2. Marginal status: In many occupations, e.g., Policing, where they may be negatively perceived in the public eye, this forms stronger bonds within the group.
3. Inclusiveness of the work or organisational situation: In hospitality, policing and the military, there are long-standing traditions linked to the rites and rituals e.g., training, passing out, and the routines regularly employed throughout the working day that have cultural significance through a hierarchical system. This will allow them to feel part of the group.

Salaman suggests that each of these factors would need to be satisfied and will determine the strength of the occupational community, however, they may not be definitive but in varying degrees. Dennett et al. (2010) link this to organisational culture by adding that the degree of strength may determine how central attitudes and beliefs, supported by company values, are formed. This in turn may be parallel to organisational culture, or it may be opposing it.

2.1.8 Cultural Stereotypes

All the occupations listed above have commonalities in that they usually have a shared understanding of their purpose and values. They have rituals in the way that they work. They also have shared symbols in their uniforms and the tools and equipment with which they work. These strong manifestations of culture are likely to fall victim to stereotyping.   Trice (1993) summarises that while occupation-based stories may provide a means of expressing how to perform tasks effectively, at the same time they can often create dysfunctional stereotypes of others in or outside the organisation.

Stereotyping is a perpetual distortion that can create difficulties in dealing with people, inferring that all people within a particular category share the same traits or characteristics (Mullins, 2007). Therefore, pre-judgements are often made based on a limited evidence base. For example, IT professionals do not have social skills, chefs have a fiery temperament, and armed forces personnel are aggressive.

While this thesis is not specifically about stereotyping, it is important to consider that some of my participants who come from these occupational groups may have fallen victim to such stereotypes and this is considered with sensitivity throughout.

2.1.9 Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is the attitude that one's own culture is superior to that of others. It has been conclusively shown that ethnocentrism can be prevalent where there are strong occupational cultures. The rationale for this position is that as humans, part of our identity is found through affinity with social groups. Strong occupational cultures have a unique set of shared values and beliefs, which they often believe are superior to other groups (Trice, 1993). Cultural literature argues that this like-mindedness produces a kind of favouritism for the 'in-group,' naturally, there will need to be a contrasting 'out-group,' creating an environment of 'us and them.'

Trice (1993) goes on to outline that this can sometimes lead to social segregation as groups with other beliefs are distrusted and disliked. In his memoir '*Down and Out in Paris and London,*' George Orwell (1940, p.88) provides an example of the superiority of the 'in-group' of chefs, in comparison to the 'out-group' of waiters:

> "The cook does not look upon himself as a servant, but as a skilled workman; he is generally called 'un ouvrier' which a waiter never is…He despises the whole non-

cooking staff and makes it a point of honour to insult everyone below the head waiter. And he takes a genuine artistic pride in his work, which demands very great skill."

To summarise at this point, it is possible to conclude that neither identity nor culture represents a singular concept, and both are inextricably linked. From psychological, social, and cultural dimensions, it is clear to see how they can complement each other. However, in application, it is possible to see how the two can merge and will become intertwined as this research progresses. With the view of understanding identity more clearly, the next section will illustrate the influences of group affiliation linked to occupations and how multiple groups can impact identity.

2.2   Identity and Professionalism

Thus far this review of literature has demonstrated that both culture and identity are social constructs, where identity is influenced by culture in a bi-directional relationship. Individual identity is shaped by culture, but the culture exists and lives on through the experience of individuals.

As individuals, we can belong to several groups which can shape our identities. Identity is not a single factor or trait but a combination. Some remain static whereas some can change over time as we mature and grow or leave and enter new social groups and cultures. Therefore, occupations can be a significant determinant in how an identity is created.

2.2.1 Social Identities Linked to Occupations

Fundamental to the theme of identity is Tajfel's social identity theory (Tajfel *et al.*, 1971; Tajfel, 1982). Social identity is 'the individual's knowledge that he/she belongs to certain social groups, together with some emotional and value significance to him/her of the group membership' (Tajfel, 1982, p.31). Within the theory, a central tenet is how social criteria can cause divisions of people into 'us and 'them,' or 'in-groups' and 'out-groups'. Membership of the group causes people to behave in a way that is consistent with the group norms; "self-perception, beliefs, attitudes, feelings and behaviours are now defined in terms of the group prototype" (Terry, Hogg and Mullin, 1999, p.284). When individuals feel strong emotional ties to a group, the social identities are most influential and can provide higher levels of self-esteem, which in turn helps them to sustain the identity.

Terry, Hogg, and Mullin (1999) suggest that memberships and socialisation in social groups provide the important aspect of self-categorisation and emphasise the differences between such groups and similarities among group members. Salaman (1974) uses the term 'self-image' to propose that individuals can affiliate to social categories, through a self-categorisation process, and so form an identity. How an individual articulates or communicates their identity (known as avowal) is an important aspect of identity formation. However, an alternate view is one of social categorisation versus self-categorisation.

Saunders' (1981) study and subsequent book '*Social Stigma of Occupations'* identified the constraints imposed on kitchen porters to perceptions of social categorisation. His work clearly shows the circumstantial effects of where kitchen porters stand within society, but also how organisations play a role in maintaining these norms. By stereotyping these identities, organisations and wider outside groups can define and sustain a lower status for individuals within these occupational groups. Cameron (2004) outlines that society sees groups of individuals as a reflection of *what they are,* the idea of ascription and how we perceive others can also play a significant role in identity formation.

In Dennett et al.'s, (2010) conference paper, they link the two concepts through the example of cruise ship waiters. The hospitality industry is surrounded by negative stereotypes and ideologies of long hours and low pay, additionally, the service profession has long-standing historical connotations with the idea of master/servant identities. However, they point out that this perception can vary from society to self, with the perceived glamour and service expectations linked to a cruise which may *enhance* professional identity. Additionally, at a high end, the role requires elevated levels of professional expertise where waiters' duties contain elements of performance and style, as George Orwell (1940) also describes so eloquently.

Goffman (1959) makes further connections between the perception of self, and the perception of society within his monograph '*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life'.* By using the analogy of theatre and drama, he illustrates how the perception of self and identity by way of group behaviour, portrays a 'public identity' to others, which is linked to the idea of performance. While 'acting' often implies conscious effort, Goffman's theory also encompasses the many ways we unconsciously shape our behaviour to fit social situations. Just as an actor plays different roles in different plays, we present different facets of ourselves depending on the 'stage' we find ourselves on. This 'performance'—which may involve conscious or unconscious adjustments to our behaviour—is influenced by the audience and their expectations. Central to his writing is the theory that people are constantly engaged in 'impression management' where the actors will be constantly trying to present themselves in a particular way to maintain a certain image. This is a crucial factor to consider when newer members join a group or in groups where the *status quo* must be maintained.

The summaries above are important to this research as not only do they provide the theoretical context for the research and subsequent discussions; the idea of identities being linked to professions is a key point for this study. A defining characteristic of FE lecturers is that they may identify with multiple identities (or characters to put it in Goffman's (1957) terms). These identities may run in parallel or may be less evenly balanced depending on the history and nature of the individual. The next section will introduce the concept of professionalism and dual professionalism linked to identity and its implications for FE lecturers and this research.

2.2.2 Professional Identity

The concept of professional identity is multifaceted, encompassing an individual's sense of self as it relates to their occupation. Traditionally, professions have been associated with formal education, ethical codes, and regulatory bodies, often found in sectors like education, law, and medicine. However, this research expands the definition to include individuals in craft-based occupations who possess specialised skills and knowledge, often gained through formal training or apprenticeships. These individuals may also be members of professional bodies, such as the Craft Guild of Chefs or the Federation of Master Builders.

Bucher and Stelling (1977) define professional identity as a complex interplay of knowledge, skills, work experiences, and social interactions. This definition is particularly relevant to the context of lecturers transitioning from industry to academia. Their prior occupational experiences and expertise, combined with their interactions with colleagues and students, shape their emerging professional identity as lecturers.

While Bucher and Stelling's definition provides a valuable framework, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The definition primarily focuses on cognitive and behavioural aspects of professional identity, potentially overlooking the role of emotions, values, and beliefs. Additionally, it may not fully capture the dynamic and evolving nature of professional identity, especially in contexts of significant career transitions.

Beijaard *et al*.'s (2004) review offers a comprehensive overview of research on teachers' professional identity. Their work emphasises the importance of understanding how personal and professional factors shape teachers' sense of self and their commitment to the profession. However, the review's focus on Western contexts limits its generalisability to diverse educational settings. Furthermore, the reliance on self-report measures raises concerns about the potential for social desirability bias and other methodological limitations. Despite these minor shortcomings, Beijaard *et al*.'s work remains a foundational text in the field of teacher education research.

2.2.3 Dual Identity and Dual Professionalism

As highlighted in the previous chapter, many FE lecturers will maintain a strong commitment to their previous occupation. Several authors (Robson, Bailey and Larkin, 2004a; Gleeson *et al.*, 2015) agree that the professional identity that is linked to their former job will impact the emerging teacher identity. Fejes and Köpsén (2014) develop this argument further by adding that for some, the allegiance to the former occupation can be stronger or weaker depending on the years of service in each role. Orr (2011) adds that a strong allegiance and professional identity linked to the previous occupation can even prevent some FE lecturers from viewing themselves as education professionals or 'teachers' due to the connotations linked with school teaching. The two are often vastly different due to the FE lecturers' stronger links with industry.

This then raises the issue of whether are they teachers who used to work in industry, or an industry worker who teaches. These competing identities that FE lecturers hold are often described as dual identities or dual professionalism. On the one hand, they are qualified in a vocational or academic subject, and on the other, are teacher-trained and committed to developing skills and knowledge in teaching.

Dual professionalism is advantageous when seen in the context of the learner experience. The ETF Professional Standards (Education and Training Foundation, 2023) outline that dual professionals 'give their learners the benefit of expert subject knowledge and skills'. Teachers who still work in the industry or with strong contacts can develop partnerships between the education organisation and the workplace to enable students and staff to gain valuable insight into the current world of work which may otherwise be difficult. Again, the ETF outlines that this is a key ingredient in ensuring that education can lead the way in the development of employability.

Dual professionalism also brings with it up-to-date knowledge and skills, providing a greater sense of credibility which will undoubtedly enhance the teaching and learning process. The Commission on Adult and Vocational Teaching and Learning's report '*It's About Work*' declares that one of the characteristics on which excellent teaching and learning within the sector depends is: "dual professional teachers who combine occupational and pedagogical expertise" (CAVTL, 2013, p.3). The positions above argue that dual professionalism as a concept makes a key contribution to the learning experience and is on the whole positive.

Conversely, many researchers warn us to take caution with the concept of dual professionalism. For example, authors such as Fejes and Köpsén (2014) describe how some FE teachers prioritise their professional identity over their previous occupation. Orr's (2011) assertion above is a stark reminder that some teachers never fully subscribe to being a professional teacher. Gleeson *et al.* (2015) reflect on the many different (and some unconventional) routes into teaching that have been outlined in the previous chapter.

For many, working part-time alongside teaching part-time is the norm. This can sometimes lead to a divide or conflict in the identities linked to the former occupation and to the new teaching role.

These conflicts can spill out into other areas for example when undertaking CPD and other types of professional development. To illustrate this, Broad (2015) describes how some FE lecturers will choose to develop their subject expertise through learning new knowledge and skills in that aspect of their identity versus others who choose to develop their pedagogical practice. In an ideal world, lecturers would be able to do both but there is often too little time, and complex decisions must be made.

Robson, Bailey, and Larkin (2004) questioned whether it was indeed possible for two identities to become compatible. Highlighting that the move from one to another is far from straightforward, they argue that the idea of holding two identities is preferable. If we continue to link identity as being integral to group membership, Wenger's (1998) nexus of multi-membership helps explore how identity can be mediated across different sociocultural spaces. By being part of two (or more) communities of practice, we engage in different practices in each of the communities to which we belong. Depending on the level of membership and participation, identity may be more or less developed in one space than it is in the other. Wenger's model asserts that you could be an expert in one and a beginner in another. While the specific trajectories do not merge, they may become part of each other either by clashing or reinforcing each other and this requires some coordination.

These arguments demonstrate the fluidity of professional identity and its meaning for teachers. Fejes and Köpsén (2012) highlight the social aspects, that developing an identity as a vocational teacher may be shaped in and move between multiple contexts. These important debates on professional identity and its formation have helped to inform the rationale for this thesis, which is to add a new understanding to occupational culture, occupational identity, and how it can present itself in the FE classroom to better prepare students for the workplace.

2.2.4 Expanding on Identity and Professionalism: The Role of Language

In the context of identity and professionalism, language plays a pivotal role, shaping not only how individuals perceive themselves but also how they are perceived by others. The nuances of language, including vocabulary, registers, accents, and code-switching, contribute to the complexities of professional identity.

The words we use and how we use them can be powerful indicators of our professional identity and occupational culture. Technical jargon and specialised terminology serve as a linguistic gateway to a profession, signalling expertise and understanding. By mastering this vocabulary, individuals demonstrate their competence and their "right" to belong to a specific professional community (Schein, 2014). Registers, or the level of formality in language use, further refine professional identity. A surgeon in theatre employs a different register than they do when conversing with patients. This ability to adapt language to different professional contexts is critical in establishing credibility and trust. This is closely linked to the thinking of Goffman (1959) and Wenger (1998) in that the different identities may be presented in different ways depending on the circumstances.

Accents, while often associated with regional or social backgrounds, can also become intertwined with professional identity. In some professions, a particular accent might be linked to prestige or authority for example a French chef or Maître d', or a Concierge with an upper-class British accent. However, accents can also lead to stereotyping and bias, highlighting the complex relationship between language and social perception (Mullins, 2007). Growing up in rural North Yorkshire, my working-class Yorkshire accent was often commented on when working in an international hotel in London and so I sought to soften it. Code-switching, or the ability to switch between different languages or dialects, is a linguistic tool that can enhance or adapt professional or personal identity.

In today's globalised workplace, professionals who can code-switch demonstrate adaptability and cultural sensitivity, valuable assets in navigating diverse professional environments.

Language is not merely a means of communication; it is a fundamental building block of identity. Through language, individuals express their values, beliefs, and cultural affiliations. In the professional sphere, language becomes a marker of belonging, distinguishing "us" from "them", also described as a visible manifestation (Schein, 2014). The process of acquiring professional language is akin to a rite of passage. As newcomers master the vocabulary and registers of their chosen field, they undergo a transformation, aligning themselves with the norms and expectations of their profession. Language thus becomes a badge of honour, signifying membership in a professional community. Cameron's (2001) grid-group analysis provides a valuable framework for understanding how language can function as a mechanism for reinforcing cultural norms and shaping professional identity. In high-grid cultures, where roles and statuses are precisely defined, language serves as a tool for maintaining order and upholding professional boundaries. The use of standardised language, adherence to specific registers, and even prescribed accents can contribute to the "precisely defined roles and statuses" (p.105) characteristic of high-grid cultures. Conversely, in low-grid cultures, where autonomy and individuality are highly valued, language may be used more flexibly and creatively to express diverse perspectives and foster innovation. The absence of rigid linguistic norms allows for greater freedom of expression, enabling individuals to challenge conventions and contribute to the evolution of their profession.

The "group" dimension of Cameron's analysis further illustrates the role of language in professional identity. In high-group cultures, language can be a powerful force for fostering cohesion and solidarity. Shared vocabulary, inside jokes, and even distinct communication styles can reinforce a sense of belonging and strengthen the bonds between group members. In contrast, low-group cultures may exhibit greater linguistic diversity, reflecting the weaker ties between individuals. While this diversity can lead to richer communication and a broader range of perspectives, it can also create challenges in establishing shared understanding and coordinating action.

To summarise, language serves as a tool for professional identification, enabling individuals to project their professional identity to the world. By using specific terminology, adhering to professional registers, and engaging in code-switching when necessary, professionals signal their expertise and establish their place within a professional hierarchy. Moreover, language can foster a sense of shared identity among occupations. The use of common vocabulary and registers creates a sense of belonging, reinforcing the bonds that tie individuals to a profession.

2.2.5 Does a Previous Occupation Influence Teaching Practice?

Later in the chapter, I will explore skills, knowledge, and pedagogy in more detail. However, in this section, I will attempt to make connections between how the occupational identity of lecturers can influence how they teach. Avis and Bathmaker (2006) outline that the former occupation and the resulting professional identity can have a significant impact on the teaching strategies and practices that teachers adopt. From a study of trainee teachers, they argue that teaching practice is shaped by previous experiences of work. Additionally, they found that teachers drew upon approaches used in their previous careers to inform their "preferred orientations to educational practice" (*Ibid*, p.175). In other words, the trainee teachers used teaching and training techniques used in their previous occupations. Robson, Bailey, and Larkin (2004) believe that these close links with industry give trainee teachers an advantage in that they are well-placed to teach in a way that prepares learners for work.

Robson, Bailey, and Larkin's (2004) research also highlights the importance of having high expectations for the learning environment that creates a culture of not only gaining a qualification but developing the student as a whole. They report that many lecturers are going over and above

what is required in the curriculum to provide the student with not only knowledge and skills, but the values, attitudes, and beliefs required to meet the demands of the occupation. The FE lecturers were acting as "vanguards of professional practice" …preserving "the status and identity of the professional group from which they come" (*Ibid,* p.190).

We know from the previous chapter that a significant part of membership in a profession is a commitment to an agreed set of values and conforming to certain codes of conduct and ethics. As argued by Robson, Bailey, and Larkin (2004), teachers believe that part of their role is to instil the values of their former occupation into their learners. However, Maxwell (2010) notes that both personal and professional values can be influenced by many complex factors such as social identity, occupational identity, and culture.

The identity from the previous occupation forms a prevailing influence on the teaching practice of FE lecturers. Within research (see Robson, Bailey, and Larkin 2004), FE teachers describe a 'pride in their former occupation', as a value which they try to instil into their learners. The fact that they have done that job, makes them a role model and gives them a sense of credibility amongst their students. In Robson, Bailey, and Larkin's (2004) research, the lecturers developed a sense of altruism regarding their professionalism. They wanted their students to be the absolute best in their industry just as they once were. By role modelling high expectations and an unconditional positive regard for their occupation, students all aspired to be part of the 'in group.'

A final aspect to touch on briefly is the previous educational experiences of FE lecturers. This is important to include as it may also contribute to how participants view education and the pedagogical strategies that they may use to support the development of occupational culture. Avis and Bathmaker (2006) tell us that two of their lecturer participants were educated themselves through the further education system. Jephcote, Salisbury and Rees (2008) describe how in their study, FE lecturers had similar educational histories to their learners, with many attending colleges themselves. This suggests that some FE teachers may have a shared identity with their students based on their own educational experiences. They then may consider themselves a role model based on this shared characteristic which can help FE lecturers relate to their learners, form strong bonds, and be well-placed to pass on their know-how. Day and Gu (2014) explore the concept of teacher resilience and its significance in maintaining quality education. They argue that positive experiences with inspiring teachers can have a profound impact on individuals, motivating them to pursue careers in education and adopt similar pedagogical approaches. This suggests that effective teaching practices can be perpetuated through a cycle of influence, where experienced teachers inspire future generations of educators.

To draw this section to a close and summarise, I have described some of the key components of FE professional identity and its formation. FE teachers' former occupation has a significant impact on their new identity, with many ascribing to the notion of a dual professional identity. As my study centres on vocational teachers and teaching practices, it is important to interrogate some of these issues in detail to provide a foundation for understanding the results that follow.

In the next section, I will begin to relate the ideas of culture and identity to various aspects of knowledge and how key writers and theories in this field have contributed to this study.

2.3 Knowledge and Learning

Central to this research is if and how occupational culture can be taught in the FE classroom. Therefore, how people learn is crucial to this work. A considerable amount of literature has been published on knowledge and learning, with many varied learning theories being generated in the process.

From a historical perspective, early philosophers like Aristotle tried to label the distinct types of knowledge. In *Nichomachean Ethics* (trans. 1998) he describes:

Techne: Broadly translated as 'technique.' This could include the principles, rationale or method of producing, making, or doing something. It is not knowledge for knowledge's sake, it has an end goal or product.

Poiesis: Simply translated as 'to make.' This may be more related to a basic skill where the process is replicated without the underlying knowledge of how or why it is done.

Phronesis: Often translated as 'practical wisdom.' This is a combination of the knowledge of a technique or skill relevant to practical action and good judgment. Carr notes, "Phronesis is the supreme intellectual virtue and an indispensable feature of practice" (1995, p. 71).

Praxis: In Ancient Greek, *praxis* refers to the activities undertaken by 'free people.' Aristotle believed that humans had three basic activities: *theoria* (thinking), *poiesis* (making), and *praxis* (doing). *Praxis* has evolved to describe action or doing because it is the right thing to do. It is our capacity to analyse ideas and wrestle with them as what makes us uniquely human.

Episteme: Most translated as 'knowledge;' however, *episteme* is more linked to scientific knowledge in its purest form rather than having practical application. For example, mathematics or physics do not yet have relevance to the real-world principles of engineering.

Aristotle believed that knowledge is gained through experience, observation, and reasoning. He argued that knowledge is not just a matter of memorising facts, but rather involves understanding and making connections between concepts. Understanding Aristotle's views on knowledge is important in an educational research context because his ideas continue to have a considerable influence on educational philosophy and practice today.

2.3.1 Theory/Practice Divide

There have been many debates concerning the idea that theory and practice are two binary concepts. Aristotle's forms of knowledge—*episteme* (scientific knowledge), *techne* (craft knowledge), and *phronesis* (practical wisdom)—are often seen as distinct but not necessarily hierarchical. Each form serves a different purpose and is considered a virtue in its own right. In *Nichomachean Ethics,* he goes on to say that:

> "Some people who do not possess theoretical knowledge are more effective in action (especially if they are experienced) than others who do possess it."

> (Book VI 1141 68-27)

For Aristotle, a skilled craftsman (who possesses *techne*) and a practical, morally wise person (who possesses *phronesis*) are not considered "lesser" than a theoretical scientist (*episteme*). Instead, each form of knowledge is appropriate for its specific domain of activity. The goal is not to ascend a hierarchy but to apply the right kind of knowledge to the right situation.

The relationship between *episteme* and *techne* in ancient philosophy offers an interesting contrast with our notions about theory and practice. In the world of Further Education, there is a common misconception that students who do not fare well at school will go to college to study a trade or craft-based subject, focused more on practical skills than academic ability. Hyland (2019) points out that these 'preferences and prejudices favouring intellectual over practical or manual pursuits are deeply embedded in Western culture and, arguably, have their origins in Ancient Greek philosophy' and continues to argue that hierarchical divisions are inextricably linked to social class.

Yet what is often overlooked is that all 'practical' subjects have a theoretical underpinning that must be mastered and understood if the student is to become proficient. In some historical dialogues, Socrates for example, theory and practice are complex and interchangeable. For example, medicine can be the physician's craft and knowledge of health - one studies health and the sciences but practices medicine.

In my own experience of hospitality education, customer service units were grounded on sociological, psychological, and anthropological perspectives. When learning to understand consumer behaviour, we were taught about how and why people can act in the way they do, which helped us to compose appropriate responses. Similarly, in cookery, we were reminded of scientific reactions when baking by testing the efficacy of different raising agents in bread. We learned about nutrition and the human body, which enabled us to construct balanced menus and meal plans for end users.

In my later teaching career, my initial teacher education was focused on educational theory, which I struggled to relate to practice. Carr (1995) describes how teachers cling to an image of theory as 'incomprehensible jargon' that has nothing to do with everyday problems and concerns. I agree with Carr in that providing education is largely a practical activity, one that involves developing the knowledge of students through the process of teaching. He outlines that education is like other theoretical practices as it is a 'consciously performed intentional activity' that is based upon a framework of thought. However, he argues that anyone engaged in education must already have some theory to guide it.

The same could be argued for anyone in their occupation be it a practical one or otherwise. In *The Craftsman* (2009), Sennett suggests that in practical work, technique is the first step in craft development and draws attention to the importance of observation, repetition, imitation, cooperation, dialogue, and critique. However, he argues that distinct types of knowledge must co-exist as a craftsperson cannot rely on technique alone. Craftworkers must know how to problem solve, how to adapt, how to deal with different challenges and be more pragmatic in nature.

This argument is relevant to this study as my participants will have both the theoretical underpinning and practical experience of their former occupation and will often enact it in a manner that is taken for granted as they have a mastery of the craft. However, it may be challenging for novice teachers to impart both the skill and knowledge of their subject, in order to provide students with their practical wisdom or phronesis. Teachers in the study will also be simultaneously wrestling with their theory and practice of teaching as they develop in this different space. Those that develop a mastery of their craft, will be able to apply different techniques to different situations while making good judgements based on the situation or problem that has arisen.

While technique is an important part of a practice, it can be argued that recently there has been too much of a focus on skills within Further Education. Students need the opportunity to acquire and develop the traditions and practices of their chosen profession, which as discussed in the previous chapter, can be constrained by time and a narrowing curriculum.

2.3.2   Whose Knowledge Is It Anyway

Hyland (2019) reflects Plato's distinction between 'genuine' knowledge (acquired through rational reflection) and mere 'opinion' (acquired for specific, practical purposes). He asserts that the genuine knowledge of sciences, mathematics etc. is reserved for the academic curricula and cannot be linked to vocational further education which is based on applied knowledge.

The idea of 'genuine knowledge' is linked to the idea of 'powerful knowledge,' popularised by Michael Young and Johan Muller (see Young and Muller, 2013). It refers to the knowledge and

understanding that students would not encounter in their daily lives beyond their education setting. In their view, knowledge is powerful if it fulfils several characteristics. It should:

1. Provide reliable explanations and a sound basis for making judgements and generalisations about the world beyond the narrow limits of experiences
2. Be developed systematically by specialists within subject disciplines
3. Provide a language for engaging in political, moral, and other kinds of debates
4. Allow us to "think the unthinkable and the not yet thought"

The writing of Young and Muller (2013) builds on the sociologist perspectives of Durkheim (1893), who offers a sociological account of the development of knowledge and how it progresses. Durkheim's ideas of 'profane' and 'sacred' provide the basis for separating practical and everyday difficulties from theoretical/intellectual/conceptual issues. Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896-1834) also held a binary view of knowledge, similarly to Durkheim, his distinction was between two concepts - theoretical (or scientific) and every day (or common sense).

Young and Muller's ideas of 'powerful knowledge' focused primarily on STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) as they 'offer predictions and explanations beyond any that are possible for those who have to rely only on everyday thinking.' While they assert that these subjects are intrinsically more powerful than others, they do not claim that they are any more or less important than others such as humanities or the arts, but that there should be a broad and balanced curriculum offered. All of Michael Young's work has strong links to social justice at its heart, his view was that all young people are entitled to a comprehensive education, and a knowledge-rich curriculum would provide young people with social mobility.

Another perspective is that of Dewey. John Dewey (1859 – 1952) made significant contributions to educational thinking, arguing that the purpose of education was to create critically reflective and socially engaged individuals. He rejected the idea of rote learning and the premise that learning is about the passive receipt of knowledge, recognising the gap between 'the remote and general terms in which philosophic ideas are formulated and the practical and concrete details of vocational education' (Dewey, 1916).

At the time, his theories of education were controversial and even now are often misquoted. He did not believe that the purpose of vocational education was to prepare students for a specific occupation but should give them a broader understanding of the world of work and how to be better individuals in society. Dewey challenged the idea of 'learning for earning,' explaining that children are being trained to enrich the system and not themselves. He argued for a reconstruction of the whole educational system, where young people should not have to choose between a vocational or an academic route. Instead, all young people should have access to a broad curriculum where the economy and society are linked through what he termed 'industrial intelligence.' In this model, students would learn how to be pragmatic problem solvers, that also have an appreciation for social sciences and the arts as well as knowledge and understanding of the business world.

It was difficult to see how his approaches could fit within the curriculum traditions of the time and so his work became intricately linked to manual training linked to manufacturing and other craft-based occupations. Many references to his work can be found in the literature however many lose the powerful sense of social justice and passion for democracy which was a key aspect of his vision for vocational education. That said, Dewey's ideas form a strong basis for teaching and learning in Further Education today. His theories suggested that we learn through interactions and experiences with the wider world. Some examples include dialogic or discussion-based teaching, problem-solving and enquiry, learning through discovery and sensory exploration.

This is important to this study as it focuses on the occupational cultures and teaching practices of lecturers in vocational education. Participants will have had careers in their respective industries before coming to teaching, and they will likely use teaching and training methods linked to their former vocational occupations.

2.3.3 Workplace Learning

A considerable amount of literature has been published on learning in workplace contexts. This is important to discuss as the workplace is often simulated within vocational FE environments. For example, workshops, labs, salons, kitchens, and so on. Additionally, many colleges operate 'realistic learning environments' (RWE) such as salons or restaurants that are open to staff, students, and members of the public. RWEs help students to develop practical skills and prepare them for the real world. By working in a realistic environment, students can gain hands-on experience and practice applying what they have learned in a way that simulates real-world situations. This means that teaching and learning happen in the context of training in the workplace (Armstrong and Hughes, 2000).

Additionally, a core part of further education in vocational contexts is work experience, also referred to as work-related activity or employability. Guile and Griffiths (2001) argue that work experience provides a unique learning opportunity, especially for young people. They stress that it should be an integral part of education rather than an add-on as it allows students to develop valuable skills and knowledge that are not typically taught in the classroom. They discuss different perspectives on the role of work experience in education. Some view it as a way to prepare students for specific jobs, while others see it as a means of developing more general skills and knowledge. Guile and Griffiths emphasise the importance of reflexivity, or the ability to reflect on one's experiences, as a key aspect of learning through work experience however note the need for more research in the relationship between work experience and learning.

Building on Polanyi's(196) work, educational theorist Michael Eraut (2004) applied the concept of tacit knowledge directly to the contexts of professional and workplace learning. Eraut argued that learning in the workplace often occurs through an "implicit" process of participation, observation, and experience, which contrasts with the more "explicit" and formal learning found in educational institutions. He expanded on the idea that knowledge is often acquired informally through participation in social activities and that much of it is "taken for granted" and thus people are unaware of its influence on their behaviour. Eraut's theory also emphasises the importance of the social context in which learning takes place. He argues that workplace learning is not just an individual process but is also influenced by the culture and norms of the organisation and the relationships between colleagues.

While Eraut's theory emphasises the role of experience and social interaction in learning, arguing that individuals learn through their interactions with others and the environment, Knud Illeris's (2003) theory of workplace learning focuses on the concept of learning in the context of work and how it is shaped by individual and organisational factors. Both theories recognise the importance of practical learning and the acquisition of skills and competencies, but Illeris also includes cognitive and affective learning as important components of workplace learning. Cognitive learning refers to the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, affective learning refers to the development of attitudes, values, and emotions. Illeris argues that all three types of learning are important in the workplace and that individuals must be able to engage in all three to adapt to changing work environments and achieve their full potential.

Engeström (2001) is another key author on workplace learning, sharing the view of Eraut by considering the complex interplay between individuals and their social and cultural contexts. His expansive learning theory is a framework for understanding this, based on the idea that learning is

an expansive process that involves the whole person and their environment, rather than a reductive process that focuses only on isolated skills or knowledge. Like Dewey, Engeström places an emphasis on sensory and practical learning, giving the students or trainees an aesthetic appreciation of the topic or skill through sight, touch, smell etc.

According to Engeström, expansive learning occurs when individuals engage in activities that involve the expansion and transformation of their current cognitive and social structures. This can involve developing new skills, creating new knowledge, or modifying existing frameworks. The theory emphasises the role of social interactions and the importance of context in shaping learning experiences. It also highlights the role of participation and collaboration in learning, as well as the importance of reflection in helping individuals make sense of their experiences and integrate new knowledge into their existing frameworks.

Workplace learning is important in this study's context as the knowledge that FE lecturers have about their subject specialism may often be taken for granted. This may then pose challenges in a teaching environment when explaining something in detail that is second nature to an expert.

2.3.4 How Does Knowledge Transfer Between Industry and Education?

Workplace learning theories make distinctions between academic and vocational knowledge and within some of these approaches are debates that vocational knowledge is tacit and uncodified (see for example Eraut, 2004, Hodern, 2014).

Philosopher and chemist Michael Polanyi, in his 1966 seminal works, introduced the concept of tacit knowledge, famously stating, "we know more than we can tell". Polanyi's theory posits that all human knowledge has a tacit dimension, meaning it is deeply personal and rooted in our actions and experiences. This type of knowledge is not easily articulated or codified; it is a form of "know-how" that is acquired through a process of focused practice and subsidiary awareness. He famously used the example of riding a bicycle: a rider can perform the complex actions necessary to maintain balance, but they would struggle to write down a complete set of instructions that would allow another person to do the same without practice. This is because the knowledge of balance is felt and embodied, not explicitly reasoned.

Polanyi further distinguished between the proximal and distal parts of this knowledge. The proximal is the subsidiary, internal awareness of certain clues or actions (e.g., the slight muscle adjustments and weight shifts while cycling), while the distal is the object of our focal attention (e.g., the destination we are riding towards). We rely on our awareness of the proximal without consciously thinking about it to achieve the distal goal. This framework is highly relevant to vocational education, where a skilled craftsperson relies on a wealth of such unarticulated knowledge. The feel of a saw blade cutting through wood, the subtle sound of an engine in need of repair, or the precise pressure required for a massage are all forms of tacit knowledge that are difficult to put into words.

Tacit knowledge is often contrasted with propositional knowledge, Guile (2011) differentiates between the tacit as 'know-how' and the codified propositional knowledge as 'know that'. Broad (2016) considers these diverse types of knowledge in relation to the subject knowledge of FE teachers and that the idea of 'knowing how' vs 'knowing what' is not always so binary. This slipperiness of knowledge cannot easily be defined. Some knowledge can be codified e.g. course handbooks, learning materials etc, however, workplace practices, customs, approaches, and innovative ideas are difficult for teachers to keep up to date with and to teach. Broad (2016) refers to this flux in knowledge as 'knowledge in motion'.

Guile (2011) offers a view that gives tacit knowledge primacy and recognises that individuals learn diverse types of knowledge in different ways. Broad (2016) outlines that this raises a particular issue

in that if vocational knowledge is tacit and therefore problematic to codify, how is it transported across contexts or brought into the learning environment?

A further implication is that knowledge moving from one context to another is not as simple as it sounds. Within workplace learning theories, the underlying premise is that within the context of a workplace, knowledge is learned through experience, observation and 'doing.' It has a quite different purpose to learning in the FE classroom and is more likely to be learning and training to meet the curriculum goals, targets or overall qualification outcomes.

The knowledge required in the vocational curriculum on the other hand contains some of these aspects that can be codified or written down, but also the more formal academic knowledge required for mastery of the discipline. The learning in these situations brings together both the theory and the practice with the aspiration of achieving a qualification, reaching the next level of study, or being competent to enter the workplace.

This then brings about an imbalance, where the idea of the 'transfer' of vocational knowledge becomes problematic. Relating the abstract nature of 'theory' to the 'real' nature of practice is captured in the term 'theory to practice.' However, this can be a challenge as it may not move as seamlessly as the term implies. This requires what Bernstein (1999), and others define it as 'recontextualisation'. Recontextualisation refers to the process of taking knowledge or information that exists in one context and placing it in a different context or giving it a new meaning or interpretation within that context. Dewey was an advocate of recontextualisation, arguing that education should be the active reconstruction of experience through the process of reflecting on and reframing past experiences.

Evans et al. (2010) established a fresh approach that concentrates on different forms of knowledge and the ways in which these are contextualised and 'recontextualised' in movements between different sites of learning in colleges and workplaces. While their work focuses on nursing professions, it can be applied elsewhere. Their work draws on developments of Bernstein's idea that concepts change as they move from their disciplinary origins and become a part of a curriculum (Bernstein, 1999). They also assert that 'concepts are an integral part of practice, and that practice varies from one sector or workplace to another.' They describe how practitioners seek to understand and evolve their practice as 'chains of recontextualisation.'

Guile and Evans described four distinct kinds of recontextualisation as being significant:

1. Content recontextualisation - putting knowledge to work in the programme design environment
2. Pedagogic recontextualisation - putting knowledge to work in the teaching and facilitating environment
3. Workplace recontextualisation - putting knowledge to work in the workplace environment
4. Learner recontextualisation - what learners make of these processes

The four domains are important in the context of this research and the overarching research question of can occupational culture be taught in the FE classroom. Within the content recontextualisation domain, Evans *et al.,* (2010, p.4) remind us that:

> "What most descriptions of the theory-practice relation fail to acknowledge is that knowledge viewed as content is knowledge that has been 'codified' in accordance with the rules and procedures of, sometimes competing, disciplines, schools of thought and practices."

Evans *et al.* (2010) assert that when curricula are created, knowledge moves from its original context into a learning programme. It goes through a process where a particular group of people will select what information is most important to learn, simplify it, and suggest ways of teaching it.

The implication for the FE sector and vocational teachers here is significant. In his work on horizontal and vertical knowledge structures, Bernstein (1999) outlines that a horizontal discourse is 'likely to be oral, local, context-dependent and specific, tacit, multi-layered, and contradictory across but not within contexts'. He likens it to the taken-for-granted or 'common sense' knowledge. However, a vertical discourse takes the form of a coherent, explicit, and systematically principled structure, hierarchically organised, such as in the sciences or language learning.

Bernstein's approach to knowledge helps to shed light on the difficulties of relating theory to practice in vocational programmes. Codified or vertical knowledge offers more opportunities for recontextualisation as particular elements can be selected and combined in a curriculum structure. Clear criteria can be defined for vertical knowledge; however, horizontal knowledge has fewer opportunities for recontextualisation due to its uncodified and tacit nature.

A last point to consider is that due to the nature of FE, some teachers still practice in their respective industries however some teachers are far removed from where vocational knowledge is developed. In later work, Broad (2019) describes the nature of vocational knowledge which is complex, complicated, and in constant motion and flux. This then provides further challenges around the practicalities of the learning and recontextualisation of new techniques and innovations from workplaces to teaching environments. This is paramount in vocational education where one of the main aims is to prepare students for a career in a specific discipline, they need to have the most up-to-date knowledge and skills to reflect the modern workplace.

2.3.5 *Language and Vocabulary Acquisition*

In vocational further education, language serves as the conduit for understanding technical concepts, communicating effectively, and successfully navigating the workplace. Language acquisition, therefore, is not merely an auxiliary skill but rather a cornerstone of vocational training, intricately linked to occupational identity and workplace culture. The language used in many occupations can be full of specialised terms and jargon, yet plays a significant role in supporting students to access specialised knowledge (Young and Muller, 2013). While initially daunting, students must learn these terms to be able to participate meaningfully in their chosen fields. For instance, a culinary student must be familiar with terms like "julienne" and "braising," while an aspiring construction worker needs to grasp the difference between a "joist" and a "lintel." Without this linguistic foundation, students' understanding remains superficial, hindering their ability to apply knowledge effectively. Eraut (2004) further supports this when discussing informal learning in the workplace. His study highlights the significance of language acquisition in workplace learning, particularly for the development of tacit knowledge and professional expertise.

In the context of Further Education, a variety of pedagogical approaches can facilitate language and vocabulary acquisition. Active learning techniques, such as group discussions, role-playing, and hands-on activities, encourage students to use new vocabulary in context, reinforcing their understanding and retention. Collaborative activities, such as peer teaching and group projects, provide opportunities for students to practice using technical terms with each other, fostering both language development and teamwork skills (Marzano and Pickering, 2005).

Language acquisition is not merely a cognitive process; it is also deeply intertwined with the development of students' professional identity. As students master the language of their chosen field, they are not only gaining knowledge but also constructing a sense of self as a member of that occupational community. Using specific terminology and engaging in professional discourse can foster a sense of belonging, confidence, and competence. Schein's (2014) model of the

manifestations of culture and language is explicitly mentioned once. However, jokes, mottoes, slogans and stories all play a part in communicating occupational culture.

