

**ADJUSTING PERSONAL EXPECTATIONS:  
AN ANALYSIS OF EARLY-CAREER  
TEACHER NARRATIVES**

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## **Keywords**

Adjustment of expectations, beginning teachers, conditions supporting teacher growth, early-career teachers, expectations of teaching, graduate teachers, narrative inquiry, personal expectations, professional development, professional growth, professional identity, Queensland state school context, role identity, self as teacher, teacher attrition, teacher identity

## Abstract

The early years of a teacher's career are often a site of tension, where long-standing beliefs about what it is to be a teacher are challenged. The images and ideals that teachers have of themselves – their “personal expectations” (Cole & Knowles, 1993) – have recognised implications for the development of a teacher's professional identity. Early-career teachers often confront a disparity between their personal expectations, and what they find to be realistic to achieve in practice. Understanding how early-career teachers adjust their personal expectations, whilst at the same time maintaining their commitment to the profession, is at the core of this narrative study. This study of four early-career teachers in Queensland seeks to address the following research questions: (1) how do teachers adjust their personal expectations during the early-career years? and (2) what conditions influence the adjustment of personal expectations?

Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth is used in this study as a theoretical framework. The cycles of growth and change emphasised in the Interconnected Model reflect the ongoing interplay between internal and external domains of a teacher's world, and the mediating processes of enactment and reflection. The use of the model highlights the processes, phases and contextual factors involved as the participants adjusted their personal expectations in the early-career years, offering an original contribution to the literature. Additionally, the study gave a voice to second- and third-year teachers, responding to an identified need for further research on teachers in this career stage (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011; Pillen, Beijaard, & den Brok, 2013b).

This study drew upon semi-structured interviews (Schuman, 1982; Seidman, 2013) in the data collection phase. Not only did the research method allow for depth in the responses, but also allowed for participants to engage in a process of ongoing reflection and engagement in the construction of the narrative. The analysis was guided by the narrative approach detailed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), and Connelly and Clandinin (2006). The findings of the study are presented as narratives: individual, idiosyncratic stories of teachers' lives, experiences and expectations.

The findings of this study suggest that early-career teachers adjust their personal expectations gradually and with difficulty, and only through reflecting and acting upon their own professional experimentation. Importantly, the findings demonstrate that whilst feedback, collegial relationships and trial-and-error practices are critical for early-career teachers to develop more realistic expectations of themselves, retaining some aspects of their initial expectations allows them to maintain their ideological vision of themselves in a teaching role. This study provides considerable insight into the ways that teachers can be better prepared for their first years in the profession, and, as such, has implications for early-career teachers, school administrators, policymakers, and for universities. The findings suggest that encouraging early-career teachers to confront unrealistic personal expectations is critical in empowering them to shape strong professional identities.

## Table of Contents

Keywords.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
List of Figures.....	vii
List of Tables.....	viii
List of Abbreviations.....	ix
Statement of Original Authorship.....	x
Acknowledgements.....	xi
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>12</b>
1.1 Background and Research Context.....	14
1.1.1 Early-career teacher expectations.....	14
1.1.2 Attrition, teacher effectiveness and resilience.....	16
1.2 Purpose of the Study.....	20
1.3 Significance and Scope of Study.....	22
1.4 Outline of the Thesis.....	25
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review.....</b>	<b>28</b>
2.1 Overview of Literature Review.....	28
2.2 Conceptualising Teacher Identity.....	28
2.3 Personal Expectations: Expectations of <i>Self as Teacher</i> .....	32
2.4 Modelling Teacher Identity Development.....	35
2.4.1 Clarke and Hollingsworth’s (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth.....	38
2.5 Adjusting Early-Career Teacher Expectations.....	44
2.5.1 Initial personal expectations of early-career teachers.....	45
2.5.2 “Shattered images”: Challenges in confronting and adjusting personal expectations.....	50
2.5.3 Adjusting expectations: a question of conditions?.....	54
2.6 Summary and Implications of Literature Review.....	62
2.6.1 Use of theoretical frameworks.....	63
<b>Chapter 3: Research Design.....</b>	<b>65</b>
3.1 Overview of Research Design.....	65
3.2 Methodology.....	65
3.3 Design of the Study.....	68
3.4 Participants.....	70
3.5 Procedure and Timelines.....	71
3.5.1 Semi-structured interview.....	72
3.5.2 Interim research texts and member checking.....	74
3.6 Analysis.....	76
3.7 Ethical Considerations and Limitations.....	78
3.8 Summary of Research Design.....	80
<b>Chapter 4: Findings.....</b>	<b>81</b>

4.1 Overview of Findings.....	81
4.2 Early-Career Teacher Narratives.....	81
Charlie’s Narrative.....	83
Deanna’s Narrative.....	91
Erica’s Narrative.....	101
Scott’s Narrative.....	108
4.3 Summary of Findings.....	116
<b>Chapter 5: Discussion.....</b>	<b>117</b>
5.1 Overview of Discussion.....	117
5.2 Initial Personal Expectations.....	118
5.3 Primary Experimentation and Salient Outcomes.....	122
5.4 Absence of Feedback, Indicators or Measures of Success.....	127
5.5 Awareness and Intervention.....	131
5.6 Secondary Experimentation and Salient Outcomes.....	135
5.7 Adjusted Personal Expectations.....	138
5.8 Summary of Discussion.....	141
<b>Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations.....</b>	<b>143</b>
6.1 Overview of Conclusions and Recommendations.....	143
6.2 Research Questions.....	143
6.2.1 Research Question 1.....	143
6.2.2 Research Question 2.....	144
6.3 Contributions of the Study.....	145
6.4. Limitations of the Study.....	148
6.5 Suggestions for Future Research.....	149
6.6 Suggestions for Practice.....	150
6.7 Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations.....	152
<b>Reference List.....</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>168</b>
Appendix A: Interview schedule.....	168

## List of Figures

<i>Figure 1.</i> Flores and Day’s (2006) model of the key mediating influences on the formation of teacher identity. ....	36
<i>Figure 2.</i> Lee and Schallert’s (2016) model of the interrelation between teacher identity development and conceptions of teaching. ....	38
<i>Figure 3.</i> Interconnected Model of Professional Growth, showing the four domains situated within the Change Environment, as well as the processes of enactment and reflection between the domains. ....	39
<i>Figure 4.</i> A schematic of the research process. ....	75
<i>Figure 5.</i> Adapted version of the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth: Initial personal expectations. ....	119
<i>Figure 6:</i> Adapted version of the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth: Primary experimentation and salient outcomes. ....	123
<i>Figure 7.</i> Adapted version of the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth: Absence of feedback, indicators or measures of success. ....	127
<i>Figure 8.</i> Adapted version of the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth: Awareness and intervention. ....	132
<i>Figure 9.</i> Adapted version of the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth: Secondary experimentation and salient outcomes. ....	136
<i>Figure 10.</i> Adapted version of the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth: Adjusted personal expectations. ....	139

## List of Tables

<i>Table 1.</i> Summary of the design of the study.....	69
<i>Table 2.</i> Teacher participant demographics at Cityside State High School.....	71



## **List of Abbreviations**

The following abbreviations are used in this thesis document.

AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
ARTISM	Active and Reflective Teaching in Secondary Mathematics
EMIC	Exploring Mathematics in Classrooms
QCT	Queensland College of Teachers
SETE	Studying the Effectiveness of Teacher Education (Report)

## Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: [QUT Verified Signature](#)

Date: June 2017

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

*The longer I teach the more I understand the importance of self-care in this profession. I've realised how important it is that you know your limits and create boundaries for yourself – lest you become devoid of energy and optimism and completely ineffective. I've been aware of other teachers who have pushed themselves close to the point of breakdown.... You can't fix every student or make every class perfect but plenty of teachers seriously put themselves to this very test. It is essential that as new teachers we learn quickly how to manage our workload and have realistic expectations of ourselves. Because despite numerous very well intentioned attempts from partners, friends, mentors and colleagues, it's pretty hard for someone to do that for you. (McIlroy, 2015)*

Melbourne teacher Pip McIlroy's article on teacher self-care was published online in *Stories from Teach for Australia*, in April 2015. As a third-year teacher, she highlights the importance of teachers setting boundaries, knowing their limits, and establishing realistic expectations of themselves. Mastering this in the early-career years, McIlroy proposes, is the key to maintaining enthusiasm and passion for the profession. But, as she observes, it is only individual teachers themselves who can set more reasonable expectations, and reconcile this tension. McIlroy's article highlights a key concern reflected in recent literature on teacher identity and resilience, which is that many early-career teachers have unrealistic expectations of themselves in their role. Adjusting these expectations is fundamental to resolving a coherent sense of professional identity, but how do teachers achieve this in the early-career years, and what conditions influence this?

The early-career years are acknowledged to have long-term consequences for teacher quality, retention and resilience. Research has demonstrated that teaching is one of the most stressful occupations, due to workload, hectic workdays, the pressures of catering to a diversity of student needs, and the emotional demands of the role (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). The early-career years are particularly fraught with the challenge, as individuals often learn to teach whilst assuming the same responsibilities as experienced teachers, learning through a frustrating process of

trial-and-error (Herbert & Worthy, 2001). In the Australian state of Queensland, where the current study is contextualised, these stressors are complicated by other factors. The lack of certainty around gaining permanent employment upon graduation compounds stress for Queensland teachers, who also report that large class sizes, student behaviour, and inadequate support within schools contribute to their early-career challenges (QCT, 2013). Stressors such as these have been found to predict burnout and teacher attrition (Johnson et al., 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015).

Alongside challenges related to professional competence are the individual challenges involved in negotiating a professional identity. Personal histories, professional aspirations and images of oneself as a teacher come together to inform beliefs about what makes an individual suitable for teaching, and the early-career years are often a site of tension where long-held beliefs about what it is to be a teacher are challenged. As a result, this phase of a teacher's career is "a time of constant self-assessment in relation to a new body of knowledge, new experiences, unfamiliar expectations and burgeoning responsibilities" (Morrison, 2013, p. 92), as teachers determine their capacity for the role and shape their professional identities. The images and ideals that early-career teachers have of themselves often conflict with the realities of the profession (Herbert & Worthy, 2001), however, the process of adjusting, adapting or reshaping these personal expectations can also lead to disillusionment and disappointment (Flores & Day, 2006; Trent, 2016). In spite of this, there is a lack of research recognising the processes involved in the adjustment of these expectations, and the phases or cycles of learning as early-career teachers re-evaluate their often misinformed or unrealistic expectations.

This study explores, through narrative inquiry, the experiences of four early-career teachers at one Queensland secondary school. The focus of this study is the adjustments to their personal expectations during their early-career years; and the conditions that supported a shift from having idealistic to more realistic expectations of themselves as teachers.

There are five sections to Chapter 1. Initially, the introduction provides a foundational background (Section 1.1) to the issues under investigation. Within this section, research on early-career teacher expectations is addressed (Section 1.1.1),

before an overview of the impacts on teacher attrition, quality and resilience. Following this, the purpose of the study is outlined, as well as the research questions addressed by the study (Section 1.2). Here, a short summary is also provided of my own motivations for undertaking the study. The significance of this study, as well as the scope, are highlighted within the following section (Section 1.3). This section addresses the necessity of this study, and details the use of the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002) as a lens through which to view the adjustment of early-career teachers' personal expectations. Finally, an outline of the thesis (Section 1.4) provides an overview of the remaining chapters of the document.

## **1.1 Background and Research Context**

Two areas of research critical to the study are discussed here to provide context. The first is the volume of research concerned with the perceived gap between early-career teacher expectations, and the realities of the profession. This is narrowed further to address studies on early-career teachers' expectations of themselves as teachers. The second body of research discussed here highlights the impacts of this disparity on the profession, such as early-career attrition, teacher effectiveness and resilience.

**1.1.1 Early-career teacher expectations.** A significant body of literature has emphasised the gap between early-career teachers' expectations and the realities of the profession. Research suggests that in the early-career years, teachers often experience a reality shock, or transition shock (Corcoran, 1981; Veenman, 1984) in confronting and negotiating the gap between their expectations and reality. Studies such as that by Herbert and Worthy (2001) have highlighted that early-career teachers' expectations about teaching and students often conflict with the realities of school contexts and as such, can be a source of anxiety and frustration. Research on the mismatch of early-career teacher expectations and the reality of teaching has drawn attention to a variety of factors: expectations of pedagogy and instructional practice (Cook, Smagorinsky, Fry, Konopak, & Moore, 2002; Shkedi & Laron, 2004); expectations about students (Hong, 2012; Lassila & Uitto, 2016), and expectations about the demands of the teaching profession (Gardner, 2010; Hagger, Mutton, & Burn, 2011; Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007). Another body of research has

analysed and evaluated early-career teachers' expectations of themselves as teachers (Le Maistre & Paré, 2010; Manuel & Brindley, 2005; Tait, 2008; Trent, 2016). As Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013) notes, the first years in the profession challenge teachers' beliefs not only about teaching, but about the type of teacher they imagined they would be. Such beliefs are defined by Cole and Knowles (1993), in their seminal study of teacher expectations, as the *personal expectations* of teaching. The authors define these expectations as early-career teachers' "images of themselves as teachers" and "ideals and aspirations about teaching" (Cole & Knowles, p. 459) – their expectations about themselves in a teaching role. The authors note that these expectations have developed over many years prior to teaching, and, whilst they are often highly idealised, they are firmly entrenched and difficult to destabilise. The term *personal expectations*, as it is used throughout this study, is in reference to Cole and Knowles's original terminology to describe the expectations teachers have of themselves in their professional role. This includes their expectations of their capacity and success across a variety of dimensions of their role, reflective of the type of teacher they want to become.

Personal expectations of teaching have recognised implications for the development of a teacher's professional identity (Alsup, 2006; Olsen, 2010; Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, & Fry, 2004). As early-career teachers negotiate the transition to the profession, they often confront a gap between their initially idealistic visions of themselves as teachers, and what they find to be realistic to achieve in practice (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Delamarter, 2015; Morrison, 2013). For Pillen, den Brok and Beijaard (2013c), the mismatch of personal expectations with the realities of the profession may even lead to a number of "professional identity tensions" (p. 88), or, as Delamarter (2015) explains, a professional identity "crisis" (p. 3). For Lauriala and Kukkonen (2005), this involves conflict between the interconnected dimensions of *actual self*, *ought self* and *ideal self*. Sfard and Prusak's (2005) work on teacher identity, similarly, reinforced that identity is formed not through experience, but through self-concept or a "vision" (p. 17) of one's experiences, as does MacLure's (1993) characterisation of teacher identity as something to use, to make sense of oneself in relation to a given context. As such, we must also consider that as early-career teachers reappraise their personal expectations, they re-conceptualise their own experiences to make sense of

themselves in a teaching role. This shift constitutes important “identity work” (Watson, 2006, p. 525). Adjusting personal expectations is acknowledged to be a complex process, involving changes that often stand in opposition to teachers’ values, perceptions or beliefs about what it is to be a quality teacher (Pillen, Beijaard, & den Brok, 2013a). As such, recognising the processes involved in the adjustment of early-career teachers’ personal expectations is essential in understanding how they can build a robust teacher identity (Johnson et al., 2015).

**1.1.2 Attrition, teacher effectiveness and resilience.** Gaining further understanding about teacher identity development – specifically, the conflict between idealistic and realistic expectations of self as teacher – is crucial, given its impact on the beginning professional. Studies have highlighted the difficulties early-career teachers can face as their initial conceptions of themselves are destabilised and challenged (Flores & Day, 2006; Friedman, 2000; Kumazawa, 2013; Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007; Lee & Schallert, 2016; Yuan & Lee, 2015). Johnson et al. (2015) addressed the complexities of shaping a new professional identity, and even suggested that the dissonance that teachers experience during this transition leads to attrition. Feelings of isolation, insecurity and doubt can occur in response to identity conflicts (Pillen et al., 2013c) as well as a sense of losing oneself, or losing hope of becoming the type of teacher they had wanted to be (Alsup, 2006; Bullough, 2005; Gaudelli & Ousley, 2009).

It is well-documented that when early-career teachers’ expectations of their own performance are not met, they can experience feelings of helplessness when becoming aware of their shortcomings (Alsup, 2006; Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington, & Gu, 2007; Flores & Day, 2006; Hong, 2010; Pillen et al., 2013c; Tait, 2008). Burnout, a stress-related process of exhaustion, depersonalisation and unaccomplishment (Maslach, 1993), has also been reported as very real possibility for early-career teachers who struggle to negotiate this tension (Chang, 2009; Friedman, 2000; Gallant & Riley, 2014; Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008). Fantilli and McDougall (2009), Gallant and Riley (2014) and Henke, Chen and Geis (2000) observe that many of the best and brightest leave the profession due to a mismatch of their expectations of themselves, and their perceived performance – in fact, Pittard (2003) suggests that the more committed an early-career teacher is, the greater the disappointment. In drawing attention to the consequences for those teachers unable



to adjust their expectations of themselves in their teaching role, findings such as these lay the foundations for the current study.

These consequences have wider repercussions for the teaching profession. Teacher attrition has been linked to a mismatch of expectations with the realities of teaching, which is further compounded by other factors: including stress, isolation, a heavy workload, a lack of support, student behaviour, and an increasing focus on teacher performance and achievement data (Paris, 2013; QCT, 2013; Watt & Richardson, 2011). High attrition rates for early-career teachers are widely reported in studies in most developed nations (Goddard & Goddard, 2006; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Indeed, a number of studies have identified that up to 40% of teachers in developed countries leave the profession in the first five years (Johnson et al., 2010; Paris, 2013; Watt & Richardson, 2011).

Determining the actual scale and impact of teacher attrition in Australia is problematic. Mason and Matas (2015), in their literature review of Australian teacher attrition research over the past decade, found that despite increasing research interest in this area, the research is dominated by small-scale, qualitative studies. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2016) suggests that there is a lack of consistency within the research and the Australian education sector as to definitions of ‘attrition’ and ‘retention’ (p. 4). According to AITSL (2016), some studies of early-career teacher attrition are inclusive of students in teacher education programs who do not graduate with a teaching qualification, or those who graduate but never gain employment as a teacher, alongside those who leave the profession within five years. They also note that the terms are often used to refer not only to teachers leaving the profession, but those leaving a particular sector or state to move to another.

Thus, whilst it is suggested by the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT, 2013) that between 25 and 30% of Australian teachers leave teaching in the first five years, estimates in the literature range from between 8 and 50% (AITSL, 2016; QCT, 2013). Indicative of the difficulties in transitioning to teaching, Watt and Richardson’s (2011) longitudinal study revealed that the dropout rate for Australian teachers was highest at the end of the first year of teaching – at 45% across all states and territories. Within the Queensland context, the QCT (2013) reports that nearly

one-quarter of all teachers from the 2006-2008 graduating cohorts did not remain teaching in Queensland for long enough to be granted full registration, noting that many will never return to the profession. More concerning is that attrition rates have increased in Queensland with successive cohorts of graduating teachers. Reporting an increase of approximately 3.5% in the attrition rate every two years based on their 2008 data, the QCT data indicates a rise in the proportion of early-career teachers leaving the profession. If this trend continues, it would be expected nearly 30% of the cohort of 2016 Queensland teachers graduates will leave the profession within the first five years.

The issue of teacher attrition has serious ramifications for stakeholders at all levels. Early-career turnover, as Smith and Ingersoll (2004) note, is becoming a persistent organisational problem for the teaching profession as a whole. In some subject areas, nearly half of all teachers leave before five years (Smith & Ingersoll). Research indicates that turnover rates are also higher in disadvantaged, hard-to-staff schools (Ewing & Smith, 2003; Lyons, 2004; Morrison, 2013). As Lyons (2004), and Ingersoll and Strong (2011) further note, high teacher turnover also leads to poorer outcomes in schools, perpetuating a cycle of school disadvantage. Ingersoll and Strong also point to the drain on public resources and departmental instability resulting from early-career teacher attrition. The urgent need for additional teachers further compounds the issue of teacher retention in Australia. A report from the Australian Council for Educational Research highlighted the projected increase in classes across the nation, indicating that between the years of 2011 and 2020, an additional 443 primary classes, per annum, will be needed in Queensland alone (Weldon, 2015). High attrition rates also come at a cost to teacher quality. Ingersoll and Strong, for instance, argue that teacher effectiveness increases significantly after the early-career phase. A further concern is that many studies report that “it is the most able who are most likely to leave” (Ewing & Smith, 2003, p. 16), as these teachers experience disillusionment in their struggle to enact their high personal performance standards (Henke et al., 2000; Le Maistre & Paré, 2010). Morrison (2013) refers to the early exit of quality teachers from the profession as “wastage” (p. 94), pointing out the attrition of these teachers continues to be a threat to the capacity and strength of the teaching workforce.

Consequently, a number of studies have identified the critical link between the development of a positive, robust teacher identity and the retention of quality teachers in the profession (Day & Gu, 2014; Johnson et al., 2015; Tait, 2008). Day and Gu (2014), for instance, suggest that intrinsic motivation and commitment to the profession are strongly aligned with a positive sense of identity. They note that student achievement is, consequently, likely to be positively impacted by teachers with a strong sense of moral purpose and loyalty, who are motivated to work for the good of the school and teach to their best.

A number of authors have also identified the role of personal efficacy in shaping teacher identity (Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink, & Hofman, 2012; Tait, 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Perceived self-efficacy, as Bandura (1994) explains, concerns one's "beliefs in their capabilities to exercise control over their own functioning and over events that affect their lives" (p. 71), affecting motivation levels, resilience and susceptibility to stress. For instance, as Hong (2012) observed in a study of teachers who have both stayed in and left the profession in the early-career years, the teachers with low efficacy were more likely to leave the profession. The *Studying the Effectiveness of Teacher Education* (SETE) report was the result of a large-scale longitudinal investigation of early-career teachers across Queensland and Victoria. This report also showed that many graduate teachers were frustrated that they were not yet the teacher that they wanted to be, but felt little control over the factors and conditions that influenced this (Mayer et al., 2015). Tait's (2008) research explored the relationship between resilience and personal efficacy, and, like other authors (Hong, 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), she addressed the crucial role that efficacy plays in influencing teachers' "levels of effort, goal setting, persistence, resilience, willingness to try new ideas and strategies, enthusiasm, planning, fairness and commitment to teaching" (p. 59). Research by Day et al. (2007) suggests that early-career teacher efficacy is strongly related to support from the school, leadership and colleagues, as well as recognition of their work.

Importantly, recent literature also highlights the role that teacher identity development plays in resilience (Cattley, 2007; Day & Gu, 2014; Johnson et al., 2015). Masten, Best and Garmezy (1990) define resilience as "the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening

circumstances” (p. 425). Research by Johnson et al. (2015) addressed five interrelated themes in the issue of early-career teacher resilience in Australia, developed from a large-scale Australian Research Council (ARC) project. A total of 169 interviews were conducted with early-career teachers as well as school leaders, with the five themes – relationships, school culture, teacher identity, teachers’ work, and policies and practices – emerging from the data. For the researchers, the development of a strong sense of identity as a teacher is a key factor in early-career teacher resilience. Lauriala and Kukkonen’s (2005) study demonstrated this coherence: when the teachers in their study developed an *actual identity* that came into line with their *ideal identity*, they were empowered and re-energised in their work.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Study

Central to the present study is the significant volume of research indicating that early-career teachers have unrealistic expectations of themselves as teachers, and that there are significant consequences for individuals who struggle to reconcile their beliefs about what is desirable, and what is in fact possible, within the time and institutional limitations of teaching (Cook, 2009; Delamarter, 2015; Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007; Pillen et al., 2013c; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Trent, 2016; Wilson & Deane, 2010). Nevertheless, early-career teachers often feel dissatisfied, frustrated and disillusioned in compromising their initial expectations of themselves as teachers, impacting upon teacher quality and attrition (Flores & Day, 2006; Gallant & Riley, 2014; Gaudelli & Ousley, 2009; Pillen et al., 2013c; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Trent, 2016). Thus, although confronting unrealistic personal expectations can provide new hope and positive challenges for early-career teachers (Olsen, 2010), it also has significant consequences when teachers are unable to adjust effectively, or when these tensions impact upon motivation, efficacy or resilience (McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006). Understanding how early-career teachers successfully reassess their personal expectations, whilst at the same time maintaining their motivations and ideological visions of self as teacher, is at the core of this study. As many authors (Johnson et al., 2015; Kyriacou and Kunc, 2007; Pearce & Morrison, 2011) have stressed, in reshaping their professional identities, early-career teachers’ personal selves must also be able to “persist and remain coherent” (Pearce & Morrison, 2011, p. 49).

Studies emphasise that successful early-career teachers adjust their personal expectations to reflect a more practical, realistic approach to the profession (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Le Cornu, 2013; Le Maistre & Paré, 2010; Yuan & Lee, 2015). Nevertheless, the current body of literature lacks an in-depth, coherent understanding of the contexts and conditions influencing early-career teachers' expectations. Despite research in this field gaining momentum in recent years, there has been little attention paid specifically to the processes involved as early-career teachers modify and adapt their initial expectations of themselves as teachers. What also emerges from the existing body of research is a need to understand the conditions that support the successful re-appraisal of these personal expectations.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how early-career teachers adjust their expectations of themselves as teachers – their personal expectations – in the early years of practice. This study explores, through narrative inquiry, the experiences of four early-career Queensland secondary school teachers. Specifically, the study focuses on the adjustment of their personal expectations during this period; and the conditions supporting their shift from having idealistic to more realistic expectations of themselves as teachers. For early-career teachers, this is an individual process which may involve settling for a less-than-perfect performance and outcome, and accepting their own limitations as they develop new knowledge and skills. For this reason, the narrative approach is a strength of this study, allowing for nuanced description about the participants' personal expectations, the adjustments of these, and the conditions under which such changes were made. A semi-structured interview process was used to reveal the nature of the teachers' beliefs, values and attitudes that influence – and are influenced by – changes in expectations.

Essentially, this study addresses the following key questions:

1. How do teachers adjust their personal expectations during the early-career years?
2. What conditions influence the adjustment of personal expectations?

The first research question is concerned with 'how', in terms of the process they have followed as well as the nature of the changes; the second is concerned with the factors that have supported the process.

In focusing on the experiences of early-career teachers who have adjusted their personal expectations, this study provides a contrast to other research (Friedman, 2000; Gallant & Riley, 2014) describing teachers whose attempts to realign their personal expectations resulted in burnout and premature exit from the profession. This study instead contributes to the body of work focusing on the experiences of continuing early-career teachers, and the factors which have led them to remain in the profession. As Herbert and Worthy (2001) note, hearing from these teachers provides a valuable opportunity to learn from success, rather than failure.

The motivation behind this study stems from my own experiences in teaching. After teaching in the Queensland state school system for almost ten years, I am aware that I have undergone a number of transitions and changes in my approach to the profession. A number of years ago, I started to recognise just how many of my interactions with early-career teachers focus on their constant re-evaluations and changes to their expectations of themselves as teachers. I began contemplating the conversations I would overhear between other experienced teachers and novices: the encouraging pep-talks over morning tea, the tips offered in the line-up for the copier, the heart-to-heart conversations taking place in empty classrooms at the end of every day. *It gets easier, they would say, the longer you teach. You'll learn to pick your battles. You won't worry about things like that anymore. It takes time.* There appears to be a common understanding of a gradual process in which personal expectations are adjusted, yet the learning experiences that define the process are not so commonly understood. It takes time, yes, but what happens in that time? What happens during that process to enable this development to occur, and what conditions influence it? These questions prompted my interest in this field of research, and led to the development of the overarching research questions in this study.

### **1.3 Significance and Scope of Study**

This study represents an important contribution to the existing knowledge on the adjustment of early-career teacher expectations. Existing Australian and international studies have not examined, in detail, the processes involved as early-career teachers experience the conflict between their initial images and aspirations for themselves as teachers and what they find to be realistic and practical to achieve. This is despite recognition that such a process is highly influential in a teacher's

decision to stay in or leave the profession (Cole & Knowles, 1993; Friedman, 2000; Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007; Le Maistre & Paré, 2010), a serious issue in Australia and internationally where retaining quality teachers is a concern. Although some studies have paved the way by presenting models that explore interactions between teacher identity formation, conceptions of teaching and mediating influences (Flores & Day, 2006; Gallant & Riley, 2014, Lee & Schallert, 2016), these models are largely conceptual and do not address the specific cycles of experimentation and learning involved as a teacher adjusts their vision of self as a teacher. The current study instead drew upon a non-linear model of teacher growth to analyse the adjustments to personal expectations and, as such, specifically focused on the processes and phases involved.

There is an overwhelming tendency for Australian and international research to concentrate on teachers at the very beginning of their career. As such, the vast majority of literature on early-career teacher expectations focuses on preservice teachers (see, for instance, Chong, Low & Goh, 2011; Ezer, Gilat & Sagee, 2010; Kumazawa, 2013; Lee & Schallert, 2016; Manuel & Brindley, 2005; Ok, 2005) and those in their first year of teaching (see Alsup, 2006; Anthony & Ord, 2008; Pillen et al., 2013c; Wilson & Deaney, 2010). While this has led to a rich understanding of the early processes of identity development in the “boundary space” (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011, p. 7) between being a student and a teacher, studies have not typically focused on teachers in their second or third year of the profession to gain a retrospective understanding of the continued professional learning of teachers. As Kyriacou and Kunc (2007) observe, it is surprising to note “how little attention has been paid specifically to the initial expectations of teaching held by beginning teachers... and then monitored through into their first two years in post” (p. 1248).

Further studies extending into the second and third year of the profession also provide an opportunity to consider shifts in teacher identity once individuals have settled into their role, beyond their initial transition from student to teacher (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011). Pillen, Beijaard and den Brok (2013b) suggest further research on teacher identity tensions should focus on those who have taught for a year or two, positing that at this point in their careers teachers may offer more revealing insights into their professional identity development. As such, this study is also significant in that it used second- and third-year teacher participants – a group

that could reveal, by means of reflection, their changing expectations in their early-career years. Their reported experiences form the basis of this investigation of how, in the early-career years, teachers adjust their expectations of themselves and their conceptions of quality teaching. *Early-career teachers* are defined in this study as teachers in their first three years of the profession: a stage demarcated by Day et al. (2007) as the first of six teaching career stages.

Using the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002) as a framework, the study employs a new lens through which to view early-career teachers' adjustment of personal expectations. As such, this study explores the way in which early-career teachers develop realistic expectations of themselves as a process of learning and development. The framework, in its attention to the personal beliefs, practices and conditions of a teacher's professional world, creates opportunities to explore sequences and processes of growth and change. The emphasis on the influence of the teaching setting and context within the framework allows for an insightful exploration of the conditions that influence the adjustment of personal expectations.

In using narrative inquiry as a methodology, the study has led to the creation of narratives, which are individual, idiosyncratic stories of teachers' lives, experiences and expectations. The study utilised a condensed form of a three-stage semi-structured interview process (Schuman, 1982; Seidman, 2013), in the data collection phase. In alignment with a narrative approach, the participants' preparatory interview notes were also used for data collection. The construction of the developing narratives – or *interim research texts* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) – formed part of an iterative research cycle, in which the participants' involvement was encouraged. This cycle was guided by the analytical approach detailed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), and Connelly and Clandinin (2006).

This study has the potential to influence practice at a number of levels, in adding to the body of literature on early-career teacher expectations and enhancing current understandings of teacher identity development. The study suggests a number of changes in the provision of support and education for early-career teachers, implemented at the preservice, or early-career stages. The findings of the study have implications for teaching contexts both inside and outside of Australia, and as such,



educational systems and sites can benefit from insights into the processes and conditions associated with the successful reappraisal of personal expectations. In particular, implications for mentoring, performance feedback and transparency in employment processes arise from this study.

Australian and international universities and teacher educators also stand to benefit from this study, which, in exploring the processes of expectation adjustment in the first year of a teacher's career, provides insights into ways in which teachers can be better prepared for their first years. By addressing the idealised expectations and images that early-career teachers hold about themselves in a teaching role, and the processes by which these can be re-evaluated, early-career teachers can be better prepared for the realities of the profession. As Williams (2002) observes, "encouraging early-career teachers to become aware of their non-formal and unplanned learning is likely to be as important as ensuring that formal learning needs are met" (p. 10). Accordingly, this study supports other research (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Cattle, 2007; Cook, 2009; Delamarter, 2015; Johnson et al., 2015; Olsen, 2008; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Sutherland & Markauskaite, 2012; Tait, 2008) in suggesting that teacher education has a crucial role to play in encouraging preservice teachers to identify and confront their initial expectations of themselves as teachers.

#### **1.4 Outline of the Thesis**

Following the introduction, the thesis continues with a literature review in Chapter 2, which synthesises existing theories and empirical research related to this study. The review outlines previous approaches to investigating teacher growth and early-career teacher expectations, and identifies the gaps in current knowledge that this study seeks to address. The research questions which emerge from the literature review are detailed, and the theoretical underpinnings of the study are explained.

Chapter 3 explains and defends the research design of the proposed study. The elements of narrative research design are discussed and linked to the purpose of this study. In addition to this, the process for selecting the participants, as well as the characteristics of the participants themselves, are explained. An outline of the data collection procedures, as well as the iterative nature of the data collection and

analysis, is presented. The processes for analysing and constructing the participants' stories are expanded on, and detailed with reference to the conventions of narrative research outlined by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Connelly and Clandinin (2006). Finally, considerations for the ethical conduct of the study are highlighted, along with precautions for ensuring participants are respected during the research process. In this section, potential limitations of the study are also suggested, based on the research design and methods to be employed in the study.

