

**Down the rabbit hole:
Professional identities, professional learning,
and change in one Australian school.**

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution. This research has been conducted with the approval of the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (project number 2013/034).

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Abstract

This study takes researcher and reader down the rabbit hole of story with its unique approach to the phenomena of professional identity, professional learning, and school change. It examines the perspectives of 14 educators: a range of teachers and leaders in one independent Australian school and in the context of a teacher growth intervention. Set against the backdrop of the global push for teacher quality, and consequent worldwide initiatives in the arenas of teacher professional learning and school change, the study generates context-specific connections between lived critical moments of identity formation, learning, and leading.

A bricolaged paradigmatic stance weaves together a social constructionist, phenomenological approach to narrative inquiry. Data were generated primarily from individual narrative-eliciting interviews, of the researcher, two teachers, and 11 school leaders. Extended literary metaphor and known literary characters operate as a symbolic and structural frame. Alice, the White Rabbit, and the Cheshire Cat, from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, are analytical tools for the presentation and analysis of the perspectives of researcher, teacher, and leader participants.

While the study set out to explore the ways in which educators' experiences of professional learning (trans)form their senses of professional identity, it found that it is not just professional learning, but epiphanic life experiences, which shape professional selves and practices. School context, and the alignment of the individual with the collective, emerged as key factors for individual and school change. Transformation of educators' identities and practices was evident in environments which were supportive, challenging, and growth focused, rather than evaluation driven. Identity formation, individual professional growth, and collective school change were revealed to be unpredictable, fluid processes in which small, unexpected moments can have far-reaching effects. The findings have implications for the theorisation of identities, and the research and implementation of professional learning and school change.

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Preface: Dreaming Alice

The book Alice had been reading lay abandoned on the soft grass beside her, flooded as it was with curious words and silly rhymes. “What use is a book,” thought Alice, “without pictures, stories, and conversation? If I wrote a book, I would fill it to the brim with the most wonder-full stories and the most scintillating conversation!”

As she lay by the riverbank, Alice threaded daisies together dreamily. She had just finished a thought—“What silky white petals, so soft like a rabbit’s fur!”—when she saw a White Rabbit scamper right past her, as though on its way to some very important business. Alice, surprised by this peculiar sight, jumped up, pinafore bouncing, and raced after it, daisy chain trailing behind her.

The Rabbit, Alice had realised with a start, was carrying an oversized and elaborate pocket watch. It hurried on before bounding into a rather large rabbit hole. Arriving at the threshold of the rabbit hole, Alice peered into its cavernous depths which seemed to go on and on. “Could this be a bottomless hole or a portal to another world?” she pondered.

For a moment she thought she sensed the outline of a Cat’s tail flicking like a whip through the shadows, and even the quick shimmery flash of feline eyes. Alice blinked and the visions disappeared almost as soon as they appeared, so she could not be sure. She remained at the precarious edge, her toes jutting daringly over the mouth of the subterranean abyss.

Burning with curiosity about the Rabbit, the glimpses of Cat, and the dark burrow-portal before her, Alice leapt from the dark earth and into the rabbit hole vortex, her skirt billowing like a parachute around her.

1. Begin at the beginning: Introduction

“Begin at the beginning,” the King said gravely, “and go on till you come to the end: then stop.” (Carroll, 2014, p. 134)

1.1 Overview

Through the Preface, this research text opens into an imaginative world of story¹. This, and the deliberate choice to begin each chapter with a quotation from Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, sets up the well-known literary novel as a symbolic and structural frame for this thesis. Using the imagery and characters of Carroll’s timeless work, this thesis transports the reader “down the rabbit hole” into the stories of 14 educators from one Australian school. The nonsensical and inconsistent world of Wonderland provides an appropriate metaphor for the shifting political and theoretical landscape of education within which these stories are situated.

As implied by the Preface, I have framed myself as Alice for the purpose of this thesis. I am researcher, storyteller, and participant. I am the multiplicitous guide to this storied text and the stories within it. In my fluid and intersecting roles, my voice shifts between the distant analytic Waking Alice voice of outsider-researcher, and the imaginative voice of Dreaming Alice who is insider in the story and weaver of the stories. Chapters One to Four are largely told in the Waking Alice voice; here, I refer to myself in the third person as “the researcher” in order to establish the academic background and position of this study. In Chapters Five, Six, and Seven the voice moves—perhaps unexpectedly after so long at a distance—into the Dreaming Alice voice of storyteller. Chapter Five is largely narrated in the first person as I tell my own story. Chapters Eight and Nine return to the Waking Alice voice of analytic researcher. In addition to my own multiple and shifting voices, two teachers’ and 11 school leaders’ voices are woven into the narrative of this thesis.

¹ The Preface and Postscript are written by the researcher, drawing on Lewis Carroll’s novel *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, and relating it to this research text in a metaphorical way. These bookend texts, in which Alice may be viewed as the researcher or the reader of the thesis, are in italics to indicate their storylike departure from the rest of the thesis.

The contextual background for these narratives is the initial years of a school-based professional learning intervention: the Teacher Growth Initiative of Lutwidge School². This intervention was instigated by the school for its own purposes. I was involved in its inception as the school staff member charged with investigating and leading the development of a context-appropriate model for teacher growth. Having then worked at Lutwidge School for four years, initially as a head of faculty, this new role presented an opportunity to tap into the insider perspectives of a group of teachers and leaders who were at a critical point in school reform. The purpose of the present study was not to evaluate the Teacher Growth Initiative, but to conduct narrative research alongside the intervention in order to uncover insights into the interconnected phenomena of professional identity, professional learning, and school change.

The study's worldview is situated within an interpretive, social constructionist paradigm. This zeroes in on meaning making, in context, by using a qualitative methodology that is pursued in a natural setting, locates the observer in the world, focuses on people as the human instrument for research, uses human methods for collection of empirical materials that describe meanings in individuals' lives, and values tacit knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011b; Guba & Lincoln, 1988). It seeks multivoiced descriptions of lived experience in a particular time and place in order to disclose and reveal (Van Maanen, 1983a), rather than to measure. Concerned with seeking an understanding of individuals' lived experiences (Ricoeur, 1975; van Manen, 1997), this study assumes that learning is situated, that identities are enmeshed with the worlds they inhabit (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Rodgers & Scott, 2008), and that people can best be understood through their situated experiences and the retelling of those experiences. Teachers' and school leaders' identities are seen by this study as contextually-embedded perceived-selves-in-flux. Professional growth is ongoing and we are always becoming (Dunne, Pryor, & Yates, 2005). This study acknowledges that professional identity, professional learning, and school change are rich, socioculturally-grounded, complex, and dynamic. These phenomena are, for educational practitioners, highly personal (Day & Sachs, 2004; Sarason, 1971; Saunders, 2013), wound up inextricably in teachers' and leaders' senses of themselves. The present study accepts the complexity of teaching and the vulnerability which comes from teachers' highly personal investment in their classroom practice

² The name "Lutwidge School" is a pseudonym. In keeping with this study's symbolic and structural frame of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the name Lutwidge comes from the real name of author Lewis Carroll: Charles Lutwidge Donaldson. The name of the professional learning intervention, "Teacher Growth Initiative," is also pseudonymic.

(Goodson, 1991), and school leaders' investment in the leading of their teams. This necessitates a research approach that honours teachers' and leaders' voices, addresses the multidimensionality of these phenomena, and acknowledges their situatedness.

In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the King of Hearts, in the trial scene, tells Alice to "begin at the beginning," go on until she comes to the end, and "then stop" (Carroll, 2014, p. 134). In some ways, a thesis tells a story from beginning to end, yet the beginning of any research is a deliberate choice. This thesis, as explicated in my own story in Chapter Five and the limitations section of the conclusion, is acutely influenced by the researcher lens; that is, my own idealistic-leaning, organisationally-embedded, insider perspective on Lutwidge School and the Teacher Growth Initiative, as someone who was integrally part of the intervention and had a positive experience of it. The starting point of a thesis is demarcated by the author as they delineate the appropriate contextual and theoretical "beginnings" of the work. Rather than stopping abruptly at its end, the author of a thesis offers possibilities for new journeys. The middle of the thesis is not a linear telling, as the King of Hearts' quotation might suggest, but a sequence which makes sense of the iterations and evolutions of the research. This thesis takes the reader through its telling and sense making as follows.

This introductory chapter outlines the beginning of the study: its context, background, rationale, and the lens of the rabbit hole as portal into a land of phenomenological wondering. Chapter Two reviews literatures that provide existing perspectives on professional identity, professional learning, and school change. It then situates this study within the existing body of knowledge and poses the research question: In what ways might teachers' and school leaders' experiences of professional learning (trans)form their sense of professional selves; *and* in what ways might school leaders' professional identities, perceptions of professional learning, and strategic intentions, shape and be shaped by the culture and enacting of professional learning in a school context? The study's social constructionist, phenomenological paradigm is made clear in Chapter Three, and is followed in Chapter Four by an explanation of the narrative method undertaken.

Chapters Five, Six, and Seven present this study's data in storied format. Using the imaginative Dreaming Alice voice, they take the reader down the rabbit hole into a world of story. Continuing with the extended literary metaphor of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the stories present the data under the pseudonyms of Alice the researcher, the

hurried White Rabbit the teacher, and the ambiguous Cheshire Cat the school leader. Each concludes with a brief analytic summary of findings.

Bringing the reader back up out of the rabbit hole of storyworld, Chapter Eight discusses the findings and links them to the studied phenomena, research questions, and existing literature. Concluding the thesis, Chapter Nine outlines the study's implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research. The resulting knowledge is there applied to the theorisation of identities and professional learning, and to research into and practice of professional learning and school change.

It is the little-explored amalgamation of teacher and school leader voices, through story, which allows this study to paint a multifaceted portrait of educator professional identities and learning from both insider (teacher) and strategic leadership (school leader) perspectives. By exploring factors which contribute to powerful professional learning and its impact on educator identities, this study provides applicable insights into how schools, education systems, and policy makers can provide structures, frameworks, and processes for professional learning and teacher quality improvement. In uniquely bringing together three interrelated but often separated phenomena, the present study explores professional learning which positively engages educators; results in transformation of educators' practices; affects educators' storying of their identities; and warrants further investigation by school leaders and policy makers.

1.2 Context of the study

Stories are not collected like found objects, rather they are generated in context. Stories are shaped by their environments, just as environments are shaped in turn by what has been said within or about them (Gubrium, 2010). As people are inextricably connected to their social, cultural, and institutional settings (Moen, 2006), analyses of life stories must be attentive to the contexts in which they are produced (Elliot, 2005; Feldman, Sköldberg, Brown, & Horner, 2004; Gabriel, 1991; Gubrium, 2010; Hawkins & Saleem, 2012; Mishler, 1999; Polkinghorne, 2007). The narrative report is true only for the time and place for the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) and the researcher must provide thick enough description of the time and context of the research in order to allow transferability; "enough that another investigator or practitioner can say 'that context is similar to my

own in these ways, and different in these ways, and on the balance of probability I judge that those findings will be useful for me in my context” (Geelan, 2003, p. 18).

Unlike studies which have focused on disadvantaged or government schools as sites of professional learning and leadership (e.g. Baguley & Kerby, 2012; Comer, 1980; Louis, 2006), the research site for this study was Lutwidge School, an Australian, non-selective, independent, well-resourced, Pre-Kindergarten to Year 12 school, with about 1500 students from urban, rural, and international backgrounds. This site was a school in which the researcher had been a teacher and middle leader for four years, prior to taking on the role of leading the Teacher Growth Initiative. At the time of writing, the researcher is in her eighth year of employment at the school; she continues to teach and lead the now fully implemented teacher growth model.

The Teacher Growth Initiative—a teacher-directed growth-through-observation-and-coaching intervention, situated within the context of Lutwidge School—also requires explication, as it provided a backdrop for this study’s participants and their stories of identity formation, learning, leading, and change. As outlined in Appendix A, the researcher’s Teacher Growth Initiative work at Lutwidge School occurred alongside her research work for this PhD. The Teacher Growth Initiative was adjacent to, but was not initiated as part of, this study. Moreover, this study is not an evaluation of the Initiative. Any data collected in the researcher’s school role did not “cross the line” to her research, and the data collected for this study was bound by ethical obligation to remain between researcher and each participant.

As outlined in timeline form in Appendix A, the Teacher Growth Initiative began with a proposal phase in 2012, initiated by the principal. In it, the researcher, in her school role, wrote a recommendation and discussion paper which she presented to the school board. This included the proposal of a model for teacher growth which used a combination of the Danielson Framework for Teaching (Danielson, 2013), non-inferential lesson observations, and cognitive coaching conversations (Costa & Garmston, 2006). Once the school board had discussed and approved the Teacher Growth Initiative, teachers were invited to volunteer to be part of a team of teachers responsible for a participatory action research process (Timperley, 2012) of piloting, iteratively fine-tuning, and developing the initial recommendations into a complete program for implementation across the school. This study occurred adjacent to the Initiative, during its first two years: 2013 and 2014.

During 2013 and 2014, the Teacher Growth Initiative teams operated as professional learning communities, which, as promoted by Louis (2006), worked across year levels and disciplines. Across the two years, teachers involved included those from 10 faculties, from Pre-Kindergarten to Year 12, and from a variety of career stages. Apart from the researcher's school-based role, which was to coordinate the Teacher Growth Initiative team's efforts and report back to the principal and school board, all team members were teachers without formal management positions. They were provided with team time and training in the Danielson Framework for Teaching, collecting non-inferential lesson observation data, and cognitive coaching.

The Teacher Growth Initiative is an example of a school coaching and teacher improvement model which grew from both the top down and the bottom up. It was initiated by the principal, out of the school's strategic plan, literature on teacher quality, and a changing national landscape of professional standards for teachers. It was trialled and developed by teams of teachers. Across the first two years of this school intervention there were 19 Teacher Growth Initiative team members (including the researcher), 11 teacher coachees, and a number of other teachers who were coached on a more informal basis as part of Teacher Growth Initiative team members' training and practice. Further description of the Initiative, including the Danielson Framework for Teaching and cognitive coaching, can be found in Appendix B.

1.3 Background to the study

The present study is set against an international educational landscape which can be conceptualised as a nonsensical cacophonous one, reflecting Lewis Carroll's imaginary Wonderland in which characters do not often make sense and words are used to confuse and confound. One of the more recent theorisations of the international educational landscape is Sahlberg's (2011) Global Education Reform Movement (GERM). Sahlberg names three inspirations for current educational agendas: a focus on constructivist learner-centred teaching which sees learning as being done by the learner; public demand for inclusive education; and a culture of accountability, performativity, and commodification. Sahlberg uses his acronym GERM in ironic ways to frame education reforms which focus on standardisation, prescription, and test-based accountability, as

infections spreading through international policies, systems, and schools. Finland is provided as an example of an education system uninfected with the GERM virus. Sahlberg tells us that the term *accountability* cannot be found in Finnish policy discourse, suggesting that the words used in education policies shape their enactment. High stakes testing has been characterised as a villain, a virus, and a symptom of authoritarianism (Zhao, 2014). Perhaps the international culture of testing, at the heart of much education reform, is the Queen of Hearts of the educational Wonderland: autocratic, a force of fear, and tyrannically focused on a narrow view of right and wrong. Australia, the national context of the present study, is influenced by this globalisation and economisation of education policy, and the emphasis on performative accountabilities (Lingard, Thompson, & Sellar, 2016).

It is against this backdrop of an educational landscape focused on performativity, accountability, and commodification that the international teacher quality agenda is located. The ongoing global focus on teacher quality, sometimes referred to as teacher effectiveness, as it pertains to student learning, has been a propulsive change force in education at global, national, system, and school levels. It is from debates around how best to improve student learning, by focusing on developing teachers, that this study arises. Generally agreed-upon notions around the importance of teacher quality are as follows³.

- Teaching is a complex practice (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Eisner, 1988; Garmston & Wellman, 2013; Goldenberg, 2004; Grundy & Robison, 2004; Marzano, 2007; Sarason, 1971, 1996).
- Individual teachers can positively impact student learning and achievement (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005; Hattie, 2009; Jensen, Hunter, Sonnemann, & Burns, 2012; Marzano & Toth, 2013; Snook, O'Neill, Clark, O'Neill, & Openshaw, 2009; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007; Zammit et al., 2007).
- A teacher's quality as an educator, including knowledge and understanding of content and pedagogy, can be developed (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Drago-Severson, 2012; Jensen et al., 2012; Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009).

³ References in the bulleted list below are not teased out into their nuances, but are clustered into those themes which re-appear across literatures promoting a teacher quality agenda, an agenda which operates as an overarching background to the present study.

- Students benefit when their teachers learn, grow, and change (Allen, Pianta, Gregory, Mikami, & Lun, 2011; Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Drago-Severson, Blum-DeStefano, & Asghar, 2013; Jensen et al., 2012; Louis, 2006; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Slater, Davies, & Burgess, 2009; Darling-Hammond, Wei et al., 2009; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007).
- The growth of teachers into more and more masterful designers, facilitators, and enactors of learning should be a central focus of current educational practice (Danielson, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Marzano, 2007; Muijs et al., 2014; Timperley et al., 2007; Wasley, Hampel, & Clark, 1997; Wiggins & McTighe, 2007).

Some see the quality of teachers and leaders as the measure by which schools are judged (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2014). Others, such as Wiliam (2016) challenge the use of international measures such as PISA for measuring the effectiveness of education. While this study does not endeavour to investigate how student achievement is related to professional learning, it is student learning which is at the centre of worldwide debates and initiatives around professional learning, school change, and even sometimes professional identity. The link between student achievement and teacher quality has been made by a number of researchers (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Hattie, 2015a; OECD, 2005; Snook et al., 2009; Wiliam, 2014b; Wiliam, 2016). While student learning is a complex phenomenon influenced by many factors (Louis, 2006; OECD, 2005), some claim that the quality of teachers is the single most important *school-based* variable influencing student achievement.⁴ This impact on student learning is what has foregrounded teacher quality as a major focus of education and school reform efforts (Ferguson, 1991; Rose, 2006); and investment in teacher learning for continuous improvement (Wiliam, 2014b). While the fixation on individual (as opposed to collective) teacher quality is seen by some as misplaced, teachers' quality is seen as an imperative educational focus (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Hattie, 2015b). Reforms which focus on developing the quality of teachers often focus on professional learning, and on building school cultures which enable individual and organisational change to occur. Despite the history of school reform showing that most

⁴ The claim that quality of teachers is the single most important *school-based* variable influencing student achievement is made by a number of researchers (e.g. AITSL, 2012; Allen et al., 2011; Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005; Hattie, 2009; Hattie, 2015a; Jensen et al., 2012; Schmoker, 2006; Slater et al., 2009; Snook et al., 2009; Timperley et al., 2007; Wiliam, 2014a, 2014b; Zammit et al., 2007).

educational change efforts have either been unsuccessful or with short-lived impact (Hargreaves, 2006), improving teacher quality continues to be a central worldwide educational agenda. Schools and education communities around the world are focusing on ways to improve the quality of their teachers and of teaching, through professional learning initiatives and reform at school, district, and national levels.