Each vocational sector has its own unique communication style, norms, and expectations. Understanding these nuances is essential for students' successful transition into the workplace. For instance, the direct and assertive communication style common in the construction industry might be inappropriate in the healthcare sector, where empathy and tact are paramount. Guile and Griffiths (2001) explore the relationship between language use and workplace learning, emphasising the role of language in shaping professional identity and facilitating communication within occupational communities. As students learn the vocabulary of their chosen field, they are also internalising its values, norms, and modes of communication. This process fosters a sense of belonging and professional identity, enabling students to see themselves as members of the occupational community.

2.4   What Does All This Mean for Teaching?

The central challenge for vocational FE programmes remains how we can effectively bring together the subject and work-based knowledge, skills, and behaviours in a way that meets the needs and expectations of the students, future employers, and various awarding organisations and professional bodies.

While I have discussed the moving of knowledge from disciplines and workplaces into a curriculum, I will now address how this might move from a curriculum into successful pedagogic strategies. Guile and Evans when discussing recontextualisation in the pedagogic domain, point out that decisions are made about organisation into learning activities, options, and modules, for the purposes of teaching and learning. They add that these decisions are never technical matters; they are influenced heavily by practitioners' assumptions about what constitutes good learning experiences and worthwhile outcomes. Hordern (2021) argues that for content or subject knowledge to be successfully recontextualised and enacted within the curriculum, what is needed is teachers with both subject knowledge and educational expertise.

Lee Shulman's (1987) PCK model (see Figure 1) provides a framework for this which many believe is valuable in understanding and developing teaching practice. The underpinning idea is that teachers will have content/subject knowledge (CK), and they will have pedagogical knowledge (PK) but to bring it all together and teach topics in a way that students will understand requires pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Shulman says that teachers' expertise lies "in the capacity of the teacher to transform the content knowledge he or she possesses into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and backgrounds presented by the students" (1987, p.15). This model is used in a variety of contexts e.g. various professional frameworks (Early Career Framework, ETF Professional Standards), within the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework and supporting research, CAVTL's It's About Work report and its supporting literature review as well as the Education Endowment Foundation's Great Teaching Toolkit.

While the model is useful, it is important to point out that there are no clear definitions of PCK. Additionally, PCK is not static – teachers may make decisions about how to teach a particular topic and may move between the dimensions depending on how well learners respond. A final concern over PCK that is linked to this research, is that PCK seems to favour knowledge that can be expressed i.e. codified knowledge over the knowledge that can be acquired through experience. It could be argued then that the many professional bodies mentioned above, may be more in favour of a model where knowledge is hierarchically sequenced and taught in a structured fashion, over that which is horizontal and acquired through more holistic means.

The idea of teachers being both subject experts and teaching experts simultaneously has already been discussed in the context of identity within this chapter, but it is important to address further within the theme of subject specialist teaching. Subject specialist pedagogy is a term that refers to the specific approaches and strategies that teachers use to teach a particular subject. Subject specialist pedagogy is particularly important in a further education setting because students in these programmes often have a specific career or academic goal in mind, and therefore need to have a deep understanding of the subject matter to succeed in their chosen field. Subject specialist teachers can provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the subject and the skills and knowledge required to apply this understanding in real-world situations.

Lee Shulman developed this further within his 2005 essay *Signature pedagogies in the professions.* He defined signature pedagogies as 'types of teaching that organise the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated for their new professions.' These will typically be distinctive to that profession and uses an example of bedside teaching, in which a senior physician or a resident leads a group of trainees through the daily rounds, involving them in conversation about the diagnosis and management of patients' ailments. Additionally, they will be pervasive and common across courses or organisations. The subject is taught in a way that is faithful to its discipline, for example, law is taught through discussion and debate, sciences through experimental lab work, drama through theatrical production etc. This is key to this research as within an FE setting, vocational programmes are often taught this way using realistic working environments and work-simulated spaces. This then provides early socialisation into the practices and values of a field, potentially shaping the way how the new era of professionals will behave. Shulman argues that such pedagogical signatures can teach us a lot about the personalities, dispositions, and cultures of their fields, a theme that is central to this thesis.

Within their report, commissioned by City & Guilds, Lucas, Spencer, and Claxton (2012) outline that the best vocational education learning is broadly hands-on, practical, experiential, real-world as well as, and often at the same time, something which involves feedback, questioning, application, and reflection and, when required, theoretical models and explanations. They identify several tried and tested teaching methods that help them to define a vocational pedagogy before summarising that teachers need a clear understanding of the variety of learning methods before they can make informed pedagogical decisions. Their work established that there is clearly a need to make closer links to the teaching and learning methods and the desired outcomes to ensure that teaching is most effective.

Harkin (2012) offers a contrasting viewpoint, outlining that there is no one-size-fits-all approach, and it may be damaging to think of vocational pedagogy as a singular concept. Instead, it should be considered as a series of overlapping pedagogies depending on factors such as subject, level, age range, and location of the learning. However, he does agree that there is a "strong consensus that effective teaching methods for vocational learning are based on realistic work problems and scenarios, led by teachers and trainers who have recent and relevant vocational experience" (Harkin, 2012, p.28).

Within the City and Guilds report, Lucas, Spencer, and Claxton draw attention to the recent developments in understanding the cultural aspects of vocational education and the idea of 'craftsmanship.' They cite Sennett (2009) among others to draw attention to the physical aspects and manual aspects of learning while being in the pursuit of excellence. They add that craftsmanship is about the pleasure, pride and patience involved in doing a 'good job.'

Hyland (2019) expands on the physical aspects of learning further, using the term 'embodied learning' to describe various forms of working with the hands. He outlines that the importance of the hand in human development is now widely acknowledged and has broad implications for all forms of learning. So much so that Sennett (2009) devoted a whole chapter to the human hand in his

book *The Craftsman.* While Lucas, Spencer and Claxton have paid attention to techniques such as 'role modelling,' Hyland argues that there is too little attention paid to the need for teachers to embody such roles in transmitting the values of craftwork. Instead, pointing to a disconnect between body and mind.

2.5   Chapter Summary - Can you teach occupational culture?

Many previous studies focus on knowledge formation, types of knowledge and the recontextualisation of knowledge between the workplace and the education setting. There is also an emphasis within the literature on subject specialist pedagogies and vocational pedagogies in general. However, the existing research fails to address in sufficient depth the tacit knowledge and behaviours that are connected to the subject disciplines.

The concept of the 'hidden curriculum' has been discussed within the academic literature since the mid-1970s. The hidden curriculum refers to the unspoken or implicit lessons that students learn. These lessons may be about values, beliefs, and behaviours that are not explicitly part of the formal curriculum, but that students absorb because of their experiences. For example, the hidden curriculum may include the ways that social norms are reinforced through the way that classrooms and education settings are structured and run. It may also include the way that certain subjects are valued or marginalised or the way that students are expected to behave and interact with one another.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the hidden curriculum within medical education and within the discipline of educational philosophy. However, it fails to reach a consensus around a validated method for identifying the components of the hidden curriculum. Furthermore, much of the research is centred on the hidden curriculum to support the learning process and is focused on behaviours etc while in education, and not in preparation for their next stage. This poses significant challenges for educators, policymakers, and all those involved with curriculum design. If they cannot codify or assess it, it makes it difficult to include it in learning programmes.

A solution to this was the apprenticeship reform in 2017. This created a new type of apprenticeship based on 'standards' to replace the traditional 'framework' model. Rather than achieving a competency-based qualification (NVQ for example), the new standards are based on the apprentice being able to demonstrate a specific set of knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs). Apprenticeship standards were created in consultation with employers in their field, much like the T Levels are now. This means that employers have a significant input in curriculum design and through the Skills and Post-16 Education Act (2022), known as the 'Skills Bill', the expectation is for employers to have continuous input into the design and delivery of learning programmes so that the curriculum can continue to meet local and national skills needs.

The KSB model was then reinforced through the implementation of the 2019 Ofsted Education Inspection Framework and later became the common language for classroom-based programmes as well as apprenticeships. The sector is becoming more aware that knowledge and skills alone are not enough for students to be successful in the workplace. By placing an emphasis on behaviours, the relevant stakeholders are being made aware of the wider aspects of what it means to be a practitioner in their respective industries however it does not stretch to the occupational cultures.

The importance of work readiness has been very much debated in the literature in the higher education space. However, in FE, this is still an emerging topic and there is little empirical research to support whether students are work-ready following further education programmes. Teaching occupational culture is important for preparing students for the workplace. It will help them understand the expectations and norms of a particular profession and provide them with the necessary skills to be successful in their chosen field.

This research addresses these topics and demonstrates the breadth of vocational education through working with participants from a variety of industrial backgrounds and subject areas. While there are significant contributions in research on occupational culture, knowledge, and teaching as singular concepts, there is a substantial gap in the literature that brings these ideas together, in particular relating to the education sector.

3. Crafting the Research: Creative Approaches and Methodological Integrity

"You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the one who'll decide where to go…"

Oh, the places you'll go! – Dr Seuss (1990)

This Dr Seuss quote injects light-heartedness into what has been a difficult chapter to write while linking to the importance of personal agency and decision-making in research methodology. Like many, I found this methodology chapter, and the many 'ologies' challenging, and so the quote's message of encouragement resonates. It highlights our ability to think critically and act ("brains...feet in shoes") to navigate research from concept to practice. Ultimately, the quote reminds me that I am in charge of my research journey, responsible for my choices but empowered by knowledge and instincts.

3.1   Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the methodological position for this research and discuss the rationale for the methods that will be used.

This research focuses on what occupational culture means for lecturers and how it can present itself in the curriculum and the classroom environment. Throughout this thesis, the definition of occupational culture has been derived from Trice and Beyer (1984) and is described as:

(1) its substance or the networks of meanings contained in its ideologies, that is the beliefs, values and norms of conduct that allow members of an occupation to make sense of the world in which they work; and

(2) its cultural forms or how an occupation conveys its ideologies to its members, such as rites, rituals, ceremonies, symbols, physical artefacts, stories and myths.

This thesis argues that an understanding of occupational culture is central to effective teaching in vocational further education programmes. By supporting students to understand this concept, they will be better supported and prepared to enter the workplace (if that is their intended destination). Understanding workplace practices and customs should be a significant aspect for policymakers and awarding organisations when designing qualification routes and specifications. This chapter begins with a reminder of the questions that this research is constructed on.

1. How do teachers acquire the pedagogical knowledge and practices associated with their specialist areas?
2. In what ways are workplace practices, customs and occupational cultures taught in the curriculum?
3. How important is subject-specific vocabulary and how is it reinforced within the vocational curriculum?

The research questions have been designed to provide new insights into the experiences and everyday practice of lecturers and so by using open questions, I explore these in detail. (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009) place significant emphasis on defining clear research questions. Their view is that a question that prompts a descriptive answer is far likelier to lead to research success and generate new perspectives.

The research questions recognise that many lecturers have careers in a variety of disciplines before they come to teaching, and so bring with them a wealth of up-to-date knowledge, techniques and skills. However, as discussed in previous chapters, there are a variety of aspects that are more difficult to teach such as the occupational culture of that profession and its associated practices and traditions.

This chapter will establish the theoretical framework and guiding methodological choices for this research. The following discussion situates the research within the broader academic context, clarifies the ontological and epistemological foundations, and justifies the selected research methods. By addressing philosophical assumptions, I enhance transparency and rigour, while acknowledging potential biases and limitations.

3.2   Origins of Knowledge

The philosophical exploration of knowledge has a rich history that spans classical and contemporary perspectives and is still highly relevant today. The fundamental grounding and basis for a great deal of Western thinking in this field was Aristotle (384–322 BC). A student of Plato, he emphasised empirical observation and categorisation. He believed that knowledge comes from sense perception and experience, categorising different types of knowledge that distinguished between practical and theoretical wisdom (Shields, 2023). Aristotle's classifications recognise that knowledge is multifaceted, encompassing not only theoretical understanding but also practical skills and ethical judgment.

He believed that a comprehensive understanding of the world requires both sensory experience and rational reflection, with the ultimate goal of uncovering the essential nature and purpose of things. Understanding Aristotle's take on knowledge is significant for my study as this formed the basis of interpretivist approaches that I will later discuss, with his ideas still strongly influencing how we approach educational research today.

Aristotle's work also became the basis for more modern and contemporary perspectives such as Empiricism (17th–18th centuries, e.g., John Locke,1632-1704, David Hume, 1711-1776) and Kantian Epistemology (Immanuel Kant, 1724–1804). Empiricists argued that knowledge comes from sensory experience. Locke, for example, proposed the 'tabula rasa' (blank slate) theory, suggesting that the mind starts as a blank slate and acquires knowledge through sensory input (Dawes, 2023). Again, referring back to earlier discussions on social identity and occupational culture, these perspectives are important to acknowledge in relation to this research. The question of how occupational culture can be developed through vocational FE teaching is underpinned by the assumption learning and occupational identities can be socially constructed.

The 20th century witnessed the development of analytic philosophy, emphasising logical analysis and linguistic clarity (e.g., Bertrand Russell, 1872-1970, Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1889-1951). Existentialism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics (e.g., Jean-Paul Sartre, 1905-1980, Martin Heidegger, 1889-1976) were other examples of more contemporary approaches that I have drawn upon. When seeking to understand the perspectives and experiences of FE lecturers, a phenomenological approach seeks to analyse and describe the features of human experiences without making assumptions about the human world (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). By stripping away subjective interpretations and biases to reveal the pure, essential structure of the phenomenon, phenomenology focuses on the essential, invariant aspects of an experience (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2008). Within this research, however, I am interpreting the meaning through the data. With that comes aspects of subjectivity that are important to embrace and acknowledge given my position as an insider researcher and sharing lived experiences with participants.

Hermeneutics however is traditionally concerned with understanding the meaning of texts. In more contemporary contexts, it extends to the interpretation of various forms of communication, including oral traditions, visual arts, and cultural practices. Hermeneutics emphasises the idea that both the author and the reader bring their own horizons of understanding to the interpretive process. These horizons are shaped by cultural, historical, and personal factors, influencing how individuals perceive and interpret a text (George, 2021). This makes this approach far more suited to this research given that it is about the dynamic interplay between the researcher, participants, and the data that has been produced and interpreted.

Postmodernists, however, challenged the idea of objective truth, arguing that knowledge is shaped by cultural, historical, and individual perspectives. The work of Michel Foucault (1926-1984), a notable figure associated with postmodern thought has also helped develop my methodological thinking around occupational culture and if or how it can be used within the vocational FE curriculum. Foucault introduced the concept of discourse, which refers to systems of knowledge and language that define and regulate our understanding of the world. Discourses shape how we talk about and perceive various topics, influencing social norms and power dynamics which have relevance to this study.

These perspectives represent just a glimpse of the diverse ways in which philosophers have approached the question of knowledge throughout history and are useful to add context to my study and the research paradigm that later follows. The ongoing discourse in philosophy continues to shape our understanding of knowledge and its foundations however it is important to acknowledge and recognise the origins of knowledge and how it is conceptualised to develop my methodological choices and standpoint.

3.3   Research Philosophy

It is essential for researchers to understand and describe the key ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin their research, how these can influence the methodology and method and ultimately the findings. Understanding this philosophy is important, as social science research can only be meaningfully interpreted when there is clarity about the decisions that were taken that affect the research outcomes (Moon and Blackman, 2014). In essence, the nature of knowledge and reality acts as a foundational framework that guides each aspect of the research. This transparency in articulating ontological and epistemological assumptions is crucial for a coherent and robust research approach.

Morris (1972, in (Carr, 1995), p.87) asks the pertinent question that is still relevant for researchers today:

> "Can those who carry out educational research safely ignore that part of their subject (philosophy) which underlies their own investigations? For if we do, we cannot claim to be educationalists but must be content with being laboratory technicians. If we are merely technicians, we cannot claim to be able to criticise the educational foundations and implications of our own work. This means quite simply that we cannot claim to know what we are doing."

The philosophy that is adopted here is of course influenced by practical considerations, however, the main influence is the researcher's particular view of knowledge and the process by which it is developed (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). The purpose of this chapter is not to argue that one philosophy is better than another, but to provide justification and insight into my standpoint and the decisions that follow as a result of it.

Saunders *et al*. (2009) provide a helpful comparison between the different research philosophies in terms of ontology - 'the nature of reality', epistemology - 'the acceptable knowledge', axiology - 'the

role of values in research', and data collection techniques, as shown in the table below. For the purposes of this thesis, I will discuss and describe the two more commonly adopted positions of positivism and interpretivism as they sit roughly on opposing sides of the spectrum.

Concept	Positivism	Interpretivism	Realism	Pragmatism
Ontology	External, objective and independent of social actors.	Socially constructed, subjective, may change, multiple.	Is objective. Exists independently of human thoughts and beliefs or knowledge of their existence (realist), but is interpreted through social conditioning (critical realist).	External, multiple, views chosen to best enable answering of research question.
Epistemology	Only observable phenomena can provide credible data and facts. Focus on causality and law-like generalisations, reducing phenomena to simplest elements.	Subjective meanings and social phenomena. Focus upon the details of situation, a reality details, subjective meanings motivating actions.	Observable phenomena provide credible data, facts. Insufficient data means inaccuracies in sensations (direct realism). Alternatively, phenomena create sensations which are open to misinterpretation (critical realism). Focus on explaining within a context or contexts.	Either or both observable phenomena and subjective meanings can provide acceptable knowledge dependent upon the research question. Focus on practical applied research, integrating different perspectives to help interpret the data.
Axiology	Research is undertaken in a value-free way, the researcher is independent of the data and maintains an objective stance.	Research is value bound, the researcher is part of what is being researched, cannot be separated and so will be subjective.	Research is value laden; the researcher is biased by world views, cultural experiences and upbringing. These will impact on the research.	Values play a large role in interpreting results, the researcher adopting both objective and subjective points of view.
Data Collection Techniques	Highly structured, large samples, measurement, quantitative, but	Small samples, in-depth investigations, qualitative.	Methods chosen must fit the subject matter, quantitative or qualitative.	Mixed or multiple method designs, quantitative and qualitative.

	can use qualitative.			

3.4   Ontology and Epistemology

The origins of ontology and epistemology date back to Aristotle, through his study of metaphysics and notions of the nature of reality and existence. For Aristotle, metaphysics was the study of nature and ourselves, which was then applied through concepts such as being and non-being, existence and essence, transcendence and immanence (Shields, 2023).

3.4.1 Ontology

Smith, (2003) describes ontology as a branch of philosophy relating to the science of 'what is', of the kinds and structures of objects, properties, events, processes, and relations in every area of reality. To further enhance this definition, it explores questions about what exists, how things exist, and how they relate to each other. Ontology seeks to understand the fundamental categories of existence and the nature of entities that make up the fabric of reality. Questions such as 'ss there a God', the existence of the universe, etc., are classic philosophical problems that are ontologically based as they broadly deal with whether or not something exists (Hofweber, 2023).

Fine (2009) identifies a number of difficulties with this standard quantifiable view. Firstly, around the substantive character of ontological questions. It is usually supposed that the answers to ontological questions are non-trivial. For example, whether numbers exist, or chairs and tables and such like. However, the answers to the corresponding quantificational questions are trivial. Thus, given the evident fact that there is a number greater than 2, it trivially follows that there is a number; and, similarly, given the evident fact that I am sitting on a chair, it trivially follows that there is such a thing as a chair. Secondly, it is usually supposed that ontological questions are philosophical in nature. However, to use the example above, Fine (*ibid*) asks whether the question of if numbers exist could be seen as a matter for mathematicians, or if the existence of chairs and tables can be settled based on everyday observation.

Another challenge around answering questions about what exists and the general features and relations of things is that not only is it unclear what there is, but it's also unclear how to approach these questions, or what the questions even are. Going back again to the chair example, we can find out 'what is' by perceiving the chair with our eyes. However, in the context of numbers, this is a bit more complex. In the first instance, we should see if what we believe can answer the question, and if these beliefs can bring a rational commitment to an answer. If our beliefs can answer an ontological question by providing a rational commitment, then we can commit to the belief that numbers exist as an entity.

3.4.2 Epistemology

Epistemology stems from the philosophical term '*episteme'*, which refers to knowledge and how we understand and acquire knowledge. It is the study of knowledge acquisition and development and in a research sense, it is driven by our ontological beliefs.

Waring (2017) describes it as relating to knowledge, while asking the question 'How can what is assumed to exist be known?' Sol and Heng (2022) summarise a range of definitions and ask further questions such as "What is knowledge?" "What are the sources of our knowledge?" "what do we know?" and "What differentiates knowledge from wisdom and opinion?"

Walter (2017, p.12) outlines that what we regard as knowledge has a strong cultural component and makes links to social identity:

"As with social assumptions, dominant ways of knowing and the dominance of some knowers over others are embedded into our society. Social research is conducted against a background of these dominant ways of knowing."

3.5   Research Paradigms

Within academic research, there are a large number of terms used to describe different philosophical standpoints as demonstrated in Figure 3. All have their purpose in helping to understand a particular research tradition, however, for the purpose of this thesis I will provide an overview of two opposing perspectives (positivism and interpretivism) that guide this research and how this helps shape my understanding of the nature of reality and existence, before ultimately leading to a research methodology and method.

3.5.1 Positivism

At one end of the spectrum, positivism assumes that there is a reality independent of our minds (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Saunders *et al.*, 2009). It is a perspective that lends itself towards the quantitative or objectivist research tradition due to its emphasis on pure data and facts, without being influenced by any human bias. Adopting an extreme positivist position in research entails viewing social entities, like organisations, as real and tangible, similar to physical objects. The focus would be on discovering observable and measurable facts or regularities to establish credibility and meaningfulness in the data (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). The researcher would usually aim to identify causal relationships, enabling the creation of generalisations similar to scientific laws. These rules and laws may then be used to support and explain organisational behaviour or events.

Scott and Usher (1996) describe that the assumptions of a positivist epistemology lead to a research approach that emphasises *determinacy* (that there is a certain truth that can be known), *rationality* (that there can be no contradictory explanations), *impersonality* (the more objective the better), and *prediction* (that the research makes claims to knowledge that can be generalisable, allowing control over future events and phenomena). By thinking of research in this way, a positivist standpoint is that there are logical rules of explanation, independent of the world and research is concerned with facts rather than impressions (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

The methods used in positivist epistemology to understand the natural world are not always transferable to the social world. When researching people, it can be very difficult to control the variables related to the given context. Alharasheh and Pius (2019) argue that positivism has limitations as an approach when used in an educational setting, given the unpredictable nature of human behaviours. Saunders *et al.*, (2009) consider further issues and challenges, for example, statistical tests can be misused leading to misinterpretation within the research. Furthermore, the results of the test as well as its significance are largely dependent on the sample size. They also add that generalisations in the research can lead to ignoring the intention of individuals and their actions may not be fully explored and understood. Kuhn (1970, in Scott and Usher, 1996, p.16) also critiques the focus on an 'objective' world and argues that 'data and observations are theory-led, that theory is paradigm-led, and that paradigms are historically and culturally located'.

Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) identify some key limitations with a positivist approach when researching within the social sciences. Some positivist methods used to help understand the natural world are not always transferable to the social world. For example, there are difficulties in controlling or isolating variables. Saunders *et al.*, (2009) identify further challenges through the adoption of positivism that are relevant to this study such as how generalisations can lead to the ignoring of the intention of individuals and their actions may not be fully understood or explored. Furthermore, its emphasis on the status quo and descriptive findings may pose challenges for researchers seeking in-depth insights into complex issues.

3.5.2 Interpretivism

A positivist would see it possible to gain knowledge of the world through more scientific methods of direct observation and measurement (Waring, 2017). An interpretivist view, however, is that through a focus on narratives, stories and perceptions, new knowledge is developed through a process of interpretation (Waring, 2017; Alharasheh and Pius, 2020). It is complex, rich and socially constructed through culture and language. Developed initially from the work of German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920), the interpretivist perspective emphasises the meanings that individuals give to social interactions (Walter, 2017), that people experience the world in different ways, and that facts and values are closely linked. It considers that humans are different to physical phenomena and for that reason cannot be explored in the same way. Therefore, social science research should be different from the natural. Saunders *et al.*, (2009) outline two core beliefs of interpretivist approaches: a relativist ontology and a subjective epistemology.

Interpretivism is the belief that reality cannot exist without perspective (Pessu, 2019). Interpretivists believe that multiple constructs of realities are influenced by experiences and social interactions (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2008; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). This ontological perspective sits within a more qualitative and subjectivist research approach, rejecting the idea that an objective reality exists. Livesey (2006) adds that subjectivists hold the view that social interaction is based on consciousness, action, and unpredictability. Pessu (2019) concludes that through Livesey's premise, clearer understanding and answers are only achieved through interaction between the researcher and participant (or object under study), as it assumes that humans cannot be divided from their knowledge (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009).

As social scientists, we know that reality is not as static as we might think, as people experience the world in different ways. Walter (2017) gives the example of Australia's census to help illustrate this point. From a mainstream 'Euro-Australian' perspective, questions on household composition, cultural background, and key demographic details seem clear enough. However, when surveying Aboriginal people, the concept of age, place of residence, and household became problematic, compromised by the mainstream Westernised cultural assumptions of the questions. Within this paradigm, realities can exist as multiple, intangible mental constructions where there is no reality beyond subjects. Pessu (2019) adds to this by describing that these socially constructed realities may change, and there may be multiple views or perspectives used when answering the research question.

3.5.3 My Position

While positivism has been influential in various fields, it is often considered less well-suited for qualitative research, which tends to focus on the exploration of subjective experiences, meanings, and social constructions. Positivism places a strong emphasis on objective reality, which can be at odds with the more interpretive and subjective nature of qualitative research. It may oversimplify the richness and complexity of contextual factors that shape human experiences. Additionally, qualitative researchers, especially those influenced by social constructivist perspectives, often explore how individuals and communities collectively construct meaning and negotiate reality. Positivism may not fully embrace the idea that reality is socially constructed. Utilising a positivist approach removes the researcher from the interactive aspect of the research, potentially restricting the flow of expression and dialogue. Interpretivism advocates that it is necessary for the researcher to understand differences between humans, which Saunders *et al.* (2009) outline as being crucial – the researcher has to adopt an empathetic stance as you attempt to enter the social world of the participants and see the world from their point of view.

My research focuses on the viewpoints and experiences of lecturers, making sense of their historical, social and cultural perspectives. This has led me to an interpretivist standpoint which is concerned with the way we interact in society. An interpretivist approach assumes that all human action is

meaningful and has to be interpreted and understood through the context of social practices (Scott and Usher, 1996). Through a focus on narratives, stories and interpretations, interpretivism seeks to provide a more in-depth understanding of the research context. It enables researchers to consider different factors such as behavioural aspects based on the participants' experiences. It is from this standpoint that I can begin to consider how knowledge is constructed as I believe that people make sense of their worlds using conversations with participants but also with those around them.

3.6   Methodological Framework and Justification

As described above, this research explores how occupational culture can influence teaching practices in vocational further education through the voices and experiences of lecturers. Through their responses, I not only provide a description of what they say and produce, but I continue beyond that to suggest insights, concepts, explanations, and other deeper aspects. This offers a more abstract theoretical understanding that adds value to the study.

Research approaches in social sciences generally lend themselves to two basic approaches: deduction and induction. Alvesson and Karreman (2011) outline that most researchers would likely adopt a 'top-down' approach, emphasising the importance of the deduction of theoretical ideas from earlier knowledge, the formulation of knowledge, and the testing of these ideas. These tests would then either confirm and verify these theories or refute them. This structured form of reasoning relies on logical inference, assuming that if the initial premises are true and the logic is valid, then the derived conclusions or predictions are also valid.

Inductivist approaches however work from a 'bottom-up' principle, emphasising the building of theory based on the data that has been collected. This reasoning process involves moving from specific observations to broader generalisations. To arrive at this point, I have been working at a large general further education college for almost 10 years, most of those as a lecturer. Throughout that time, I have also been involved in both quality and curriculum development which has provided me with the opportunity to observe my research topic in great detail before beginning this research.

The research methods have allowed me to collect and interpret data while looking for patterns or commonalities. Inductivist approaches then provide the opportunity to formulate general principles, theories, or hypotheses that can be applied beyond the specific cases studied. Inductivist approaches are beneficial for this research as the emphasis in inductivism is on discovering new insights, relationships, or theories that may not have been anticipated at the outset of the research. This allows for flexibility in the research process, as inductive researchers have the opportunity to continuously refine their theories based on ongoing observations.

Both deductivists and inductivists share a belief in the separation of theory and data, and a trust in the capacity of data to inform the creation of theory. Alvesson and Kärreman (2011) argue that inductivists that claim theory is to be developed through sifting through data, are no different from deductivists who would see theory emerging through verified hypothesising. In this case, data is the central element to research where theory either 'fits' the data, or where theory is emerging from the data.

For this research, I am highlighting the usefulness of the data for theory development through the research construction process. In this research, artefacts are created by participants and serve as the empirical data (digital mood boards), that then act as a resource for developing theoretical ideas "through the active mobilisation and problematisation of existing frameworks" (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011, p.4). This empirical data is then used to encourage and facilitate critical reflection, enhancing the ability to challenge, contemplate and illustrate their views. By using these approaches, there is a dual focus, not just on the data itself, but also on how it is constructed for the benefit of theoretical reasoning (Sutton and Staw, 1995)

3.7   Research Strategy

My research approach provides a framework for selecting and implementing appropriate research methods and techniques. This contributes to the overall rigour of the study, ensuring that the chosen methods are well-suited to answer the research questions.

Reflecting on this chapter so far, the theoretical framework for this research is interpretivist in nature, to explore occupational culture within a vocational further education context. My lecturer participants share their lived experiences from their former occupation, the cultural symbols and traditions that go alongside it, and then provide insights into their teaching practices. As I am interpreting their experiences, this research is subjective in nature and inductive as I am making meaning from their responses.

In selecting a research strategy, I have considered a range of different possibilities to support me in reaching my overall aim of understanding if occupational culture can contribute to vocational further education. I have chosen to discount approaches such as survey research, action research, case studies and grounded theory as I have research questions that I wish to interrogate in detail, with a variety of participants that come from a range of different occupational and cultural backgrounds. Research is a complex activity and a product of many decisions made by both researcher and participant. It is also an activity filled with uncertainty, with several studies linking uncertainty with creativity (Acar, Burnett and Cabra, 2017; Zhou, 2022; Runco, 2023). My research strategies contain elements of ethnography as I am providing a holistic understanding of the culture under investigation, seeking to understand behaviours and beliefs, while uncovering the subjective experiences and perspectives of the people being studied. However, true ethnographic research involves the researcher fully immersing themselves within that culture for extended periods of time.

As this research uses non-traditional approaches, a ready-made or 'off the shelf' methodology (Chamberlain, 2012), which provides a 'pre-prepared package of theory, analytic method and (elements of) research design' (Braun and Clarke, 2021) is challenging to apply. Braun and Clark (2021) argue that there is rarely one ideal method – or methodology – for a research project and that there is no requirement to use an off-the-shelf methodology just because it is the most well-known approach associated with a particular type of qualitative research. However, what is important is that the research strategies and approaches 'fit' the purpose, and that the research questions, theoretical assumptions, and overall design are coherent (Braun and Clarke, 2016).

Levitt *et al.* (2017, pp.9-10) propose a similar concept of 'methodological integrity' to capture when:

> "research designs and procedures (e.g., autoethnography, discursive analysis) support the research goals (i.e., the research problems/questions); respect the researcher's approaches to inquiry (i.e., research traditions sometimes described as world views, paradigms, or philosophical/epistemological assumptions); and are tailored for fundamental characteristics of the subject matter and the investigators."

I wanted to think differently about the research and while qualitative in nature, I chose not to go down a particular and defined route, thinking more broadly about creative and arts-based methods. Arts-based research in the social sciences offers a unique and enriching approach that goes beyond traditional methodologies. One key advantage is its ability to tap into the expressive power of various art forms, such as visual arts, music, drama, or literature, enabling researchers to explore complex social phenomena in innovative ways. This approach often fosters a deeper and more nuanced understanding of individuals' experiences, emotions, and perspectives, providing insights that may be challenging to capture through conventional methods. Arts-based research encourages participant engagement, collaboration, and reflection (Kara, 2020). This then empowers individuals to actively contribute to the research process using their creative approaches.

Creativity is multifaceted, can be ambiguous, challenging to define, and is sometimes conflated with art. In English, the verb 'create' is defined as 'bringing something into existence' or put simply, to make something. Yet many connotations could be off-putting to many. For example, creativity means being innovative, having originality, or doing something truly groundbreaking. However, some commentators take the view that originality is not a requirement for creativity (for example Fryer, 2012), and it could be seen as a way to interpret or solve problems and think differently about things. Kara (2020) comments that nowadays, creativity is more often viewed as a process of creating something from elements that already exist by putting them together in a new way. This was a message that I was keen to develop with my participants who may interpret 'creativity' with an originality or innovation lens, and potentially hamper their efforts if they fear that they are not creative 'enough'.

3.8   Data Collection Methods

The investigation into occupational culture within FE teaching is the focus of this research. Therefore, the research methods employed must align with an interpretivist viewpoint that is well suited to the social sciences. I have already discussed the challenges relating to lecturers' identity, their occupational culture as both industry experts and teaching practitioners and the potential conflicts that may arise. Additionally, I have related the funding and financial pressures on FE colleges to the way in which teachers now have to operate and have limited scope to teach wider aspects of their curriculum. Students are potentially being restricted in the knowledge, skills, and behaviours that they are developing due to the time and funding constraints along with a narrowing curriculum.

The interpretivist nature of this research means that I am comfortable in using multiple methods of primary data collection. Denscombe (2017) adds that qualitative researchers who only complete interviews are at a disadvantage compared to those who use multiple methods of data collection. This provides the researcher with more information to discuss and interpret. This increased breadth can give the research arguments more plausibility, credibility, and authenticity. Silverman (2011) describes this approach as 'quasi-experimental' (p.323), using the example study of Sharples et al. (2003) where children were provided with single-use cameras to use in any way they liked over the course of a weekend. Their analysis showed significant variation by the age of the children, with different age groups taking photographs of similar things. This researcher-provoked type of activity is often supplemented by more conventional kinds of research activity e.g. interviews, mixing the visual with more established qualitative methods (Silverman, 2011).

I have chosen to follow a similar approach by first providing my participants with the means to creatively express themselves to help illustrate their occupational culture. I then followed up with an interview to support the interpretation of the participant-produced artefact and explore lecturers' voices and experiences of occupational culture about their classroom practice. However, as Byrne (2004) points out, this assumes that what is said in interviews can be treated as a direct expression of their experience. Within a positivist tradition, interview data have the potential to give us 'facts', however within constructivism, interviewers and interviewees are co-creating meaning as opposed to accurate depictions of 'facts' (Silverman, 2011). Rapley (2011) concurs with this and outlines that interviews do not give us direct access to 'facts' or to events, nor do they tell us directly about peoples' experiences but instead offer 'representations' of those experiences (Byrne, 2004). This lack of stability of 'facts', 'reality' and 'experiences' points to the way in which Silverman (2011) describes social phenomena dissolving into sets of practices embedded in particular settings. In relation to this research, I considered the way in which interviews would allow me to see how well lecturers can describe their embedded occupational culture in teaching practice if it has become the norm. It was from this position that I then began to consider the third element

of participant observation to provide a different perspective and to see for myself how occupational culture is influencing teaching practice and supporting students to be ready for the workplace.

3.8.1 Creative and Visual Methods

Following a chance meeting with a colleague to discuss my research proposal, I was generously provided with a copy of 'The Value of Visual Exploration' by Roz Hall (2005) where participants in the project were provided with cameras in order to document their lives over a given period. These images were analysed and discussed via participant interviews to provide a broader understanding of their context. As the previous sections have established, this research operates within an interpretivist paradigm, seeking to understand the subjective experiences and perspectives of vocational educators. The idea of a creative methodology appealed to me and I began to read more widely on the different approaches that I could utilise to capture the rich and nuanced nature of occupational culture.   This led to the adoption of a creative and arts-based method, a tradition that has expanded significantly across social science disciplines in recent years. There is a growing body of interdisciplinary scholarship that is incorporating image-based techniques into its research methodology (Mitchell, 2017). Kara (2020) adds that methodological boundaries are expanding across all social science disciplines, over the last ten years or so, the field has developed and expanded as researchers seek effective ways to address increasingly complex questions in social science.

This approach, known as Arts-Based Educational Research (ABER), is not simply about using art in research but about employing artistic forms and processes as a fundamental mode of inquiry. As Elliott Eisner (1981) articulated, ABER offers a way to explore and represent complex human phenomena that may be difficult to capture through traditional linguistic or numerical methods alone. By engaging with aesthetic and expressive forms, researchers can tap into tacit, emotional, and sensory dimensions of experience that often remain unspoken. Barone and Eisner (2012) further elaborated on this, arguing that artistic inquiry can provide unique insights by creating evocative representations that invite readers to feel, not just think, about the research subject.

My initial ideas were for participants to create a collage of photographs. This provided the flexibility of artistic expression, which would allow for the exploration of diverse cultural contexts, making it a valuable tool for this research. A collage is, by its nature, a process of assembling disparate elements into a new whole, where the juxtaposition of images, text, and other media creates a fresh narrative that can reveal deeper meanings and connections.

Collage is a particularly powerful tool for exploring complex and multifaceted concepts like "occupational culture" and "professional identity." By creating these digital artefacts, participants were able to externalise their internal worldviews, beliefs, and values in a non-linear way that transcended the limitations of a purely verbal description. As Vaughan (2005) suggests, the act of selecting and arranging images can unlock tacit knowledge and unconscious associations that might not surface in a structured interview.

This approach is further supported by Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2010), who highlight collage's ability to help participants reflect on their experiences in a holistic and sensory-rich manner. The creative process itself becomes a form of active meaning-making, where the choices of colours, images, and juxtapositions reveal the emotional and cultural weight of their professional experiences. De Rijke (2023) and Culshaw (2019) both build on this, positioning digital and visual methods like collage as critical for eliciting and representing complex lived experiences, particularly those related to identity and social phenomena.

I then began to think more broadly about the topic and types of images, whether they would use their own cameras or access stock photos online. This led me to consider whether participants might like to contribute using other types of digital media, and so I began to research options for different web-based platforms or apps that could facilitate this activity. The choice to have participants create a digital collage using Wakelet was a deliberate methodological decision, rooted in a rich body of literature on the power of collage as a research method.

Kara (2020) describes research using technology as including internet-mediated research, such as research through social media, as well as research supported by other kinds of technology such as mobile devices or apps. She also outlines the importance of technology through the research process for example data analysis software, online survey platforms etc. Technology has an influence on people's creativity, yet the role of technology in the creative process has not yet been fully understood or theorised (Gangadharbatla, 2010). Kara (*ibid*) adds that research using technology is a very fast-moving field, adding many possible new dimensions to the research process. I have chosen to adopt a research strategy that incorporates technology to allow for greater flexibility and to provide participants with the choice to either create their own artefacts from scratch or utilise existing digital media to create their own interpretations and meanings.

In each case, there is the immediate visual artefact, drawing, video, narrative, and audio, which can also include a caption or a narrative that reflects what participants want to say about that particular item. Mitchell (2017) adds that their participation does not have to be limited to 'take a picture', however, the level of participation will depend on participants' time, ability, and level of willingness to be involved. I considered this at length within this research as participants will be busy teaching practitioners with high levels of workload pressures. I also considered timescales for this research to maximise levels of willingness in terms of time and workload pressures for example timing of interviews in relation to exam season etc.