In Chapter 4, the findings of the study are presented by means of four narratives of early-career teachers, all of whom were in their second or third year of their career at the time of the interviews. These narratives are presented using a combination of prose and the original transcript dialogue, and highlight the way in which the participants' personal expectations were challenged and changed in their transition to the profession in the early-career years.

The findings are discussed in Chapter 5, using the phases of Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth to provide structure in the discussion. The discussion begins with an analysis of the initial personal expectations of the participants, and the nature and origins of these expectations. Next, the participants' early professional experimentation inside and outside the classroom is examined, with reference to the impact of these early expectations of their own performance and effectiveness. The discussion then highlights the impacts of the reported external factors on the participants, paying particular attention to the lack of meaningful feedback and supportive collegial relationships. A turning point, or significant change for each participant is then evaluated in relation to the addition of crucial external factors, before their secondary and subsequent professional experimentation is discussed. Specifically, the integration of risk-taking and trial-and-error processes, and the shift in focus to students' needs in their teaching practice, are analysed. The discussion concludes with an evaluation of the participants' adjusted personal expectations with reference to their changed attitudes and beliefs about themselves as teachers.

The conclusion of the thesis is provided in Chapter 6. The findings pertaining to each research question are summarised first, before the contributions of the study are outlined. Limitations of the study are also addressed. The conclusion then

addresses the implications of this study for future research, and makes suggestions for future practice – in particular, for teacher education.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Overview of Literature Review**

This thematic literature review provides a foundation for the current study through highlighting the key theorists and their works, exploring related empirical studies, and determining the relationships and connections between these. There are five sections to Chapter 2. The literature review begins with an overview of the research on teacher professional identity (Section 2.2) and how it has been conceptualised in the past. Following this, the focus is narrowed (Section 2.3) to review the body of research on early-career teachers' expectations of themselves in their professional role, addressing a variety of previous approaches to describing the conflict between their initial conceptions of an ideal teacher self and what they find to be realistic and practical for them to achieve. Section 2.4 elaborates upon models describing the development of teacher identity and the theoretical construct underpinning this study: Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth. Section 2.5 provides a review of the literature surrounding the nature and origin of early-career teachers' idealistic expectations of themselves as teachers, before addressing studies highlighting the professional tensions and challenges posed by these initial expectations in the first years of teaching. This section also includes a review of research on the conditions and contextual factors that may serve to help or hinder early-career teachers in negotiating this gap between the idealistic and the realistic teacher selves. The implications of the existing research are addressed in Section 2.6. This section highlights the value of the current study and further justifies the use of the theoretical construct.

### **2.2 Conceptualising Teacher Identity**

There has been an increasing interest in the past two decades on teacher identity (Beijaard et al., 2004; Henry, 2016; Pillen et al., 2013a). The importance of understanding teacher identity is frequently acknowledged in the literature, where development and growth are conceptualised as a process of becoming a teacher as opposed to a linear process of professional development (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Henry, 2016; Morrison, 2013). Teacher identity, the

“development of one’s awareness and understanding of self as a teacher” (Johnson et al., 2015, p. 103), is of utmost importance in the early-career years. For Flores and Day (2006), shaping a teacher identity involves making sense of, and reinterpreting experiences and one’s own beliefs and values.

Understandings of identity as a concept vary across the disciplines of the social sciences and philosophy, and indeed, even within the literature on identity in education there is a multiplicity of definitions (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Morrison, 2013). The concept of teacher identity, then, is not only complex, but defining it is difficult, as research draws attention to teacher identity from a variety of perspectives (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Morrison, 2013). These include intersecting discourses in which teachers participate (Alsup, 2006), narrative (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Sfard & Prusak, 2005), the role of a robust teacher identity in building resilience (Day & Gu, 2014; Johnson et al., 2015), the role of emotions (Flores & Day; Pillen et al., 2013a), conditions and contexts that influence teacher development (Delamarter, 2015; Morrison, 2013), and the responsibility of teacher education to provide opportunities for the development of teacher identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Tait, 2008; Cattley, 2007; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Sutherland & Markauskaite, 2012). Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), in their review of research on teacher identity, also note the variations in the language used in the literature, with the terms *building*, *creating*, *constructing* or *forming* an identity used interchangeably.

The terms *professional identity*, *teacher identity* and *role identity* are also used across a variety of contexts with varying definitions. Day and Gu (2014), for example, refer to professional identity as the ways that teachers see themselves in relation to the greater community of teachers, which they differentiate from role identity which is concerned with the ways that teachers understand themselves as classroom practitioners. Other authors suggest that professional identity encompasses both of these dimensions. Beijaard et al. (2004) state that professional identity refers to both “the influence of the conceptions and expectations of other people” including generally accepted notions of what teachers know and do, and to “what teachers themselves find important in their professional work and lives” (p. 108). Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) note that teacher identity can be seen as both a product (the

outcome of a number of influences on the teacher), and as a process (an ongoing, multifaceted course of development). Likewise, for Olsen (2008), identity consists of the

collection of influences and effects from immediate contexts, prior constructs of self, social positioning, and meaning systems (each itself a fluid influence and all together an ever-changing construct) that become intertwined inside the flow of activity as a teacher simultaneously reacts to and negotiates given contexts and human relationships at given moments. (p. 139)

A teacher's sense of identity changes over time due to a range of influences, contexts, and relationships that define what it is to be a teacher in any place, at a given point in time (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beauchamp & Thomas; Beijaard et al.). MacLure (1993) asserts that teacher identity is not stable or something a teacher has, but is "something that they use, to justify, explain and make sense of themselves in relation to other people, and to the contexts in which they operate" (p. 312).

Morrison (2013) argues that what it means to be a teacher varies across the contexts and communities in which teachers work, and therefore there cannot be a universal understanding of teacher identity. Rather, he notes that teacher identity is an attempt to explain oneself as a teacher across a variety of experiences of teaching and teaching contexts. Similarly, Sachs (2005) highlights not only the importance of understanding teacher identity, but also how such a concept permeates all of the personal and professional aspect of a teacher's life:

Teacher professional identity then stands at the core of the teaching profession. It provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of 'how to be', 'how to act' and 'how to understand' their work and their place in society. Importantly, teacher identity is not something that is fixed nor is it imposed; rather it is negotiated through experience and the sense that is made of that experience. (p. 15)

Such a definition is useful for this study for two reasons. First, it addresses the multi-dimensional nature of teacher identity, and second, it highlights the concept of identity negotiation, a fundamental process in the transition to teaching. By describing a framework of "how to be", "how to act" and "how to understand" (p.

15), Sachs refers to the self-consciousness that is intertwined within identity formation and negotiation that occurs at the beginning of a teacher's career. Indeed, the notion of the *self*, or *self-concept*, is also frequently evaluated in the literature on teacher identity. For Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), the development of teacher identity necessarily involves an understanding of the self across a variety of contexts such as schools and classrooms, as well as "an examination of self in relation to others" (p. 178), which aligns with Mead's (1934) understandings of self in relation to social setting. Hamachek (1999) considers understandings of self, or knowledge of self, to be critical to the development of teacher identity, whilst Lauriala and Kukkonen (2005) see self-concept and teacher identity as being the same. Lauriala and Kukkonen's research draws upon a model of self-concept formation that describes three dimensions of self: the actual self, the ought self, and the ideal self. Interestingly, these selves are interconnected and dynamic, with the actual self (one's beliefs about the attributes they currently possess) in constant negotiation with social obligations of what one believes one should be (ought self), and other possible, ideal selves. These components of identity are analogous with Sfard and Prusak's (2005) *actual* and *designated identities*. As they note, it is "our *vision* of our own or other people's experiences, and not the experiences as such, that constitute identities" (Sfard & Prusak, p. 17). These conceptions of teacher identity, in particular, have strong connections with expectations of oneself as a teacher, discussed in the following section.

Teacher identity is also understood to have complex connections with professional communities as well as the personal self. Wenger (1998) highlights both the role of the self and the role of the professional community in developing teacher identity, noting the influence of different forms of group membership on the development of a teacher identity. In the SETE study (Mayer et al., 2015), the authors emphasised that teacher identity is relational, and early-career teachers' identities can be shaped through interactions with colleagues, students, and the wider teaching community. There is also general agreement in the literature that there is a complex connection between the personal and the professional in teacher identity development (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Day & Gu, 2014; Pillen et al., 2013a). For Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), a combined view of the personal and professional dimensions is absolutely necessary

to understanding teacher identity development. This echoes Pillen et al.'s (2013a) suggestion that developing a professional identity involves finding a reasonable balance between the personal and professional side of being a teacher. Pillen et al. (2013c) argue that the development of a teacher's identity involves the integration of an individual's values, attitudes, beliefs and norms, with the professional expectations of their workplaces and teacher education programs.

Limitations of teacher identity research have also been examined by a number of authors (Beijaard et al., 2004; Hamman, Gosselin, Romano, & Bunuan, 2010; Urzúa & Vásquez, 2008). Although research on teacher identity is extensive, its development and evolution over time are not well understood. Rodgers and Scott (2008) note that there is a “black box”, left mostly unexplored in the literature, which is concerned with how teachers make the shift from being “authored” by expectations of what teachers should know and do, to “authoring their own stories” (p. 733) – that is, shaping their own professional identities and resolving their images of themselves as teachers. Beijaard et al. (2004) similarly highlight that the contextual and situational factors in a teacher's identity development have been largely underemphasised. Urzúa and Vásquez (2008) and Hamman et al. (2010) are among authors who have identified a gap in what they see as *future-oriented thought* in early-career teacher identity development, calling for research on how individuals attempt to project their personal vision of themselves as teachers in the formative years (Urzúa & Vásquez). Such limitations are addressed by the current study, which explores shifting expectations of self as early-career teachers transition to their professional role.

### **2.3 Personal Expectations: Expectations of Self as Teacher**

The intersection of the professional and personal dimensions of teaching make understanding processes of teacher identity formation a complex exercise. Flores and Day (2006) are among authors who have highlighted the intense and sometimes distressing experience of transitioning from a student to a teacher, in response to the “mismatch between idealistic expectations and classroom reality” (p. 219). The period of adjustment to the challenges of a new professional role has been referred to in the literature as *reality shock* or *transition shock* (Corcoran, 1981; Veenman, 1984). The difficulties of early-career teachers in negotiating this



transition has been well-documented (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014; Korthagen, 2004; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013) with studies suggesting that stress or even burnout is likely to occur when teachers are unable to cope with these challenges (Friedman, 2000; Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008).

In their seminal study, Cole and Knowles (1993) described three dimensions of expectations confronting preservice teachers upon entry to the profession. These include expectations of students, classrooms and schools, expectations of professional practices and routines, and expectations of *self as teacher*. This final dimension relates to what Cole and Knowles call the *personal expectations* of teachers: early-career teachers' "images of themselves as teachers" and "ideals and aspirations about teaching" (p. 459). Although these expectations are often unrealistic, they have developed over many years prior to teaching, and often underpin an individual's motivation for entering the profession. As such, expectations of oneself as a teacher are often the most difficult expectations to destabilise and re-evaluate. As Alsup (2006), Johnson et al. (2015) and Bullough (2005) reinforce, the transition to teaching can involve feelings of conflict or even a sense of losing oneself. The first years of teaching, in many ways, can be seen as a "two way struggle", as early-career teachers attempt to "make their work match their personal vision of how it should be" whilst simultaneously being subjected to "the powerful socialising forces of school culture" (Day, 1999, p. 59). This conflict between that which new teachers find to be realistic for them to achieve and their personal expectations of themselves as practitioners (Beijaard et al., 2004) is therefore a significant tension during the development of a teacher's professional identity.

Research into the expectations that early-career teachers have of themselves often examines their conceptions of their ideal teacher selves and the difficulties they experience in negotiating a more realistic teacher identity. In recent years, there has been an increase in the volume of research exploring this phenomenon (Delamarter, 2015; Kumazawa, 2013; Pillen et al., 2013c; Trent, 2016), and a variety of definitions have been used in these studies to classify and describe it. Conflicts between what early-career teachers desire, and what they find to be possible to achieve in reality, are what Pillen et al. (2013c) refer to as *professional identity tensions*. Delamarter (2015), in a similar way, refers to a professional identity

“crisis” (p. 3) occurring when teachers realise their idealistic expectations of themselves do not align with reality. Cook’s (2009) study referred to the same phenomenon as a state of “disequilibrium of the self” (p. 274), whilst Morrison (2013) argues that such a tension manifests itself in what he calls a *distressed* teacher identity. Trent’s (2016) research describes the characteristics of early-career teachers’ *preferred* and *available* teacher identities, with the preferred characteristics being highly idealistic and often not grounded in the practical realities of the profession. Hamman et al. (2010) and Kumazawa (2013) both explored the phenomenon through the lens of *possible-selves* theory. Their studies used this approach to define and describe early-career teachers’ highly aspirational expectations of themselves in practice, exploring the tension between “the ideal selves that we would very much like to become... the selves we could become, and the selves we are afraid of becoming” (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954). Friedman (2000) identifies this same disparity “between an individual’s expectations of successful performance and actual, less satisfying reality” (p. 597) as a *professional efficacy discrepancy*.

This body of research echoes Cole and Knowles (1993) earlier work, reinforcing that the set expectations that early-career teachers have of themselves in the role may be highly aspirational, and may draw from selected outstanding or memorable moments with limited contextual relevance. Although research in this field has gained momentum since Cole and Knowles’ study, and despite the variety of definitions and approaches to the research, all of these studies explore a central phenomenon: the conflict between early-career teachers’ initial expectations of themselves as teachers, and what they find to be realistic and practical to achieve.

This study draws upon Cole and Knowles’ taxonomy, the *personal expectations* of teaching, to refer to early-career teachers’ expectations of themselves as teachers and their conceptions of quality teaching. It should be acknowledged that not all authors have used this term, as this literature review draws together the findings of studies across a range of approaches and research areas, to analyse and evaluate the current understandings of how early-career teachers develop realistic expectations of themselves as teachers.

## 2.4 Modelling Teacher Identity Development

A significant body of literature describes the similar patterns of growth that occur as teachers settle into their role and develop their understandings of themselves as teachers (see Berliner, 1988; Day et al., 2007; Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1995). An early model by Berliner (1988) highlights the underlying phases of teacher development, from the *novice* stage characterised by inflexibility and an adherence to procedures and rules, through to the *expert*, by which stage teachers have developed an intuitive approach to their role. In between, teachers move through stages of the *advanced beginner*, *competent* and *proficient*, defined by an ever-increasing flexibility, self-awareness and problem-solving ability.

Other stage models (Kagan, 1992; Moir, 1990) attempt to represent the professional growth of, specifically, the novice teacher, as it is widely accepted that this career phase has long-term implications for a teacher's career, their motivation and effectiveness (Herbert & Worthy, 2001). Moir's (1990) framework, the Phases of First Year Teaching, focuses exclusively on the learning stages within the first year of teaching. This framework describes a five-stage sequence. *Anticipation* is characterised by commitment and idealism, which begins before teachers begin in the role and ends after the first two weeks of teaching. *Survival* is characterised by a sense of being overwhelmed: by the pace, the problems and the all-consuming daily routines of teaching. Following this is *disillusionment*, a phase in which low morale sets in after teachers become aware of the realities of the profession, and begin to question their own competence. Attitudes improve during the *rejuvenation* phase, after teachers gain new coping strategies and skills. The final phase of *reflection* leads to the anticipation of the next year's events.

Stage models suggest that learning and professional growth occur as a result of a linear progression of events that lead to increasing autonomy and skill as a teacher. However, there is ongoing debate as to whether early-career teacher growth can be simplified to such an extent (Burn, Hagger, Mutton & Everton, 2003; Grossman, 1992). Stage models lack acknowledgement that early-career teachers can engage in complex or sophisticated problem-solving. It has been argued that these frameworks are highly prescriptive, assume that early-career teachers have a limited repertoire of thinking skills, and cannot account for individual difference in teacher

competency (Burn et al., 2003; Conway & Clarke, 2003). As such, they pose limitations in a study such as this, which seeks to understand the highly individual process of shaping professional identity. Not only that, but this study also focuses on how early-career teachers confront a highly complex challenge in adjusting their expectations of themselves as teachers.

A number of models focus on the interrelationship between initial conceptions or expectations of teaching and teacher identity development in the early-career years. Flores and Day’s (2006) model represents one attempt to show adaptations to teacher identity in the early-career years (see Figure 1). Their model demonstrates the evolution of the pre-teaching identity – underpinned by initial ideas and expectations of self as teacher – into a reshaped teacher identity. The model suggests that these changes are made in response to a teacher’s biography, as well as contextual factors. Although this model is a useful starting point, it does not provide a temporal dimension, so does not describe the specific nature of the operations or processes involved as teachers reshape their identities.

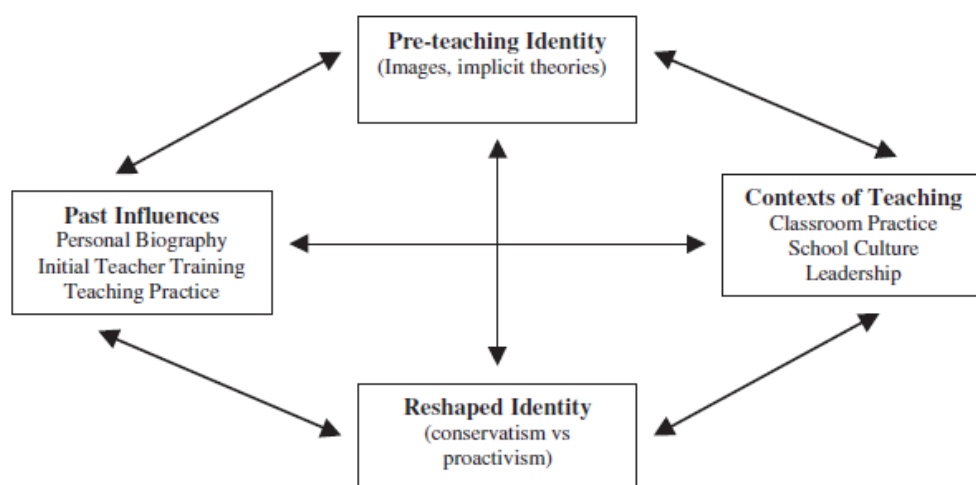


Figure 1. Flores and Day’s (2006) model of the key mediating influences on the formation of teacher identity. From “Contexts which shape and reshape new teachers’ identities: A multi-perspective study,” by M.A. Flores and C. Day, 2006, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22: p. 230

Gallant and Riley’s (2014) model also refers to the changing concept of self for early-career teachers, representing an attempt to chart the path of “the optimistic beginner who changes into a disillusioned leaver” (p. 575). The authors reinforce that the *process* of this transition has remained under-described in the literature, and in

response their study draws upon the narratives of four Australian teachers to formulate four phases of teacher attrition: *entry*, *early-experiences*, *pre-exit* and *exit*. Their study contributed to our understandings of a process that is frequently mentioned in the literature – the attrition of early-career teachers – but rarely explored in depth or described. Nevertheless, Gallant and Riley’s model represents attrition as the only outcome of these changing expectations of self, and does not conceptualise how adjusting expectations may lead to a resolved sense of self as teacher.

Lee and Schallert’s (2016) model also includes a temporal dimension to explain the process of identity development in the transition to teaching (see Figure 2). Their model suggests that one’s conceptions of teaching influence initial teacher images, and the gap between these images and reality eventually reduces, then closes, resulting in a coherent teacher identity and conceptual growth. Unlike other models, Lee and Schallert’s (2016) model explicitly demonstrates the interrelationship between teacher identity development and conceptions of teaching. In other words, the initial ideals, values and expectations that an individual teacher brings to the role are represented in this model as a critical influence on early-career growth. Crucially, the authors separate *conceptions of teaching* from *initial teacher images*, and in doing so, recognise the important distinction between expectations of teaching, and expectations of oneself as a teacher. Nevertheless, whilst this may be the closest model to date that addresses the process involved in the adjustment of early-career teachers’ personal expectations, it still does not provide any detail of the specific processes or phases that a teacher may undergo whilst resolving identity tensions. Like the other models discussed, Lee and Schallert’s (2016) model does not provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating the distinct processes involved as teachers’ personal expectations are adjusted in the early-career years.

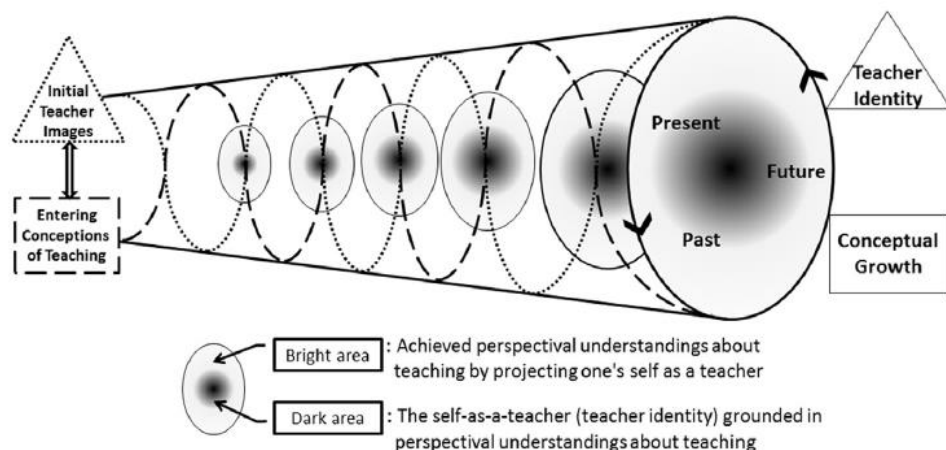
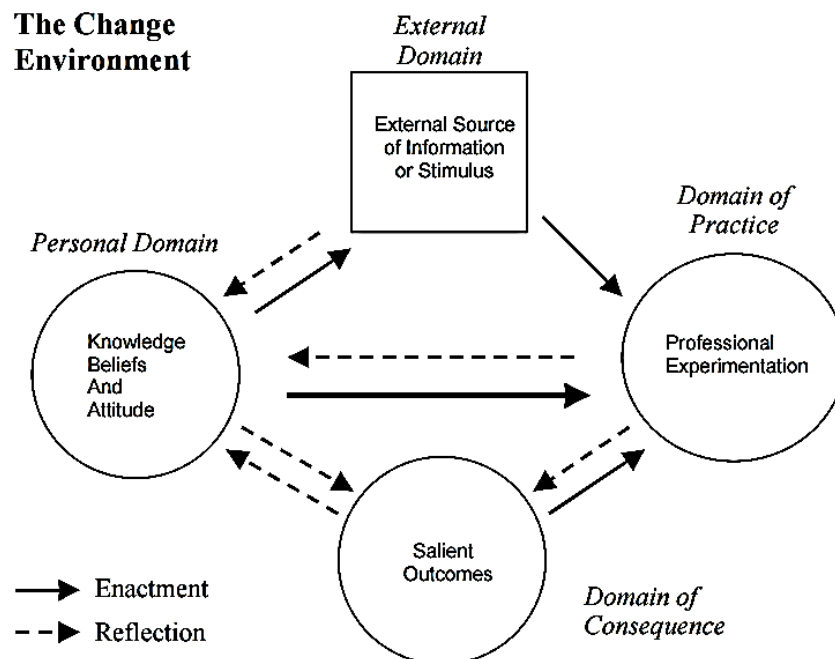


Figure 2. Lee and Schallert's (2016) model of the interrelation between teacher identity development and conceptions of teaching. From "Becoming a teacher: Coordinating past, present, and future selves with perspectival understandings about teaching," by S. Lee and D.L. Schallert, 2016, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 56: p. 80

**2.4.1 Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth.** In recognition of the need for a non-linear framework of teacher professional growth that draws on contemporary learning theory, Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) devised the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth. Drawing upon earlier models of teacher growth that saw the process as predominantly linear (for instance, Clarke, 1988; Cobb, Wood, & Yackel, 1990; Fullan, 1982; Guskey, 1986; Johnson & Owen, 1986), this framework differs by identifying multiple pathways between domains, and recognises that professional growth is part of an ongoing, inevitable process of learning. This framework, shown in Figure 3, refers to four analytic domains, based on those described by Guskey (1986), however, utilises mechanisms whereby change in one domain elicits change in another.

The framework is empirically founded on three Australian studies. The initial two are the *Active and Reflective Teaching in Secondary Mathematics* (ARTISM) study, and the *Exploring Mathematics in Classrooms* (EMIC) study. Both are longitudinal studies over 18 months, focusing on mathematics teachers enrolled in professional development programs. The third study involved the collection of classroom video and interview data of 55 secondary teachers over the course of four

years. Using these studies, Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) devised a framework which recognises the idiosyncrasies of teacher growth.



*Figure 3. Interconnected Model of Professional Growth, showing the four domains situated within the Change Environment, as well as the processes of enactment and reflection between the domains. Reprinted from “Elaborating a model of teacher professional growth,” by D. Clarke and H. Hollingsworth, 2002, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18, p. 951.*

The Interconnected Model demonstrates four distinct domains. The first three domains are situated within what Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) see as the teacher’s “professional world of practice” (p. 951): the *Personal Domain*, the *Domain of Consequence*, and the *Domain of Practice*. The final domain, the *External Domain*, is situated outside of the teacher’s personal world. Change occurs and is translated between domains through the mediating processes of *reflection* and *enactment*; that is, “active, persistent and careful consideration” (Dewey; cited in Clarke and Hollingsworth, p. 954), which results in new beliefs and knowledge translating to practice. The terms used to describe the domains are capitalised in this study when referencing the model.

The *Personal Domain* addresses teacher knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002). This may include, for instance, knowledge of subject area content, beliefs about students or working in a school, or attitudes

towards collaboration with teaching colleagues. This domain also encompasses beliefs about what it is to be a teacher, which are critical to this study. These beliefs and attitudes underpin the expectations that a teacher may have about their students, the teaching and learning process, and their own image of themselves as a teacher. Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) argue that through professional growth as described in their framework, teacher knowledge, beliefs and attitudes are changed and re-aligned over time. For example, an early-career teacher may have the attitude that in order to maintain control of a boisterous class, he or she should maintain an authoritative role in the classroom, and firmly respond to each student indiscretion, no matter how inconsequential or trivial. The teacher may hold the belief that a failure to maintain this role will result in a loss of control of, or respect from, the class. However, through the processes and interactions with the domains of the framework, these beliefs are liable to change, as described below.

The Domain of Consequence is concerned with the salient outcomes of teacher actions. Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) are careful to note that these may be different for any individual teacher as they perceive the degree of their success or failure, and apply their own understandings to it. Simply, this domain is concerned with results and outcomes within the process of a teacher's professional growth: whether these be concrete, measurable outcomes, or new understandings or conclusions about their practice. For the early-career teacher in the aforementioned example, a consequence of their behaviour management approach may be an increasing awareness that students deliberately attempt to be antagonistic within such rigid boundaries. Alternatively, a possible outcome could be that the teacher finds himself or herself devoting a large proportion of their break-times to administering student consequences, or facilitating detentions. This may be enough, through a reflective process, to change the beliefs and attitudes in the Personal Domain and the teacher's expectations of themselves in the role. It may also lead to professional experimentation with new approaches, instigating change within the Domain of Practice.

The process of professional growth continues through the Domain of Practice. The Domain of Practice involves professional experimentation, both inside and outside of the classroom (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002). This domain is concerned with the ways in which teachers, through trial-and-error, attempt to



include new methods or procedures into their professional practice: in areas ranging from pedagogical approaches, to building relationships, to differentiation. Of course, Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) framework suggests that reflection on beliefs and attitudes (Personal Domain), and the consequences and outcomes of teacher decision-making (Domain of Consequence) are fundamental in influencing initial professional experimentation. However, the Domain of Practice similarly leads to change within the other domains. Concerning the aforementioned example, the early-career teacher may experiment with new methods of classroom management. For instance, he or she may start to allow time during lessons to build rapport with students, or may relax his or her stance on certain, minor student behaviours. As a result of this experimentation, and reflection upon it, the teacher may come to a conclusion about its degree of success (thus effecting change in the Domain of Consequence). Similarly, a reflection on this new approach may influence teacher attitudes, beliefs and knowledge (Personal Domain). Together, these three domains "encompass the teacher's world" (Clarke & Hollingsworth, p. 950), as change in one domain stimulates change in another, through the processes of reflection and enactment.

The final domain is the External Domain, which includes "sources of information, stimulus or support" (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002, p. 950). This domain differs to the three previously described, as it is located "outside the teacher's personal world" (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002, p. 951). For instance, the External Domain may include sources of information or stimulus such as formalised professional development programs, or professional reading materials. In the case of an early-career teacher, sources of support may include a mentor or experienced teaching colleague to provide guidance, or relationships with other early-career professionals who are able to empathise with their challenges. The External Domain may influence the Personal Domain and the Domain of Practice in significant ways. In the previously mentioned example, the early-career teacher may organise to observe an experienced colleague, in a positive classroom environment where students are busily engaged in a challenging activity. This experience may provide new information, or stimulate ideas about new approaches to class management for the early-career teacher. The teacher may realise, through reflection, that students in his or her own class may be disruptive due to a lack of challenging, diverse activities.

The teacher may also reflect on the rapport that his or her experienced colleague has with the class and that the teacher's positive reinforcement and use of humour has enhanced student engagement. The early-career teacher may then, according to the framework, experiment with this approach themselves (Domain of Practice), evaluate the outcomes of this (Domain of Consequence), and as a result, change their own expectations of, or beliefs about themselves in their role (Personal Domain).

Not to be confused with the External Domain, the final element of this framework is the *Change Environment*. This represents the context, or conditions, under which the professional growth within the four domains occurs (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002). Whilst the External Domain is concerned with the actual sources of support, stimulus or information, the Change Environment refers to the context within which such external sources may be provided. This dimension recognises the disparities between different school contexts in the availability of these opportunities. Conditions in the Change Environment could include the provision of funding for professional development, managerial encouragement to work with new or innovative pedagogical approaches, or allocation of time and resources to mentoring programs (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002). Consequently, an absence of supportive conditions within the Change Environment may cause difficulties for early-career teachers in adjusting to the profession.

Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) also discuss the framework's alignment with a theory of learning. They refer to a situative perspective in learning theory, whereby the process of learning occurs within a given context, both social and physical. From this perspective, professional growth happens through the "evolving practices of a teacher... iteratively refined through a process of enaction and reflection" (p. 955). The connections between this framework and a situative perspective are clear, however, the authors also note the alignment of their framework to a cognitive perspective, whereby teacher growth occurs as a variety of knowledge types are constructed, including content or pedagogical knowledge. Thus, in its application to learning theory, the Interconnected Model is consistent with either a situative or cognitive perspective, depending on whether teacher growth is seen as development of practice or of knowledge. The authors, furthermore, see this as confirmation of the framework's robustness, and its conformity to a "coherent theory of learning" (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002, p. 955).

Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) framework has been used in a number of qualitative studies focusing on teacher professional growth and development (Anderson & Moore, 2006; Goh & Yoon, 2010; Justi & van Driel, 2006; Voogt et al., 2011; Witterholt, Goedhart, Suhre, & van Streun, 2012). A number of studies use the framework as an analytical tool. Witterholt et al. (2012) focused on the lesson planning processes of a mathematics teacher, applying the cycles of change from the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth to the teacher's increasing competence. In applying this framework, Witterholt et al. concluded that changes in the Domain of Practice, and the development of new teaching strategies, are a result of controlled experimentation and reflective processes. Goh and Yoon's (2010) study utilises the framework in an investigation of the changing instructional practices of an experienced teacher over two years. In analysing their findings, Goh and Yoon use the framework to determine reasons for changes in the teacher's practice, highlighting the processes of reflection and enactment as central to these changes. Voogt et al. (2011) applied the framework to explore teachers' learning whilst collaboratively creating curriculum materials. Using published studies from six countries, the authors analysed the learning processes of teaching teams, concluding that the framework has inherent value not just in determining processes of individual teacher learning, but also collaborative learning.

Others have used the framework to inform the development of teacher professional development programs. In a study from the Netherlands Justi and van Driel (2006) highlighted the value of the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth as both a developmental, and analytical tool. As part of their study, a program was designed that was aimed at developing early-career science teachers' knowledge about scientific modelling. The framework was then used as an analytical tool for investigating the extent to which formalised professional learning is incorporated into a teacher's repertoire. Similarly, in an Australian study, Anderson and Moore (2006) used the framework to develop, and evaluate a professional development course for secondary mathematics teachers. Following this, the authors analysed teacher change by applying the dimensions of the framework.

The studies discussed here highlight the value of using the framework as an analytical tool, and to guide the development of formalised professional learning

programs. However, the framework has not been extensively used in exploring professional development as a result of day-to-day teaching practice. This is despite the fact that, as Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) point out, a major strength of the framework is its recognition that in their daily practice, teachers engage in professional experimentation across all areas of their practice, reflect on the outcomes and refine and modify their practice. Previous studies utilising the framework as an analytical tool have focused on teacher knowledge and its influence on planning and pedagogy. Unlike the current study, they have not drawn upon the model to highlight the process involved in the adjustment of teachers' personal expectations, nor do they explore the conditions conducive to such change.

Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) acknowledge that professional growth occurs as a consequence of everyday teaching practice; however, for early-career teachers, it is a steep learning curve. While our understandings of teacher development suggest that early-career teachers have unique needs, research such as that of Castro, Kelly and Shih (2010) shows that the development of professional skills is a time and energy intensive exercise, with the burden falling mainly on the individual. These authors note that it is well-recognised that most early-career teachers learn to seek help, problem-solve, and manage difficult relationships – with varying degrees of success – on their own (Castro, Kelly, & Shih, 2010). Clarke and Hollingsworth also point out a lack of connection between theory and practice, noting that “the application of contemporary learning theory to the development of programs to support teacher professional growth has been ironically infrequent” (p. 947). The implications of this for teacher development in the early years are significant.

## **2.5 Adjusting Early-Career Teacher Expectations**

This section highlights literature that explores the adjustment of personal expectations of early-career teachers. It is organised to reflect the stages in Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth to demonstrate the applicability of the framework to the current study. The first section examines the nature and basis of the initial personal expectations of teachers, positioned within the Personal Domain of the model. In the next section, literature describing the challenges and obstacles in adjusting personal expectations is

discussed, with reference to the Domain of Practice and the Domain of Consequence. The final section will explore literature regarding external conditions or factors that support or hinder the successful adjustment of personal expectations, which pertain to the External Domain and Change Environment of Clarke and Hollingsworth's model.

**2.5.1 Initial personal expectations of early-career teachers.** Cast in terms of Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth, the initial expectations teachers have of themselves as teachers fall within the Personal Domain. These personal expectations simultaneously contribute to, and are a product of, their knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about what it is to be a teacher. As Sachs (2005) notes, as individuals develop expectations of themselves in a teaching role, they draw upon their own life histories inside and outside of schools, as students and as teachers, and popular understandings of what teachers know and do as represented in teacher narratives from films and fiction. A teacher's images and ideals of what it is to be a teacher, and the type of teacher they hope to become, are therefore mediated by their own life experiences, as preservice teachers and as students, as well as by other popular ideologies and beliefs about the profession itself.

Lortie (1975) first used the term *apprenticeship of observation* to refer to the years any prospective teacher has spent as a student, noting that such experiences foster a set of unrealistic expectations of themselves in a teaching role. This theory has been constantly refined in the literature, with Intrator (2006) noting that early-career teachers "try on" (p. 235) and attempt to reproduce the role of other teachers they have observed. Similarly, in an often-cited study of the development of teachers' perspectives, Ross (1987) draws attention to the notion that many early-career teachers have an idealised image of the teacher they want to become, based on the selection of particular characteristics of their own prior teachers. Similarly, Cook's (2009) study, involving interviews with 10 first-year teachers, revealed that every teacher still used elements of their own teachers' approaches as a reference point or benchmark for their own successful performance. However, this research also suggests that early-career teachers often 'pick and choose' ideal qualities from their teachers in forming expectations of themselves in the role, with Cook noting that a "patchwork of iconic teachers" (p. 280) have a significant impact on how new

teachers envisage their own practice. Indeed, many studies address the influence of one's own teachers as a reason for entering the profession (Findlay, 2006; Flores & Day, 2006; Lassila & Uitto, 2016; Macgregor, 2009; Olsen, 2008) demonstrating the impact of this prior observation on an early-career teachers' aspirations.

Interestingly, studies such as those by Lee and Schallert (2016) and Flores and Day (2006) suggest that these expectations of an ideal teacher self are also based upon early-career teachers' individual preferences for learning from their own time as students.

Other authors have looked elsewhere for factors influencing an early-career teacher's understanding of an ideal teacher, including the role played by popular culture in shaping teachers' images of themselves. Farr (1997) refers to romanticised, uplifting teacher narratives from popular culture as reinforcing idealised myths about teaching, and setting highly unrealistic expectations for early-career teachers. Likewise, Britzman (2003) and Delamarter (2015) suggest that idealistic expectations have been shaped by representations of teachers in literature, television, and films, which are inconsistent with actual teaching practice. These "classroom heroes" (Barlowe & Cook, 2015, p. 26) shape popular understandings of quality teaching. Delamater notes that these representations often share common traits including opposition towards the official curriculum or academic knowledge, hostile relationships with school administration, and martyrdom; their effectiveness lying in their ability to change student lives and facilitate their emotional development.

Correspondingly, research indicates that early-career teacher expectations often emphasise the relational and emotional aspects of teaching, with teachers building images of themselves as teachers around their role being primarily relational, with content delivery as secondary (Delamarter, 2015). This can affect an early-career teachers' perceptions of their own performance if they see this as central to their image of themselves as a teacher. A longitudinal study of two cohorts of preservice teachers in the UK and Australia investigated the professional goals, beliefs and attitudes about teaching for 52 preservice teachers (Manuel & Brindley, 2005). Similar to the preservice and early-career teachers in other studies (Cole & Knowles, 1993; Kumazawa, 2013; Lyons, 2004; Ok, 2005), these teachers reported high expectations for "a sense of community in teaching" (p. 41), and for making a difference, with these being central to their sense of personal fulfilment. Olsen's

(2008) study of six early-career teachers' motivations to teach revealed a strong theme of social justice or equity, with all teachers reporting an aspiration to "make a difference in the world" (p. 33). Studies such as that by Cook (2009), Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013) and van Rijswijk; Akkerman, Schaap & van Tartwijk (2016) show that early-career teachers often attempt to re-create these images in their teaching, in spite of contexts and situations that may be at odds with them. This, ultimately, can cause disillusionment when these perceptions of themselves as teachers do not align with reality, as reflected in a number of studies (Cole & Knowles, 1993; Friedman, 2000; Kagan, 1992).

Other research suggests that early-career teachers' unrealistic expectations of their own performance may also, in part, be due to the complexity of the profession itself in comparison with an individual's prior professional roles. A qualitative New Zealand study by Anthony and Ord (2008) explored the initial expectations of early-career teachers, but focused exclusively on change-of-career secondary teachers. In their study of 68 early-career teachers with prior occupational experiences, the authors addressed a number of complications in the transition to teaching, with the re-evaluation of performance expectations being of central concern. Participants in Anthony and Ord's study reported that they were "struggling to accept less than perfection in lesson preparation, marking or instruction" (p. 370), indicating a contrast between teaching, and working within the clearly defined performance indicators within other trades or professions. These participants found the human complexity and intuitive demands of the teaching role difficult to reconcile, as well as the unpredictability and a perceived lack of accountability for their performance. These findings are supported by Wilson and Deaney's (2010) narrative study of a career change teacher who resigned from teaching after only one term, which was attributed mostly to her misunderstandings of the professional demands of teaching. For one teacher in Olsen's (2008) study, a prior role in tutoring had led her to formulate an expectation of herself as being a popular teacher who would be friendly with the students, which became difficult to reconcile as her role as an authority figure developed once she began classroom teaching. Studies such as these suggest that prior workforce experiences or skills often do not translate well to a classroom teaching role, and can generate unrealistic expectations, misperceptions and uncertainty.

An area that has received attention in the literature is the extent to which practicum and field experiences do, or do not destabilise these unrealistic expectations of self as teacher. Research has suggested that teacher education and field experiences often do little to challenge prior expectations of teaching (Bullough, 1997; Ezer et al., 2010; Ok, 2005; Shkedi & Laron, 2004), with a number of authors agreeing that preservice teachers' personal beliefs and images of themselves as teachers are also generally unchanged by preservice programs. Weinstein's (1988) seminal study drew attention to the way prospective teachers think about teaching, suggesting that early-career teachers have an *unrealistic optimism* about their first year of teaching – a construct used in health psychology to explain the tendency to believe that the problems or crises experienced by others will not happen to us. Weinstein surveyed 118 preservice teachers enrolled in a preparatory program using a questionnaire, which she had based upon Veenman's (1984) research on frequently perceived problems of first-year teachers. The teachers, overall, demonstrated the tendency to believe that they would not experience the hardships of an average beginning teacher. Accordingly, the optimistic bias was greater for those problems that were seen to be controllable, such as establishing procedures and maintaining discipline. This study highlights the very beginnings of reality shock, demonstrating the extent to which prospective teachers enter the profession with very little real understanding of what it is to be a teacher.

There is also a reported tendency for individuals to enter the profession with an exaggerated confidence in their proficiency and knowledge, reflecting their initial idealistic expectations. A quantitative Australian study by Ewing and Smith (2003) of 196 preservice teachers found that 89% of respondents perceived themselves as proficient before taking their first teaching position. These findings aligned with Weinstein's (1989; 1990) studies, with a higher level of confidence indicated for items that seemed controllable (lesson planning, differentiation, ability to reflect) than those that were less so (classroom management). Similarly, 80% of preservice participants in Ezer et al. (2010) study reported feeling that they would be successful in fulfilling their teaching duties from the outset. Likewise, a quantitative study of Singaporean preservice teachers found that a relatively high percentage (39%) of respondents perceived that their understandings of teaching already reflected reality (Chong et al., 2011). Fewer than 15% of teachers reporting mismatched expectations



and frustration or self-doubt before taking their first teaching position, suggesting that the preservice teachers in this study did not yet have a full understanding of the demands of the role. In a qualitative study of 84 Finnish preservice teachers, interviewed at two points in time, Maaranen, Pitkäniemi, Stenberg and Karlsson (2016) also found that the participants' "underlying beliefs, experiences, values and conceptions of 'good teaching'" (p. 80) remained highly idealistic during their teacher education. The authors also stressed that the practical, operational side of teaching was given less emphasis in responses than abstract, idealistic goals for teaching. Although many studies have pointed to the positive effects of teacher self-efficacy on teacher effectiveness (Canrinus et al., 2012; Hong, 2012), Settlage, Southerland, Smith and Ceglie (2009) found that some uncertainty and self-doubt is actually beneficial for early-career teachers. They argued that, for the early-career science teachers in their study who demonstrated "exaggerated self-efficacy incongruous with their abilities" (p. 119), some level of self-doubt may have moderated the overwhelming degree of unrealistic optimism. Thus, being exposed to the realities of the profession during a field experience may have influenced the participants' ideas about the teaching profession, however, their expectations of themselves in a teaching role remained consistently high.

In contrast to this are studies suggesting that practicum experiences are the point at which teachers begin to recognise a disharmony between their expectations of teaching and the reality of the profession (Cole & Knowles, 1993; Gaudelli & Ousley, 2009, Lee & Schallert, 2016; Harlow & Cobb, 2014; Sutherland, Howard & Markauskaite, 2010). The six preservice teachers in Lee and Schallert's (2016) longitudinal study were certainly unrealistically optimistic, but some of their ideas about their own performance were initially confronted during their practicum placements and remained to be tested in their transition to their first teaching position. Lamote and Engels (2010) compared data from questionnaires administered to first, second and third year education students, finding that over time, the self-efficacy of participants was negatively affected as they were exposed to workplace experiences. Thus, whilst these authors agree that processes of identity development begin in preservice education, it is also accepted that it is once these teachers graduate and begin working in schools that the most significant changes to their expectations occur (Sutherland et al., 2010). Many studies, including those by

Bullough (1997), Cook et al. (2002), Pittard (2003) and Flores and Day (2006), suggest that their optimistic anticipation of the future is likely because preservice teachers perform to suit the conditions of their practicum placement and “cope with the dilemmas of student teaching in ways that maintain their beliefs” and “their conceptions of themselves as teachers” (Bullough, p. 83).

**2.5.2 “Shattered images”: Challenges in confronting and adjusting personal expectations.** Clarke and Hollingsworth’s (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth acknowledges that the beliefs, values and knowledge within the Personal Domain influence the nature of professional experimentation within the Domain of Practice. The model shows that it is not so much the outcomes of a teacher’s practice, but the teacher’s resulting assessment of their success or capacity, that influence their future practice. This occurs within the Domain of Consequence and in the reflective links between this domain and others. Accordingly, the initial personal expectations of early-career teachers define their practice inside and outside the classroom; and the degree to which these expectations are realised determines their perceptions of success or failure. Unrealistic or idealistic expectations can therefore establish a cycle of disappointment and a perception of failure.

Studies consistently demonstrate that confronting and adjusting expectations is challenging for most early-career teachers. As Cole and Knowles (1993) note in their early study, the expectations that early-career teachers have of themselves in the role can be likened to “images frozen in time and context” and “shatter against the hard realities and complexities” of the role (Cole & Knowles, p. 459). Research similarly draws attention to the difficulties early-career teachers face in negotiating their expectations, suggesting that this process may lead to feelings of disappointment, disillusionment, frustration, and an awareness of one’s own shortcomings, encouraging some teachers to leave the profession (Alsup, 2006; Flores & Day, 2006; Friedman, 2000; Pillen et al., 2013a).

A number of authors have acknowledged the disparity between early-career teachers’ initial images and ideals of themselves and the professional reality, with most in agreement that the ideal teacher self is not realised across multiple professional dimensions. In other words, early-career teachers’ expectations of themselves are not met in many aspects of their role: from their classroom management and teaching

practices, to their planning and differentiation, to their relationships with colleagues, students and parents. Pillen et al. have undertaken a number of recent studies investigating what they refer to as *professional identity tensions* (Pillen et al., 2013c), finding in their initial literature review a wide variety of dilemmas related to what beginning teachers expect of themselves in their roles. The authors conducted interviews with 24 early-career teachers in the Netherlands, finding that the teachers experienced a variety of tensions or conflicts in their expectations of themselves as teachers. These included tensions related to the shift from being a student to being a teacher, the provision of support to students, and their understandings of quality teaching practice. In a later study, the authors conducted quantitative research determining the extent to which 373 teachers experienced the professional identity tensions emerging from the earlier interviews (Pillen et al., 2013c). Drawing from this data, the authors profiled the participants in accordance with their identity tensions, such as *teachers with care-related tensions* and *teachers with responsibility-related tensions*. Their research highlights the complexities in adjusting expectations of oneself as a teacher, as well as the difficulties for researchers in understanding the process, given the vast array of identity tensions reported by any individual early-career teacher. Additionally, despite findings in their study demonstrating that the teachers did experience changes to these tensions over time, the details and processes involved in these changes were not able to be mapped through their data collection method.

During the early-career years, teachers find their initial, taken-for-granted conceptions of quality teaching are confronted as they struggle to reconcile a discrepancy between what their idealistic vision and what they perceive they must become (Flores & Day, 2006; Friedman, 2000; Kumazawa, 2013; Lee & Schallert, 2016; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Yuan & Lee, 2015). A longitudinal study by Flores and Day (2006), for example, explores the negotiation and transformation of teacher identity as fundamental to maintaining a sense of purpose in becoming a teacher. This mixed-methods study draws upon data from semi-structured interviews, as well as a questionnaire to explore the identity-shaping process of 14 early-career teachers over two years. The findings demonstrate that for many of the participants, this reconstruction led to teaching becoming “more routine, more rule governed and less creative” (Flores & Day, p. 230). This aligns with Gallant and Riley’s (2014)

phenomenological study, which identified the common experiences of nine teachers who had left classroom teaching within the first five years. Among their reasons for leaving the profession was an inability to reconcile the mismatch of their expectations of teaching with the reality of the school setting, and this was consistent across every narrative. Like the teachers in Flores and Day's study, these participants reported that the development of their creativity and innovation in lesson planning was arrested, leading to a gradual process of disillusionment.

These findings correspond with Gaudelli and Ousley's (2009) narrative study of ten preservice teachers, in which early-career teachers reported "losing themselves in the prescriptive teacher role" (p. 937) and losing hope of being engaging and dynamic in the ways they had imagined. Similarly, for the seven early-career second-language teachers in Trent's (2016) study, the tension between their expectations and the practical realities shares many similarities with these other studies. Trent (2016) explored these as tensions between *preferred professional identities* and *professional identities made available*. The findings showed that those identities made available were constrained by time and examination pressures, contrasting with the ideal of learning as enjoyment. Similarly, the teachers' preferred professional identities included a conceptualisation of teachers as learners, whereas the reality dictated a position of teacher as expert with which the participants were uncomfortable. In all of these studies, early-career teachers' practices conflicted with their initial ideals and beliefs about themselves as teachers, with this tension becoming an ongoing dilemma.

Not surprisingly, the vast majority of research demonstrates that confronting unrealistic expectations of oneself as a teacher results in a negative emotional experience. A quantitative study by Pillen et al. (2013b) explored the emotions that accompanied professional identity tensions of 182 early-career teachers. In alignment with Flores and Day's (2006) study as well as others (Trent, 2016; Yuan & Lee, 2015), the teachers in this study experienced negative emotions as they confronted these expectations: including feelings of helplessness, not being taken seriously, anger, insecurity or doubt, frustration, discomfort, resignation, and an awareness of their shortcomings. The main tensions that were experienced related to classroom management ("wanting to care versus being expected to be tough"), maintaining a work-life balance ("wanting to invest in a private life versus feeling pressured to

spend time and energy on work”) and their own learning needs and desires (“experiencing conflicts between one’s own and others’ orientations regarding learning to teach”) (p. 253). These tensions highlight a mismatch between their idealised views of themselves as teachers, and what is realistic in practice. Compounding this concern are findings from studies by Sharplin, O’Neill and Chapman (2011) and McCormack et al. (2006) which show that early-career teachers are often unwilling to ask for help, and are more likely to draw upon avoidant strategies in response to stress at work.

Even more concerning are studies that show a gradual process of burnout occurring as early-career teachers struggle to live up to their own expectations. Burnout, “an erosion of engagement such that what started out as important, meaningful and challenging work becomes unpleasant, unfulfilling and meaningless” (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 416), is characterised by emotional exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy. Chang’s (2009) research highlights connections between early-career teacher burnout and having unrealistic expectations. Friedman’s (2000) research similarly suggests that burnout in early-career teachers stems from a *professional efficacy discrepancy* – a significant gap existing “between an individual’s expectations of successful performance and actual, less satisfying reality” (p. 597). Friedman categorised the experiences of first-year into three stages: *the slump*; *fatigue and exhaustion*; and, finally, *adjustment*. During *the slump*, it was observed, teachers experienced what Friedman referred to as a “rude awakening from an idealistic dream and the shattering of expectations” (p. 598) of a potentially rewarding career experience. The second stage, *fatigue and exhaustion*, Friedman observed, was marked by difficulties pertaining to workload, criticism and lack of recognition, difficulties with students, and isolation. The final stage of burnout for early-career teachers, *adjustment*, was further characterised by disenchantment and cynicism. In this stage, the participants in the study were trying to survive by “finding a compromise between ‘quality teaching’ (as dreamed of by the teacher prior to actual teaching) and the quality of teaching dictated by reality” (Friedman, p. 600). Like those in Flores and Day’s (2006) and Gaudelli and Ousley’s (2009) studies, the participants of Friedman’s study experienced dissatisfaction with such a compromise, particularly with regards to class planning and preparation, differentiation, and their expectations of what represents quality teaching. Though

successfully capturing a moment in time with teachers in their first year, the study did not interview any participants in their second, or third year of teaching to observe whether, over time, early-career teachers defined more realistic goals for their teaching. The current study focuses on this very gap.

Clearly, Friedman's (2000) study, among others (Flores & Day, 2006; Gallant & Riley, 2014; Gaudelli & Ousley, 2009; Pillen et al., 2013c; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Trent, 2016) draws attention to a disheartening process during the early-career years, as "teachers learn that they cannot possibly live up to their own performance expectations with regard to their various tasks" (Friedman, p. 601). These studies collectively reinforce that the failure to adjust one's personal expectations successfully can result in disillusionment, a loss of motivation and even burnout. What these studies and others have not addressed is the process through which teachers adapt their expectations, reframing their experiences and their knowledge, beliefs and attitudes to reflect a more realistic approach to the profession. It is this process of expectation adjustment that this study seeks to investigate.

**2.5.3 Adjusting expectations: a question of conditions?** Another body of literature focuses on the conditions that allow teachers to potentially succeed in negotiating the disparity between their expectations of themselves as teachers and the realities of the profession (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013). There are a number of conditions that allow teachers to transition successfully into the profession; managing their adjustment and satisfying demands adaptively. These conditions fall within the External Domain and the Change Environment of Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth – the former representing actual sources of information or support; the latter reflecting the context in which professional development occurs. This body of empirical research demonstrates the impact of certain contextual factors which can either support or restrict an early-career teacher's identity development – conditions which allow, or do not allow for the successful adjustment of their personal expectations to survive the early years of teaching. As Herbert and Worthy (2001) note, research such as this calls into question the notion that the early-career years are necessarily difficult, and

acknowledge the importance of studying “those who succeed, describing their experiences, and seeking factors which help explain their success” (pp. 899-900).

Importantly, not all conditions influencing the development of an early-career teachers’ identity are contextual. A number of authors (Beltman et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2014; Gu & Day, 2007; Le Cornu, 2013; Tait, 2008) have addressed the personal factors that may assist teachers in making a smoother transition to their role and allow them to better negotiate their initial reality shock. In his influential study, Huberman (1993) argued that personal factors are most likely to support the successful re-evaluation of teacher expectations. After interviewing 160 Swiss teachers at different career phases, Huberman identified that it is the *way* that teachers deal with periods of expectation adjustment – their personal coping style – that influences their decision to stay in the profession in spite of disillusionment. Similarly, in Johnson et al.’s (2014) inquiry, early-career teachers who demonstrated a strong emerging identity looked after their own wellbeing, had acute personal awareness, were open to new learning, and were reflexive, which are qualities recognised elsewhere by other authors (Gu & Day, 2007; Le Cornu, 2013, Tait, 2008). Findings from a study by Beltman, Mansfield and Price (2011) emphasised that an intrinsic motivation for teaching was another important protective factor. This study also drew attention to self-efficacy as another important protective factor – that is, “feeling confident and competent, taking credit for and drawing sustenance from their accomplishments” (p. 190). Tait (2008) argued that key personal skills for the teacher in her study were her intrapersonal intelligence, ability to cope with stress and ability to foster connections with others, also reflected in the study by Le Cornu (2013). These studies call into question the degree to which any standardised approach to teacher preparation can be useful and invites further inquiry into the manner in which personal factors play a role in early-career teacher transition.

Research has considered the influence of context and external conditions on the shaping of teacher identity, both at a preservice level (Smagorinsky et al., 2004; Yuan & Lee, 2015) and in the early-career years (Flores & Day, 2006; Johnson et al., 2015), with many authors arguing that these conditions are just as likely to determine teacher identity development as personal factors (Day & Gu, 2014; Sachs, 2005). The impact of the school environment, availability and quality of induction processes, colleagues and school leadership, employment conditions, and teacher

education have all been recognised in the research. These studies are valuable as they suggest contextual factors or conditions that may influence a successful re-evaluation of expectations. It is perhaps not surprising that a number of studies suggest that teachers who enter the profession with images of teaching that are more closely aligned with the context in which they will be teaching find it easier to adjust their own expectations of themselves – most likely because there are fewer adaptations to be made. Herbert and Worthy's (2001) examination of early-career teacher success utilised a longitudinal, phenomenological approach, analysing the transition to teaching for a physical education teacher. The alignment of expectations and the realities of the workplace was paramount in her success, as her clearly defined expectations about the realities of teaching were formed during her preservice teaching at the same school. Echoing these findings is the SETE study (Mayer et al., 2015), where it was found that completing a practicum at the same, or a similar school to the place of first employment had a positive impact on teacher preparedness. Similarly, a study by McCormack et al. (2006) highlighted that early-career teachers were more likely to find teaching intimidating and overwhelming when they found themselves in teaching contexts that were different from their practicum schools. These findings are significant given the Queensland context, as the majority of university teacher education programs are located in metropolitan areas, but there is high employment demand for teachers in rural and regional areas.

Collegial relationships and support are frequently recognised for their role in assisting early-career teachers develop realistic expectations of themselves in a teaching role (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Le Cornu, 2013; Le Maistre and Paré, 2010; Yuan & Lee, 2015). Alsup's (2006) research described how guidance and support from other teachers is critical in allowing early-career teachers to accept "ambiguity, multiple subjectivities, shifting contexts, and uncomfortable tension" (p. 192) around the "noisy contradictions" (p. 183) in their professional ideals and aspirations. Guidance and encouragement may be in the form of affirmations or emotional support, or confirming that other teachers have faced similar feelings or experiences (Papatraianou & Le Cornu, 2014). Such support can reassure early-career teachers that adjustments to their idealistic personal expectations are not only appropriate, but necessary to avoid burnout. This is reflected in Le Maistre and Paré's (2010) qualitative study of Canadian preservice teachers, where the guidance



of colleagues was crucial in assisting the teachers to successfully adjust their expectations of themselves, to set realistic goals and to learn to accept less-than-optimal outcomes in their practice. The authors drew upon Simon's (1957) term *satisficing* in explaining the way that the participants learnt to accept adequate or satisfactory results in their everyday decision-making, as opposed to pursuing the optimal solution. The findings of the study showed that this skill, learnt from their mentor teachers, allowed the participants to experience a sense of accomplishment and success in their teaching. Although the study focused predominantly on short-term problem-solving, rather than examining the process through which these expectations were adjusted over the course of the first years of teaching, it does offer a distinctive lens through which to view a shift in early-career teachers' conceptualisation of quality teaching.

A similar pattern can be observed in Le Cornu's (2013) study, which found that positive relationships with other staff provided emotional support, connectedness and a sense of belonging. This study demonstrated that the relationships with other early-career teachers are helpful in overcoming tensions between their teaching ideals and the reality of the profession, with peers playing a non-judgmental role in "keeping each other going" (p. 6) through challenges and uncertainty. Similar to the participants in Le Maistre and Paré's (2010), Izadinia's (2015) Yuan and Lee's (2015) studies, the teachers grew more confident in response to affirmations from their colleagues, and this allowed them to make more positive assessments of their own practice. This support is especially important to ensure that early-career teachers do not feel disillusioned and defeated when they confront their initial, often idealistic expectations, but rather can gain some perspective about what they are doing well. It is likely that listening and emotional support from colleagues is critical for encouraging early-career teachers to cope with such challenges and for them to take more risks in their teaching (Papatraianou & Le Cornu, 2014).

Morrison's (2013) teacher identity research provides significant depth and detail about how collegial relationships can help early-career teachers re-evaluate their expectations. The 14 Australian first- and second-year teachers in the study were interviewed and observed four times over a period of one year, and findings highlighted that participants' understandings of themselves, and their values and beliefs, evolved in accordance with their relationships with colleagues, students and

the community. From the longitudinal data set, Morrison identified different pathways of identity development: namely *emergent*, *tenuous* and *distressed* trajectories. Participants with emergent trajectories were those whose early-career experiences confirmed their sense of ability and suitability, and found success in meeting their own expectations of themselves as teachers. This group reported that colleagues provided guidance, support, care, and comfort to them in an ongoing capacity, and even assisted them in rationalising emotional responses to events. Drawing on Wenger's (1998) work, social participation was critical for participants to become a part of the teaching community, and to allow them to negotiate their teacher identities successfully. Conversely, teachers in Morrison's study with a distressed identity reported that their isolation from colleagues led to ongoing struggles in their early-career years. Participants who were isolated also reported that their beliefs about themselves as teachers were beset by doubt and insecurity. Morrison suggests that this isolation translated to a lack of opportunity to use others to interpret their own teaching experiences, and as such, over time, they developed a constant preoccupation with "uncertainties about whether they could do the job well and whether they could continue to do the job into the future" (p. 99). Like the participants in Yuan and Lee's (2015) study and Trent's (2016) study, teachers with limited opportunity to engage with colleagues were disadvantaged on a professional and social level. Similarly, all of the early-career teachers in Gallant and Riley's (2014) study who left the profession reported feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Feedback plays a critical role in allowing early-career teachers to make appropriate and reasoned assessments of their own effectiveness. Research shows that often, the measures that early-career teachers use to assess their own effectiveness are likely to lead to further disillusionment. The SETE study (Mayer et al., 2015) revealed that teachers assessed their own effectiveness using evidence such as student results, student and parent feedback, and how hard they felt they were working: all of which are indeterminate measures of their actual performance. Papatraianou and Le Cornu (2014) are among authors who agree that informal feedback on their performance was very important to early-career teachers, as they used this as a gauge of appreciation of their efforts as well as a measure of their accomplishments. Lamote and Engels (2010) note that a mentor's feedback may be critical in affecting the self-efficacy of an early-career teacher, reflecting Kidd,

Brown and Fitzallen's (2015) suggestion that mentors must be available to observe pedagogy in order to offer constructive feedback to early-career teachers. Recognition is another important component of feedback. Findlay's (2006) study, for instance, explored the factors which constrain or enable the professional growth in early-career teachers, finding that the main cause of disaffection among teachers was a lack of opportunity to earn praise and initiate meaningful change in their departments – in other words, gain feedback and be recognised. Similarly, McCormack et al. (2006) reported that early-career teachers in their study needed confirmation and feedback on their achievements and value in the school, noting the impacts on the confidence and efficacy of the teachers who did not receive this validation. Despite recognition that feedback is paramount in influencing early-career teacher development, the provision of regular, detailed, specific feedback to teachers often comes to an abrupt halt as they transition from their preservice placements to their first teaching position.

Many studies also remind us that the critical opportunities for early-career teachers to work alongside others and experience a positive mentoring relationship were not within their control. Morrison (2013) found that the successful early-career teachers in his study were in schools where there was time, staffing and resource allocation to support experienced teachers in supporting early-career teachers. For Morrison, a lack of collaborative opportunities can “confine early-career teachers to the periphery of the profession and can hold them in a state of survival rather than allow them to thrive” (p. 103). Pietch and Williamson (2010) reinforce this, noting the availability of such opportunities can significantly hinder the progress of an early-career teacher. A staggering 70% of the NSW teachers in Ewing and Smith's (2013) study reported that they had to find their own informal support. Similarly, the SETE study (Mayer et al., 2015) indicated that there was a lack of consistency in the availability of formal mentoring arrangements, despite this being rated by the early-career teachers as the most influential factor in their development, in addition to the availability of professional development. The study found that when mentoring programs are taken seriously by schools, teachers are more likely to remain in the profession (Mayer et al., 2015).

The SETE study (Mayer et al., 2015) also highlights another contextual factor that has been given some attention in the literature: the employment conditions of

early-career teachers. It is perhaps not surprising that employment context was found in the study to have the most significant impact upon early-career teacher perceptions of themselves in a teaching role, as teachers employed in casual and contract positions reported feeling less prepared and effective than those who had found permanent employment. These teachers also reported feeling further from becoming the teacher they aspired to be, and felt distracted from their core duties by the pressures of applying for positions (Mayer et al., 2015). Alarming, the SETE study (Mayer et al., 2015) showed that teachers employed on casual or short-term contracts still described and saw themselves as ‘graduate teachers’, despite having taught for a number of years. These teachers, as a group, appeared to experience an interrupted or arrested process of development, continuing to raise the same challenges and dilemmas over and over during the course of the longitudinal study (Mayer et al., 2015). This is a disconcerting indication of just how influential job security is for teacher development. Likewise, Kidd et al. (2015) undertook mixed-methods research on early-career teachers’ induction into the profession, finding that the uncertainty of short-term contracts and relief teaching “inhibit beginning teachers’ ability to gain a sense of belonging and stability, and the opportunity to establish classroom routines and relationships with students, which interrupt the process of becoming an established, confident teacher” (p. 156). Their research found that the inability to gain permanent employment influenced many early-career teachers’ decisions to leave the profession. Early-career teachers on contracts are also less likely to seek help from leadership, concerned about revealing their inadequacies, or form collegial relationships with other early-career teachers whom they began to see as competition. Papatraianou and Le Cornu’s (2014) study showed that a fear of revealing their inadequacies or jeopardising their ongoing employment discourages early-career teachers from seeking support, in spite of mounting challenges.

It is also purported that teacher education has a significant part to play in empowering early-career teachers to negotiate their own expectations of themselves in the role. Tait (2008) suggests that teacher education needs to better address resilient behaviour and ways of thinking, whilst Cook (2009) similarly emphasises a need to prepare teachers for the psychological and emotional complexities of the profession. Cook stresses that teacher education must move toward intellectualising “the impending disequilibrium of becoming a teacher” (p. 290) in the same way that

other professional complexities, such as pedagogical practices, are addressed. Delamarter (2015) takes this further, arguing that teacher education should specifically “confront pre-service teachers’ misaligned expectations of teaching head on” and provide opportunities for individuals “to process their changing expectations of teaching and themselves” (p. 2).

Thus, it is generally agreed upon in the literature (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Cattley, 2007; Cook, 2009; Delamarter, 2015; Johnson et al., 2015; Olsen, 2008; Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Sutherland & Markauskaite, 2012; Tait, 2008) that preservice teachers should be encouraged to examine, challenge and negotiate their assumptions, beliefs and expectations about themselves as teachers during their teacher education. Olsen (2008) points out that addressing this during teacher education would provide assurance to early-career teachers that “they are not alone in experiencing identity conflicts, that these conflicts are often resolved incrementally, and that teacher identity construction is forever ongoing” (p. 38). Encouraging prospective teachers to engage in meaningful self-reflection is therefore critical in challenging expectations of oneself as a teacher. Delamarter’s (2015) study analysed the reflections of preservice teachers who participated in a course focused on deconstructing popular teacher narratives in film, with the author also suggesting that structured reflection in response to deliberate confrontation of teacher expectations may alter idealistic teacher expectations. Studies by Mantei and Kervin (2011) and Cattley (2007) highlighted positive impacts of reflective writing on shaping a professional identity during teacher education. Other research has suggested that teacher education draw upon the use of metaphor in encouraging preservice teachers to consider their expectations meaningfully (Alsup, 2006), or deliberately place students in situations that challenge their preconceived notions of self as teacher (Smagorinsky et al., 2004).