Substantial efforts by many countries, often on large scales, to augment student outcomes through the development of teacher quality, have often come from the top down, imposed with a focus on teacher evaluation rather than growth. Initiatives like the USA's *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, the introduction of professional standards for teachers in England (established 2007) and Scotland (established 2013), the development of a Global Network on Teaching Quality and Effectiveness (2012), and the focus on teacher quality of The Global Cities Education Network, are examples of international attempts to address the attraction, education, development, retention, and evaluation of teachers. The *No Child Left Behind Act* mandated that teachers receive high quality professional learning opportunities that are: sustained; aligned with imposed standards; focused on increasing knowledge of their subject and of scientifically-based instructional strategies; and regularly evaluated for effectiveness on teachers and students. Performance pay initiatives have been experimented with in a variety of ways in a variety of places, such as Nashville, New York City, Dallas, North Carolina, Michigan, Israel, England, Kenya, and India (Leigh, 2013). Elite teacher-graduate programs such as Teach for America in the USA and Teach First in England are attempts to raise the standards and profile of teaching, but as Wiliam (2014b) points out, there is no clear evidence of the effectiveness of these initiatives over traditional routes. In addition, many North American states are implementing rigorous teacher evaluation models, utilising frameworks such as the Danielson Framework for Teaching, which intend to raise accountability and quality of teachers. These evaluative models often involve scoring teachers and schools, putting a number to their effectiveness based on observations and test scores. Despite a lack of evidence for these models of teacher accountability and top down evaluation—and warnings that a policy focus on punitive accountability measures is “crude,” “demotivating,” and has “no chance of working” (Fullan & Quinn, 2016)—they persist around the world.

Research has aimed to redesign and investigate the impacts of teacher feedback and evaluation approaches in order to best serve student learning, teacher improvement, and school accountability (e.g. Kane & Staiger, 2012; Sartain, Stoelinga, & Brown, 2011). A

recent horizon scan of global cross-industry trends in professional learning emerged out of the continuing recognition of the power of professional learning to advance teacher practice and improve student outcomes” (AITSL, 2014). Research focused on schools and educators has considered teacher perspectives (e.g. Comer, 1980; Goldenberg, 2004; Hammerness, 2006; Jackson, 1986; Rosenholtz, 1991), and leader experiences (Comer, 1980; DuFour, 2002; Gurr & Day, 2014; Holmes, Clement, & Albright, 2013; Johnson, 2009; Louis, 2006), but there remains a need for research which illuminates how practitioners themselves believe better outcomes can be achieved and how they envision and enact these. Sarason (1996), Fullan (2000), and Goldenberg (2004) all call for more perspectives on school change and professional learning: comprehensive descriptions of change processes in schools, examination of school change initiatives from the outset, and detailed longitudinal views of school change, respectively. Lave and Wenger (1991) agree that community members’ points of view and conditions which make deeply transformative learning possible, are valuable areas for research.

The Australian education context, relevant to the Australian school studied here, has also been focused on the quality of teachers and teaching. Australian government initiatives include: the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Barr et al., 2008) which had the goal of developing high quality teachers to improve student learning; introduction of high stakes standardised testing (National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy) to measure student achievement in order to drive education improvement; formation of the National Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality (2009-2013); the National Plan for School Improvement (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013); and formation of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, established 2010), and Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (introduced in 2010) and Principals (introduced in 2011). The Australian government has been trialling reforms such as performance-based teacher pay which rewards quality teaching, while the Australian Review of Funding for Schooling (Gonski et al., 2011) and the National Plan for School Improvement (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013) positioned teacher quality as fundamental to improving education for Australia’s students.

While international and Australian education systems have been applying national reforms to improve teaching and learning in classrooms, many of these foreground competitive or punitive approaches. Some warn against these kinds of negative drivers of change (Day, 2002; Fullan, 2011; Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Hattie, 2015b; Kemmis, 2010; Sahlberg, 2015),

arguing that building education reform on merit-based, standardised, test-focused measures develops a culture of fear and competition, rather than collaboration and learning. Merit pay, for instance, is seen by a number of scholars as an unsuccessful intervention which commodifies, oversimplifies, and even demeans, educational practice (Baguley & Kerby, 2012; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Kemmis, 2010). It has been found to negatively impact teacher collegiality (Leigh, 2013) and result in teachers working fewer hours with more stress and less enthusiasm (Hattie, 2015b). Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) warn about excessive and obsessive focus on achievement, advising that “not all conversations about teaching need to be connected to a test score or target” (p. 94), and that learning cannot be separated from lives or the emotional and relational aspects of education. Schmoker (1999) maintains that results or achievement data used to assess teachers or drive school improvement be carefully considered. He describes many measures of achievement as narrow and one-size-fits-all, arguing that schools and systems be careful to measure what matters, or risk alienating practitioners. Wiliam (2014b) also sees measures of teacher effectiveness as unreliable, noting that when teacher performance measures are linked to job or financial decisions, teachers are unlikely to innovate, tending instead to performance-teach to the evaluation. Consistent with Day and Sachs’ (2004) emphasis on teachers’ collaborative, cooperative action and interaction with their wider contexts, are Hattie’s two recent papers (2015a, 2015b) which warn against trying to fix people and systems, and suggest instead that the focus be on growth and collaboration. A performativity agenda coupled with a test-focused teacher-monitoring system encourages uncritical teacher compliance, reduces teachers’ connections with individual students, challenges teachers’ identities, and diminishes teachers’ senses of motivation, efficacy, job satisfaction, and agency (Day, 2002). Those critical of competitive or punitive measures suggest that the quality of teaching and of teachers is not measurable by tests (Kemmis, 2010), and that negative drivers of change are ineffective in driving positive transformation. These cautions are a challenge to those schools and systems which cultivate fear, competition, and compliance.

Proponents of positive school change advocate for constructive drivers of change. Educational reform would benefit from being driven by those things which foster motivation; engage people in collaborative, continuous, focused improvement; and have wide-reaching impact (Fullan, 2011; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Zhao (2016) acknowledges the strong desire for measuring students, teachers, and schools, but argues for treating numbers with suspicion and expanding what is measured in education. Hargreaves and

Shirley (2009) advise that improvement be evidence-informed rather than data-driven. Darling-Hammond (1997) argues that student progress which takes into account students' different starting points or changes in the population of students taking a test, is valuable, although she does not advocate for using this information for remuneration. Some see a fitting approach to be focusing on building the culture of schools as collaborative professional learning communities (Gonski et al., 2011; Hattie, 2015a) which engage in the complexities of practice, in the development of educators' beliefs and practices, and in collective learning culture. The recent book *Flip the system: Changing education from the ground up* (Evers & Kneyber, 2016) combines the contributions of teachers, researchers, and education experts, who promote a subversion of current hierarchies and a democratised view of educational reform. The focus on positive change indicates a need for research that examines education contexts which are utilising positive drivers of change to build efficacy, individual capacity, and collaborative expertise. The researcher's task, as Alice, traversing the educational landscape as practitioner, researcher, and storyweaver, is as multiplicitous as her voices: to unravel and find sense in the cacophony of the current educational landscape; to weave and share the lived experiences of educators; and to reveal and elucidate new meanings relevant to educational theory, policy, and practice.

1.4 Rationale

The present study emerges out of the global push to improve teacher quality, and the call for positive drivers and growth-focused models for developing teacher quality, and therefore student learning. By studying teachers and leaders involved in one Australian school's context-specific growth-focused approach to improving teacher quality, it gets to the nucleus of teacher improvement: how to best develop teachers through professional learning opportunities and school change interventions. No single solution is ever suitable for all education contexts (Fullan, 2000; Hargreaves, 2015; Wiliam, 2016). Rather, schools are encouraged to build tailored models which are owned by the organisation and its members. The bespoke school approach to professional learning which backgrounded this study involved teachers themselves as designers and implementers of change. The study aimed, in part, to uncover in what ways the Lutwidge School's method of implementing change through the Teacher Growth Initiative interacted with and shaped teachers and leaders, their senses of self and their practices.

While there are studies telling educator stories (e.g. Comer, 1980; Goldenberg, 2004; Gurr & Day, 2014), and those that have interviewed rather than surveyed educators (e.g. Jackson, 1986; Rosenholtz, 1991), they, like this study, are limited to the context within which they occurred and their narrow selection of participants. The present study explores, through educator stories, the fullness of professional identities, professional learning, and school change, in an authentic school context. It illuminates how professional learning shapes teachers' professional identities, their constantly shifting self-perceptions and self-constructions. In turn, it examines the shaping of school leaders' identities and the role of the school leader in shaping professional learning in school contexts. The stories shared and analysed here are vital because, rather than provide a mere evaluation of the school-based teacher quality professional learning initiative (which does provide insights for policy and practice), they recognise and celebrate the personal, situated, and complex nature of identity transformation and professional learning, as well as the intricacies of school change, from the perspective of those inside it. In sharing stories of the researcher, two teachers, six middle leaders, and five executive school leaders, this study layers the perspectives of multiple stakeholders and those not often included in school reform, as recommended by Malone (2015) and as implied by Sahlberg's (2011) assertion that the voices of practitioners are rarely heard in education reform. In particular, it includes the voices of middle leaders, who are often absent from research literature. Teachers, while present in much literature around school-based reform, were revealed in this study to be an especially vulnerable participant group, with only four of 11 teachers involved in the first year of the Teacher Growth Initiative volunteering to participate in this study, and two of those four eventually withdrawing.

The purpose of studying individuals in one Australian school and delving deeply into the stories of educators is, in part, to contribute to the literature on educator identity and educator professional learning. It contributes to the call for new research on the effectiveness of alternative strategies for professional learning, including those that are sustained over time, and involve collective participation and active learning (as called for by Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001).

1.5 Narrative methodology

Viewing participants' identities and experiences within a social constructionist paradigm requires a qualitative focus on rich descriptions which reveal the perspectives of individuals within their social worlds (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011b). It requires data which focus on describing and understanding complexity (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Janesick, 2000), and on looking close and deep (Miles, 1979). While qualitative data are rich, real, and undeniable, they come with challenges in their overwhelming nature and loose frameworks for analysis (Miles, 1979). Narrative method—although described as inherently messy (Marshall & Rossman, 1989), “unfinished and unfinishable” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007, p. 375)—allows for the systematic study of personal experience and meaning, especially beneficial for representing and analysing identities (Riessman, 1993, 2002), as is the case here. In seeking depth through small, information-rich samples (Green, 2002), a detailed microanalytic picture is captured (Creswell, 2012, 2013). In attempting to describe, understand, and explain important aspects of the world (Squire, Andrews, & Tamboukou, 2008), research designs like this one are able to offer critical insights into individual mindsets (Flory & Iglesias, 2010; Gabriel, 1991; Hawkins & Saleem, 2012; Polkinghorne, 2007). Going in close brings researchers, and therefore readers, closer to the lived experience of educators, enriching the lives of participant, researcher, and reader (Creswell, 2012).

This narrative study engages with story as a way people make sense of their world and their place in it (Feldman et al., 2004; Gee, 2011a; Mishler, 1986). Narrative is ubiquitous, always there “like life itself,” “international, transhistorical, transcultural” (Barthes, 1975, p. 237); both about living and part of it (Ellis & Bochner, 2000); a continuously reconstructed, storied version of reality which displays transformation or change (Bruner, 1991; Clandinin & Connelly, 1998; Gabriel, 1991; Geelan, 2003; Squire, 2008). Narrative engages with and respects the wholeness of people's lived experiences and creates a rich picture (Goodwin & Horowitz, 2002). The narrative approach used in this study, while amalgamating participant stories to protect anonymity and create a full portrait of each group, aims to avoid pulverising life into decontextualised fragments (van Manen, 1997). As a multidimensional, multivocal method it tries to capture a complex understanding of human existence (Larsson & Sjöblom, 2010). The openness of stories enables narrators and listeners to derive meanings that are relevant in their own social context (Flory & Iglesias, 2010). Rather than attempting to control participant responses, the present study

allows iterative diversions, digressions, and surprises to “follow participants down their diverse trails” (Riessman, 2002, p. 696).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) challenge narrative researchers to ask themselves what will be learned about their phenomena that is special and can only be known through narrative method. In this case, the holistic narrative exploration of the phenomena of professional identity, professional learning, and school change provided understandings that can be applied to improving practice and driving educational change (Hamilton, Smith, & Worthington, 2008). Narrative research was chosen as the method which resonated most powerfully with the paradigm, purpose, and phenomena of this study. It provided a way to celebrate the subjectivity of experience, and explore epiphanic moments that shape identities and learning.

1.6 Thesis as rabbit hole portal into storyworld

Challenges of meaning making and participant anonymity are inherent in any research that looks at rich qualitative data which reflects the humanness of its participants. As narratives are never simply reports of experiences, but make sense of and distort those experiences (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 1997), how does a narrative researcher re-present participant stories in a way which comes closest to the essence of our understandings and presents them in a trustworthy way (Ely, 2007)? How does a researcher-storyteller ensure they do not cross from poetic license into misrepresentation (Gabriel, 2008)? The task of the narrative researcher is to find a way of telling participant narratives through research texts in a way that is compelling (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007; Ely, 2007). In order to be effective in communicating stories and their meaning, research texts need to be engaging, readable, and interpretable. In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the Eaglet says, “Speak English! . . . I don't know the meaning of half those long words, and, what's more, I don't believe you do either!” (Carroll, 2014, p. 24). As the larger audience for research is “all humans who care about whatever is the topic of study” (Lofland, 1995, p. 42), one challenge is how to produce a text which was accessible and interesting (Sikes & Gale, 2006) to academics and practitioners, while being systematic and trustworthy.

Narrative research has been described as quilt, collage, web, portrait, journey (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), window (Riessman, 2002), and portal (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006;

Volker, Phillips, & Anderson, 2011). A portal—as doorway, gate, and entrance—speaks to the function of this research: sharing experience in order to make meaning and enter the storyworld. This research text can be seen as a rabbit hole portal into a land of phenomenological wondering, taking the reader down the rabbit hole into a wonderworld of story. It presents one example of a playful, deliberate, and systematic approach to narrative research, employing Lewis Carroll’s novel *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* as symbolic and structural frame. Watson (2015) promotes playfulness as an orientation to research, as a way to re-see the world, noting that “what genuinely delights and sparks the sociological imagination is rare” (p. 418). The choice to structure the thesis using a known literary story taps into the readers’ experience of known cultural models (Mus, 2014). It is reminiscent of Collins’ (2015) use of aspects of Carroll’s Alice stories in her doctoral dissertation on social marketing. Another example is Hoogland’s likening of the character of Little Red Riding Hood to the narrative researcher (Hoogland & Wiebe, 2009). Others, too, have used emblematic representations in their stories, such as a Scottish Highlands river as life metaphor (Findlay & Jones, 2014), the bat from Aesop’s fable as researcher and storyteller (Jones, 2015); and the Persephone myth and labyrinth image as metaphor for the journey of the doctoral student (Jones, 2013). Watson (2015) theorises humour as an analytical attitude and tool for communicating research, drawing on literary traditions which do so. She adds that dismissing humour as a human way of meaning making undermines research. While not using humour, this study does embrace the playful and the literary; reference to the literary novel has been extended into a long thread that weaves the research together, as well as a tool for analysis, communication, and participant protection.

Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland focuses the reader on language, sense making, and identity, making it an appropriate vehicle for the present study of professional being, becoming, learning, and leading. Characters from Lewis Carroll’s novel emerged as fitting symbolic figures to represent the researcher (Alice), the teacher (White Rabbit), and the school leader (Cheshire Cat). These character names, and the literary and cultural meanings attached to those characters, were selected deliberately to add to the meaning making of the stories: Alice as curious wonderer; the White Rabbit as pressured time-watcher caught between hierarchical layers; and the Cheshire Cat as sometimes-supportive, sometimes-philosophising, disappearing, reappearing guide and advisor, often deliberately revealing only part of itself. The decision to use literary characters and metaphor in the study was

not driven by a desire for novelty but emerged through a systematic iterative working through of the challenges of narrative research.

This approach straddles, as others' methods do (see, for instance, Kallio, 2015; Kara, 2015; Watson, 2000; Wiebe, 2010; Wiebe, 2014), both creativity and systematisation. The thesis itself includes quotations from the novel and researcher-created storybook-style illustrations as devices to build a bridge between the worlds of research and story, method and imagination. The study used two distinct voices to demarcate the connected modes of analytic-researcher (Waking Alice) and storyteller (Dreaming Alice). Chapters One to Four and Eight and Nine are written in the distant voice of the Waking Alice. The constraints of academic writing mirror the rules and regimentations of Victorian England in which *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is set; there are certain expectations of how one is expected to behave as researcher and academic writer. In Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, the signpost "Down the rabbit hole" is used to signal to readers that they are entering the storyworld of Dreaming Alice and to anticipate the change in voice. The freer and less distant voice of the Dreaming Alice embraces the imagination and curiosity of Wonderland. The words "Up and out of the rabbit hole" indicate a return to the methodical world of the Waking Alice researcher voice after the participant stories. The illustrations are used to frame the emblematic characters for the reader, working to dismantle popular constructions of *Alice* characters and re-form them in the mind's eye of the reader. The characters become a familiar-but-new analytical tool for this study. The illustrated character portraits additionally serve to remind readers of the storybook genre, helping them to enter the storyworld. In this way the write-up of the stories was influenced by narrative researchers' reliance on readers' expectations of story; stories were deliberately constructed in a way which relied on both craft and artistic vision (Coulter & Smith, 2009; Eisner, 1981).

This thesis, acting as a portal, has been written with the intention of honouring the stories and voices of participants, capturing their essence through compelling telling. It transports readers into the experiences of others while maintaining their anonymity. Readers may, like Alice, return from their journey through the rabbit hole portal with new knowledge and a heightened understanding of professional identity, professional learning, and school change.

2. The rabbit hole went straight on like a tunnel: Burrowing into the literature

The rabbit hole went straight on like a tunnel for some way and then dipped suddenly down, so suddenly that Alice had not a moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself falling down what seemed to be a very deep well.

Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly . . .

Down, down, down! Would the fall never come to an end?

(Carroll, 2014, pp. 2-3)

In many ways, digging into interconnecting scholarly literatures is like burrowing deep into dark earth. The reader uncovers insights and discovers connections as she or he navigates divergent, subterranean tunnels. In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, as Alice slowly falls through the rabbit hole, she sees books, maps, and surprising objects such as an empty jar of orange marmalade. In digging into the intersecting phenomena of professional identity, professional learning, and school change, this chapter looks, in turn, at the dense literature surrounding each of these phenomena. The purpose of this chapter is to identify current knowledge, bring together diverse threads of debate, and foreground areas for further exploration.

Firstly, this chapter canvasses the theorisation of professional identities, in order to consider the role of the perceived and enacted educator self, in individual change and school reform. Secondly, a review of the ways in which scholars suggest that educator professional learning might most effectively be implemented in school settings, with a view to teacher growth and change, is presented. Thirdly, research and writing around school change provides a strategic perspective on education reform, from a school and leadership standpoint. Figure 1 shows visually that the quest for teacher quality, in order to improve student learning and achievement, is an overarching context. The diagram represents the interconnectedness of the three studied phenomena by showing them as overlapping, interlocking burrows. It is the overlap between these phenomena which is explored in this chapter under the headings of professional identity, professional learning, and school change.