Fiske (1989) adds a further dimension termed 'production texts' when considering visual methodologies - *how* participants engaged in the process describe the project and indeed what they make of the finished artefact. Whether they are producing their own drawings, photographs, videos, or 'reconstructing' existing media into a new piece, the production texts are often elicited during follow-up interviews. Mitchell (2017) describes this as 'looking at looking', where participants can reflect on the part they have played in the process and show levels of engagement. This approach will also help to uncover participants' thought processes when selecting items for their artefact, eliciting further meaning from the data.

3.8.2 Interviews

Interviews are one of the most common research methods used within social sciences, first used in the late 19th century by social policy researchers to understand the problems of the poor (Travers, 2017). This anthropological approach to social research has been widely used as a means to investigate groups or social worlds, obtain life histories, and to see to understand experiences, opinions and ideas (Silverman, 2011; Travers, 2017). The flexibility and ease of availability of recording adds to the appeal of this method, as there are several ways researchers can choose to conduct interview studies. When selecting interviews as a method, it is important for researchers to consider what they want to learn from the research (Mears, 2017) the overarching research question and aims, the research strategy (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009), and the overarching theoretical framework in which the research sits (Travers, 2017). For example, interviews using a structured approach can be quantitative in nature and lean more towards a positivist tradition. In this case, the researcher would ask the same set of questions, in the same way, to multiple respondents. This pre-determined, standardised approach enables the responses to be clearly identified and statistically analysed. While there will be some social interaction in this approach, this will be limited to preliminary explanations, interviewers are encouraged to read the questions

exactly as written and in the same tone to minimise any potential for bias (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009).

Within a qualitative paradigm, however, interviews as a research method tend to be semi-structured, unstructured or in-depth interviews. At the centre of this theoretical framing is the importance of meaning and subjectivity. Instead of using a pre-set list of questions, the interview is guided by a general set of themes (Travers, 2017). Travers (*ibid*) describes the in-depth interview as more of an open-ended conversation between interviewee and interviewer as opposed to a structured question-and-answer process. This approach provides the flexibility to omit questions if required, add supplementary questions to explore the topic further, or express opinions and personality as appropriate. The opportunity to communicate with the object of study provides an advantage to social science researchers over those studying the natural world. Max Weber (1864-1920) helped to popularise the word *verstehen,* meaning 'understanding', or the way in which we can interpret and understand the actions of others. Weber highlighted that we might recognise the actions of others through a shared common culture however there may be complex subjective meanings alongside.

In order to support the idea of a shared common culture, Fontana and Frey (2000) suggest that the interviewer must resolve problems such as deciding how to present themselves. For example, as a student, as a researcher, as a colleague, or simply as a curious learner. They identify the challenge of gaining and maintaining trust, especially if sensitive questions need to be asked. Finally, the importance of establishing rapport with participants is highlighted, i.e. attempting to see the world from their viewpoint while balancing this with being over-empathetic. This added informality can help to put the interviewee at ease however Silverman (2011) also stresses the importance of flexibility, facilitation skills and active listening and the impact that these skills have on the process.

Rapley (2011) further comments on the skills required for interviewing and identifies some key interactional practices required to elicit detailed and comprehensive responses that can lead to rich data, with the key recommendation being 'allow them the time and space to talk' (Byrne, 2004, p.25). In this sense, interviewers do not monopolise the conversation, yet still need to prompt and guide the discussion. For this to be effective, the interviewer must be knowledgeable about the research topic and the organisational or situational context in which the interview is to take place. Saunders *et al*. (2009) suggest conducting a thorough investigation into these aspects in advance of the interview. Within this research, my knowledge of the college, its history and organisational culture helps to demonstrate credibility, assess the accuracy of responses and encourage the interviewee to provide a more detailed account through the discussions.

Saunders *et al*. (2009) make further recommendations relating to the practicalities and logistical aspects of interviews as a research method that researchers should consider. For example, the appropriateness of the location to ease with convenience but also to ensure privacy and comfort. Researchers should also make consideration to the level of information supplied in advance to interviewees. Within this research, I did not have a pre-determined list of questions and so chose not to send a question schedule in advance. However, to promote reliability and validity, I provided participants with a list of themes for discussion to enable them to prepare in advance.

It is important for researchers to consider the types and styles of questioning within interviews. Travers (2017, p.237) provides helpful guidance and advice to 'vary the diet', giving examples of different questions that extend from simply 'open' or 'closed' that aim to elicit different responses. For example, descriptive questions, compare/contrast, opinion, feelings or value questions, reflective questions, hypothetical and 'devil's advocate' questions, and summary or follow-up questions. Mears (2017) describes a variety of situations that can cause challenges for interviewers. For example, if participants are shy or reluctant due to nerves or other unforeseen reasons. They may be providing answers that are too short, too long, or too convoluted and it becomes difficult to

extrapolate meaning. By utilising a range of different questions, the participant has the opportunity to give nuanced answers that not only describe their activities but convey a deeper level of complexity (Travers, 2017).

The purpose of an in-depth interview is to understand participants' explanations and meanings. Effective listening allows for clarification of responses, ensuring accuracy and completeness of data (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). It also demonstrates empathy and respect, creating a supportive environment where interviewees feel valued. Attentive listening facilitates adaptability in questioning strategies, leading to a more fluid and tailored interview process, where the researcher can be 'on the lookout' for signals that provide the opportunity to explore and probe explanations and meanings (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2008).

A final, and perhaps most important point for consideration is that of interviewer conduct. The researcher should take appropriate steps to put the participant at ease and behave in a way that is professional and ethical. Saunders *et al*. (2009) found that during initial discussions, the interviewee may have uncertainties about the process, sharing information, or the exact nature of the information that they are expected to provide. Travers (2017) suggests allowing time for general conversation to help develop an initial relationship. Robson (2002) adds that the interviewer's appearance may affect the perception of the interviewee, potentially having an adverse impact on their credibility or may result in failure to gain confidence. Robson (*ibid*) advises advance research and adopting a similar style of dress to those to be interviewed, or wearing clothing that is generally acceptable for the location where the interview will be taking place. Interviewer behaviour and conduct play a pivotal role in ensuring the integrity and effectiveness of the interview process. It establishes rapport and trust with participants, encouraging them to provide candid and accurate responses (Travers, 2017). Additionally, interviewer behaviour influences the depth of insights obtained, affecting the quality of data collected (Robson, 2002). For example, comments or non-verbal cues such as gestures may indicate bias in your thinking and project a negative response towards the interviewee (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009).

3.8.3 Observations

Rapley (2011) and Silverman (2011) both outline that interviews do not give us facts but only an interpretation of an event or situation. As discussed above, I opted to include a third data collection method to allow me to observe participants in their teaching space. While this is still open to my interpretation, it adds a point of triangulation and can enable me to observe things that might not have been considered within the interviews as they are 'the norm' for the lecturer participants. Participant observation can add considerably to the richness of the data (Saunders *et al*. 2009), as my research questions are concerned with what people do, an obvious way to discover this is to watch them do it.

As with interviewing, there are different ways in which observations can be carried out that can lend themselves to either quantitative or qualitative paradigms. Structured observation involves having a more detached stance in which the researcher's primary concern is quantifying behaviours. This will usually involve how often something happens as opposed to why it might happen. Within management literature, one of the most notable examples of structured observation was conducted by Henry Mintzberg (1973) to provide insights into the real-world practices of managers. Mintzberg conducted his research by shadowing and observing senior managers in different types of organisations, including manufacturing companies, hospitals, banks, and government agencies. He spent considerable time observing managers in their natural work environments, accompanying them to meetings, interacting with subordinates, and observing decision-making processes using a pre-determined coding schedule. Mintzberg's research challenged traditional views of management as a rational and systematic process. Instead, he depicted managerial work as dynamic, complex,

and socially embedded, emphasising the importance of interpersonal relationships, informal networks, and adaptive behaviour.

From a qualitative perspective, however, participant or unstructured observation provides a social anthropological lens, with the opportunity to discover meanings attached to actions. This approach allows researchers to fully immerse themselves in the research setting, gaining an appreciation for the nuances of meaning (Saunders *et al.* 2009). As an employee of the FE college where this research is taking place, I adopted the role of participant observer which presented several opportunities. Brannick and Coughlan (2007) acknowledge some of the arguments within the literature that research is best conducted by outsiders and that insider research can be perceived as not conforming to standards of intellectual rigour. This is because it is argued that insider researchers have a personal involvement and emotional connection in the setting. Brannick and Coughlan (*ibid*) challenge this view, making the point that researchers can benefit from easy access to a research setting and participants. They argue that insider researchers benefit from pre-existing experience and understanding, for example, what everyday life is like in the organisation, how the organisation operates, and any critical events in the organisation's history that might influence participants. Insider researchers in particular those conducting participant observations, will be more able to conduct the research freely, without drawing attention to themselves or creating suspicion.

I was acutely aware that participants or others involved in the study may act differently if they know they are being observed. This is known as 'The Hawthorne Effect'. The Hawthorne effect refers to the phenomenon where individuals modify their behaviour or performance in response to being observed or receiving attention from researchers or supervisors. It is named after the Hawthorne experiments conducted between 1924 and 1932 at the Hawthorne Works plant of the Western Electric Company in Chicago. Originally, the Hawthorne experiments were intended to study the effects of environmental and work-related factors, such as lighting, on productivity. However, researchers observed that regardless of the changes made to the work environment, productivity tended to increase. The Hawthorne effect has since been recognised as a common phenomenon in social science research. It suggests that individuals may alter their behaviour or performance when they know they are being observed, either consciously or unconsciously, leading to inflated results or inaccurate conclusions in research studies (Walter, 2017).

As part of my day-to-day role involves visiting lessons and speaking with lecturers and students, I was ethically comfortable with making it clear who I was and what I was doing, feeling no need to conceal my identity or purpose for being there. Additionally, as I know my participants through working in the same setting, they are familiar with my role and position. They understand that I often visit classes and so this puts them at ease when teaching while discouraging them from changing their behaviours or teaching style.

Saunders *et al.* (2009, p.293) provide a typology of participant observation researcher roles to help illustrate this point:

	Researcher takes part in activity		
Researcher's identity is revealed	Participant as observer	Complete participant	**Researcher's identity is concealed**
	Observer as participant	Complete observer	
	Researcher observes activity		
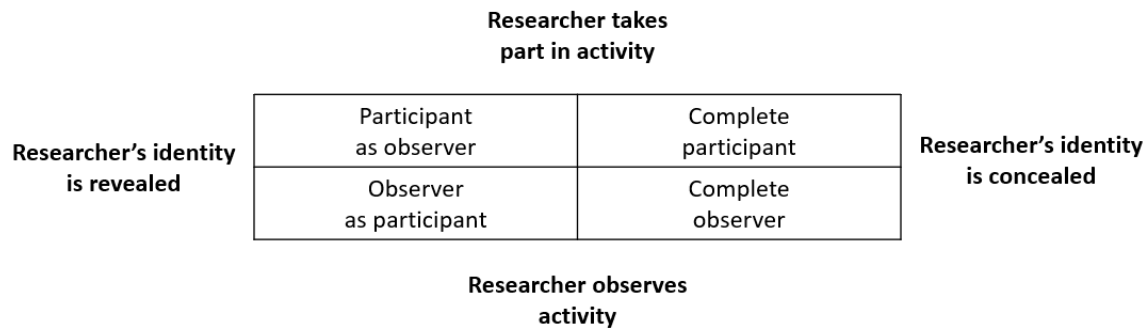
Figure 4: Typology of participant observation researcher roles

Using this framework, I consider myself to be the 'observer as participant'. I observed my lecturer participants but without taking part in the lesson itself. I was a spectator in the session and my identity was clear to all involved. This is advantageous as I focus on my researcher role, concentrating on the task at hand and being able to take notes as things occur.

Delbridge and Kirkpatrick (1994) provide three categories of data that can be generated by participant observation:

Primary observations: Where the researcher makes note of what happened or what was said.

Secondary observations: Statements made by researchers that help to interpret what happened or what was said.

Experiential data: The researcher's perceptions and feelings as they experience the process they are researching.

As part of this study, I kept a diary of these perceptions as well as my primary and secondary data. This supports the trustworthiness of the research that will later be discussed, along with the opportunity to be reflexive.

In terms of data collection, I followed the framework set out by Robson (2002). Firstly, completing a descriptive observation, where l concentrated on observing physical aspects of the setting, the key participants and activities, particular events, their sequence, and the processes and emotions involved (Saunders *et al.* 2009). These descriptions then support the narrative account, to help provide a framework to describe and analyse what is taking place in the setting and how it connects to the research questions, illustrating occupational culture within a vocational classroom.

Participant observation is subject to high levels of ecological validity (Saunders *et al*. 2009), as it involves studying social phenomena in their natural setting. However, as Delbridge and Kirkpatrick (1994) note, we cannot detach ourselves from the social world that we are studying because we are a part of it. Our perceptions and propensity for these to inform what we believe to be 'true' can raise the issue of observer bias. This is something that cannot be avoided, however, my position is that researchers should be aware of it and its threat to reliability, and put in place actions to control it as far as possible. These are described as part of 'trustworthiness', and outlined below.

3.9   Reflexivity and Positionality

Throughout the process, I was conscious of my viewpoints towards the topics that I was researching, as well as my role as a researcher in interpreting and presenting the data. Willis (2017) identifies three key points in relation to the role of the researcher. The first is the impact of the researcher on the research process. I spent many years working in the hospitality industry, and then in the college restaurant developing the skills, knowledge, and work-readiness of aspiring students. Being an

'insider' in the research process brings both a unique and rich knowledge base to the research and a commitment to improve the practice that I am studying (Munn-Giddings, 2017). As the researcher, I am one of the main instruments for gathering and analysing data and therefore it is important to outline how my background and experiences may impact the findings, but to also 'look outside' of a practice that I have been closely involved in for many years. I am also acutely aware of my own influence on this research and the potential for interviewer bias. My own personal beliefs and experiences may affect the data collection and the interpretation of the responses obtained. Jacobson and Mustafa (2019) outline that 'understanding our position, particularly in comparison to the social position of our participants, helps us to better understand the power relations imbued in our research and provides an opportunity to be reflexive about how to address this' (p.2). Additionally, being fully transparent about my position in this research helped me see the data in productive, insightful ways.

The second point that Willis (2017) makes in this regard is the importance of understanding the subject position of the researcher. Throughout this research I have done my best to minimise any impact that could be attributed to power relations or hierarchy by making clear the distinction between me as a researcher and me as a manager. There is a potential for power dynamics to influence participants' responses, or subtly influence the behaviours and interactions I observed. Participants may alter their usual routines or responses in my presence, either consciously or unconsciously, to present a more favourable image or avoid potential negative consequences.

As an insider researcher, I have existing relationships with most participants which provided a strong foundation for trust and openness. However, at times this might present problematic elements for example if a participant should speak negatively of a colleague, or share a personal story. It is important for researchers to carefully balance their ethical and professional position, while acknowledging and reacting to responses. While I have experienced first-hand the challenges that my participants are likely facing and needed to be mindful that my own views and opinions in no way influenced those of my participants. I put my own concerns to the back of my mind to enable me to focus on their experiences. Although slightly covert, this helped me to view myself as someone to record and document the material of others and remain as neutral as possible.

To mitigate aspects of bias and power imbalance, I prioritised transparency by clearly communicating my research goals and expectations to participants, emphasising the importance of their honest responses and usual lesson format. I built trust through regular interactions and open communication, creating a safe space for participants to share their perspectives without fear of judgment or repercussions. Additionally, I engaged in regular self-reflection to identify and address my own biases and assumptions. To further enhance the reliability of my findings, I triangulated data from participant observations with other methods, such as interviews and Wakelet collections. I strictly adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and the well-being of all participants.

Thirdly, Willis (2017) highlights the impact of the research on people's lives and the ways that the research can be used in the wider social and political sphere. In his paper on ethical data collection, Husband (2020) acknowledges the impact of the research process on participants following some feedback that he had received after a research project. The discussions through interviews had prompted participant reflection and directed them to change their practices. Interviews can be used as retrospective accounts to explain or justify a particular phenomenon, however as Charmaz and Bryant (2011) point out, they may also be special social spaces in which participants can reflect on the past and link it to the present and future in new ways. Through my reflective research journal and interview memos, I was able to think critically, and incorporate a careful assessment of the effect that the research may have on the lives of my participants. For example, one participant spoke quite candidly on their experiences of being placed at risk of redundancy and the impact this

had on her personally and her team. I was able to navigate this sensitively, allowing moments of silence and pause to provide her with the time to gather thoughts before moving on.

By applying high levels of scrutiny to each phase of the research process, being reflexive not just on the individual interviews but the whole research approach has acknowledged how power can be constituted and enacted throughout (Silverman, 2011). My reflexivity can therefore be aligned with my methodological standpoint as described earlier in this chapter.

3.10 Establishing Trustworthiness

Traditionally, qualitative research methods have received critique as not being as valid or reliable as traditional scientific methods. It isn't feasible for example to check the quality of research findings by replicating the experiment in the same way as a scientist may (Denscombe, 2017). The very nature of human beings means that it is difficult to replicate a social setting and those within it. Another perspective to consider is that of time. Participants' perspectives may change over time depending on factors such as personal and professional events that take place. Additionally, the close involvement of the researchers in the collection and analysis of the data makes it challenging for another researcher to be able to produce identical data and arrive at the same conclusions (Denscombe, 2017; Varpio et al., 2017; Walter, 2017). It is my position that the research should be approached in a manner that is different from the positivist epistemological and ontological approach that is inherent within the natural sciences. However, there is still a need to ensure that there is a means to judge quality and rigour within research, as well as provide the means of verification.

Nowell *et al.*, (2017) build on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) in establishing trustworthiness in research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refined the concept of trustworthiness by introducing the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as an alternative to the traditional positivist criteria of validity and reliability. By establishing these additional trustworthiness criteria, they were able to provide additional reassurances that findings were worthy of reader attention. I have chosen to mirror them here to demonstrate that this research has been carried out with integrity and is faithful to the research discipline.

3.10.1 Credibility

Credibility in research is the extent to which researchers can demonstrate that their data are accurate and appropriate (Denscombe, 2017), persuasive, plausible, reasonable and convincing (Silverman, 2011). Lincoln and Guba (1985) make the point that qualitative researchers can't prove in any way that they have 'got it right', it is also difficult for a reader to check the extent of the researcher's personal involvement. Therefore, through the description of the steps taken, I can persuade the reader of this research to trust that the research data is reasonably likely to be accurate. Denscombe (2017) argues that there are no guarantees because none are available, however, reassurances are offered that the data has been produced and checked in accordance with good practice.

I have undergone training with the University of Sunderland through online and face-to-face workshops. This has provided me with familiarity with the process and the importance of avoiding bias. While I am the only researcher, I utilised the support of my Director of Studies who is an experienced researcher to review the data and my interpretation of it, to ensure that there is a second pair of eyes and to provide a different perspective.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline that a key element in establishing credibility in qualitative research is to provide participants with items such as interview transcripts and recordings as well as the

finished study. This perspective provides them with the opportunity to note any errors, misrepresentations or misinterpretations in the data. However, as I am conducting thematic analysis within a constructivist paradigm, data analysis is an interpretive process in which the researcher is actively part of constructing the findings and conclusions (Varpio *et al.*, 2017). Findings presented for a wider audience will likely differ from the account of an individual participant, who additionally will not be privy to the responses of other participants. Therefore, I am bringing my theoretical expertise to inform the data interpretation of the whole data set. That said, while I am not actively member-checking, I have offered to provide participants with copies of the completed research as some have asked to read the thesis out of personal interest.

Finally, through the use of three research methods, one being led by the participants, I have provided the opportunity to triangulate the findings and reduce the potential for bias. When using triangulation as a method in the constructivist sense, I am seeking to capture the richness and diversity of perspectives on a phenomenon, as opposed to a positivist perspective which would hone in on one valid representation of it that ideally converges upon 'the truth' (Varpio *et al.*, 2017).

3.10.2 Transferability

Generalisability is a standard term in quantitative research and leans more towards positivist paradigms. It is usually achieved through sampling procedures which provide an added layer of confidence in the representativeness of the sample to make broader inferences (Silverman, 2011). Within a constructivist and qualitative approach, there are inherent issues with generalisability and transferability. For example, this type of enquiry is often positioned within a particular context using participants that have been purposively selected as they have certain characteristics to explore, as opposed to a random sampling basis. Additionally, interviewing as a research method is a time-consuming effort and therefore limits the number of participants that is feasible within the timescale for this research. This means that a small sample size may not be representative of the full population and raises the question of how likely is it that what is found here can also be found elsewhere.

I accept this issue as being relevant and agree with Denscombe (2017) that generalisability needs to be approached in a different way within qualitative research. I am not content with producing something idiosyncratic or particular to my single setting. I am keen to produce something useful to others in the sector and on which some theory can be built to have wider resonance. Qualitative research based on smaller sample sizes requires an alternative perspective to address this concern. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed an alternative as 'transferability', in which the reader uses the information to assess how comparable it is to other instances. They argue that it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that there is sufficient contextual information about the research setting to enable the reader to decide whether research can be transferrable or not. In my case, this phenomenon exists within my setting. It is reasonable to assume that this research within vocational FE teaching could be transferable due to the large number of FE colleges, vocational programmes and teachers within them, however as per Lincoln and Guba's (1985) points, it is up to the reader to make such a transfer.

Denscombe (2017) advises that researchers should demonstrate how the research setting compares with other environments and contexts to aid with transferability. Throughout this process, I have supplied information to enable the reader to infer the relevance and applicability of the findings to apply this to their settings. Shenton (2004, p.70) supports by providing clear guidance on this aspect and suggests that researchers should make the following clear:

a) the number of organisations taking part in the study and where they are based;
b) any restrictions on the type of people who contributed data;

c) the number of participants involved in the fieldwork;
d) the data collection methods that were employed;
e) the number and length of the data collection sessions;
f) the period over which the data was collected.

By providing a thorough and detailed description of the research methods, including the participants, data collection procedures, and analysis techniques, I am supporting readers to understand the context and conditions under which this research was conducted. As an addition to Shenton's (2004) recommendations above, I have also ensured that participants represent a diverse range of backgrounds, perspectives and experiences. This will increase the likelihood that the readers can transfer the findings to different settings. This research uses three methods to gather rich and comprehensive data. A creative and participant-created method, interviews and observations help to capture the complexity and nuance of the phenomenon under study, making the findings more transferable to other situations. Additionally, this triangulation enhances the validity of the research and increases confidence in the transferability of the results. Silverman (2011) asserts that, if the findings obtained with all of these methods correspond and draw similar conclusions, then the validity and transferability of the findings can be established.

In the following chapters, I will provide rich and detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and findings. This allows readers to assess the relevance and applicability of the findings to their contexts. I will also compare the findings of the study with existing literature or similar studies conducted in different contexts. Identifying similarities and differences helps clarify the factors that influence the phenomenon across different settings.

3.10.3 Dependability

Within the positivist paradigm, strategies are employed to demonstrate that the output would be similar if the research were to be repeated in the same context, with the same methods and participants (Shenton, 2004). However, the very nature of social sciences and the qualitative approach taken here means that even if the research was completed again the following week, it would be unlikely to achieve the same results. As an alternative, Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed the term 'dependability'. They emphasise the strong connection between credibility and dependability, suggesting that demonstrating credibility significantly contributes to ensuring dependability in practical research contexts.

Shenton (2004, p.71) states that 'in order to address the dependability issue more directly, the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results'. As per Shenton's (2004) recommendation, I have allocated space within this thesis that describes in detail the research design and its implementation, describing what was planned and executed on a strategic level; the operational detail of data gathering, addressing the minutiae of what was done in the field; reflective appraisal of the project, evaluating the effectiveness of the process of inquiry undertaken. Additionally, the use of a research diary and field notes, including raw data, analysis codes, and decision-making processes allows for transparency and accountability, enabling other researchers to verify the study's dependability.

3.10.4 Confirmability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), confirmability is established when credibility, transferability, and dependability are all achieved. Confirmability, akin to objectivity in qualitative research refers to the degree to which the findings of a study are shaped by the data collected rather than by the biases, perspectives, or preferences of the researcher. It is a key aspect of ensuring the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research. Within quantitative traditions, objectivity is achieved by

minimising the influence of personal biases, preferences, or preconceptions on the research process and findings. However, within this qualitative paradigm, it is still of significant importance to ensure that the findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and references of the researcher (Shenton, 2004).

Once more, the importance of a rich and detailed description of the research methods employed are key to achieving confirmability. Shenton (2004) outlines that this enables the reader to determine how far the data and constructs emerging from it may be accepted. This chapter and the one that follows provide a detailed theoretical 'audit trail' and a reflective commentary that describes the practices, processes and decision-making that I have undertaken. This provides the reader with full transparency and allows for accountability.

Again, reflexivity should be mentioned. Reflecting on the researcher's own biases, assumptions, and perspectives throughout the research process is key to establishing confirmability and building trust in the research. Being aware of these factors helps to mitigate their influence on data interpretation. Shenton (2004) stresses the role of triangulation in promoting confirmability. However, in this context, he is relating to the impact triangulation can have in reducing researcher bias. Throughout this thesis, I have been transparent and honest about my own beliefs that underpin the research, in particular those around the research methods employed and the decisions that have been taken throughout.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Within the educational research community, there are many well-established approaches focused on issues of practice. Given that I am not researching my practice, I am choosing to adopt the term 'close to practice'. The British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018) define this as 'research which focuses on issues defined by practitioners as relevant to their practice, and involves collaboration between people whose main expertise is research, practice, or both.' Within this research, I invite my participants to be co-producers to better understand or improve educational practices. I have used the BERA guidance to ensure that this research is conducted in a way that is responsible and respectful, with the welfare and confidentiality of participants in mind.

Steps have been taken in accordance with the BERA guidelines (2018) to ensure that all participants understand the process in which they are involved, why their participation is necessary and how their data will be used. I was aware of any potential risks in this research and participants were not exposed to any risks greater than those that they may encounter in their normal lifestyle. The research took place on the premises of the college. As an education organisation, there are detailed risk assessments for all areas and activities, in addition to safe working practices guides. All staff have undertaken health and safety training commensurate to their role in the organisation. The participants were asked to use the Wakelet app and did so under the terms and conditions of the app and while following the College's guidance on the use of personal and college devices. Participants were also reminded of the display screen equipment guidance.

I invited participants via email and attached the relevant documentation for them to read in detail and to keep for their records. The email contained a brief summary of the project and its aims and objectives. It also included ethical considerations on a digital form where participants can select a check box to indicate their consent (Appendix 1). Participation was with voluntary informed consent, with the option to withdraw. However, a disclaimer was made that this would be more difficult after the study had been written up and submitted.

Participants were informed that the interviews were to be video-recorded to assist with the analysis. I was careful to ensure that questions would not cause distress to participants as they focused on their previous work history before teaching. However, it is acknowledged that while not likely, it is

not impossible. I ensured that the questions were appropriate and relevant to the study. The college also has a partnership with a well-being organisation where staff can seek counselling and advice if needed.

Recordings and transcripts have been stored securely, used only for this research and destroyed after the report has been published as per the UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) (*Data Protection Act*, 2018), any personal data will not be kept any longer than it is necessary. Participants remain anonymous in the paper and known by a pseudonym. Any names and identifying data are removed from the transcript. Participants were informed that they could request access to recordings, transcripts and field notes relating to their input at any point, as well as the final output.

I took care to ensure that no potentially harmful or sensitive information (if disclosed) appeared either in the final output or in my field notes. Within the interviews, some participants expressed personal and organisational grievances however these did not make it into this thesis and are removed from field notes. Additionally, any negative information discussed during the interviews has not been shared with the affected groups. Where negative views were shared, these mostly related to the impact of financial pressures e.g. staffing, resources and equipment, and the time that is allocated to teach qualifications. Nonetheless, these are not shared elsewhere.

As an insider researcher, I understand the language, context and culture of the participants. I was able to use my own experience as a hospitality professional and then teacher to interpret the viewpoints both from the Wakelet collections and within the interviews. As someone who has worked in the organisation for almost 10 years, this gave me an ethnographic-style approach that is well-suited for exploring hidden reasons behind complex, interrelated, or multifaceted social processes. That said, I have used the BERA (2018) guidelines also help to ensure that the research is conducted with integrity. I have reported findings truthfully and accurately and attempted to avoid biases or conflicts of interest that could compromise the results, the reputation of myself or participants, or that of the organisation.

Within this research, I acknowledge my axiological dimensions and how these might influence the research process and output. Within an interpretivist philosophy, research is value-bound, the researcher is part of what is being researched and so will be subjective (Saunders *et al*. 2009). My choice of philosophical approach reflects my values as a researcher, for example, the use of interviews and observations as opposed to an anonymous survey demonstrates that I value personal interaction with participants. I have strong ethical and moral values that guide my behaviour and decision-making throughout the research process. I act with consideration of honesty, integrity, respect for participants' rights, and adherence to ethical guidelines and codes of conduct. This also includes determining research questions, conducting research ethically, and interpreting findings in a morally responsible manner.

I acknowledge throughout this research that I have strong personal values about the subject of this study and its setting. Personal values are the individual beliefs, preferences, and priorities that influence the researcher's perspectives, attitudes, and decisions. I took great care to regularly reflect on my values and biases to minimise their influence on the research process and findings. This is through thorough and robust reporting of the research plus a research journal to help me understand and analyse my thoughts and feelings towards different situations and responses.

As this research is centred on occupational culture within a vocational FE context, I recognise that this research setting encompasses strong societal norms, ideals, and goals that might shape collective behaviours and attitudes, including my own as an insider researcher. I have closely considered social values when examining vocational teaching and pedagogy. I have also paid attention to cultural values when designing the research, selecting research methods, and interpreting findings within cultural contexts. In this sense, I have a diverse range of participants

from different ethnic backgrounds, different ages, sexes, occupations and social backgrounds. I have been mindful to ensure that I am sensitive to these and minimise any potential biases in the research.

3.12 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have clarified the foundational ontological and epistemological framework of this research, addressing a variety of different elements within this research context. Additionally, I have outlined my methodological decisions and approaches, deliberated various aspects of the research methods employed, and provided insights into my interview reflections and experiences through my reflexive lens. Furthermore, I have summarised pertinent aspects regarding establishing the trustworthiness of the research in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability situated within qualitative social sciences research. Lastly, I have explored ethical considerations, both in adherence to BERA (2018) guidelines and in considering axiological dimensions. This has provided me the opportunity to engage in reflective and ethical research practices, enhance the credibility and validity of the findings, and contribute to the responsible advancement of knowledge within the field of educational research. In the next chapter, I will present an overview of how the research was completed, the methods employed, the experience of the activity for me as a researcher and introduce the findings.

4. Methodological Journey and Discussion of Findings

"It is impossible for a man to learn what he thinks he already knows."

- *Discourses* - Epictetus (approx. 50-135 AD)

This quote by Epictetus, a key figure in Stoic philosophy, captures the importance of humility and openness to new knowledge. I chose to use it here (not just because of my interest in Stoicism) because the core message is that if you believe you already possess all the knowledge on a subject, you'll be closed off to learning anything new. This 'know-it-all' attitude hinders growth and understanding. The quote emphasises the importance of approaching new information with an open mind. This philosophy aligns with the Stoic belief in continuous learning and self-improvement. Here I am acknowledging that I don't have all the answers, I stay receptive to new knowledge and experiences. Epictetus is telling us that true learning requires humility. Admit you don't know everything, and open yourself up to the endless possibilities.

4.1 Introduction

Building upon the methodological framework outlined in Chapter 3, this chapter explores the specific methods employed to conduct the research. This chapter presents data collected from digital mood boards, participant interviews, and observations of teaching practice. The data collection period was 12 months, with phase 1 (Wakelets and interviews) from January 2023-June 2023, and phase 2 (remaining interviews and observations) from September 2023-December 2024. The findings in this chapter represent the holistic experience of further education lecturers, their journey from tradesperson to teacher, and the processes involved in acquiring the pedagogical practices associated with their subject specialism. Here, I detail the research design, sampling strategies, data collection methods, and the analytical techniques utilised. Additionally, a preliminary overview of the key findings is presented, providing a roadmap for the in-depth discussion and analysis that will follow in Chapter 5.

As discussed already within Chapters 1 and 2, central to this thesis are questions of how an understanding of occupational culture can enhance the learning environment, and if a better understanding of it can contribute to the work-readiness of students in a vocational setting.

Trice and Beyer (1993, p.64) offer the following explanation of the importance of occupational culture:

"The occupational culture...provides its members with a set of values, beliefs, and role models that shape their work behaviour, their relationships with colleagues and clients, and their sense of professional identity".

Here, Trice and Beyer are highlighting the significant influence occupational cultures have on how individuals approach their work and interact with others. In the context of learning, for Trice and Beyer, Dewey (1916) and Vygotsky (1896-1834) before him, students actively construct their own knowledge based on their experiences. Within an FE context, where much of the learning takes place in practical settings, workplace learning approaches provide students with opportunities to connect the theoretical concepts they're learning to real-world problems and situations faced in those professions.

Within Chapter 2, through the work of Bernstein (1999), Guile and Evans (2010) and Broad (2019), we are reminded that the idea of translating 'theory to practice' might be more challenging than it appears, as it may not move as seamlessly as the term implies. Bernstein's theory of knowledge structures sheds light on the challenges of integrating theory and practice in vocational education. While codified (vertical) knowledge allows for easier recontextualisation – its clear structure and defined criteria facilitate selection and integration into curriculum design, horizontal knowledge presents a greater obstacle. Its uncodified and tacit nature makes it more difficult to translate directly into practical learning experiences.

Additionally, Broad (2019) highlights the ever-evolving nature of vocational knowledge, which presents a challenge for educators. This complexity makes it difficult to translate new workplace techniques and innovations into effective teaching practices. In vocational education, where preparing students for current workplaces is crucial, this gap between cutting-edge skills and classroom instruction can be particularly problematic.

I have chosen to structure this chapter in line with the research questions and the identified themes will be plotted against them in a logical format. This will aid with the analysis that will be presented in the next chapter.

1. How do teachers acquire the pedagogical knowledge and practices associated with their specialist areas?
2. In what ways are workplace practices, customs and occupational cultures taught in the curriculum?
3. How important is subject-specific vocabulary and how is it reinforced within the vocational curriculum?

What follows illustrates the diverse approaches that vocational further education lecturers have employed to develop their teaching practices, and how these lecturers promote occupational culture and integrate technical vocabulary, ultimately preparing their students for the realities and demands of their future careers. In the next section of this chapter, I have chosen to include a detailed account of the context of the college and its participants. This is for trustworthiness. By providing this thick description, I am further contributing to the credibility and transferability of the research.

4.2   The College

The setting for this study is a large and diverse General Further Education (FE) college in Port City (pseudonym used), South West England. Catering to a wide range of ages, the college educates and trains over 10,000 students, from teenagers as young as 14 to octogenarians. This diverse student body is spread across five main city centre locations and two residential facilities focused on independent living.

Port City itself holds the title of the largest city in the South West of England and is recognised as one of the UK's core cities experiencing the fastest growth. This economic boom is partly attributed to the West of England Combined Authority (WECA), a collaborative governing body that allows multiple local councils to work together and make strategic decisions for the entire region.

Despite boasting a relatively young age profile compared to the national average, with higher proportions of people aged 16-24 years, from April 21 to March 22, 3.4% of people in the city were unemployed. Port City also has a significant portion of the population (4.7%) lacking formal qualifications. In the same period, 56.5% of residents held a level 4 or above qualification (Office for National Statistics, 2021)

At least 91 languages are spoken in Port City, with 15% of people who live in the city being born outside of the UK, and coming from more than 50 different countries. 9% of people do not speak

English as their main language and of these 6,089 (1.5% of all people) cannot speak English or cannot speak English very well. Nearly 30% of Bristol's pupils are disadvantaged in some way, with 17% of Port City's pupils receiving SEN support or having an EHCP (Office for National Statistics, 2021).

Skills gaps exist in certain sectors, and some communities face barriers to opportunity. Issues like low wages, insecure work, and limited career progression are particularly prevalent for part-time workers. The pandemic's impact has further exacerbated these problems, with a decrease in older workers returning to the workforce and continued difficulties for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities to gain work experience. Apprenticeship programmes, a key source of talent development, see low participation rates, particularly in certain industries. Additionally, geographical inequalities in health and well-being plague the region, with pockets of deprivation existing alongside areas of greater affluence (Business West, 2023).

The college itself reflects the rich diversity of Port City's population. With students from over 60 different language backgrounds, it has become the largest provider of both Special Educational Needs Support (SEND) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programmes within the city. The college demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting those furthest from the labour market, offering shorter, work-focused programmes for adults through a subsidiary company.

Port City is a city of contrasts. A thriving economy and a highly skilled workforce coexist alongside significant pockets of deprivation. The college plays a crucial role in supporting the city's diverse population and addressing the city's ongoing challenges. One way they are doing this is through the LSIP (local skills improvement plan).

Building upon previous initiatives like the Skills Advisory Panel Report and the Employment and Skills Plan, the LSIP is a comprehensive strategy to bridge the skills gap and empower the West of England workforce (Business West, 2023). It aims to bring together employers, training providers, and other stakeholders to create a unified approach. By working together, these groups can ensure all parties are aligned and working towards the same objectives.

The college is working collaboratively with the West of England Combined Authority by focusing on several key employment areas where there are skills gaps. These include growth sectors such as advanced manufacturing, construction (with a focus on green building), health and life sciences, high-tech industries, retail, the rural food economy, social care, creative industries, and the visitor economy. Numeracy and digital skills are also identified as particular areas for improvement within the LSIP, which is hardly surprising given the demographics and disadvantages in Port City and beyond.

At the college, the large majority of students study at Entry Level to Level 2. While the presence of increased numbers of lower-level students might seem concerning, it's important to consider the context of the area. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds often enter FE college with lower or no qualifications due to factors like limited access to resources or support in earlier education. This dictates enrolment in lower-level programmes to build a foundation before progressing to higher levels. These programmes can be a vital stepping stone for students to build skills, gain qualifications, and improve their future employment prospects. Additionally, the college prioritises programmes offering practical skills relevant to the local job market for example in the Health and Care, and Construction sectors where there is high demand.