A common theme that emerges from this research is that a key facet of early-career teacher development lies in development of realistic, rather than idealistic expectations of themselves as teachers – in other words, an adjustment of their personal expectations within the role. Nevertheless, the fundamental understanding that we can gain from this body of literature is that an early-career teacher’s expectations cannot be reduced in an *ad hoc* fashion, without having a negative influence on job satisfaction and well-being, or both. Instead, it is only through a

successful re-appraisal of expectations that early-career teachers can minimise disillusionment and frustration, highlighting the need to better understand what influences those who successfully realign their expectations with the realities of the profession (Cole & Knowles, 1993; Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007). However, as Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013) observes, despite the volume of research on the transition to teaching, there is still a significant gap in the literature concerning the relative ease or difficulties experienced by teachers transitioning into the profession, and as they shape their professional identities.

## **2.6 Summary and Implications of Literature Review**

What these studies ultimately highlight is that the adjustment of personal expectations is fundamental for teachers to develop a realistic approach to the profession to avoid early-career burnout. Additionally, these studies reinforce that early-career teachers experience challenges in reconciling their expectations with what is possible or realistic, emphasising the importance of settling for a perhaps less-than-ideal, but practical approach to their teaching. Nevertheless, the literature does not address in detail the processes and phases involved in this transition. Kyriacou (2011) notes that the challenge for future research in this field is to address the complexity involved in deconstructing teachers' personal narratives, concluding that our understanding of teacher well-being has much to gain from this type of qualitative analysis. In doing this, Kyriacou suggests, we may come to understand how these positive attributes or skills can be enhanced, and even how they could contribute to resilience.

Thus, this study uses narrative inquiry to explore how early-career teachers have adjusted their personal expectations, and the conditions that supported this adjustment. In exploring early-career teachers' personal expectations, the focus of the study is on second- and third-year teachers likely to be able to describe the process of adjusting their expectations, as well as highlight the conditions under which this took place at the beginning of their careers.

This study addresses the following key questions:

1. How do teachers adjust their personal expectations during the early-career years?

## 2. What conditions influence the adjustment of personal expectations?

Specifically, this study focuses on how early-career teachers' expectations of themselves in the role were adjusted – described by Cole and Knowles (1993) as their *personal expectations*. Thus, rather than emphasising, for instance, a teacher's expectations of how students might behave, the study directs its attention to a teacher's expectations of how he or she might manage difficult class behaviour.

**2.6.1 Use of theoretical frameworks.** In exploring the adjustment of personal expectations, this study draws upon a framework of teacher growth or change in order to contextualise the study theoretically: Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth. Clarke and Hollingsworth's model is less concerned with specific outcomes of teacher professional development or growth, but instead focuses on the processes involved. This framework uses four change domains to represent this process, recognising the influence of external sources, knowledge, beliefs and attitudes, experimentation and outcomes. It is used in this study to frame the narratives, allowing for the adjustment of personal expectations to be explored as a cycle of change over time. As such, this framework is drawn upon extensively in this study in scaffolding the interview and guiding the development of questions and sub-questions. Furthermore, in its emphasis on processes and changes, the framework is used in the analysis of the data in alignment with the narrative approach of the study.

The cycles of growth and change emphasised in the Interconnected Model inherently build a narrative in themselves. They reflect the ongoing interplay between the internal and external domains of a teacher's world, and the associated mediating processes of enactment and reflection, together painting a picture of the participants' changing personal expectations in their first years of teaching. This study investigates the re-evaluation of expectations for early-career teachers; thus exploring the adjustment of expectations as a mechanism for change and growth. The Interconnected Model is again valuable in light of this, as it has a great "capacity to stimulate speculation, research and development regarding possible change mechanisms as yet unexplored and unexploited" (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002, p. 947).

This framework has, as such, influenced the development of the research questions. The first research question, *how do teachers adjust their personal expectations during the early-career years?* is concerned with the framework's internal domains, which together make up the teacher's world of practice. These encompass "the teacher's professional actions, the inferred consequences of those actions, and the knowledge and beliefs that prompted and responded to those actions" (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002, p. 951). The question firstly requires an exploration of the Personal Domain, drawing attention not only to the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs that early-career teachers have about themselves in their role, but to how this is negotiated. Referring to the terms used in the framework, this question asks how, through reflection and enactment, these expectations are adjusted. This is also intrinsically tied to the Domain of Consequence and the Domain of Practice, as participants were asked to specify what types of adjustments they have made, and the outcomes of these, through professional experimentation inside and outside the classroom.

The second research question, *what conditions influence the adjustment of personal expectations?* represents the attempt of this study to shed light on the External Domain of the Interconnected Model, as well as the conditions within the Change Environment. These are the conditions within the school context which potentially support, or impede, the development and learning of early-career teachers. In investigating the conditions which support the re-appraisal of expectations, the study directs its attention to the sources of information or support for the early-career teachers. In doing this, the conditions of the Change Environment that influence the early-career teachers' development are also revealed.

Therefore, the framework contextualises the study theoretically, underpinning the development of the interview questions, the basis of data generation in the study. Thus, through an analysis of semi-structured interview transcripts as well as participants' preparatory notes, this study reveals how teachers adjust their personal expectations in the early-career years. Furthermore, the study draws conclusions about what conditions influence these modifications to an early-career teacher's personal expectations.



## **Chapter 3: Research Design**

### **3.1 Overview of Research Design**

There are eight sections to Chapter 3. Following the overview, this chapter includes a discussion of the methodology of narrative inquiry (Section 3.2) and its value as an approach to exploring the adjustment of teacher expectations. This section details the characteristics of narrative studies, with reference to the dimensions outlined by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Connelly and Clandinin (2006). Following this, the research design is explained (Section 3.3), as well as the use of field texts such as semi-structured interview transcripts and participant notes. An overview of the characteristics of the participants is then addressed (Section 3.4). Procedures and timelines are discussed in the following section (Section 3.5), alongside an explanation of the phenomenological interview process (Schuman, 1982; Seidman, 2013) consolidated for use in this study (Section 3.5.1). The process of member checking, necessary to maintain the integrity of the narrative approach, is also explained (Section 3.5.2). Next, the procedure for analysing the field texts is addressed (Section 3.6). Ethical issues and limitations have also been considered (Section 3.7) and are discussed with reference to the narrative approach of the study. Finally, a summary of the chapter is provided (Section 3.8).

### **3.2 Methodology**

This study employs a narrative research design, meaning that it focuses on what Creswell (2014) sees as the "micro-analytic picture" (p. 504) of an individual's story. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research design that is concerned with the study of an individual's experiences, gathering data about these experiences, and exploring the meaning of the experiences for the individual (Creswell, 2014; Herbert & Worthy, 2001). Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) note the critical importance of using stories to express identity, or even multiple identities, and acknowledge the power of the narrative in understanding teachers' developing professional identities across shifting contexts.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) provided the first comprehensive overview of this research design for the field of education, with Cortazzi (1993) suggesting that

the emphasis on teacher reflection and teacher knowledge can empower teachers by bringing their voices to the forefront. For Creswell (2014), the continued interest in, and significance of teachers' stories – “what they know, how they think, how they develop professionally, and how they make decisions in the classroom” (p. 505) – is what drives narrative research in education today. This research design aligns with an interpretivist paradigm. As Guba and Lincoln (2005) note, researchers attempt to understand their subjects by interpreting their perceptions and interactions within a particular social context. In choosing to work with a narrative research design in this study, the teachers' feelings and expectations are captured as a journey of learning, changing and adapting.

Narrative inquiry is an overarching category for a number of different research practices (Creswell, 2014) and one distinction is between the life history study and the personal experience story, the latter of which describes this study. Rather than focusing on the participants' broader past experiences, this study focuses particularly on their early experiences as a teacher. As Denzin (1989) notes, personal experience stories are studies of an individual's experiences based on single or multiple episodes. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) expand this category to include both the personal and the social, noting that this stance reflects the fundamental experiences of teachers. This particular study also falls into another specific narrative research category, which is that of the teacher's story. A popular form of narrative research in education, teachers' stories are personal accounts of their experiences and aim to capture the lives and work of teachers (Creswell, 2014).

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) point out that narrative inquiry draws upon features of other qualitative approaches, including the use of story as in phenomenology, and an emphasis on the social as seen in ethnographic studies. Reissman and Speedy (2007) argue that the field of narrative inquiry has “realist, postmodern and constructionist strands” (p. 249), in recognition that researchers often disagree on the origin of the approach. Nevertheless, as Clandinin and Huber (2010) note, there is agreement that narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience through story. Connelly and Clandinin explain that:

People shape their daily lives by the stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of those stories. Story, in the

current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters a world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. (p. 375)

To understand and inquire into experience using this approach, it is necessary to understand that narrative inquiry involves “collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) use the structure of a *three-dimensional narrative space* to approach narrative inquiry, emphasising the personal and social, the past, present and future, and the notion of space. As they see it, a narrative study is defined by the three dimensions of *interaction, continuity* and *situation*. Within this framework, Clandinin and Connelly highlight that narratives contain situational information such as context, time and place, but also foreground both personal and social interactions: feelings, hopes, and the influence of others. Their framework focuses on continuity, emphasising the influence of the past, experiences of the present and possibilities of the future as being central to narratives. Thus, they argue, any inquiry is necessarily bound within this three-dimensional space.

These three dimensions are referred to elsewhere as *commonplaces* of narrative inquiry. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) note that the *temporality, sociality* and *space* –analogous to the authors’ earlier references to *continuity, interaction* and *situation* – are “commonplaces” (p. 479) of narrative inquiry and should define any narrative study, as attending to these is what characterises this approach and separates it from other methodologies. More recently, Clandinin and Huber (2010) elaborated on these dimensions. Temporality, for Connelly and Clandinin, attends to transitions, and the past, present and future of the participants in the study. As Clandinin and Huber note, this commonplace involves researchers directing attention towards the ongoing nature of lived experience, with an awareness that, drawing on Carr (1986), “we are ...constantly revising our autobiographies as we go along” (p. 76). The next narrative commonplace, sociality, revolves around personal and social conditions. *Personal conditions* refer to not only the participants’, but the inquirers’ aspirations, feelings and moral dispositions (Connelly & Clandinin). Similarly, social conditions situate people within a “cultural, social, institutional, and linguistic”

narrative, exploring the conditions under which we enact experience (Clandinin & Huber, p. 436). Finally, the dimension of place is the actual physical locations, or spaces, where the events of one's narrative take place (Connelly & Clandinin). An attention to these commonplaces is essential in the narrative inquiry approach, as is the importance of learning to "think narratively" (Connelly & Clandinin, p. 481) every step of the way, from framing the questions, to undertaking the research, to constructing the final narrative.

Another important consideration within the narrative approach is the inseparability of researcher and participant. The relationship between the researcher and participant, for Clandinin and Huber (2010), forms a second dimension of the sociality commonplace, as they note that "[n]arrative inquirers cannot subtract themselves from the inquiry relationship" (p. 436). The repercussions of this are discussed in *Ethical Considerations and Limitations*.

### **3.3 Design of the Study**

In aligning with a narrative approach, this study centres on telling teachers' stories as a means of inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Huber, 2010; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In narrative research, the most holistic way in which to gather the participants' stories is through semi-structured interviews. This naturalistic method of data collection again aligns with the study's interpretivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Ultimately, the participants in this study responded to questions during a semi-structured interview, engaged in conversation and told their own stories about their expectations of themselves in their role, and about their evolution and change over time. This allowed for the narratives to reflect, and be defined by the three-dimensional narrative space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), or narrative commonplaces (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Thus, the interviews explored, and gave participants the opportunity to revisit the contexts and situations whereby their experiences unfolded; aligning closely with the sociality and place dimensions. The interview questions were also designed to address continuity, considering the influence of the past, experiences of the present and possibilities of the future, and thus paid close attention to the temporality commonplace of narrative inquiry. As Clandinin and Huber (2010) note, the continuing temporality of lived experience means that narrative inquiry "always begins in the midst of ongoing

experiences” (p. 438). The purpose of this study, in exploring growth, change and adjustment, then, is well-supported by this narrative approach. Table 1 summarises the research design.

*Table 1. Summary of the design of the study*

<i>A narrative inquiry, approached from a interpretivist paradigm</i>				
<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Research questions</b>	<b>Study participants</b>	<b>Research and data collection</b>	<b>Methods of analysis</b>
To investigate the nature of, and processes involved in the adjustment of early-career teachers' expectations of themselves as teachers.	1. How do teachers adjust their personal expectations during the early-career years?  2. What conditions influence the adjustment of personal expectations?	Four second- and third-year teachers from one Queensland secondary school	Semi-structured interview, 1 hour in duration, Nov/ Dec 2015  Additional field notes in the form of preparatory interview notes from participants  Member checking process, co-construction of narrative	Creation of interim texts through narrative coding (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006)  Use of Interconnected Model of Professional Growth (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002) as a theoretical context, in describing internal and external domains and mediating processes  Analysis as an ongoing, collaborate process

Clandinin and Huber (2010) caution against limiting a line of inquiry in a narrative approach through framing research with expectations of a precise or defined answer, instead seeing a narrative inquiry as being “composed around a certain wonder” (p. 438). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) similarly emphasise the need for narrative inquiry to carry with it “a sense of continual reformulation” (p. 124) in the search for stories. In light of this, the interview questions, listed in the interview schedule in Appendix A, were open-ended and allowed for flexibility, depending on participant responses. Ultimately, the prompts below each question allowed for the participant to navigate in any direction as they constructed their own narrative of changing expectations as an early-career teacher. The transcripts of these interviews formed the basis of the field texts of the study.

Clandinin and Huber (2010) also note that field texts can include any number of other texts aside from transcripts, and may include field notes, artefacts, photographs, and other texts such as journals which reflect lived experience. In order

to be attentive to all commonplaces of the individual's lived experience, this study also used additional field texts. In this case, these were the participants' preparatory interview notes, used with permission. These notes were used to further inform and develop the interim research texts.

### **3.4 Participants**

Often, narrative researchers focus exclusively on the experiences of a single individual for their study. Narrative studies explore the experiences of multiple individuals far less frequently, lest the study dilute the story of any individual's lived experience (Creswell, 2014). However, there is value in studying several individuals whose stories may complement one another through their similarities and differences (Creswell, 2014; Gibbs, 2007). For this reason, it was decided that four individuals were to be chosen, as the nuances of their early-career experiences could provide a richness in the data, creating depth and adding to the significance of this study.

Participants were selected through purposeful, convenience sampling within one state secondary school. Approval from Principal was sought and granted in order to contact the teaching staff via email, as per the mandated policy. An email was sent to all teaching staff at the school, with a participant information flyer included as an attachment. Although a number of state high schools in Brisbane were approached, and the information flyer sent to teaching staff at a range of schools, the chosen site was the only one in which individuals made contact and volunteered to participate in the study.

At the time of the interviews, all four participants were teaching at Cityside State High School,<sup>1</sup> a high-performing secondary school of over 2000 students, located in an inner-city Brisbane suburb. All participants were in their second and third years of the profession at the time of their interview, and were employed in either a temporary (contract) or permanent capacity. Only one of the participants had begun her teaching career at Cityside. All three other participants had completed at least their first semester of teaching at a different state school, with one participant having begun his career in a state primary school. The participant group included two male and two female teachers, who were teaching across a range of discipline areas.

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<sup>1</sup> Schools have been referred to by pseudonyms in this study.

Two participants were career-change teachers and had undertaken a Graduate Diploma of Education as mature-age students. The others had completed a Bachelor of Education after finishing secondary school. Table 2 provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the participant group.

*Table 2.* Teacher participant demographics at Cityside State High School

<i>Name</i>	<i>Gender and age</i>	<i>Years of teaching service</i>	<i>Teaching qualification</i>	<i>Discipline area</i>
Charlie*	Male, 39	1.5	Grad. Diploma	Secondary (Music*)
Deanna*	Female, 27	2.5	Bachelor	Secondary (History*)
Erica*	Female, 35	2.5	Grad. Diploma	Secondary (Economics*)
Scott*	Male, 24	2	Bachelor	Primary/ Junior Secondary

\* All names and discipline areas have been changed.

During the participants' early-career years, their schools had not delivered any formalised mentoring or support programs for first- or second-year teachers. However, school management had run induction sessions for new teachers at each of their schools, covering school policy and procedures, and addressing compulsory departmental training for use of information technology and professional conduct. The size of the sample influences the extent to which the findings of this study can be generalised, however, the aim is to gain a detailed understanding of the central phenomenon. The study seeks depth, rather than breadth of understanding about how these continuing early-career teachers adjusted their personal expectations in the early-career years.

### **3.5 Procedure and Timelines**

After ethical clearance had been gained from the university, the interviewing process occurred over a period of four weeks. Consent was gained from participants, and they were provided with the questions at least one week in advance so that they had an opportunity to prepare notes or ask clarifying questions before the interviews began. All participants prepared notes and brought these to their interview. The participants were also invited to submit any of these prepared materials post-

interview, so that a more comprehensive picture of their experiences could be formulated. All participants agreed to this and provided their notes at the end of the interview. The iterative research process continued over a course of three months as participants engaged in member checking, a process that is explained further in the following sections.

**3.5.1 Semi-structured interview.** The interview process drew upon the three-stage phenomenological interview model described by Schuman (1982), based on interviewing research conducted with Dolbeare. This has been explained further and evaluated by Seidman (2013). The three stages, as Seidman notes, are important to attend to as each phase has a distinct purpose. As he sees it, the open-ended inquiry requires a structure that facilitates and maintains a sense of focus, for both the participant and the researcher. Schuman and Seidman recommend that these stages occur during three distinct interviews, to ensure that each phase is given specific attention. In this study, due to the time limitations of the participants, they each participated in only one semi-structured interview, in November/ December 2015. Nevertheless, each semi-structured interview followed Seidman's three distinct interview phases.

These three phases are reflected through the three overarching interview questions, which were provided to participants in advance on a page with space for note-taking. The semi-structured questions were designed to encourage participants to reflect on their own teaching journey, and more specifically, the adjustments to their personal expectations in their growth as a professional. As Seidman (2013) suggests, the questions encourage the participants to place their experiences in the context of their own lives by using a *how?* prompt, rather than *why?*

The first phase, as Seidman (2013) sees it, determines the context of the participant's lived experiences. This is reflected in the first of the semi-structured interview questions: *Thinking about your first year/s of teaching, can you tell me about what you initially expected from yourself as a teacher?* This not only addresses the context of the participant's experiences, but attends to the first research question as it establishes the initial expectations of themselves in a teaching role before any adjustments took place. The second phase encourages participants to "reconstruct the details of their experience" within that context (Seidman, p. 21). As such, the second



interview question asked participants the following: *Thinking about these early expectations of yourself as a teacher, could you tell me about times when these expectations were challenged by any part of the role?* This required participants to reflect upon and reconstruct experiences within a given context, building a narrative of their early-career challenges. Finally, the third interview phase should allow participants to consider and reflect upon the significance of their experiences (Seidman, 2013, p. 21). Seidman (2013) also stresses that this phase should tie together the threads, seeking an understanding of how “factors in their lives interacted to bring them to their present situation” (p. 22). The final interview question, accordingly, encouraged the participants to arrive at a conclusion and evaluate the meaning of their experiences: *Could you tell me about how your expectations of yourself as a teacher have changed during your first year/s?* This question clearly aligned with the research questions of the study, as it ultimately required participants to reflect upon how they have adjusted their expectations, and what conditions allowed for these changes. The interview schedule, inclusive of the additional prompts, is shown in Appendix A.

The questions, as explained previously, were designed to elicit responses pertaining to the teachers’ attitudes towards their own performance and expectations of themselves as teachers. As such, more focused questions were necessary at times, to gain a better understanding of the specific issue under investigation. For example, if a teacher began to explain that the students in the class were not behaving as they had expected, it may have been necessary to encourage the teacher to explain how they imagined *they* would control behaviour in the class – that is, their own changing expectations of themselves in the role. Any further questions such as these, not included in the interview schedule, were captured in the audio files.

The interview timeframes were also carefully considered. Seidman (2013) advocates for a 90-minute timeframe, and though he acknowledges that at first this may seem overwhelming for a participant, it allows for structure and ensures that participants feel that their stories are being taken seriously. In a workplace context, however, a 90 minute timeframe was considered too extensive and exhausting for teachers after a day of work. As such, a one-hour timeframe was chosen, and the participants were interviewed in a convenient, distraction-free setting such as their own classroom. Ultimately, Seidman emphasises strict adherence to an agreed-upon

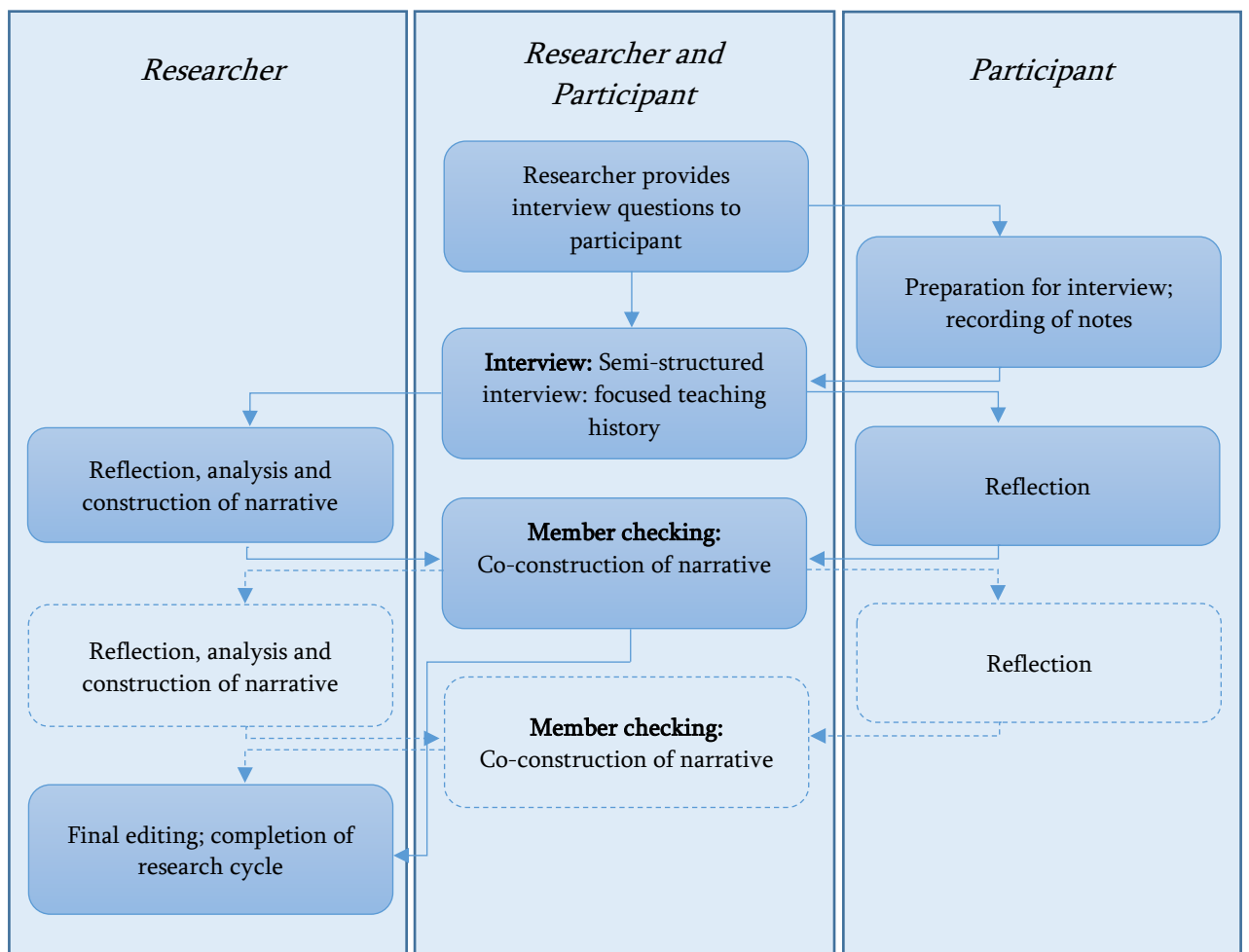
timeframe to build trust between the researcher and participant, giving the participant confidence that the researcher will follow through on their promises. The preference in this study was to make contact with the participants post-interview, if necessary, by email, phone call or meeting at an arranged time, rather than extending the interview timeframes. The participants were made aware of this, and this was adhered to in order to build a sense of confidence in the participants that their time was being valued.

Interviews were audio-recorded using Audacity software and saved as a .wma file. The audio was transcribed in intelligent verbatim style for readability and accuracy, with half of the audio being transcribed by the researcher, and the remainder transcribed in the same style by Pacific Transcription, an Australian audio transcription service. The process of analysing the texts and constructing the narratives then took place to create the first of what Clandinin and Huber (2010) refer to as the *interim research texts*.

**3.5.2 Interim research texts and member checking.** After the data collection phase, narrative research requires the active involvement of the participants in the process. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note that this is fundamental in decreasing the gap between the narrative being told, and that being reported. As the authors explain, this means researchers engage in the writing of a variety of interim research texts, which are essentially drafted versions of the narrative, for review by the participants. As Creswell (2014) also observes, it is important that the participant check the interim research text and collaborate with the researcher in order for both parties to “negotiate the meaning of the database” (p. 509) – a process referred to as *member checking*. In other words, each participant was encouraged to read over the interim research text, and make suggestions for changes or additions to reflect, more accurately, their own teaching experiences. This process aligns with the interpretivist research paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), which accepts that the researcher becomes a “co-constructor of knowledge, of understanding” (p. 196) and of interpretation of the deeper meanings behind the participants’ experiences. Thus, rather than finishing when the researcher is satisfied that data saturation has occurred, such as in other methodologies, the cycle only

concluded once the participants were satisfied that the research text accurately reflected their perceived experience.

A schematic of this study's narrative research process is shown in Figure 4. The interview is referred to in the schematic as a *focused teaching history*, revising the term *focused life history* used by Seidman (2013). After the interview, it must be noted that participants were encouraged to reflect, as can be seen in Figure 4, before being shown the interim research text. The reasoning behind this is that, as Clandinin and Huber (2010) note, narratives are created whilst participants continue to live their stories. This is especially relevant in this study, where participants are still in the process of growing as early-career teachers.



*Figure 4.* A schematic of the research process. The individual roles of researcher and participant are outlined as the research cycle continues. Optional phases and processes are distinguished by the use of dotted lines.

As shown in the schematic, the participants were presented with the interim research text a second, or even third time where necessary. This may have been required if extensive changes needed to be made after the first member checking event. However, if only minor changes or additions were made, these were addressed and the narrative was finalised. This additional phase is differentiated in the schematic by the use of dotted lines.

### 3.6 Analysis

In narrative inquiry, it is the field texts that provide the data for analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and in this case, it was the transcripts of interviews that formed the basis of the data. In this study, as in any narrative inquiry, the process of analysing the field texts was collaborative, ongoing and above all, iterative in nature. As discussed in *Procedures and Timelines*, the analysis of the data took place during the research process, rather than at the end.

After the interviews, the interim research texts were constructed in preparation for the participants' member checking. Narrative studies are distinctive in that they use the elements of a typical narrative, such as setting, characters, problems, rising action, and resolutions, to retell the stories of the participants. Information about the individual's past, present and future is elicited within narrative studies to build a time sequence, which Cortazzi (1993) sees as setting narrative research apart from other types of study. Thus, chronology is a central element in the analysis of the participants' narratives. As such, in this study, it was necessary to narrativise the field texts to provide this sequence, forming links between times, places and ideas to establish a chronological sequence. Aside from working with a chronology of events, Clandinin and Huber (2010) point out that researchers should also show the "complex and multilayered storied nature of experience" (p. 439) through working with imagery and metaphors in their research texts.

To construct the interim research texts, the field texts – the interview transcripts and additional participant notes – were positioned within the three dimensional narrative space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Huber, 2010; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). The initial coding of the narrative therefore drew upon the frameworks described by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Connelly and

Clandinin (2006): identifying times, events and phases (temporality), people, relationships and communities (sociality), and places, setting and scenes (place). Thus, the field texts were carefully analysed to identify these thematic ideas, transitions and the narrative elements and structure. In this study, the narrative coding included identifying character, setting, plot and tensions, resolutions, as well as a narrative voice and tone (Clandinin and Connelly). The suggestions of Gibbs (2007) were also followed, with the initial coding also identifying accounts, epiphanies and explanations to gain a rich understanding of the participants' evolving expectations of themselves as teachers.

Once these interim field texts had taken shape and were being refined, the analysis turned to the processes involved in the participants' adjustment of expectations. In this study, the terms used in the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002) were applied to the sequences of events to describe the processes of development and change, as well as the conditions under which the changes occurred. In doing this, the framework provided a theoretical context to situate the narratives within; that is, the context of professional development and change.

However, the process of analysing within narrative inquiry requires a number of important considerations. To use Bateson's (1989) words, it is "particularly tempting to disassemble" (p. 10) participants' stories and experiences in the process of analysis and interpretation, however Clandinin and Huber (2010) caution researchers against this in narrative inquiry. They acknowledge that once working at a distance from the participants in composing interim research texts, it is imperative to continue to see the texts as incomplete, and open to negotiation. In light of this, the use of participants' notes, surrendered after the interviews, was central to this study in order to fill in detail and gaps, as well as prompt dialogue and "further engage with participants around unfolding threads of experience" (Clandinin & Huber, p. 439) during the member checking process.

Furthermore, the coding of themes and categories in order to make sense of the individual's story can be somewhat problematic in narrative inquiry. Gergen (2003), among others, has warned that the analytical coding as a method of analysis in narrative inquiry can lead to an undermining of the meaning of the study.

Ultimately, deconstructing participants' lived experience into "coded piles" (Gergen, p. 272) is contrary to the point of narrative inquiry, which must attend to "lives as lived and told through the inquiry" (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 439). These concerns further justify the use of the Interconnected Model to theoretically contextualise this study. This framework allowed for the narratives to reflect the interplay of experiences and learning through the domains, which, as Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) point out, recognise the personal and often, very individual process of teacher growth. The framework sees change and growth as occurring through the mediating process of an individual acting and reflecting upon experience and knowledge, and as such, effectively lends itself to a narrative approach. The framework itself anticipates "the possibility of multiple change sequences and a variety of possible teacher growth networks" (Clarke & Hollingsworth, p. 965). Thus, for Clandinin and Huber (2010), the understandings generated are not part of a search to confirm or challenge existing concepts or taxonomies, or about generalising, but about "wondering and imagining alternative possibilities" (p. 440) within a narrative approach.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations and Limitations**

Narrative research raises a number of ethical concerns, which were imperative to consider before data collection occurred. As Clandinin and Huber (2010) note, ethical considerations are of critical importance in narrative inquiry due to relational aspects, and are responsibilities that Clandinin and Connelly (2000) recommend are negotiated and discussed at all phases of the research. These responsibilities have long-term relevance, and researchers must consider the potential impacts on participants' lives, both during the inquiry and into the future (Clandinin & Huber). From the outset, it was necessary to gain full permission from participants to report their stories, and make clear to them the purpose of the study. This ensured that participants were given respect and rights to their own stories and experiences, which was reinforced through their ongoing collaboration in the research process. For Clandinin and Huber, narrative researchers "understand that a person's lived and told stories are who they are and who they are becoming and that these stories sustain them" (p. 440). As I saw it, there was an absolute necessity that the final research texts portrayed the participants' stories with not only honesty, but honour. Being an

empathetic, non-judgmental listener is fundamental to the success narrative inquiry (Lieblich, 1996).

A factor that complicated this study was that I, like the participants, also teach in a state high school in Brisbane. This likely had positive and negative bearings on the study. Knowing that I am a fellow teacher, it is likely that participants felt more at ease during the interview process and relaxed in my presence. Our shared understandings of the realities of the profession meant that, in the interview, participants could focus more on their values, attitudes and knowledge as opposed to context or operational aspects of their role.

However, my position as a fellow teacher may have also raised concerns for participants. Participants may have felt cautious about revealing their personal expectations to me, potentially regarding me as their peer, rather than as a researcher. Revealing beliefs about their own performance and effectiveness to a peer could potentially cause participants some discomfort. To complicate this, participants may have been concerned about confidentiality. They may have felt vulnerable in revealing, for example, that they feel inadequate, if they believed it could have been shared with others in the Brisbane teaching community. For this reason, at the commencement of each interview I personally reminded each participant of the ethical approval process that had taken place, reinforced my role as a researcher and reassured them of the confidential nature of their responses. I reassured each participant that I would employ strategies such as “fictionalising and blurring identities and places” (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 440) to protect their identity. Furthermore, participants were made aware that their names, their discipline areas and school name would be changed to protect their identities.