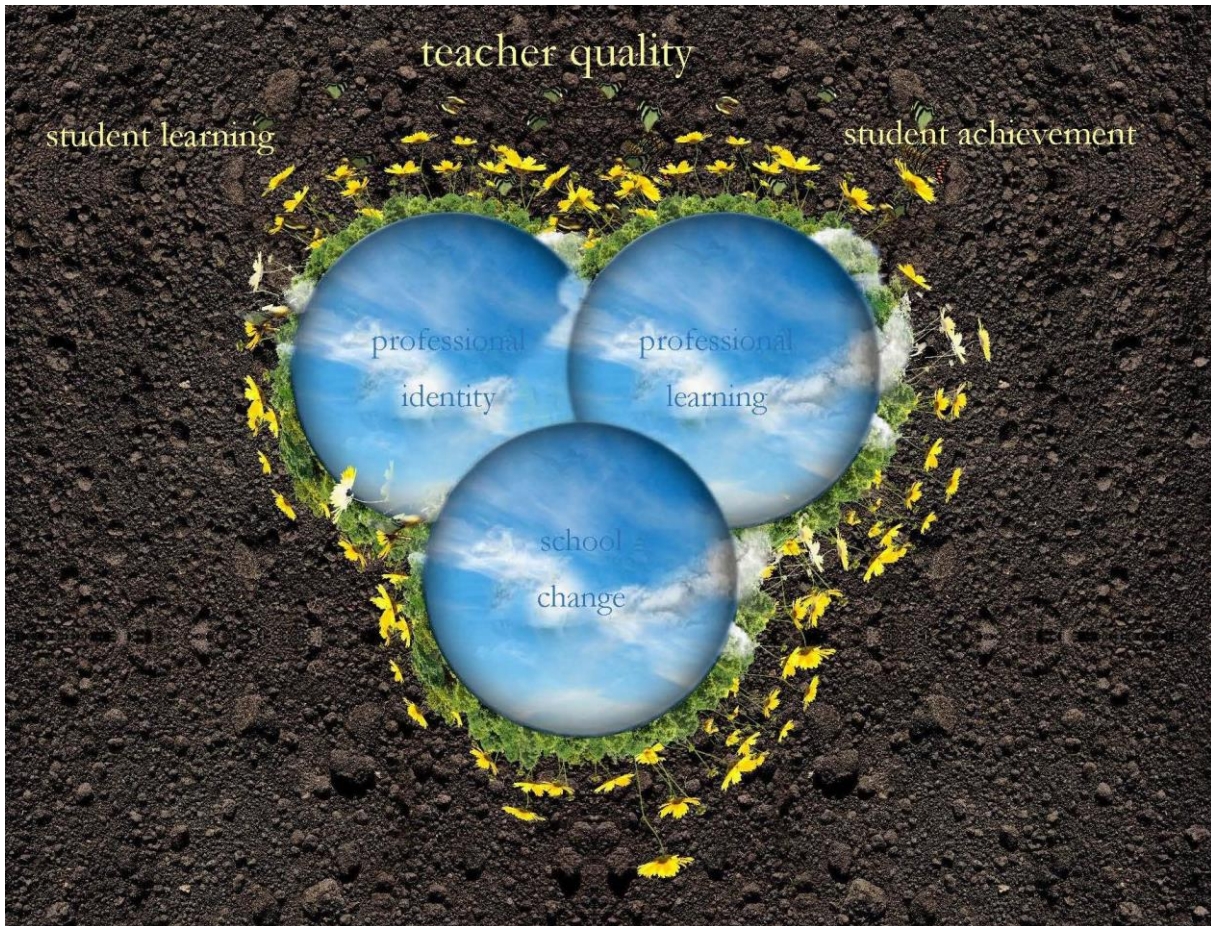


Figure 1: Diagram of the reviewed literature

The literatures reveal that these phenomena are viewed from various vantage points, through a variety of methods, and occasionally through multiple perspectives (for multiple perspectives, see Comer, 1980; Goldenberg, 2004). Weaving together existing theory and practice developed an understanding of what has come before, what has been done, and what areas would benefit from exploration and embellishment. In this chapter, after the discussion of the literature, the body of knowledge is summarised and the present study situated within it. Finally, the emerging research question is outlined.

2.1 Professional identity

The global push to develop the quality of teachers and teaching often focuses on what instructional knowledge and skills are optimal, but not on how teachers, or those school leaders charged with supporting the professional learning of teachers, perceive and enact their professional selves. Literature around educator professional identity is often focused on the teacher, sometimes on the principal, and rarely on the middle leader. Reforms

would benefit from engaging not only with evidence-informed best practice in teacher quality, professional learning, and school leadership, but also with how teachers and school leaders describe themselves, to themselves and to others (Lasky, 2005). Mockler (2013) argues that, in discussions of professional learning for educators, using a lens of identity is more useful than one of teacher quality. Examining professional identity allows for the exploration of what it is that shapes educators' development of professional identity perceptions, what shifts those self-perceptions, and in what ways schools and systems might work with a greater understanding of educator identities when designing and implementing education reform. In understanding the teacher and the school leader as perceived and enacted self, ways of supporting professional learning can be conceptualised, through mechanisms that harness educators' wonder, curiosities, and passions (Holly, 1989).

Although theorisation of the self has a long history (see, for instance Cooley, 1902), by the 1980s, identity had emerged as a rich, complex, and explicit field of study (e.g. Bannister & Fransella, 1986; Erikson, 1980; Weinreich, 1986), making distinctions between internal and external, and personal and sociocultural, identities, and drawing from a variety of theoretical frameworks. For example, Weinreich's (1986) Identity Structure Analysis framework was an attempt to synthesise psychodynamic, personal construct, and symbolic interactionist approaches to identity. The field of identity remains interdisciplinary and diverse, with inconsistent views of what identity is and how it is shaped. Although scholars have applied a multiplicity of approaches to grapple with this concept and its complexity, Lawler (2014) argues that it is not possible to provide a single, overarching definition of identity as it can mean different things in different contexts. While some lament the range of theoretical frameworks underpinning studies of professional identity as revealing an underdeveloped and confused field (Bridges, Macklin, & Trede, 2012), Lawler celebrates the complexity of identity's many interconnected facets, arguing that scholars should aim for precision in their explanations of their approaches to identity, but not fracture identity into separate phenomena.

Within the social constructionist paradigm, this study takes as its definition of identity: the ongoing sense-making process of contextually-embedded perceived-selves-in-flux. Identity is viewed here as the personal-and-professional, socioculturally-entrenched way that we make sense of ourselves, to ourselves, and the authored image we present to others (Day & Kington, 2008). This study draws on Holland et al.'s (1998) description of

identities as “imaginings of self in worlds of action” (p. 5), and Weinreich and Saunderson’s (2003) distinction between identity and self, in which identity is the totality of the self’s contextual being-in-world experiences, and self is the singular agent of enaction. “Identity,” in the present study, is understood as the broader concept of being in the world, while “self” is conceived as something which can be perceived, remembered, imagined, and enacted; self is a socially constructed but individually perceived vehicle for the embodiment of aspects of identity, in a particular time and place. While this study has a particular view of identity and self, it looks to its participants to describe their lived experiences of their contextually-embedded perceived-selves-in-flux, accepting Mockler’s (2011) argument that the storied nature of identity lends itself to description, rather than definition.

The following review of professional identity literature, with a particular focus on educators in schools, found that: notions of identity remain contested; identities exist in context; identities are individually and jointly constructed; and that schools would benefit from harnessing educator identities in reform efforts.

Contested notions of identities: Fixed or fluid, singular or plural

Within the complexity of the education professional landscape, identity lacks a clear definition (Mockler, 2011); it is a slippery concept (Lawler, 2014). A tension exists around to what extent professional identities are fixed or fluid, stable or unstable. Sociological approaches, which view identity as social and collective, are at odds with individualist ones which see identity as within, as property of, the person (Lawler, 2014). Many recent theorists conceptualise identities as pluralistic, multiple, overlapping, and intersecting constructions, operated by the individual (Breen, 2014; Holland et al., 1998; Lawler, 2014). In this view, identities are ever-unfinished, ongoing co-constructions, constantly being recreated and refined over time (Bauman, 2004; Brown & Humphreys, 2006; Freire, 1998; Jenlink, 2014; Watson, 2006; Wenger, 2008). Yet while much recent literature agrees professional identities are fluid and plural, rather than singular and fixed, theories of identity as “real” (Weinberg, 1972) or “core” (Giddens, 1991; Drago-Severson, 2012) persist.

Some research suggests identity immovability and resistance to identity shifts. Lasky (2005), for instance, found in her interviews with four mid-to-late-career Canadian high

school teachers, that teachers were unwilling to change their professional identities, which were initially formed through early professional training and context. She asserts that teachers' early-established identities anchor them in times of change and challenge; that identity does not transform when under the influence of externally imposed reform. Goker (2006) supports this notion of inflexible teacher identity when he comments that pre-service teachers may be more receptive to feedback, observations, and experiences because they are "yet to foreclose on a career identity" (p. 243). The idea that a teacher would "foreclose" on an immovable identity is one that is supported by some studies on school reform, but challenged by much theoretical literature on the concept of identity. Day, Kington, Stobart, and Sammons (2006) argue that professional identities are stable and instable at different times and in different ways, depending on a number of life, career, and situational factors. Being an educator, and continuing to participate in an ongoing process of professional becoming, is seen by many as a complex lifelong process which does not end at the completion of formal teacher education programs, or after early career years (Danaher, 2014; Dunne et al., 2005; Glass, 2011; Goker, 2006).

Identities exist in context

In education, the theorisation and study of identity emerged alongside, and interconnected with, the study of educators' (mainly teachers') work, lives, and professionalism (Mockler, 2011). Educator identities exist within professional landscapes and practices which are complex (Danaher, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Goldenberg, 2004), deeply personal (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007; Sarason, 1971), multivoiced (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007), and storied (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007; Giddens, 1991). While some identity theorists focus on political context or power as key (e.g. Bauman, 2004; Elias & Scotson, 1994; Lawler, 2014), studies of educator professional identities tend to focus on personal, professional, and professionally situational factors (such as the model put forward by Day & Kington, 2008). While professionally situational factors might include political ones, such as the context of education reform and the global push for teacher quality—in which, for instance, tensions arise between individual agency and organisational control (Bridges et al., 2012)—issues of politics and power are not always explicitly addressed in literature on the identities of educators. The focus of identity in education literature depends on the focus of study and the trends which emerge from data.

Identities are firmly situated in their contexts (Mishler, 1999; Rodgers & Scott, 2008) and profoundly connected to practice and participation (Watson, 2006; Wenger, 1998, 2008). As negotiated ways of being, they are lived experiences in the social world, developed in world and in action, within communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 2005; Wenger, 2000; Wenger, 2008). Each individual has different identities for different roles in different contexts (Gee, 2011a) and works to reconcile their identities with the contexts in which they operate (Wenger, 2008). Identities, occurring as they do at the intersection of biography, experience, and context (Day et al., 2006; Mockler, 2011), are informed by and inform the contexts in which they develop (Elias & Scotson, 1994; Glass, 2011; Mockler, 2011; Wenger, 1998). Identity is a fluid, sociocultural process which can only be understood within its specific sociocultural context (Rogoff, 2003).

As malleable and multiplicitous amalgams (Day, 2002; Day & Kington, 2008; Gronn, 2003), professional identities are cognitively and emotionally tied to context (Day et al., 2006; Gronn, 2003). Gronn (2003) argues that professional identities incorporate various conflicting affiliations, and that when working in a team, members want to cognitively and emotionally identify with the collective identity and purpose. Team members need more than to be officially associated with others in their team; their productivity depends on “a wholesale reworking of one’s cognitive and emotional perspectives” (p. 127). Gronn reminds us that teachers’ and leaders’ senses of who they are, and who they aspire to be, play a pivotal role in their engagement with their work. Hammerness’ (2006) longitudinal exploration of four teachers’ visions found that teachers were continually searching for a place which aligned with their visions for their students and their classrooms; they were always looking for a match between identity and context. As professional identities are grounded in, and inseparable from, the worlds in which they act and participate, and which they thereby shape and transform them, a valuable focus for research is person-in-world: specific people in specific circumstances (Lave & Wenger, 2005). Educators’ senses of their learner, teacher, and leader selves-in-action seems a valuable consideration in discussions of school and education reform. When examining educators’ identities, the school environment is a primary area of focus in supporting teachers and leaders in their journeys of development, and places the perceived and enacted educator self squarely at the centre of the school as learning environment for educators as well as students. The importance of viewing each person within the context of their world points to a need to be explicit about the specifics of the sociocultural context of any research: the place, time, physical space, organisational values, and practices.

Identities are individually and jointly constructed

Identities are both individually formed and collectively constructed, interacting and coexisting with the Habermasian concept of shared intersubjective lifeworlds (Allen, 2008; Walker, 1991). Individuals construct their identities by looking at past, present, and potential future selves (Bernstein, 2000; Day et al., 2006; Weinreich, 1986). Hammerness' (2006) finding that imagining their hoped-for teacher selves over time helped teachers to learn and get through difficult times is consistent with Weinreich's (1986) notion of future identity construal, Giddens' (1991) ideal self, Bernstein's (2000) future-imagining prospective identities, and Day et al.'s (2006) finding that teachers define themselves, in part, by the kind of teacher they hope to be.

As individual and context are interdependent (Costa & Garmston, 2006; Sawyer, 2002), identities are both autonomous and shared ways of making sense of lived experience (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997; Holland et al., 1998). Professional identities are formed, given meaning, and understood in the context of their relationship to others (Beattie, 2000; Watson, 2006; Watson & Drew, 2015); they are co-developed and jointly produced in collective social worlds (Holland et al., 1998); and participation in community activity changes individuals (Rogoff, 2008). So, although individuals operate within and contribute to the sociocultural worlds in which they participate, they are also capable of autonomous action, critical reflection, and deliberate self-transformation. These notions of both co-transformation of interlacing identities, and authorship of individual self-perceptions, point towards a need to cross-analyse the ways in which individuals in the same group perceive joint experiences, collective identities, and the individual's place within them.

So identities are simultaneously whole, but also part; symbiotic organic elements of an organismic entirety; there exists both a "we" and an "I" in professional identity. The complex and necessary tension between individual independence and group interdependence is developed by Costa and Garmston (2006) in their theorisation of the school as a holonomous culture in which individual teachers work within and respond to the school as an organic system. They base this on Arthur Koestler's work (1967, 1972) around the word "holon" as something which operates simultaneously as a part and a whole: dichotomously autonomous and integrated, independent and interdependent, disparate and united. Koestler combines the Greek word "holos" meaning whole, and the

suffix “on,” which indicates a particle or part (1967); the holon is a part-whole (Edwards, 2005). Koestler (1972) uses the metaphor of a tree and its branches to illustrate his concept of the holistic, gestaltic, independent, macro nature of things, at the same time as their interdependent partness: “It is as if the sight of the foliage of the entwined branches in a forest made us forget that the branches originate in separate trees” (p. 240). Costa and Garmston apply the holonomy concept to education. Here, the role of the teacher is individual, self-asserting, self-motivating, and self-modifying, but also influenced by the collective contextual norms, attitudes, values, and behaviours of their larger wholes (faculties, schools, districts). Holonomy poetically brings together the organic and organismic relationships between the individual teacher (the parts) and the school or system (the whole). Members of a group can be “forever apart and forever united” (Follett, 1965, p. 33) and unified without being uniform; difference can be accepted while unity is pursued (Follett, 1965). The implications for educators’ professional identities are that schools and their leaders need to simultaneously address and honour the parts and the whole, the individual and the collective.

Harnessing educator identities to motivate, connect, and transform

While theorisation of teacher and school leader identities is not always a focus of education reform and school change, identity is a key factor in teacher effectiveness (Day, 2008), and educational reforms have a cognitive and emotional impact on educators (Day et al., 2006). Some literature points to the importance of considering educators’ senses of themselves and their emotional lives, in any efforts to develop them professionally (e.g. Hargreaves, 1995). For schools to improve, what is needed is “a better understanding of the factors which enable teachers ... to sustain their commitment, resilience, and, therefore, effectiveness over the whole of their careers” (Day, 2008, p. 259). The harnessing of educator professional identities can help in designing education reforms which engage and improve teachers.

Sarason (1971) reproached educational change-makers of the time for failing to be sensitive to how and why teachers think as they do. The challenge of understanding the teacher’s perspective in order to apply strategies to help teachers to embrace, accept, and adapt to change, continues to be a focus of education theory. More recently, Hargreaves (1995), and Cordingley and Buckler (2012), have noted that teachers are frequently overlooked in the research and practice of professional learning and school reform

efforts. Some scholars, without explicitly investigating identity, do explore ideal educator self-perceptions or self-imaginings. Sarason's (1971) assertion that teachers see themselves as modellers of thinking and learning is echoed by Hattie (2009) when he writes that "the biggest effects on student learning occur when teachers become learners of their own teaching, and when students become their own teachers" (p. 22) and when this learning is visible and verbalised.⁵ Freese's (1999) description of her own view of her role as educator (albeit in a higher education, rather than a school, context) resonated with this identity ideal of the teacher, encapsulating the way an educator might conceptualise their professional self in action:

I am more like a coach who structures the learning events and co-inquires. . . . I have become more comfortable modelling and making public my thinking about teaching, and risking being vulnerable as I put my own teaching under scrutiny. This is a different role from that of being the "expert" and the dispenser of knowledge. (p. 908).

Here Freese echoes Hattie's (2009) emphasis on making thinking visible or "public" by modelling her own thinking and learning processes. Furthermore, she sees herself as coach and co-inquirer, vulnerable in her collaboration as co-learner with her students. This idea of professional vulnerability in which the teacher is a visible learner who models the act of reflective learning, is explored by other authors such as Lasky (2005) and Goodson (1991). Freese highlights the notion of self-reflection in her comment about having the willingness and capacity to put her "own teaching under scrutiny." This example of educator identity in action is consistent with Wiggins and McTighe's (2007) definition of teacher as reflective designer, diagnoser, facilitator, and constructor of learning and learners. By investigating educators' own perceptions of their professional selves, resonance or dissonance between the scholarly ideal and the personal reality can be observed.

Educators often actively or passively resist change, especially when externally imposed (Evans, 1996), and when individuals' identities are dissonant from their context (Day et al., 2006). In harnessing an understanding of educator identities, schools and systems can

⁵ While Hattie's (2009) set of statistical meta-analyses has been criticised for its limitations, such as lack of currency of data base, comparison of abstract variables, over-synthesising of limited quantitative data to the point of distorting original findings, and ignoring the complexity of education, his work has also been praised for its significant contribution to educational research. For critical perspectives on Hattie's (2009) meta-analyses, see Snook et al., (2009) and Terhart (2011). For cautions about the use of meta-analyses in education, see Wiliam, (2014b, 2016) who argues that "meta-analysis is simply incapable of yielding meaningful findings that leaders can use to direct the activities of the teachers they lead" (2016, p. 96).

learn from literature on what motivates and what changes beliefs and behaviours. The behaviourist carrot-and-stick approach results in resistance and is ineffective in changing behaviour (Rock, 2009); it extinguishes intrinsic motivation, crushes creativity, and crowds out positive action (Pink, 2009). Hints to what facilitates identity development can be found in literature which focuses on how to minimise resistance to change by addressing the personal and developmental needs of educators as becoming-selves and continuous, efficacious, autonomous learners. The experience of work itself, not metric data, drives people (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). According to Csikszentmihalyi, Damon, and Gardner (2011), good work is likely to occur when there are clear, enforced standards, in their case imposed from the organisation onto the individual, for what constitutes desirable performance. These authors argue that time and opportunity be provided for reflection on personal mission and shared standards, so that the standards are internalised in the self-image of practitioners, becoming part of the fabric of professional identity. The idea of continuously returning to teachers' progress towards their own personal mission is supported by Hammerness' (2006) work on teacher vision in which she found that envisioning their future professional selves was a positive and powerful force for teachers. It is also consistent with Pink's (2009) recommendation to offer autonomy to staff, see individual abilities as infinitely improvable, and work from a foundation of clear individual and organisational purpose. Individuals are most likely to be receptive to change when their personal mission and purpose, central to their identity, is aligned with shared organisational mission and purpose.