GFE/Specialist Colleges

SW GFE/Specialist Colleges
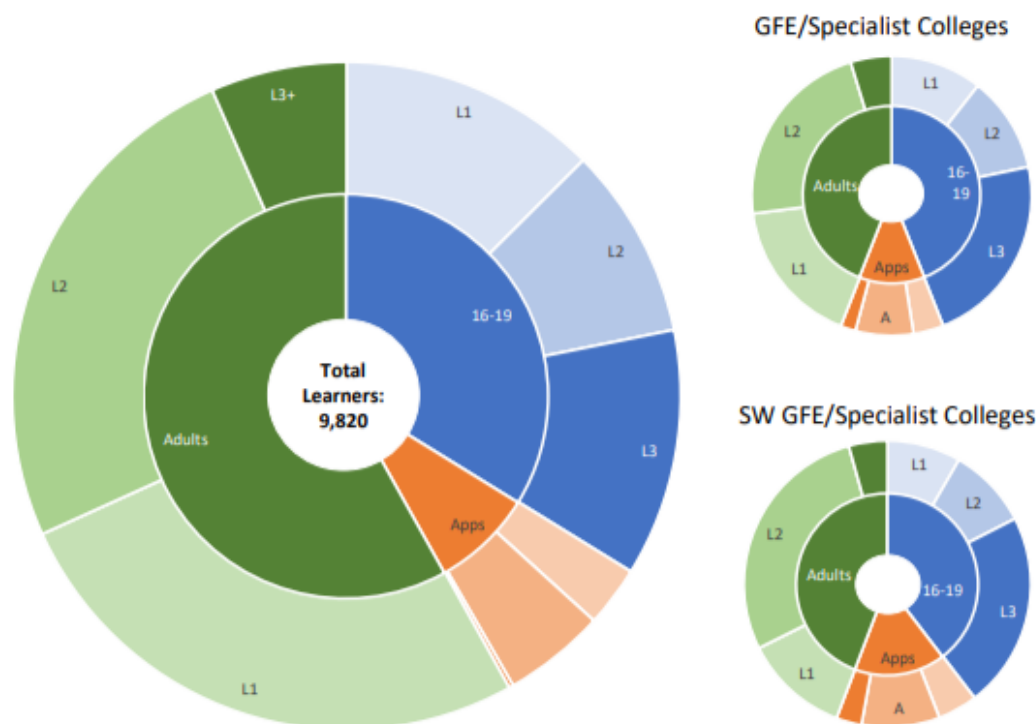
See Key Below

		Learners	% College	% GFE/SC	% SW GFE/SC
	16-19 Funded	**3,320**	**34%**	**44%**	**40%**
	Level 1 or below	1,230	13%	11%	8%
	Level 2	910	9%	11%	9%
	Level 3	1,180	12%	22%	22%
	Apprenticeships	**800**	**8%**	**12%**	**16%**
	Intermediate	290	3%	3%	4%
	Advanced	490	5%	7%	9%
	Higher	20	0%	2%	3%
	Adults (Adult Skills & Loans)	**5,710**	**58%**	**44%**	**44%**
	Level 1 or below	2,590	26%	17%	12%
	Level 2	2,480	25%	22%	28%
	Level 3+	650	7%	5%	4%
	Total	**9,820**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Figure 5: Student profile of Port City College vs other GFE and South West GFE

(MiDES, 2024)

4.3   Participants

Data were gathered from five vocational FE lecturers who work at Port City College. I am currently employed by the college and have full written permission from the Senior Leadership Team to conduct this research. I chose to use my own organisation as the basis for this work as I have easy access to internal data and information which saves time and resources that may be required if I were to gather data from external sources. I have a familiarity with the organisation and an intimate understanding of the culture, practices, and policies of the college. This has helped me design and implement a research method that is relevant and appropriate. However, this does pose a risk in terms of bias, objectivity, and subsequent ethical concerns. To mitigate some of this risk, I do not directly work with, or line manage any of the participants. I have upheld the highest standards of

ethical conduct throughout and have ensured that the research has been closely supervised by my University of Sunderland Director of Studies.

I have chosen to use a purposive sample for this research. Tranter (2017) defines this as where the sample is selected based on what we know about the target population and the purpose of the study. As I am studying a very specific topic, the sample needs to be carefully selected to ensure that the participants have the necessary experience, expertise, or knowledge to provide useful insights. I have deliberately chosen individuals that I considered to be representative of the population, based on certain characteristics or traits. By being transparent about my selection criteria, I am reducing sampling bias by ensuring a broad range of diverse perspectives are represented in the sample. The goal of this qualitative research is not to be generalisable or necessarily replicable across contexts, due to the very nature of understanding participants' experiences as individuals. However, by providing rich descriptions of the sample characteristics and contexts, I can also enhance the applicability of the results to broader contexts.

The chosen sample aligns with the research objectives and questions and consisted of five lecturers from a range of different vocational backgrounds, with a variety of length of service and experience in teaching. I sought out lecturers with subject specialisms that were deemed to have strong occupational cultures through my literature review, and where there was sufficient published work to support triangulating findings with other sources of data or theoretical frameworks.

I developed transparent criteria for the selection of participants to support the reporting and reflexivity in acknowledging potential biases, further developing the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

The criteria for selecting participants were as follows:

1. Must be teaching in a vocational area related to their previous occupation. Even though some teachers have vocational backgrounds and retrained in a different specialism (e.g. English or maths), I wanted teachers to have knowledge and experience of teaching within their specialism so they can relate it to their former industry.
2. Must have at least 12 months service. I purposefully included one participant who has just completed 12 months of teaching as I felt it was important to explore the experiences of someone 'fresh' from the industry. However, I did not want someone so new that they did not fully understand the practices and procedures of teaching and the nuances of their curriculum.

To introduce the participants and to begin to understand their backgrounds, I first asked their reasons for choosing to teach and their inspirations varied, ranging from unexpected opportunities to long-held aspirations. These motivations highlight the complex and personal nature of career transitions into teaching and the various factors that influence individuals' decisions to pursue this path. Mutually agreed pseudonyms have been used for this thesis. Going forward, they are identified by their initials and subject.

SA - Engineering:

White British male, late 40's. SA has been teaching for approximately fifteen years. His entry into teaching was somewhat serendipitous, stemming from his prior experience in the military and civilian manufacturing industry. He joined the Royal Air Force as a teen, before leaving in his early 30's and finding civilian engineering work. He was approached to help design an apprenticeship programme, which led to a teaching position. During which he completed a Cert. Ed alongside working full time. His primary motivation seemed to be a desire to share his knowledge and

expertise with the next generation of engineers. He also expressed a sense of duty and responsibility to prepare students for the realities of the engineering and aviation industries.

SDB - (Joinery):

White British male, mid 30's. SDB had always considered teaching as a long-term career path. He had even taken a level 3 teaching course years earlier but didn't pursue it due to family commitments. The opportunity to teach joinery presented itself as a part-time role, allowing him to transition smoothly from his previous employment. His motivation seemed to be a combination of a passion for the craft and a desire to share his knowledge and skills with others. He also mentioned the financial stability and work-life balance that teaching offered compared to running his own joinery workshop. SDB was formerly a student at the college, speaking eloquently about his inspirational teachers, one of which he is still working with. He worked as a joiner with the same employer for thirteen years and has been teaching now for just under two years. He has also just completed a level 5 Diploma in Education and Training.

ZK - Beauty Therapy:

White British female, late 30's**.** ZK's inspiration for teaching stemmed from a positive experience with a passionate and dedicated tutor during her own college years. This tutor's enthusiasm for the beauty industry and her commitment to student success left a lasting impression on ZK, sparking her desire to teach. She also saw teaching as an opportunity to continue her involvement in the industry while also sharing her knowledge and passion with others. After leaving college, she worked for twelve years in a variety of SPAs and salons, some within luxurious hotels as a multi-skilled beauty therapist, however, her passion is for holistic and therapeutic treatments. She has been teaching for just over ten years and holds both a level 3 and 5 teaching qualification (PTLLS and DTLLS) and various assessing and quality assurance certifications.

RF - Catering:

Indian male, early 40's. RF's journey into teaching was gradual and organic. He started by assisting his head chef with demonstrations at local schools and colleges, which eventually led to a part-time teaching position. His motivation seemed to be rooted in a desire to give back to the profession and help shape the next generation of chefs. He also appreciated the opportunity to stay connected to the industry and keep his skills current through teaching. RF was fortunate to experience a varied international career as a chef, before moving to the UK where he worked in numerous fine dining establishments. He has been teaching for almost twelve years and completed the level 5 Diploma in Education and Training in his third year of teaching.

IS - IT and Computing:

White British male, mid 30's. This participant completed a Wakelet collection but then opted to withdraw from the research due to personal reasons. His Wakelet collection provided useful and important insights into the Computing and IT profession so while I was not able to interview or observe him, I sought permission to include it in my research which was approved in writing.

Following an invitation to participate, I provided my participants with an information sheet and digital consent form via Microsoft Forms before commencing the research. This included all recommended information as per BERA (2018) guidelines such as how their information was going to be used, the right to withdraw, how their data would be protected, anonymity and so forth. It was also shared and approved by the University of Sunderland's Ethics Committee

4.4   Methods

After researching a variety of digital mood board apps and websites, I selected 'Wakelet' as the most appropriate. It is a digital curation platform used primarily for educational purposes that is owned by Microsoft. It was selected for this project as our organisation has a Microsoft for Education license. Therefore, there was no cost involved and it uses existing college/Office 365 log-in to access the platform. No additional accounts or security protocols were required other than following college policies on acceptable use, GDPR and other digital-related policies. The platform has been fully vetted and participants were provided with guidance on how to keep their collection private. Additionally, for flexibility, it can be accessed via a web browser or a mobile app. First, upon accepting the invitation to participate, participants were sent an instructional guide (Appendix 2) to access the Wakelet platform with suggestions for the types of media or topics they might like to include in their collection. Participants can add any form of digital media to their Wakelet space including video links, images, free text, links to social media posts, or if they have the app on their phone they can take their own photos, videos or voice notes.

I asked my participants to create a collection of at least 10 items relating to their vocational occupation or subject specialism that could include the following (not an exhaustive list but just for inspiration):

- Where does the work take place?
- Who does the work?
- Any uniform or specialist clothing
- Any specialist tools or equipment used
- Language and technical vocabulary (use free text to include some)
- Are there any traditions in the line of work (especially if it is craft-based)?
- Any sort of rituals e.g. ways of greeting each other, routines or occasions
- Any celebrities or heroes/role models
- What are the values held by people who work in your industry?

This list was informed by Schein's (2014) manifestations of culture that were discussed in Chapter 2 and would help gain a clear sense of that occupational culture through a multi-modal representation. Silverman (2011) notes that much of the history of visual research is associated with artefacts such as photographs. He comments on the early interest in visual representation however this waned as written and numerical analysis became the dominant mode of sociological analysis, with figures and charts becoming the visual centrepieces.   Within anthropological disciplines, Bateson and Mead's (1942) study of Balinese culture juxtaposed both text and photographs in such a way that one enhances the meaning of the other, encouraging the reader to see and read the story simultaneously.

The digital collage activity served as a researcher-provoked method that enabled participants to visually express their occupational cultures. This approach not only facilitated the collection of rich, multi-modal data but also empowered participants to be co-creators of meaning. The collages then became the focal point for subsequent semi-structured interviews, allowing for a deeper exploration of the ideas and associations contained within each visual narrative. This intentional blend of creative and conventional qualitative methods aligns perfectly with the research's interpretivist paradigm, ensuring a comprehensive and ethically-grounded inquiry into the heart of vocational education.

I reviewed their Wakelet collection in advance of the interview, then used it as a focal point for the discussions as well as additional questions to capture any areas that were missing or less detailed. Like Bateson and Meads' work discussed above, Mason and Davies (2009) used photographs for their 'Living Resemblances' project. However, in their research, they asked to see any photographs

around the home that might be relevant so that they could use them to elicit or evoke reflection on resemblances. They found that looking at photographs with their interviewees helped to establish the emotional significance of the resemblance and the connection expressed between people. This is something I was keen to incorporate in this research and wanted to use my participant's artistic creations as a focal point for the follow-up interviews to not only view them but to help affirm and construct meaning to their verbal responses.

The 45-minute-1-hour interviews were carried out online using Microsoft Teams and recorded with participants' permission. An outline schedule of interview questions can be found in Appendix 3. This was chosen as a preferred method due to participants being based on different campuses across the city. Additionally, the video recording would enable me to look back and review any non-verbal aspects of the interview. As noted in several qualitative research texts, non-verbal cues are important to acknowledge to understand participants' attitudes and emotions. Cues such as body language and tone of voice provide additional layers of meaning which may help uncover implicit information (Byrne, 2004; Silverman, 2011; Travers, 2017). Integrating non-verbal aspects into the analysis facilitates triangulation and sensitivity, and leads to a more nuanced understanding of the findings.

By using this method, I was able to capture brief field notes and memos relating to the conversation that I could later match up to the transcript. Teams provide a downloadable transcript which makes analysis easier as it also contains timestamps. Following the interviews, I was able to review the transcript alongside the video and check for accuracy, for example where some words were changed due to an accent or background noise.

Through the use of qualitative methods, I acknowledged the specific need for the active engagement of the researcher. Throughout this project, I kept a reflective journal that acted as a centralised repository for documenting all aspects of the research process, including ideas, observations, methods, decisions, and reflections. It helped me stay organised, fostered reflection and problem-solving, helped to maintain rigour and transparency, and promoted personal and professional development by encouraging self-awareness and continuous improvement. Following each interview, I wrote a short reflective memo. Willis (2017) advises that memos help to improve interview techniques by reflecting on which questions worked best, the emotional impact of the interviews, and the role of the researcher in facilitating the research process. By doing this, I was able to consider how I was asking the questions, review timings, and also the practicalities of the interview, for example, having two screens so that I could screen share the Wakelet collections as a centre point for the discussion while still being able to see my interviewee.

To enhance the robustness of this study, I incorporated a third data collection method: classroom observation of the lecturer participants. While acknowledging the potential for subjective interpretation inherent in any observational approach, this method offers a valuable tool for triangulation, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Classroom observation has the additional advantage of potentially revealing aspects of the lecturers' pedagogical practices that may not be readily apparent through interview data alone. Interview responses, by their nature, can be influenced by participants' self-perception and may not always capture the nuanced realities of classroom practice.

I worked with participants to agree on the most appropriate time and group for the observation to take place as I felt it was important for it to be on their terms. As an employee of the college, I am aware that the college has a chequered past with lesson observations and I did not want participants to feel that they were being judged in any way. For each observation, I followed the guidance and recommendations from my wide range of reading and considerations in Chapter 3 (primarily Robson, 2002 and Saunders et. al 2009). I joined the groups at the agreed time, introduced myself to the

students, explained the purpose of my attendance and research, and positioned myself in an unobtrusive space where I could hear and see the activities taking place.

Within my research notebook, I had a page of prompts taken from Schein's (2014) manifestations of culture as a guide. I noted down a narrative and chronological account of the session including notes about the surrounding environment. I also made notes in the margin for any follow-up questions or further prompts to consider. For example, in my first observation, I noted the question "Has this lesson been planned specifically to meet my objectives?" as the session was around professionalism in the workplace. I considered how this may link with the legacy of graded lesson observations at the college and how it was commonplace for teachers to teach in a way that they thought an observer would expect to 'pass the test'. This was then followed up with a question from the teacher around if that was what I needed and "Was that ok?" as if she felt that she was being judged. I used this experience to refine my approach for the remaining observations to ensure that the lesson I observed was as naturally occurring as possible and reassured participants of my position as an objective researcher. I also reflected on my positionality through my research journal, ensuring that I was meeting the standards I had set for myself. I do not believe that this renders my data unusable as the Wakelet and interview supported the observation however I feel it is important to acknowledge.

4.5   Data Analysis

Once each artefact or data item was collected, they were organised into subsequent data sets and systematically collated and organised as a whole data 'corpus' (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was applied to identify, analyse, and report patterns (themes) within it. Thematic analysis is the most suitable method for this study because its characteristics align well with my constructivist perspective, allowing me to craft responses that effectively address the research questions.

Thematic analysis involves systematically coding data to identify recurring themes, organising those themes into meaningful categories, and interpreting the underlying meanings or patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2021). I intended to utilise thematic analysis as an inductive approach through the identification and interpretation of themes, allowing me to gain insights into participants' experiences, perspectives, and perceptions.

I was drawn to the work of Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021) as key scholars in this field due to the practicality of their approach. Through the theoretical work of qualitative enquiry, they highlight the importance of theory *as* a practice. By analysing data, we are *doing* and also making our meaning and assumptions. In more recent work (see Braun and Clarke, 2019), they draw further attention to reflexivity, encouraging researchers and those undertaking thematic analysis to regularly reflect on their assumptions and interpretations.

The flexibility of thematic analysis over more rigid approaches such as content analysis (which focuses on the explicit content of the text and minimises researcher bias or interpretation) provides a structured approach to analyse qualitative data and generate rich, descriptive findings using my interpretations and reflexivity.

Throughout the research process, I considered other means of analysis such as discourse and conversational analysis to support the analysis of the interview aspect of the study. Discourse analysis and conversation analysis focus on underlying features of communication however I discounted these as I wanted to have a holistic approach to data analysis that encompasses the multi-modal approach. I also considered phenomenological analysis which emphasises participants' interpretations of their lived experiences. Unlike thematic analysis, which is not tied to a specific epistemology and thus offers flexibility across paradigms such as constructivism, phenomenological

analysis is rooted in a phenomenological epistemology, imposing theoretical boundaries (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis is widely used, yet Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight that there is no clear agreement on what it is or how you do it. They suggest approaches to managing data sets to establish particular themes. For example, in this research, I could analyse either all Wakelet collections together or each participant's Wakelet alongside their interview data. Or, I could look for specific themes or ideas across all of the data items in the *corpus.* I wanted to look at the data from a variety of different perspectives and so I combined the two approaches to produce the data set.

The thematic analysis employed in this study follows an inductive approach, where themes are derived directly from the data itself rather than being based on pre-existing concepts, which would constitute a deductive approach. Boyatzis (1988) distinguishes between themes that are directly observable in the data (manifest level) and those that represent underlying or interconnected features (latent level). In this study, the thematic analysis primarily focuses on identifying themes that reflect underlying patterns and connections within the data, characterising it predominantly as a latent-level analysis.

Braun and Clarke (2006) propose a systematic approach to thematic analysis in the absence of alternate clear guidance, emphasising flexibility and rigour in analysing qualitative data. Their key ideas include:

Familiarisation: Researchers immerse themselves in the data to become familiar with the content, identify patterns, and gain an understanding of the context.

Generating Initial Codes: Researchers systematically code data by identifying and labelling meaningful segments relevant to the research question or topic of interest.

Searching for Themes: Codes are grouped into potential themes based on patterns or similarities identified across the data. Themes represent patterns of meaning or significance within the dataset.

Reviewing Themes: Researchers review and refine identified themes, ensuring they accurately capture the essence of the data and are coherent and distinctive.

Defining and Naming Themes: Each theme is defined and named to reflect its content and significance. Themes should be clear, concise, and meaningful in capturing the essence of the data.

Writing Up: The final step involves integrating the themes into a coherent narrative, supported by illustrative examples from the data. Researchers provide a rich, detailed account of the findings, demonstrating how the themes address the research question and contribute to understanding the phenomenon under investigation.

I followed Braun and Clarke's framework above to support the data analysis and read through visual data, observation notes and interview transcripts in detail, adding my handwritten comments or questions in the margins or on the documents. Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to this as open coding, where salient ideas or categories are identified or labelled. This enabled me to capture any initial items of relevance about the research questions that would later become themes, constituting "larger patterns of meaning, underpinned by a central organising concept" (Clarke and Braun, 2017, p.297). I identified a specific data pattern as a theme based on my assessment, considering both its frequency in the data and its relevance to the research questions. However, just because a potential theme appeared more frequently in the data, it did not necessarily mean it was more important, as Braun and Clarke (2006, p.10) warn "more instances do not necessarily mean the theme itself is more crucial". I followed the guidance of Braun and Clarke (2006, p.10) in reference to assigning a level of significance to a theme: the 'keyness' of a theme is not necessarily dependent on

quantifiable measures – but in terms of whether it captures something important about the overall research question.

Through reviewing the Wakelet collections and repeated readings of the transcriptions, I started to identify themes through the codes. Initially, I used colours (via a highlighter tool in a Word document) to mark comments in the transcripts and pull key aspects into another document (see an example as Appendix 4), aiming to pinpoint noteworthy aspects of occupational culture discussed by participants (refer to the table below). However, I found it difficult to compare the different documents so completed some upskilling on NVivo, a digital qualitative analysis tool. I was able to design a coding strategy by highlighting text and using 'drag and drop' Subsequently, I explored how these aspects might connect through underlying latent themes associated with these codes.

Within the next section, I utilise each theme as a heading to structure the findings. Within these discussions, I provide comprehensive explanations of the themes' significance and include illustrative quotes and examples that support the development of these themes. Within each theme, there is a reference to the data as a whole collection as well as individual artefacts within it.

4.6   Findings

This section delves deeper into the results of this research into occupational culture within further education teaching. I present the key findings following the order established by the research questions outlined earlier. By examining the data collected through Wakelet collections, semi-structured interviews, and participant observations, I shed light on how occupational culture can present itself in classroom teaching and how it can be used to support students' readiness for the workplace. Throughout this chapter and the one that follows, I make frequent reference to the participants' Wakelet collections. These can be found in Appendix 5 and it is recommended you view these alongside reading this chapter and the next.

4.7   Overall Themes Constructed from Visual Representations

What follows is a brief summary of each of the participants' Wakelet collections, to acknowledge the significance of visual communication in capturing and conveying occupational culture. The images, videos, and text curated by the participants offer a unique and nuanced perspective on the values, practices, and challenges associated with their respective professions.

Engineering - Military: The stark contrast of black and white imagery in this collection speaks volumes about the seriousness and discipline associated with military engineering. The inclusion of a war image serves as a potent reminder of the high-stakes environment in which these professionals operate, where precision and adherence to protocol can be a matter of life and death. The emphasis on tool control and punctuality further underscores the values of responsibility and accountability that are deeply ingrained in military culture.

Joinery: The "Joinery" Wakelet tells a story of craftsmanship and tradition. The images predominantly focus on hands and tools interacting with natural materials, symbolising the intimate connection between the joiner and their craft. The absence of faces in these images suggests that the work itself is the defining feature of the joiner's identity. The inclusion of a finished piece of furniture, a beautifully crafted table and chairs, represents the tangible reward of the joiner's skill and dedication.

Beauty Therapy: This collection utilises pastel colours and soft lighting to create a visual narrative of relaxation, well-being, and aesthetic enhancement. The focus on the body, presented in diverse forms, suggests inclusivity and acceptance within the beauty industry. The juxtaposition of images showcasing a variety of treatments, from massages to manicures, speaks to the versatility and range of skills required in this profession.

IT Industry: The "IT Industry" Wakelet employs humour and pop culture references to challenge stereotypes and offer a light-hearted yet insightful look into the world of tech support. The inclusion of memes and videos satirising customer service interactions reflects the challenges and frustrations that IT professionals often encounter. However, the collection also includes references to technical knowledge and problem-solving, highlighting the intellectual rigour and expertise required in this field.

Catering: RF's Wakelet collection serves as a visual representation of his culinary journey and the values he holds dear. It includes images showcasing his culinary creations, experiences working in prestigious kitchens like the Taj Group of Hotels, and his travels, reflecting his passion for food and the diverse culinary landscape. The collection also features pictures highlighting the importance of professionalism and hierarchy in the culinary world, such as the image of a head chef inspecting a dish, emphasising the high standards and attention to detail required in the profession.

The Wakelet collections serve as visual narratives that encapsulate the essence of each profession. They employ symbolism, storytelling, and humour to convey the values, challenges, and rewards associated with each occupational culture, providing a window into the lived experiences of those within these fields. By examining this symbolism, storytelling, and aesthetic choices within the Wakelets, I have gained a deeper insight into the personal and professional identities of the teachers and how these identities shape their pedagogical approaches and interactions with students. These collections not only complement the interviews and observations but also offer a unique and engaging way to understand the complexities and nuances of occupational culture.

4.8 RQ1: How do teachers acquire the pedagogical knowledge and practices associated with their specialist areas?

The data shows that teachers acquire pedagogical knowledge and practices through a combination of formal training, industry experience, continuous professional development (CPD), and mentorship/collaboration, however less so from their teaching qualifications in most cases.

4.8.1 Participants' Own Experiences of Education

The participants' narratives reveal that their own educational experiences have significantly shaped their professional identities and teaching practices. These experiences range from positive and inspiring encounters to challenging and disillusioning ones, all contributing to their understanding of what might be an effective pedagogy and their commitment to providing a meaningful learning experience for their students.

ZK (Beauty Therapy) vividly recalls the impact of her passionate and dedicated tutor during her college years.

"I just loved her whole like, ethics and approach and like, her passion for the industry came across."

RF (Catering) reflects on his positive experiences in hotel management school, where he was encouraged to explore different aspects of the hospitality industry and develop a strong foundation for his career. He also mentions the value of the structured training programme he underwent at the Taj Group of Hotels, which instilled in him a strong work ethic and a commitment to excellence.

"So, I did my diploma in hotel management as well and in my final year, because I was selected for the All India Chef competition, I was called for an interview by the Taj Group of Hotels for the Kitchen Management Training Programme and I got selected for their programme which as soon as I finished the College in July. I joined the Taj in August in Delhi for their two years of rigorous kitchen management training."

However, with mixed experience, SDB (Joinery) mentions briefly attending university but leaving after a short period. He doesn't elaborate on the reasons for leaving or any specific experiences during that time. He talks more extensively about his apprenticeship, which he started at an older age (21) than typical apprentices. He reflects positively on this experience, mentioning that his employer paid him more than the standard apprenticeship wage, which motivated him to stay afterwards. He appreciated being in a class with older, more serious students at the college. He enjoyed the college environment and even has a piece of furniture he made during his level 3 course in his workshop now.

SA (Engineering) recounts his struggles with boredom and disengagement during his school years, highlighting the importance of providing challenging and stimulating learning experiences for students.

"Was I what you would class as a problem child? No, not because I was naughty or anything. I was a bit, but just because they had no stretch or challenge when I was at school. So, I got bored. I do all the work in the first 10 minutes and then get bored."

This experience has shaped his teaching style, as he strives to make his lessons engaging and relevant to his students' interests and abilities.

4.8.2 Industry Experience

Industry experience was highlighted as a crucial factor in shaping pedagogical knowledge and practices. All participants had extensive experience in their respective fields before transitioning to teaching. They emphasised that this experience provided them with a deep understanding of the subject matter, industry standards, and workplace practices, which they could then draw upon in their teaching. For example, SA (Engineering) explained how his experience as an avionics engineer in the military and the manufacturing industry informed his approach to teaching engineering concepts and skills.

Similarly, SDB (Joinery) highlighted how his 16 years of experience as a joiner gave him a deep understanding of the craft, including the different types of wood, tools, and techniques, which he could then pass on to his students:

"Well, I stayed with the same employer for my entire career. So yeah. So, it was just me and him for 16 years, I still work the occasional Saturday to keep my hand in."

This emphasis on industry experience suggests that vocational teachers draw heavily on their practical knowledge and skills to inform their teaching practices. They use their experience to contextualise theoretical concepts, provide real-world examples, and model professional behaviour for their students.

The interview data highlights several challenges faced by individuals transitioning from industry to teaching. These challenges encompass adapting to new environments, learning pedagogical techniques, and managing student expectations.

The images and narratives shared in the Wakelet collections further reinforce the significance of industry experience. For instance, the images of hands using tools and individuals working with wood in the "Joinery" Wakelet highlight the deep understanding that comes from years of practice. In the "Catering" Wakelet, the images of elaborate dishes and bustling kitchens evoke the sensory and dynamic nature of the culinary world, suggesting that RF's industry experience provides him with a rich repertoire of examples and anecdotes to share with his students.

4.8.3 Adapting to New Environments

The transition from a fast-paced, results-oriented industry environment to the more structured and regulated world of education can be jarring. Participants noted the differences in pace, communication styles, and decision-making processes. SA (Engineering) observed a contrast in the sense of urgency between the two environments:

"The biggest thing coming from industry and the military... If you wanted something or needed something, it was there and then, whereas it's so long-winded getting things sorted in education, isn't it?"

This adjustment to a new environment can be particularly challenging for individuals accustomed to the autonomy and immediate feedback of industry work.

Many participants, despite their industry expertise, felt unprepared for the pedagogical aspects of teaching. ZK (Beauty Therapy) candidly admitted her initial struggles with lesson planning and classroom management:

"I remember when I first started... I was thinking, oh, my God, I've got a whole week of teaching now. How am I going to plan this?"

Similarly, SDB (Joinery) with only one year of teaching experience acknowledged the need to improve his lesson planning and structure, recognising the importance of providing a clear framework for his students.

"I think I need to...give the session a proper start at the beginning, which I don't do at the moment."

Navigating student expectations and dynamics can also be a challenge for new teachers. ZK (Beauty Therapy) faced some initial resistance from students who questioned her authority due to her young age and perceived lack of teaching experience. She had to assert her industry expertise and establish clear boundaries to gain their respect.

"I was like, no, I've got 12 years of experience in the industry. So, from that point of view, I felt very confident going, *'Well, I know my stuff inside out, so if anyone, any of the students have a question, it was like, no, it's that, it's that, it's that'*."

SA (Engineering) also spoke about the challenge of managing student expectations, particularly those who have romanticised notions of military service. He chooses to focus on the positive aspects of his military experience to avoid discouraging students and to protect the privacy of some of his personal experiences and tragedies of losing colleagues and friends but acknowledges the difficulty of preparing them for the harsh realities of combat.

4.8.4 Formal Training

All participants had undertaken formal teacher training, such as a PGCE or Cert Ed, and all had trained 'in-service' (alongside teaching) except for SDB (Joinery) who completed a Level 3 Award in Education and Training before joining the college (note that he then enrolled on the level 5 Diploma upon joining the college). However, the extent to which this training equipped them for the specific challenges of teaching their vocational subject varied. Some participants felt that their teacher training provided a solid foundation in general pedagogy but lacked subject-specific guidance. For example, ZK (Beauty Therapy) noted that her training focused on generic teaching methods rather than the specific challenges of teaching practical skills and technical vocabulary in beauty therapy:

"The only thing we had to do was a 20-minute micro-teach at the end that they [the assessors] observed."

In contrast, RF (Catering) found his formal teacher training to be very demanding and comprehensive, covering a wide range of pedagogical approaches and assessment methods.

This contrast highlights the variability in the quality and relevance of formal teacher training programmes for vocational education. While some programmes may provide a strong theoretical foundation, they may not adequately address the specific pedagogical challenges of teaching practical skills and technical knowledge. SDB (Joinery) also alluded to this gap, stating that his teacher training focused more on the "administration side of teaching" and less on practical classroom management strategies. He felt he needed this teaching joinery to lively 16-18-year-old (mostly) males, in a deprived part of the city.

4.8.5 Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Participants engaged in various CPD activities to keep their knowledge and skills up-to-date and enhance their teaching practices. These activities included attending workshops and conferences, participating in industry training, reading relevant literature, and collaborating with colleagues. RF (Catering) highlighted the importance of working in industry kitchens as a form of CPD, stating that "the main CPD is going out there and working in kitchens and seeing what's going on." He also mentioned his involvement in industry bodies, awarding organisations and standardisation meetings as a way to stay current with industry practices and trends.

SA (Engineering) also emphasised the importance of industry-based CPD, stating that "industry is still moving at that speed, whereas education isn't. So you've got to get them [industry professionals] to come back and just say *'Oh, we're not gonna do that anymore. We do this now*."

ZK (Beauty Therapy) discussed attending training courses and webinars to learn new techniques and stay updated on industry trends. She also mentioned the value of informal learning through social media and online forums:

"But there's always, I think, I think when you're in the industry, it is you know, your CPD is wholly focused on the industry. But I think as soon as you go into teaching it, it changes. It's like even sometimes when things pop up on like Facebook and you're like, oh, well, this is like a little autism webinar or something that you think that might be quite interesting. I think it changed. It does change your kind of CPD views of what you think would be helpful."

This suggests that vocational teachers are proactive in seeking out opportunities for professional development, both formal and informal, to ensure that their teaching remains relevant and engaging for their students. The "Beauty Therapy" Wakelet collection, with its inclusion of diverse treatment modalities and references to professional development resources, further illustrates this commitment to ongoing learning and skill enhancement.

4.8.6 Mentorship and Collaboration

Mentorship and collaboration with colleagues and industry professionals also played a significant role in teacher development. Participants described how they learned from experienced colleagues, sought advice from industry experts, and shared ideas and resources with peers. ZK (Beauty Therapy) emphasised the importance of having a supportive mentor during her transition to teaching, stating that her mentor was "an absolute godsend." SDB (Joinery) also mentioned learning from and collaborating with colleagues in the furniture department to enhance his teaching of traditional techniques.

The importance of mentorship and collaboration highlights the social and collegial nature of teacher learning in vocational education. It suggests that teachers benefit from a supportive network of colleagues and industry professionals who can provide guidance, feedback, and opportunities for professional growth. The "IT Industry" Wakelet, with its humorous take on the challenges of tech

support, hints at the importance of camaraderie and shared experiences in navigating the complexities of the workplace and the classroom.

4.8.7 Passion as a Driving Force

The teachers' passion for their subjects is evident in their narratives. This passion serves as a driving force in their teaching, motivating them to not only impart knowledge and skills but also to inspire and cultivate a similar enthusiasm in their students. They recognise that passion is not merely taught but rather nurtured and ignited through various pedagogical approaches. ZK (Beauty Therapy) recounts how her initial inspiration to teach stemmed from a "fantastic tutor" who radiated a contagious passion for the beauty industry:

"I just loved her whole like ethics and approach and like, her passion for the industry came across."

This tutor's enthusiasm left a lasting impression on ZK, fuelling her desire to share that same passion with future students.

Similarly, RF (Catering) speaks of his enduring love for cooking and the satisfaction he derives from seeing his students develop their culinary skills and creativity. He emphasises the importance of going beyond the basics and encouraging students to explore the artistry and passion that underpin the culinary profession. His Wakelet collection, featuring images of appetising dishes and bustling kitchens, visually reinforces this passion for food and the culinary arts.

The participants recognise that passion is not simply taught but rather nurtured and inspired. They employ various strategies to ignite enthusiasm in their students.

ZK (Beauty Therapy) frequently shares stories from her career, both humorous and challenging, to illustrate the realities of the beauty industry and the importance of resilience and professionalism. These anecdotes not only make the learning experience more engaging but also humanise the profession and make it more relatable for students. RF (Catering) challenges his students to go beyond the prescribed curriculum and experiment with flavours and techniques, fostering a sense of curiosity and innovation. He believes that true passion for cooking comes from the joy of discovery and the freedom to express oneself creatively in the kitchen.

SA (Engineering) emphasises the practical applications of engineering principles, highlighting the impact that engineers can have on society and the environment. By showcasing the real-world relevance of their subject, he aims to spark students' interest and demonstrate the potential for meaningful contributions through engineering. The inclusion of images of aircraft and military operations in his Wakelet collection further reinforces this connection to real-world applications.

All participants expressed the joy of witnessing their students' progress and successes, recognising the importance of positive reinforcement in fostering a love for the subject. SDB (Joinery) takes pride in seeing his students' creations, particularly when they surpass their expectations:

"It's nice to see them produce something that they didn't think they were capable of."

In addition to passion, the participants also emphasised the importance of professionalism, work ethic, and resilience in their professions. They viewed these qualities as essential for success in the workplace and actively sought to instil them in their students.

ZK (Beauty Therapy) stressed the importance of maintaining high standards of personal grooming and professional conduct, even in the classroom. She explained:

"I think it's a real shame when they don't, they don't get that. It's not in our contracts that we have to wear uniforms to teach. There's never been a day that I haven't worn a uniform to teach because it's like well, I'm representing the industry and the standards so why would I not."

Her Wakelet collection further reinforces this emphasis on professionalism, featuring images of therapists in neat uniform and well-maintained salon environments.

RF (Catering) echoed this sentiment, stressing the need for discipline, timekeeping, and the ability to work under pressure in the culinary industry. He modelled these qualities in his teaching, setting high expectations for his students and pushing them to develop their skills and resilience.

SDB (Joinery) implicitly conveyed the value of craftsmanship and attention to detail through his meticulous work and high expectations for his students. His pride in his craft and his commitment to quality workmanship served as a powerful example for his students. The images in his Wakelet collection, showcasing the beauty and intricacy of handcrafted joinery, further reinforce this message.

4.9 RQ2: In what ways are workplace practices, customs and occupational cultures taught in the curriculum?

The analysis of the interview transcripts and Wakelet collections reveals a multifaceted approach to embedding workplace practices, customs, and occupational cultures within the vocational curriculum. This is achieved through a combination of explicit instruction, implicit modelling, experiential learning opportunities, and the use of visual representations.

4.9.1 Industry Standards

The importance of adhering to industry standards is a recurring theme throughout the data, highlighting its role in shaping vocational education and preparing students for the professional world. The participants emphasise the need to replicate workplace practices and expectations within the classroom, ensuring that students are equipped with the skills and knowledge required to seamlessly transition into their chosen industries.

SA (Engineering) underscores the criticality of adhering to industry standards, particularly in the context of engineering and aviation, where precision and safety are paramount. He states:

"So they've got to do it in that really standardised way because if a plane crashes...and that's where I've signed it off. The Principal goes to jail."

(Here he is referring to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) which regulate the aviation industry and its safety standards. If an engineer was found to be at fault or negligent in the event of a dangerous occurrence or accident, it is traced back to where they trained and some of the blame may be apportioned to the training organisation and ultimately its leadership e.g. Principal/CEO or similar.)

This stark statement emphasises the high-stakes nature of engineering and the potential consequences of deviating from established protocols. SA's insistence on standardised procedures reflects the industry's emphasis on quality control and risk mitigation. Within the classroom observation, he further reinforces this by using industry-standard equipment and setting up the classrooms and workshops to resemble a real-world engineering environment.

SDB (Joinery) also highlights the importance of teaching students to work to industry standards, particularly in terms of accuracy, precision, and craftsmanship. He notes that the assessment pieces in his course, such as constructing a small set of stairs and a door, directly mirror "bread and butter products in the joinery industry." This alignment ensures that students are developing the skills and techniques that will be expected of them in the workplace.

"So everything is around those assessments. Leading up to that, I'm trying to sort of make it busier, trying to get them to produce more."

Furthermore, SDB stresses the economic realities of the joinery industry, teaching students to be mindful of costs and material usage. This reflects the importance of efficiency and resourcefulness in the workplace, where wastage can impact profitability. I witnessed examples of this in practice, where students made incorrect cuts, they were requested to keep the off-cuts for other students to practice. Smaller pieces were disposed of in a wood recycling area.

"...the thing I'm trying to do...give them an insight into is costs of things and trying to make them think about the material, be economic with it."

ZK (Beauty Therapy) highlights the importance of adhering to industry standards in terms of hygiene, safety, and client interaction. She notes that students are assessed not only on their practical skills but also on their professionalism and adherence to protocols. This emphasis on professionalism and adherence to industry standards reflects the importance of creating a safe and welcoming environment for clients in the beauty therapy industry. Throughout the classroom observation was a mix of theory and practical, the teacher discussed how massages might be carried out in different types of therapy environments e.g. spa, home salon, cruise ship and the professional expectations of those employees.

RF (Catering) describes the significance of consistency and quality in the culinary profession. He emphasises the need for students to understand and adhere to standardised recipes and techniques to ensure that dishes are prepared and presented to a high standard.

"So whether the sauce is missing or, you know, something is not put at the right point on the plate, all those things need to be ticked [off] because consistency is key and food to be hot is another key thing."

He also stresses the importance of professional behaviour, timekeeping, and teamwork in the fast-paced and demanding environment of a professional kitchen. This was evident throughout the practical kitchen session I observed. The teacher constantly reinforced professional behaviours such as cleaning as you go, helping each other, how to put trays in the oven to maximise cooking space and time.

While all participants recognise the importance of teaching to industry standards, they also acknowledge the challenges involved in replicating workplace practices and expectations within the confines of an educational setting.

ZK (Beauty Therapy) notes the difficulty of providing students with adequate hands-on experience with expensive equipment, highlighting the financial constraints faced by educational institutions.

"Level 3 Beauty is...where it kind of hits a bit of a barrier because Level 3 they learned all the body electricals and facial electricals. Those machines are incredibly expensive and they're so well used."

However, in contrast, in Engineering, SA has been fortunate to receive additional funding due to an Institute of Technology collaboration, LSIF (Local Skills Improvement Fund) plus additional DfE investment to support the onboarding of T Level qualifications. SA has access to high-specification equipment to enhance learning and student experience.

"Luckily this college has been really good at getting new kit and upgrading every so often. So yeah, so all our aircraft stuff is still current. They're old aircraft, but the theory behind it is the same, but we've got a simulator coming. We've got all the T Level VR stuff [virtual reality headsets], then we got the CNC machines, we got the new CAD systems and 3D printers. These are so good."