Given the relational aspects of working with participants in narrative inquiry, there is an understanding that a researcher’s own experiences and past influence the story being told; thus participants’ stories are always re-shaped by the researcher into his or her own narrative (Coles, 1989, p. 19). Though selection of subject matter is inherently part of the narrative inquiry process, Clandinin and Murphy (2007) suggest that researchers work to make transparent the aspects of experience that they have foregrounded and highlighted, which has been done in this study. Additionally, in this study, the ongoing nature of the participants’ involvement in the research

cycle mitigated against a potential loss of participants' voices in the final text (Creswell, 2014). Clandinin and Huber (2010) note that a dominant researcher voice, or signature, should also be avoided, which was also adhered to in this study.

All research practices for this study conform to QUT's Code of Conduct for Research (Ethics Approval Number 1500000761).

### **3.8 Summary of Research Design**

Within this chapter, the methodology of narrative inquiry (Section 3.2) was discussed, with reference to its inherent value for a study of this type. The characteristics and conventions of narrative inquiry, including the dimensions of *sociality*, *temporality* and *space* were also detailed, drawing upon the work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Connelly and Clandinin (2006). The research design was explained (Section 3.3) as well as the use of semi-structured interview transcripts and participant notes. The participants' characteristics and the use of convenience sampling were described (Section 3.4). The procedures and timeline of the study (Section 3.5) were explained with reference to a timeline, followed by an explanation of a phenomenological interview process (Section 3.5.1) which was modified for this study. Following this, the process of member checking (Section 3.5.2) was explained and justified. The procedure for analysing the field texts was elaborated upon (Section 3.6). A consideration and evaluation of ethical issues and limitations was also included (Section 3.7).



## **Chapter 4: Findings**

### **4.1 Overview of Findings**

This chapter presents the narratives of four teachers at Cityside State High School, all of whom were in their second or third year of their career at the time of the study. The data from the field texts and interview transcripts have been used to construct the narratives. Each narrative details the processes of expectation-adjustment for each early-career teacher, reflecting the research questions underpinning the study: (1) how do teachers adjust their personal expectations during the early-career years? and (2) what conditions influence the adjustment of personal expectations?

Accordingly, the narratives, in isolation and collectively, highlight the way in which the participants' personal expectations were challenged and changed in the early-career years, and the conditions and contextual factors that were either helpful or a hindrance to the adjustment of these expectations.

### **4.2 Early-Career Teacher Narratives**

The four narratives in this section are presented in the sequence that the teachers were interviewed. Charlie's narrative is the first presented. Charlie is a 39-year old second-year music teacher who undertook the Graduate Diploma as a mature-age student. The second narrative highlights the first and second year of teaching for Deanna, 27, a History teacher who gained a position at Cityside after a successful practicum experience at the school. Deanna's narrative is the most comprehensive of the narratives, as she communicated considerably more detail in her interview than others. Third is the narrative of economics teacher Erica, 35, a former manager from the corporate sector who came to teaching for a lifestyle change. The final narrative in the study is that of Scott, 24, a primary-trained teacher in his second year of teaching at the time of the study.

A purposeful decision was made to break the stylistic conventions in this section, with each narrative starting on a new page in order to honour the participants' experiences, and no section numbering being applied. To enhance

readability, a summary is provided at the start of each narrative. Furthermore, in addition to the names of the participants being changed to pseudonyms, the names of other staff and students, and schools referenced by name in the transcripts have also been given other names. Finally, each narrative finishes with a reflective quote, allowing the voice of each participant to emerge in the form of a coda that captures their lingering concerns, future hopes, and yet-unanswered questions.

## Charlie's Narrative

Charlie is in his second year of teaching at Cityside State High School. A music industry professional and father-of-two, he came to teaching later in life. His initial expectations of himself as a teacher were firmly grounded in his teaching philosophy, and a rigid adherence to this made it difficult for Charlie to adjust his expectations.

Charlie has been involved in the music industry for most of his adult life, working in theatre and enjoying an outstanding professional reputation. Charlie was always drawn to teaching, and opportunities to work as an artist-in-residence at a number of schools sparked an interest in becoming a high school teacher. For Charlie, the decision to return to university and undertake the Graduate Diploma of Education was not taken lightly. As the father of two young children, he was aware that he would be working long hours and sacrificing many of the perks of his current lifestyle to begin on this new pathway as a music teacher.

A major influence on his early beliefs about himself in a teaching came from his own beliefs about classrooms and learning. Charlie's own prior secondary school experiences had been exceedingly negative. Following a misdemeanour at a prestigious inner-city boy's school, he was expelled and was sent instead to a state high school in the outer suburbs. He recalled that his time at this school was filled with further delinquency and academic failure as he underachieved, and felt disillusioned with the schooling system. Charlie left school with a very negative perception of teachers and schools, distancing himself from traditional educational settings for many years afterwards.

When it came time to enrol his own children in a school, he gravitated towards the Montessori system, rejecting more traditional educational institutions in favour of an alternative approach. As such, Charlie's initial expectations of his own teaching were aligned with the philosophy of Montessori schooling, as he was determined not to replicate the authoritarian approach he remembered from his own schooling experiences. He explained that:

*I'm a real big fan of Montessori schooling and my daughter goes to a Montessori school, and it's all about, you know, them learning to be intrinsic learners from an early age, and they can manage their own behaviour and the classroom manages their behaviour as well... I guess it's the whole thing*

*is 'teach me to do it myself', so it's all about being autonomous, and from a really early age they are encouraged to just take on their own learning.*

Charlie was eager to create learning spaces where students could be curious and develop through the pursuit of their own interests and abilities, and at their own pace. However, Charlie's knowledge of the Montessori philosophy came only from his experience as a parent, and his vision was somewhat romanticised. Whilst he was enamoured with the idea of a class of independent, curious students, he had a limited understanding of how to build student autonomy. Instead, he built his expectations of himself as a teacher around practices he had casually witnessed in his daughter's classroom, hoping to build a student-centred approach in his own classes that reflected this system.

These early beliefs about his teaching role were, equally, influenced by his previous experience as an artist-in-residence, working in schools with teachers and students, running workshops, managing specialised activities, and providing creative direction for productions. He explained that working with students as a visiting industry professional established his early understandings of being a teacher:

*When you're an artist in residence you can turn up in torn jeans and you can look like an artist – you can be quirky and you can be 'fringe'. And so that's kind of relaxing, you don't have to worry about behaviour. And there's a certain aura around you that's probably projected by the kids, so they tend to listen to you more keenly... You can be totally creative, I guess, you don't have to be as organised.*

These pre-teaching experiences with students in schools established a number of key expectations about Charlie's role as a classroom teacher. More pervasive than his university study, or even his supervised practicum experiences, these positive experiences established Charlie's expectations of what a classroom may be like when he was the direction with creative control. For him, his "aura" as an artist-in-residence meant minimal challenging behaviour. His initial hope to be "effortlessly engaging, approachable, liked, creative, confident, in control" in the classroom reflected these pre-teaching experiences.

This romanticised vision of himself as a teacher influenced both his approach to curriculum but also to classroom management. Not only did Charlie want to create a flexible classroom culture where students would be creative, self-governing and

free to express themselves, but he wanted to avoid being a disciplinarian. This was, as he explained, not just because of his own teaching philosophy, but because he was afraid that he would struggle in an authoritative role:

*I hoped that I didn't need to be stern, I didn't want to be an authoritative, grumpy teacher... I don't know if you've been to a Montessori classroom, but you'll have trouble finding the teacher... because it's like the teacher's a background presence... And of course they're going to misbehave and they're going to muck around a bit but it's always, just, really sort of subtly managed..... They actually have an internal discipline. So when they're like thirteen, they don't struggle and they have a lot of ability to focus as well.*

In order to avoid confrontation and being an authority figure, Charlie hoped that he would simply replicate an approach in which he assisted learning as a background presence: a combination of the teaching style in his daughter's Montessori classroom, and his own manner as an artist-in-residence. As such, a significant influence on Charlie's expectations of himself was a teaching philosophy that situated him as a facilitator in a room of active, autonomous learners, regardless of other contextual factors.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Charlie did not have success in his practicum experiences with his approach. Placed at a challenging, outer-suburban school for his practicum, he struggled significantly. His lack of discipline and reluctance to present as an authority figure had resulted in very challenging behaviour from his classes:

*After my four weeks, I didn't have a triumph.... Early on I knew, I'm not going to work in a school like that. I can't, I'm not going to be the kind of teacher that would be useful in that kind of school. It wouldn't, I would last a month in those schools, and I know that.*

A new concern was beginning to emerge for Charlie, which was that he was not able control these classes and be the teacher that he wanted to be. However, rather than challenging his personal expectations, it actually reinforced, for Charlie, that systematic, structured methods of classroom management would not work for him. He was convinced that the school environment – working in “that kind” of school with a disciplinary culture – was not a good fit for him, not suited to his teaching style. His approach, he reasoned, would work elsewhere.

As such, upon entering the profession, his expectations of himself as a teacher had remained consistent. He completed a short English teaching contract at

Eastside State High when he first graduated, before securing a contract at Cityside State High School. He was particularly excited about this contract, as it involved teaching junior secondary music classes. Charlie remained reluctant to discipline students, eager for his classroom to reflect the philosophical and pedagogical principals he believed in. However, he still lacked the knowledge and experience in establishing or maintaining this approach successfully. During his early experimental phase, he avoided teacher-directed tasks and being the centre of attention in the room:

*The system pushes you to become that kind of teacher, the teacher that holds the room, holds the focus, and the students do well because of that teacher and who they are.... it didn't suit me. I thought, I don't, yeah I tend not to take the authority in that situation so I wanted to be able to be able to teach without having to do that. I didn't realise that at the time, as I started teaching more and more, I resisted being the authority in a really strong way.... I didn't go gung-ho trying to be a really good behaviour management teacher, I kind of went the other way. I kind of just hoped that it would be ok.*

Frustrated by the institutional limitations of the role, he resisted becoming what he did not like about traditional schooling. Charlie was determined not to replicate the inflexible, strict learning environments that he associated with his own school failure, explaining that he driven by the question of how to “reach the kid that I was... how do I reach me?”

Not only was he attempting to bring to life his vision of students engaging in spontaneous yet purposeful activities, but he had a fear that, as on his practicum, he would also fail to control these students if he attempted to take on an authoritative role:

*I resisted being an authority in the classroom for whatever deep-seated psychological reasons.... I didn't want to become this stern presence. And maybe I was afraid I wouldn't be able to do it if I [tried], so that was a negative expectation or a belief that I wasn't able to control a class properly. So then, in that case, if I tried I'd just fail, so I didn't want to own up to that.*

Instead, he focused on developing the students' abilities through preparing creative, imaginative student-driven lessons, hoping that they would become the self-governing individuals that – he believed – he was encouraging them to be.

Charlie's initial expectations of himself had a clear influence on his early professional experimentation. But over time, through reflection, it became clear to

Charlie that this permissive approach was having consequences: the behaviour of his classes rapidly deteriorated and the work was not getting done. He began to dread teaching his year eights, who, over the course of six months, had become increasingly unmanageable. The students did not follow his instructions or take the subject seriously: completing little work, raiding the cupboards in the performing arts studios, and leaving class without permission. As he explains, “I think it slowly dawned on me that I was dreading Tuesday period four every week”.

However, his expectations of himself as a “background presence” had been eclipsed by a fear that he would fail at any attempt to control the students. This meant that Charlie continued to attempt to recreate his original ideal teaching environment for fear of failing at the alternative, despite the fact he was beginning to feel burnt-out.

The lack of positive intervention also influenced Charlie’s practice. As an older teacher with extensive industry experience, Charlie’s colleagues did not suspect that he would be experiencing difficulty in the classroom, and Charlie was hesitant to share his problems with them. Concerned about not having his contract renewed, he lived in fear that a Principal or Head of Department should come into his classroom, lest they witness the disorder that was unfolding. As he explained, he had a “constant anxiety going on about, what do they think of me, you know.... I think they want to see order.”

As it happened, however, he could not hide for long. Karen\*, a teacher-aide was rostered onto Charlie’s class to assist the students with additional learning needs, and began to attend his dreaded Tuesday class. Charlie remembers, in vivid detail, the day when she lost her temper at his students:

*She’d been coming to the class for several weeks and I think she was a bit disgusted by their behaviour at that point, and she just let rip at them. So, she was holding two cardboard swords from the drama cupboard and standing there, telling them what for about their behaviour and how disgusting it was, and how hard I’d been working hard to create good lessons for them, and how disrespectful they were. And I think the fact that another teacher had to come in... I actually appreciated it, but it made me realise, you know – she never said anything to me – but I just thought, I’ve got to really come down on them.*

Although Karen reprimanded the year eights for their unruly behaviour, she also recognised that Charlie had gone to great lengths to ensure that the lesson was creative and enjoyable. Nevertheless, by this point, Charlie had the awareness to realise that, whilst it was true that he had tried to ensure the lessons were engaging, he had failed the students in allowing his expectations of them to be so low.

This experience was a critical turning point for Charlie. In reflecting on the consequences of his professional practice, Charlie began to adapt his expectations of himself in the role. He began to realise that, due to his approach, it was *his* fault the students were not learning to be responsible, autonomous and self-sufficient. He was not providing the necessary structure for this to occur. Confronting his expectations about himself in the role brought about a realisation that he needed to change his approach to reflect the system in which he was teaching, if he was going to succeed in the profession he was so passionate about:

*Obviously, we're working in this system that is a certain way... and it sort of trains the kids to be a certain way. They need you to be an authority to them, because they often can't control themselves.... Yeah, so I think that accepting that for me is like, ok, we're not in a Montessori school, I have to actually govern their behaviour, and even though I'd like for them to do it themselves they're not going to.*

In the next phase of professional experimentation, Charlie began to see improvements in his classes. In his words, it was not easy to “undo the damage you know, of six months of being quite permissive”. Confronting the fear of failure was hard at first:

*... the first thing I had to do was to clarify what I expected and then follow through on that every lesson, so I guess kind of letting them know. Saying it's different now, it's changing now, it's not going to be like this, it's a new chapter and if you do this, then this is what will happen and this is what I expect. And it's gradually gotten better, so yeah, it's sort of, I've kind of stumbled along and yeah. Having that expectation, and I think not being afraid of failing, has been a big thing for me.*

However, as the cycle continued, he observed that students were more responsive in class with firmer instructions and when he carried through with consequences.

An important realisation for Charlie was that by setting higher expectations the students would naturally rise to the challenge and become more self-sufficient:



*I had to sort of face that and go, ok, I really need to do something because the behaviour stuff is getting out of control and I realised that I had pretty low expectations of them and that they were, of course, responding to that.*

Charlie started to approach teaching with a renewed set of priorities as he adjusted his expectations of himself as a teacher. Classroom management became his first priority, and he saw the benefits of this almost immediately, planning each lesson around behaviour and transitions rather than the content:

*...part of my planning is about managing, so what am I going to do first: orient them into the lesson subject but also to bring them down off the lunch time sugar-high. So it's about that. I've prioritised planning over marking, so, not spending two hours planning a lesson that bombs anyway – there's not a correlation between a two hour lesson plan – that takes two hours to plan – and a good lesson, it doesn't work like that necessarily.*

He accepted his past failures as valuable experience, and focused on reimagining himself as an authority figure. He was now aware that he no longer was the quirky artist-in-residence, having fun with the students with no concern for the mundane, day-to-day classroom routines:

*... it's worked, more or less, to a fair degree it's worked – just being a bit more stern, coming down on stuff earlier, not letting kids get away with things from the start, you know, like the small things? Being more alert in the classroom, and yeah... just finding the little ways of managing behaviour.*

He had now realised that it was his responsibility – not the students' – to create a classroom where learning happened.

It is also important to note that Charlie also sought out a mentor as well, in his staffroom, once he had settled in and built relationships with the staff. A mentoring relationship with another music teacher resulted in a number of positive influences on his daily practice:

*I've had a teacher in my staffroom, Rebecca\*, who's been a mentor really, like day in, day out.... I think it's having... getting feedback on ideas and lessons, and then I think it's given me more confidence about my own approach to teaching.... we share a class so we're sharing resources – so, I would share things. And it's very satisfying I think when someone else takes your resources or takes your lesson and uses it, so it's a good indication... And having that and just bouncing ideas and getting that feedback and just knowing where I've gone wrong.*

In an interesting turn of events, Charlie's expectations of himself needed to change in order for him to achieve success in the profession. However, once he had achieved this success, and built confidence, his practice finally began aligning with some of his initial ideals. In gaining more control of his classes, he can now imagine a distant future where he can become that teacher he initially imagined himself being: completely flexible, accommodating, and creative:

*I'd still like to experiment with that. I think it can be done, but – and I've tried little ways in the music room and classroom – but it tends to be if you drop off as a teacher, they drop off, you know... I've got to figure that out. But to be able to do that in, say, a music classroom, would be a cool kind of experiment.... I know lots of teachers do it to some degree or other here. But I think, maybe you can't do that in your first year. And yeah, so that's an expectation I've let go of. And maybe down the track, once I've sort of found my feet, I can, you know, start to employ that.*

As a result of the processes of reflection and experimentation, Charlie now sees the development of his ideal teaching approach as a long-term goal, rather than expecting instant success.

Charlie believes that his first year of teaching was difficult because, it seemed to him, it was necessary to fail in order to eventually have some success. Indeed, his journey of professional learning and development, and in particular the major turning points, is replete with feelings of disappointment, humiliation and isolation. Charlie's experience is concerning for a number of reasons, but perhaps mostly because the characteristics of dissatisfaction and disillusionment are not unique to his situation. He concluded, on a bittersweet note, that first-year teachers should simply prepare for the reality that their learning will come about from mistakes:

*I think that that's the only way that you learn. You have to fail. And maybe that's what first-year teachers should be told, is that this is your year of failing, this is where you fail, and you should try to fail as much as possible.*

## Deanna's Narrative

Deanna, a senior History teacher at Cityside State High School, is in her third year of teaching. She found it difficult to adjust her high personal expectations in her early years of teaching after gaining employment at Cityside after completing her final practicum there. As such, Deanna's story offers us an opportunity to explore some distinctive concerns of early-career teachers who gain employment at their practicum schools.

Deanna had previously been a preservice teacher in the Humanities department at Cityside State High School, and gained outstanding results during her practicum experiences. A self-confessed "high achiever", she was offered a contract at the school immediately after her practicum ended, teaching Senior Modern and Ancient History. Deanna leapt at the opportunity and felt "so lucky", as it was well-known that teaching contracts in inner-city schools were competitive even among experienced teachers. She reported feeling excited at having avoided those well-acknowledged hardships facing her fellow graduate teachers starting at unfamiliar schools: establishing relationships and a reputation whilst trying to negotiate new content, subject areas and policies.

As we follow Deanna's journey of expectation-adjustment, her initial expectations of herself in the role are important to understand. She assumed that returning to Cityside on contract would be an easy transition, and expected her performance to remain as it was during her practicums:

*I would say that I had pretty high expectations of how my first year was going to go ... I expected that I would continue to do all of the things that I did on prac, but obviously not taking into account the increased teaching load and the fact that when I was on prac I was obviously teaching far fewer classes than I was in a fulltime teacher's load. I really hoped to create lessons and deliver lessons that were really engaging, really organised and supported by a range of resources that I would develop myself. That is what I did on prac, and I assumed that that is how I do a good job of being a teacher once I got to school.*

Deanna's academic success at university, outstanding practicum results, and the familiar environment of Cityside made her optimistic that her first year would be successful, and as such, her expectations of her early-career performance were aligned with what she had expected of herself during practicum – completed, of

course, under very different conditions. Deanna was given a timetable with six different subject areas in her first year, compared with the three she had taught during her practicum.

Deanna's existing relationships and reputation also presented a distinctive challenge, in the form of a power imbalance as a legacy of her preservice teaching experience. A significant influence on Deanna's early expectations of her performance was that she now found herself seated beside her former supervising teacher and the other experienced colleagues she had shared a staffroom with as a preservice teacher. Deanna reported feeling that her performance as an early-career teacher was under evaluation as it had been during the previous term during her practicum:

*Working in close proximity with my final supervising teacher, looking back, was not necessarily a very healthy dynamic for my first year, because I did feel that there was still that element of being assessed by that person. And I think at times that added that external pressure to do really well and to be the teacher that they thought I was, because they helped me to be here, working and continue on from my final prac... I felt that they'd really gone out on a limb for me.*

As a result of this existing relationship, Deanna placed pressure on herself to continually impress, and was concerned that if she had let the quality of her performance slide, it may have indicated that she had only tried during her practicum because she was being assessed. She was determined to maintain – if not exceed – the same performance that had impressed during her practicum and secured her a contract position. With an attitude that she needed to prove herself, Deanna's early expectations of herself as a teacher were already unrealistically high:

*I thought if it turned out that I wasn't a really great teacher that I would obviously be very disappointed in myself but also that I would let other people around me down, because I didn't want it to seem like I'd only really tried hard, or I could only be a really great teacher on a half teaching load on prac and then when it got to the real thing, that the quality of my teaching would slip.*

In exploring Deanna's early experimentation as a teacher, the influence of these initial expectations is apparent. Deanna was reluctant to take risks, not straying from her tried-and-tested practices from her practicum experiences. A preoccupation

with creation of original resources also stemmed from her early understandings about what quality teaching entailed:

*The amount of time that I spent planning lessons on prac, I then attempted to do in my first year... The great teaching that I had seen through prac and through videos at university... the delivery of content and the activities were backed up by these really amazing creative resources. I wanted to be an expert, in terms of the content, but I really felt – especially because of the way I had learned about unit planning and lesson planning through assignments – I felt that you had to deliver that content in a really wide range of ways, and that a good unit would involve a really diverse array of activities. I assumed as a result of my limited experience that really good passionate teachers made their own stuff.*

As a result, even in the very early stages of Deanna’s professional experimentation, she was becoming exhausted by teaching. Just as she had done during her time as a preservice teacher, she spent countless hours creating student and teacher resources to share with others.

It is not surprising, then, that Deanna’s desire to replicate her successful practicum is reflected across a number of areas of her early experimentation. Deanna continued, as on practicum, to mimic the work habits and behaviours of her experienced colleagues – “great teachers” who were successful within the Cityside context. She noted that the “working culture” of her staffroom further perpetuated the pressure that she was placing on herself, as the handful of teachers were all high-achieving, competitive personalities. But because Deanna came into the profession with such high expectations of her own performance, she did not question the unhealthy habits of those around her – in fact, it confirmed her unrealistic performance expectations:

*When I was on prac, obviously the teachers that I had taught me a lot and were fantastic teachers and possibly just by coincidence, [they] seemed to be very busy and stressed out. And so [through] conversations that I had with them – not necessarily explicitly but implicitly – I felt that that teaching was just this all-consuming thing. I got the idea from the behaviour they were modelling but also the conversations that we had, that if you weren’t stressed out and you weren’t marking until 12 o’clock that maybe you didn’t care as much as a teacher that does. And so I really – in wanting to be a good teacher in my first year – I think I allowed that to frame the way I was acting, or rather, allowed it to justify the amount of work I was doing when I was doing it, and if I was stressed out, thinking well, I should be stressed out because it is a stressful job.*

At this point, the influence of colleagues' teaching approaches is clear. Persuaded by her belief that the first year of teaching *should* be stressful, the combination of Deanna's existing expectations of her own performance and a high-achieving staffroom culture meant that Deanna felt inadequate and stressed within this early experimental phase.

Eager to prove herself, Deanna set unrealistic timeframes for turning around sets of marking and drafts, allowing all of her time outside of school and on weekends to be consumed by the provision of extensive written feedback to the students. This, again, was traceable back to her early beliefs about quality teaching, and mirrored the work habits of those around her:

*The teachers that I had as supervisors wrote very extensive draft feedback and felt that that was the norm and so I tried to sort of emulate that without really, I suppose, consulting with people – a wider range of people – when I did start teaching fulltime... A teacher that I had worked with talked about and acknowledged that they wrote too much feedback but said that, you know, I write this much feedback because the students need it, and that if I don't tell them these things then they're not going to change them.*

It is important to recognise, in Deanna's case, that her work practices and teaching environment were no different from those that had allowed her success on practicum, albeit with a reduced teaching load. However, as Deanna pointed out, it was not the addition of classes that made her workload unsustainable, but the reduction in feedback about her performance. Deanna had previously had ongoing, substantial feedback about her classroom practice, which had allowed her to regulate her personal expectations. Her supervising teachers had provided positive reinforcement and given her confidence about her teaching, resources and interactions with the students.

The lack of feedback post-practicum was the main factor influencing Deanna's expectations about her own performance:

*I didn't feel that I got a lot of feedback or really a lot of monitoring... if I wasn't getting any feedback from anywhere else then the only person that I can sort of consult is myself, and I had really harsh things to say and think about my teaching because that's my personality. If you're not getting that outside feedback then you're going to be judging yourself and I don't think necessarily that a first-year teacher is a good person to be judging whether that first-year teacher is doing a good job.*

The lack of feedback Deanna was receiving was a critical issue during this first cycle of experimentation and expectation-adjustment. It is evident that Deanna's early experimentation was influenced negatively by her staffroom environment. However, the *lack* of positive influences led Deanna to reflect on her early experimentation in an exceedingly negative manner. As a result, her own unattainable standards determined how much work she was putting into her teaching, and how she perceived her own performance. As the year continued, Deanna's expectations had been adjusted, and were now more unmanageable and unachievable than when she had started.

Deanna's next phase of experimentation inside and outside the classroom was characterised by a deterioration in her confidence and a general sense of exhaustion. The pressure to meet her own performance standards took its toll on her wellbeing, and she reflected that:

*Just managing any kind of work life balance was very difficult for me in my first year and that had an impact on my physical health and my relationships with other people, including family and also friends as well, and I just felt that I wanted to do such a good job that I was working all of the time. So I would work every evening, every weekend – no exaggeration. The time demands of the job, and what I thought was realistic and sustainable and how much work I thought I could do outside of work hours, was unrealistic and, as it turns out, unsustainable.*

During this phase, Deanna's personal life and relationships deteriorated as school took up all of her time. She began to resent the students who did not appreciate the time she was spending on extensively planning their classes, and felt constant guilt about neglecting her partner:

*The time that I was spending planning and marking obviously meant that I was quite tired when I was coming into class because I had been up since four-thirty marking, or I had been up till twelve o'clock, you know, spending three hours on a PowerPoint that took 30 minutes to deliver. If you have spent your Saturday doing [that] you have obviously let something else go, and you could have been spending time with family or friends. And if ... you come in and it doesn't work for some reason, there is a real sense of guilt that not only have you not done a good job as a teacher but you feel guilty because of the impact it has had on you personally.*

Overall, this also affected Deanna's ability to distance herself from work. One consequence of this was that in reflecting on her practice, Deanna's evaluation of her

own performance became very negative. She reflected that “I was very hard on myself and, you know, my self-talk was very negative in my first year because I was putting so much of myself into it, if it didn’t go well I took it very personally”.

Deanna’s work practices impacted her passion for the profession, as well as her personal life. Of course, as the cycle continued, this impacted upon her knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about herself in the role. But whilst her understandings of the role were changing, her expectations of her own performance remained consistently high, as she tended not to question the pressure on her:

*The lack of sleep, just little things like not eating well, not exercising, not calling my family, just feeling that teaching just took over every aspect of my life, but [I thought] that it was supposed to. I really got the sense that what I was feeling was normal and to be expected if you wanted to be a good teacher.*

During this phase, much of Deanna’s stress could, once more, be attributed to a lack of a critical factor, which was feedback about her performance. Initially, Deanna felt that she could not confide in her experienced colleagues about her feelings of failure or stress, for fear of letting them down or seeming incompetent.

However, in addition to this, the absence of feedback and communication also contributed to Deanna’s despair over a timetable decision in second semester. In order to reduce her overwhelming workload, Deanna’s Year 11 Modern History class was taken off her and given to another teacher. She explained that:

*I was devastated, because I had been – I was – stressed out, but I had been working so hard and I thought that that change was a reflection that they thought that I couldn’t do it, and that I wasn’t doing a good job, and I was gutted. I do think that because we do get so little feedback on our teaching ... I sometimes feel that I interpret decisions about timetabling and other things of that nature as a reflection on how people see me as a teacher, because there is not a lot else to go on, to be honest: what else would I use as an indication of how I teach?*

By the time this decision was made, Deanna saw it as a reflection on her teaching, and what she saw as a lack of trust in her ability. This lack of feedback and communication meant that Deanna had no other means through which she could evaluate her own performance and no way of adjusting her expectations to be more realistic. Deanna had now been through a number of cycles of professional experimentation and re-evaluation of her expectations, however her expectations had



not become more realistic – if anything, they had become more unattainable. She ended her first year of teaching feeling exhausted, disappointed and disheartened in her own performance.

The importance of feedback and communication in shaping Deanna's expectations of herself as a teacher becomes even more relevant when her second year is taken into consideration. Perhaps Deanna would not have survived her second year of teaching if she had not changed staffrooms. A collapse of a number of smaller staffrooms into one large work space meant that Deanna was able to begin to adjust her expectations in a positive way, and develop more realistic expectations of her own performance.

Deanna reflected that the change in her attitude towards the profession was almost instantaneous. The influence of other teachers made a significant difference to her perceptions of the role. She explained the benefits of moving from a “close-knit, high achieving culture” to a staffroom with over twenty teachers from a variety of faculty areas and experience levels:

*Getting to see really wonderful teachers who I look up to, and that they don't work twenty-four seven, and they encourage you to take a break and seeing they were doing things so differently to me in terms of how they managed their marking and how they managed their time but they were amazing teachers that I looked up to, that gave me a much broader understanding of what good practice is and that it doesn't have to be that very narrow view of what a good teacher is that I had prior to that.*

Deanna's interactions with the teachers, either incidental or in conversation, allowed her to expand her understandings of quality teaching as they applied to her own practice. In mixing with her new colleagues, she realised that their commitment to the profession was not like that of the insular group she had been previously working with. The teachers in the new staffroom arrived to school later, left earlier, and did not work over the weekends. They appeared, to Deanna, to have different priorities. They were focused on their families and their life outside school, and for many of them, the students and curriculum were less of a focus in their lives.

The relationship between Deanna and these teachers was also different. She did not feel as though these teachers saw her as a preservice teacher, as had been her perception in her former staffroom. Instead, she felt like she was now an equal.

Increasingly empowered to ask questions and share her ideas, many of her new teaching colleagues offered her guidance and reinforcement about her work habits:

*Just looking at their work and talking to them about how they taught a lesson showed me that you didn't have to have those flashy resources and you didn't have to spend three hours developing a booklet to give them and that there were simpler, more efficient ways to do it, and that appealed to me and because they were teachers that I really admired... I realised that I didn't have to have all of that stuff: that it was more about what I did in the classroom and I felt that that was a more realistic goal to have – to work on how I was in the classroom than how many great things I could make.*

This represents an interesting shift in focus for Deanna. Previously preoccupied with creating teaching resources, she began to see her personality, and those of her students, as the key resource in the classroom. Deanna noticed more positive outcomes overall – she was working less outside of school, and was more satisfied with her practice. Her reflections on her practice were also positive, for the most part, largely due to the new culture of the staffroom being one of sharing the ups and downs of teaching:

*The staffroom where I work now is quite open about their teaching and there is a lot of checking in, which I didn't feel I got as much of in the first year... They have been good role models for me, because I am slowly accepting the idea that you don't have to be this stressed-out mess in order to be a good teacher, because they are much more relaxed than me and their work is amazing.*

As the cycle continued, her professional experimentation became more varied, and she began to take more risks in her practice.

The introduction of risk-taking and trial-and-error practices within her teaching repertoire was the most significant factor influencing Deanna's expectation-adjustment. Relying less on lesson planning meant relinquishing some of the control of her classroom practice, and she explained:

*... sometimes if I did had to improvise a little bit and maybe I would walk into a lesson and I hadn't got an amazing booklet to hand out or a sheet or whatever, it went really well... and I found that because I do know my subject well, sometimes lessons that I had spent less time on, went much better than the ones that I had really slaved over in my own personal time and that gave me more confidence in my ability to come up with something or tweak an activity or change the direction of a lesson in response to what the students were doing... it's not about every lesson going perfectly and it's not about control and controlling every element of the classroom because sometimes,*

*when I haven't had that control or I have let it go a little bit, the results have been really awesome.*

As a result, Deanna was encouraged to experiment further, and reflected that over time, her understandings of her role in the classroom changed significantly. An increased confidence in her ability meant being able to make changes 'on the fly'.