In order to improve, schools would benefit from a focus on harnessing identity by rewarding effort and experimentation, celebrating small successes, and identifying certain kinds of failure as noble (Evans, 1996). Rock (2009) argues that in focusing and maintaining teachers' attention on elements of practice, their brains can be rewired, new connections created, behaviours altered, and practices transformed. Supporting enhanced risk taking and creating opportunities to act on new thinking increases the potential for greater self-authorship and self-ownership by teacher learners (Drago-Severson, 2004, 2009). Following Dweck's (2006) notions of mindset and capacity for dynamic self-improvement, teachers benefit from seeing themselves as constantly able to improve and refine the quality of their practice; and schools benefit from celebrating teacher behaviours such as hard work and self-reflective practice, rather than intrinsic qualities such as talent. A growth mindset would also suggest that schools work from an assumption that all teachers have the capacity to improve, that their qualities are not static.

Change which is internally propelled, and which builds efficacy and self-actualisation, seems to be central to effective teacher capacity building. Louis (2006) found, in her study of organisational learning in two urban USA schools, that teachers, when required to put in extra hours, work, and effort, can feel energised rather than tired. She and her colleagues believe that this is because the extra effort was voluntary, intellectually stimulating, and collaborative; when connected with other people and excited about work, teachers saw work as an enjoyable part of life and in service of a higher goal. Voluntary professional learning and growth initiatives, which involve collaboration and make explicit a higher goal, may be valuable contexts for research into the interaction between identity, learning, and practice. It seems important for schools and policy makers to consider and harness teacher identity when designing change, learning, or development initiatives. Schools and researchers would benefit from investigating in-action, school-based, voluntary, collaborative, highly-purposeful interventions.

Professional identity: Current knowledge, the gap, and future directions

While some researchers support the notion that professional identities are fixed or formed early, there is a growing body of research demonstrating that identities are flexible, multiple, and continually shaped by contexts and relationships. This body of research establishes that, not only do identities shift, but they are multifaceted and situation-specific. That is, each person has a fluid and ever-changing set of identities; they call into action the identity appropriate to the situation in which they are currently functioning. Hence an educator may call into play a separate set of characteristics and behaviours in the classroom, with peers, with school leaders, or in a research interview.

The situated nature of professional identity requires attention to context in order to develop our understanding of whether identities are fixed or fluid in relation to professional learning, and in which contexts identities might shift or remain fixed. Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) identified teacher professional identity as an emerging research area, evident in a number of small scale, in-depth studies (similar in scale and depth to the one proposed here). Their review of literature suggests that interpreting the relationship between educators' stories and their professional identities has a sound theoretical basis, and that the literature would benefit from further attention to the role of context, including looking at relevant others as well as teachers. Lu (2010),

too, warned against limiting studies to teachers only, thereby excluding the perceptions and experiences of other key players and stakeholders; the voices of “others” are important to gaining broader understandings.

Research into professional identity can make use of story as a way to describe, rather than define (Mockler, 2011), identities. As “storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2), educators frame their identities, construct their learning, and shape their practice, through language (Doyle & Carter, 2010; Mockler, 2011). Yet stories are more than description; they are complex interpretive devices through which people make sense of themselves and their worlds (Lawler, 2014); story is a process of identity production. The use of language to narrate and make sense of experience positions the person within their story. Stories of identity are a lens through which to view how people grow, change, and develop their ways of being in and interacting with their worlds. Paramount to understanding the importance of teacher and school leader identities is the way that experiences are described and constructed. As identities are formed in the stories we tell about ourselves (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997), rich educator stories of learning—which reveal educators’ senses of professional identity and perceptions of their own learning, teaching, and growth—would add a new dimension to current data which drive teacher quality reforms. Sharing of teachers’ and school leaders’ stories would facilitate professional learning interventions more readily integrated with educators’ identities and practices than initiatives driven primarily by the strategic aims of school systems and analyses of student data. Investigating stories, as areas where practice and identity meet (Watson, 2006), would shine a light into how individuals’ identities are shaped by their participation in contextual activity (Rogoff, 2008).

Little is understood about the ways in which teacher identity interacts with reform mandates to affect teachers’ experiences of professional vulnerability (Lasky, 2005). There is also limited research into the ways in which professional learning interacts with professional identities. Questions about professional identity remain. Are, or in what contexts are, professional selves fluid or fixed? How and when is professional identity shaped and in what ways does it interact with educators’ learning and experiences across their work lives? Is identity formed early into immovable existence which is resistant to change, or does it exist in a constant state of becoming? What internal and external factors might facilitate either malleability of identity or resistance to identity change? The

area of contextually-based educator identity, in combination with lived experiences of professional learning and school reform, is a valuable one ripe for further exploration. Sharing the perspectives of school leaders, including those in middle leadership positions, would add perspectives to the leading of student-achievement-focused, teacher-quality-driven, growth-focused professional learning. Examining educators' identity transformations as a result of school-based professional learning and participation can illuminate how identities and practices might be shaped.

2.2 Professional learning

Professional development is a coordinated effort and a lifelong process (Goker, 2006). In this thesis *professional learning* has been used to describe any experience of educator learning, including what some literature and participants call *professional development*, *PD* (professional development), or *CPD* (continuing professional development): those activities packaged as professional learning experiences for educators, such as talks, courses, and conferences. This reflects Timperley et al.'s (2007) definition of professional development as the delivery of activities and processes, and professional learning as the internal process of creating knowledge and expertise. More than that, like Mockler (2013), this thesis situates professional learning as part of the process of professional becoming, which creates shifts in knowledge, practice, or identity.

While not the only driver of professional learning initiatives, the debate concerning teacher quality for student learning is a propulsive agenda for much theory and practice around professional learning and school change. Despite professional learning being a neglected area of teacher quality research (Muijs et al., 2014), more important than the quality of the teacher is the notion of teacher growth: that the quality of a teacher and their teaching can be changed and improved, and that this can benefit students. While schools and policy makers cannot directly shape factors such as social class and home environment, they can affect those factors within their sphere of influence such as leadership, school culture, teachers' teaching, and professional learning. In particular, supporting teacher learning in ways which improve teachers' knowledge, skills, and teaching, is directly linked to raising students' academic achievement.⁶ Teacher learning is

⁶ The link between improving teachers and improving student achievement is made by a number of researchers (e.g. Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Darling-Hammond, Wei et al., 2009; Drago-Severson, 2009, 2012; Garmston, 2006; Jensen et al., 2012; Slater et al., 2009; Yoon et al., 2007).

morally obligated to be based around what will benefit students (Wiliam, 2014a). Effective, sustained teacher learning enhances teacher quality and is crucial to developing and maintaining high quality teachers (Baguley & Kerby, 2012; Desimone et al., 2002; Educational Testing Service, 2004). It is intensive, ongoing professional learning, rather than one-off or short term experiences, which is more likely to have an impact and prepare teachers for the complex demands of quality teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001).

Education is a dynamic field in which there is continual discovery of new knowledge, requiring new expertise and the ongoing refinement of teachers' conceptual understandings and instructional skills (Guskey & Huberman, 1995). The complexity and richness of teaching as an "unfinished profession ... never complete, never conquered, always being developed, always changing" (Grundy & Robison, 2004, p. 146) necessitates an ongoing, lifelong approach to teacher professional learning, with endless trajectories for development and refinement, involving systematic, reflective, and collaborative learning within schools as learning communities (Nicolini, Gherardi, & Yanow, 2003; OECD, 2004). Teachers, including teachers who become school leaders, are adaptive experts engaged in lifelong professional learning, refinement of practice, and transformation of beliefs and practices (Darling-Hammond & Hammerness, 2005; Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005; Muijs et al., 2014; Schmoker, 2006). Drago-Severson (2009) posits that adult learning can be informational, increasing knowledge and skills, or transformational, actively changing how a person knows through shifts in cognition, emotion, and capacity. Rather than grafting on new knowledge or skills, the internal fabric of a person's knowing, doing, being, and becoming, is shaped and re-formed. Transformational learning is about meaning making and is therefore tied to the notion of identity, amplifying the need for professional learning to be considered in relation to how individuals perceive, imagine, and enact their selves. This kind of professional learning shifts educator professional learning from a focus on disseminating information to harnessing what is known about how people learn (Bransford et al., 1999; Muijs et al., 2014). The focus on professional learning to improve teaching and learning points to crucial questions. How, why, and when do educators learn and grow? What learning leads educators to shift their identities and practices?

In looking to research literature for clues of what transformative professional learning encompasses, the complexity of professional learning for educators becomes apparent. In

order to improve instruction, individual teachers need to become aware of specific weaknesses in their own practice, understanding what they do and why they do it; deliver instruction in an effective and efficient manner; gain understanding of specific best practices, through the demonstration of such practices in an authentic setting; and be motivated to make the necessary improvement, usually incentivised by a shared sense of purpose and drive to make a difference (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). While some question the value of the current body of literature on educator professional learning (Yoon et al., 2007; Guskey & Yoon, 2009; TNTP [previously The New Teacher Project], 2015), there are those forms of sustained professional learning which have been shown to have the potential for individual and organisational growth, including professional learning communities, participatory action research, coaching, and the use of frameworks for mapping teacher quality.

Professional learning is both independent and collective

Professional learning is identity work (Mockler, 2013), making it both an individual and a collaborative process. Many scholars agree that in order to change and develop, a degree of autonomy and empowerment is necessary for professional learning. Drago-Severson, Blum-DeStefano, and Asghar (2013) highlight the importance for adult learners of designing individual goal setting opportunities that focus on improving instruction and instructional leadership, and developing supports and challenges for self-growth. Csikszentmihalyi et al. (2011) highlight contemplation and deep reflection as ways in which people build engagement and quality in their work, suggesting that any growth process involve formalised self-reflection. When professional learning includes opportunities to formally reflect on their work and to connect it to research and theory, teachers are better able to identify areas needing improvement, to consider alternative strategies for future application, to problem solve in practice, and to work with a heightened awareness of their teaching and of their students' learning (Darling-Hammond & Hammerness, 2005; Freese, 1999).

Yet teachers learn within and as part of communities. Learning, like identity, cannot be reduced to the combined learning of individuals (Follett, 1965; Louis, 2006; Senge, 2006); the individual parts do not equal the collective sum. Following Rogoff's (2008) notion of participatory appropriation, individuals can and do change through their participation in community activities. By attempting to understand and contribute to the external, the

individual is internally transformed. Personal passion and individual growth occurs when teachers “explore the nitty gritty challenges of their practice through thoughtful exchanges with colleagues and in relation to relevant research” (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009, p. 93). Some argue that learning which leads to change and development takes place in groups and involves the creation of socially constructed and organisationally generated knowledge (Louis, 2006; Rosenholtz, 1991). Teacher collaboration is viewed as a key driver of improvement (Fullan, 2000; Fullan, 2011; Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Hattie, 2015b). Rather than being limited to minor tasks or administration, teachers should be charged with work around fundamental school issues (Louis, 2006), with the cultural and structural support of schools (Sawyer, 2002). Collaboration results in the continual building, sharing, and testing of professional knowledge, ideas, and practices (Fullan, 2001). Collegial growth, rather than oppositional competition, is more likely in environments in which teachers are working to improve their individual practices (William, 2014a). Learning is an individual and collective act.

The potency of teacher collaboration is supported by studies of teacher learning. One example is Pil and Leana’s (2009) sampling of over 1000 USA primary school Mathematics teachers which found that team collaboration and trust can positively impact student achievement. In another example, Holly’s (1989) interviews of 60 UK and USA early childhood to middle primary teachers revealed that collaboration is crucial to professional learning and impacts classroom practice. Collaboration, through informal exchanges, team teaching, and collaborative planning, was valued by teachers in Holly’s study who more often referred to informal activities than formal or institutional activities as the inspiration for their classroom practice. Holly’s findings around informal activities as professional learning opportunities are consistent with Smylie’s (1995) theorisation of incidental learning as unplanned, unintentional learning which is facilitated by shared power, open communication, and collaborative working relationships. Incidental learning is difficult for schools or researchers to measure, but is worth investigating in terms of its impact and how it might be harnessed by schools.

As a collaborative learning practice used within professional learning communities, teachers observing each other’s teaching can improve teacher practice and student achievement (Fleming & Kleinhenz, 2007). Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) encourage processes which facilitate interdependence including mentoring new teachers and studying new research findings. Two other best practice forms of collaborative professional

learning, supported by the reviewed literature, are professional learning communities and participatory action research. Professional learning communities are resonant with the notion of collaborative school culture as vital for fostering educator learning. Not only do they provide environments which cultivate collaboration and continuous, authentic, enduring, in-context learning (Darling-Hammond & Hammerness, 2005; Mullen & Schunk, 2010; Schmoker, 2006; Shulman, 2004; Timperley et al., 2007), but they also result in increased student learning (Garmston, 2006). Professional learning communities are participant structures which: generate new understandings; involve the professional learner as active agent; and support reflection, collaboration, passion, commitment, and a community culture which values and creates opportunities for learning (Shulman, 2004). Such communities of practice need careful design and organisation in order to be productive (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). They evolve out of their contexts, requiring leadership, momentum, stability, and an emerging critical mass of engaged and respected participants (Hudson-Ross, 2001). Professional learning communities work best when they span year levels, roles, and disciplines, refocusing social capital, human resources, and school structure, around student learning (Louis, 2006). Developing professional communities with shared vision, adequate resourcing, emphasis on unlearning, and ongoing “fearless and open community inquiry” is essential to ensuring deep-rooted teacher improvement (Senge, 2012). The notion of unlearning points to a need for school cultures which allow graceful disagreement and challenges to accepted knowledge. Promoting professional communities has positive effects on pedagogy, classroom practice, social support for students, and thereby student learning.

Participatory action research (Grundy, 1994; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2008) sits philosophically with the idea of viewing teachers as researchers (Jensen et al., 2012). It uses a social, inclusive, participatory, inquiry-based, systematic cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Timperley, 2012). It is a social process of in-world, practice-developing, collaborative learning (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2008). Participatory action research facilitates self and collective authorship (Drago-Severson, 2004, 2009), meaning making (Boud, Cressey, & Docherty, 2006), and shared commitment to mutual critical inquiry aimed at practical transformation of existing practices, understandings, and situations (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2008). Participatory action research’s active, collaborative, and self-reflective process has the capacity to change individual practice and school culture (Grundy, 1994; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2008). The recognition of teachers as expert colleagues, co-researchers, and knowledge producers is key to transformative

professional learning (Hudson-Ross, 2001). It supports Sarason's (1996) contention that the ongoing, rigorous, lifelong learning of teachers is a central criterion for school change.

These best practice examples indicate that, to be effective, professional learning needs time, structure, collaboration, and reflection (Boyle, Lamprianou, & Boyle, 2005). A depersonalised view of teaching practice deprivatises classrooms, shares classroom activity, and helps teachers reflect, self-evaluate, and engage with the notion of continual improvement (Conway & Andrews, 2016; Garmston & Wellman, 2013). Freese (1999), in her study of 11 secondary pre-service teachers, found that depersonalising teacher reflection through the use of an organising framework resulted in an analytical and reflective stance, rather than a defensive and emotional one. Teacher learning and quality improve when teachers seek evidence about the effectiveness of their teaching, base their reflections on tangible data, identify gaps in their thinking and practice, and are open to making mistakes (Danielson, 2007; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Hattie, 2009). While professional learning includes employing external expertise (Comer, 1980; Timperley et al., 2007) and further tertiary study (Holly, 1989), this literature review found that it was collaboratively-experienced, contextually-embedded approaches which were found to be most effective by existing literature. However, while collaboration facilitates new perspectives, language, and practices, it does not automatically lead to increased reflection about practice (Sawyer, 2002). It is a combination of individual reflection and collaborative learning that leads to growth.

Coaching as professional learning

Coaching, rather than mentoring, is a focus for the present study. Mentoring tends to be focused on induction, support, and career transition, while coaching focuses on knowledge creation and improving practice (Fletcher, 2012). Coaching benefits the coachee in developing their self-efficacy (Rhodes & Fletcher, 2013), practice, agency, and leadership capacity (Charteris & Smardon, 2014). It provokes thinking and provides space for reflection (Charteris & Smardon, 2014), improving both teaching and teachers' experiences of professional learning (Lofthouse, Leat, Towler, Hallet, & Cummings, 2010). It may also benefit those with whom the coachee interacts, as they may become a coach for others (Rhodes & Fletcher, 2013). Fletcher (2012) notes that while mentoring was a focus from 1995 to 2005, coaching has dramatically emerged more recently as a

focus which, while popular, is under-researched. She posits that this is partly because coaches do not research their own practice.

Coaching in various forms is explored in much literature concerned with professional learning, developing teachers' quality, and school reform. The term "coaching" describes a variety of models in which teachers are paired with a coach for a variety of purposes. Some researchers have attempted to group coaching into areas; see for instance Showers and Joyce (1996) who identify peer coaching, cognitive coaching, technical coaching, team coaching, and collegial coaching; or Cornett and Knight (2008) who identify peer coaching, cognitive coaching, literacy coaching, and instructional coaching. Others see two main arenas of coaching (Ackland, 1991; Lu, 2010) which are applied for different purposes and using different implementation models: expert coaching and peer coaching. Expert coaching involves an apprentice/master-craftsman or expert/protégé relationship, in which a person with more advanced expertise provides assistance to someone less-experienced (Murray, Ma, & Mazur, 2009). In peer coaching, teachers are paired with coaches with similar levels of knowledge and experience; often the coaching relationship is reciprocal.

One form of expert coaching is instructional coaching (Cornett & Knight, 2008), which involves specific coach feedback, judgements, and suggestions. In their experimental study of 51 teachers on the effects of instructional coaching as a means of professional learning for teachers, Cornett and Knight concluded that coaching by an expert increases the frequency and quality of uptake of new classroom practices, when compared with teachers who do not receive coaching support. Fletcher (2012) notes that there is not yet any external validation of instructional coaching, and some suggest that coaching remain separate from any kind of evaluation, including judgements and advice, in order to enhance collaboration and implementation (Ackland, 1991; Showers & Joyce, 1996).