4.9.2 Balancing Theory and Practice
The data reveals a strong emphasis on balancing theory and practice in vocational education, with teachers recognising the critical role of practical experience in preparing students for the workforce.

They employ various strategies to integrate theory and practice, creating a dynamic learning environment that bridges the gap between the classroom and the real world.

The teachers consistently highlight the importance of hands-on learning and skill development in vocational education. They believe that practical experience is essential for students to truly understand and internalise the knowledge and techniques required in their chosen fields. SDB (Joinery) emphasises the need for students to develop practical skills through hands-on activities:

"So I get them in and we'll start making basic little joints just with throwaway bits of timber, they could start to build their hand skills with the saws and the chisels and whatnot."

This emphasis on hands-on learning is also evident in the Wakelet collections. The "Joinery" Wakelet, for instance, features numerous images of hands using tools and individuals working with wood, underscoring the tactile and experiential nature of the craft. Similarly, the "Beauty Therapy" Wakelet includes images of therapists performing treatments, highlighting the importance of practical skills in this profession.

The participants employ various strategies to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. They recognise that students need to understand not only the "how" but also the "why" behind specific practices and techniques.

Demonstrations are a common strategy used by teachers to model techniques and processes, allowing students to observe and learn from their expertise. RF (Catering) frequently uses demonstrations in his culinary classes, showcasing various cooking methods and culinary techniques before supporting students to complete their own. This was also evident in the Beauty Therapy classroom observation however as the session was a re-cap on massage, the students were encouraged to use pre-recorded videos of different strokes so that they could hone in on the aspect that they required the most practice with.

Hands-on activities provide students with opportunities to apply their theoretical knowledge in practical settings. SDB (Joinery) has his students experiment on scaled-down roof joists, doors, and staircases, allowing them to develop their hand skills and familiarise themselves with tools before moving on to more complex, full-size projects. In this session, I observed students all working on different items and at different stages, some that were ahead of others were encouraged to add decorative aspects to their products.

Industry placements and visits offer students a glimpse into the real-world application of their skills and knowledge. RF (Catering) emphasises the value of work placements in helping students discover their niche within the hospitality industry and gain exposure to diverse working environments. SA (Engineering) also advocates for industry visits and guest speakers to provide students with a realistic insight into the engineering and aviation industries.

In the beauty therapy field, client sessions provide students with the opportunity to interact with real clients and apply their skills in a professional setting. ZK (Beauty Therapy) acknowledges the challenges in securing enough clients but stresses the importance of these experiences in developing students' confidence and competence.

The teachers also acknowledge the challenges in balancing theory and practice, particularly in light of resource limitations and curriculum constraints. ZK (Beauty Therapy) notes the difficulty of providing students with adequate hands-on experience with expensive equipment, while SDB (Joinery) and RF (Catering) discuss the challenge of keeping the curriculum up-to-date with the latest industry developments.

However, the participants demonstrate a willingness to innovate and adapt their teaching to overcome these challenges. RF (Catering) employs a flipped learning approach, providing students

with resources and videos to review before class, allowing for more hands-on practice and individualised instruction during class time. I observed SA (Engineering) teaching on real small aircraft in a hangar to provide students with a realistic experience of working on aircraft, even within the limitations of a college setting. Students worked in pairs to identify different 'mock' health and safety issues in the workshop before coming back together in a group.

4.9.3 The Teaching of Socio-Cultural Aspects

Participants actively incorporate the social aspects of the workplace into their teaching, recognising the importance of preparing students not only for the technical demands of their professions but also for the interpersonal dynamics and cultural norms that shape the work environment.

The teachers utilise explicit instruction to familiarise students with the social expectations and communication styles prevalent in their respective industries. RF (Catering) stresses the importance of professional etiquette and behaviour in the kitchen, highlighting the hierarchical structure and the need to maintain composure under pressure. He states:

"And when you're not prepared to produce [or] perform in that two-hour window, you will be shouted at. But it's nothing personal. You need to take it on the chin and then life moves on."

This direct communication prepares students for the realities of working in a fast-paced kitchen environment, where clear communication, respect for authority, and the ability to handle criticism are essential. However, the negative feedback revolves around the emotional and psychological challenges faced in the high-pressure, demanding nature of the culinary industry. This requires individuals to confront the harsh realities of the stress of kitchen service, which might lead to feelings of inadequacy or fear among those unprepared for such experiences.

Similarly, ZK (Beauty Therapy) explicitly addresses the importance of client interaction and communication. She emphasises the need for students to develop effective communication skills, build rapport with clients, and handle challenging situations with professionalism and empathy.

"And I think we do it well. We always introduce it well because we start with family and friends clinics... And then we'll open up for the general public. So, it's great from that point of view and it does give them a little bit of a... of a realistic kind of expectation because we have really fussy clients, we do have someone that you know they'll come in and they're like, *'oh, it's taking forever'*, it's like well, we're a training academy, what do you expect..."

SA (Engineering) also provides explicit instruction on workplace norms, particularly those related to the military and aviation industries. Within his Wakelet, he emphasises the importance of punctuality, discipline, and following procedures, reflecting the high-stakes nature of these fields.

"Punctuality - if you're not five minutes early...you're late."

"Tool control - if you don't know where the tool is.... ground the fleet"

SA followed with a description of his experiences of active service that I have opted to leave out of the findings to respect his privacy and the well-being of any readers of this thesis. However, what came from that discussion was an acknowledgement that no training can fully prepare individuals for the emotional and psychological impact of war, indicating a significant gap in military training regarding the mental health and emotional resilience required.

Beyond explicit instruction, the teachers also implicitly model workplace behaviours and attitudes, providing students with tangible examples of professionalism in action. As previously discussed, ZK consistently wears her uniform and maintains high standards of personal grooming, demonstrating the importance of presentation and self-care in the beauty industry.

Similarly, RF embodies the demanding yet rewarding nature of the culinary profession through his work ethic and passion for the profession. He sets high expectations for his students, wearing his chef whites with pride, ensuring students do the same. At the beginning of his class, I observed him completing a uniform and cleanliness check while doing the register.

Experiential learning opportunities, such as work placements, realistic working environments and client sessions, provide students with invaluable exposure to the social dynamics of the workplace. These experiences allow them to interact with clients and colleagues, navigate power dynamics, and develop the interpersonal skills necessary for successful collaboration.

The teachers also actively foster teamwork and collaboration within the classroom, mirroring the collaborative nature of many workplaces. SDB (Joinery) uses group projects to encourage students to work together, communicate effectively, and share responsibility for completing tasks.

"I've done a couple of group projects where they've had to work together to produce something..."

This approach not only develops students' teamwork skills but also creates a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose, reflecting the social aspects of many occupational cultures.

The Wakelet collections provide further insights into the social aspects of the workplace and how teachers incorporate them into their teaching. The "Beauty Therapy" Wakelet, for instance, includes an image titled "What does a beauty therapist's working day look like?" which depicts various client interactions and treatment scenarios. This visual representation highlights the importance of interpersonal skills and client relationships in the beauty industry.

The "IT Industry" Wakelet, with its humorous videos about customer service interactions, also touches upon the social dynamics of the workplace, albeit in a light-hearted manner. These videos accentuate the importance of patience, communication, and problem-solving skills when dealing with challenging clients or situations.

Beyond the examples already mentioned, the data also reveals other ways in which teachers incorporate workplace customs and traditions into their teaching. For example, SA (Engineering) talks about sharing his positive experiences in the military with his students, including the camaraderie and teamwork he experienced, to inspire and motivate them. He also discusses the importance of teaching students about military traditions and customs, such as Remembrance Day and the significance of the poppy. SDB (Joinery) mentions the unique sensory experiences associated with joinery, such as the smell of different types of wood. He encourages his students to appreciate these sensory aspects of the craft, fostering a deeper connection to the materials and the process of creation. ZK (Beauty Therapy) discusses the importance of ethical practices in the beauty industry, sharing stories about unethical behaviour she has witnessed in salons. This helps students understand the importance of integrity and professionalism in their future careers.

4.9.4 The Impact of External Factors on Teaching and Learning

Participants have described in detail how factors, such as funding cuts, curriculum changes, and resource limitations, can significantly impact teaching practices and student experiences in vocational education. These factors can create challenges for educators, but they also inspire innovative solutions and adaptations to ensure that students receive a quality education that prepares them for the workforce.

Funding cuts can lead to reductions in course offerings, limited access to equipment and materials, and larger class sizes. ZK (Beauty Therapy) highlights the impact of funding cuts on her department, forcing them to switch awarding bodies and drop certain units, such as reflexology, from the curriculum. This not only limits student choice but also impacts their employability, as reflexology is a popular treatment in the industry.

"But we've had to drop reflexology, there's not a reflexology unit which I hate because I love reflexology. I miss teaching it."

Resource limitations can also hinder students' ability to gain practical experience. ZK notes the challenges of teaching certain treatments when there are limited machines available for a large class size. This can result in less hands-on time for students and potentially impact their confidence and competence in performing these treatments.

"When you've got a group of 18 students and you've maybe got two machines that you're trying to teach them all, it makes it very difficult."

Curriculum changes can pose challenges for teachers, requiring them to adapt their teaching materials and methods to align with new requirements. SDB (Joinery) mentions having to update his curriculum to include new timber treatments that were not covered in the qualification. These modern timbers are more sustainable due to the speed at which the trees grow. This highlights the need for ongoing professional development and curriculum review to ensure that vocational education remains relevant to industry practices.

"I've updated it myself with a few timbers this might sound strange, but there's wood products, well, there's wood that's available now that wasn't available when this this qualification was thought up just in terms of treatment and what they do to it, so there's a there's an item that I've added to my, to my theory work, which wasn't there before."

Curriculum changes can also raise questions about the relevance of certain units or topics to current industry practices, as well as the challenges of covering topics at a surface level when there are fewer hours available to teach a curriculum. ZK (Beauty Therapy) expresses concerns about some "old school bits" in the curriculum, such as outdated mask treatments, that she feels are no longer relevant to the industry. This highlights the need for ongoing dialogue between educators and industry professionals to ensure that the curriculum reflects the latest trends and technologies.

"... there are certain elements of units that are mandatory units that you think why oh why have we still got that in there? Why are we still teaching a little bit of nails when it's like, no, actually, if it needs to be in there, well, it needs to be more kind of like a step up from the basic, because that doesn't give them anything in the industry."

RF (Catering) also touches upon curriculum changes, noting the shift towards a more flexible and adaptable curriculum in the newer technical qualifications in catering. He appreciates the freedom this provides in tailoring his teaching to current industry trends and incorporating a wider range of dishes and techniques.

"So the technical [City and Guilds Technical Certificate/Diploma], the latest version of qualification is such that they don't tell you what you what type of dishes you need to teach. They'll say this is the type of things you need to cover. So the dishes you can come up with yourself or use those that are more current."

Despite these challenges, the participants demonstrate resilience and resourcefulness in adapting their teaching practices to overcome external constraints.

ZK (Beauty Therapy) describes how she used to bring in her own supplies, such as cotton pads, when the college ran out due to budget constraints. This highlights the dedication of vocational educators to providing students with the necessary resources, even when faced with financial limitations.

ZK also mentions collaborating with colleagues in other departments to share resources and provide students with a wider range of learning experiences. This demonstrates the importance of teamwork and resourcefulness in overcoming resource limitations.

SDB (Joinery) discusses his efforts to make health and safety training more engaging by incorporating practical activities and breaking up the content into smaller, more manageable chunks. This reflects his awareness of the need to adapt curriculum delivery to maintain student interest and motivation.

"...when I started I had an apprentice group that started in January last year pretty much as well. And I did full health and safety for their three hours of theory and it was very boring. And, you know, they were losing interest. So, when I go into September, I was like OK, so we have to do health and safety at the start. But I'm gonna do one session health and safety and then the other session is gonna be something with a bit more meat to it."

The impact of external factors on teaching and learning in vocational education is undeniable. Funding cuts, curriculum changes, and resource limitations can create significant challenges for educators and students alike. However, the participants in this research demonstrate resilience, adaptability, and a commitment to providing quality education despite these constraints. They employ creative solutions, collaborate with colleagues, and adapt their teaching practices to ensure that students receive the knowledge, skills, and experiences they need to succeed in their chosen fields.

4.9.5 The Dynamic Nature of Occupational Culture

This research has found that occupational cultures are not static but evolve over time due to technological advancements, societal changes, and economic factors. The teachers discuss how they adapt their teaching to reflect these changes and prepare students for the evolving workplace.

SA (Engineering) highlights the impact of technology on the engineering industry, noting the shift towards computer-aided design (CAD) and the use of simulators in training. He ensures that his students are proficient in the latest software and technologies used in the industry.

ZK (Beauty Therapy) discusses how societal attitudes towards beauty and wellness have evolved, leading to changes in the types of treatments offered and the skills required of beauty therapists. She adapts her curriculum to reflect these changes, incorporating new treatments and techniques while also ensuring that students understand the historical and cultural context of the profession.

SDB (Joinery) notes the impact of economic factors on the joinery industry, particularly the rising cost of materials and the increasing demand for sustainable practices. He incorporates these considerations into his teaching, encouraging students to be mindful of costs and to explore the use of sustainable materials and techniques.

In the culinary world, RF (Catering) also acknowledges the influence of economic factors on menu planning and ingredient choices. He encourages his students to be mindful of costs and to consider the profitability of their dishes, reflecting the business acumen required in the hospitality industry.

The Wakelet collections further illustrate this adaptability, showcasing how teachers incorporate current trends and technologies into their teaching. For example, the "IT Industry" Wakelet includes references to cloud computing and cybersecurity, reflecting the growing importance of these areas in the IT field. The "Catering" Wakelet features images of modern culinary techniques and presentations, demonstrating how the industry is constantly evolving and innovating.

The ability to adapt to change is not only crucial for students entering the workforce but also for the teachers themselves. As RF (Catering) aptly puts it:

"It's not a normal nine-to-five job for me, to be honest. I'm in if I need to do something or want to. If you want to stand up, then you need to go that extra mile. [It] Isn't enough that you just know what

to do. I mean, I could happily just come in, just do 9 to 5, go home, let's say, and just teach. And then the students can tell that you're then so outdated."

This statement encapsulates the essence of adaptability and resilience in vocational education. By embracing change and continuously seeking to improve their practice, teachers can inspire their students to do the same.

4.9.6 Past Experiences Shaping Teaching Practices

The participants' narratives reveal how their past experiences, both within their industries and in their education, have profoundly influenced their teaching practices. ZK (Beauty Therapy), for instance, attributes her firm but fair approach to classroom management to her experiences in the beauty industry, where maintaining high standards of professionalism and hygiene is paramount. She explains:

"I think they know I'm, you know...firm but fair...These are my standards. These are what I expect...I have high standards of the industry and I want you to."

Similarly, RF's (Catering) experiences in the demanding and fast-paced environment of professional kitchens have shaped his teaching style. He emphasises the importance of discipline, timekeeping, and the ability to work under pressure, mirroring the expectations of the culinary world.

The transition from industry professional to teacher often involves reconciling multiple identities. Participants grapple with balancing their expertise in their field with their developing pedagogical skills. ZK initially struggled with this duality, feeling confident in her industry knowledge but unsure about her teaching abilities.

Over time, however, she learned to integrate her industry experience with her teaching practice, using anecdotes and real-world examples to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

SDB (Joinery) also navigates this duality, recognising the need to balance his role as a skilled craftsman with his responsibilities as a teacher. He strives to impart not only technical skills but also the values and mindset of a professional joiner.

The participants also reflect on how teaching has shaped their own personal and professional growth. For SDB (Joinery), teaching has provided an opportunity for greater autonomy and creativity compared to his previous role in the industry.

"I actually felt like I do have more of that here now, you know, in developing what we deliver from a practical sense...it's nice to have that freedom."

ZK (Beauty Therapy) also acknowledges the personal and professional growth she has experienced through teaching. She describes how interacting with students from diverse backgrounds has broadened her perspectives and challenged her assumptions.

"It's nice that you get to meet so many different people from different walks of life and different backgrounds and different cultures and things."

For RF (Catering), teaching has allowed him to stay connected to the industry and continue learning and growing as a chef. His involvement in curriculum development and industry consultations ensures that he remains at the forefront of culinary trends and techniques.

"I also work with City and Guilds as a consultant for qualifications, so at the moment I'm like sitting on those editing meetings for the newly reformed quals that have been developed."

This reconciliation of identities is also evident in the way RF (Catering) identifies himself as both a "chef" and a "lecturer." He acknowledges that his primary identity remains rooted in his culinary expertise, but he also recognises the importance of his role as an educator.

"I'm always going to be a chef at heart. I don't know whether that's bad, but... I think it's, it's more of a chef lecturer. The chef will always come first."

4.9.7 The Wakelet Collections as Reflections of Identity

The Wakelet collections created by the participants offer valuable insights into the interplay of personal and professional identity. These curated collections act as representations of their occupational cultures, showcasing the tools, techniques, values, and aesthetics central to their professions. For example, the "Engineering - Military" Wakelet, emphasises discipline, precision, and adaptability, reflecting SA's military background and its influence on his professional identity.

Similarly, SDB's "Joinery" Wakelet, focused on craftsmanship and natural materials, reveals his deep appreciation for the artistry and tradition of his craft. ZK's "Beauty Therapy" Wakelet, with its calming aesthetic and emphasis on well-being, showcases her passion for the transformative power of beauty treatments and her commitment to client care. The "IT Industry" Wakelet, with its humorous take on the challenges of tech support, highlights the lighter side of the profession and the importance of humour and resilience. Finally, the "Catering" Wakelet collection presents a culinary journey, highlighting experiences in prestigious kitchens, a passion for food, and the importance of professionalism and tradition within the culinary world.

For vocational educators, the interplay of personal and professional identity is a complex and dynamic process. Past experiences, industry expertise, and their evolving roles as teachers all contribute to shaping their pedagogical approaches, values, and interactions with students. These Wakelet collections visually manifest this interplay, offering a glimpse into the unique perspectives and passions each teacher brings to the classroom. Becoming a vocational educator, therefore, is not simply about acquiring pedagogical skills; it's about integrating past experiences, industry expertise, and personal passions into a coherent and authentic teaching persona.

4.10 RQ3: How important is subject-specific vocabulary and how is it reinforced within the vocational curriculum?

The findings of this research highlight the critical role of subject-specific vocabulary in vocational education. Teachers employ a variety of strategies to teach and reinforce this vocabulary, recognising the challenges students may face in mastering technical terms. They emphasise the importance of contextualisation, repetition, and the use of visual aids and technology. Furthermore, they stress the need for curriculum alignment with industry standards to ensure that students are equipped with the vocabulary and knowledge required for success in the workplace. The Wakelet collections provide additional evidence of the importance of subject-specific vocabulary and offer insights into how teachers use visual representations to reinforce vocabulary learning and convey the culture of their professions.

4.10.1 The Role of Subject-Specific Vocabulary in Vocational Education

The crucial role of subject-specific vocabulary in vocational education is underscored by all four participants. They emphasise that mastering this vocabulary is not just about rote memorisation but is fundamental for students to thrive in their chosen fields. It enables them to grasp complex concepts, communicate well within their professional communities, and ultimately achieve success in the workplace.

The need for curriculum alignment with industry standards is a key theme that was interpeted from the transcripts. The teachers recognise the challenges of keeping up with the evolving language and

practices of their industries but emphasise the importance of doing so to ensure that their students are well-prepared for the workplace.

4.10.2 The Significance of Precise Terminology

The teachers consistently highlight the importance of using correct terminology, recognising it as a key indicator of professionalism and competence. SA (Engineering) articulates this clearly:

"It's getting them to use the correct names for things, but the biggest one is using the correct words for the tools and equipment."

He further illustrates this point with an example from his engineering workshop:

"So if you're in the workshop, *'get me get me a…'. 'What's that? What does it look like?' 'Yeah*, *you know, flat-bladed screwdriver'* and some of them, some of them at that age, don't know what a hammer is or a mallet. What's the difference between a hammer and a mallet and things like that is something we teach a lot."

He provides a further, humorous example of students answering questions:

"*Oh, yeah, it's that thingy'*. But no, we don't use thingies in engineering. *'What are the thingamajigs? I think they've been banned.* So, it's getting them to answer questions using the correct term."

This anecdote underscores the practical implications of imprecise language in a vocational setting, where the correct use of terminology can impact safety and efficiency.

4.10.3 Vocabulary as a Gateway to Understanding

Beyond simple communication, the teachers recognise that subject-specific vocabulary serves as a gateway to a deeper understanding of complex concepts and processes. ZK (Beauty Therapy) acknowledges the challenges students face in learning technical vocabulary, particularly in fields like beauty therapy where Latin terms are prevalent. She employs various strategies to make this vocabulary more accessible, such as using phonetic pronunciation guides, rhymes, and visual aids.

"There's some of them that you can link and there's certain bits that you can go *'Well, as long as you know this bit, that will give you a little bit of a clue'*."

This approach highlights the importance of breaking down complex terminology and providing students with multiple pathways to understanding.

The Wakelet collections created by the participants serve as visual aids for vocabulary acquisition, showcasing the tools, equipment, and processes associated with each profession. The "Engineering - Military" Wakelet, for instance, features images of various aircraft and tools, providing a visual reference for technical terms. The "Joinery" Wakelet includes images of different types of wood and joinery techniques, reinforcing the vocabulary associated with these concepts.

4.10.4 Challenges in Learning Technical Vocabulary

The data shows that the teachers recognise the challenges students face in learning technical vocabulary, particularly in fields with specialised terminology derived from Latin or other languages. For example, students often encounter unfamiliar and complex terms that can be intimidating and difficult to grasp. ZK (Beauty Therapy) acknowledges the abundance of Latin terms in her field, which can be confusing for students.

"Yeah, yeah, there's a lot. And the weird thing is that some Latin words make sense but others don't."

The pronunciation of technical terms, especially those derived from other languages, can pose a challenge for students. RF (Catering) notes that many culinary terms are French, and students may struggle with their pronunciation.

4.10.5 Diverse Strategies for Reinforcing Subject-Specific Vocabulary

The data provides evidence of a variety of strategies employed by teachers to reinforce subject-specific vocabulary, showcasing their commitment to equipping students with the linguistic tools necessary for success in their chosen fields.

The teachers leverage technology to support vocabulary acquisition. ZK mentions using a website that pronounces Latin terms for students, while RF suggests using Google Translate for pronunciation and understanding foreign culinary terms.

"We use quite a lot of...a little website where it just pronounces it for you. So you can put the word in and it will say back to you and the students find that really useful."

Recognising that vocabulary acquisition can be challenging, the teachers strive to make it fun and engaging. SDB (Joinery) incorporates games like hangman (or "hangcat" as he playfully calls it) into his lessons, using tool names and other relevant terms as the mystery words. This gamified approach not only reinforces vocabulary but also creates a more enjoyable and interactive learning experience.

Teachers simplify complex terms by breaking them down into smaller, more manageable components. ZK explains how she helps students understand the meaning of words like "cytoplasm" and "leukocytes" by identifying familiar root words and prefixes.

The teachers emphasise the importance of using vocabulary in context. They provide opportunities for students to apply technical terms in real-world scenarios, such as client interactions, work placements, and industry visits. This helps students understand the practical relevance of the vocabulary and builds their confidence in using it appropriately.

4.10.6 Repetition and Reinforcement

The teachers utilise repetition and reinforcement techniques to solidify students' grasp of technical terms. SA (Engineering) employs quizzes and hands-on activities to ensure students can correctly identify and use tool names. ZK (Beauty Therapy) emphasises repetition, particularly for anatomical terms, encouraging students to create visual aids like muscle posters and engage in interactive activities that require them to recall and apply the vocabulary.

"You know, repeating the names all the time when they massage and I'm like *'What muscle was that you're massaging and what muscle is that?'* I guess it's that. Yeah. Just that repetition."

ZK (Beauty Therapy) provides students with phonetic pronunciation guides and uses rhymes and mnemonics to aid memorisation. For example, she uses the phrase "Come, let's go shopping girls" to help students remember the layers of the epidermis.

"...trying to think of rhymes and things so they can say like 'come let's go shopping girls' and the first letter of each word would give them the Latin name."

4.10.7 Reinforcing Vocabulary through Practical Application

The teachers stress that vocabulary acquisition is not just about memorisation but should be integrated with the development of practical skills. They use real-world examples, industry-specific tasks, and client interactions to contextualise vocabulary and make it more meaningful for students. SDB (Joinery) highlights the use of workbooks and demonstrations to introduce and reinforce terminology related to tools, materials, and techniques. He also mentions the importance of having

students create cutting lists that include the names and sizes of timber, providing a practical context for vocabulary acquisition.

"...they've got a workbook that they work through and that covers all the basics. And then I'll do demonstrations as well."

In the culinary arts, RF (Catering) similarly emphasises the importance of knowing the correct names and pronunciations of ingredients, particularly those from diverse culinary traditions. He encourages students to explore ethnic food shops and utilise tools like Google Translate to familiarise themselves with the specific vocabulary of different cuisines.

"So, so yeah, I mean the basic names, I mean cumin is a spice and it's how you pronounce it. So the spices that we work with are the spices that I explained, say this is paprika and this is sumac and you know, so those basic terms, if they know the spices."

The teachers leverage visual aids and technology tools to enhance vocabulary acquisition. ZK (Beauty Therapy) uses muscle posters and anatomical models to provide visual representations of complex terms, while also utilising online resources like pronunciation websites to aid students in mastering challenging vocabulary.

...get them to do like a muscle poster where they write the names and actually cut them out and stick them on. Layer them, layer them up... ...we use quite a lot of...a little websites where it just pronounces it for you. So you can put the word in and it will say back to you and the students find that really useful."

The "Beauty Therapy" Wakelet collection further exemplifies this approach, featuring diagrams and images that visually reinforce anatomical and skincare terminology.

4.10.8 The Role of Assessment in Reinforcing Vocabulary

The importance of assessment in reinforcing vocabulary is evident in the data, where teachers discuss how they use various assessment methods to not only evaluate students' understanding but also to solidify their grasp of technical terms and their application in real-world scenarios.

RF (Catering) emphasises the use of mock exams as a valuable tool for assessing and reinforcing vocabulary learning. He explains that these exams include dishes that cover all the units taught, allowing him to gauge students' retention and understanding of culinary terminology. The feedback provided during these mock exams helps students identify areas where they need to revisit and strengthen their vocabulary knowledge.

SA (Engineering) also utilises written assessments to reinforce vocabulary. He mentions incorporating questions in reports and exams that require students to use the correct engineering terminology. This approach ensures that students not only memorise the terms but also understand their meaning and can apply them in context.

ZK (Beauty Therapy) highlights the role of practical assessments in reinforcing vocabulary. She explains that during assessments, she will ask students to identify specific muscles or techniques using the correct terminology, ensuring that they can apply their vocabulary knowledge in a hands-on setting.

The teachers emphasise that assessments should not solely focus on rote memorisation but should also evaluate students' ability to apply vocabulary in real-world scenarios. This approach reflects the practical nature of vocational education and the importance of preparing students for the workplace.

RF's use of mock practical exams, where students must plan, prepare, and evaluate a three-course meal, exemplifies this emphasis on application. The assessment requires students to demonstrate not only their culinary skills but also their understanding of culinary terminology and their ability to communicate using industry-specific language.

Similarly, the client sessions in ZK's beauty therapy courses provide students with opportunities to apply their vocabulary knowledge in real-world client interactions. This practical experience reinforces their understanding of technical terms and helps them develop the confidence to use them professionally.

4.10.9 The Importance of Cultural Context in Vocabulary Acquisition

The data suggests that understanding the cultural context of subject-specific vocabulary is important for students to fully grasp its meaning and usage. The teachers share anecdotes and personal experiences to illustrate the cultural nuances of language in their respective fields.

SA (Engineering), for instance, highlights the importance of understanding the specific terminology and jargon used in the military and aviation industries. He emphasises that using the correct terms is not just about accuracy but also about demonstrating professionalism and respect for the culture of these fields. Using a previous example, he recalls an anecdote about a student who used the term "thingamajig" to refer to a tool, illustrating the potential for miscommunication and misunderstanding when technical vocabulary is not used correctly.

Similarly, RF (Catering) emphasises the cultural context of culinary vocabulary. Encouraging students to visit South Asian shops to experience first-hand the ingredients and spices they are learning about, fosters a deeper understanding of culinary terminology beyond mere definitions. He also acknowledges the influence of French terminology in the culinary world and the need for students to understand its historical and cultural significance.

While not explicitly discussing cultural context, SDB (Joinery), implicitly conveys the importance of understanding the traditions and values associated with joinery. His Wakelet collection, which features images of handcrafted furniture and traditional tools, reflects the rich history and cultural heritage of the craft. By immersing students in this visual representation of joinery, SDB helps them to appreciate the cultural context in which the vocabulary and techniques they are learning have evolved.

ZK (Beauty Therapy), although primarily focused on the challenges of teaching Latin terminology, also touches upon the cultural context of beauty practices. She discusses the evolving societal views on beauty and wellness and how these changes have influenced the types of treatments offered and the skills required of beauty therapists. Her Wakelet collection, which includes images of diverse treatment modalities and references to relaxation and well-being, reflects the broader cultural context in which beauty therapy is situated.

In essence, mastering subject-specific vocabulary is not just about learning a set of words; it is about entering a professional community and acquiring the tools for effective communication and collaboration within that community. By emphasising the importance of vocabulary and providing students with the strategies and resources to master it, vocational educators can empower their students to succeed in their chosen fields and contribute meaningfully to their professions.

4.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the findings of the research, structured around three key research questions. The first question explores how vocational teachers acquire their pedagogical knowledge and practices. This research project addresses the stated aim and research questions. The analysis of the transcripts and Wakelet collections provides a rich and nuanced understanding of how occupational

culture is developed through vocational education. The inclusion of visual representations adds another dimension to the research, offering a glimpse into the lived experiences of vocational teachers and their students.

The findings highlight the interplay of formal training, industry experience, continuous professional development, and mentorship in shaping their teaching approaches. While formal training provides a foundation, industry experience is demonstrated to be a crucial factor, enabling teachers to contextualise theoretical concepts and model professional behaviours.

The second research question investigates how workplace practices, customs, and occupational cultures are embedded in the curriculum. The findings reveal a multifaceted approach that includes explicit instruction, implicit modelling, experiential learning, and the use of visual representations.

The third research question examines the importance of subject-specific vocabulary and how it is reinforced. The findings emphasise the critical role of vocabulary in vocational education and showcase various strategies employed by teachers, such as repetition, contextualisation, visual aids, and technology tools, to facilitate its acquisition.

The chapter concludes by highlighting the dynamic nature of occupational culture and the need for ongoing adaptation and innovation in vocational education to prepare students for the evolving workplace.

The subsequent chapter will delve deeper into the findings presented in this chapter, establishing connections between the empirical data and the theoretical frameworks explored in the literature review. The aim is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research findings, illuminating the intricate relationship between occupational culture, pedagogical practices, and subject-specific vocabulary in vocational education. By weaving together the voices of the participants with established theoretical perspectives, this analysis will offer a nuanced understanding of how occupational culture shapes the teaching and learning experience in vocational settings, ultimately contributing to the development of work-ready and culturally competent professionals.

5. The Heart of the Matter: Synthesising Theory and Practice in Vocational Education

"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view… Until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it."

- *To Kill a Mockingbird* - Harper Lee (1960)

This timeless wisdom, shared by Atticus Finch with his daughter Scout, resonates deeply with me. It reflects a philosophy of empathy that has not only shaped my personal values but also guided my approach to this research. Just as Atticus frames complex ideas in a way that Scout can grasp, I have sought to understand and interpret the perspectives embedded in my data with clarity and care.

In this chapter, I aim to "walk around" in the experiences and viewpoints of those who have contributed to this study. Whether through direct narratives, patterns in the data, or theoretical insights, I have strived to appreciate the context and complexity of each perspective before drawing conclusions. This process mirrors my own belief in the importance of empathy and understanding as central to meaningful analysis.

By adopting this lens, I hope to honour the diverse voices and experiences represented in this research while presenting findings that are both thoughtful and grounded. For me, this chapter is not just about presenting results; it is about embodying the principle of seeing through another's eyes - an approach I deeply value both in research and life.

5.1   Introduction

Chapter 2 of this thesis explored the multifaceted nature of culture, identity, knowledge, and learning, especially within the context of Further Education (FE). Key themes included exploring definitions of culture, its formation, and its manifestation in various occupational settings. The chapter also examined the interplay of social and professional identities, highlighting the concept of dual professionalism prevalent in FE teaching. Furthermore, the literature review discussed different types of knowledge, the theory-practice divide, and the challenges of transferring knowledge from industry to education. It also touched on pedagogical approaches relevant to vocational education, such as subject specialist pedagogy and embodied learning.

Chapter 4 then presented empirical findings from the study conducted in a large FE college, focusing on how teachers acquire and transmit occupational culture. The lecturer participants in the study acquire pedagogical knowledge and practices through a combination of formal training, industry experience, continuous professional development (CPD), and mentorship/collaboration. Industry experience is particularly important, as it provides lecturers with a deep understanding of the subject matter, industry standards, and workplace practices.

Workplace practices, customs, and occupational cultures are taught through explicit instruction, implicit modelling, experiential learning opportunities, and the use of visual representations. Lecturers emphasise the importance of adhering to industry standards and replicating workplace practices within the classroom.

Subject-specific vocabulary is also critical in vocational education, as it enables students to grasp complex concepts and communicate effectively within their professional communities. Lecturers use various strategies to teach and reinforce this vocabulary, including contextualisation, repetition, and visual aids.

The chapter highlights the dynamic nature of occupational culture and the need for ongoing adaptation and innovation in vocational education to prepare students for the evolving workplace. Lecturers discuss how they adapt their teaching to reflect changes in technology, societal attitudes, and economic factors.

The purpose of this discussion chapter is to synthesise the insights from the literature review with the empirical findings, forging connections between theoretical frameworks and real-world practices. By examining the alignment and divergence between the literature and the research, this chapter aims to offer a deeper understanding of occupational culture in FE teaching. Key areas of exploration will include the role of occupational identity in shaping pedagogical practices, the challenges of recontextualising industry knowledge for educational settings, and the effectiveness of different teaching strategies in transmitting occupational culture. Ultimately, this discussion seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on vocational education by bridging the gap between theory and practice and offering insights for improving the preparation of FE students for the workplace.

5.2   Occupational Culture and Identity in FE

This study explores the intricate relationship between occupational culture and identity within the FE sector, drawing upon both established theoretical frameworks and the lived experiences of practitioners. The literature on occupational culture provides a rich theoretical framework for understanding the participants' experiences and perceptions in this study. Key authors (Hofstede, 1991; Schein, 2014) offer definitions and models that resonate with the participants' narratives, shedding light on the complex and often unconscious forces that shape their work behaviours and relationships. Schein's (2014) multi-layered model of culture, encompassing artefacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions, aligns with the participants' descriptions of their occupational cultures.

5.2.1 Alignment of Literature and Participant Perspectives

The participants' experiences vividly illustrate the significance of artefacts and symbols in representing occupational cultures. ZK, for instance, highlights the importance of uniforms in beauty therapy, stating:

"I don't think there's ever been a day...that I haven't worn a uniform to teach because it's like...I'm representing the industry and the standards."

This resonates with the literature's emphasis on the symbolic role of uniforms in conveying professionalism and adherence to industry norms. Similarly, SDB's Wakelet collection emphasises the value of craftsmanship in joinery through images of hands and tools interacting with natural materials, culminating in the "tangible reward" of a beautifully crafted table and chairs.

Beyond artefacts, the participants also articulated the espoused values and norms that guide their work, such as a strong emphasis on professionalism, teamwork, and customer service. For example, SDB's emphasis on quality workmanship and attention to detail echoes the literature's, highlighting of craftsmanship in joinery. The images focus on hands and tools interacting with natural materials, symbolising the intimate connection between the joiner and their craft. The inclusion of a finished piece of furniture, a beautifully crafted table and chairs, represents the tangible reward of the joiner's skill and dedication. SDB implicitly conveyed the value of craftsmanship and attention to detail through his meticulous work.

Furthermore, the participants' narratives hinted at the deeper, often unspoken assumptions that underpin their occupational practices, such as the hierarchical structure in professional kitchens or the importance of discretion in policing. Hofstede's (1991) concept of culture as "the collective programming of the mind" also resonates with the participants' experiences. Their accounts suggest

that their occupational cultures are not merely a set of rules or procedures but are deeply ingrained ways of thinking and acting. The literature and the participants both recognise the role of practices and traditions in reinforcing occupational cultures. For example, the literature discusses the importance of standardised procedures in engineering, which is reflected in SA's insistence on adhering to industry standards in his teaching. He emphasises the importance of standardised procedures, stating that "they've got to do it in that really standardised way" because the consequences of errors in engineering can be severe. In one instance, SA recounts a situation where a student was working on a project and was unsure about a particular step. Instead of relying on guesswork or approximations, SA insisted that the student refer to the technical drawing and follow the precise measurements and specifications outlined. This anecdote highlights SA's dedication to ensuring that his students develop the skills and habits of precision that are essential in the engineering field.

The literature and the participants both highlight the importance of language and vocabulary in shaping occupational cultures. For example, the literature discusses the challenges of transferring tacit vocational knowledge, including subject-specific vocabulary, which is reflected in the participants' efforts to teach and reinforce technical terms in their respective fields. SA's teaching practices reflect this commitment to industry standards. He uses industry-standard equipment in his classes and ensures that his workshops and classrooms are set up to resemble real-world engineering environments. He also insists on students using the correct terminology for tools and equipment, emphasising that "we don't use thingies in engineering."

Schein's manifestations of culture are evident in their use of specialised language, their shared understanding of work practices, and their strong sense of identity as members of their respective professions. However, the participants' understanding of occupational culture also extends beyond the theoretical definitions. Their narratives highlight the dynamic and evolving nature of culture, shaped by individual experiences, workplace interactions, and broader societal influences. This suggests that occupational culture is not a static entity but is constantly being negotiated and reinterpreted by its members. The literature on occupational culture provides a valuable lens for understanding the participants' experiences. However, their narratives also highlight the need to go beyond the theoretical definitions and consider the lived experiences of individuals within their specific occupational contexts. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, this study offers a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of occupational culture in FE teaching.

5.2.2 Schein's layers and levels of culture in the context of FE

In the context of Further Education (FE), Schein's (2014) model of culture provides a valuable framework for understanding the complex interplay between organisational and occupational cultures. Schein's three levels - artefacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions - can be observed in both the broader FE institution and the specific occupational communities within it.

At the level of artefacts, FE colleges exhibit visible manifestations of their organisational culture, such as mission statements, logos, and physical layouts. These artefacts reflect the college's espoused values, such as a commitment to inclusivity, student success, and vocational excellence. However, Schein reminds us that artefacts alone do not reveal the deeper cultural assumptions that guide behaviour, these surface-level manifestations may mask underlying assumptions that are not immediately apparent.

The level of espoused values encompasses the explicitly stated beliefs and principles that guide behaviour in both organisational and occupational cultures. In FE, these values may include a focus on student-centred learning, collaboration, and industry relevance. Occupational cultures may espouse values like professionalism, ethical conduct, and a commitment to lifelong learning.

However, Schein cautions that espoused values may not always align with actual behaviour, and it is essential to examine the deeper level of basic underlying assumptions.

Basic underlying assumptions are the taken-for-granted beliefs and values that shape behaviour at an unconscious level. In FE, these assumptions may relate to the purpose of education, the role of teachers, and the nature of learning. Occupational cultures may have unspoken assumptions about hierarchy, teamwork, or the relationship between theory and practice. These assumptions are often difficult to identify and change, but they have a profound impact on behaviour and decision-making. The findings from Chapter 4 suggest that the participants' teaching practices were influenced by these underlying assumptions, often in ways that were not immediately apparent to them.