Moreover, seeing her unplanned lessons succeed meant a shift away from thinking of her planning and her teaching as the key variable in the classroom. This led, once more, to a change in her expectations of herself as a teacher:

*I was just possibly placing too much emphasis on what I would be doing in the classroom, and not thinking enough about getting the students to do the work in the classroom... I saw myself as a key variable as to how a lesson was going to go, and if they were going to learn what they needed to learn. And in doing that, I probably placed too much emphasis or was disregarding the many other things that come into play in whether a student is going to achieve the learning objective of the lesson. The teachers that I observed on prac, were great performers and they did a lot of explicit teaching and they were always at the front of the room... I have learned to know when to take a step back and put the focus on the student doing the work.*

The reflection that "it wasn't as important for me to be up there as I thought it was" was a strong indication that her focus had shifted from herself to the students. Alongside this was a recognition that to be a better teacher meant looking after herself, and spending her energy wisely. Her expectations about her feedback to students changed dramatically after seeing what other teachers considered to be adequate, and, after trialling this and seeing positive outcomes, she scaled back her marking hours, and became:

*...more efficient at planning and at marking by giving myself less time to do it, and trying to set rules about, well, you only get this amount of time to plan so you have got to get it done, and I don't think that the quality of my work has reduced as a result of that ... [It was] just really thinking about what the best use of my energy is – is it important that I make this flashy resource or I add a few more comments to that draft, or is it more important for me to get a good night's sleep and come into the room and be present in that way?*

Deanna's attitude to teaching slowly changed as she was exposed more to the opinions and culture of the new staffroom, and she began to change her own focus back to her personal life. She began to find time for family and exercise and to improve her work-life balance, and reflected that she felt "much healthier,

emotionally, than I did in my first year”. She was also offered permanency – confirming for her that she was, in fact, doing a good job.

Adjusting her expectations of her own teaching was difficult for Deanna, due mainly to the influence of other teachers. In her first year, a lack of feedback and collegial support led to her developing unsustainable work practices. Being a self-motivated, high achiever posed challenges when Deanna did not receive any evaluation on her performance or know when she was doing well. Now, she believes that a lack of tangible feedback is a critical issue for early-career teachers:

*I do think it [teaching] is romanticised, both obviously in popular culture, but also in the way that teachers talk about their teaching sometimes and some of the dialogue. And at university, you know, that idea that you're a good teacher if the kids are smiling and you have had an impact on their lives... is really quite a fluffy way to think about whether you're doing a good job or not. And sometimes you don't get that indication that you are doing a good job, and how do you even measure that, you know?*

The change of staffroom and relationships with other teachers in her second year meant that her need for feedback and recognition could be, in part, fulfilled. This allowed for significant development and growth, and Deanna adjusted her expectations of her own performance to be more realistic.

Deanna also reflected on what made her decide to continue in the profession in spite of challenges. Conscious of the alarming attrition rate of early-career teachers in Queensland, she concluded that:

*I don't think I am special, or different, or more resilient than anyone else. I do think that the people I have around me and the people I work with, particularly since that change in staffroom, has had a huge impact on what my perception of a good teacher is, and so it's not that I don't want to be a great teacher anymore – I still do – but that idea of what a good teacher is, has become much less narrow than it was originally and I think that has made a huge difference.*

## Erica's Narrative

Erica, a third year teacher at Cityside State High School, had a rough transition from her previous career in management in the corporate sector. She came to teaching in search of a career with meaning. Erica's expectations of herself in her previous role carried over to her new profession, as did a number of unsustainable habits.

Erica, a former project and information management consultant for a major mining company, was drawn to teaching after she found herself, mid-thirties, searching for purpose in her career. Erica had spent most of her working life earning an impressive salary which kept her in her in corporate sector for years after she had begun to feel tired and cynical. When Erica made the choice to take on the Graduate Diploma of Education, she was motivated by a search for a more "meaningful" profession:

*You didn't feel like you were impacting the world, instead you were adding to carbon... I would never have thought I would have worked for a big miner but here I was: a slave to the money like everybody else.... I did want a job that I thought added value.*

Secondary school teaching seemed like an appealing option for Erica: she believed that her strengths in managing people would surely make her an excellent teacher, not to mention having the school holidays for her to pursue her travelling passion. Erica was confident that she would adapt to the profession very well. She explained that:

*I thought that I would be alright at the job having come from a professional corporate background and I knew that I was good with people and good with communicating and good with being able to explain things to people.... I got very good marks through university and through prac, my feedback was really very good. I felt that it was a professional career that I would adapt to quite well... Then I got the job and just about died.*

Erica's initial expectations of herself in the role were potentially based on reasonable assumptions, and yet, in practice, they were ultimately unrealistic.

When Erica started her first contract at Westside State High School, she assumed that her professional skills would transfer seamlessly from her management role to teaching, which was not the case. As such, her early experimentation was fraught with frustration and disappointment in her own ability:

*I have quite high expectations of myself, and I think coming from a background where I was quite competent and more than competent in my roles, I knew what it was to do a good job. I didn't leave my previous professions because I was crap or couldn't do them or I wasn't sure what I was doing: I had succeeded in those.... I know what it is to be effective and efficient and productive and I was not operating at that capacity yet.... I just died in terms of trying to feel like I could get it all done and to do it at a level that was acceptable to myself.*

Erica's high expectations of her performance carried across from her success in her previous career. Erica became frustrated by how long her planning, marking and other administrative tasks were taking her, and she reflected that she did expect to be proficient straight away:

*It took over my life for six months. Yeah, it took every ounce of energy and everything... I hadn't expected it to do that. I thought I would be able to do it. I thought I'd be able to manage the job more efficiently to start with.... I'm a fast learner but it's taken longer than I thought.*

Not only did her prior success in her career define her personal expectations, but Erica also fell back into habits from her corporate career. Thus, during her early experimental phase, when overwhelmed by work, she responded by putting in long hours. Determined to get her tasks done, Erica stayed behind at school well into the night to complete work and reply to emails, which was a habit that carried over from her managerial roles:

*So I come from a corporate background where you got paid a salary - you did what you did. So if you're at work until ten, three in the morning, that's what you did. Like you just... that's what you do. I took that same attitude into teaching and so I just got the job done, but I think it was consistently overwhelming.... [my colleagues] would have helped pick up the slack, but I'm not the sort of person that likes to say I can't do what the job requires. I would just get it done.*

Thus, for Erica, "getting the job done" was as much about maintaining her pride as it was a habit. The way that her colleagues perceived her was of critical importance. This was also reflected in the pressure she put on herself to form immediate relationships within the school community, convinced of the value of networking:

*I think just that the first six months were just full-on in terms of understanding the system and understanding the school... and getting to know 120 or 130 people. Because for me relationships are really important, so making sure I fostered good relationships with staff and with kids was*

*important. So that's really draining as well as trying to learn all the curriculum and covering everything else.*

What is perhaps particularly interesting is the way in which the personal expectations carried over from her prior career permeated every aspect of Erica's new professional life – even her classroom relationships. She had assumed that this would be one of her strengths in teaching, as she had extensive experience managing teams:

*I can find common ground with most people and so I'm really good in a team environment and good to work with like that. I know that's one of my strengths is I can manage to find a way to work with most people. It's pretty rare to find someone I don't. So I expected that in the classroom as well.*

However, during her early experimental phase, she learned that classroom management was going to be a major hurdle for her. Prior to teaching, Erica had not been inside a school for twenty years. Her own experience as a high school student was a distant memory, and she did not have children of her own. Unlike the adult team environments she was used to, the classroom presented her with a particular challenge: there was often no mutual working relationship, and she found herself having to constantly supervise and micro-manage students. Unlike her former clients and colleagues, it seemed that she and her students were not always working towards the same goal:

*If I ask people at work to do something they do it. They might bitch and moan about it later, but they do the job. I don't have to sit over you for twenty minutes to make you write something and that's still something I struggle with, with teenagers. Like I said, that's probably been a really big adjustment.... I did underestimate the difference between children and adults.*

Thus, although she was used to managing others, Erica had not had any experience working with young people before her practicum experiences, and found this aspect of the role particularly exasperating. Her year eight students were not motivated to complete any work unless she was standing right beside them, and as a result, she began to not only dislike the students, but dislike herself as a teacher:

*I feel like I am doing no teaching and I'm just spending all day saying move over there, sit down, stop doing that, get on your chair, stand up, you're not swinging, you know, you're not getting on that chair anymore.... I would just spend days that I felt like I was nagging people to do things that they didn't like.... I found I didn't like the kids and thought, oh my God! I really do dislike you; what am I going to do with that?*

Her frustrations here are understandable, and as she began to reflect on the consequences of her professional practice, Erica was forced to confront her expectations of herself in the role. This was not what she had wanted, or expected, from herself as a teacher:

*I just felt like I was nagging people all day. I reflected on that again. If this is what it's like, I don't know that I can do this because I'm not happy being this sort of person.... I was hearing myself, wanting to go shut up, you sound like a screaming banshee.*

Instead of making a difference, Erica was struggling to find meaning in her role and was becoming worn-down by her students' behaviour.

Nevertheless, her colleagues, who had taught in more challenging contexts, often discussed their prior teaching experiences, and Erica increasingly found herself wondering if it was just her who was struggling to get her class under control. She explained that another teacher had “come from down Logan way – she was just like, oh my God, the kids are amazing here, and I'm like, are you kidding me? These kids are nuts”. Erica felt isolated, embarrassed that she was not coping with the student behaviour. This isolation was exacerbated by the fact that Erica had not been assigned a mentor teacher, and no experienced teachers, Heads of Department, or administration team members visited her room or checked on her progress in her first six months. She describes her Head of Department as “very remote” and “not present at all... I felt like there was nobody there checking what I was doing”.

Unlike her prior role, there was no transition program to ease her into the profession, or any performance management processes. As she continued to experience frustration inside and outside the classroom, she reflected on how a lack of communication and feedback impacted her professional judgment:

*You are alone in the classroom and you've only got your own feedback, like your own assessment of the environment.... you think, well I'm not doing a good job. Nobody's giving you any feedback.... I feel like I'm ripping off the kids because they didn't get the best teacher they could've had.*

Erica continued through cycles of experimentation, reflecting all the while on her own expectations and how she was measuring up to her own performance standards. She recalled feeling like she was “drowning” in tasks she felt were necessary, when in reality, it was “probably not necessarily what people around me were requiring”.



Her expectations of her own teaching were the only benchmarks for success she had, and she was not meeting them.

The late nights, frustrating student behaviour, and her own disappointment in herself reached a crescendo halfway through her first year of teaching, during a staff meeting. Teachers were reminded that their mid-year class data reviews were due, which was a task that Erica had not been told about. Tired from a late night of marking, and overwhelmed by the thought of yet another administrative task she would now have to rush through, she began to cry in front of her colleagues, much to her embarrassment:

*When everybody walked in, they were talking about data placemats – I had no idea, half the time things were all just going on. I was really overwhelmed and my Head of Department looked at me and went: right, so Erica, are you all right with that? And tears just came. [Two other teachers] took me out of the room and they were like, don't listen to all that bullshit! Right – this is what you do: sit down, here, cut and paste mine, Erica, just do this.... I'm like, this is so embarrassing, I never cry at work.*

The humiliation of this moment led Erica to evaluate her situation critically. It was becoming clear to Erica that the rules of the game were radically different from those of her previous career, and she was seriously considering leaving the profession at this point. She had gone from being self-sufficient, capable and celebrated in her previous role, to feeling incompetent and invisible in teaching, experiencing a distinct lack of feedback and direction.

Not knowing what else to do, Erica once more drew upon her prior management experience. She made an action plan, drawing on what she knew to be successful management practices. Recalling her motivation to come into the profession, she noted that “part of why I did choose teaching was for a work-life balance”, and as such, for her own survival, it was necessary to adjust her own performance standards for it to be sustainable, long term.

Initially, she made a rule to allow herself two years in teaching before she would be allowed to give up. From undertaking various projects and roles in the past, she knew that it was important to give herself time to adjust and learn the ropes:

*I knew that I needed to give the job that long before I could make an appropriate assessment about whether this was the right job for me for the*

*next period. So I gave myself some timeframes around it and let myself feel like that but knowing that, hoping that it would – not hoping but expecting that it would – change, and if it didn't change then I would go and change jobs.*

Erica knew that making an appropriate assessment about whether teaching was a good fit for her required evidence and data – and she did not have enough of this after only six months in teaching.

The most important change, however, came from the addition of mentoring relationships to her practice. As a former manager, Erica knew the value of mentoring. By now, Erica was only too aware of the impacts that the lack of formalised performance reviews or feedback mechanisms were having. As such, Erica sought out mentors to assist her in the role. Being very aware of management styles, she gravitated towards mentors with whom she knew she could work effectively:

*Allison\* was so good to me in terms of, she would just say, “Erica, do you know this is coming up? When you're ready, ask me about that. Okay, do you know you need to fill in these reports and there are just a few things, so just when you're ready, you come and ask me”. She project managed me... and I literally couldn't have done it without her.*

*Deirdre\* is so good here, because she's so structured and organised... That I appreciate, so that style. Whilst it can be micro-managing to some people, I can actually work with her management style quite well.*

She assigned herself a mentor teacher at Westside, and also at Cityside State High School when she began her contract there in her second year of teaching. Her mentors were experienced senior teachers in leadership positions, and Erica took the initiative to schedule regular meetings with them to discuss her own development, outside of school hours. She asked the other teachers to come into her room and assess her skills, and provide her with feedback:

*I drove probably my staff room mad, because I would ask questions though, like that was part of my... you know, coping skill, to be able to ask what I needed to know and to talk about what was going on in the classroom.*

Developing productive relationships with fellow staff was integral in changing Erica's attitude towards the profession, and, by extension, her expectations of her own performance. She realised over time which tasks were more important to prioritise.

As she progressed in her second year, Erica began to relax into the role, learning to trust in the imperfect and unpredictable nature of the teaching profession:

*I think as I've matured... I have relaxed in and got more confident in a certain amount of going with the flow and that, and trusting myself and trusting the kids and that we'll be fine and we can work this out. Yeah, that's a big change I've noticed, that I haven't been so stressed about knowing what I was planning with every minute.*

Previously, Erica had been consumed by planning and paperwork, afraid that she would run out of material in her lessons. Unable to sustain this long-term, she eventually began to become less structured in her approach, out of necessity. This approach became embedded into Erica's practice as she continued through the cycles of professional experimentation. In time, she began to demonstrate a preference for "winging it" in her lessons, realising over time that that "that's when the better teaching stuff happens, when you can have some real flexibility and creativity". Becoming more comfortable to "allow whatever might come up from the class", she began to relax her control of her lessons.

Through trial-and-error and 'going with the flow', Erica's later cycles of professional experimentation led to positive outcomes. She adjusted her personal expectations accordingly, allowing herself to become less controlling of the variables in her classroom, and noted that with an increase in confidence, she has let go of "having to be perfect at everything".

At the end of her two-year teaching trial, Erica is now enjoying the profession and has decided to continue on. She is now a permanent staff member at Cityside and has adjusted her expectations of herself to more realistically reflect the demands of the profession.

As Erica sees it, there is a trap for early-career teachers, in that "it's just one of those jobs, there's always more you can do. At some point you need to work out that breaking-even point". However, as Erica's narrative demonstrates, without any feedback, finding that "breaking-even point" is an accomplishment in itself for an early-career teacher.

## Scott's Narrative

Scott, a primary-trained teacher, came into the teaching profession with absolute confidence in his own ability after a number of successful practicums. He soon realised that the responsibilities and capabilities that were expected of him as a teacher were vastly different from what he had experienced during his practicums, and he struggled to perform to his own standards.

Scott had always wanted to become a teacher. A naturally patient and kind-hearted person, Scott possessed a number of qualities that made him well-suited to working with children. He followed in the footsteps of his mother – also a primary school teacher – and entered the profession with much enthusiasm in his early twenties. For Scott, to become a teacher was a privilege and he held teachers in high regard:

*You see teachers and you go, they're just phenomenal. They're just up there and they're rattling this lesson off and they're just amazing... coming into the profession, you think that teachers are just these robots that just don't make mistakes. Their lessons always run on time and their timing is perfectly spot on.*

Scott experienced great success on his practicums, gaining outstanding results through his hard work, and feeling every bit the inspiring, esteemed teacher he wanted to become. He reflected that he felt very excited, and entirely prepared, to teach:

*I felt like I was a good teacher because I'd always had exceptional prac reports and things like that. That led me to believe that, yeah, I can do this. I had this image of myself.... my expectation for myself was I immediately wanted to come in and be that respected, experienced teacher that I'd been with on my pracs.... I think personally, I came into the profession maybe having a false idea of my skills as a teacher.*

Scott began his first teaching contract straight after he graduated, in year four at Northside State School. His expectations of himself as a teacher were firmly grounded in some basic principles. He expected that he would be the kind of teacher that the students would like, as had been the case during his practicums. He expected that he would be a kind and caring teacher, as well as organised, using engaging, good-quality resources every lesson. He would be the source of all knowledge and be able to answer every question. Scott's expectations of himself as an early-career

teacher were very high, but due to his early influences and teaching experiences, it was perhaps not surprising why he felt this way.

In his first semester of teaching, however, he felt let down and resentful that his practicums had not prepared him for “real” teaching. He reflected on the moment that his expectations of himself were first confronted – at nine o’clock in the morning on first day of school:

*I remember getting into the class on the first day, standing there and the kids all had their stationery boxes out. I just went, what do I do? Because there was no preparation for that moment. You get prepared to teach in front of the class but you don't get prepared for all the organisational parts of running a classroom and I guess, just all the procedures and things like that.... Most of the pracs don't happen in first term. They don't happen on the first week, first term. So you don't see any of that.*

For Scott, the confronting experience of the first day was a sign of things to come. As he explained, although he was ready to teach a lesson, he did not have any experience setting up the routines, rules and expectations of a classroom. The students had arrived on the first day, each with a cardboard box of school supplies, which he had not been expecting. He had not even started to think about how he wanted the students to label, use, and store their stationery and notebooks.

As soon as he had started teaching, Scott had immediately felt overwhelmed by the pressure to perform and manage every aspect of classroom life. Things has been very different during his practicums:

*You just came in and you could fit everything in because someone else had planned and organised everything for you. So you could just waltz in, teach your lesson and you felt like, that was pretty straightforward.... Their activities are generally organised. You might have to create some but you have a template on what to run by. Then having to actually do it all yourself and there's all this work and you've got to have reading groups. You've got to have maths groups... You sit there and go, well how am I doing this? Where do I start? What do I do?*

Scott explained that most of his struggles during the early experimental phase were related to his classroom management and organisation. He quickly gained an appreciation of the taken-for-granted aspects of his practicum classes as he began to realise that many of his successes as a preservice teacher were a result of pre-established classroom routines.

In particular, the most difficult realisation was that he had been so unconscious of his own inabilities. He had genuinely assumed that he would excel straight away and was distressed when he did not meet his own expectations:

*There was so much that I wasn't necessarily ready for... I was not aware of to become ready for. It just felt like I was taking a step forward and two steps back all the time trying to catch up because I saw these routines that had been set up in these classrooms that I'd been in on prac and I wanted to set them all up straight away and have them running like clockwork from day one.*

Scott's approach to classroom management was also based on his positive practicum experiences, where he had enjoyed happy relationships with well-behaved classes:

*I've come from... really good classrooms and the kids were well behaved. There was that respect between teacher and students. They've obviously worked through that for the first part of the year and I was unsure of how to actually get to that stage with them.... I guess I was naïve in the fact that I thought I'd give the students an instruction once and they'd get it and it would just all happen.... I didn't really understand the fact that it takes teachers weeks or months even to get these processes to be entrenched and students to understand what they're supposed to do when.*

He became stressed, and confused, when students did not listen or follow instructions. Compared to his preservice experiences, his classroom now seemed out of control. The student behaviour meant that class time was wasted, which made Scott panic about getting the work done. Recognising the negative consequences of his current practice, he responded by adjusting his planning, attempting to regain control of the class.

As he continued to fall further behind, his practice became increasingly routine and rule-governed. His rigid approach to teaching meant that many of the creative risks he took whilst undertaking his practicums ceased. Instead, he focused on the content and getting everything done:

*Because I was so worried about the kids actually getting the work done because I was cramming so much in, that I didn't take the time to actually show them. Me talking, I felt like I was talking a lot and then I wanted to get them doing something. It was very stilted and there was no real flow because there was me talking and then them doing. Me talking. Them doing. It wasn't that gradual release.*

His planning was crowded with content as he lacked the perspective to know what was, and was not important for the students to learn. Although Scott recognised that this was not quality teaching as he has envisaged it, he did not want to waste any class time, lest he provide opportunities for students to be off-task. He explains that “everything that I had done and done well flew out the window because I was so stressed, so worried about all these different things that were going on that it was overwhelming”. For Scott, who had been so passionate about the profession, this was an extraordinary disappointment.

As he attempted to recreate his ideal images of himself as a teacher, he also began to feel drained by the time he was spending on school work. Scott spent countless hours making flash cards, wall charts and games, developing physical resources like those he had seen in the classrooms of the teachers he admired:

*I thought everything had to be laminated because this is what the classrooms were like. Things were laminated. But I failed to really think and realise that these teachers had been teaching for ten, twelve years, so that accumulated over ten, twelve years.... Staying up till midnight laminating and cutting things out, at that stage I could have been putting that into resting for one... or actually doing things that would have a bigger gain.*

Soon enough, Scott became conscious that he was spending seven nights a week working on schoolwork, which he had not anticipated. He was forced – yet again – to confront the fact that he was not the teacher he thought he was going to be:

*I thought that I would be able to handle the teaching workload a lot better, and then realising that I was losing all my weekends to working and becoming run down and realising just how much effort and, I guess, work goes into outside of the nine until three. So I found the biggest challenges I found was realising that not everything that I had in my mind and that what I thought a great teacher would do was actually possible in the time that you get in the class with the students.*

By the end of the first term, Scott felt exhausted by teaching. He was aware that his students were not engaged, but felt ill-equipped to change this around. He missed having another teacher in the room to debrief with after his lessons, and desperately wondered if he was doing well. He had not been given any feedback since he began and felt very alone at work:

*I guess teaching is a bit of an isolated profession in the fact that when you're in front of the class, it's you and the class. You don't really have that person*

*there to bounce things off because you're in your room. There's no one else there except for the kids.*

As a result, by the end of Scott's first term of teaching, he had developed some critical beliefs about his own practice. His expectations of himself as a teacher had not changed, and remained consistently high, but he had become conscious that he was not meeting them. He was tired all of the time and felt inefficient:

*I had this ideal image and when I started making mistakes or getting caught up and forgetting little parts to do, I suddenly lost, kind of... I thought I was no good. I was going, these kids are going to just think I'm absolutely useless. They won't respect me and they won't like me and all that self-doubt started coming through. I guess that comes down to me having high expectations of myself, which probably as a first-year teacher were unrealistic.*

This had some serious consequences for Scott. He had developed negative patterns of thinking, and had become disillusioned with the profession. As a person who had invested so much of himself in the profession, he was only experiencing disappointment, and he started to wonder whether he really wanted to be a teacher, after all:

*I felt very swamped and overwhelmed. I went through a big phase where I would come home and seriously consider changing profession.... It wasn't because I wasn't trying or didn't care. It was just the fact that there was so much on my plate that I lost sight of what good things I was doing as a teacher.*

Thinking reflectively, Scott realised he would need to seek help if he was to continue in the profession.

Scott began to look for ways of accessing support within his school, and decided to make time each week to see his Head of Curriculum, who had offered her support previously. He reflected that the mentoring sessions with the Head of Curriculum started to build his confidence up once more, as he realised he was not alone and that he was, in fact, doing well. The addition of feedback was essential in changing Scott's attitude and allowing for positive growth to start:

*... each Thursday I'd go and spend an hour with one of the other beginning teachers with our head of curriculum, who was a lovely lady and she helped us, bent over backwards to help us, and just working through strategies and differentiation... She would sit down and go through some things. Through those meetings and sessions we did with her, it basically started building my confidence in that I don't have to fit everything in.*



The recurring sense of failure and disillusionment had been very disempowering for Scott, and he reflected that these mentoring sessions made him feel a sense of achievement and self-worth. He noted:

*It wasn't her telling me, it was more me suggesting and her providing feedback on those suggestions that I made. That helped me grow as well because having those professional conversations about it and it gave me some ownership over what I was doing in the classroom as well, because I was essentially making the decision. I was running it by her and she would go, yep, great, or have you thought about this? It was instilling that confidence.*

Scott explained that as he heard other perspectives on his teaching and his ideas, he began to feel the same sense of accomplishment that he had whilst on practicum: he could do it, he had good ideas, and he was an effective teacher. These “collegial conversations” meant that began to realise that his initial, lofty ideals about the teaching profession were misguided. Teachers could, and did, make mistakes:

*Once I started teaching and having those conversations were really good and really beneficial and made me start realising, yeah I'm probably not as bad as what I think I'm going. I'm doing an alright job. I can't necessarily be blamed for a lot of these things that have happened. It happens to teachers all the time.... realising that other teachers were in the same position that I was made me feel that, okay maybe this is what it is actually like and that what I'm doing is not actually that horrible.*

Another consequence of having these new connections was that he realised that he had been basing his ideas about quality teaching on teachers he had admired, but he was ultimately trying to be someone he was not in the classroom. Scott purchased a journal and decided to put his reflective skills to use. In particular, Scott found that once he started to actively reflecting on his teaching practice, he began to make changes:

*I was picking and choosing bits and pieces from everywhere. I think that really ended up causing a bit of a problem and I had to sit down and go, what am I good at? What are my strengths? What are my weaknesses? And how can I be the best teacher that I can be?*

Actively reflecting on his practice, he began to scale back the workload in his classes and spend time developing the students’ skills. One change he noticed was that he began to focus less on himself as the centre of attention in the room:

*I probably spoke and talked too much to the kids and didn't get them to do.... I guess it was really self-centred, my idea at the start of teaching, where the teacher was the source of knowledge.... I stopped thinking of myself and how I was fitting in and then flipped it around to the students and started thinking, right, how are they feeling when they are coming into the classroom? That was a good change, I think. It took the emphasis off how I was feeling and maybe overthinking my own teaching and it flipped it back to how I could help them.*

Scott began to change his lesson structure. He wanted to allow for more discussion between students and time for student activities, shifting away from his prior focus which had been, in his own words, “how much information I've got to jam down their throats in an hour lesson”:

*At that stage I went, right I've got to change how I'm actually structuring my lessons. What activities can they do that were going to help them? Because I probably got them doing activities that didn't actually help them at all.... was laminating cards for kids really going to help them learn?*

Scott also noted that his expectations of himself in terms of behaviour management changed significantly once he began to take the focus off himself. Again, he began to think more about what the students needed, not just what he thought they would like:

*I realised that this nice, caring teacher is important but it's not always the best strategy or you can't use that strategy all the time.... You can still be liked, but be firm. Generally kids might like you more, as long as you're fair about it.... I found that modified my expectation of what a good teacher was drastically.*

Overall, shifting the focus from himself to the students was the most important change he made in his first year, and the most critical factor in adjusting his expectations of himself as a teacher. Scott explained that, through reflection, he realised:

*.... The classroom shouldn't be about the teacher. It should be about the students. I think once you realise that's what your role is, that you can adapt your expectations of what your role is for the students that you have.*

Scott was offered a contract at Cityside State High School in his second year of teaching, teaching year seven. He had been recommended for this position, and he knew this meant his hard work had been noticed and was being talked about. For Scott, this was a significant boost to his confidence and he explained that:

*[Being offered a position at another school] made me feel like maybe I was doing something right or I was on the right path.... it made me feel like, yes I was a proficient in the classroom and that teachers aren't these robots that stand up the front. You can make a mistake and still be a good teacher.*

Having the confidence now to take risks again meant that his practice became less rule-governed and more flexible. At the start of his second year of teaching, he felt in control. When the students arrived with their cardboard boxes of stationery on the first day, this time, he was ready.

Scott has continued his reflective practice and incorporates elements into his daily life. He believes that setting time aside, just for reflection, is the best way to continue to improve in teaching:

*I'll reflect constantly on the day, what worked well, what didn't work well. I actually get paid out at the gym.... I'll lock myself in the disabled bathroom, sit on the bench, sit on the bench in the disabled bathroom and just decompress from my day.... They [my friends] all give me hell about it but that's where I'll go and reflect and think about the day.... Sometimes I'll even make notes in my diary... just to write down what I need to change.*

For Scott, his initial respect for teachers and the profession has not changed – he still believes that “if teachers necessarily don't want to become the best teacher that they can, I don't think that they should necessarily be a teacher... it's too important of a role to take for granted”. What has changed is Scott’s understanding about what constitutes quality teaching, and what he expects of himself in the role.

However, Scott still resents the system that nearly made him resign from the profession he is so passionate about, and he reflected that he felt poorly prepared for the realities of teaching. As he summed up:

*Uni prepares you to teach a lesson in front of a class. It doesn't necessarily prepare you to be a teacher. That's my take on it and there will be other opinions out there. I think that's the biggest thing. You need to be able to change your idea coming out of university because otherwise you're not going to become a teacher.*

### **4.3 Summary of Findings**

The narratives in this chapter each told a story of the adjustment of personal expectations of early-career teachers. Each of the narratives addressed the research questions of the study: (1) how do teachers adjust their personal expectations during the early-career years? and (2) what conditions influence the adjustment of personal expectations? The narratives highlighted processes of growth and change as a result of professional experimentation, but also revealed personal struggle, disappointment and disillusionment. As such, they also shed light on the conditions and contextual factors that paved the way for the adjustment of their personal expectations.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### 5.1 Overview of Discussion

This chapter includes a discussion of the participants' narratives presented in Chapter 4, addressing the two research questions: (1) how do teachers adjust their personal expectations during the early-career years? and (2) what conditions influence the adjustment of personal expectations?

Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth is used to frame the analysis, providing a core structure for the discussion. The transitions between each of the domains, and the processes that allow for these transitions to take place, guide the direction of the discussion. As such, the themes emerging from the narratives are situated within this framework, and discussed with reference to relevant literature.

Framing the discussion in this manner is a purposeful decision. In following phases within a cycle of development and change, the discussion follows the journeys of the participants as they adjusted their expectations over time. As such, the discussion is temporal, as it progresses through phases in sequence, and highlights common themes within each phase. Ultimately, this structure foregrounds the research questions as it maps the actual *process* of expectation-adjustment, and allows for a complex and nuanced analysis of patterns of change within the narratives.

It is also worth mentioning, at this point, the remarkable parallels between the narratives, without which the discussion could not be structured sequentially. Although each participant's narrative is unique and distinctive, the processes in which participants adjusted their expectations were decidedly similar, as was the order in which specific shifts occurred. It should also be noted that, although the participants' narratives were analysed alongside one another in the sequence, the actual time taken for each participant to arrive at (and progress through) each phase varied widely. This was determined by a range of factors: from disruption to class timetables, to movement between schools, to gaps between teaching contracts.

Addressing the specific impacts of such interferences, however, is beyond the scope of this study.

The discussion begins with an analysis of the initial personal expectations held by participants in Section 5.2, situated within the Personal Domain. Following this, the discussion examines the participants' early experimentation inside and outside the classroom (Section 5.3), identifying patterns in the way in which participants approached planning and organisation, demonstrated persistence, and attempted to control variables in their work. The absence of positive external factors (Section 5.4) is then addressed, highlighting the lack of meaningful performance feedback, evident across all narratives. The next phase, marked by a turning point or significant change (Section 5.5), emphasises the influence of external factors. Secondary and subsequent professional experimentation cycles (Section 5.6) are then discussed and analysed, with reference to new habits such as risk-taking, use of trial-and-error processes, and a shift in focus to students' needs. Finally, the adjusted expectations of the participants are discussed (Section 5.7), their expectations within the Personal Domain having being influenced by the other domains and processes of enactment and reflection. The chapter concludes with a summary of the discussion (Section 5.8)

A modified version of Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth appears in each sub-section, highlighting the domains and processes being discussed during each phase. Active domains and processes are highlighted in green, whilst those that are notably inoperative during a phase are indicated in red.

## **5.2 Initial Personal Expectations**

In evaluating the processes of adjusting personal expectations, the participants' initial expectations of themselves in the role provide a starting point from which all change occurs. The participants in this study came to the teaching profession with a variety of expectations of themselves in a teaching role. These are what Cole and Knowles (1993) referred to as their personal expectations – their “images of themselves as teachers” and “ideals and aspirations about teaching” (p. 459). Nevertheless, in analysing these initial personal expectations of the

participants, a number of themes emerged, which are discussed here with reference to the Personal Domain in Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth. The Personal Domain addresses teacher knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002). It is within this domain, then, that these initial expectations lie, as they are underpinned by teachers' knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about themselves in a teaching role. Of course, as Clarke and Hollingsworth argue, through the cycle, the Personal Domain is consistently re-shaped over time.

Figure 5 highlights the Personal Domain within the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth.