Peer coaching, a non-evaluative, non-hierarchical form of coaching (Zepeda, Parylo, & Ilgan, 2013), appeared in education literature in 1980 (Lu, 2010). Joyce and Showers (1988) define the main purpose of peer coaching as the implementation of innovations in order to effect positive change for students. They assert that coaching builds collaborative teaching communities; develops shared language and understandings; develops clearer cognition of teaching purpose and practice; and develops collegial and experimental school norms which support continuous teacher improvement and school

change. Barber and Mourshed (2007) identify coaching of classroom practice, and enabling teachers to learn from each other, as among effective interventions to improve the quality of instruction, leading to substantial improvement in outcomes in a short time. It appears that allowing teachers to observe and learn from each other stimulates the sharing of knowledge and the giving of feedback, shapes aspiration towards and language of quality instruction, and develops a positive learning culture among teachers. The positive effects of peer coaching are supported by Wong and Nicotera (2003). In their synthesis of literature, they found that peer coaching can promote a culture of collaboration and professionalism, while expanding teachers' working repertoires of planning and instructional strategies. One recent form of peer coaching is instructional rounds (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009; Marzano, 2007), in which a small network of teachers work collectively through a sustained inquiry process to enhance their teaching practice, based on classroom observation data. While Marzano argues on the one hand that these observations are non-evaluative, he does suggest that observing teachers take notes on the positives and questions for each observed lesson segment, which some might argue is a form of evaluation. Marzano's framework provides teachers with a language for reflection on practice, an element missing from Goker's study. For Marzano, the goal is not to coach the observed teacher about the observed lesson. The main aim is for the observer to learn from other teachers and, through self-reflection and collaboration, apply this learning to their own teaching.

Studies have found elements of peer coaching problematic. Goker's (2006) two year experimental study of 32 pre-service TEFL teachers in Cyprus found peer coaching to promote confidence, autonomy, and self-directed learning. However, his work also revealed a primary concern of peer coaching: teachers' capacities for self-reflection and self-directed development. Goker's participants had a lack of a language of reflection, difficulty being self-critical, and difficulty identifying strategies for improving practice. This points to a potential criticism of peer coaching: while providing a safe environment for teacher growth, peer coaching does not provide the kind of expert feedback of the instructional coaching or consulting model which might add to a teacher coachee's repertoire. Other problems identified with peer coaching include scheduling, weak peer partners, the lack of skills to provide effective feedback, time constraints, and increased workload (Zepeda et al., 2013). Additionally, a tension can arise in school peer coaching contexts when school leaders colonise and infiltrate the process for monitoring and organisational agendas, rather than protecting it as a collaborative learning process

(Lofthouse et al., 2010; Lofthouse & Hall, 2014; Lofthouse & Leat, 2013). In context and in practice, peer coaching, like other forms of professional learning, can have “a troubled identity, caught between empowerment and managerialism” (Lofthouse & Leat, 2013, p. 9), in which school leaders are perceived to be exercising control over teacher learning.

Cognitive coaching (Costa & Garmston, 2006), the model of coaching used in the studied Lutwidge School Teacher Growth Initiative, is a form of coaching which can be conducted by an expert or peer. The model bases its approach in research which shows that neurochemical pathways in the brain work in such a way that if an individual does not feel safe, they cannot think and learn (Costa & Garmston, 2003). According to Costa and Garmston (2003), sensory signals entering the brain travel first to the thalamus, then to the amygdala or threat detector, and then to the neocortex where thinking happens. “If threat, fear, pain even in the most minute portions are perceived, neurological and chemical processes occur which prepare the system for survival, not reflection” (Costa & Garmston, 2003, p. 5). While for learning to occur, there may be what Costa and Garmston call “disequilibrium,” or what Lofthouse et al. (2010) call “rethinking” or “dissonance,” there needs to be a foundation of safety and trust for thinking and reflection to occur in the brain. This reflects subsequent work which has looked at neural responses to different types of coaching and which found that coaching and mentoring which emphasise compassion has been shown to positively enhance openness to learning and incite behavioural change, while deficiency-based coaching for compliance results in defensiveness and reduced cognitive functioning (Boyatzis, Smith, & Beveridge, 2013; Jack, Boyatzis, Khawaja, Passarelli, & Leckie, 2013). That behaviour and cognition are inseparable from emotion (Day, 2002; Day & Sachs, 2004; Saunders, 2013) suggests that professional learning models consider their emotional impact, in order to maximise learning and growth.

Cognitive coaching actively discourages any feedback, positive or negative. It focuses instead on the coachee’s cognition and capacity for self-reflection, goal setting, and growth. Its goal is developing both self-directed individual learners and the individual’s interdependence with the school system (Costa & Garmston, 2006). While four roles are available to the coach—coach, collaborator, consultant, and evaluator—the default role is of the coach: non-judgemental mediator of cognition. This approach is intended to create personal change through new connections in the brain, reconstructing knowledge through a conscious, reflective approach to new experiences. It is inner thought processes that are

targeted, rather than outer behaviours (Batt, 2010; Costa & Garmston, 2006). A cognitive coaching approach would argue that even positive feedback (such as that suggested in Marzano's version of instructional rounds) is evaluative feedback, inhibiting the teacher's thinking. The cognitive coaching approach aligns with Wiliam's (2014a) suggestion that the teacher choose the foci for their improvement, that "each teacher has a better idea of what will improve the learning of their students, in their classroom, in the context of what they are teaching them, than anyone else" (p. 33).

Some research supports cognitive coaching as an effective change agent for teachers. Edwards and Newton's (1995) quasi-experimental study of 143 teachers over two years found that it increased teachers' use of higher level questions, feelings of efficacy, and feelings of satisfaction with teaching as a career. Their study indicated that its effects manifest themselves over time. Batt's (2010) study of 15 elementary teachers found that cognitive coaching had a direct effect on teachers' practice and that teachers found the coaching process well worth the time spent. Teachers in Batt's study attributed shifts in their own perceptions of teaching and learning, and gains in student achievement, to coaching. The use of a cognitive coaching process for teacher capacity building is supported by Danielson's (2007, 2008, 2011, 2013) caution that mentors, supervisors, evaluators, and colleagues beware of imposing their own styles or preferences when observing.

Like much school reform, coaching initiatives need to include adequate training, sufficient time, appropriate resources, and a process to review the effectiveness of the initiative (Lofthouse & Hall, 2014; Wong & Nicotera, 2003). Consideration of school context is key, as coaching relationships and dynamics cannot be separated from the wider contextual culture. Trust needs to be fostered, participants encouraged to recognise the need for improvement, and a pervasive culture of learning built (Hargreaves & Skelton, 2012). A safe and non-evaluative environment, in which power inequities are minimised, is central to a culture of learning, experimenting, and refining teaching practice (Joyce & Showers, 1988). Hargreaves and Skelton (2012) warn about "contrived collegiality" in which coaches force compliance rather than helping teachers help themselves to build capacity. They caution that while coaching originated as "a learning journey taken by travellers together" (p. 135), it has often, within the context of large scale systematic reform, become "enforced transportation" done to people for the purposes of compliance with externally prescribed practice. They argue that coaching's moral purpose

is “developing people, not implementing policy; building capacity rather than enforcing compliance; and giving colleagues a professional service rather than delivering them into ideological servitude” (p. 136).

School coaching contexts benefit from being growth focused, not accountability driven. While many agree that coaching is a valuable form of professional learning which impacts positively on thinking and practice (Batt, 2010), the most effective models and ideological approaches are in dispute. Concerns remain about the school-based implementation of coaching, in that the purpose of coaching initiatives can be shifted towards surveillance and performance, rather than collaborative learning and individual growth (Hargreaves & Skelton, 2012; Lofthouse & Hall, 2014; Lofthouse & Leat, 2013). Further investigation of coaching approaches from the perspective of coaches and coachees would give attention to the lived experience of the coaching relationship and process.

Mapping teacher quality

As the quality of teachers is generally agreed to be an important influencer of student achievement, researchers have attempted to identify aspects of teaching as demonstrating evidence of positive effect on student achievement. Identifying what it is that makes quality teaching is seen as a first step in designing ways to help teachers develop their practice. The Educational Testing Service (2004) defines teacher quality as knowing what to teach and knowing how to teach. This definition hones in on the planning, classroom instruction, and assessment aspects of teacher quality, and therefore on the professional knowledge and skills upon which teachers can build in their pursuit of improving the quality of their teaching.

While many researchers and educators have worked to identify what quality teaching looks like and what quality teachers do, a problem arises when schools or systems want to measure this quality against a neat scorecard. Measuring such a complex, problematic activity is fraught with difficulty (Marzano & Toth, 2013). Pil and Leana (2009) suggest that, although there is little agreement on alternative measures of teacher quality, researchers and practitioners move beyond easily obtained metrics to consider context and task-specific measures in assessing teacher quality. While some question and warn against the itemising of teaching into a set of prescriptive elements (Bransford et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Eisner, 1988; Pil & Leana, 2009; Sarason, 1971), there are those

who have tried to capture and map the complexity of teaching (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Fleming & Kleinhenz, 2007; Hattie, 2009; Jensen et al., 2012; Zammit et al., 2007). These latter authors attempt to detail, describe, interpret, and evaluate the elements of teaching; to find the “things that matter” (Jensen et al., 2012), including what quality instruction looks like, and the conditions necessary for developing the quality of teachers’ instruction. Wasley et al. (1997) presented one of the few studies examining teaching, learning, and school change from an in-depth student perspective. Considering students as voices and people, rather than patterns and numbers, they spent three years observing and interviewing six students in five USA schools. They found that good teachers: believe that each of their students can learn; are innovative and rigorous; establish productive routines; work towards an interesting and varied instructional repertoire; and have the skills and capacity to engage in debate on behalf of their students’ learning. While not a focus of Wasley et al.’s study, the same could be said for school leaders. That is, quality teaching and leading is innovative, systematic, deliberate, and varied, and involves advocacy for students and their learning. The notion of advocacy is consistent with Jackson (1986), who included in his list of outstanding teacher attributes: strength in fighting for what they believe about teaching and learning, and acting independently to advocate for their students. These findings place the student squarely at the centre of the push for developing the quality of teachers and their teaching.

Mapping teacher quality is sometimes seen as less about measuring teachers’ quality, and more about finding a tool and shared language of practice which facilitates teachers’ growth. In order for teachers to improve, not only do teachers have to want to improve, they must know how to improve and on what aspects they would benefit from focusing their attention (Levin, 2009). Schools can make use of frameworks which provide the knowledge base of what good teaching looks like, as well as a process which facilitates the development of this shared knowledge in practice. The need for clear standards and a framework which encompasses the complex interrelated elements of teaching, is supported by Goldenberg’s (2004) rumination on his work with a USA primary school over five years. He retrospectively reflected that the school and teacher change model he and the principal implemented was too abstract and unspecified: “we should have been more nuts-and-bolts oriented, in the sense of specifying more clearly what teachers were to do in various settings, including their classrooms” (p. 173). Many authors agree about helping teachers talk about and improve their craft through a precise and detailed understanding of what teaching involves. They suggest that in order to develop teacher

quality, teachers need a map of where to go and how to get there. This map involves a clear set of agreed standards, a way to think systematically about the complexity of their task, and a framework for understanding both the big picture and the interrelationships of individual aspects (Darling-Hammond & Hammerness, 2005; Fleming & Kleinhenz, 2007; Hammerness et al., 2005; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Mapping teaching becomes less about *identifying* quality and more about *changing* teacher quality, developing a common understanding of the complexity of teaching in order to improve it.

Examples of attempts to address the need for a framework or map of the intricacies of teacher practice include the Danielson Group's Framework for Teaching⁷ (Danielson, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2013), the Marzano Causal Teacher Evaluation Model (Marzano, 2007), and the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership National Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2012). The Danielson Framework for Teaching has been shown to: identify the most effective teachers and positively correlate their quality with student achievement gains; focus observers' attention on specific aspects of teaching practice; establish common evidentiary standards for each level of practice; and create a common vocabulary for pursuing a shared vision of effective instruction (Kane & Staiger, 2012; Sartain et al., 2011). Students showed the most academic growth in classrooms with teachers who rated highly on the Framework, and the least academic growth in classrooms with teachers who received the lowest ratings (Sartain et al., 2011). Wiliam (2016), in outlining research findings around the Danielson Framework, calls it "rigorously researched" (p. 45) and currently representing "the best we can do in relating student progress to classroom observations" (p. 51). Marzano's model has also been tested in studies and meta-analyses (Marzano, Toth, & Schooling, 2012), which report that using the instructional strategies of the model improves student achievement and helps teachers develop themselves professionally. AITSL (2015) measured attitudes to its standards, rather than their effectiveness. While these maps are each researched, each study has different foci, with some privileging the identification of quality teachers who increase student achievement, and others concentrating on educators' perceptions of the tool.

There are a range of approaches to the use and evaluation of teaching mapping tools. Wiliam (2014b) points out that rubrics such as these may provide a valuable starting point

⁷ The Danielson Framework for Teaching was used in the Lutwidge School's Teacher Growth Initiative which provided the background to this study. More information about the Framework and how it was used at Lutwidge School can be found in Appendix B.

for conversations about teaching practice, but that decontextualised unquestioning adherence to rubrics are unlikely to improve teaching. Pink's (2009) work on motivation would suggest that external evaluative scoring would be ineffective in resulting in improvement of practice. Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) suggest that any framework for teaching be coherent and empowering, indicating that it is about enabling teachers to develop their practice, rather than being used as a scorecard of performance. Frameworks such as Danielson, Marzano, and AITSL may have a place in helping teachers to achieve clear, measurable targets, but schools and systems using these tools need to be considered in their purpose and process of their implementation. More research is needed into, not just whether quality teachers can be identified, or how they feel about mapping frameworks, but whether use of these maps can influence teacher learning and lead to positive changes in teaching practice. Can they be used effectively for growth, as well as measurement?

Professional learning: Current knowledge, the gap, and future directions

Trends emerging from researchers on what constitutes meaningful learning for teachers include that effective teacher professional learning, sometimes referred to as continuing professional learning or by the acronym CPD, is collaborative, targeted, and ongoing.⁸ While the agency of the individual in the self-direction and design of their own learning is important (AITSL, 2014; Wiliam, 2014a), there is also a focus on the importance of collaboration to enhance and sustain teacher learning (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Some claim that teachers learn best from and with each other (Rosenholtz, 1991; Schmoker, 1999); that the solitary norms of teaching need to be replaced with collective action (Joyce & Showers, 1988; Hattie, 2015b).

Professional learning is a field which has both a wealth of research, and few solid findings. It is contested, for instance, as to what, if any, professional learning for educators impacts positively on student achievement. To date, research on teacher learning and teacher quality has largely examined quantitative data, survey data, and brief accounts or evaluations of particular professional learning experiences, to determine the possible effects of teacher learning on student achievement or how professional learning might

⁸ Those who agree that the best professional learning is collaborative, targeted, and ongoing include Baguley and Kerby (2012), Drago-Severson (2004), Garmston and Wellman (2013), Grundy (1994), Hargreaves and Shirley (2009), Jensen et al. (2012), Kemmmis and McTaggart (2008), Louis (2006), Pil and Leana (2009), and Schmoker (1999, 2006).

influence aspects of teachers' classroom practice. While there are many recommendations for the implementation of grounded, collaborative, ongoing forms of professional learning, this advice is not always based on empirical data, or the data are limited. For instance, while the AITSL (2014) horizon scan of global professional learning identified key trends in innovative organisations, it also made claims about "powerful" professional learning. These claims were based on quantitative ratings of professional learning activities. Further understanding of what powerful learning means for educators, and what kinds of professional learning are powerful for particular educators, could be gleaned from in-depth qualitative studies of educator perceptions and stories of professional and other learning.

Student achievement data is often used as a measure of the development or effectiveness of teachers. Slater et al. (2009) linked individual teacher quality to students' GCSE scores. Boyle and others (2004, 2005, 2006) longitudinally tracked the participation in, and popularity of, various types of research-based professional development, comparing this to national performance profile data. They maintain that their study is designed to investigate the influence of professional development on the effectiveness on primary and secondary teachers across England (Boyle, While, & Boyle, 2004; Boyle et al., 2005) and report their findings according to the experiences of English teachers, Mathematics teachers, and Science teachers. I would argue, however, that their sample of heads of department and key stage coordinators from primary and secondary schools in England is not necessarily representative of the experiences of teachers in general; middle managers with leadership roles and responsibilities are likely to have a different experience of and agenda for their professional learning than their non-leadership teacher colleagues. In one study, Dash, de Kramer, O'Dwyer, Masters, and Russell (2012), using teacher surveys and student testing data, found that, while intensive, sustained, content-focused online professional development effected positive change in teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical practices, there were not any meaningful differences in students' Mathematics achievement. Dash et al. (2012) hypothesised that perhaps the short time between teachers' experiences of professional development and their measuring of student achievement, as well as the lack of alignment of professional development with curricula, influenced their findings of the lack of impact of professional development on student achievement. There is a need for studies which look at a multiplicity of perspectives on professional learning, including those of teachers, middle leaders, and executive leaders, to

illuminate how professional learners learn and how school leaders lead the learning of their teachers.

Other studies focus on teacher accounts of professional learning experiences (e.g. Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001) often relying on briefly descriptive, rather than deeply reflective, data. For example, Garet, Desimone, and others (2001, 2002) asked over 200 teachers to report on one professional learning activity from a given year. As well as potentially over- or under- representing types of professional development experienced by teachers, this provides an interesting but limited picture of teachers' perceptions of their professional learning. In addition, while teachers in the longitudinal study were asked to describe behaviours rather than making critical judgements, these non-reflective data are both more objective and less telling than deeper, yet subjective, reflections upon professional learning. There is a need for studies which open up the concept of professional learning to professional learners, engaging individuals in reflection about their own learning over time and about what has shaped their identities and practices.

While there are an increasing number of researchers focusing on the forms and features of professional learning that most effectively improve teacher quality, much-championed models of teacher learning are questioned by Guskey and Yoon (2009) who state that “at the present time we have no strong, valid and scientifically defensible evidence that these kinds of oft-promoted school-based professional learning are effective” (pp. 496-497). One of Yoon et al.'s (2007) findings was that professional development workshops, often criticised for being isolated and ineffective methods of developing teachers are not a “poster child” of ineffective practice, but can provide effective professional learning. Yoon et al.'s (2007) syntheses found that only nine of the then-existing 1343 studies on teacher professional learning met the standards of credible evidence set by What Works Clearinghouse, the USA government body responsible for the provision of scientific evidence around education (Yoon et al., 2007; Guskey & Yoon, 2009). The standards of credible evidence applied were: topic dealing with the effects of in-service teacher professional development on student achievement; sample including K-12 teachers and their students of English, Mathematics, and Science; empirical studies using randomised control trials or quasi-experimental designs; measuring student achievement outcomes; use of accurate and consistent measures; occurring between 1986 and 2006; and taking place in Australia, Canada, the United States or the United Kingdom. While the nine

studies they analysed showed that providing professional development to teachers increased student achievement by an average of 21 percentile points (Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Yoon et al., 2007), they describe the existing knowledge about the relationship between professional learning activities and improvements in student learning as scarce. Dismayed that current evidence is in short supply, they called for dedicated efforts to address the lack of sound, trustworthy, and scientifically valid evidence.