In the FE context, the interplay between organisational and occupational cultures can be complex and dynamic. For example, a college's emphasis on student-centred learning may align with the values of a teaching profession but clash with the hierarchical assumptions of a military culture. Understanding these cultural dynamics is key to effective leadership, collaboration, and student success.

The findings from Chapter 4 demonstrate the importance of examining culture at all three of Schein's levels to gain a comprehensive understanding of the forces that shape behaviour in FE. The participant's understanding of occupational culture aligns with Schein's theoretical framework but also highlights the evolving nature of culture, shaped by individual experiences and societal influences. This suggests that culture is constantly being negotiated and reinterpreted by its members, adding a further dimension to Schein's model. By recognising the interchange between organisational and occupational cultures, FE colleges can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all stakeholders, while also preparing students for the diverse cultural contexts they will encounter in the workplace. This understanding can also inform the development of more effective pedagogical strategies that bridge the gap between theory and practice, ultimately enhancing the quality of vocational education and training.

5.2.3 How social and professional identities intersect in FE teachers

Chapter 4 of this thesis illuminates the intersection of social and professional identities in FE teachers, particularly highlighting the concept of dual professionalism as discussed by Tajfel (1982), and Bucher and Stelling (1977) in Chapter 2. The findings illustrate how FE teachers navigate the complexities of holding multiple identities, shaped by their occupational backgrounds, teaching roles, and personal experiences.

The concept of dual professionalism, where teachers possess both occupational expertise and pedagogical knowledge, is evident in the participants' narratives. For instance, the chef lecturer articulated a strong sense of professional identity tied to his culinary background, using industry-specific language and drawing on his practical experience to inform his teaching. Simultaneously, he embraced his role as an educator, demonstrating pedagogical knowledge and a commitment to student learning. He emphasises his identity as a chef first and foremost, stating:

"I'm always going to be a chef at heart...it's more of a chef lecturer. The chef will always come first."

This aligns with Bucher and Stelling's (1977) definition of professional identity, which encompasses both the knowledge and skills of the profession and the individual's perception of themselves as a professional.

The findings also resonate with Tajfel's social identity theory (1971), which emphasises the importance of group membership in shaping individual identity. The participants identified strongly with their occupational communities, drawing on shared values, norms, and practices to inform their teaching. This sense of belonging to a professional group contributed to their self-esteem and

motivation as educators. SDB (Joinery) expresses pride in his teaching identity, stating that it is "more interesting than joinery" and that he is "very proud of being a teacher now." However, the findings also suggest that navigating multiple social identities can be challenging. Some participants experienced a sense of conflict between their occupational and teaching identities, particularly in terms of time management and professional development priorities. ZK (Beauty Therapy) describes the challenge of balancing her industry expertise with her teaching responsibilities, stating:

"I think when you're in the industry, it is... your CPD is wholly focused on the industry. But I think as soon as you go into teaching, it changes."

The research highlights the dynamic and evolving nature of professional identity in FE teachers. As they gain experience and navigate the complexities of their dual roles, their sense of self as educators and occupational experts may shift and evolve. This aligns with Wenger's (1998) concept of a nexus of multi-membership, where individuals negotiate their identities across different communities of practice. SDB (Joinery) expresses a desire to continue developing his industry skills while teaching but finds it challenging to balance this with his teaching commitments, asserting:

"I think it's [industry work] less... important to keep your hand in... I'd like to think that when I've got my ducks in a row here, then I'll have the opportunity to do that here as well."

These results provide valuable insights into how social and professional identities intersect in FE teachers. The concept of dual professionalism, as discussed in the literature, is evident in the participants' narratives, highlighting the complexities and rewards of holding multiple identities. This research therefore builds upon the theories of Tajfel (1982) and Bucher and Stelling (1977) by providing empirical evidence of how their concepts manifest in the lived experiences of FE teachers. Moreover, it adds a further dimension to the concept of dual professionalism by highlighting the dynamic and evolving nature of professional identity in FE teachers.

While the literature review predominantly focused on established concepts of occupational culture, identity, and knowledge transfer, the empirical findings revealed an unexpected theme: the prevalence of imposter syndrome among FE teachers. This phenomenon, characterised by feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt despite evidence of competence, has been widely documented in various professional fields (Clance and Imes, 1978; Sakulku, 2011). However, its presence in the context of FE teaching, particularly among those with strong industry backgrounds, was not anticipated in the initial literature review.

ZK (Beauty Therapy) provides a poignant example of this phenomenon. Despite her extensive industry experience and successful teaching career, she confessed to grappling with feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy, particularly when interacting with more academically qualified colleagues. She detailed:

"I do tend to have a little bit of imposter syndrome... especially when I'm surrounded by people that are very academic."

This quote highlights the internal conflict experienced by some FE teachers who may feel their industry experience is devalued compared to traditional academic qualifications. This resonates with Young's (1999) work on powerful knowledge, which proposes that knowledge acquired through academic disciplines is often privileged over practical or vocational knowledge.

ZK's experience also aligns with the broader literature on imposter syndrome, which suggests that it can affect individuals across various professions and levels of experience (Bravata *et al.*, 2020). However, what is curious about this result is that only the female participant in this study explicitly mentioned experiencing imposter syndrome. There is indeed a growing body of research on imposter syndrome in women, especially in fields like academia and STEM where they may face

additional pressures and stereotypes (see for example (Armstrong and Shulman, 2019; Beesley, Vece and Johnson-Ulrich, 2024, Muradoglu et al., 2022). While this finding might suggest a potential gendered dimension to imposter syndrome in FE, it is essential to approach this interpretation with caution due to the small sample size of this study. With only one female participant, it is impossible to draw definitive conclusions about the prevalence of imposter syndrome among female FE teachers compared to their male counterparts. The findings might not be generalisable to the broader population of FE teachers but an interesting observation nonetheless.

Further research is needed to explore the prevalence and impact of imposter syndrome in FE, particularly across different genders, subject areas, and levels of experience. Understanding this phenomenon can inform the development of targeted support and professional development initiatives to help FE teachers overcome feelings of self-doubt and recognise their valuable contributions to education.

5.2.4 Occupational communities and participants' sense of belonging and shared practices within their vocational fields

Salaman's (1974) work on occupational communities provides a valuable framework for understanding the participants' strong sense of belonging and shared practices within their vocational fields, as evidenced in Chapter 4. Salaman's key factors, including involvement in work tasks, marginal status, and inclusiveness of the work or organisational situation, offer a compelling explanation for the participants' strong identification with their occupational communities.

The participants' deep involvement in their work tasks, as evidenced by their use of specialised language, tools, and techniques, fostered a sense of shared expertise and identity. For example, the chef in the study spoke passionately about his culinary knowledge and skills, demonstrating a strong sense of pride in his craft. This was further emphasised by the Wakelet collection, featuring a variety of images that highlight the importance of professionalism and high levels of attention to detail. This resonates with Salaman's assertion that individuals in skilled trades often derive a sense of identity and community from their craft.

Furthermore, the participants' narratives suggested a sense of marginal status, particularly about their previous experiences in industry. Some participants described feeling undervalued or misunderstood by those outside their profession, which may have contributed to a stronger sense of solidarity within their occupational communities. This aligns with Salaman's observation that marginal status can strengthen bonds within a group, as individuals seek validation and recognition from those who share their experiences and values. For instance, ZK (Beauty Therapy) discussed the perception that beauty therapy is "not a proper job" and how this can create a sense of marginalisation within the broader FE context. This mirrors Salaman's observation that occupations with lower social status or prestige often develop stronger internal bonds as a form of self-preservation and resistance against external devaluation. Similarly, RF (Catering) mentioned the challenges of gaining recognition for the culinary profession, despite its demanding nature and high skill level. This echoes Salaman's argument that the struggle for recognition and legitimacy can be a powerful driver of community formation within marginalised occupational groups.

Finally, the inclusiveness of the work or organisational situation played a role in shaping the participants' sense of belonging. The shared experiences of working in demanding environments, such as professional kitchens or construction sites, fostered a sense of camaraderie and mutual support. This supports Salaman's argument that the inclusiveness of the work situation contributes to the formation of occupational communities, as individuals develop strong bonds through shared challenges and collective achievements. For example, SDB (Joinery) described the close-knit community within his previous joinery workshop, where he worked alongside his employer and a small team of apprentices for 16 years. He also mentioned the "family-type vibe" within this

workplace and how this contributed to a strong sense of belonging. This finding supports Salaman's assertion that shared work experiences, particularly in physically demanding or high-pressure environments, can create a sense of solidarity and mutual dependence among workers.

The findings of this study are largely congruent with Salaman's (1974) theory of occupational communities. The participants' narratives demonstrate how shared practices, marginal status, and the inclusiveness of the work situation contribute to a strong sense of belonging and identity within vocational fields. However, this extends Salaman's work by providing empirical evidence of these concepts in the context of FE teaching, highlighting the nuances and complexities of dual professionalism. This is a particularly useful finding, as we can infer that recognising and valuing the occupational identities of vocational teachers enhances their sense of belonging and professional development.

5.2.5 Passion, Craftsmanship and Professionalism

While the literature review in Chapter 2 predominantly focused on the broader themes of occupational culture, identity, and knowledge transfer, the empirical findings highlighted an unexpected theme: the significant role of passion and personal values in shaping the participants' teaching practices. This theme was interpreted organically from the data, suggesting that passion and personal values are integral to understanding how FE teachers conceptualise and communicate occupational culture. This finding underscores the importance of considering the affective dimension of teaching and learning in vocational education, which aligns with Illeris's (2003) theory of workplace learning, emphasising the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning.

Echoing Richard Sennett's (2008) profound exploration of craftsmanship in The Craftsman, this study highlights the vital role of passion and commitment in vocational teaching. Sennett argues that craftsmanship transcends mere technical skill; it embodies a deep engagement with the materials, tools, and processes of a craft, fuelled by a genuine passion for the work itself. This resonates with the findings of this research, which reveal that the participants' passion for their respective crafts is a driving force in their teaching practices. The participants' narratives illustrate how their passion motivates them to not only teach technical skills but also to instil a love for the craft in their students. For example, RF (Catering) speaks of his enduring love for cooking and the satisfaction he derives from seeing his students develop their culinary skills and creativity. He emphasises the importance of going beyond the basics and encouraging students to explore the artistry and passion that underpin the culinary profession. His Wakelet collection, featuring images of appetising dishes and bustling kitchens, visually reinforces this passion for food and the culinary arts.

Similarly, ZK (Beauty Therapy) recounts how her initial inspiration to teach stemmed from a "fantastic tutor" who radiated a contagious passion for the beauty industry:

"I just loved her whole like ethics and approach and like, her passion for the industry came across."

This tutor's enthusiasm left a lasting impression on ZK, fuelling her desire to share that same passion with future students.   SDB (Joinery) also highlights the importance of passion in his teaching practice. He aims to instil in his students an appreciation for the craft of joinery, highlighting the satisfaction of creating beautiful and functional pieces. He explains:

"It's nice to see them produce something that they didn't think they were capable of."

This quote reflects SDB's belief that passion for a subject can be nurtured by providing students with opportunities to achieve success and develop confidence in their abilities.

The participants recognise that passion is not simply taught but rather nurtured and inspired. They employ various strategies to ignite enthusiasm in their students, such as sharing personal anecdotes, challenging students to experiment, and highlighting the real-world relevance of their subjects. ZK

(Beauty Therapy) frequently shares stories from her career, both humorous and challenging, to illustrate the realities of the beauty industry and the importance of resilience and professionalism. These anecdotes not only make the learning experience more engaging but also humanise the profession and make it more relatable for students. SA (Engineering) highlights the practical applications of engineering principles, underscoring the impact that engineers can have on society and the environment. By showcasing the real-world relevance of their subject, he aims to spark students' interest and demonstrate the potential for meaningful contributions through engineering. The inclusion of images of aircraft and military operations in his Wakelet collection further reinforces this connection to real-world applications.

In addition to passion, the participants also stressed the importance of professionalism, work ethic, and resilience in their professions. They viewed these qualities as essential for success in the workplace and actively sought to instil them in their students. ZK (Beauty Therapy) stressed the importance of maintaining high standards of personal grooming and professional conduct, even in the classroom. In addition to the earlier quote on uniforms, her Wakelet collection further reinforces this emphasis on professionalism, featuring images of therapists in neat uniforms and well-maintained salon environments. RF (Catering) echoed this sentiment, stressing the need for discipline, timekeeping, and the ability to work under pressure in the culinary industry. He modelled these qualities in his teaching, setting high expectations for his students and pushing them to develop their skills and resilience. SDB (Joinery) implicitly conveyed the value of craftsmanship and attention to detail through his meticulous work and high expectations for his students. His pride in his craft and his commitment to quality workmanship served as a powerful example for his students. The images in his Wakelet collection, showcasing the beauty and intricacy of handcrafted joinery, further reinforce this message.

In essence, the participants' passion for their crafts acts as a catalyst for their teaching, motivating them to not only impart knowledge and skills but also to cultivate a similar passion in their students. This resonates with Sennett's assertion that craftsmanship thrives on passion, dedication, and a deep connection to the work itself. By fostering a love for their crafts in their students, these FE teachers are not only preparing them for future employment but also nurturing a sense of pride and purpose in their work. This, in turn, contributes to the perpetuation of craftsmanship and the ongoing development of skilled professionals in their respective fields.

5.2.6 The Influence of Educational Experiences on Teaching Approaches

The participants' own educational experiences significantly shaped their teaching approaches, highlighting the lasting impact of both positive and negative learning encounters. This resonates with the broader literature on teacher identity and development, which emphasises the role of past experiences in shaping pedagogical beliefs and practices. For instance, Beijaard *et al.* (2004) argue that teachers' identities are formed through a complex interplay of personal experiences, professional development, and social interactions. This study provides empirical support for this notion, demonstrating how past experiences as learners can influence individuals' pedagogical approaches and beliefs about teaching and learning. However, it also extends this line of inquiry by specifically examining the influence of prior educational experiences on the pedagogical approaches of FE teachers, a population often underrepresented in research on teacher identity.

ZK (Beauty Therapy) and RF (Catering) spoke positively about their own experiences of education. ZK was inspired by a passionate tutor who instilled in her a love for the beauty industry and demonstrated the power of enthusiastic, student-centred teaching. This aligns with the research of Day and Gu (2014), which suggests that positive experiences with inspiring teachers can motivate individuals to enter the teaching profession and adopt similar pedagogical approaches. RF, on the other hand, valued the structured training and industry exposure he received in hotel management school. This experience fostered in him a belief in the importance of discipline, high expectations,

and a strong connection between education and industry. His current teaching practices reflect these values, demonstrating the enduring impact of positive learning experiences on pedagogical beliefs. However, this study also adds a further dimension by exploring how RF's personal values and cultural background intersect with his professional identity and pedagogical approach, creating a unique blend of influences that shape his teaching practices.

SDB (Joinery) had mixed experiences. He withdrew from university, enrolling on an apprenticeship and valuing the serious atmosphere of an older cohort at college. This contrast highlights the potential for both positive and negative experiences to shape pedagogical beliefs. SDB's appreciation for hands-on learning and a mature learning environment is reflected in his teaching, where he accentuates practical skills and encourages a focused and disciplined approach. This finding aligns with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, which emphasises the importance of concrete experience and reflective observation in the learning process. It also resonates with Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of situated learning, which highlights the role of social context and authentic practice in knowledge acquisition. However, the findings challenge the view that experiential learning alone is sufficient for effective teaching, as SDB also reinforces the importance of structured training and theoretical knowledge in his pedagogical approach.

SA (Engineering) recounted boredom and disengagement at school, emphasising the need for stimulating learning experiences. This negative experience shaped his teaching style, as he strives to make his lessons engaging and relevant to his students' interests and abilities. This result reflects Robson, Bailey and Larkin's (2004) work on the importance of creating meaningful learning experiences that resonate with students' lives and aspirations. SA's focus on active learning and real-world applications can also be linked to constructivist theories of learning, which underline the importance of student agency and knowledge construction, for example, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory and Eraut's (2004) focus on implicit and explicit learning in the workplace. Additionally, SA's military background and experiences of formal training have influenced his pedagogical practices as he recounts these fondly in class.

This discussion of the impact of participants' educational experiences on their teaching approaches illustrates how their experiences as learners have shaped their current identities as teachers. This aligns with the research of Beijaard *et al.* (2004), which suggests that teachers' identities are formed through a complex interplay of personal experiences, professional development, and social interactions. The participants' own educational experiences have played a crucial role in shaping their teaching approaches and pedagogical beliefs. These findings have significant implications for FE teacher education and professional development. They suggest that effective preparation for vocational teaching requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond traditional pedagogical training. This includes considering the lasting impact of both positive and negative learning experiences on the development of FE teachers. By reflecting on their own experiences as learners, FE teachers can gain valuable insights into effective pedagogy and develop teaching practices that foster student engagement, motivation, and ultimately success.

5.3   Knowledge and Learning in Vocational Education

Chapter 4 specifically emphasises the diverse ways in which different types of knowledge manifest in FE teaching, particularly the relationship between theoretical and practical knowledge. This section will delve into those findings, drawing upon examples from Chapter 4 and the transcripts to illustrate the multifaceted nature of knowledge in vocational education. The participants' narratives and teaching practices demonstrate how they draw on various forms of knowledge, including techne (technique), phronesis (practical wisdom), and episteme (theoretical knowledge), to create positive learning experiences for their students. This research, however, challenges the traditional Aristotelian binary between theoretical and practical knowledge, arguing for a more integrated approach that recognises the interdependence of these forms of knowledge.

5.3.1 How Different Types of Knowledge Manifest in FE Teaching

Aristotle's distinction between different types of knowledge, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, provides a useful framework for understanding the complex interplay between theoretical and practical knowledge in FE teaching, which is further illuminated by the findings.

The findings of this study offer support for Aristotle's philosophy. The concept of techne, or practical skill, is central to FE teaching, particularly in vocational subjects. The participants, who came from various occupational backgrounds, possessed a high level of techne in their respective fields. For example, the chef lecturer demonstrated his culinary expertise by skilfully preparing dishes and explaining the techniques involved. This practical knowledge was not merely a matter of rote memorisation but involved a deep understanding of the underlying principles and the ability to adapt to different situations. The findings highlight that impactful FE teaching often involves a strong foundation of theoretical knowledge that underpins practical skills. For example, SA (Engineering) explains how his theoretical understanding of engineering principles, gained through formal education and industry experience, informs his approach to teaching practical skills:

"It's getting them to use the correct names for things, but the biggest one is using the correct words for the tools and equipment. So if you're in the workshop, 'get me get me a...' 'What's that? What does it look like?' 'Yeah, you know, flat-bladed screwdriver' and some of them, some of them at that age, don't know what a hammer is or a mallet. What's the difference between a hammer and a mallet and things like that is something we teach a lot."

This example illustrates how theoretical knowledge about tools and their specific uses is essential for the safe and effective execution of practical tasks.

Episteme, or theoretical knowledge, also plays a role in FE teaching, although its importance may vary depending on the subject and level of study. The participants demonstrated episteme in their understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of their subjects, such as the scientific principles of cooking or the legal frameworks of business. This theoretical knowledge helped them to explain complex concepts to their students and to provide a broader context for their practical skills.

The findings suggest that practical knowledge can inform and enhance theoretical understanding. For instance, SDB (Joinery) explains how his practical experience as a joiner for 16 years has given him a deep understanding of the craft, which he now uses to contextualise theoretical concepts for his students:

"Well, I stayed with the same employer for my entire career, actually. So yeah. So it was just me and him for 16 years, I still work the occasional Saturday to keep my hand in."

This quote demonstrates how practical experience can provide a rich foundation for understanding theoretical concepts, making them more relevant and meaningful for students.

Phronesis, or practical wisdom, is another key aspect of FE teaching. It involves the ability to make sound judgments and decisions in complex situations, drawing on both theoretical knowledge and practical experience. The participants demonstrated phronesis in their ability to adapt their teaching to the diverse needs of their students, incorporating real-world examples and industry-relevant practices. They also showed phronesis in their ability to navigate the challenges of recontextualising knowledge from industry to education, making complex concepts accessible and meaningful for their students. The participants emphasised the need for students to develop critical thinking skills and the ability to apply their knowledge in complex real-world situations, reflecting the Aristotelian ideal of the virtuous practitioner.

The findings highlight the relationship between theoretical and practical knowledge in FE teaching. The participants did not simply transmit knowledge to their students but actively engaged them in

the process of knowledge construction, encouraging them to develop their techne, phronesis, and episteme. The participants in the study employ various strategies to integrate theoretical and practical knowledge in their teaching. For example, RF (Catering) frequently uses demonstrations in his culinary classes to showcase various cooking methods and culinary techniques, and SDB (Joinery) has his students work on scaled-down projects to develop their hand skills and familiarise themselves with tools. Both RF (Catering) and SA (Engineering) emphasise the value of industry placements and visits in helping students connect theory to practice.

By bridging the gap between theory and practice, they helped their students to develop a deeper understanding of their subjects and to prepare them for the challenges of the workplace. However, despite the recognised importance of both theoretical and practical knowledge, the findings also highlight the challenges FE teachers face in balancing the two. ZK (Beauty Therapy) notes the difficulty of providing students with adequate hands-on experience with expensive equipment, while SDB (Joinery) and RF (Catering) discuss the challenge of keeping the curriculum up-to-date with the latest industry developments.

Therefore, this research extends but also challenges certain aspects of Aristotle's ideas. While Aristotle valued theory over practice, placing episteme at the pinnacle of his hierarchy of knowledge, this study challenges that binary. The findings suggest that practical and theoretical knowledge are not mutually exclusive but rather interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Practical skills inform and enhance theoretical understanding, while theoretical knowledge provides a foundation for the development and refinement of practical skills. The participants' narratives demonstrate how these different types of knowledge inform and enhance each other in practice, creating a more holistic and integrated approach to vocational learning.

Furthermore, this research contradicts Aristotle's hierarchical view of knowledge, which prioritises theoretical knowledge above practical knowledge. The findings suggest that both forms of knowledge are essential for success in vocational fields, challenging the traditional privileging of abstract intellectualism over practical skills and experience.

While Aristotle's distinction between different types of knowledge remains relevant, this study argues for a more nuanced and integrated approach that recognises the complexities and interdependence of theoretical and practical knowledge. This has significant implications for pedagogical practices in FE, suggesting a need for curricula and teaching methods that foster the development of both practical skills and theoretical understanding, as well as the ability to integrate and apply these different forms of knowledge in real-world contexts.

5.3.2   The Challenges of Recontextualising Knowledge from Industry to Education

The literature highlights the challenges of recontextualising knowledge from industry to education, particularly the difficulties in translating tacit, experiential knowledge into codified, teachable content. Bernstein (1999) and Evans *et al*. (2010) discuss the complexities of this process, emphasising the need to bridge the gap between theoretical and practical knowledge. Particularly for knowledge that is tacit, context-dependent, and embedded in practice. These challenges are reflected in the experiences of the participants, who grappled with transforming their industry expertise into effective pedagogical practices. However, this research also extends the existing literature by providing empirical evidence of these challenges within the specific context of FE teaching and by highlighting the diverse strategies employed by teachers to overcome these challenges.

One key challenge is the tacit nature of much occupational knowledge. As highlighted in the literature, tacit knowledge is often difficult to articulate and codify, as it is deeply embedded in

practice and experience. This was evident in the participants' narratives, as they struggled to explain certain aspects of their occupational culture that they had internalised through years of experience. For example, the chef lecturer found it challenging to articulate the unspoken rules and norms of the professional kitchen, which they had acquired through observation and participation. He states:

"And when you're not prepared to produce [or] perform in that two-hour window, you will be shouted at. But it's nothing personal. You need to take it on the chin and then life moves on."

This statement illustrates the difficulty of conveying the unwritten rules of conduct and performance expectations that are deeply ingrained in the culture of professional kitchen culture. These unspoken norms, often learned through observation and first-hand experience, can be difficult to articulate or codify, yet they are central to success in the culinary world. This resonates with Bernstein's concept of horizontal discourse, which is often tacit, context-dependent, and resistant to codification.

There can be a disconnect between the standards and practices of industry and the realities of the educational setting. This can make it difficult to create authentic learning experiences that adequately prepare students for the workplace. For example, ZK (Beauty Therapy) notes the difficulty of providing students with adequate hands-on experience with expensive equipment:

"Level 3 Beauty is...where it kind of hits a bit of a barrier because Level 3 they learned all the body electricals and facial electricals. Those machines are incredibly expensive and they're so well used."

Additionally, industry knowledge and practices are constantly evolving, making it challenging for FE lecturers to stay current and ensure that their teaching is up-to-date. For example, SDB (Joinery) mentions having to update his curriculum to include new timber treatments that were not covered in the original qualification:

"I've updated it myself with a few timbers this might sound strange, but there's wood products, well, there's wood that's available now that wasn't available when this qualification was thought up just in terms of treatment and what they do to it, so there's a there's an item that I've added to my, to my theory work, which wasn't there before."

Another challenge is the need to recontextualise knowledge for a different audience and purpose. In industry, knowledge is often acquired and applied in specific contexts, whereas in education, it needs to be presented in a more generalised and structured manner. This requires teachers to adapt their knowledge and practices to a learning environment, which can be a complex and demanding process. The participants faced this challenge as they attempted to translate their industry-specific knowledge into curriculum content and teaching strategies that were appropriate for their students. For example, SDB (Joinery) highlights the difficulty of balancing the need to teach to industry standards with the need to provide students with a supportive and engaging learning experience. He explains how he has had to adapt his teaching style to accommodate students with varying levels of motivation and skill, while also ensuring that they meet the rigorous demands of the joinery trade. This reflects Evans *et al*.'s (2010) concept of pedagogical recontextualisation, where teachers must transform industry knowledge into pedagogically sound practices.

Despite these challenges, the FE lecturers in this study demonstrated a commitment to recontextualising their industry knowledge and experience for the benefit of their students. They employed various strategies to bridge the gap between industry and education, such as drawing on their industry experience to contextualise theoretical concepts and provide real-world examples, using authentic workplace scenarios and simulations in their teaching, engaging in ongoing professional development to stay current with industry trends and technologies, and collaborating with industry partners to provide students with work placements and other experiential learning opportunities.

The above also highlights the importance of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) (see for example Shulman, 1987), which involves understanding how to effectively teach specific content to particular learners. This aligns with Shulman's argument that effective teaching involves the transformation of content knowledge into pedagogically powerful forms. This requires teachers to not only possess subject matter expertise but also pedagogical expertise. The participants demonstrated varying levels of PCK, with some struggling to effectively bridge the gap between their industry knowledge and their students' learning needs. This suggests that developing PCK is a crucial aspect of recontextualising knowledge for education. For instance, RF (Catering) initially struggled to adapt his industry-focused training style to a more learner-centred approach. He gradually developed his PCK through experience, reflection, and collaboration with colleagues, incorporating more interactive and engaging teaching strategies.

The challenges of recontextualising knowledge from industry to education are significant, as highlighted in the literature and reflected in the participants' experiences. These challenges include the tacit nature of occupational knowledge, the need to adapt knowledge for a different audience and purpose, and the importance of developing pedagogical content knowledge. Additionally, this research highlights the importance of recognising and valuing the industry experience of FE lecturers and of providing them with the support and resources they need to effectively recontextualise their knowledge for the educational setting. By understanding these challenges, I assert that the FE sector can better support teachers in their efforts to bridge the gap between industry and education, ultimately enhancing the quality of vocational education and training.

5.3.3 The Role of Workplace Learning Theories in Understanding How FE Teachers Acquire and Transmit Occupational Knowledge

Workplace learning theories, as exemplified by the work of Eraut (2004), Illeris (2003), and Engeström (2001), offer valuable insights into how FE teachers acquire and transmit occupational knowledge, as reflected in the findings. These theories emphasise the importance of experiential learning, social interaction, and the integration of theoretical and practical knowledge, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains in vocational education, which are key aspects of the participants' teaching practices.

Eraut's (2004) emphasis on implicit and explicit learning resonates with the participants' experiences of acquiring occupational knowledge through both formal training and on-the-job experience. For example, the chef lecturer described learning culinary techniques through observation and practice in a professional kitchen, which aligns with Eraut's concept of implicit learning. He also acquired explicit knowledge through formal culinary education, which helped them to understand the theoretical underpinnings of his craft. This supports Eraut's belief that effective workplace learning often involves combining implicit and explicit knowledge acquisition.

Similarly, SDB (Joinery) discusses the knowledge he gained through his apprenticeship and subsequent employment as a joiner. He explains how he learned through observation, imitation, and hands-on experience, reflecting Eraut's concept of implicit learning. However, he also highlights the importance of formal training in providing a structured understanding of joinery principles and techniques, aligning with Eraut's concept of explicit learning.

Illeris's (2003) focus on cognitive, affective, and skills-based learning is evident in the participants' teaching practices. They not only transmitted technical skills to their students but also fostered their cognitive understanding of the subject matter and their affective engagement with the occupational culture. For instance, the construction lecturer encouraged students to reflect on the ethical implications of their work, demonstrating the importance of affective learning alongside technical skills. This is further supported by ZK (Beauty Therapy), who discusses the importance of instilling professionalism and ethical conduct in her students:

"I think they know I'm, you know...firm but fair...These are my standards. These are what I expect...I have high standards of the industry and I want you to."

This account highlights a second example of the affective dimension of learning, where teachers aim to shape students' attitudes and values to align with the professional standards of their industry.

Engeström's (2001) expansive learning theory, which emphasises the transformation of existing knowledge structures, is reflected in the participants' efforts to adapt their industry knowledge to the educational context. They did not simply replicate their workplace practices but actively recontextualised them for their students, creating learning experiences that were both relevant and engaging. This aligns with Engeström's view of learning as an expansive process that involves the whole person and their environment.

Furthermore, SA (Engineering) discusses how he has adapted his industry experience to create a learning environment that simulates real-world engineering practices. He explains how he uses industry-standard equipment and software in his teaching and how he has designed his workshops and classrooms to resemble real-world engineering environments. This aligns with Engeström's notion of creating "activity systems" that foster expansive learning by connecting individual actions to broader social and cultural contexts.

The findings demonstrate how FE teachers draw on a combination of implicit and explicit learning, cognitive, affective, and skills-based learning, and the transformation of existing knowledge structures to acquire and transmit occupational knowledge. For instance, by recognising the importance of experiential learning, colleges could facilitate opportunities for teachers to engage in industry placements or collaborate with industry professionals. Similarly, understanding the role of social interaction in learning could lead to the development of more collaborative teaching practices and the creation of communities of practice where teachers can share their knowledge and experiences. It can therefore be assumed that by incorporating insights from workplace learning theories, FE colleges can enhance the quality of vocational education and training, ultimately preparing students for success in their chosen fields.

5.3.4 Pedagogical Content Knowledge and Subject Specialist Pedagogy

The literature on pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and subject specialist pedagogy, as discussed in Chapter 2, provides an established framework for understanding the teaching practices and strategies of the participants in Chapter 4. Shulman's (1987) concept of PCK emphasises the importance of teachers understanding both the subject matter they teach and the effective ways to teach it.

The findings of this study indicate that the participants possessed varying levels of PCK and subject specialist pedagogy, aligning with Shulman's (1987) assertion that effective teaching requires a complex interplay of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. The chef lecturer (RF), for instance, demonstrated a strong understanding of both the culinary arts and the innovative ways to teach them. His use of a variety of pedagogical strategies, such as demonstrations, practical activities, and reflective discussions, aligns with Shulman's concept of PCK, which emphasises the integration of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge to create effective teaching practices. Furthermore, RF's deep understanding of the occupational culture of the culinary industry, which he actively incorporated into his teaching to create a more authentic learning environment, aligns with Shulman's (2005) work on subject specialist pedagogy, which highlights the importance of understanding the specific cultural context of a subject area to teach it effectively. Coffield (2008, p.13) supports this view, jovially commenting that "the pedagogy needed to teach engineering is obviously different from that needed to teach child care. If not, we shall end up with rather mechanically-minded nurses and child-centred engineers."

Similarly, ZK (Beauty Therapy) exemplified a strong understanding of both the beauty industry and impactful teaching strategies. Her deep knowledge of the field, acquired through years of experience, enables her to provide students with a rich and authentic learning experience. She can demonstrate complex massage techniques, explain the underlying principles, and share insights into the occupational culture of the industry. Moreover, her understanding of varied teaching strategies allows her to translate her expertise into engaging and accessible lessons for her students. She employs a variety of pedagogical approaches, including demonstrations, hands-on activities, and reflective discussions, to cater to diverse learning needs and promote active learning. By combining her industry knowledge with pedagogical skills, she creates a learning environment that is both informative and inspiring, which she believes effectively prepares students for the demands of the beauty therapy profession.

In contrast, other participants, like the construction lecturer (SDB), were still developing their PCK and subject specialist pedagogy. He had a strong understanding of the technical aspects of the subject but was less comfortable with the pedagogical aspects of teaching. However, despite this perceived lack of teaching experience, he was still able to incorporate real-world examples and industry-relevant practices into his teaching. This suggests that subject specialist pedagogy is not solely about pedagogical expertise but also about the teacher's ability to connect the subject matter to the students' experiences and interests.

The findings suggest that the participants' PCK and subject specialist pedagogy were shaped by a variety of factors, including their prior occupational experience, their formal teacher training, and their ongoing professional development. Those with extensive industry experience tended to have a stronger understanding of the occupational culture and the practical skills required for success in the field. However, they may have lacked formal training in pedagogy and may have struggled to translate their tacit knowledge into practical teaching strategies.

Conversely, those with strong pedagogical skills may have lacked the depth of subject matter knowledge and industry experience necessary to effectively teach occupational subjects. This suggests that the ideal FE teacher possesses a strong combination of PCK and subject specialist pedagogy, developed through a combination of formal training, industry experience, and ongoing professional development.

5.3.5 The Role of Embodied Learning and The Importance of Role Modelling in Transmitting Occupational Culture

Hyland's (2019) concept of embodied learning, which emphasises the physical and sensory aspects of knowledge acquisition, is intertwined with the importance of role modelling in transmitting occupational culture, as evidenced by the findings. The participants in the study, through their teaching practices and narratives, demonstrated how the embodiment of occupational practices and the presence of role models contribute to the transmission of cultural norms and values.

The chef lecturer, for instance, didn't just verbally explain culinary techniques; he physically demonstrated them, allowing students to observe and emulate their movements, posture, and handling of tools. This embodied practice not only imparted technical skills but also conveyed the chef's passion, precision, and respect for ingredients - intangible aspects of culinary culture. Similarly, the construction lecturer, by using industry-standard tools and materials, provided students with a tangible connection to the occupational environment. The physicality of handling these tools and materials helped students to develop a sense of familiarity and competence, contributing to their enculturation into the construction industry. Furthermore, the participants themselves served as role models, embodying the values and behaviours associated with their respective professions. The engineering lecturer, through his demeanour and interactions with students, exemplified professionalism, ethical conduct, and a commitment to public service. This

role modelling helped students to understand the expectations and responsibilities associated with a career in the military.

The findings also suggest that role modelling goes beyond simply demonstrating technical skills or professional behaviours. It also involves conveying the passion, dedication, and pride associated with a particular occupation. The chef lecturer's enthusiasm for his craft, for instance, was infectious, inspiring students to develop a similar appreciation for the culinary arts.

The findings support the importance of embodied learning and role modelling in conveying occupational culture. By physically demonstrating occupational practices and embodying the values and behaviours associated with their professions, FE teachers can create a more authentic and engaging learning experience for their students. This can help students develop a deeper understanding of their chosen fields, a stronger sense of professional identity, and a greater sense of readiness for the workplace.

5.3.6 Challenges in Replicating the Workplace

Technology plays a crucial role in enabling FE teachers to simulate workplace practices and provide students with access to industry-standard tools and equipment. This is particularly important in vocational education, where hands-on experience with industry-relevant technology can significantly enhance students' skills and employability.

Several artefacts highlighted the use of technology in their teaching. SA (Engineering) discussed the use of simulators and virtual reality (VR) headsets to provide students with a realistic experience of working on aircraft and other engineering equipment. He explained that these technologies allow students to practice skills and procedures in a safe and controlled environment before applying them in real-world settings. Similarly, ZK (Beauty Therapy) mentioned using online resources and videos to demonstrate treatment techniques and provide students with access to information beyond the textbook. She also discussed the use of social media to connect with industry professionals and stay updated on the latest trends and techniques.

The role of technology in simulating workplace practices is further illustrated in the participants' Wakelet collections. The "Engineering - Military" Wakelet featured images of flight simulators and other advanced technology used in the aviation industry. The "IT Industry" Wakelet included references to cloud computing, cybersecurity, and other cutting-edge technologies that are shaping the IT landscape.

In addition to simulating workplace practices, technology also provides students with access to industry-standard tools and equipment that they may not otherwise have the opportunity to use. This is particularly important in fields like engineering and beauty therapy, where specialised equipment can be expensive and difficult to acquire.   For example, SA (Engineering) explained how the college has invested in industry-standard CAD software and CNC machines to ensure that students are trained on the same equipment they will encounter in the workplace. Similarly, ZK (Beauty Therapy) mentioned the importance of having access to a variety of treatment machines and products to provide students with a well-rounded education in beauty therapy.

The use of technology in FE can be linked to the broader literature on vocational pedagogy and workplace learning. For example, Illeris's (2003) theory of workplace learning emphasises the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning. Technology can play a key role in facilitating this integration by providing opportunities for students to develop both theoretical understanding and practical skills. Furthermore, Engeström's (2001) theory of expansive learning highlights the importance of transforming existing knowledge structures and creating new learning opportunities. Technology can support expansive learning by providing access to new information

and tools, facilitating collaboration and knowledge sharing, and enabling students to engage in authentic problem-solving activities.

This research has found that technology plays a vital role in simulating workplace practices, providing access to industry-standard tools and equipment, and enhancing the overall quality of vocational education. By incorporating technology into their teaching, FE teachers can create more engaging and relevant learning experiences that prepare students for success in the modern workplace. However, challenges exist in funding and access to such resources.

One of the most significant challenges to replicating authentic workplace environments in the FE classroom is the availability of resources. Limited budgets, space constraints, and the high cost of industry-standard equipment can all hinder the ability to fully mirror the workplace setting. This is particularly pertinent in vocational areas that rely heavily on specialised tools and technologies.

For instance, ZK (Beauty Therapy) eloquently articulated the difficulties she faces in providing her students with sufficient hands-on experience with expensive treatment machines.

This constraint not only limits the time each student can spend practising essential skills but may also compromise the development of the speed and efficiency expected in a real-world salon environment. This resonates with Evans *et al*.'s (2010) work on workplace recontextualisation, which highlights the inevitable compromises that occur when transferring authentic workplace practices into the educational setting due to resource limitations. The disparity between the resource-rich environment of a professional salon and the constraints of a college classroom underscores the challenge of achieving complete authenticity in vocational training.

Furthermore, this challenge raises questions about equity and access in FE. If students from less affluent backgrounds are less likely to have access to industry-standard equipment in their educational settings, it could potentially perpetuate existing inequalities in access to skilled employment opportunities. This highlights the need for continued investment in FE resources to ensure that all students have the opportunity to develop the skills and experience necessary to succeed in their chosen fields.

Maintaining a safe learning environment is paramount in FE, and this can sometimes necessitate modifications to authentic workplace practices. Safety regulations and educational policies often impose stricter guidelines than those found in industry settings, particularly when working with potentially hazardous tools or equipment. For example, SA (Engineering) explained how he has to prioritise student safety when teaching practical skills in the aviation engineering workshops:

"I've got to teach them how to safely use tools and equipment... I can't just let them loose on an aircraft with a spanner."