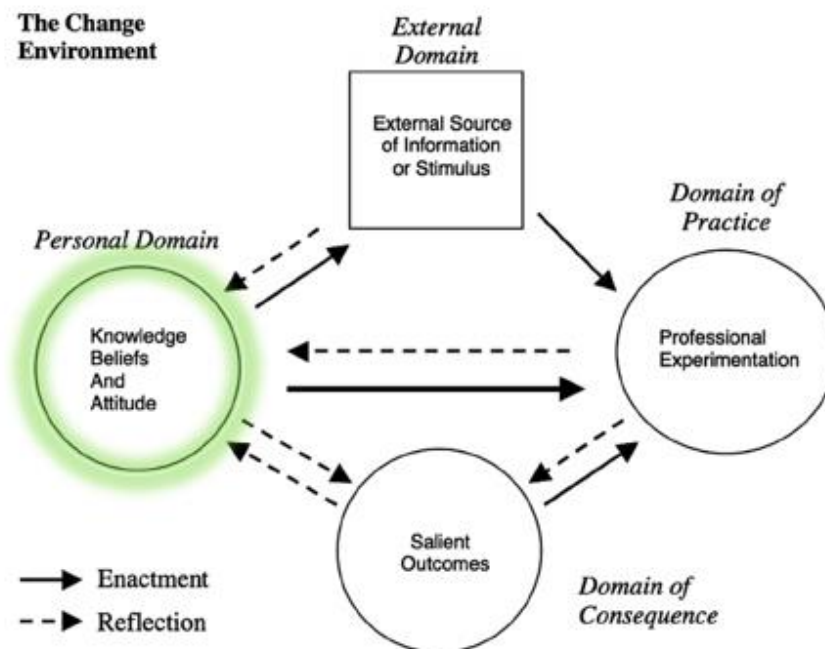


Figure 5. Adapted version of the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth. Participants' initial expectations of themselves fall within the Personal Domain, indicated by the green outline. Adapted from "Elaborating a model of teacher professional growth," by D. Clarke and H. Hollingsworth, 2002, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18, p. 951.

Lauriala and Kukkonen's (2005) notion of an ideal self was relevant here, as, in shaping their professional identities, each teacher had clear ideas about the types of teachers they saw themselves becoming – images of themselves in the role. However, these expectations of themselves in a teaching role were, in many ways, highly idealistic, like those of participants in other studies (van Rijswijk et al., 2016;

Delamarter, 2015; Le Maistre & Paré, 2010). Another trend reflected by the literature – the tendency for early-career teacher expectations often to emphasise relational and emotional aspects of teaching – was also evident (Manuel & Brindley, 2005; Olsen, 2008). For Erica and Charlie, who came to teaching in a career-change, the idea of making a difference in the lives of young people largely shaped their expectations of themselves in the role. This redemptive ideal, whilst highly idealistic, shaped their beliefs about what kind of teacher they would be in a significant way. For Erica, it meant finding purpose outside the clinical corporate world, and for Charlie, it was about reaching out to the disengaged youth he had once been. As such, a positive relationship with students was an important part of Erica’s image of herself as a teacher, as it was for Charlie, who wanted to avoid being a “stern presence”. Making a difference was also a key motivation for Scott, who looked up to his own teachers at school and then during his practicums as role models. These findings are similar to those of Cook (2009) and Lassila and Uitto (2016). For Scott, being a high-quality, inspirational and knowledgeable teacher was what counted, and he wanted to immediately become the respected, proficient teacher he had observed during his practicum experiences.

For both Deanna and Scott in particular, their personal expectations were largely influenced by their own successful practicum performance. Deanna’s expectation of herself as proficient within her teaching context was not surprising; after all, she had just completed a practicum at the same school. She already held a positive attitude towards the school and returning to teach there instilled confidence in her. Not only were her beliefs about herself as a teacher based upon her own successful practicum, but also upon her high-performing supervising teachers, who she saw as being successful within the Cityside context. This provides a contrast with other research (Herbert & Worthy, 2001; McCormack et al., 2006) that suggests that early-career teachers experience greater success if they return to teach in similar contexts to those they were students or preservice teachers. However, in Deanna’s case, this caused further complications, which is discussed in more detail when looking at her professional experimentation. Scott, similarly, expected himself to be as successful in his first year of teaching as he was during his practicums, and also attempted to copy or adapt the teaching practices of his supervising teachers. The positive feedback about his classroom teaching and lesson preparation meant that



Scott established high expectations of himself in the role, but Scott reflected that his practicums did not prepare him for school life, and in particular, the daily routines and management practices of the classroom. Scott and Deanna's experiences, in particular, are reminiscent of Lortie's (1975) *apprenticeship of observation* – that is, the building of expectations of what it is to be a teacher, based on years of being a student. In this case, it is not only watching teachers whilst a school student, but being a student teacher and observing teachers during practicum.

For all participants, their exposure to the realities of the profession during practicum had done little to destabilise their high expectations of themselves in the role, reinforcing these even when they had experienced challenges during their practicum experiences – echoing studies showing that practicum experiences tend not to destabilise idealistic expectations of future performance (Ezer et al., 2010; Maaranen et al., 2016). In contrast to the other participants' successful practicums, for instance, Charlie's preservice teaching experiences were not positive and he struggled significantly with behaviour management. Nevertheless, these experiences still reinforced his existing expectations of himself in the role, as he attributed his failure to the practicum school context, which, he reasoned, did not fit his teaching approach. Similarly, other studies (Cook et al., 2002; Flores & Day, 2006; Pittard, 2003) suggest that preservice teachers maintain their images of themselves of teachers, in spite of schooling contexts that may challenge these ideals. Like the preservice teachers in Pittard's (2003) study, Charlie was "biding time" until the time when he would have his own class, where he could do his "own thing" (p. 19).

For Charlie and Erica, their expectations of their own performance in teaching were also influenced by their prior career experiences. Erica's success in her prior corporate career had been built upon her excellent communication and management skills, and she had assumed that these skills would transfer to teaching – as she noted, "I had succeeded [in my previous professions]... I know what it is to be effective and efficient and productive". Her early expectations of herself in the role, including her relationships, organisation and management practices, were formed around workplace experiences in which she had been empowered and efficient. Similarly, Charlie's expectations of himself in a role were based on his positive and rewarding experiences while working with students as an artist-in-residence in schools. Although it would seem that Charlie's prior experience was

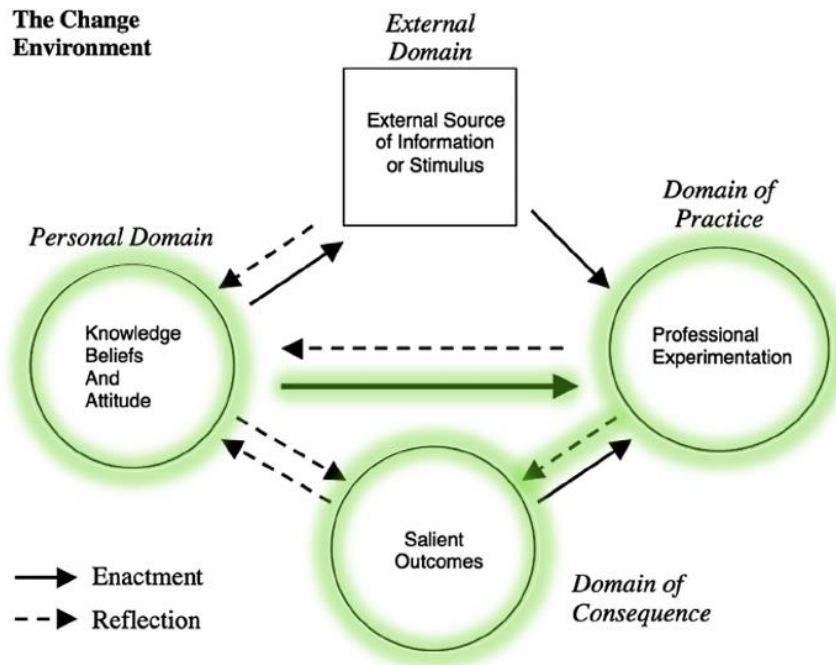
closely aligned to the teaching context, his role was markedly different. He could be “totally creative”, and his “aura” as a non-teacher visitor to the classroom naturally captivated the students’ interest. As an artist, Charlie had been a different type of teacher, however his initial expectations of himself as a classroom teacher were based upon this ideal – reminiscent of the former tutor in Olsen’s (2008) study with aspirations of being fun and popular with students. Thus, Charlie’s early expectations were grounded in a teaching philosophy – in which students would not view him as an authority figure and he could express total creativity – which did not align with the school context he was entering.

### **5.3 Primary Experimentation and Salient Outcomes**

The participants’ early experimentation, both inside and outside of the classroom, are discussed here with reference to the Domain of Practice (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002). This domain reflects all attempts to introduce and establish methods or procedures to their professional practice. Clarke and Hollingsworth’s (2002) framework suggests that teacher beliefs and attitudes (Personal Domain), are fundamental in influencing experimentation. Furthermore, this experimentation produces outcomes, seen in the Domain of Consequence. These outcomes can be concrete and measurable, but in many cases they are in the form of new understandings about their practice – in other words, a lesson is learned. The degree to which such outcomes are positive or negative rely on the teachers’ own perception of their experimentation as a success or a failure. Figure 6 illustrates this process occurring within the Interconnected Model of Teacher Professional Growth.

All four participants experienced hardship during their early professional experimentation, as a number of common issues emerged which had stemmed from their initial personal expectations. All participants acknowledged that long working hours and a lack of balance in their lives characterised their early practice. For Erica, this was intrinsically tied to her own personal expectations, coming from a corporate background. As she explained, she took the same attitude towards teaching as she had in her prior role, and just “[got] the job done”, regardless of how long it took. Erica found herself working well into the night, replying to emails, planning lessons, and marking. Her experience is an interesting parallel with Anthony and Ord’s (2008) study of change-of-career teachers. Like the participants in their study, Erica

found it difficult to “accept less than perfection in lesson preparation, marking or instruction” (p. 370). Compared with the defined performance indicators of the corporate world, the quality and quantity of work expected in teaching seemed ambiguous to Erica.



*Figure 6: Adapted version of the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth. Active processes, highlighted in green, demonstrate the influence of the Personal Domain on the Domain of Practice. Salient outcomes are determined through reflecting on professional experimentation. Adapted from “Elaborating a model of teacher professional growth,” by D. Clarke and H. Hollingsworth, 2002, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18, p. 951.*

The pressure of planning lessons and developing materials was also felt by both Deanna and Scott, who were both determined to create and use original, innovative activities and resources in their classrooms. Like the early-career teachers in Hamman et al.’s (2010) and Gallant and Riley’s (2014) studies, being creative and innovative was central to their conception of quality teaching. For primary school teacher Scott, this also meant making his classroom look like those of experienced teachers, and he worked to ensure that he had a repertoire of colourful, educational laminated resources, without considering that these had taken other teachers years to develop. Deanna, also having the belief that quality teachers make all of their own resources, invested time in developing her own, original resources despite the availability of existing materials, just as she had done during her practicum. She also

worked long hours to provide her senior students with extensive feedback, reflecting her staffroom's culture of personal sacrifice for the students' benefit. Deanna felt the additional pressure of being evaluated by her former supervising teacher, and so was reluctant to change any element of her former practice for which she had received praise. An inflexible, teacher-centred focus is therefore also evident in Deanna's early experimentation. She observed that her preservice supervisors were "great performers" whose approach was teacher-centred, and she had become accustomed to this style and uncomfortable with turning the responsibility for learning over to the students. This low-risk, highly-structured practice characterised her early teaching, drawing a parallel with findings by Kagan (1992) and Yuan and Lee (2015).

Scott also attempted to control most of the variables in his classroom. His high expectations were challenged when he started to recognise that his practicum had sheltered him from many of the complexities of teaching. Reminiscent of the teacher in Tait's (2008) study, in his early experimental phase, Scott struggled to establish routines, rules and procedures that provided structure in the classroom, having not witnessed these practices during his field experiences. Scott's expectation that he would have these processes running from the first day led to confusion and disappointment, and he felt that his classroom was unmanageable and out-of-control. Within the Domain of Consequence, his teaching became highly controlled and constrained, reflecting a similar transition to the participants in Flores and Day's (2006) and Ruohotie-Lyhty's (2013) studies. He attempted to push students through the content, allowing very little time for discussion or modelling of skills. Ultimately, Scott did not have high expectations that the students would, or could learn independently and without explicit teacher direction.

Low expectations of students was a theme that also emerged in Erica's narrative. She expected, because of her excellent communication skills, that she would not experience behaviour management issues. Instead, she found herself struggling to control class behaviour, spending a significant proportion of her day "nagging" students through explicit direction, telling them to "move over there, sit down, stop doing that, get on your chair, stand up". She became weary with micro-managing teenagers who were not motivated by her logical reasoning, and within the Domain of Consequence, a reflection on her practice led to frustration and dissatisfaction with herself in the role. Charlie, similarly, experienced behaviour

management issues in his early professional experimentation, as he attempted to bring to life a vision of himself as a non-authoritarian teacher. Partly motivated by philosophical beliefs about education, and partly by a fear of failure, Charlie avoided teacher-directed practice and instead adopted a permissive approach. However, he also became highly stressed when student behaviour deteriorated to the point where he dreaded going to class.

Within the Domain of Practice, Scott, Deanna and Erica's early professional experimentation was low-risk, rule governed and teacher-centred. In equating Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) model with Berliner's early developmental model, we can see that this phase is akin to Berliner's *novice* stage, an inflexible phase characterised by an adherence to routine and procedures. Similarly to the early-career teachers in Flores and Day's (2006) study, the participants' practice became "more routine, more rule governed and less creative" (p. 230) as their initial expectations were confronted.

It may seem that Charlie stands out as having a contrasting approach. Rather than attempting to control all variables in the classroom, he instead tolerated behaviour that was unruly and out-of-control as he attempted to create a flexible, student-centred learning space. However, upon analysing the narratives, it becomes clear that Charlie's experiences are not so contradictory. Just like Scott, Deanna and Erica, Charlie was attempting to enact a vision of himself as an ideal teacher, despite finding himself in a situation that was incompatible with this vision (Cook, 2009; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; van Rijswijk et al., 2016). For Charlie, recreating this ideal meant resisting becoming an authority figure and instead facilitating learning through unstructured, creative practice.

Although her classroom practice likely looked very different from Charlie's, Deanna was also persisting with her original ideas despite challenges. She was determined to be the prodigious early-career teacher others perceived her as during her practicums. For her, classroom control was about ensuring that her students were given every chance to succeed, regardless of the time and effort required on her part. Scott's structured, teacher-centred approach also reflected his early ideals of himself as a teacher, in particular his desire to be the source of all knowledge and influence in the classroom. Erica, similarly, was attempting to recreate a vision of herself as a

capable and confident people-manager, as she had been in her prior careers. Her attempts, however, manifested in a restrictive, authoritarian classroom climate. It would seem that, in spite of their varied experiences, all participants struggled during early professional experimentation to negotiate their “idealised views of pupils and an optimistic, oversimplified picture of classroom practice” (Kagan, 1992, p. 154). By attempting to “make their work match their personal vision of how it should be” (Day, 1999, p. 59), the participants in this study were challenged by the outcomes of their early professional practice. Cast in terms of professional identity, all four participants at this stage could be seen to be beginning to recognise the tension between their ideal and actual selves (Lauriala & Kukkonen, 2005).

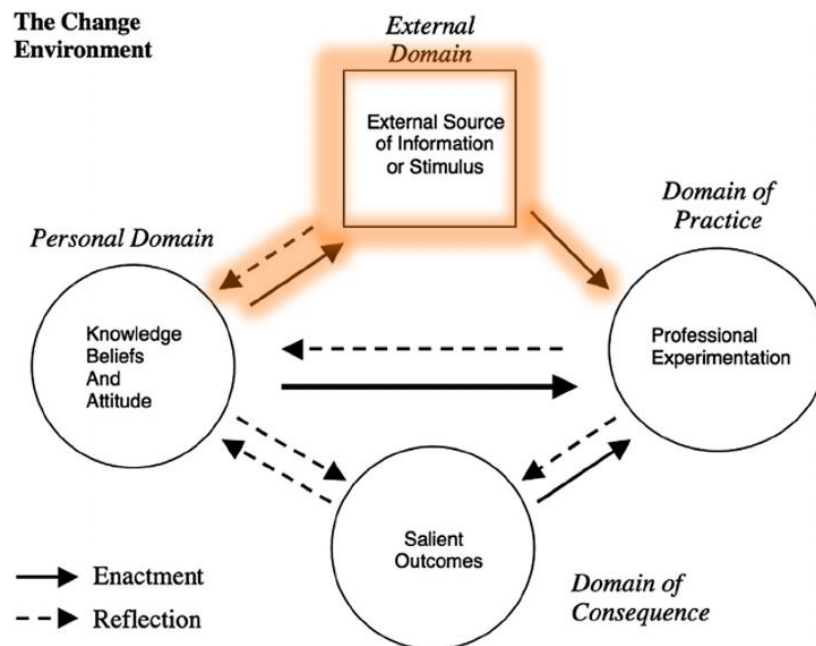
It is important, at this point, to address whether the participants’ expectations of their performance were, in fact, ‘shattered’. This nomenclature is common in the body of literature surrounding early-career teacher expectations. “Shattered expectations” were referred to in Cole and Knowles’ (1993) early work on teacher expectations, where it was argued that the images an early-career teacher has of their own performance “shatter against the hard realities and complexities” of the role (p. 459). Similarly, Friedman (2000) likens the process being described here as a “rude awakening from an idealistic dream and the shattering of expectations” (p. 598). Nevertheless, it is vital to note a crucial difference in the findings of this study, highlighted through looking at the process as a developmental cycle. The participants’ expectations of themselves in a teaching role (within the Personal Domain) were initially very high and idealistic, influencing their early professional experimentation within the Domain of Practice. Over time, through the reflection and enactment cycle between the Domain of Practice and the Domain of Consequence, participants gained an understanding that their expected performance did not match their actual performance – resulting in the participants working harder to realise these personal expectations. As such, in the early cycles between the Domain of Practice, the Domain of Consequence and the Personal Domain, the expectations of the participants had of their performance did not change dramatically, but they simply became increasingly aware that they were not meeting them. It could be argued, then, that the use of the term ‘shattered’ does not appropriately describe what occurred in the early phase of these teachers’ professional experimentation. The participants’ expectations did not, in reality, shatter – they were not destroyed or

crushed – but actually remained relatively intact. It was the enduring presence of such expectations, in fact, that resulted in the participants becoming increasingly disillusioned and dissatisfied with their performance during this next phase.

#### 5.4 Absence of Feedback, Indicators or Measures of Success

The most pervasive theme to emerge from the participants’ experiences was that of a persistent absence of meaningful feedback on their performance, without which they found it difficult to measure their success or growth. Feedback falls under the External Domain, alongside other “sources of information, stimulus or support” (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002, p. 950), and is discussed here with reference to this part of the model. The External Domain is located “outside the teacher’s personal world” (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002, p. 951), and as such, differs from the previous three domains discussed.

Figure 7 demonstrates the processes impeded by the absence of feedback.



*Figure 7.* Adapted version of the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth. The influence of the External Domain is notably absent at this point in the narratives, indicated by the red outlines. Similarly, the processes of reflection and enactment between this domain and others is not occurring. Adapted from “Elaborating a model of teacher professional growth,” by D. Clarke and H. Hollingsworth, 2002, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18, p. 951.

Previous studies have emphasised the importance of feedback in facilitating early-career teacher growth (Kidd et al., 2015; Lamote & Engels, 2010; Papatraianou & Le Cornu, 2014). The critical absence of feedback, or appropriate measures of success for all participants led to an identity “crisis” (Delamarter, 2015, p. 3) whereby their perceptions of their capacity did not reflect the teacher self they had imagined. This was perhaps most immediately obvious for Deanna, who had returned to the same school post-practicum, but now was teaching under changed conditions. Her confidence had grown on her practicums under the guidance of her supervising teacher, and during her early professional experimentation, she had attempted to replicate this success. However, like each of the participants, Deanna had moved from having ongoing, sustained feedback about her teaching, planning and assessment practices, to having no feedback at all. Complicating this was the power relationship in her staffroom existing between herself and her former supervising teacher, so in spite a lack of feedback, Deanna still felt as if she was being evaluated and assessed. Being perceived as high-performing was critical to Deanna as she wanted to “be the teacher they thought I was”, but without any performance feedback, she struggled to regulate her expectations of herself. However, in contrast with the findings from the SETE study (Mayer et al., 2015), Deanna questioned the “romanticised” views of effective teaching, such as student feedback or relationships. Overall, Deanna became increasingly bitter and inwardly focused, struggling to evaluate her own performance. She noted that without feedback, she was forced to rely on her own “harsh” evaluations of her teaching, reflecting a tendency to be highly critical of her own performance.

This tendency was also evident in Scott’s narrative, as he articulated that he felt isolated in the profession. He missed having a more experienced teacher to share ideas with and reinforce that he was doing well, and became increasingly convinced that he was failing. Like the isolated teachers in Morrison’s (2013) study, he was plagued by doubt and felt increasingly convinced that he could not continue teaching in the future. Each time he struggled or made a mistake, he saw himself as “no good” and “absolutely useless”, and even considered changing professions as he became increasingly disappointed in himself and lost sight of what he was doing well. His self-doubt mirrors that of Deanna, whereby a tendency towards perfectionism, coupled with a lack of performance feedback, resulted in persistent dissatisfaction.



This was also reflected in Erica's narrative. Erica had believed that the quality of her teaching was so poor she was "ripping off the kids", and she also attributed this belief to isolation. As she noted, being alone in the classroom meant relying on "your own feedback.... you think, well I'm not doing a good job". Meeting the standards that she expected of herself was difficult, as she began to focus on failure and dwell on her mistakes. Like in other studies (Gallant & Riley, 2014; Morrison; Trent, 2016; Yuan & Lee, 2015), these findings highlight the critical consequences of early-career teacher isolation.

Not one participant in this early phase of their career was allocated a mentor teacher, given time to build mentoring relationships with other teachers, or felt well-supported by their school leadership team. As a number of authors have argued, without these positive external influences, early-career teachers cannot gain realistic perspectives on their challenges (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Le Maistre & Paré, 2010; Papatraianou & Le Cornu, 2014; Schatz-Oppenheimer & Dvir, 2014). For example, Erica reflected that her Head of Department was unsupportive, and that she did not have a school administrator visit her classroom once in her first semester. For her, this was a source of anxiety as she felt like nobody was monitoring her performance. It is interesting that, like the change-of-career teachers in Anthony and Ord's (2008) study, a perceived lack of accountability in teaching made Erica feel uneasy.

For other participants, despite their recognition that they needed support and guidance, the thought of a more experienced teacher or Head of Department coming into their classrooms became a source of anxiety as they became increasingly dissatisfied with their performance. A lack of job security was a major contributor to this anxiety, as all participants were on semester-by-semester contracts. This is reported to be a common stress factor for Queensland early-career teachers (QCT, 2013) and has clear parallels with the findings from other studies (Kidd et al., 2015; Papatraianou & Le Cornu, 2014; Mayer et al., 2015), showing that teachers employed on short-term contracts are often concerned about revealing inadequacies, lest they jeopardise their future employment prospects. A perceived absence of communication and feedback from school administrators meant that, in addition to not meeting their own expectations, the participants worried whether they were meeting the expectations of the school administrators. For Deanna, the infrequent

visits to her classroom from her Head of Department meant she felt pressure to “show who you are as a teacher in five minutes”, when previously, she had had the opportunity to demonstrate her skills over a sustained period of time. Additionally, Deanna made an assumption that a timetabling decision to reallocate her senior class was because she was not performing, despite her hard work. In reflecting on it, she explained that her interpretation of this event was a direct result of a lack of feedback about her teaching. As she explained, “there is not a lot else to go on, to be honest: what else would I use as an indication of how I teach?” Charlie – whose age and prior industry experience potentially resulted in his department overlooking his need for support – felt constant pressure to appear as if he was not struggling. He speculated that administrators would want to see structure and discipline, which were lacking in his classroom, but admitted that he was never sure what they were looking for in a teacher. This uncertainty, combined with the unstable nature of his employment, left Charlie in fear of visits from principals or school administration.

As a result of their self-doubt and an awareness that they were not meeting their own measures of success, all four participants were dismayed and exhausted after early professional experimentation within the Domain of Practice. The salient outcomes of their practice, within the Domain of Consequence, were decidedly similar: fatigue and guilt from an unsustainable work-life balance, disillusionment as a result of not meeting their own expectations, and disappointment in the teaching profession as a whole. For Friedman (2000), this mismatch “between an individual’s expectations of successful performance and actual, less satisfying reality” (p. 597) can lead to early-career teacher burnout, when teachers fail to negotiate this gap effectively. Like the participants in Friedman’s, Trent’s (2016) and Pillen et al.’s (2013a; 2013b) studies, the participants in this study experienced a phase of disillusionment and fatigue, experiencing difficulties relating to workload, student behaviour and a lack of feedback and recognition. Erica had come to the profession expecting the kind of success she had always experienced in the corporate sector, but a lack of feedback meant she had little understanding of what people around her were requiring, and struggled to perform at a standard acceptable to herself. Deanna, similarly, had worked tirelessly to be the successful teacher she had been on her practicum, but a lack of recognition, alongside the timetable decision to re-allocate her senior class, left her feeling bitter and downtrodden. Scott, who had wanted to be

a teacher since childhood, was considering changing professions as he felt isolated, received no feedback on his performance as he failed to meet his own high personal expectations. Charlie continued to try to inspire his students to be self-governing learners in alignment with his original vision of himself as a teacher, but his reluctance to discipline the class had led to them becoming unmanageable, and he found himself no longer enjoying teaching. These professional identity tensions (Morrison, 2013) came to light as the participants came to recognise that their practice did not reflect the qualities of the teachers they had wanted to become.

The critical role of recognition and feedback in allowing early-career teachers to adjust expectations is undoubtedly clear. As Papatraianou and Le Cornu (2014) have pointed out, this feedback can provide an important “reality check” (p. 109) for early-career teachers. Such feedback is also vital in allowing early-career teachers to negotiate more realistic expectations of themselves (Le Maistre & Paré, 2010) and to “stand back from their personal beliefs and images, acknowledging where they are incorrect or inappropriate” (Kagan, 1992, p. 155). Without such feedback and guidance, as Alsup (2006) observed, it is difficult for a teacher to accept the tensions, ambiguities and uncertainties around their initial ideals and aspirations.

## **5.5 Awareness and Intervention**

The turning point for the participants, and the subsequent intervention may, on a superficial level, appear to provide the answer to how these disillusioned early-career teachers turned around their practice and readjusted their expectations of themselves in the profession. However, this would ignore a host of other factors that converged to influence the participants’ success and imply a direct connection between external factors and immediate change in the Personal Domain. In actual fact, this critical point, for most of the participants, simply involved a new awareness that their practice was unsustainable, and that a re-evaluation of their practice was necessary. The way in which this awareness came about differed in each case, and not all experiences were positive. The learning curve was very steep for some of the participants who were pushed to breaking point before such awareness occurred.

Although the experiences varied widely between participants, Figure 8 shows the impact of the External Domain that was a common theme across all participants’

awareness and intervention processes. The reflective connection between the External Domain and the Personal Domain has been highlighted in red in Figure 8 to indicate an inactive process. As is discussed, the participants' personal expectations were not directly influenced by the introduction of external sources, but changed over time as a result of subsequent professional experimentation.

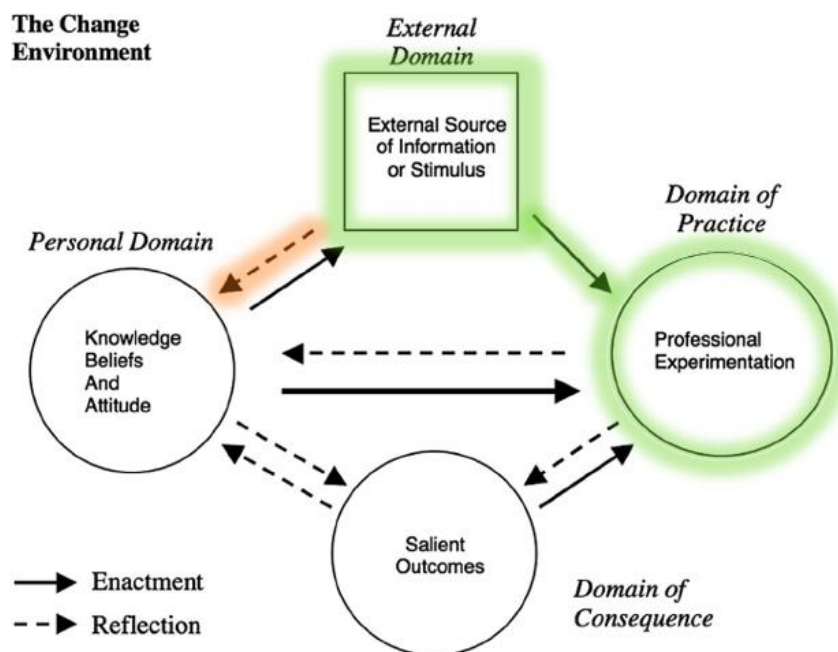


Figure 8. Adapted version of the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth. The mobilisation of the External Domain, now indicated in green, impacts upon the Domain of Practice. Adapted from “Elaborating a model of teacher professional growth,” by D. Clarke and H. Hollingsworth, 2002, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18, p. 951.

Deanna’s narrative reflects a key turning point at the beginning of her second year of teaching, which involved a shift to a larger staffroom. The opportunity to work alongside a new group of teachers – with a variety of levels of experience and commitment to teaching – was an external factor that provided Deanna with new perspectives on teaching and her own practice. Not only had she shaken off what she had perceived to be a stigma of being a former preservice teacher, but her new staff culture was one where teachers were sincere and straightforward about what was happening in their classrooms. This reinforces the findings of the SETE study (Mayer et al., 2015) showing that an open, honest approach to discussing teaching is the cornerstone of successful mentoring and support. Deanna’s new colleagues, who

managed to have a work-life balance and still perform at a high level, were important role models who she looked up to, and it is unlikely that such a shift in Deanna's practice would have occurred if she did not respect or admire them. The positive interactions between Deanna and the other teachers, or "checking in", allowed her to reshape some beliefs and attitudes about her teaching practice during her second year. Although Deanna did not receive explicit observation feedback on her teaching from these teachers, it was her relationships with these teachers that elicited change in the Domain of Practice. Their modelling of well-balanced professional practice, and her increasing trust and willingness to articulate her concerns, led to refinements to her practice. Analogous to the positive mentor teachers described in Morrison's (2013) study, these teachers modelled skills that Deanna adapted into her own repertoire, provided non-judgmental support, and helped her to rationalise her own emotional responses. In shaping a professional identity, early-career teachers understand and make sense of themselves in relation to their colleagues and teaching community (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009), and as such, being immersed in a new community of teachers allowed Deanna to make positive assessments of her own practice.

The addition of an external factor, for Scott, was also critical in allowing him to positively see himself in the role and make changes to his practice. However, in contrast to Deanna, Scott began to actively seek support and feedback in his first year of teaching – a key personal protective factor for resilience identified in Johnson et al.'s (2015) study. Mentoring sessions with a Head of Curriculum allowed Scott to regain confidence in his abilities, recognise that parts of his ideal vision of himself in the role were unrealistic for his career stage, and try new strategies. It is also important to note that, like in Deanna's case, the relationship with a trusted, experienced teacher empowered him and gave him confidence, rather than making him feel judged. His increasing awareness that other teachers were facing the same challenges allowed him, like Deanna, to feel comfortable admitting his concerns and experience a "reality check" about his situation (Papatraianou & Le Cornu, 2014, p. 109). For both Deanna and Scott, the positive influence of the External Domain allowed them to realise that some changes in the Domain of Practice may help them to manage their workload.

Charlie and Erica's turning points, on the other hand, were far more poignant. An awareness that change was required came about for both teachers as a result of a moment of humiliation, resulting in a critical re-evaluation of their personal expectations. For Erica, an emotional breakdown in front of her peers and administrative staff at a staff meeting left her feeling embarrassed and demeaned, which prompted her to make changes. Drawing upon her prior experience, she applied her existing coping skills to her own critical situation. Like Deanna and Scott, change in her Domain of Practice was associated strongly with relationships with other teachers who were able to provide feedback, either directly or indirectly, on Erica's performance. Charlie's awareness also came about as a result of a humbling experience, when his class was reprimanded in front of him by a teacher aide. The shock of this moment prompted Charlie to re-evaluate his expectations of the class, and he realised that without clear boundaries and structure, the students were not learning or participating effectively in class. At this point, within the Domain of Practice, Charlie began to modify his teaching to reflect his teaching context and the needs of the students. He began to work with an experienced mentor teacher in his staffroom, sharing his ideas and getting her feedback on his lesson planning and resources. Like Deanna, Scott, and Erica, the success of the mentoring relied on building his confidence about his teaching approach and as such, did not result in a complete re-appraisal of his personal expectations at this point, but adjustments to his teaching practice.

It seems to be a theme within the participants' narratives that the main positive external factor was the addition of mentoring, staff relationships and collegial support. This had strong parallels with the findings of Le Maistre and Paré's (2010) study, in which they proposed that mentoring by experienced teachers assists early-career teachers in settling for less-than-perfect outcomes in their practice, and setting realistic goals. This, they argued, is necessary for early-career teachers to experience a sense of accomplishment and confidence (Le Maistre & Paré). Similarly, the successful early-career teachers in Morrison's (2013) study were in schools with staffing and time allocations to support mentoring programs. The lack of these opportunities, Morrison notes, can isolate early-career teachers "hold them in a state of survival rather than allow them to thrive" (p. 103). Whilst this may not be surprising, it is important to note that for all participants in this study, these

successful mentoring relationships were established on their own terms, in their own time, and with trusted colleagues. Not only this, but for each participant, this trust and support allowed them to make gradual, safe modifications within the Domain of Practice without destabilising their hopes for the teacher they may, one day, become. This naturalistic, opportunistic process of finding one's own mentor also stands in contrast to the practice of allocating a mentor to early-career teachers.