More recently, the value of professional learning efforts were questioned by the TNTP (2015) report of a two year study into teacher professional learning of over 10,000 teachers and 500 school leaders in three USA public school districts. They found that, despite schools and systems investing time and money into professional learning of teachers, no clear patterns emerged to suggest which deliberate efforts improved teacher performance, as measured by teacher evaluation scores (using the education district's final evaluation score, calculated using the district's official methodology). Findings included that those teachers who improve, according to district evaluation scores, have similar levels of satisfaction and similar mindsets to those who do not improve over time. The TNTP report suggests that we do not yet know what helps teachers to improve the quality of their instruction. Like Guskey, Yoon, and others (2007, 2009) they call for more rigorous evaluation of current professional development efforts. So, while there is an increasing body of literature on the professional learning of educators, the data on which these literatures are based may need closer scrutiny, as may the consequent conclusions and recommendations. There remains a need for research which uncovers what it is that incites growth, change, and improvement in educators' practice.

One lens which can be applied to studying the phenomenon of professional learning is that of talk and story. Some models of professional learning which are claimed to embody best practice, such as professional learning communities and coaching, integrate elements of talking with others and verbally reflecting. For individuals, talk—that is, individual and shared language of practice, collaboration, and community—is essential for learning (Garmston, 2006). As well as professional talk, research interviews can be a site of professional practice; the interview itself can be an opportunity for the interviewee to make new meaning and generate new knowledge (Johnson, 2009). Within schools or organisations, talking together about practice and working together with a common purpose, grounded in clearly articulated standards for student and teacher performance, aids learning (Garmston & Wellman, 2013). Rosenholtz's (1991) social organisational

perspective assumes that organisational structures, policies, traditions, interactions, and language shape teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and behaviours, shaping the way they define their work, their selves, and their professional reality. Talking itself develops shared learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and shared forms of knowledge (Rosenholtz, 1991; Smart, 1998). Organisational talk establishes unifying, context-specific goals, purpose, norms, and language which unifies schools and their educators (Nicolini et al., 2003; Rosenholtz, 1991). Professional knowing, learning, and meaning-making are social and intersubjective, occurring and existing in action, in situation, and “engaging workers in the creation of new identities, meanings, and communities inside work” (Boud et al., 2006, p. 5). Organisation-talk and self-talk are a key to illuminating professional identity and learning.

2.3 School change

In order to examine the theory and practice of professional learning of educators, it was necessary to gain an understanding of work done on strategic school-based perspectives on professional learning, growth, and change, including school culture and leadership. While many researchers uphold that the quality of classroom teaching is a pivotal school-based factor in student achievement, literature on education reform and change management suggests that improving teacher quality and enacting teacher change is challenging. If teacher quality can be defined and developed, how do schools go about facilitating teachers' improvement of their practice in ways that get teachers “on side” and that change behaviour? What sorts of leadership and school cultures allow positive professional growth to occur?

One important assumption underpinning much school change literature is that learning is a situated social practice and collective process (Lave, 1991; Wenger, 2000). Environment profoundly affects teaching (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) and quality teaching depends on the environments in which teachers work (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Schools are not simply places of professional learning and educational work, but sites of teacher improvement and authentic, ongoing educator development (Fullan, 2001; Grundy, 1994). Schools are socially and culturally constructed worlds which (re)produce and (trans)form learning, encompassing complex relations between such elements as participant, world, act, thought, knowledge, and meaning (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Schools combine the fluid, mutually transformative interactions between individual and community of practice, in which individual influences community and community influences individual. As professional learning is both an individual and collaborative process, constructed within and by the individual, but situated within and transformed by community, effective school cultures enmesh the duality of individual and collaborative learning. Each school would benefit from considering its own idiosyncrasies when designing approaches to professional learning and teacher improvement. While any school can benefit from providing a “community culture that supports, scaffolds and rewards those levels of risk taking and invention characteristics” (Shulman, 2004, p. 494), factors contributing to improvement are contextual and dynamic (Zammit et al., 2007). A strong commitment to teacher growth can result in gains in student achievement (Wasley et al., 1997). School learning cultures should focus on high expectations, continuous learning, and independence (Gonski et al., 2011, p. xix). Darling-Hammond (1997) points out that greater student learning depends on more skilful teaching and more supportive schooling, while Wiliam (2014b) stresses that schools need to be environments of continuous improvement.

But what do effective and supportive schools look like, especially in terms of supporting teacher and student learning? Darling-Hammond (1997) suggests that supportive schools feature: active, in-depth, in-context learning; emphasis on authentic performance; attention to the wide range of student variation; appreciation of diversity; opportunities for collaborative learning; shared coherent collective vision; structures for caring; support for democratic learning; and connections to family and community. Many of these themes recur in literature around school and educator change. School environments need to “hold” teachers in highly safe and highly challenging environments (Drago-Severson, 2004, 2009, 2012), providing organisational qualities of shared power, open communication, and collaborative working relationships (Smylie, 1995). Drago-Severson’s (2004, 2009, 2012) four pillars of professional learning, based on a study of the school-based leadership practices of 25 USA school principals, also cover many of the themes across educational change management literature: teaming or partnering with colleagues within and outside the school; providing teachers with leadership roles; engaging in collegial enquiry; and mentoring (or coaching). The following themes recur in literature around teacher and school change: shared school leadership; compelling, shared, and coherent vision, enacted into practice; a safe, non-judgemental school culture based

on continuous improvement and which embraces errors as learning moments; school investment of time and resources. A discussion of each of these aspects of school change literature follows.

Shared school leadership

School leaders are vital to supporting teacher and school growth (Goldenberg, 2004; Barber & Mourshed, 2007). Literature on school leadership often represents the principal as the central protagonist on the stage of school change. Studies of school leadership often focus on the principal (e.g. Comer, 1980; DuFour, 2002; Gurr & Day, 2014; Holmes, Clement, & Albright, 2013; Johnson, 2009; Louis, 2006), providing insights into the role of school leaders operating at this level. In her study of eight USA high schools, Louis (2006) found that effective principals delegated and empowered their teachers to solve problems; anticipated emerging problems; had an open door policy encouraging drop-in visits; set the tone for the ethics and values of the school by example; emphasised the care of students as the core business of the school; and were highly networked educators seen to be actively using educational knowledge and ideas in their work. DuFour's (2002) own story of his journey as principal emphasises the importance of the role of principal in school change, including how language defines roles and the leader's role in providing an environment for change. In their study of two Australian principals, Holmes, Clement, and Albright (2013) identify five characteristics of transformational leaders: developing shared school vision, developing an environment of trust, ability to solve complex problems, clear focus on teaching and learning, and willingness to engage with the wider community. Gurr and Day (2014), in their reflections on 15 stories of successful school principals across 13 countries, identify successful principals as: having high expectations; being both heroic and empowering in their leadership; developing collective, shared vision; taking on the symbolic role of storyteller and sense-maker; embodying integrity, trust, and transparency; being people centred; and balancing instructional and transformational leadership. The principal is clearly a central figure in the leadership of schools and in any school reform, but it is creating cultures of collaborative growth, not championing charismatic heroes, which will improve teachers and schools (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Many of these findings point to the principal as needing to balance directive leadership with empowerment, including building the capacity of others to lead.

Gronn (2003, 2009, 2010), from his perspective of promoting and acknowledging the distribution of leadership, questions the focus on the principal as central protagonist in research and practice of school leadership. He calls the tendency to foreground principals, often as heroic figures or “champions that drive change” (2010, p. 417), in school leadership literature as a “curious and ironical tendency that should not go unremarked” (2009, p. 314). In Gronn’s (2010) description of distributed leadership he explains that organisational influence is not monopolised by one person, but shared around among a number of influential forces, or groups of individuals who come together interdependently to exert their influence jointly. The notion of distributed leadership is reflected in Comer’s (1980) finding that, while the principal is a critical figure, he or she should lead but not control school change, sharing power with parents and teachers in order to develop community ownership.

Consistent with Gurr and Day’s (2014), and Louis’ (2006), finding that effective principals empower their staff, some research literature views teachers as leaders, recommending that teachers be made fully able to lead initiatives (Rose, 2006) and have autonomy in making school decisions (Farris-Berg & Dirkswager, 2016). In school-based initiatives, having teachers actively leading professional learning impacts positively on a range of student outcomes (Timperley et al., 2007). Teachers need to be supported as leaders through remuneration, time release, and training (Schmoker, 1999; Weiss, Montgomery, Ridgway, & Bond, 1998). The role of the teacher, and the non-principal leader, is an important consideration for schools.

Compelling, shared, and coherent school vision

A key theme in professional learning literature continues to be the need for compelling, coherent, and shared vision (Fullan, 2001; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Joyce & Showers, 1988; Louis, 2006; Rosenholtz, 1991; Sarason, 1971), as well as shared values (Horowitz, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005). Schools improve when purpose and effort unite (Schmoker, 1999). Successful leadership lies in leaders having shared identity with the group (Rhodes & Fletcher, 2013). A shared vision, common goals, equality across the school team, collaborative planning, encouragement of risk taking, ideas-sharing, and a strong belief in research-based professional inquiry, are central to teacher improvement (Mullen & Schunk, 2010). Senge (2012) argues for creating an ongoing process of learning and unlearning, by creating a shared vision and providing resources, time, and

mechanisms that facilitate dialogue across the school. The aims of unlearning, learning, and developing the morale of the group—along with the requirements of common purpose, resourcing, and time—are important ones to consider when planning an approach to developing teacher quality, educator practice, and school learning culture.

It is cohesive, whole school, shared vision, and purpose—based on trust, respect, and consensus—which most profoundly intensify teacher engagement and incite school change (Comer, 1980; Louis, 2006). A coherent vision unifies teacher talk and behaviours (Rosenholtz, 1991). Coherence making (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016) in schools involves context-appropriate, shared understanding about purpose. New initiatives must be coherently connected with the culture, mission, and moral imperative of the school in order for the change to be sustained over time (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). The previously discussed TNTTP report (2015) noted one school system whose teachers and students consistently performed better and improved more than the three public school districts. The report notes this better-performing, teacher-developing system had a more disciplined and coherent system for teacher development, a clear vision of success, and a network-wide culture of high expectations and continuous growth. Culture, expectations, cohesion, and clear roles were standout factors of that high-performing school system. Although shared vision is championed as part of effective school change culture, schools and leaders need to consider whether their approach to vision imposes a rationality which quashes possibilities (Watson, 2013), or allows the engagement of its community.

As well as vision, schools need a clear well-grounded plan and ongoing communication (Levin, 2009). Coordinated and coherent action makes change happen (Goldenberg, 2004). Sergiovanni (2005) highlights the importance of “transforming visions into actions and marshalling the human resources needed for the actions to be successful” (p. 8). In other words, vision statements need to shape strategy, decision making, resourcing, roles, and action, permeating all aspects of a school. Measurable school goals and vision work best when connected with teacher collaboration and use of data (Rosenholtz, 1991; Schmoker, 1999). Fullan’s (2001) discussion of reculturing combines the notion of compelling, coherent, shared vision with widespread collaboration and a strategic approach to professional learning, thereby providing a comprehensive approach for ingraining change in a school environment, rather than grafting change initiatives onto systems, policies, and practices. Wiggins and McTighe (2007) reinforce this notion of the

coherence of vision and action with their discussion of backwards-designed mission-driven schooling, in which a clear vision leads the reality of the school.

Safe, non-judgemental school contexts which honour the individual and the collective

The previously discussed notion of holonomy brings these tensions together: an organisation includes independent individuals who are part of and responsive to the larger system; the whole makes up more than the sum of its parts (Costa & Garmston, 2006). Comer (1980) brings together human, organisational, and systemic behaviour theories in order to consider schools as ecological environments in which individuals and their contexts interact, similar to Sarason's (1996) systemic approach to school change. As individual and organisational trust is a foundation stone of effective school relationships (Tschannen-Moran, 2014), consideration of school context is key, as school leadership and interventions cannot be separated from the wider contextual culture. In refining leadership, vision, and resourcing, as discussed above, schools aim to provide the kind of supportive school environment promoted by Darling-Hammond (1997) and Weiss et al. (1998). When school professionals trust each other, and feel trusted, they feel safe to be vulnerable, experimental, and engaged in reform initiatives (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Learning is fostered within an environment in which teachers are aligned and nurtured, like-minded, and like-purposed (Thomas & Seely Brown, 2011; Wenger, 2000). The notion of a *holding environment*, first introduced by Winnicott (1960) in psychoanalytic literature⁹, has been appropriated in educational contexts (Drago-Severson, 2009, 2012; Drago-Severson, et al., 2013). In educational contexts, it is an organisational environment which offers high support and high challenge in order to foster adult growth (Drago-Severson, 2012). Drago-Severson (2012) notes that in order for teachers to feel held by their professional environments, those environments require a "keen awareness for individual needs and differences, and a willingness to honour and see those in our care for who they are and who they are becoming" (p. 47). Individuals' differing selves influence their responses to leaders and to school change (Tuytens & Devos, 2011).

Following Costa and Garmston's (2006) notion of holonomy, the individual educator needs to be considered in relation to the whole of the school and system within which

⁹ The concept of the holding environment continues to be a central tenant of psychoanalysis (Ginot, 2001) and has been adopted in arenas including social work (Applegate, 1997) and higher education (Ward, 2008). This thesis is not aligned with these fields, but acknowledges the wide ranging use of the term.

they operate. Collaborative efforts need to occur in tandem with the individual reflection described above. Fullan (2001) advocates mobilising the collective capacity in a way that fires independent purpose in the individual. Sergiovanni (2005) emphasises that collaborative cultures serve both the individual and the organisation, building on the personal strengths of individuals and transferring improved individual capacity into amassed organisational competence, thereby serving the school's goals. It is necessary to balance the individual's capacity to work independently with personal vision, with collegiality and collaboration (Fullan, 1993). The tensions and benefits of the combination of individual effort and "communal choreography" come together best in schools which can "cherish individuality and inspire communality" (Rosenholtz, 1991, p. 221). This vision of schools as learning-enriched contexts of shared lifelong learning is wonderfully described by Rosenholtz (1991) in her reflection on her research of 78 Tennessee primary schools. She notes that in learning-enriched settings "an abundant spirit of continuous improvement" seems to "hover school-wide, because no one ever stopped learning to teach," describing educators in effective schools as "clumped together in a critical mass, like uranium fuel rods in a reactor" (p. 208). This comment encompasses the notions of school communities as ones of continuous collaborative learning in which the individual "rods" work individually and together to create positive change for a school and its students.

Collaborative work and school-wide values and norms build and test knowledge, helping to seek, critically assess, and selectively incorporate new ideas and practices on a continual basis (Fullan, 2001). Rather than focusing on small teams, professional learning should aim to create school-wide professional learning communities (Fullan, 2001). As Garmston and Wellman (2013) attest, it is not "a collection of superstar teachers" but "interdependent colleagues who share and develop professional practices together" which result in improvement in the quality of teachers' teaching (p. 16). This suggests that having individual outstanding teachers in a school is not what results in teacher improvement; rather, the collective efforts of a community of teacher learners lead to growth. Professional communities are key to ensuring that change takes root and becomes part of the fabric of a school (Senge, 2012). Learning communities work best when they set ambitious targets and high standards together; explore a wide range of mindful and meaningful questions; and become informed by statistical evidence and accumulated experience (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). We need "more collegial interaction, lateral learning, and professional fulfilment in school reform. But these

reforms must be substantial and profound, not data-driven and contrived” (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009, p. 43). The notion of professional fulfilment adds another layer to collaborative teacher work; schools need to engage, connect, and fulfil educators.

Adding to Hargreaves and Shirley’s (2009) notion of reform which is profound rather than contrived, Gronn (2003) warns against groupthink and coerced compliance. He encourages schools to think about how to guard against imposed collaborative groups which have such high degrees of attitudinal concurrence and conformity that they are enslaved rather than empowered, and where learning, thinking, and decision making are impaired. Watson (2013), too, advocates for creative debate through transparently grappling with cognitive conflict in schools. Yet despite these calls for schools with openness and without coerced compliance and contrived collegiality, teachers remain vulnerable in schools which scrutinise and evaluate their practice. While teaming teachers for regular peer observations has been found to enhance the quality of teachers’ work, their feelings of success, and their daily discussions about pedagogy (Louis, 2006), teacher classroom practice is the arena of greatest anxiety, insecurity, and vulnerability (Goodson, 1991). Rather than placing teacher attention on the most exposed and vulnerable aspect of their work, Goodson advocates listening to teachers, valuing and capturing their voices about life and work. Louis (2006) adds that teachers are often fearful of initiatives which open the classroom door in order to look at teachers’ classroom practice. So while school change can help teachers to grow, it places teachers in a heightened state of vulnerability. Researchers of teachers, too, may benefit from considering the vulnerability of teachers, stemming from the highly personal nature of teaching practice, uncertainty about how their data may be shared, and the exposed role of the teacher in the school system.

School investment of time and resources

If school change is to occur, it needs to be adequately resourced (Garet et al., 2001; Desimone et al., 2002; Fleming & Kleinhenz, 2007; Timperley et al., 2007). Garet et al.’s (2001) surveys of over 1000 teachers’ accounts of their professional learning opportunities led to their recommendation that funds be focused on providing high quality professional development experiences in order to have a meaningful effect on teacher learning and foster improvements in classroom practice. For Garet et al., high quality professional development is that which is sustained, intensive, focuses on academic subject matter, involves active learning by teachers, and is coherently integrated into the daily life of the

school. Fleming and Kleinhenz (2007) assert that teachers need time and space for both professional collaboration and to visit each other's classrooms to observe alternate ways of engaging with subject matter, ascertaining and measuring student achievement, and utilising a diversity of teaching strategies. The essential conditions for a positive professional learning culture as time, opportunities, funding, and technical assistance. Timperley et al.'s (2007) best evidence synthesis of 97 individual studies and groups of studies around how to promote teacher learning in ways that impact on outcomes for students, found that providing sufficient time for extended learning opportunities was vital to the success of professional learning. Meanwhile, the 2012 Californian Task Force on Educator Excellence report argued that a consistent share of education budgets be dedicated to professional learning investments (Darling-Hammond & Steinhauser, 2012). Time and money are crucial considerations in school change initiatives, if they are to be successful.

School change: Current knowledge, the gap, and future directions

Reviewing literature around those factors which facilitate school change at organisational and individual levels reveals the central role of school leaders and school context in the success of any change initiative. Existing literatures consider data from students, teachers, and leaders, but often the subjective and complex voices of these groups are absent from, or marginalised in, the data. Analysis of whole school systems, large scale quantitative data, and student achievement mostly views teacher quality from an overarching macro perspective. In seeking patterns and amalgamating a large number of disparate studies, the complexity of education and of classrooms can be overlooked (Snook et al., 2009). What is needed now is not a replication of attempts to evaluate the effects of the teacher on student achievement. Having established the importance of teacher quality, and systemic pressures to improve teacher quality, the important question is now how to develop the quality of teachers at school and system levels. Effective change and building of teacher quality is “a matter of both *will* and *skill*,” “people have to want to do it, and they have to know how to do it” (Levin, 2009, p. 62). What kinds of school cultures facilitate a staff of teachers who want to change and who have the capacity to grow? Considering teacher quality development from a close-up micro level, taking on board the perspectives of educators operating within schools and classrooms, is appropriate in order to add another layer to current understandings.