This highlights the need for FE teachers to adapt workplace practices to ensure they meet the specific safety requirements of an educational setting. Similarly, RF (Catering) discussed the importance of teaching safe knife-handling skills in his culinary classes:

"I have to be very careful when teaching knife skills... I make sure they understand the correct techniques and safety precautions before they even touch a knife."

Similarly, SDB (Joinery) discussed the importance of providing a structured learning environment for his students:

"I think it's important to have a balance between freedom and structure in the workshop... Students need to be able to experiment and make mistakes, but they also need clear guidance and support."

This demonstrates the responsibility of FE teachers to instil safe working practices in their students, even if it means modifying certain techniques or procedures compared to how they might be performed in a professional workplace.

While these modifications may slightly detract from the authenticity of the workplace simulation, they are essential to prioritise student safety and well-being. However, it is important for FE teachers to be transparent with students about these adaptations, explaining the rationale behind them and emphasising the importance of adhering to safety protocols in both educational and professional settings. This not only promotes a culture of safety but also prepares students to be responsible and safety-conscious practitioners in their future careers. This activity involves careful consideration of how to replicate real-world working environments while also providing appropriate support and scaffolding for learners. For example, while exposing students to the fast-paced, high-pressure environment of a professional kitchen can be beneficial, it's also important to provide a structured learning environment where students feel safe to make mistakes and learn at their own pace. This might involve breaking down complex tasks into smaller steps, providing clear demonstrations and instructions, and offering regular feedback and support. Similarly, in a construction workshop, students might need initial guidance and supervision when using power tools or operating machinery, even if such close supervision wouldn't be typical on a professional construction site or workshop.

5.3.7 External Factors

Funding cuts in FE can have a detrimental impact on the ability to effectively teach workplace practices and cultures. Reduced budgets can lead to several challenges such as fewer resources for staff, equipment, and materials. This can limit the ability to create authentic workplace simulations and provide students with access to industry-standard tools and technology. For example, ZK (Beauty Therapy) highlighted the impact of funding cuts on her department:

"We've had to make cutbacks... We've had to reduce the number of specialist products we use, and we've had to make do with older equipment."

This resonates with the work of Smith (2016) on the political economy of education, which highlights how funding policies can create inequalities in educational provision.

Funding constraints can also lead to increased class sizes, making it more challenging for teachers to provide individualised instruction and support, particularly in practical settings where hands-on experience is crucial. SA (Engineering) explained the impact of larger class sizes on his teaching:

"With bigger classes, it's harder to give students the individual attention they need... It's especially challenging in the workshop, where safety is paramount."

This aligns with the broader literature on the impact of class size on student learning, which suggests that smaller classes can lead to improved academic outcomes, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g., Blatchford *et al*., 2007). However, this is a contentious issue as the Education Endowment Foundation (2021) review of 41 pieces of research found that while reducing class size can have positive impacts on pupil outcomes when implemented with socioeconomically disadvantaged pupil populations, evidence suggests that significant effects of reducing class size are not seen until the number of pupils has decreased substantial (to fewer than 20 or even 15 pupils). There is little literature relating to Further Education colleges, likely due to the complexity and variety of different types of teaching spaces and the activities taking place.

Funding cuts can also restrict access to industry-standard equipment and technology, hindering the ability to provide students with authentic workplace experiences. For example, RF (Catering) discussed the challenges of maintaining up-to-date kitchen equipment:

"It's difficult to keep up with the latest technology in the kitchen... We have to make do with what we have, even if it's not the same equipment they're using in industry."

These findings suggest a possible disconnect between the skills and knowledge students acquire in the classroom and the expectations of the modern workplace. However, it is possible that these results have been confounded by the college's legacy financial difficulties that are now significantly improved.

Frequent curriculum changes can pose a substantial challenge for FE teachers in keeping their teaching materials and methods aligned with the latest industry standards and practices. This is particularly relevant in vocational education, where currency and relevance to industry are paramount for preparing students for successful careers. SDB (Joinery) provided an example of this challenge, as he mentioned having to update his curriculum to include new timber treatments that were not initially part of the qualification.

This illustrates the changing nature of industry knowledge and the need for FE teachers to constantly adapt and update their teaching materials to reflect current practices. The quote also highlights the proactive role that FE teachers often play in ensuring their teaching remains relevant, even when curriculum documents may lag behind industry developments. However, this is not always possible. For example, ZK (Beauty Therapy) earlier highlighted the challenge of maintaining curriculum currency when faced with outdated or irrelevant content in mandatory units.

This description demonstrates the tension between the need to meet the requirements of awarding organisations and the desire to provide students with the most current and relevant skills and knowledge. It also highlights the potential disconnect between the content of some qualifications and the evolving needs of the industry. This challenge resonates with the broader literature on curriculum development and vocational pedagogy. For example, Evans *et al*. (2010) discuss the concept of "content recontextualisation," which involves adapting knowledge from its original context (e.g., industry) to the educational setting. This process can be complex and demanding, requiring teachers to critically evaluate existing curriculum materials and adjust to ensure they align with current industry standards.

Furthermore, the rapid pace of technological advancements and evolving industry practices can exacerbate the challenge of maintaining curriculum currency. One of the issues with this finding is that as new tools, techniques, and materials emerge, FE teachers must continuously update their knowledge and skills to ensure they are equipping students with the most relevant and up-to-date competencies. This highlights the need for ongoing professional development and continuous engagement with industry to ensure that vocational education remains responsive to the changing demands of the workplace.

External assessment frameworks and qualification requirements can also significantly influence how workplace practices and cultures are taught in FE. These frameworks, often designed to standardise and measure learning outcomes, can inadvertently shape the selection, sequencing, and emphasis of knowledge and skills in the curriculum. One example of this influence is the emphasis on standardised testing in some vocational qualifications. While standardised tests can be useful for measuring certain knowledge and skills, they may not fully capture the tacit and nuanced aspects of occupational culture that are often learned through experience and observation. This can lead to a focus on teaching to the test, potentially neglecting the more holistic and contextualised learning that is essential for developing workplace competence. For instance, RF (Catering) expressed concerns about the limitations of standardised tests in assessing the full range of culinary skills and knowledge:

"The exam only tests certain things... It doesn't necessarily capture the creativity and adaptability that are so important in the kitchen."

This statement highlights the potential disconnect between the formal assessment framework and the complex realities of workplace practice. It also suggests that standardised tests may not fully capture the essence of occupational culture, which often involves tacit knowledge, problem-solving, and adaptability to unpredictable situations. Furthermore, qualification requirements can also influence the way workplace practices and cultures are taught. For example, if a qualification requires students to demonstrate competency in a specific set of skills, teachers may prioritise those skills in their teaching, potentially neglecting other important aspects of occupational culture. This can lead to a narrowing of the curriculum and a focus on measurable outcomes rather than the holistic development of learners.

This can be linked to the work of Bernstein (1999) on the classification and framing of knowledge, which suggests that assessment frameworks can shape the selection and sequencing of knowledge in the curriculum. Strong classification, characterised by clear boundaries between subjects and strong framing, where teachers control the selection and sequencing of knowledge, can lead to a more rigid and standardised curriculum. This can limit the opportunities for students to develop the tacit knowledge and flexible skills that are essential for navigating the complexities of the workplace. Conversely, these findings provide support for a weaker classification and framing that can create a more open and flexible curriculum, allowing for greater integration of theory and practice and a more holistic approach to teaching occupational culture. This outcome provides some tentative initial evidence that this approach can better prepare students for the unpredictable nature of the workplace, where adaptability and problem-solving skills are highly valued.

The results provide further support for the hypothesis that external assessment frameworks and qualification requirements can significantly influence how workplace practices and cultures are taught in FE. While these frameworks serve important purposes in standardising and measuring learning outcomes, this research demonstrates that it is crucial to be mindful of their potential impact on the curriculum and pedagogical practices. By critically evaluating assessment frameworks and qualification requirements, FE teachers and institutions can ensure that vocational education remains relevant, and engaging, and prepares students for the complexities of the modern workplace.

5.4 The Significance and Reinforcement of Subject-Specific Vocabulary

This section addresses the third research question (RQ3): How important is subject-specific vocabulary and how is it reinforced within the vocational curriculum? The findings of this study highlight the crucial role that subject-specific vocabulary plays in vocational education and the diverse range of strategies that lecturers employ to teach and reinforce it. This focus on vocabulary aligns with the broader themes of this research, namely, the development of occupational culture and the challenges of knowledge transfer from industry to education. Mastering the language of a profession is essential for learners to become fully integrated members of their chosen occupational communities and to effectively apply their knowledge and skills in the workplace.

5.4.1 The Importance of Subject-Specific Vocabulary

The mastery of specialised language serves as the foundation for effective communication, comprehension of complex concepts, and the development of professional competence and safety practices. Eraut's (2004) work on professional knowledge emphasises the importance of language in mediating knowledge transfer and facilitating professional practice. He argues that professionals rely on specialised language to communicate effectively with colleagues, understand technical

information, and apply knowledge in complex situations. This is particularly relevant in vocational fields, where precise and accurate communication is crucial for safety and efficiency. Bernstein's (1999) concept of vertical discourse further illuminates the importance of subject-specific vocabulary. Vertical discourse refers to the specialised language and knowledge structures associated with particular disciplines or fields of study. Bernstein argues that access to vertical discourse is essential for social and economic mobility, as it provides individuals with the tools to participate in specialised fields and contribute to knowledge production.

The findings of this study provide strong support for the importance of subject-specific vocabulary in vocational education. The participants consistently emphasised the need for students to acquire and master the technical language of their chosen fields. For example, SA (Engineering) insisted on students using the correct terminology for tools and equipment:

"It's getting them to use the correct names for things... So if you're in the workshop... 'What's that? What does it look like?"

This quote highlights the importance of precise language in engineering, where the misuse of terms can lead to confusion, errors, and potentially dangerous situations. Similarly, ZK (Beauty Therapy) emphasised the need for accurate and professional language when communicating with clients:

"We have to be very careful about the language we use... We need to be able to explain treatments and products in a way that clients can understand, but we also need to maintain a professional image."

This illustrates how subject-specific vocabulary contributes to professional competence and effective communication in the beauty therapy industry.

This research has reassured us that mastering technical vocabulary is essential for learners in vocational fields. It enables them to understand complex concepts, communicate effectively with colleagues and clients, and develop the professional competence and safety practices necessary for success in their chosen fields. The findings of this study strongly support the emphasis placed on vocabulary acquisition in the literature on professional knowledge and vocational pedagogy.

5.4.2 Strategies for Teaching and Reinforcing Vocabulary

This study reveals that lecturers employ a diverse range of strategies to teach and reinforce subject-specific vocabulary, recognising its central role in vocational education. This proactive approach to vocabulary instruction aligns with the broader literature on language acquisition and professional knowledge, which emphasises the importance of explicit language development in facilitating effective communication and knowledge transfer within specialised fields (e.g., Eraut, 2004).

The lecturers in this study demonstrated a clear understanding of the pedagogical principles underpinning effective vocabulary instruction. For example, they employed explicit instruction, providing clear explanations of terms, definitions, and etymology. This aligns with research that highlights the importance of direct vocabulary instruction in promoting comprehension and retention (e.g., Marzano and Pickering, 2005). ZK (Beauty Therapy), for instance, explained the Latin roots of anatomical terms to help students understand their meaning and remember them more easily:

"It's like breaking it down, going, okay, so the word 'dermis,' what does 'derm' mean? It means skin. So anytime you see the word 'derm,' it means skin."

This approach not only clarifies the meaning of technical terms but also provides students with strategies for decoding unfamiliar vocabulary in the future. Furthermore, the lecturers emphasised the importance of contextualisation, using vocabulary in relevant workplace scenarios and examples

to demonstrate its practical application. This approach aligns with situated learning theories (Lave and Wenger, 1991), which accentuate the importance of learning in authentic contexts. RF (Catering), for example, incorporated culinary terms into recipe demonstrations and discussions of different cuisines, showing students how the vocabulary is used in real-world culinary contexts:

"I'll say, 'This is the recipe, follow it.' So if you can't understand recipes and follow it, then that's the problem."

By demonstrating the practical relevance of vocabulary, lecturers can enhance student motivation and engagement, making the learning process more meaningful and memorable.

In addition to explicit instruction and contextualisation, the lecturers employed various strategies to reinforce vocabulary learning, such as repetition, visual aids, and technology. SA (Engineering) used quizzes and practical tasks to ensure students could correctly identify and use engineering terminology, while SDB (Joinery) utilised diagrams and physical models to explain different types of joints and construction techniques.

"They've got a workbook that they work through, and that covers all the basics. And then I'll do demonstrations as well."

These diverse approaches cater to different learning needs and provide multiple opportunities for students to engage with and internalise new vocabulary. These results corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous work in teaching academic vocabulary. For example, Marzano and Pickering (2005) found that effective strategies included visualisation, active engagement, and gamification. Furthermore, the lecturers recognised the potential of technology to support vocabulary acquisition. ZK (Beauty Therapy) used a website that pronounces Latin terms for students, while RF (Catering) suggested using Google Translate for pronunciation and understanding foreign culinary terms. This reflects the growing trend of incorporating technology into language learning to enhance engagement and provide students with personalised learning experiences.

The findings of this study demonstrate that FE lecturers employ a variety of impactful strategies to teach and reinforce subject-specific vocabulary. Their approaches align with the broader literature on vocabulary acquisition and pedagogical practice, highlighting the importance of explicit instruction, contextualisation, repetition, visual aids, and technology in promoting language development. By employing these diverse strategies, lecturers believed that they were effectively equipping students with the linguistic tools necessary for success in their chosen profession.

5.4.3 Challenges in Vocabulary Acquisition

While the acquisition of subject-specific vocabulary is crucial for learners in vocational fields, it is not without its challenges. Students often encounter difficulties in learning and retaining technical terms, particularly when those terms are unfamiliar, complex, or derived from specialised language domains. For example, ZK (Beauty Therapy) acknowledges the abundance of Latin terms in her field, which can be confusing for students:

"Yeah, yeah, there's a lot. And the weird thing is that some Latin words make sense but others don't."

This challenge resonates with the broader literature on language acquisition in vocational contexts, highlighting the difficulties learners face when encountering specialised terminology and concepts (e.g., Hyland, 2019). The need to acquire a large volume of new vocabulary within a limited time frame can also pose a significant challenge for students in vocational programmes. Furthermore, the pronunciation of technical terms, especially those derived from other languages, can be a barrier to vocabulary acquisition. RF (Catering) notes that many culinary terms are French, and students may struggle with their pronunciation:

"Some of the French words... they find it difficult to pronounce."

This challenge is particularly relevant for second-language learners, who may face additional difficulties in acquiring and retaining new vocabulary in a language they are not yet fluent in, or students with Special Educational Needs.

The participants in this study demonstrated an awareness of these challenges and adapted their teaching to address them. For example, ZK (Beauty Therapy) provides students with phonetic pronunciation guides and uses rhymes and mnemonics to aid memorisation. She also breaks down complex terms into smaller, more manageable components and encourages students to use visual aids and interactive activities to reinforce their understanding of vocabulary. Again, this is linked to the work of Marzano and Pickering (2005) where the use of pictures, symbols or other types of graphics was believed to be effective.

Similarly, RF (Catering) encourages students to explore ethnic food shops and utilise tools like Google Translate to familiarise themselves with the specific vocabulary of different cuisines. He also emphasises the importance of repetition and contextualisation, using culinary terms in practical demonstrations and discussions of different cuisines. These results further support the idea of recontextualising knowledge as being a critical component in vocational further education teaching (Hordern, 2014, 2021).

5.4.4 The Role of Assessment in Vocabulary Learning

Assessment practices play an important role in reinforcing and evaluating students' understanding of subject-specific vocabulary in vocational education. Effective assessment methods not only measure students' knowledge but also provide opportunities for them to apply and reinforce their understanding of technical terms.

Formative assessment, with its focus on ongoing feedback and improvement, is particularly valuable in supporting vocabulary development. By providing regular opportunities for students to practice using vocabulary in different contexts and receive feedback on their performance, teachers can help them identify areas of weakness and build confidence in their use of technical language. For example, ZK (Beauty Therapy) uses quizzes and questioning throughout her lessons to gauge students' understanding of anatomical terms and provide immediate feedback:

"I'll say, 'Okay, so what's this muscle? What's its action? What does it do?' ... And if they get it wrong, we'll go over it again and again until they get it right."

This approach aligns with the principles of assessment for learning, which underscores the use of assessment to support learning and improve student outcomes (see for example Black and Wiliam, 1998).

Summative assessments, such as exams and practical assessments, also play a role in evaluating students' vocabulary knowledge. However, it is important that these assessments go beyond simple recall and require students to apply their vocabulary knowledge in context. For example, RF (Catering) includes questions in his exams that require students to explain culinary techniques or evaluate dishes using appropriate terminology. This assesses not only their knowledge of terms but also their ability to use them effectively in a professional context.

The role of feedback in language development is crucial. Effective feedback provides students with guidance on how to improve their use of vocabulary, clarifies misconceptions, and reinforces correct usage. Feedback can be provided in various forms, including written comments, verbal feedback during practical sessions, and peer assessment activities. For example, SDB (Joinery) provides feedback on students' use of terminology during practical demonstrations and when assessing their

written work. He also encourages students to provide feedback to each other on their use of vocabulary during group projects and presentations.

It is encouraging that the strategies employed by the participants to teach and assess vocabulary learning involved a variety of approaches both formal and informal, multi-sensory, and using evidence-informed strategies such as retrieval practice, gamification, and assistive technologies. These results reflect those of Lucas, Spencer, and Claxton (2012), who outlined that the best vocational learning involves hands-on, practical, experiential, real-world as well as, and often at the same time, something which involves feedback, questioning, application, and reflection. The role of formative assessment in supporting vocational vocabulary development is an area that could be investigated further, in particular how technology could be used to overcome challenges in both pronunciation and the volume of new terms.

5.5   Chapter Summary

This chapter explores the occupational cultures of teachers in vocational further education (FE) colleges in England. It examines how these teachers' industry backgrounds, pedagogical approaches, and workplace learning theories intersect to shape their teaching practices and develop occupational culture in their students.

The chapter begins by establishing the importance of occupational culture in FE, emphasising the need to connect the literature review findings with real-world practices. It explores the role of occupational identity in shaping pedagogical practices, the challenges of recontextualising industry knowledge for educational settings, and the effectiveness of different teaching strategies in transmitting occupational culture.

The next section discusses the alignment of literature and participant perspectives on occupational culture and identity. It examines how FE teachers navigate the complexities of holding multiple identities, shaped by their occupational backgrounds, teaching roles, and personal experiences. The chapter also explores the intersection of social and professional identities, highlighting the concept of dual professionalism, where teachers possess both occupational expertise and pedagogical knowledge. This section also discusses the role of passion, craftsmanship, and professionalism in shaping the participants' teaching practices. The chapter argues that passion and personal values are integral to understanding how FE teachers conceptualise and convey occupational culture. It also highlights the importance of considering the affective dimension of teaching and learning in vocational education.

The section that follows focuses on how different types of knowledge manifest in FE teaching, particularly the interplay between theoretical and practical knowledge. The chapter also examines the challenges of recontextualising knowledge from industry to education, emphasising the need to bridge the gap between theoretical and practical knowledge.

The chapter then explores the role of workplace learning theories in understanding how FE teachers both acquire and share occupational knowledge. It discusses the importance of experiential learning, social interaction, and the integration of theoretical and practical knowledge in vocational education. This section also examines the challenges FE teachers face in replicating the workplace in the classroom. It discusses the difficulties in recreating authentic workplace environments due to resource constraints, safety concerns, and the need to balance authenticity with pedagogical considerations.

The chapter ends by highlighting the essential role of subject-specific vocabulary in vocational education. It discusses the importance of mastering technical language for effective communication, comprehension of complex concepts, and professional competence. The chapter also explores the

challenges students face in acquiring subject-specific vocabulary and the strategies lecturers employ to teach and reinforce it.

To conclude, this chapter provides a rich and nuanced understanding of the complexities of occupational culture in FE teaching. It highlights the challenges and rewards of recontextualising industry knowledge for educational settings, the importance of considering the affective dimension of teaching and learning, and the role of subject-specific vocabulary. The chapter also underscores the need for ongoing research and professional development to support FE teachers in their efforts to bridge the gap between industry and education, ultimately enhancing the quality of vocational education and training.

Central to this study is the question of whether occupational culture can be explicitly taught or is solely developed over time. The evidence suggests that it is a complex interplay of both, reflecting the multifaceted nature of occupational culture itself. While some aspects, such as technical vocabulary, professional codes of conduct, and industry standards, can be explicitly taught through direct instruction and modelling, other aspects are more tacit and experiential. These tacit elements, often embedded in workplace practices and social interactions, are better acquired through observation, participation, and immersion in authentic workplace settings, aligning with Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of situated learning.

The findings highlight the importance of both explicit instruction and experiential learning in conveying occupational culture. FE teachers can explicitly teach students about the values, norms, and practices associated with different occupational communities, as demonstrated by the engineering lecturer who emphasised the importance of punctuality and following procedures in the aviation industry. However, they must also provide opportunities for students to experience these cultures first-hand through workplace simulations, industry placements, and interactions with professionals. The chef lecturer, for example, facilitated this by incorporating real-world case studies and scenarios into his culinary classes, allowing students to apply their knowledge and develop problem-solving skills in a context that mirrored professional kitchen environments.

The evidence indicates that the most effective approach to developing occupational culture involves a combination of explicit teaching, experiential learning, and role modelling. By combining these strategies, FE teachers can create a more holistic and authentic learning experience that prepares students for the expectations and demands of their chosen professions. This research contributes to the understanding of how occupational culture can be effectively integrated into FE teaching practices, with implications for curriculum design, teacher training, and professional development initiatives. Future research could further explore the specific pedagogical approaches that best support the transmission of tacit knowledge and the development of professional identity within different vocational disciplines.

6. Reflections and Horizons: Contributions to Vocational Education and Training

"We know what we are, but know not what we may be."

- *Hamlet* – William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

Commonly, this quote is referenced as an example of Ophelia's declining mental state in Act IV of Hamlet. While the quote can be interpreted this way as a nonsense speech about the future that has no real meaning, it's also possible (and quite interesting) to consider the quote as it applies to the play as a whole.

I believe that it encapsulates the human condition of self-awareness, acknowledging our existing state while acknowledging the vast potential for growth and transformation that lies within each individual. This profound statement summarises the realisation that as individuals, we comprehend our current identities, but remain uncertain about the boundless possibilities of what we can become. At a surface level, the quote can be interpreted as a reminder for individuals to embrace the uncertainty and ever-evolving nature of life. It encourages us to celebrate our present selves while simultaneously keeping an open mind to the endless opportunities that await us in the future.

In many ways, this sentiment echoes deeply with my research journey. When I began this PhD, I knew where I stood - a curious scholar with a passion for Further Education, vocational pedagogy and occupational culture. However, the path ahead was uncertain and filled with challenges, questions, and opportunities for growth. Through this journey, I have come to embrace the process of exploration and transformation. Each chapter of this thesis reflects not only the knowledge I have gained but also the evolution of my perspective and abilities. Much like Ophelia's reflection, this experience has taught me to appreciate my present self while remaining open to the infinite possibilities that lie ahead as I continue to learn and contribute to my field.

6.1   Introduction

This final chapter synthesises the findings of this research, highlighting its contributions to the field of vocational education and training. It begins by summarising the key insights and knowledge generated through the study, emphasising its relevance to the preservation of occupational culture and tacit knowledge in the context of Further Education (FE). Following this, the chapter discusses the implications of these findings for educators, policymakers, and institutions, offering actionable recommendations aimed at enhancing vocational education practices. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the limitations of the study, identifying opportunities for future research, and reiterating the broader significance of the work within the ever-evolving landscape of vocational education. Finally, some closing thoughts provide a reflective end to this research journey.

6.2   Research Background and Contribution to Knowledge

This research aims to make a significant contribution to the field of vocational education and training, particularly in the context of Further Education (FE) institutions, by addressing the erosion of traditional craft practices and the under-explored dimensions of vocational knowledge, culture, and pedagogical methods. At a time when the increasing marketisation of education has driven a focus on measurable skills and job placement outcomes, this study highlights the tensions between these market-driven demands and the preservation of tacit, experience-based knowledge essential for the sustainability of traditional crafts and professions.

While research on occupational culture, knowledge acquisition, and teaching in isolation has been substantial, there remains a significant gap in the literature that brings these elements together within the educational context. Further Education, often under-researched in the broader field of educational studies, has been the subject of growing calls for more attention (Orr, 2022). This study addresses this gap by exploring how FE curricula and pedagogical practices interact with the evolving landscape of industry demands, and how they influence the preservation and transmission of occupational culture. By weaving together insights into the wider curriculum, the constraints educators face, and the pressures to align education with workforce requirements, this research offers a more nuanced understanding of vocational education. It contributes to the ongoing discussion of how best to balance employability-focused outcomes with the preservation of craft knowledge and traditional skills.

The research further contributes to the field by expanding the current understanding of teaching and learning within vocational education. The prevailing focus on preparing students for the workplace often overlooks the broader significance of occupational culture. This study proposes that educators' awareness and active engagement with occupational culture beyond just technical skills and behaviours can significantly enhance the classroom experience. Drawing attention to the theoretical, historical, and cultural foundations of a craft helps students better understand the real-world application of their studies, bridging the gap between academic concepts and industry realities.

The thesis argues that vocational educators who embody the values and passion of their professions can go beyond the role of instructors to become mentors, guiding students through both technical learning and the nuances of the vocational world. The research also engages with debates around dual-professionalism in teaching, offering fresh perspectives on how educators' previous professional experience can enrich their teaching and strengthen students' connections to the occupational culture. This focus challenges the current narratives surrounding workplace preparation and extends the definition of skills to include not just technical proficiency but also the broader cultural and contextual understanding needed for long-term success in a chosen field.

Another key contribution of this research lies in its innovative use of creative methods within practice-led research. By leveraging digital tools such as the Wakelet app, this study enables participants to reflect on their subject specialisms in a way that integrates personal experiences with academic research. This approach goes beyond traditional professional development by fostering deeper critical reflection among vocational educators on their teaching practices, curriculum design, and subject knowledge. By enabling educators to craft their own narratives, this research method offers a novel way of engaging with professional learning and improving teaching practices within the FE context. It highlights the potential of digital platforms to support reflective practice and provides a fresh perspective on professional development in vocational education.

Moreover, this research addresses broader challenges within the FE sector, such as the slow development of curricula, staffing and funding pressures, and changing legislation. By exploring these issues and their impact on teaching practices, this study provides insights that can inform policy and improve the quality of vocational education across different settings. The findings from this research are not only relevant to vocational further education but also have the potential to be applied to other qualifications and settings, making a broader contribution to the field of vocational education research.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the development of more effective vocational education that values both practical skills and the deeper cultural and historical knowledge necessary for long-term success in the world of work. Through its focus on the integration of tacit knowledge, occupational culture, and innovative pedagogical practices, this research makes a significant contribution to the

field of vocational education and training, providing a framework for future improvements in policy, practice, and the overall quality of education at this level.

6.3 Literature Review

This research is grounded in the understanding that occupational culture is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, encompassing the shared values, beliefs, practices, and traditions that characterise a particular occupational community. It is intricately linked to the concept of identity, as individuals' sense of self is often intertwined with their membership in a professional group.

6.3.1 Summary of Literature

Further Education (FE) in the United Kingdom has undergone significant changes, shaped by shifting policies and ongoing struggles for recognition and esteem. The introduction of the Further and Higher Education Act (1992) and the subsequent 'incorporation' of colleges marked a shift towards increased marketisation and competition within the sector. This has prioritised measurable skills and immediate job placement, often at the expense of broader knowledge and the preservation of traditional craft practices. Critics argue that this focus on short-term economic goals undermines the long-term sustainability of professions and risks eroding valuable tacit knowledge.

This research is underpinned by an extensive review of literature across the themes of culture, identity, knowledge, and language - critical elements in understanding vocational education in Further Education (FE). The review underscores the layered and dynamic nature of occupational culture, defined by shared values, practices, and tacit knowledge that shape professional identity and group cohesion. Drawing on foundational theories from Schein (2014), Hofstede (1991), and others, it emphasises how these cultural frameworks operate within both educational and occupational contexts.

The concept of dual professionalism is a central theme, illustrating how FE lecturers balance their roles as educators and practitioners. Their dual identities, rooted in both teaching and previous industry experiences, enrich their teaching but present challenges in recontextualising industry knowledge for educational settings. This duality is crucial for fostering a deeper connection between classroom learning and workplace realities.

Language and vocabulary appear to be pivotal elements in vocational education. Mastery of technical terminology is not merely a cognitive process but a gateway to professional identity and occupational culture. Language facilitates the transmission of tacit knowledge and professional norms, acting as a bridge between theoretical concepts and practical applications. The review highlights how teaching subject-specific vocabulary not only enables effective communication but also fosters a sense of belonging and credibility within occupational communities.

The literature also examines the challenges of transmitting tacit knowledge, emphasising the need for pedagogical approaches that integrate theoretical understanding with practical skills. Workplace learning theories, particularly those by Bernstein (1999), Eraut (2004), and Engeström (2001), shed light on the processes of recontextualisation, where knowledge is adapted from industry to education. These frameworks highlight the interplay between horizontal (context-specific) and vertical (codified) knowledge, underscoring the complexities of knowledge transfer in vocational education.

The literature establishes the theoretical foundation for examining how occupational culture is taught in FE, highlighting gaps in knowledge and providing a framework for understanding the challenges and opportunities in vocational teaching practices.

This research addresses these topics by exploring the interplay of tacit knowledge, occupational culture, and pedagogical practices in FE. It critiques the current trajectory of vocational education

while emphasising the value of preserving these critical elements for the sustainability of professions. By examining vocational educators' experiences and strategies, the study offers a nuanced understanding of how tacit knowledge and occupational culture is acquired, recontextualised, and taught. The findings advocate for a balanced approach that prioritises both industry-ready skills and the deeper cultural and historical foundations of a craft.

Guided by the literature, this research poses the following questions:

1. How do teachers acquire the pedagogical knowledge and practices associated with their specialist areas?
2. In what ways are workplace practices, customs, and occupational cultures taught in the curriculum?
3. How important is subject-specific vocabulary, and how is it reinforced within the vocational curriculum?

By addressing these questions, the research seeks to inform policy and practice, fostering a vocational education system that equally values technical skills and the enduring significance of occupational culture.

6.4   Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative design, employing a combination of methods to gather rich and nuanced data on the experiences of vocational educators and their pedagogical approaches. A qualitative approach is well-suited to exploring the complex and multifaceted nature of occupational culture and its transmission in vocational education.

The study is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, acknowledging the socially constructed nature of reality and emphasising the importance of understanding subjective meanings and interpretations. This paradigm enables an in-depth exploration of the experiences, beliefs, and practices of vocational educators, offering valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with transmitting tacit knowledge and occupational culture within FE colleges.

6.4.1 Data Collection Methods

The research design integrates multiple data collection methods to capture a comprehensive understanding of the topic:

1. Participants created visual representations of their occupational cultures using the Wakelet platform. These mood boards featured curated collections of images, videos, and text that encapsulated the essence of their professions, including tools, practices, values, and challenges.
2. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences and pedagogical approaches. Topics included the influence of industry backgrounds on teaching practices, strategies for recontextualising industry knowledge for the classroom, and challenges in transmitting occupational culture to students.
3. Classroom observations of participants' teaching practices provided contextual data and enabled triangulation with findings from interviews and digital mood boards. Observations focused on pedagogical approaches, interactions with students, and the integration of occupational culture into the learning environment.

This mixed-methods approach aligns with the qualitative design and interpretivist paradigm, ensuring a nuanced and comprehensive exploration of the research topic.

6.4.2 Sampling Strategy

The research employs a purposive sampling strategy to select participants who can provide rich and relevant insights into the study's focus. The sample includes five lecturers from diverse vocational backgrounds, representing a range of teaching experience and lengths of service. This approach ensures the selection of information-rich cases, enabling an in-depth examination of the research questions. The diversity of the sample enhances the richness and credibility of the findings by reflecting a broad spectrum of perspectives within vocational education.

6.4.3 Data Analysis

The study uses thematic analysis to analyse qualitative data gathered from the digital mood boards, interviews, and participant observations. Thematic analysis is a well-established method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data.

The analysis process included the following steps:

1. Repeated readings of digital mood boards, interview transcripts, and observation notes to immerse in the data.
2. Identifying and labelling interesting aspects of the data relevant to the research questions.
3. Grouping codes into potential themes based on shared meanings and patterns.
4. Refining themes to ensure they accurately captured the essence of the data and aligned with the research questions.
5. Assigning clear and meaningful names to themes to reflect their content and significance.

6.4.4 Ensuring Rigour and Trustworthiness

Several strategies were employed to ensure the rigour and validity of the analysis. Triangulation was a key method, involving the integration of data from digital mood boards, interviews, and observations to confirm findings and enhance trustworthiness. This approach allowed for the validation of patterns and themes identified across different data sources, strengthening the reliability of the results.

Reflexivity also played a significant role in maintaining the integrity of the research process. I kept a journal to critically reflect on my own assumptions, biases, and potential influences on the study. This practice ensured a transparent and thoughtful engagement with the data, fostering a deeper understanding of the research context and participants' experiences.

In addition, I provide detailed accounts of the research context, participants, and data analysis procedures, as well as a thick description of the findings. By offering rich and nuanced narratives, the study enhances its credibility. It ensures that the reader can decide whether findings could be meaningfully interpreted and applied to their own context.

By adopting this comprehensive and methodologically sound approach, the research delivers valuable insights into the teaching of tacit knowledge and occupational culture. These findings contribute significantly to the broader understanding of vocational education, particularly in the context of today's rapidly evolving educational landscape.

6.5   Findings/Results

6.5.1 RQ1: How do teachers acquire the pedagogical knowledge and practices associated with their specialist areas?

Teachers acquire pedagogical knowledge and practices through a combination of formal training, industry experience, continuous professional development (CPD), mentorship and collaboration. Industry experience appears as particularly significant, providing teachers with a deep understanding

of the subject matter, industry standards, and workplace practices, which they can then draw upon in their teaching. This supports Eraut's (2004) theory of workplace learning, which emphasises the importance of experiential learning in the development of professional knowledge and expertise. However, the transition from industry to education can be challenging, requiring adaptation to new environments, pedagogical techniques, and student expectations. This highlights the need for effective teacher training and mentoring programmes that support this transition and equip teachers with the pedagogical skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the classroom.

The research findings align with Schein's (2014) model of culture, highlighting the importance of artefacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions in shaping occupational communities. The participants' narratives illustrate how these cultural elements are embedded in their teaching practices, influencing their pedagogical approaches and interactions with students. The research also supports Tajfel's (1971) social identity theory, emphasising the role of group membership in shaping individual identity. The concept of dual professionalism, where individuals hold both occupational and pedagogical identities, is evident in the participants' experiences, highlighting the complexities and rewards of navigating multiple identities. However, the research also revealed the prevalence of imposter syndrome among FE teachers, a finding not anticipated in the initial literature review. This suggests a potential gap in the literature regarding the emotional and psychological challenges faced by FE teachers, particularly those with strong industry backgrounds who may feel their expertise is devalued in the academic context.

6.5.2 RQ2: In what ways are workplace practices, customs, and occupational cultures taught in the curriculum?

Workplace practices, customs, and occupational cultures are embedded in the curriculum through a multifaceted approach that includes explicit instruction, implicit modelling, experiential learning opportunities, and visual representations. Industry standards are emphasised, with teachers replicating workplace practices within the classroom to ensure students are well-prepared for the demands of their chosen professions. This aligns with the literature on situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991), which emphasises the importance of learning in authentic contexts that mirror real-world practices.

Practical skills and theoretical knowledge are carefully balanced, bridging the gap between the classroom and the real world. This reflects the growing recognition of the importance of integrating theory and practice in vocational education, as highlighted in the work of Bernstein (1999) and Evans *et al*. (2010).

This research reveals that storytelling is a central, yet often unacknowledged, pedagogical tool for transmitting occupational culture and bridging the gap between theory and practice. Participants consistently drew upon personal stories and anecdotes from their industry careers to contextualise learning, model professional values, and foster a deeper connection with their students.

The social aspects of the workplace, including communication styles, professional behaviour, and teamwork, are actively incorporated into teaching. This highlights the importance of preparing students not only for the technical demands of their professions but also for the interpersonal dynamics and cultural norms that shape the work environment.

The research findings support the distinction between different types of knowledge, as proposed by Aristotle (episteme, techne, and phronesis). The participants' narratives illustrate how these different forms of knowledge are acquired and transmitted in vocational education, emphasising the importance of balancing theoretical understanding with practical skills and experience.

However, the research also challenges the traditional binary between theoretical and practical knowledge, arguing for a more integrated approach that recognises the interdependence of these

forms of knowledge. This aligns with the work of Sennett (2008) on craftsmanship, which highlights the importance of combining technical skill with theoretical understanding and a deep engagement with the craft.

The research findings highlight the challenges of recontextualising knowledge from industry to education, particularly for tacit knowledge that is deeply embedded in practice and experience. This supports the work of Bernstein (1999) and Evans *et al.* (2010) on the complexities of knowledge transfer and the need to bridge the gap between theoretical and practical knowledge.

The research also contributes to the field by providing empirical evidence of the strategies FE teachers employ to overcome these challenges, such as drawing on their industry experience, using authentic workplace scenarios, and engaging in ongoing professional development.

The findings also resonate with workplace learning theories, such as those of Eraut (2004), Illeris (2003), and Engeström (2001), accentuating the importance of experiential learning, social interaction, and the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning in vocational education.

6.5.3 RQ3: How important is subject-specific vocabulary and how is it reinforced within the vocational curriculum?

Subject-specific vocabulary is critical, enabling students to grasp complex concepts and communicate effectively. Lecturers use various strategies to teach and reinforce vocabulary, including contextualisation, repetition, visual aids, and technology. Curriculum alignment with industry standards is encouraged to ensure students are equipped with the necessary vocabulary for the workplace.

The findings underline the critical role of subject-specific vocabulary in vocational education. Mastering this vocabulary is essential for students to grasp complex concepts, communicate effectively within their professional communities, and ultimately achieve success in the workplace.

The research also highlights the challenges students face in acquiring vocabulary and the diverse strategies teachers employ to support this process, aligning with the broader literature on language acquisition and pedagogical practice.

The research findings strongly support the emphasis on subject-specific vocabulary in the literature on professional knowledge and vocational pedagogy. The participants' narratives and teaching practices demonstrate the importance of mastering technical language for effective communication, comprehension of complex concepts, and professional competence.

6.6 Recommendations

This research explores the intricate relationship between occupational culture and how it can be taught in vocational education, with a specific focus on the pedagogical practices of FE lecturers. Based on the research findings, several recommendations can be made for both educators and policymakers in the field of vocational education and training (VET).

6.6.1 Recommendations for Educators

6.6.1.1 Fully Incorporate Occupational Culture into Teaching Practices

Educators in vocational education should fully embed occupational culture such as industry norms, values, role expectations, and professional standards into their teaching. This integration connects theoretical knowledge to real-world applications, making learning more meaningful. Creating environments that mimic industry settings, modelling professional behaviours, and fostering workplace norms are essential. For example, engineering workshops with industry-standard

equipment enable students to practice precision, teamwork, and compliance with professional guidelines. Similarly, in beauty therapy, the consistent use of professional uniforms, as highlighted by one participant, reinforces professionalism and hygiene.