Importantly, for all participants, changes to their practice still allowed for their initial ideals and beliefs about themselves in the role – their personal expectations – to stay mostly intact. Supportive collegial relationships allowed participants to come to new conclusions or gain a new awareness that their current working practices were unsustainable or unrealistic, and encouraged them to try new approaches. However, at the core of the Personal Domain, the beliefs and values underpinning their initial personal expectations had not been let go. The Reflective connection between the External Domain and the Personal Domain, highlighted in red in Figure 8, indicates that before changes to personal expectations occurred within the Personal Domain, the participants in this study had to experiment with new practices themselves.

## **5.6 Secondary Experimentation and Salient Outcomes**

As a result of the influences of the External Domain discussed in the previous section, the participants' subsequent professional experimentation was markedly different from their early experimentation. Within the Domain of Practice, the participants' later experimentation reflected new beliefs and attitudes about their teaching practice, and produced widely different outcomes in the Domain of Consequence. In particular, the degree to which teachers perceived their success or failure was greatly altered, post-intervention.

Figure 9 highlights the influence of the External Domain, Personal Domain and Domain of Consequence on the Domain of Practice, discussed in this section.

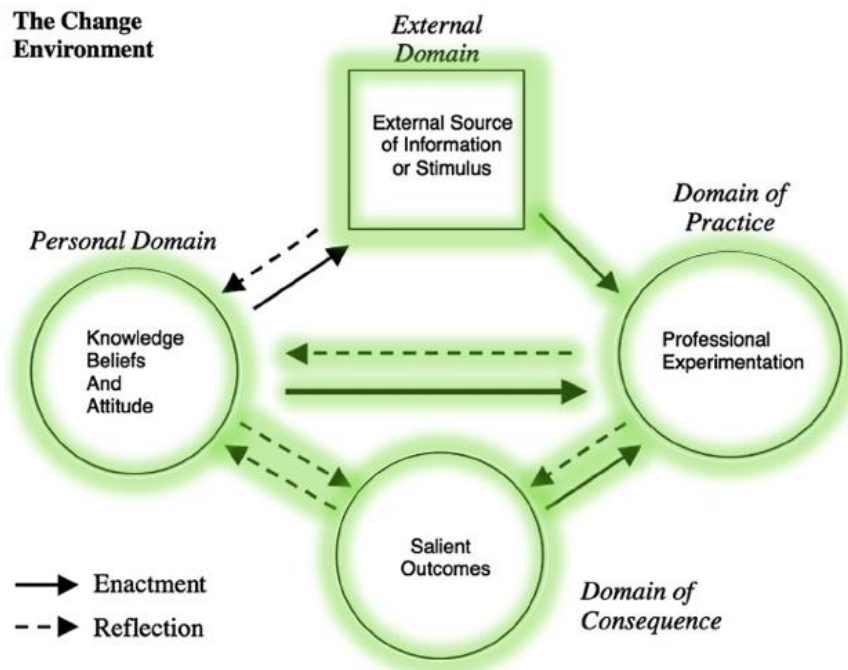


Figure 9. Adapted version of the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth. The influence of the External Domain on the Domain of Practice allows for changes to occur within other domains through reflection and enactment. Importantly, reflection on professional experimentation and salient outcomes results in change in the Personal Domain. Adapted from “Elaborating a model of teacher professional growth,” by D. Clarke and H. Hollingsworth, 2002, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18, p. 951.

With renewed confidence as a result of making meaningful connections with colleagues, the participants’ secondary and subsequent cycles of professional experimentation were characterised by increased flexibility and risk-taking in their classroom practice. Interestingly, Herbert and Worthy (2001) linked trial-and-error in early-career teacher practice to feelings of failure and inefficiency. However it would appear that, for Deanna and Erica, their improvisation and occasional failure was played out within a context of support and feedback, without which the teachers had been very unwilling to improvise or be flexible at all. This heightened sense of their own ability to improvise in class was pivotal in allowing their practice to become less structured and more focused on the students’ needs. Deanna became aware that the classes upon which she spent less time were more successful, giving her confidence that she could make changes mid-lesson and go off the plan, whilst still achieving her objectives. Similarly, Erica recognised times when she was less



prepared, and allowed for flexibility in her planning, were when the best teaching was occurring in her classroom.

For Deanna and Erica, being adaptable also meant relinquishing control of the class and no longer seeing themselves as the key variable that would determine student success. Learning when to take a step back was critical for Deanna, and as her focus shifted from herself to the students, she reflected that her previous teacher-centred approach was not only unnecessary and resource-intensive, but had been stifling opportunities for creativity and innovation in her classes. Taking the advice of another teacher, she worked towards having students work independently at least one lesson each week. Erica, too, changed her practice over time to reflect her growing trust in the students' abilities and the unpredictability of the role. Deanna and Erica felt an increased confidence and efficacy in making decisions and taking risks as a result of collegial guidance, like the participants in Yuan and Lee's (2015), Papatraianou and Le Cornu's (2014) and Izadinia's (2015) studies. For both participants, this phase of experimentation began to change their conceptualisations of quality teaching, and therefore constituted critical professional "identity work" (Watson, 2006).

Scott's changing practice also reflected an increasing focus on the students and their needs, as opposed to seeing himself as the key determinant in his students' success. He reflected that his teacher-centred approach had been misguided. As a result, his planning changed to incorporate more unstructured class discussion and activities, and he started to focus on helping students achieve the outcomes, rather than rushing them through the content. Aligning with Erica and Deanna's desire to control every variable, Scott observed that he had been "overthinking" his teaching rather than allowing the process to happen organically. He found that changing his practice meant that his expectations of students increased, and student behaviour improved in his class. An increase in expectations of students was also a key change for Charlie, who needed to confront a fear of being an authority figure and "undo the damage" of his permissive approach. By clarifying to the students his new expectations, and enforcing boundaries, Charlie noticed that gradually, their behaviour improved and the students became more self-sufficient. Like Scott, Charlie also changed his planning around the student needs and behaviour, rather than the content, whether it was focused on their interests, abilities, or simply

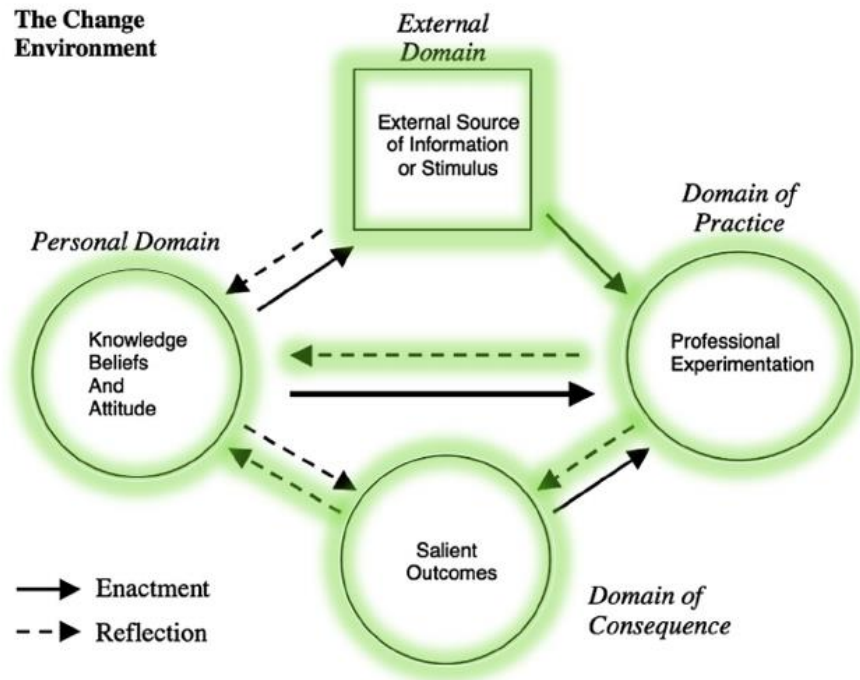
calming them down after a lunch break. The attention shift of the four participants reflects what Kagan (1992) referred to as a key *developmental task* for early-career teachers, suggesting that early-career teachers are initially inwardly focused on their own behaviours. Learning to focus their practice on student needs and instructional design is a key indicator of professional growth, “as the image of self as teacher is resolved” (Kagan, p. 156).

As highlighted in Figure 9, the mobilisation of the External Domain allowed for changes to occur within the teachers’ Domain of Practice. Such changes saw the teachers applying new approaches and practices as professional experimentation continued. The salient outcomes of these new practices within the Domain of Consequence varied, however a number of common positive outcomes emerged: a healthier work-life balance, improved confidence, and an increased focus on the students’ needs. As the participants reflected on their professional experimentation and salient outcomes, changes began to occur within the Personal Domain. The participants’ personal expectations were gradually adjusted as the participants reflected and acted upon their new understandings about quality practice, experiencing success in the classroom with new approaches.

### **5.7 Adjusted Personal Expectations**

Arriving once more at the Personal Domain, we are now able to see the adjustments made to the teachers’ expectations of themselves in their role. Changes to their attitudes, knowledge and beliefs about the profession – resulting from their professional experimentation – were largely responsible for their altered expectations of their own performance. Thus, whilst the first part of this discussion analysed the participants’ initial expectations, this final section evaluates their changed expectations – their new, reimagined “images of themselves as teachers” (Cole & Knowles, 1993, p. 459). The themes that emerged here are discussed again with reference to the Personal Domain in Clarke and Hollingsworth’s (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth.

The reflective influence of other domains on the Personal Domain is illustrated in Figure 10.



*Figure 10.* Adapted version of the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth. Through the reflective process, the External Domain, and Domains of Practice and Consequence ultimately effect change in the Personal Domain. Adapted from “Elaborating a model of teacher professional growth,” by D. Clarke and H. Hollingsworth, 2002, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18, p. 951.

For all participants, their personal expectations underwent a number of adjustments and modifications. Deanna reflected on her experimentation with a student-centred approach, and began to question the value of explicit teaching and being a “performer” in the classroom. Her initial expectation of herself to constantly create innovative teaching resources also shifted, as did her other time-consuming habit of giving extensive, specific feedback on student work. For Deanna, the appeals of these practices faded over time as she recognised that her energy was better spent looking after herself. Her positive presence in the classroom made far more of a difference to the students’ learning outcomes. As such, her perspective on what constitutes quality teaching became broader and more accommodating of different approaches. Correspondingly, Scott modified his expectation of himself in a teaching role dramatically. His initial focus on physical indicators of teaching effectiveness – such as having an organised classroom with a wealth of laminated teaching resources – was replaced by a new priority to differentiate student learning. He reflected that much of his classroom practice as well as preparation was not making him a quality

teacher – “was laminating cards for kids really going to help them learn?” – and re-evaluated his practice to reflect his new understandings. In reflecting on his new, student-centred practice, Scott began to notice a number of positive outcomes which effected change in the Personal Domain. His new understandings were underpinned by a belief that “the classroom shouldn't be about the teacher”, and as such, his ideas about what constitutes quality teaching were also re-evaluated. In continuing to pursue quality in his teaching, his personal expectations were adjusted to reflect his new beliefs.

During their early-career years, all participants had made significant adjustments to their initial personal expectations. Nonetheless, it cannot be said that the participants' initial expectations were ever completely ‘shattered’ during this process, as described in previous studies (Cole & Knowles, 1993; Friedman, 2000). In shaping their professional identities, it seems that the persistence of their original images and expectations of themselves as teachers was important in resolving the tension between the actual, ought and ideal teacher selves (Lauriala & Kukkonen, 2005). Although many of their expectations were challenged, the endurance of some of those initial ideals and images was critical for them to stay motivated. Far from being shattered, their expectations were maintained initially, and mediated over time. Erica's practice, for instance, became increasingly student-centred as she experimented and took more risks, and so the initial expectations she had of herself in a teaching role as being effective, productive and a good communicator were actually realised for the first time. Furthermore, she found that she was adding value to student lives and finding meaning in the profession, as well as now also having her holidays to travel, which were two important influences in her decision to pursue teaching. Charlie, in a similar way, maintained key expectations of himself in the role. Through changes in his teaching practice and adjustments to these personal expectations, he began to see a future where he could “experiment” with being the teacher he had initially wanted to be. An increased control of his classes, gained through professional experimentation, opened Charlie's eyes to the necessary boundaries and structures that must exist in a classroom before he could encourage students to be self-governing and totally creative. The endurance of these original teaching ideals encouraged Charlie to persist in his pursuit of being the teacher he aspired to become.

In the same way, Deanna and Scott's adjusted personal expectations also reflect their initial teaching ideals and aspirations. The adjusted personal expectations of both participants reflect a more sustainable approach to the profession, with the changes to their ideas about quality teaching being characterised by more streamlined, efficient and flexible teaching approaches. Nevertheless, their adjusted personal expectations ultimately still reflected their original vision to be engaging, creative and caring teachers. As such, both teachers can be seen to be persisting with their original high expectations of themselves as teachers, and although their practices have changed alongside their ideas about quality teaching, their aspirations have remained relatively consistent. As Scott summarised, "if teachers necessarily don't want to become the best teacher that they can, I don't think that they should necessarily be a teacher... it's too important of a role to take for granted".

As such, the experiences of the participants in this study provide an interesting contrast with early-career teachers in other studies who did not adjust their personal expectations with success. For the participants in Friedman's (2000) and Gallant and Riley's (2014) studies, attempts to realign their expectations of themselves in a teaching role resulted in disillusionment, cynicism and uncertainty. Trying to find a balance "between 'quality teaching' (as dreamed of by the teacher prior to actual teaching) and the quality of teaching dictated by reality" (Friedman, p. 600) was exceedingly difficult for these teachers, with the participants in both of these studies planning to, or having already left the profession during the early-career years. Despite also compromising their initial expectations of themselves as teachers, a number of conditions allowed the teachers in the current study to adjust their expectations with more success. Due mostly to supportive collegial relationships, participants felt encouraged and confident to attempt new approaches and take risks in their practice, leading to feelings of efficacy and accomplishment.

## **5.8 Summary of Discussion**

This chapter provided an analysis of the narratives of four early-career teachers, through addressing the research questions: (1) how do teachers adjust their personal expectations during the early-career years? and (2) what conditions

influence the adjustment of personal expectations? The phases of Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth were used to frame the discussion, and the themes emerging from the narratives, and references to relevant literature, were situated within this structure.

The discussion began by analysing the participants' early personal expectations within the Personal Domain (Section 5.2). Next, the discussion focused on the participants' early experimentation, with reference to the Domain of Practice (Section 5.3), examining their early attempts to enact their vision of themselves in a teaching role. In the next section, the absence of feedback or positive external factors was discussed, alongside the impacts of this on the participants' understandings of their own success or failure. The next section analysed the factors that led to a turning point or growing awareness for the participants that their practice was unsustainable (Section 5.5). An evaluation of the next stage of professional experimentation, now influenced by external factors, followed this (Section 5.6). This phase was characterised by a change in teaching practices from being rule-governed and rigid to include risk-taking and trial-and-error processes. The final section (Section 5.7) explored the participants' adjusted personal expectations, having been influenced by the overall processes of the model.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

### 6.1 Overview of Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter concludes the study, summarises the overall findings, and proposes future directions for research based on these findings. The chapter begins by addressing both research questions (Section 6.2) and provides a synopsis of the findings relating to each. A summary of the contributions of the study is presented (Section 6.3), and limitations of the study are proposed (Section 6.4). Next, questions emerging from the research are addressed in the form of suggestions for further research (Section 6.5). Recommendations for practice (Section 6.6) are outlined, before a final summary of the chapter is given (Section 6.7).

### 6.2 Research Questions

Two research questions were addressed in this study. A detailed analysis of the literature in response to these questions highlighted a gap in the literature, and an appropriate methodology was developed to address this gap. The findings pertaining to each research question are summarised here.

**6.2.1 Research Question 1.** The first research question was *how do teachers adjust their personal expectations during the early-career years?* The narratives generated in the study, which were presented in Chapter 4, drew upon semi-structured interview data and ongoing collaboration between researcher and four individual participants. The aim was to explore and evaluate the nature of the teachers' initial personal expectations, the events and situations that challenged these, and the changes made to such expectations. Collectively, although the narratives reflect a diversity of conflicts and challenges, it was clear that in the early-career years each participant made significant adjustments to their initial personal expectations. What was particularly interesting is that the endurance of some initial idealistic aspirations and images continue to motivate and sustain them.

The use of Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth as a framework for the study highlighted the processes and phases of development, showing how the participants followed a similar trajectory as

they developed more realistic expectations of themselves as teachers. Although the participants in the current study had to compromise between their initial ideals of quality teaching and the realities of the profession, they did so in a way that allowed them to gradually form new understandings about their practice. Initially, the participants' ideals and images led to disappointment and frustration in the cycle between professional experimentation, salient outcomes and their expectations. A turning point occurred for each participant; a catalyst for an intervention or a shift in their approach leading to the development of trusting, collegial relationships. Their subsequent professional experimentation was characterised by increased risk-taking and flexibility, focus on student learning, and satisfaction with their own effectiveness in the classroom. Most importantly, like the teachers in Le Maistre and Paré's (2010) study, they learned to *satisfice* – that is, be satisfied with a less-than-perfect, but pragmatic approach to everyday professional challenges. Experiencing a sense of success and effectiveness meant that, over time, participants were able to adjust their personal expectations to reflect new understandings of quality teaching. Thus, these narratives are simultaneously stories of resilience and courage as well as of the adjustment of personal expectations as the teachers shaped their professional identities in the early-career years.

**6.2.2 Research Question 2.** The second research question asked *what conditions influence the adjustment of personal expectations?* The analysis of the narratives highlighted a number of conditions that supported the adjustment of personal expectations, and the subsequent shaping of a professional identity. A number of intersecting conditions were identified, here, as being of central importance:

- *Feedback.* All participants acknowledged feedback on their teaching as a critical factor in adjusting their expectations. For all participants, the lack of meaningful, targeted feedback on their work made their transition to the profession difficult, and, in some cases, undermined their initial decision to pursue a career in education. Most importantly, the participants reflected that they were highly critical of, and disappointed in their own performance as a result of the lack of feedback or recognition at work.



- *Relationships with other teaching staff.* The adjustment of personal expectations was, for all participants, largely reliant on collegial relationships and support. Such relationships allowed for participants to gain informal feedback about their work, become comfortable with less-than-perfect outcomes, and set realistic goals. The narratives reflected similar patterns of cautious and controlled modifications to personal expectations, over time, as participants developed mentoring relationships.
- *Contextual factors allowing for trial-and-error.* A number of contextual factors were linked to the participants experimenting and taking risks in their classrooms, which led to an increased understanding of what the participants considered quality practice. One clear restriction was the employment conditions of the participants, who were all employed on six-month contracts. A desire to consistently impress and demonstrate quality teaching practice meant that participants were reluctant to adopt more risky trial-and-error approaches in their teaching (not to mention being less likely to seek help). Relationships with other staff, as well as job security, were both conditions which led to the participants taking more risks, and adjusting their expectations accordingly. Such trial-and-error ultimately allowed for participants to, first, develop a student-centred approach, and second, achieve a healthier work-life balance.

### **6.3 Contributions of the Study**

This study represented a contribution to the existing body of literature on early-career teacher expectations and teacher identity. There has been a recent increase in the volume of literature focusing on early-career teachers' idealistic conceptions of themselves in the profession, and the difficulties in negotiating more realistic expectations (Delamarter, 2015; Kumazawa, 2013; Pillen et al., 2013c; Trent, 2016). Research has attended to origin and nature of the initial expectations of self as teacher; the challenges in confronting these; and to the conditions and contexts that allow for early-career teachers to shape a strong and coherent sense of professional identity. Nevertheless, such studies do not describe the processes involved in the negotiation and reconciliation of, specifically, the personal expectations of teaching: how early-career teachers resolve the conflict between their

initial images and aspirations of themselves as teachers, and what they find to be realistic and practical to achieve. Relevant literature has also emphasised a need to focus on the experiences of second- and third-year teachers, who have the potential to give rich insights into the challenges of the early-career years (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011; Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007). By presenting narratives of these early-career teachers, this study described and identified patterns in their initial personal expectations, the challenges that the teachers faced in attempting to enact these ideal selves, and the conditions that allowed them to successfully adjust their unrealistic expectations. This study, then, represented a point of departure from research such as that by Gallant and Riley (2014) and Friedman (2000), who both focused on early career teachers who were unable to adjust their personal expectations and left the profession, disillusioned and downtrodden.

Importantly, this study demonstrated that feedback, collegial relationships and contexts that encourage more risk-taking in their teaching are instrumental for early-career teachers to develop realistic expectations of themselves as teachers. Perhaps just as important to note, however, is that whilst the participants' initial personal expectations were adjusted, the endurance of some of those initial ideals and images was critical for the early-career teachers to retain a sense of purpose and commitment to the profession. Thus, despite studies that see idealism as a puerile and underdeveloped position, the findings of this study suggest that maintaining these ideological motivations is absolutely necessary in order to negotiate a robust teacher identity (Shkedi & Laron, 2004). This implies that, although early-career teachers' idealistic expectations are a source of frustration and disappointment in the transition to the profession, they also play a positive role in shaping teacher identity.

Not only has this study contributed to the existing literature on early-career teacher expectations, but it also represented a contribution to methodological advancement. The study utilised a narrative approach in the study of the adjustment of teacher expectations. Although studies of teacher identity within the literature frequently draw upon quantitative approaches, this study is another example of the value of a narrative approach, understanding a story as “a portal through which a person enters a world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375). The study also drew upon the experiences of several individuals, at the risk of undermining the

integrity of the narrative approach which typically focuses on one or two individuals. Although there was a threat of diminishing the experiences of the individual, this study demonstrated that if ample attention is given to an individual narrative, and if it is presented as a whole before analysis and evaluation are applied, the rich and nuanced experiences of multiple individuals can be given due respect.

As such, this study also modelled a practical alternative for engaging in the iterative cycles of data collection whilst operating within a limited time frame. The number of participants necessitated changes to the three-stage semi-structured interview process (Schuman, 1982; Seidman, 2013). Instead, this was condensed to include one interview only, with three distinct phases. Further collaboration and ongoing member checking of the interim texts was facilitated through other channels, such as via email, telephone call, or informal face-to-face discussion. This study provides a model of this alternative approach, offering a simplified process for future application.

The study also contributed to the advancement of Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth. Although studies such as those by Flores and Day (2006) and Lee and Schallert (2016) provide models for understanding the influences on teacher identity development in the early-career years, the use of Clarke and Hollingsworth's model as a framework for this study highlighted processes and phases that have been largely unexplored in previous research. Furthermore, in using the model as a framework for understanding teacher expectations, this study demonstrated the value of the framework for exploring a teacher's personal, not just professional development. Finally, the findings of the study called into question the nature of the relationship between the Personal Domain and the External Domain. The model suggests that through reflection on all domains, knowledge, attitudes and expectations of a teacher change over time. This study demonstrated that reflection on professional experimentation and consequences can indeed effect change within the Personal Domain. However, this study also found that reflection upon external influences – such as the influence of a mentor or a professional development workshop – does not change a teacher's self-expectations in any meaningful way, until the changed approach or behaviour is attempted in a teacher's practice. In other words, teachers need to undergo their own professional experimentation within the Domain of Practice before their knowledge, attitudes and

values are adjusted. Thus, the findings of this study suggest that this component of the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth may be problematic and may need to be revised in future iterations.

#### **6.4. Limitations of the Study**

A number of limitations are evident in this study. First, the recruitment of participants introduced a potential bias. Participants volunteered to be involved in a study about their changing personal expectations in teaching, which was made clear in the participant information flyer. It is possible that participants were teachers with higher cynicism about adjusting their expectations – in other words, individuals who felt like they had a story to tell about their expectations not being met. Such teachers may have even entered the profession with unusually rigid or idealistic expectations of their own performance. In support of this, all but one participant reported the tendency to be high achieving, or reported having perfectionist characteristics. It is possible that this sample of participants may have had excessively high performance standards and a tendency towards critical self-evaluation, and therefore may not be representative of the broader teaching population.

Another limitation to consider is the sample size. Although four participants would generally be considered an appropriate sample size in narrative inquiry, the findings of the study are limited in terms of generalisability. However, as was explained in earlier stages of the thesis, it was depth, not breadth, which was being sought in the study, which was achieved through the application of a qualitative methodological approach. The suggestions for practice must therefore be considered cautiously.

A further limitation of the study lay, in part, in the application of narrative inquiry itself as a research methodology. The analysis of the data, and my individual understanding of the initial transcripts, had the potential to influence the story that the participants wanted to tell. To combat this, participants were consulted about the authenticity of the narrative during the member checking process. Finally, my role as a fellow state school teacher may have influenced participants' responses.

## 6.5 Suggestions for Future Research

This study raised a number of questions which may be addressed by further research. The potential bias in the participant group, discussed earlier as a limitation, could be addressed by drawing participants from a larger cohort. A quantitative approach may be useful here, for instance, the distribution of a survey to a wider range of schools, and participants. A comparison could be made between individuals who reported an easier, smoother transition into the profession and those who reported the transition as being difficult. The qualitative research process could then occur, with a more representative sample of individuals being included.

Participants in this study were also all recruited from a single school setting, which was a high-performing, inner-city state school. In many ways, their challenges and concerns are consistent with the profile of the school, including their ongoing awareness of high academic and behaviour standards and competition for employment at the school. Further research may apply this same qualitative approach to teachers at a school with a different demographic profile, for instance, a rural school or a school with a high level of socio-economic disadvantage. How does the setting – or, for Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002), the Change Environment – influence the adjustment of their personal expectations? What pressures and challenges may influence the nature of such a change in their expectations, in a radically different Queensland school context?

This study also paves the way for further research using Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth as a useful framework for studying teacher identity. The study demonstrated the value of using such a framework for investigating the adjustment of personal expectations in the early-career years. An opportunity also exists for further research on the nature of the reflective connection between the External Domain and the Personal Domain. This findings of this study showed the External Domain to have little direct influence on the Personal Domain, with new perspectives and approaches needing to be operationalised and experimented with before a teacher's attitudes and beliefs were truly changed.

Finally, there stands an opportunity for further research to adopt a longitudinal approach to an investigation of the adjustment of personal expectations in the early-career years. This study represented participants' experiences at a point in time, during their second or third year of the profession. All participants articulated that their modified personal expectations were more realistic and relieved pressure on them professionally and personally. However, each also reported that their idealistic expectations had endured, in some capacity, as a long-term goal or an aspiration for a later career stage. As such, a longitudinal approach may reveal whether the teachers are truly satisfied, long term, with these adjusted personal expectations. Further research may reveal the robustness and durability of these adjusted expectations, revealing whether such changes really do reflect an authentic shift in values and attitudes. Alternatively, such adaptations may have served as a survival strategy at this point in the participants' careers, which is in itself remarkable, and requires further research.

## **6.6 Suggestions for Practice**

Although the sample size limits the generalisability of the study, there are implications for practice that warrant further investigation or attention at a school level. The value of mentoring was, as it is in a variety of other research, foregrounded as being fundamental to developing resilience and a sense of professional identity (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Le Cornu, 2013; Le Maistre & Paré, 2010; Yuan & Lee, 2015). However, in this study, successful mentoring and supportive relationships were formed in a naturalistic manner, without intervention by school administration. The participants gravitated towards mentors with similar values or beliefs as their own, allowing for a gradual and successful readjustment of their personal expectations without threat or judgment. Additionally, the distinct lack of feedback from other teachers or school administration led participants in this study to become critical of their own performance and set overly high standards for themselves. The findings about the necessity of regular, non-threatening evaluation of an early-career teachers' performance stands as the most persistent and pervasive contribution of this study. In analysing the findings through a framework of professional growth, it was clear that the absence of feedback in the early-career stage was not only a source of anxiety and disappointment, but hindered early-career teacher development.

A number of implications also arose from a perceived lack of transparency in hiring practices. In some cases, the early-career teachers accepted additional work or duties in the hope that they may be considered more favourably for future teaching contracts, when they were already struggling to maintain their current teaching load. For all participants, anxiety around obtaining permanent employment and a lack of long-term job security restricted their risk-taking and professional experimentation – practices that were demonstrated as being fundamental to early-career teacher growth. Therefore, there are also understandings to be taken from this study that influence the system at a departmental level, where such decisions around employment conditions are made.

Perhaps most importantly, arising from this study are implications for teacher education. Early-career teachers should understand and be able to recognise how their expectations may be adjusted in their transition to the profession, as this study has demonstrated. Realising how they can adjust such expectations is key to developing achievable performance standards and being able to settle for a less idealistic, but more realistic approach to the profession in the early-career years. Additionally, this study echoes others (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Cattley, 2007; Cook, 2009; Delamarter, 2015; Johnson et al., 2015; Olsen, 2008; Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Sutherland & Markauskaite, 2012; Tait, 2008) in arguing that teacher education has a critical role to play in building this knowledge. This study reinforces Delamarter's (2015) assertion that teacher education "must confront pre-service teachers' misaligned expectations of teaching head on", and provide opportunities for them to "process their changing expectations of teaching and themselves" (p. 2). Opportunities must be provided for preservice teachers to examine, challenge and negotiate their assumptions, beliefs and expectations about themselves as teachers, so that they are better equipped to cope with professional identity conflicts in the early-career years. This is necessary to ensure that, in the challenging transition to teaching, early-career teachers understand that "they are not alone in experiencing identity conflicts, that these conflicts are often resolved incrementally, and that teacher identity construction is forever ongoing" (Olsen, 2008; p. 38). This study also advocates for teacher education programs to draw upon the valuable experiences of early-career teachers, inviting past graduates to present their early-career experiences to preservice teacher cohorts. Presentation of research

such as this study would also demystify the processes and practices associated with the adjustment of personal expectations. This approach could be enriched through group work and collaboration, allowing for social networking and thus expanding the potential support and resource network for new teachers.

## **6.7 Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations**

This chapter concludes the study, summarising the overall findings, evaluating the contributions and limitations, and suggesting future directions for research and practice. The chapter began by addressing the key findings of the research questions: (1) how do teachers adjust their personal expectations during the early-career years? and (2) what conditions influence the adjustment of personal expectations? The findings of the study demonstrated not only the nature of early-career teachers' expectations of themselves, and the adjustments they made to them, but the processes and phases involved. This was highlighted through the use of Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth as a framework. The study also brought to light the conditions and contextual factors that allowed for the successful adjustment of these personal expectations.

Following this, the contributions of the study were discussed. The study offered new insights into the nature of early-career teachers' personal expectations, the challenges in adjusting these, and the conditions which contribute to a positive reappraisal of these expectations. Importantly, the study demonstrated that feedback, collegial relationships and trial-and-error practices are fundamental for teachers to develop realistic expectations of themselves; and that retaining some sense of idealism allows teachers to maintain their ideological vision of themselves in a teaching role. The study also contributed to methodological advancement, providing an exemplar for modifying the three-interview model (Schuman, 1982; Seidman, 2013). This modification opens up opportunities for narrative inquiry and other time-intensive qualitative approaches to be condensed, without undermining the necessary, distinct phases. Further research may occur using a different sampling technique or focus on schools with a different demographic profile, however the most valuable research would take the form of a longitudinal study to ascertain the robustness and longevity of the adjusted expectations reported by the participants.



A number of changes for practice were also suggested, including mentoring and feedback processes in schools as well as a revision of departmental employment practices that hinder the professional experimentation of early-career teachers. A proposal for a teacher education program, based in universities, was briefly explained. Such a program would allow teacher candidates to confront their personal expectations before entry to the profession, recognise the nature of their existing expectations, and understand the adjustments to their personal expectations that are crucial to a successful transition to teaching.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Interview schedule

### ***1. Thinking about your first year/s of teaching, can you tell me about what you initially expected from yourself as a teacher?***

Additional or elaborated information may be requested by prompts such as:

- Why did teaching initially appeal to you?
- How did you become influenced to become a teacher?
- How did you envisage *quality teaching* in your first year/s?
- Are there any teachers, either from your own schooling or teaching experience, who influenced your own teaching ambitions? What made them effective?
- Looking back, how do you see the pressures you put on yourself in your first year/s?

### ***2. Thinking about these early expectations of yourself as a teacher, can you tell me about times when these expectations were challenged by any part of the role?***

Additional or elaborated information may be requested by prompts such as:

- What particular expectations of yourself were challenged in your role?
- How did certain events or experiences challenge these expectations?
- How were these expectations challenged by, for instance: planning, differentiation, or your own understanding of *quality teaching*?
- How did you feel when your expectations were challenged?

### ***3. Can you tell me about how your expectations of yourself as a teacher have changed during your first year/s?***

Additional or elaborated information may be requested by prompts such as:

- In what areas (for instance, planning, differentiation, behaviour management, and organisation) of your role have your own expectations of yourself changed?
- How do you see the change/s in your expectations? Do you see the change/s primarily positive or negative?
- How do you recall the reasons for the change/s? (for instance, aiming for a better work-life balance; a change or realisation caused by a particular circumstance; a change in attitude due to the influence of a mentor)
- What challenges did you face when adjusting or adapting these expectations?
- How did strategies or resources help you to think positively about realigning your expectations? (for example, specific people, resources, or events)
- How did you draw upon support and overcome the obstacles?
- How might your expectations of yourself change as you continue in the profession?