Literature around the culture and leadership required to manage school change points towards six interconnected elements for effective improvement of teacher quality and school change: shared school leadership; compelling, shared, and coherent vision, enacted into practice; a safe, non-judgemental school culture based on continuous improvement and which embraces errors as learning moments; and school investment of time and resources. Some central commonalities emerge when looking at the literature around school change: the emphasis on the sharing of leadership, vision, and innovation; the importance of members of a school working together; the deliberate but sensitive use of data to inform policy and practice; and adequate resourcing and time given to teachers' work and new initiatives. Many of these can be brought together in the conceptualisation, as discussed, of holonomous school culture (Costa & Garmston, 2006; Edwards, 2005; Koestler, 1967, 1972). School reform efforts would benefit from considering the whole system, its parts, and their complex, organic, symbiotic relationships.

As well as consistencies, school change literature reveals a number of tensions. Some research examines large samples of quantitative data, while some focuses on particular individuals or teams within very specific contexts. Much of the abundant research surrounding school change is based on single sources of data, such as those from teachers or leaders or students, or even a single individual such as the principal. School change interventions can be collaborative or competitive, contrived or authentic, focused on individual or collective, growth focused or measurement focused. Some interventions acknowledge the vulnerability or individuality of teachers, while others take a one-size-fits-most view. Some attempt to allow teachers to be self-authoring individuals within the larger system, while others focus on bringing individuals into line with systems and imposed standards. The complex nature of teaching and the professional knowledge landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007) at once presents a problem in measurement, and yet is necessary to be evaluated for both teacher growth and formal evaluation. Questions remain as to who should do the evaluating of practice; the teacher, the students, a school leader, or an external observer. Confusions exist around whether the purpose of professional learning in schools is to monitor performance and comply with school agendas, or to empower teachers to grow themselves (Lofthouse & Leat, 2013). These dichotomies, or outlying points on school change continua, reveal the complexities of the practice and study of school change. More studies which bring multiple perspectives of school stakeholders together would help to present a more robust picture of how individuals experience and interact with school change. Research from a

further variety of school settings, and a wider range of educators at various career stages, will help to shade in the outlined ideas of effective school-based teacher growth. In particular, as pointed out by Goldenberg (2004), more studies of school interventions from their outset (rather than part way through) would help develop an understanding of how the whole and the parts of schools interact during times of change implementation. School change is heavily researched, but its complexity and context-specificity means that understanding of this phenomenon would benefit from further inquiry.

2.5 Situating the present study

As explicated in this chapter, many researchers have long explored the educational phenomena of professional identity, professional learning, and school change. These three phenomena are not, however, holistically brought together in the research literature. Studies which analyse the world's top school systems have used largely quantitative methods to focus on identifying those aspects of teaching which enhance student achievement and on the effects of teacher quality on student achievement (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Jensen et al., 2012). Extensive best evidence syntheses (Timperley et al., 2007; Zammit et al., 2007) and meta-analyses (Hattie, 2009) have drawn conclusions about the relationships between teacher quality, professional learning, student learning and effective school reform. When averages are sought or large numbers of disparate studies amalgamated, as in meta-analyses, the complexity of education and of classrooms can be overlooked (Snook et al., 2009). Meta-analysis is singled out by Wiliam (2016) as an unsuitable technique for identifying the relative effectiveness of different approaches to student learning.

Meanwhile, smaller-scale largely-qualitative studies have investigated elements of teacher identity, teacher vision, professional learning communities, or professional learning. These studies have investigated a variety of aspects of identity or teacher learning, such as identity formation (e.g. Ban, 2006; Day et al., 2006); identity and emotions (e.g. Freese, 2006; Saunders, 2013); vision (e.g. Hammerness, 2006); professional learning opportunities offered by schools (e.g. Baguley & Kerby, 2012); and situated teacher learning (e.g. Sawyer, 2002). They have focused on groups such as teachers from one learning area (e.g. Ban, 2006; Goker, 2006; Tarr, 2010); on Vocational Education and Training teachers (e.g. Grangeat & Gray, 2007; Saunders, 2013); on Science, Mathematics,

and Technology teaching (e.g. Weiss et al., 1998); primary school Mathematics teachers (e.g. Pil & Leana, 2009; Dash et al., 2012); on pre-service or beginning teachers (e.g. Boreham & Gray, 2005; Campbell, Horn, Nolan, & Ward, 2008; Freese, 1999, 2006; Gallagher, Griffin, Ciuffetelli, Kitchen, & Figg, 2011; Goker, 2006; Timostsuk & Ugaste, 2010); on middle managers (e.g. Boyle and others, 2004, 2005, 2006); on the principal (e.g. Comer, 1980; DuFour, 2002; Gurr & Day, 2014); on one level of schooling (e.g. Hudson-Ross, 2001; Grangeat & Gray, 2007; Pil & Leana, 2009; Dash et al., 2012); or on socially disadvantaged schools (e.g. Comer, 1980; Louis, 2006). There are studies in which school change had been underway for some time (Louis, 2006) and those which look at school change from the outset of reform (Goldenberg, 2004; Comer, 1980). While there is a plethora of literature on small areas around these intersecting arenas, the interconnections of professional identities with professional learning, and leading, in school contexts, through the perspectives of teachers and leaders, has not been a focus of the literature.

In linking perspectives of professional learning and school change with perspectives on professional identity, the present study elucidates a connection which would benefit from more explicit and directed research. Making these connections may illuminate what transformative moments and aspects of school culture lead to learning and change, providing insights into how schools and systems might augment educators' growth. Additionally, while story and narrative methods have been utilised in a large body of educational research, they have not been applied to this particular combination of foci, in this particular way. For example, while Weiss et al. (1998) used teacher interviews as one of a number of instruments to evaluate the quality and impact of the three year teacher quality enhancement program, the interviews were a supplement to survey, questionnaire, and observation data, rather than the central focus. It is unclear the role the interviews played in the evaluation; although 249 interviews were conducted, these data are not discussed at any length in the report. Goldenberg's (2004) explication of seven years of implementing school change in one Californian primary school offers much in the way of how school change occurred in one school setting, but its focus is on school change management rather than professional learning and its connection to educator identities. Hammerness (2006) uses longitudinal collection of surveyed, written, interview, and observation data to provide portraits of teachers' vision and how this changed over a nine year period, in order to illuminate how teachers bring knowledge, passion, and vision to the act and craft of teaching. In aiming to "see through the eyes" of the teacher participants, Hammerness' stories of her four portrait cases present a fascinating

longitudinal cross-section of teachers' envisioning of themselves. While her study illuminates the growth of teachers across time and gives the reader a deep look at their hoped-for selves, it does not link these insights to professional learning.

The method of this study responds to the need for more in-depth perspectives which look at insiders when considering professional learning and school reform. Some research suggests that using student performance data to evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development programmes does not successfully reveal classroom or teacher changes (Fletcher & Barufaldi, 2002; Shymansky, Yore, & Anderson, 2004). Rather, educator perspectives on the extent to which they benefit from professional learning can be more useful (Boyle et al., 2005). Communities, as well as individuals, create identities is through the telling and retelling of shared stories (Boje, 1991; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Holland et al., 1998; Wenger, 2000). Stories do more than chronicle experience. They form and re-form professional selves (Boreham & Gray, 2005). They construct ideological and lived experiences (Holland et al., 1998). The reflective insider nature of the stories is vital to developing understandings about identities, learning, and school reform. As meaning-making constructions of human experience (Wertsch, 2001), stories allow participants to express their sense of who they are and their multiple identities (Gee, 2011b). Story as a tool for shaping professional selves (Campbell et al., 2008; Hayler, 2011; Johnson, 2009), and giving meaning to individual experiences (Mishler, 1986), provides an appropriate way in to examining teachers' and leaders' perceptions of how professional learning might transform identity and practice. Using story as a medium for examining professional identity, professional learning, and experiences of school change, sets the present study apart from much research around educator professional learning, which is often based on survey data generated to show large scale patterns, or on limited definitions of professional learning.

The present study contributes to areas which have been identified by others as some for future research: the relationships of teacher professional learning with teacher collaboration, teacher leadership, and school leadership (Zammit et al., 2007). It addresses the call for research which elucidates the direct effect of school reforms on teachers themselves (Yoon et al., 2007), as well as the roles and perceptions of leaders. It does not imitate the work already done in the complex, dense, and ever-expanding bodies of relevant literature. Louis (2006), in her book which encompasses findings from over 25 years of research and publication on education and schools, argues that "there is a

great deal of work to be done on the topic of teachers' work life," particularly "the complex interplay between teachers, leaders, and students and the balance between work life and the press for rapid improvements in education and teaching" (p. 111). Beijaard, et al. (2004) identified teacher professional identity as an emerging research area, suggesting that interpreting the relationship between teachers' stories and their professional identity would benefit from further attention to the role of context, including looking at relevant others as well as teachers. This study did just that by situating teachers' stories within the school context and connecting their stories with the perspectives of school leaders. It is this gap which this study addresses, through its amalgamation of phenomena. The examination of the underexplored perspectives of teachers and school leaders allows this study to explore the (trans)formation of educators' professional identities and the role of professional learning, as told through teacher and school leader stories of themselves as lifelong educator learners and educator perceived-enacted-imagined selves.

2.6 The research question

The formulation of research questions is pivotal to the journey and outcome of any research. "The questions we ask will always to some degree determine the answers we find" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 39); they reflect our goal, define our focus, and guide our study. As stated, the intention of this study was to provide insight into the dynamic connection between educators' changing identities, professional learning, and school change. The study applied a sociocultural theoretical framework to how identities and learning occur within the specific context of the professional world in which they operate.

The conceptualisation of teacher quality as a vehicle for improving student achievement has driven much recent educational reform and provides the context for the present study's foci of professional identity, professional learning, and school change. In drawing together these three foci, the research question was anchored around the fulcrum of change; personal change within the context of school change.

The primary research question which emerged from the review of the literature was:

In what ways might teachers' and school leaders' experiences of professional learning (trans)form their sense of professional selves; *and* in what ways might school leaders' professional identities, perceptions of professional learning, and strategic intentions, shape and be shaped by the culture and enacting of professional learning in a school context?

The secondary research questions for the study, which led the design of interview questions, were based around the three key phenomena, as follows.

The questions around professional identity were:

- In what ways and by what factors are teacher and leader professional identities shaped?; and
- How malleable are the professional identities of teachers and leaders?

The questions around professional learning were:

- What is the role of professional learning in identity formation and professional growth?; and
- What professional learning is (trans)formational?

The questions around school change were:

- What factors of school change are perceived as impactful by teachers and school leaders?; and
- How do school leaders' identities shape their strategic approach to teacher professional learning?

In assuming the situatedness of learning—that identities are enmeshed with the worlds they inhabit (Holland et al., 1998)—and that identities are created through storying, this study followed the journeys of teachers and school leaders involved in the first years of one school-based professional learning intervention in order to examine educators within the authentic context of one specific professional world. The focus of the study was discovering the ways in which educators' learning can (trans)form teachers' and leaders' professional identities and practices, and ways in which leaders' identities influence their leading of professional learning.

3. This ought to have been a red-rose tree: From paradigm to methodology

A large rose tree stood near the entrance of the garden: the roses growing on it were white, but there were three gardeners at it, busily painting them red. ...
“Would you tell me,” said Alice, a little timidly, “why you are painting those roses?” ...
“Why the fact is, you see, Miss, this here ought to have been a *red*-rose tree, and we put a white one in by mistake.”

(Carroll, 2014, pp. 83-84)

Paradigms are the constructed sets of beliefs that define worldview and guide action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011a; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the Queen of Hearts' worldview includes the beliefs that rose trees should be red and people should be beheaded if they displease her. This chapter is about explicating the choices the researcher made in selecting the paradigmatic soil of the research and therefore which methodological tree to plant. Not only can theory and method not be separated (Gee, 2011a), and not only do paradigmatic stances have preferred methodologies, but methodology is bound up in the assumptions that define each paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1988; Lincoln et al., 2013). Method is inevitably interwoven with and emerges from theories underpinning methodologies. Without their theoretical underpinnings, methods can become “meaningless congeries of mindless choices and procedures” (Guba & Lincoln, 1988, p. 114). The intention, purpose, and overarching view of any inquiry informs and underpins the research methodology (Hardy, Gregory, & Ramjeet, 2009). As Green puts it: the researcher needs to consider the “what” before the “how” (2002, p. 3).

The preceding review of the literature has articulated the knowledge and tensions around the phenomena of professional identity, professional learning, and school change. There remain differences in the understandings of educator identity, including under what circumstances and at what times identities are fixed or fluid, and the range of factors which might shape individuals' constructions of their professional selves. The global focus on teacher quality improvement has sharpened the education world's focus on the importance of professional learning to improve teaching and teachers, but there is more to understand about what in-action, in-world, context-specific learning is really transformative for educators, rather than affirming or compliance-conforming. Scholars,

schools, systems, and policy makers would benefit from knowing more about what professional learning or cultural and contextual school factors allow, facilitate, or hinder individual and organisational change. The primary foci of this study were distilled in Chapter Two into the central question: In what ways might teachers' and school leaders' experiences of professional learning (trans)form their sense of professional selves; *and* in what ways might school leaders' professional identities, perceptions of professional learning, and strategic intentions, shape the culture and enacting of professional learning in a school context? This chapter articulates the social constructionist paradigmatic parameters of the study. Appropriating the metaphor of bricolage (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2011b; Kincheloe, 2001, 2005; Lévi-Strauss, 1966), it goes on to describe how aspects of various qualitative beliefs and approaches have been deliberately selected and woven together into a bespoke paradigmatic stance, which provides the foundation for this study's methodology and method. The customised conceptual bricolage for this study is then articulated, providing a basis from which to discuss the selection and enactment of method.

3.1 Overarching paradigmatic stance: A constructionist ontology

In considering the “what” before the “how,” it was necessary to start with the foci of this study, and the beliefs which underpin it, in order to embed the study within fitting paradigmatic boundaries. The teasing out of the situated sociocultural phenomena of professional identity, professional learning, and school change, in the literature review, made clear that the study is based on the following assumptions.

- Individuals are entangled within their social worlds. Meaning is situated.
- Individuals construct and re-construct their professional selves and experiences through language.
- Identity is plural and shifting. It is constantly formed and re-formed through talk, including self-talk and talk with others.
- Reality is plural, shifting, and constantly being recreated, rewritten, and reimagined by individuals.
- Knowledge is constructed and created, in context.

These assumptions already situate the study within a social constructionist worldview. As a teacher of English and Literature—who aims to empower her students to be critical consumers, creators, and challengers of knowledge and language—the researcher

personally shares these assumptions. Her own axiological position, including her belief in the power of language and story, is revealed in more detail through the first person voice in Chapter Five's Alice story. The present chapter, however, consciously retains the distant Waking Alice voice in order to tease out the paradigm of the study with a focus on the theoretical, rather than personal.

Clearly the present study is at odds with what Guba and Lincoln (1988) call the conventional paradigm and which Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) refer to as the realist hard science paradigm. The positivistic paradigm rests on a realist ontology that an objective reality exists and is divisible into examinable parts (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1988). This study, conversely, sits within the constructionist paradigm which Guba and Lincoln (1981, 1988, 1989) described as alternative and new, but which is now well-established and considered legitimate (Lincoln et al., 2011). It is based on a relativist ontology that a multiplicity of realities are constructed by people and exist through their perceptions (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1988). It accepts that realities are plural, personal, and that changing the individual changes the reality (Lincoln et al., 2011, 2013). This study is designed to glean deep situated understanding by interpreting participants' stories in an unfolding inquiry which is circular, interactive, hermeneutic, intuitive, and open (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). With its subjectivist epistemology, hermeneutic narrative methodology, and value-laden axiology, participants and researcher co-create a new shared reality through the research process. The constructionist paradigm is a particularly good fit for sociobehavioural phenomena such as that on which this study focuses (Guba & Lincoln, 1988): professional identity, professional learning, and school change, revealed through the situated voices of researcher, teachers, and school leaders.

3.2 Bricolage: Weaving a methodological framework

Research increasingly uses hybrid methods (Rogers, 2011) which meld, blur, and weave approaches. In 1988 Guba and Lincoln deliberately inserted "and/or" in their work defining research paradigms, as studies can encompass more than one approach. More recently, Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) upheld the importance of looking for confluence, overlap, and linkages between increasingly shifting boundaries of research paradigms, arguing that the blurring of paradigmatic boundaries provides an opportunity for the continued growth of research and its approaches and perspectives.

The metaphor of bricolage, and bricoleur as genre blurrer (Barone, 2007), provides a way of conceptualising this study's paradigmatic stance, drawn as it is from a range of places. Denzin and Lincoln (1994, 2011b) described the qualitative researcher as bricoleur (and also as quilt maker, jazz improviser, weaver of stories, layerer of meanings, and refractor of multiple realities) who brings unity and meaning to complexity in their drawing together of multiple approaches. The term *bricoleur* comes from a French expression which denotes the craftsman who creatively uses materials and tools left over from other projects to construct something new (Lévi-Strauss, 1966; Kincheloe, 2001, 2005; Rogers, 2011). The origins of this term are, however, misleading in a research context. The researcher-as-bricoleur does not patch together an eclectic research approach out of discarded leftovers; rather, a multiplicity of theories, methods, or perspectives are considered, selected, and woven together with awareness and purpose, in an attempt to acknowledge and explore the richness and complexity of that being studied. Bricolage in qualitative research encompasses a critical, plural, multi-perspectival, -theoretical, and/or -methodological approach (Kincheloe, 2001, 2005; Rogers, 2011). Bricoleurs do not use pre-existing guidelines and checklists (Kincheloe, 2005), but rather draw on resources from a range of perspectives in “a kind of made-to-order rather than off-the-rack” way (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 25). This study, in the spirit of bricolage, applies a bespoke methodology—in which paradigms and approaches blur and meld—in order to explore the interacting richness of professional identity, professional learning, and school change in a way that best aligns with the overarching constructionist ontology, the purpose of the study, and the assumptions underlying it. Rather than selecting the existing “best fit” or “off-the-rack” perspective, it was most appropriate to draw from existing traditions, without prescribing to them in their entirety, weaving and layering a bricolaged approach.

As such, this study selects aspects of a few constructionist research traditions as elements which come together to form a customised lens through which to interpret and analyse data in a way which honours the central beliefs upon which the research rests. This lens encompasses the underlying beliefs of the value plurality, subjectivity, and the power of story as central to human sense making; borrows elements from phenomenological and ethnographic approaches; and takes hermeneutic narrative method as its general approach to data generation and interpretation. Below are outlined these overlapping and congruent aspects in order to elucidate the ways in which particular beliefs and research traditions contributed to the methodological lens of this study.

Borrowing from phenomenology

In focusing on educational phenomena, this study borrows from phenomenology in its focus. Whilst the study does not take the phenomenologist's approach of bracketing knowledge or assumptions in order to keep an open, unprejudiced mind (Maso, 2001), it does take as its focus phenomena as a basis for inquiry.