Simulating real-world environments through projects, assessments, and collaboration with industry professionals further enhances this approach. Guest speakers, work placements, and internships provide students with first-hand exposure to occupational culture and help them align their attitudes with professional expectations. For instance, an experienced chef discussing hierarchy and teamwork can help students understand occupational identity's nuances. It also fosters a sense of belonging, helping students see themselves as professionals. Such initiatives not only help students gain practical insights but also allow them to begin aligning their behaviours and attitudes with the expectations of their chosen professions.

The findings from this study strongly support the need for occupational culture to be a central focus in teaching practices. Incorporating occupational culture into teaching is therefore not only a pedagogical strategy but also a necessary step in preparing students for successful careers. It ensures that students are not only technically proficient but also culturally competent, capable of navigating the demands and expectations of their respective industries. This approach aligns with the broader aims of vocational education, which seek to bridge the gap between education and employment while fostering lifelong professional growth.

6.6.1.2   Promote Authentic Assessment

Assessment practices in vocational education should go beyond traditional written tests to recognise and value the tacit and nuanced aspects of occupational culture. Colleges and teachers should promote authentic assessment methods that closely mirror workplace expectations, such as simulations, professional practice observations, and evaluations of professional judgment. For example, a catering student could be assessed on their ability to produce a high-quality meal under time constraints while demonstrating teamwork and adherence to safety standards. Similarly, in engineering, students could be evaluated on their ability to follow technical drawings, use appropriate tools, and produce precise outcomes.

Authentic assessment is important because it aligns with the realities of professional practice, providing students with opportunities to demonstrate their competencies in realistic scenarios. Such practices help bridge the gap between classroom learning and workplace performance, ensuring students are ready for employment. The findings of this study highlight the role of tacit knowledge and occupational culture in vocational education, both of which are difficult to measure through conventional assessment methods. By incorporating assessments that reflect real-world challenges, colleges can better prepare students for professional success while also enhancing the credibility and relevance of vocational qualifications in the eyes of employers.

6.6.1.3   Emphasise and Encourage Vocabulary Development

The development of technical vocabulary specific to vocational fields is a vital component of effective teaching in further education. Educators should adopt focused strategies to ensure students acquire the language skills necessary for success in their respective industries. Techniques such as repetition, contextualised examples, and the use of visual aids appear to be particularly effective in reinforcing subject-specific terminology. For instance, introducing technical terms in the context of practical tasks, followed by consistent use throughout lessons, helps students internalise this vocabulary. Visual aids such as diagrams, labelled equipment, or digital presentations can further support understanding and retention. This will enable students to grasp complex concepts more easily and to communicate effectively within professional settings.

Mastery of technical vocabulary is essential for students to navigate workplace environments where precise and accurate communication is critical. Without this foundation, students may struggle to

articulate their ideas or comprehend instructions, limiting their ability to perform effectively in their roles. Furthermore, the use of correct terminology contributes to a student's professional identity, allowing them to present themselves as competent and credible members of their field. This is especially relevant in vocational education, where practical skills must be seamlessly integrated with the linguistic and cultural norms of the industry. By focusing on vocabulary development, educators not only enhance technical knowledge but also equip students with the tools they need to succeed in professional contexts.

The findings from this research underscore the importance of teaching and reinforcing technical vocabulary. Participant SA, an engineering lecturer, highlighted the critical role of precision in language, emphasising that students must use the correct terms for tools and equipment. As SA remarked, "We don't use thingies in engineering," illustrating his insistence on the accurate use of terminology as a reflection of industry standards. This focus on language precision not only prepares students for real-world tasks but also instils a sense of discipline and professionalism. Similarly, the broader literature on vocational education supports the need for a strong emphasis on vocabulary, particularly as technical language often encapsulates both explicit and tacit knowledge critical to workplace success. As demonstrated by the study's findings, prioritising vocabulary development is not merely an ancillary part of teaching but a core strategy for cultivating skilled professionals.

6.6.2 Recommendations for College Leadership

6.6.2.1   Prioritise industry knowledge by actively integrating vocational teachers' industry experience into the curriculum and through professional updating.

Investing in the professional development of vocational educators is a critical strategy for improving the quality of further education. Teachers transitioning from industry into education often bring valuable technical expertise but may lack the pedagogical knowledge required to effectively transmit both explicit and tacit knowledge to their students. Professional development programmes tailored to the needs of vocational educators should focus on equipping them with strategies to integrate occupational culture into their teaching. For example, workshops and CPD (Continuous Professional Development) initiatives could provide training on techniques such as modelling workplace practices, embedding industry norms, and using subject-specific vocabulary effectively. Furthermore, mentoring programmes that pair less experienced teachers with seasoned educators could offer practical guidance and help build confidence in delivering both theoretical and practical instruction.

Supporting teacher development is vital because it ensures educators are equipped to bridge the gap between industry knowledge and educational frameworks. Teachers who are confident in their ability to teach and develop occupational culture not only enhance students' learning but also foster work readiness and professionalism. The findings from this study highlight the importance of dual professionalism, where educators must balance their roles as both subject specialists and pedagogical experts. Structured professional development is essential for navigating these dual roles effectively.

6.6.2.2   Encourage Balanced Curriculum Development

College leadership teams should actively support the development of curricula that strike a balance between practical skills and theoretical knowledge. Vocational education often emphasises hands-on experience, yet a solid theoretical foundation is crucial for preparing students to adapt to complex and evolving workplace environments. Leaders should work closely with curriculum designers and industry partners to ensure that course content reflects both current industry standards and broader conceptual frameworks. For instance, engineering programmes could integrate coursework on problem-solving theories with practical projects that replicate workplace challenges.

A balanced curriculum is essential because it allows students to develop critical thinking skills alongside technical competencies. This dual focus equips them to adapt to industry innovations and solve complex problems, increasing their long-term employability. The findings from this study, supported by Bernstein's (1999) theory of knowledge structures, emphasise the challenges of integrating codified theoretical knowledge with tacit, practice-based learning. Colleges must address these challenges by creating curricula that seamlessly connect theory and practice, preparing students for the multifaceted demands of the modern workplace.

6.6.3 Recommendations for Policymakers

6.6.3.1 Policymakers must ensure sufficient funding for vocational education and training to enable providers to deliver high-quality, industry-relevant programmes.

Adequate resources are essential for equipping institutions with industry-standard equipment, up-to-date technology, and facilities that simulate real-world workplaces. For example, findings from this study highlighted how engineering classrooms designed with industry-standard tools and layouts enable students to practice precision and professionalism, mirroring the expectations of their future roles. Similarly, in beauty therapy, ZK emphasised the importance of having professional-grade equipment and environments to prepare students for the standards of high-end salons.

However, current funding rules have led to a significant reduction in teaching hours for vocational courses, limiting educators' ability to deliver in-depth training. This research revealed that these reductions often result in 'compressed delivery,' where critical elements of the curriculum are rushed or removed entirely. This compromises the quality of teaching and leaves students underprepared for the complexities of the workplace. For example, participants like SA in engineering noted that fewer contact hours restrict opportunities to teach precision and attention to detail, key skills in their industry.

Funding is also critical to support continuous professional development (CPD) for educators. Some of the participants in the research expressed the challenges of balancing their industry expertise with teaching responsibilities. Additional funding for CPD would allow educators to stay updated with industry advancements and refine their pedagogical methods, ensuring students benefit from both current industry knowledge and effective teaching practices.

Moreover, funding gaps contribute to disparities in student experiences and outcomes. The study highlighted how access to resources significantly impacts engagement and learning. For instance, some participants noted that limited access to modern tools and equipment hindered students' ability to fully grasp workplace demands. In contrast, institutions that invest in up-to-date resources provide students with opportunities to engage in simulations that closely mirror industry tasks, improving their confidence and competence.

Investing in vocational education ensures students leave with the skills and knowledge required to succeed in their chosen industries. It also addresses broader economic challenges by reducing skills gaps and producing a workforce capable of meeting the demands of modern industries. Adequate funding enables FE providers to maintain high standards, foster innovation, and prepare students to excel in an increasingly competitive labour market. The findings underscore the pressing need for such investments to bridge the gap between education and employment effectively.

6.6.3.2 Raise the profile of vocational education and training, recognising its crucial role in developing a skilled workforce and supporting economic growth.

Despite its importance, vocational education often suffers from lower societal esteem compared to academic pathways, a stigma that directly impacts student engagement, funding allocation, and institutional priorities. This research highlights how vocational education not only provides practical skills but also builds professional identity, preparing students to meet the demands of modern industries.

Raising the profile of vocational education and FE colleges requires a multifaceted approach. Public campaigns and policy statements should emphasise the economic value of vocational training, particularly in addressing skills gaps in key sectors such as advanced manufacturing, health and social care, and construction. The findings from our Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) demonstrate the critical need for vocationally trained workers in these growth sectors, underscoring the importance of positioning it as a pathway to economic resilience and innovation.

Additionally, efforts should focus on breaking down the perceived academic-vocational divide, which was a recurring theme in this study. Many participants shared how societal perceptions often relegated vocational education to a second-tier option, discouraging students from considering it as a viable and respected pathway. For example, ZK in beauty therapy and SDB in joinery spoke about how their fields were undervalued despite requiring high levels of expertise and contributing significantly to the local economy. Addressing this bias through targeted policies and increased funding could help reposition vocational education as an equally prestigious and rewarding option.

This research also revealed that vocational students often come from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds, making vocational education a powerful tool for promoting social mobility. Policymakers should highlight how vocational education enables individuals to secure stable, well-paying jobs, contributing to broader societal goals of equity and inclusion. For instance, providing case studies of students who achieved career success through vocational pathways can help challenge stereotypes and inspire more learners to consider this route.

Valuing and promoting vocational education is essential for fostering a skilled and adaptable workforce, reducing skills shortages, and ensuring sustainable economic growth. By addressing societal biases and recognising the critical contributions, policymakers can position vocational education as an integral and respected component of the education system. These findings underscore the urgency of this shift, demonstrating how vocational education serves not only individual learners but also the broader economy and society.

6.7   Limitations of the Study

While this research offers valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations, as these help to frame the findings and highlight areas for future inquiry.

The study involved a small, purposive sample of five lecturers from a single, large FE college in the South West of England. While this allowed for a deep, rich exploration of their experiences, it may limit the transferability of the findings to other contexts, such as smaller, rural colleges or institutions in other regions or countries. The insights captured are specific to this particular institutional and geographical setting, shaped by its unique student demographics, funding pressures, and local industry demands.

As an employee of the college where the research was conducted, I acknowledge the potential for insider bias. While I took extensive measures to be reflexive and transparent, my pre-existing relationships with participants and my understanding of the college's internal culture could have

subtly influenced the data collected and my interpretations of it. Furthermore, participants' responses may have been influenced by their relationship with me, even if unintentional, potentially leading to a degree of "social desirability bias."

The use of a creative, arts-based methodology, while innovative, introduces a degree of subjectivity. The interpretation of the digital collages is inherently a dialogue between my own perspective and the participant's, meaning the findings are not objective truths but rather a co-construction of meaning. This interpretive process, while transparently documented, may be viewed as a limitation from a positivist perspective.

A notable limitation is the absence of the student voice. The research focuses exclusively on the perspectives of educators and how they believe occupational culture is transmitted. Future research would benefit from incorporating student interviews or feedback to gain a more complete picture of how and what they learn about their future professions. This would allow for a valuable comparison between what teachers believe they are teaching and what students are actually receiving.

The data was collected over a specific period, and the findings reflect the particular challenges and opportunities present at that moment, such as the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on vocational education and changes in policy. The dynamic and ever-changing nature of the FE sector means that these findings are a snapshot in time and may evolve as policies, technologies, and industry demands shift.

6.8   Opportunities for Future Study

While this research has provided valuable insights into the teaching of occupational culture in vocational education, it also highlights several areas for further investigation. Building on the findings, future research could address the following key areas to deepen our understanding of vocational education and its evolving landscape.

6.8.1 The Impact of Marketisation on Various Vocational Disciplines

This study has shown that the increasing marketisation of education, with its emphasis on measurable skills and job placement outcomes, poses significant challenges to the teaching of tacit knowledge and occupational culture in vocational education. However, the impact of these pressures may vary across different vocational disciplines. Future research could examine how these challenges affect the teaching and learning of a wide range of crafts and trades, including those in the arts, other trades like plumbing and electrical, and service-oriented vocations such as nursing or early years. This research could explore whether certain disciplines are more resistant to the pressure for immediate job-readiness, or whether they face unique challenges related to preserving traditional knowledge. By examining the nuanced effects of marketisation across these diverse areas, scholars could offer more tailored recommendations for policy and pedagogical approaches that better balance industry needs with the preservation of vocational culture.

6.8.2 Exploring the Emotional and Psychological Experiences of Vocational Educators

Another critical area for further research is the emotional and psychological experiences of vocational educators. Imposter syndrome, a feeling of inadequacy or self-doubt despite being qualified, has been identified as a common experience among many educators. However, this phenomenon has been insufficiently explored within the context of vocational further education in the UK. Future studies could delve deeper into how imposter syndrome manifests in vocational educators, particularly those teaching disciplines that require both professional practice and pedagogical expertise. Further, the intersection of gender, subject area, and teaching experience could shape how educators perceive themselves and their roles. For instance, how might female educators in male-dominated trades like engineering or construction experience imposter syndrome

differently from their male counterparts? Or, how might educators new to the profession experience these feelings compared to seasoned practitioners? Investigating these aspects could yield important insights into the psychological challenges faced by vocational educators and inform the development of support systems and professional development programmes to empower educators and help them thrive in their roles.

6.8.3 Long-Term Impact of Pedagogical Approaches on Occupational Culture and Professional Identity

Thirdly, the long-term impact of different pedagogical approaches on the development of occupational culture and professional identity in vocational students presents another rich avenue for future research. While this research has highlighted the importance of integrating occupational culture into teaching practices from a teacher's perspective, further studies could focus on the longitudinal effects of these approaches. Specifically, how do students who are exposed to curricula that emphasise both technical proficiency and a deeper understanding of occupational culture fare in their careers over time? Longitudinal studies could track students' career trajectories, examining how their vocational education influenced not only their professional success but also their personal development, sense of identity, and engagement with their profession. Such research could explore how exposure to occupational culture early in a student's education affects their career satisfaction, adaptability, and contribution to the broader profession in the long run. Additionally, these studies could assess the broader societal benefits of vocational education that nurtures both technical expertise and a deep sense of professional identity, contributing to more sustainable career paths and more resilient industries.

6.8.4 Examining the Integration of Digital Tools in Vocational Education

With the increasing integration of technology in education, there is significant potential to explore how digital tools can enhance the transmission of occupational culture. Future research could investigate how digital platforms, such as online learning environments, virtual apprenticeships, or digital portfolios, can complement or challenge traditional, hands-on methods of teaching vocational education. Moreover, examining how digital tools impact the development of professional identity and the cultivation of tacit knowledge would provide valuable insights into how technology can both support and potentially alter the development of vocational culture. Investigating these questions could help shape future pedagogical approaches that effectively merge traditional craft practices with the digital realities of the modern workplace.

6.8.5 National or International Comparisons of Vocational Education Models

Lastly, an important area for future research could involve cross-national comparisons of vocational education models. This study has focused on the experiences and perspectives of five lecturers, in five vocational areas, in one college in the South West of England. It would be useful to compare similar large GFE colleges in other large cities, or, conversely, to see if smaller, more rural colleges face the same challenges. Additionally, different countries have varying approaches to vocational training and the balance between academic qualifications and work-ready skills. By comparing countries with strong vocational education systems (such as Germany, Austria, or Switzerland) to those with more market-driven education systems, researchers could identify best practices for integrating occupational culture into vocational training. This would also allow for a broader understanding of how educational systems worldwide balance industry demands with the preservation of craft knowledge and cultural traditions. These comparative studies could offer a global perspective on how to navigate the challenges and opportunities posed by marketisation while ensuring that the intrinsic value of vocational education remains intact.

Expanding on these topics, will contribute to an even deeper understanding of the complexities within vocational education and identify strategies that could lead to more holistic, sustainable pedagogical practices. These avenues for further study not only build on the findings of the current research but also open up new areas of inquiry that could help shape the future of vocational education and its role in preparing students for a dynamic, ever-evolving workforce.

6.9   Closing Thoughts

This research has uncovered the intricacies of occupational culture in vocational education, revealing the profound impact of industry experience, pedagogical practices, and subject-specific vocabulary on the development of future professionals. By amplifying the voices of vocational educators and delving into their lived experiences, this study has underscored the importance of preserving and teaching occupational culture, fostering professional identity, and bridging the gap between the classroom and the workplace.

More than just a qualification, vocational education is a journey of transformation, where individuals acquire not only the technical skills but also the cultural ethos and professional values that define their chosen fields. As this research demonstrates, vocational educators are the torchbearers of this transformation, guiding their students towards confident and competent participation in the world of work. By recognising their invaluable contributions and empowering them with effective pedagogical tools, we can ensure that vocational education continues to shape skilled, knowledgeable, and culturally aware professionals who will contribute to a thriving and ever-evolving society.

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8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet and Ethics

Research Participant Information

Thank you for expressing an interest in taking part in my research! Please read the below information carefully before submitting this form. You are very welcome to download a copy for your records and contact me with any questions you may have. Amy :-)

* This form will record your name, please fill your name.

I am undertaking a research project as part of my PhD in Educational Research at Sunderland University. The research aims to investigate how occupational cultures shape subject-specific pedagogies and develop subject-specialist literacy teaching in vocational areas.

My key research questions are:
• How do teachers acquire the pedagogical knowledge and practices associated with their specialist areas?
• In what ways are workplace practices, customs and occupational cultures taught in the curriculum?
• How important is subject-specific vocabulary and how is it reinforced within the vocational curriculum?

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you change your mind about taking part in the study, you can withdraw at any point during the session without giving a reason and without penalty. However please note that this may be more difficult if the research has already been written up and submitted. You do not have to tell anyone you are taking part in the study if you don't want to.

As part of the research, you will be required to use the Wakelet platform, either on your own or a college device (whichever you prefer). You will be shown how to use it and be told about any potential risks from using the app when we first meet. You will also take part in two interviews. These will take place online via Teams and will be recorded with your consent. Recordings and transcripts will be stored securely and not shared with anyone. I encourage you to choose a pseudonym (alternative name) that I can use when writing up my findings.

I am very grateful that you are supporting me with my work and I hope it will be of interest to you. You will be very welcome to read the work before it is submitted for marking to check for accuracy etc. If suitable, the results may also be presented at academic conferences and/or written up for publication in peer-reviewed academic journals.

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.

The University of Sunderland Research Ethics Group has reviewed and approved the study.
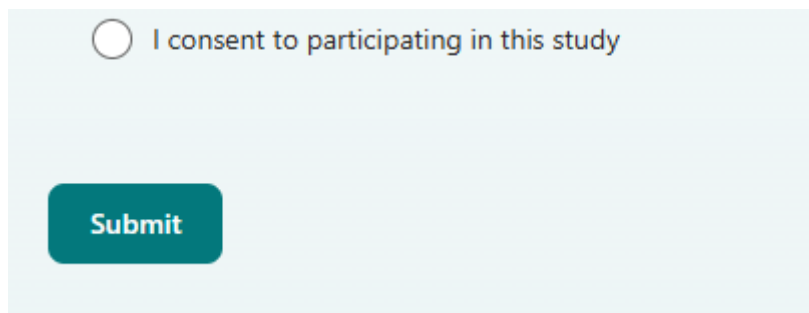
Contact for further information
Doctor John Fulton (Chair of the University of Sunderland Research Ethics Group, University of Sunderland)
Email: john.fulton@sunderland.ac.uk
Phone: 0191 515 2529

By signing below, you are confirming that you:

- are over the age of 18
- have read and understood the above study information and, by signing below, you consent to participate in this study
- understand that you have the right to withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time during the study itself
- understand that you also have the right to change your mind about participating in the study for a short period after the study has concluded, however, you also recognise that if the study is in write up phase this might be difficult

Appendix 2: Instructional Guide to Wakelet for Participants

Wakelet is a digital curation platform that lets you organise a mix of content for easy access. It is included in our Microsoft license and is free for you to use. It can be accessed via your college laptop, or you can also download the app to your phone if you wish.

As part of the project, I will be asking you to collect a range of media linked to your previous career and current teaching role. By using Wakelet you can collect images, videos, music, or anything you like that will help me gain an understanding of what it's like to be a chef, beauty therapist, engineer etc.

To log in click this direct link: https://accounts.wakelet.com/interaction/JGYqxfrD_7GGT-pw6jm0b and select the 'continue with Microsoft' option.

Use your college ID to log in.
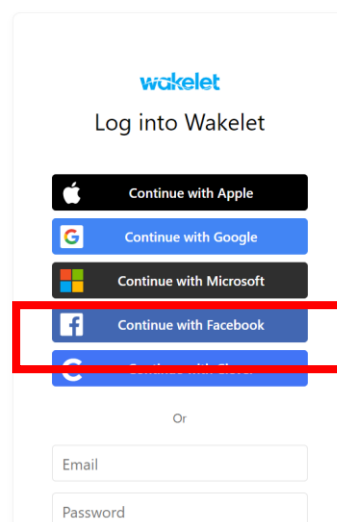
You need to 'create a collection'
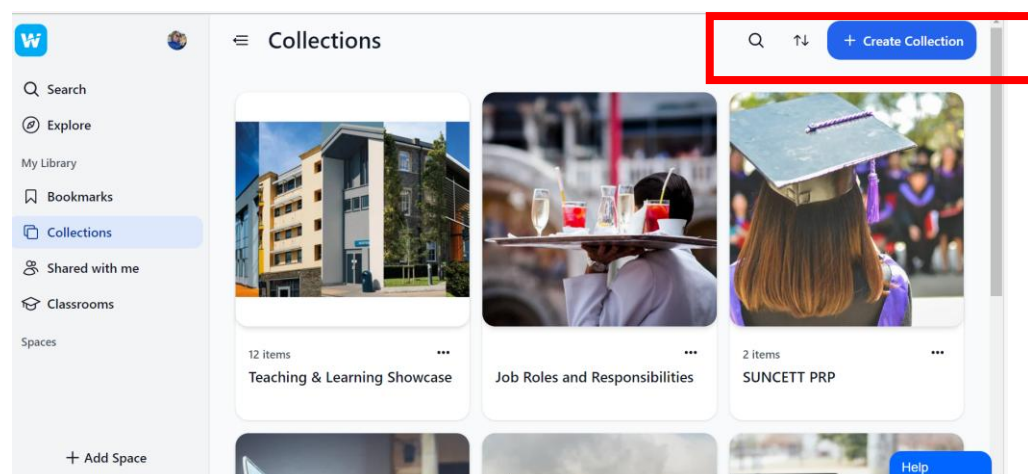
For the first part of the research, I would like you to **focus only on your career before you come to teaching**. So this first collection can be called 'My Life as a…..' You can also select the 'design' tool to set your preferences for the layout of your content.
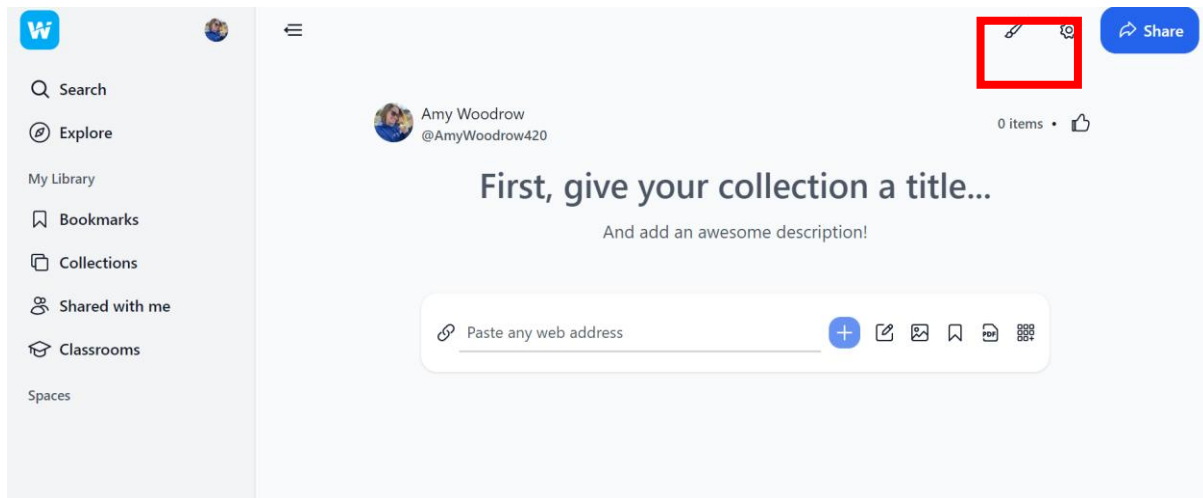

Now you are ready to start adding your content. You can paste any web address into the box. You can add any text if you want to write something. You can add photos, upload documents, or embed YouTube clips via the app integration option. Tip: to add images quickly, choose 'unsplash' and search from a range of images rather than uploading your own.
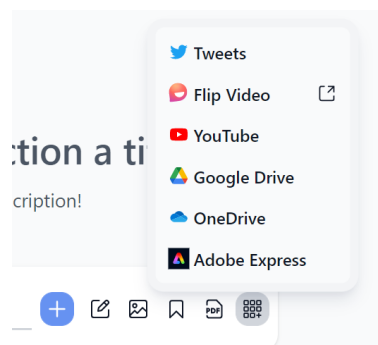
Now you are free to add anything you like about your previous career. Think about the following (not exhaustive list but just for inspiration):

-   Where does the work take place?
-   Who does the work
-   Any uniform or specialist clothing
-   Any specialist tools or equipment used
-   Language and technical vocabulary (use free text to include some)
-   Are there any traditions in the line of work (especially if it is craft-based)?
-   Any sort of rituals e.g. ways of greeting each other, routines or occasions
-   Any celebrities or heroes/role models
-   What are the values held by people who work in your industry?

Once you are happy with what you have got, click the 'share' button and change the slider to 'allow sharing'. This collection will remain private and won't be on your profile unless you 'publish to profile' (you don't need to do this).
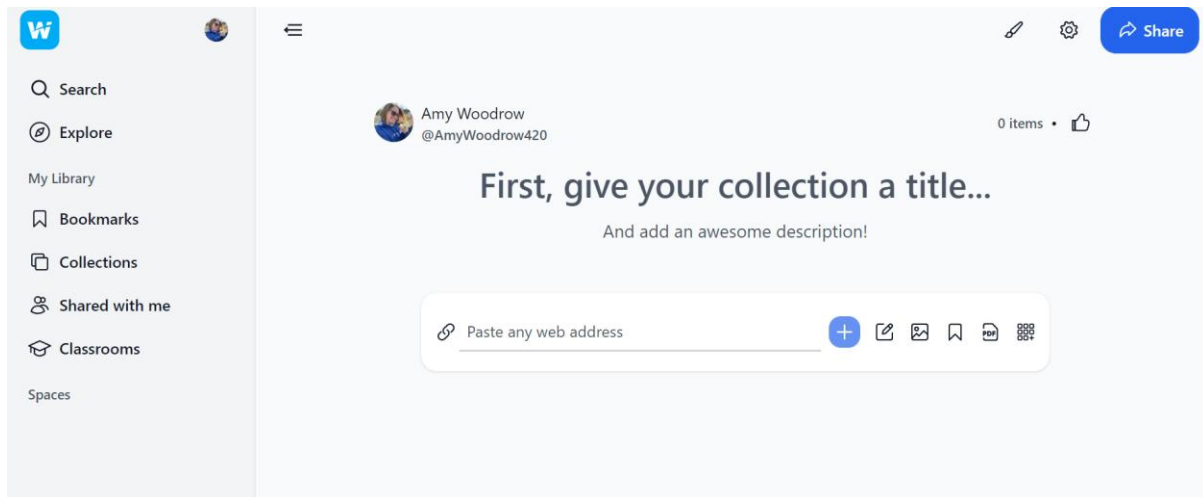
When you have had a go, send me the link and I will be in touch to arrange a meeting with you to talk through what you have got. Here's something I chucked together as an example: https://wakelet.com/wake/hzaElqfs_3_gPYu6BHjw8 (took me about 30 mins).

Thank you once again for supporting me with my research!

Appendix 3: Discussion Themes/Interview Questions

Question Themes/Discussion Points

Thursday, November 3, 2022   10:46 AM

Story - own education
Previous career
What does it mean to be a...
How would you describe yourself
Why teaching
Teaching qualifications and early experiences
Interactions with other teachers
Cpd
Industrial updating
How do they maintain identity
Influence of workplace & college
What exposure do students get to industry
How do you teach what it means to be a...

Connections between artefacts

Appendix 4: Coding Example

(Participant was asked about specific approaches to teaching beauty therapy)	
So I'll always link it into something with the industry that will be doing something and I'll then tell them a story. It's like, oh my gosh but actually, this happened to me or so a while ago.. [proceeds to tell a short story about waxing a client]..	Teaching through story-telling and using own experiences to bring context to life.
Umm, another example I'd had this massive thing with my manager because it was a small day spa and they had booked me in with this male client to massage and I was going to be in the building on my own. We're in the middle of this little village and I was thinking about how uncomfortable I felt and basically manager didn't support me at all, but that kind of comes up in conversation when you're talking about, you know, setting their own business. If you're working on your own, you're gonna keep yourself safe. And I think being able for me, I kind of, I guess it links back to what I was saying earlier about when I went into teaching. And although it was like a rabbit and headlight, I still knew that I had those 12 years of working full time in the industry that had so many different experiences that there's, there's not many things that I've probably seen like you. There's not many things that you've not come across you've not seen that being able to link all the all the elements that you're teaching, linking it to the industry, that's like, well, actually, you know, we do this because of this. And ohh, I've got a funny story. I'm gonna tell them. Tell you about this and I do, you know, I go off on my little waffle. But then I guess, like, say, it kind of helps me build my relationships with my students.	Real-life issues and challenges are not featured in the curriculum.

Wider skills and knowledge development

Personal development

Reflection

Linking theory to practice

Relationship building and rapport in the classroom |

The table below is an example of how I identified the themes that emerged from my data analysis. The themes related to the second research question explain how workplace practices, customs and occupational cultures are taught in the curriculum. Within the next chapter, I utilise each theme as a

heading to structure the discussion. Within these discussions, I provide comprehensive explanations of the themes' significance and include illustrative quotes that support the development of these themes. Please note that the subheading name and numbering changed as I restructured sections for better coherence.

Research Question	Latent Themes
RQ2 - In what ways are workplace practices, customs and occupational cultures taught in the curriculum?	Pedagogical Approaches 2.1 Use of the lecturer's lived experiences and narratives to provide context to the subject. Power of story-telling. 2.2 Practical approaches to bring theory to life e.g. demonstration and guided practice. 2.3 Importance of building rapport and relationships to foster a positive learning environment
	Facilities and Equipment 2.4 Use of realistic working environments to enhance learning although doesn't always replicate the workplace.
	"Hidden" Curriculum 2.5 Aspects of personal development and wider skills e.g. professionalism, personal safety, working with others. Careers information and guidance for that sector.

Appendix 5: Wakelet Collections

ZK – Beauty Therapy

my life in the IT industry
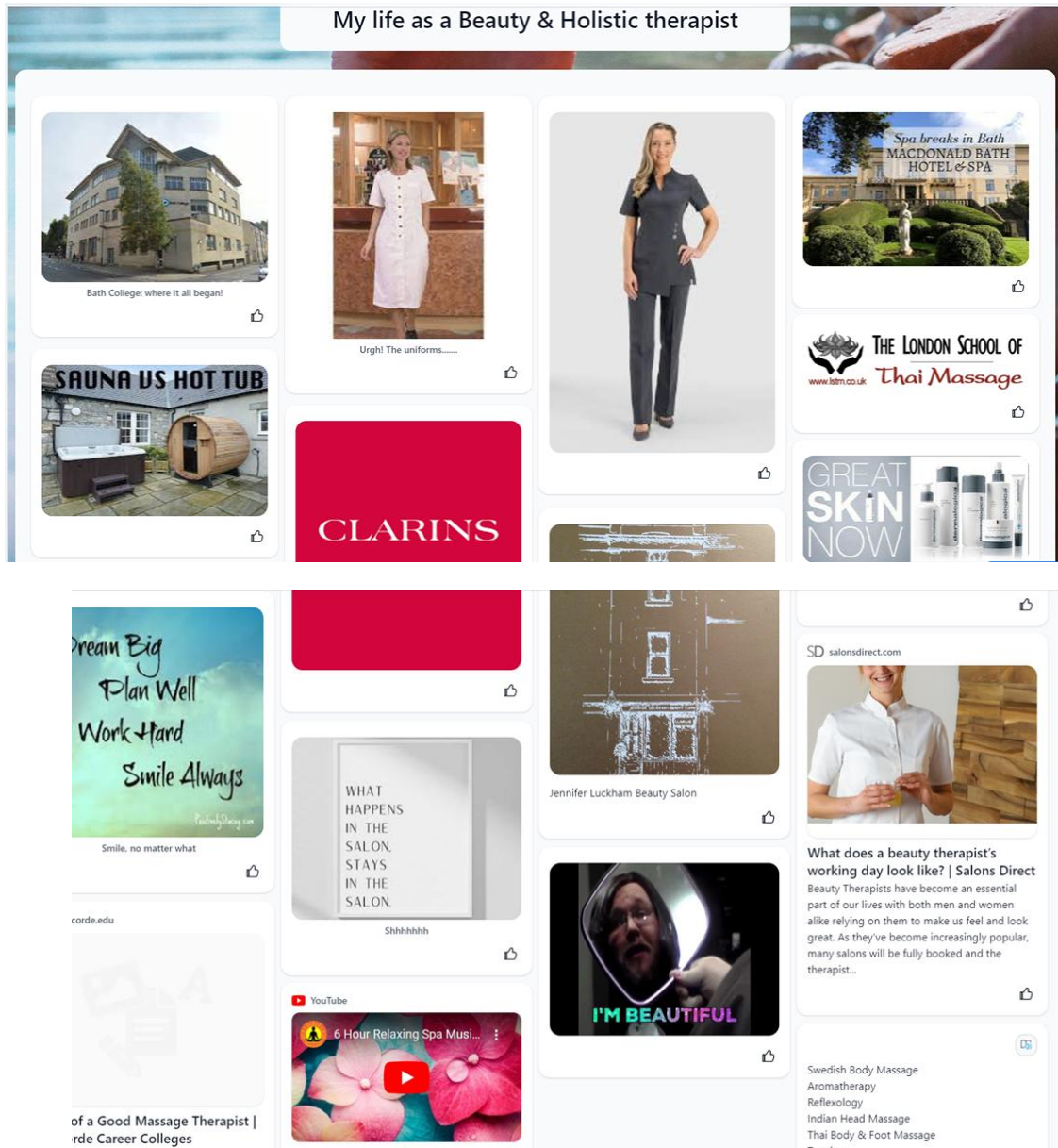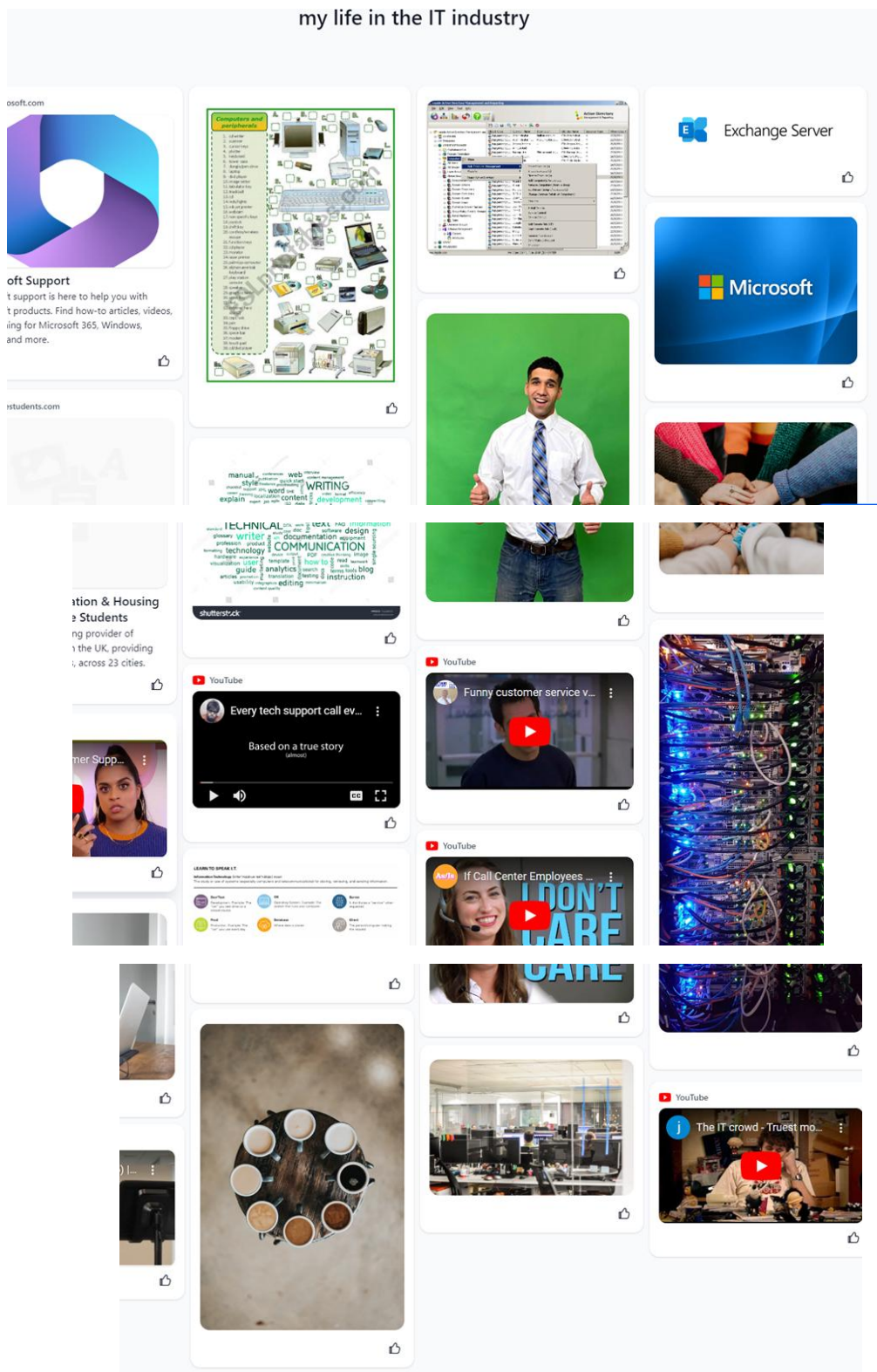
Chef - My Journey

Cooking for some amazing people

Been a thorough professional

A good place and a 2nd home

working for BBC

Been passionate when it comes to food

Back to City Hotel

Experiencing the Country style hospitality

A Profession for people who love to travel

First Uk job

completing a 3year diploma in Hotel Mangement

Travelling India with the Taj Group of hotels

Getting my first Job in the Country's Best Hotel - The Taj Groups

Graduating in Physics

What joinery means to me

wordpress.c...   ...

Working life as a joiner
People confuse joinery work with carpentry,
with most of them just assuming that they are
similar since they all deal with wood. As much
as the two are different, they have a lot of
similarities wh...

Engineering

military

Copied from: **Engineering - military**

🔗 Paste any web address

RAF 1989-2002

Tool control - if you don't know where the tool is....ground the fleet

Punctuality - if you're not five minuets early...your late

Working on aircraft - anywhere, at anytime, in any condition.