In common usage a phenomenon is regarded as an important, interesting, or unusual fact, thing, or occurrence; a marvel. In research terms, it is the “what” under study, the aspect of lifeworld or lived experience (van Manen, 1997) that would benefit from further probing, capturing, investigating, exploring, and revealing, through description and interpretation. The common usage definition of phenomena is interesting as it encapsulates the idea of marvel(ing) or wonder(ing), of phenomena as the epicentre of curiosity around which to speculate and discover more. Borrowing the terms “re-search” and “wonder” from Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 124) articulates a phenomenological study focus as one of inquiry. The word “wonder” allows consideration of the verb (to wonder, question, speculate, be curious, and investigative) and the noun (a wonder, a marvel, a curiosity, a spectacle; encapsulating awe, amazement, and surprise).

Phenomenological research can be considered as wondering about a wonder, or “a heedful, mindful wondering about the project of living” (van Manen, 1997, p. 12) in which the researcher begins with interesting, curious, or uncharacteristic phenomena (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The researcher of a phenomenon asks: What is the nature or essence of the phenomenon? What are the structures and meaning embedded in life experience (van Manen, 1997)? The focus of this particular study is one of lived experience and meaning making.

Utilising as a starting point the phenomena of professional identity, professional learning, and school change as sources of wonderment—as “things” worthy of interrogation and re-search—this study engages in an inquiring, systematic process of wondering, a research process which “goes in close” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007, p. 376), drilling down into phenomena in order to illuminate and better understand them. The intention of this study was not to solve a particular research problem, but rather to explore and gain insight into the richness of what it means to be a situated educator self, learner, and leader. It sought a research methodology which resonated with the source of wonder(ing) (Green, 2002; Hardy et al., 2009; van Manen, 1997). The method needed to facilitate the

generation and examination of rich, contextually-embedded descriptions of lived experience, intended to provide insight into phenomena through the parallel experiences of multiple participant groups.

Subjective epistemology: Assuming subjectivity, doing reflexivity

Any representation of reality is a re-presentation, and hence an interpretation (Lincoln et al., 2013; Sikes & Gale, 2006); all accounts are partial (Dunne et al., 2005). Researchers do not seek to erase their own presence, but are accepted as active central constructors and interpreters (Finlay, 2003), a key part of the research or storytelling context (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Hawkins & Saleem, 2012; Mishler, 1986). This study's epistemological perspective is pluralistic, subjective, and reflexive. Subjectivity refers to tending to the subject; that is, attempting to understand the perspectives, words, and behaviours of participants, including the researcher (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). A researcher always brings beliefs and assumptions to their research (Creswell, 2013), with any work bearing the mark of the person who created it (Riessman, 1993). Researchers are inside what they are studying (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) themselves a primary instrument of inquiry (Janesick, 2000; Josselson, 2007).

As interpretive bricoleur, I took a reflexive approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 1999; Kincheloe, 2001; Rogers, 2011). In order to assume subjectivity, it was necessary to make visible my individuality and its effects on the research process (Gough, 2003), and to make transparent the assumptions that guided the methodological strategies used (Larsson & Sjöblom, 2010). Accepting the multiplicity of truth and voice (Lincoln et al., 2013), as a reflexive researcher I actively and transparently wrote myself, and my own net of beliefs, into this research text (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011b; Josselson, 2007). As such, this study engages in “the project of examining how the researcher and intersubjective elements impact on and transform research” (Finlay, 2003, p. 4).

In accepting the value of reflexivity within the interpretive paradigm, it was necessary to examine and explore my own subjectivity and insider lens. Reflexivity and embracing of subjectivity is most evident in the Alice researcher story in Chapter Five which embeds the researcher perceptions of self. This allows the uncovering of underlying values (Wilcox, 2009) and adds new dimensions to the knowledge being generated, acknowledging and respecting complexity (Kara, 2015). Rather than being self-indulgent,

embracing and explicating the researcher self employs personal story as meaningful doorway into understanding wider social worlds (Goodson & Walker, 1991). In making explicit the process of internal search, the researcher reveals the self-discoveries they make along the way (Moustakas, 1990). The researcher's own perspective operates as a transparent lens through which to view and assess the research.

Borrowing from (auto)ethnography

Following from the valuing of subjectivity through reflexivity, this study draws from the field of autoethnography in its focus on the researcher as self-conscious participant and highly visible social actor within the study and the thesis (Anderson, 2006). Valuable insights into the work and identity of teacher educators can be gained by examining educators' own memories and beliefs through narratives as ways of making sense of lived experience (Hayler, 2011). Schwalbe's (1996) metaphor is relevant here: observations of self in ethnography are both door and mirror; a way in to others and a way back to self. An autoethnographic perspective is one in which the researcher is deeply self-identified as insider-member while maintaining the qualitative principles of outsider researcher (Anderson, 2006; Hayler, 2011). In the present study, the researcher's subjective insider-outsider experience, as teacher, coach, team facilitator, and researcher, is visible within the research, acknowledging that "there can be no value-free ethnography, no objective, dispassionate, value-neutral account" (Denzin, 2000, p. 403). This study shares the ethnographer's view that the researcher is a major instrument in research and is immersed in the field situation (Gordon, Holland, & Lahelma, 2001). Hayler points out that, "if the researcher remains visibly central the tales are always autoethnographic" (2011, p. 28). Along the same lines as Hayler's autoethnographic study of himself and six other university-based teacher educators in England, my study includes my voice alongside those within the same context. As an insider-outsider, I adopted the ethnographer's approach of using the culture of the setting (the socially acquired and shared knowledge) to make meaning from the observed patterns of human behaviour (Van Maanen, 1983b).

Whilst this study is not an ethnography *per se*, it does take on aspects of an ethnographic perspective. It does not use ethnographic direct participant observation or permanent recordings of everyday life (Gordon et al., 2001). It does sit within Denzin's view of ethnography as an authentic, jargon-free exploration which seeks to understand the construction of meaning and celebrates personal stories (2000). This study shares the

ethnographer's goal as articulated by Green, Skukauskaite, and Baker: "to learn from the people (insiders) what counts as cultural knowledge (insider meanings)" (2012, p. 309). This study is situated within the body of research which believes that the teacher's voice should be "heard, heard loudly, heard articulately" (as suggested by Goodson, 1991, p. 139). In this case it is teachers' and school leaders' emic, or insider, experiences of situated professional learning which the study explored in order to gain insight into the phenomena of professional identity, professional learning, and school change.

A belief in the power of story(ing): Narrative methodology

As outlined above, this study focuses on phenomena and rests on the value of phenomenology, subjectivity, and autoethnographic consciousness. Belief in the power of story and the telling of stories is central to the study and forms a facet of the bricolaged paradigmatic stance. Narrative researchers unite in their fundamental belief in the power of story, that as human beings are storying creatures, narrative is the fundamental to understanding human lived experience, communication, and social interaction (Sikes & Gale, 2006). In showing the diverse ways in which people experience the world (Gabriel, 2008), stories can distort experience (Gee, 2011c). A narrative methodology accepts and celebrates that stories of life experience re-present versions of truth. In the process of constructing narratives of lived experience, "there is a reflexive relationship between living a life story, telling a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 71).

The study follows Kincheloe's (2005) view that narrative bricolage accepts the notion that all research knowledge is shaped by the researcher's storying of their research by bringing insight, consciousness, and focus to the shaping of knowledge production through narrative. Narrative research is case-centred (Riessman, 2002; Riessman, 2008) qualitative research that uses and tells stories (Sikes & Gale, 2006), taking as its object of investigation the story itself (Riessman, 1993). Scholars have increasingly turned to narrative, as "a many-layered expression of human thought and imagination" (Riessman, 2008, p. 13), for a wide range of studies in a wide range of disciplines (Gabriel, 2008; Riessman, 2002). Detailed cases, as presented in narrative research through story, can help to illuminate complex phenomena, revealing connections between people, events, and outcomes (Goldenberg, 2004; Shulman, 1986).

By focusing on quality and depth of data, rather than quantity and generalisability, narrative depicts the complexity of experience in a way that contributes to theories of understanding and improvement (Wildy & Clarke, 2008). Narrative tales are told and are telling in that they have valuable insights and understandings (Hayler, 2011). Narrative research provides insight through the re-storying of practice (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007) in a way that “has a great deal to offer practising professionals, showing how knowledge is constructed in everyday worlds through ordinary communicative action” (Riessman & Speedy, 2007, p. 431). It allows us to understand more about individual and social change (Squire, 2008), as educators’ stories are personal and social, inward-looking, and outward-reflecting (Clandinin & Huber, 2002). In an educational context it offers “substantial opportunities for engagement with education theory, research, and practice at all levels within the context of a positive spirit of problematisation, improvement, and change” (Sikes & Gale, 2006). Narrative research in which teachers’ voices are heard in their stories of experience offers an opportunity to present the complexity of teaching to the public (Moen, 2006).

A narrative approach to research sits snugly with the focus on subjectivity and the idea that there can only be re-presentations of reality, and that these are narratively constructed. Participant stories are narrative constructions of reality, as is this thesis a storied construction which re-presents and interprets reality. In showing the people, personalities, hopes, beliefs, theories, and worldviews of participants (Beattie, 2000), narrative inquiry shows the potential of story to shape personal and collective history (van Manen, 1997). More than that, storied experience is a source of authoritative knowledge (Gabriel, 2008) which offers a unique window into the (re/trans)formations of life meanings and identities (Riessman, 2002). The very telling of stories is a ubiquitous process of meaning making, crucial to our humanness (Squire, 2008), and our construction and reconstruction of self. Individuals use stories around what they perceive as key happenings in their careers as a way to chronicle their experience (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The stories of individuals, groups, and organisations can be a key lens through which to view professional learning journeys and to evaluate the perceived power of learning experiences. Stories of self-formation and learning can show how educators enact and construct their selves, and what factors of learning or school change interventions might lead to the formation of significant moments of identity formation and transformative learning. Riessman (1993) notes that the narrative approach is well-suited to studies of subjectivity and identity. Multiple storied perspectives of socially-

situated identities may reveal much about the connected webs of professional identities, professional learning, and school change.

It therefore made sense to apply a narratologic approach to data and research product when focusing on the human aspects of professional identity, learning, and leading as constructed through narrative retelling. The narrative method used in this study allowed the explicit situation of researcher in the research as all narrative research studies tell participants' stories, but they are also autobiographical, growing out of the researcher's interests and experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 121). "Stories of us are with us as we move from field to field text to research text" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 177). Similarly, the analysis of field texts is affected by the researcher, who re-searches those texts again and again, each time bringing their own storied lives and research interests to the interpretation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). While "much remains to be discovered [about narrative inquiry] in the years to come" (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007, p. 377), the tensions of researcher bias and the complexities of telling the stories of others in a way that reveals their essence, is a worthy challenge, a challenge embarked upon by this study.

Immersion, iteration, analysis, and critique: Hermeneutic approach to method

A hermeneutic approach is necessary when focusing, as this study does, on story and its role in making sense of human experience. Hermeneutic method "does not offer a procedural system; rather, its method requires an ability to be reflective, insightful, sensitive to language, and constantly open to experience" (van Manen, 1997, p. xi). A hermeneutic approach to analysing data aims at full interpretation and understanding rather than description or structural analysis (Kincheloe, 2005; Squire, 2008). It involves an ongoing hermeneutic circle of iteration, analysis, and critique (Geelan, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 1988; Squire, 2008), described by Squire as one in which the researcher describes the stories, develops predictive theories, and then revisits the stories, retheorises, and so on. According to Kincheloe (2005), a researcher informed by hermeneutics understands that rigorous research involves: connecting the object of inquiry to the many contexts in which it is embedded; appreciating the relationship between researcher and that being researched; connecting the making of meaning to human experience; making use of textual forms of analysis while not losing sight that living and breathing human beings are the entities around which and with which meaning is being made; and building a bridge between these forms of understanding and informed action.

The present study takes the hermeneutic position, consistent with narrative method, which holds that one cannot transcend one's own historical and situated embeddedness, that textual interpretations are always perspectival (Polkinghorne, 2007), and that language is not innocent and transparent but as real as physicality (Polkinghorne, 1988). Language is the meaning-maker of knowledge and the constructor of human experience. Our realities and identities are described, constructed, organised, and (re)told through narrative (Campbell et al., 2008). Individuals use series' of stories around what they perceive as "key happenings" in their careers as a way to chronicle their experience (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), and to (re)form their (professional) selves (Boreham & Gray, 2005), constructing ideological and lived experiences (Holland et al., 1998).

Along the same lines, Moustakas (1990), from a heuristic perspective offers the advice of organisation of data into a sequence that tells the story of each participant followed by "timeless immersion inside the data," individual case analysis, development of "exemplary portraits" which are unique to the individuals but categorise the group as a whole (pp. 49-50). The final product of heuristic research, according to Moustakas, is a creative synthesis which presents the experience studied as a whole and allows the individual to remain intact. This study adopts both Moustakas' strategy of continuous immersion in the data and Squire's (2008) "simple" classic hermeneutic approach to narrative interpretation. Approaching data in this immersive hermeneutic fashion facilitated the generation of emblematic stories of teachers and school leaders around their perceptions of professional identity, professional learning, and school change.

3.3 Conceptual clarification: The bricolage

As described above, this study assumes the bricoleur's focus on complex interconnectedness rather than things-in-themselves (Kincheloe, 2005), deploying a range of interpretive strategies. The researcher locates her self within the "web of reality" and combines this with other perspectives "to widen the hermeneutical circle and to appreciate the diversity of perspectives on a particular topic" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 335), in this case professional identity, professional learning, and school change. With a social constructionist ontology, this study takes phenomena as its focus. A hermeneutic narrative methodology was suited to its pluralistic, subjective, and reflexive epistemology.

This tailored paradigm, which draws from long-standing theories and qualitative traditions, provided the set of foundational beliefs upon which the study examined the phenomena of professional identity, professional learning, and school change. This bricolaged conceptual framework provided the basis for the choice and design of narrative method for this study.

4. Which way I ought to go from here: The research method

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.

(Carroll, 2014, p. 66)

The question of method begins with a socially-situated researcher who moves from research question, to paradigm, to empirical world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011a; van Manen, 1997; Wilcox, 2009). Applying the previously-explained paradigm, this research is based in the study of subjective human meaning making, in context. Returning to the claim that methodology is bound up in and emerges from particular disciplines and theories (Guba & Lincoln, 1988; Lincoln et al., 2011), and the contention that methods are inextricably tied to paradigms, the methodological lens of this research helped to narrow the exhaustive choice of methods down to those which were most theoretically resonant. This study necessitated a qualitative research approach in which phenomena were examined in context, and in which the researcher’s place within the setting was transparently explored.

Narrative method, emerging out of the research focus and bricolaged theoretical frame, was chosen partly because it privileges subjectivity, humanness, and the plurality of truths (Riessman, 1993, 2002); with subjective, shifting reconstructions of experience (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 1997). It harnesses remembrance and retelling as a way into understanding phenomena, and into uncovering significance in our remembered moments (Leggo & Sameshima, 2014). In this case, with the phenomena of professional identity, professional learning, and school change as central to the research, the study asked participants to share personal and professional moments which they considered transformative. Lived experience, re- and co- created into narrative, provided a vital way for educators to (trans)form their experiences into learning moments or learning stories (Shulman, 2004). This study used story as a portal into how teachers and school leaders enact and construct their professional selves, and what factors of living, learning, and experiencing a school-based teacher growth process, led to meaningful learning and shifting of identities. It shared the stories of teachers and leaders to identify how

elements of leadership and school change interact with professional identities and learning.

While narrative method is increasingly popular and potentially engaging, approaches to narrative research are overwhelming and hotly debated (Sikes & Gale, 2006; Squire, 2008). As well as being a vast, diverse, and contested area, it is cross-disciplinary (Riessman, 1993; Riessman, 2008), drawing from many traditions (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 1997; Renkema, 2004). Researchers sift through narrative approaches in order to select and design the most appropriate methods for their particular study. This chapter outlines the why, what, and how of narrative method as it was designed for and applied to this study. Again, the Waking Alice voice is employed in order to explain the method at a conscious distance. While deliberately taking on the role of detached researcher is of course not feasible, especially considering the researcher's immersion in the context of the study, it does help to articulate the shifts between her multiplicitous roles. In this chapter the focus of the third person voice is on explicating the systematic processes of the study.

4.1 Defining story and narrative

It is necessary to define what is meant in this study by the terms *story* and *narrative*, terms which are interdisciplinary and have multiple meanings and multiple uses in multiple contexts (Larsson & Sjöblom, 2010; Riessman, 1993; Riessman, 2008). The messiness of these terms—which have disputed definitions (Hardy et al., 2009; Squire, 2008)—needs to be grappled with by the narrative researcher. What follows here is an articulation of how this study came to its use of story and narrative as interchangeable terms to describe contextually-driven, idiosyncratic life-based stories.

Broadly, narrative researchers agree that narratives describe past events or experiences and make meaning of those events (Elliot, 2005; Flory & Iglesias, 2010; Gee, 2011a; Geelan, 2003; Labov, 1972; Sikes & Gale, 2006). Narrative “texts of experience” (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998, p. 166) are storied constructions told by a person to other people (Hardy et al., 2009), or to themselves (Riessman, 2002). They have been described as personal, socially-and-contextually-situated fusions of identity, form, and content (Mishler, 1999); as cognitive frameworks that guide individuals in making sense of their experiences (Hawkins & Saleem, 2012); and as looking back products constructed to make sense of

life (Flory & Iglesias, 2010). For the purpose of this study, personal narratives are retrospective, contextually-situated, identity-shaping, meaning-making constructs. It is not just what happened which is the focus of narrative inquiry, but why and the impact. This follows those who see narrative as encompassing explanation and sense making (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997; Lawler, 2014; Watson, 2006), rather than linear beginning-middle-end telling (such as that defined by Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972; Potter & Wetherell, 2001), which was seen as limiting and decontextualising for the purposes of this study.¹⁰ Content, style, and structure are inseparably linked and need to be considered together, without parts of language being analysed apart from their context (Bakhtin, 1986a). While participants in this study told about events, they also reflected on beliefs as an important part of their identities. It was important to share something of the messiness and complexity of participant stories, and the way in which participants used story to consider, explore, and articulate their lived experiences of being, becoming, teaching, learning, and leading.

Some scholars argue that narrative is conceptually bigger than story, defining narrative as an overarching concept which contains within it series of sub-stories (as in Feldman et al., 2004), such as personal stories within collective organisational or societal narratives (Hawkins & Saleem, 2012; Renkema, 2004). Non-participant narrative study focuses on macro organisational or societal contexts and narratives, rather than on individuals (Renkema, 2004). The present study does situate the personal stories of teachers and leaders within their local and global contexts, but it does not seek to illuminate organisational, educational, or societal narratives; it is focused on individual experience. This study takes the well-worn position of story as narrative and narrative as story, using the terms synonymously and interchangeably to mean contextually-driven, idiosyncratic, life-based stories. Narrative refers both to storied data and to the research story told through this thesis: “data as narrative and narrative as data” as Sikes and Gale (2006) put it. So while narrative can be the method of research, the data generated, and the studied phenomenon (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Moen, 2006; Trahar, 2009), here it is used as method, data, and product.

The present study’s method includes use of semi-structured narrative interviews, transcription, veracity checking, inductive theme generation, and composite story-

¹⁰ See Gubrium and Holstein (1998), Patterson (2008), Squire (2008), and van Manen (1997), for criticisms of the limitations of a definition of narrative as strict linear chronologies.

forming. The primary data are narrative interview transcripts. The stories in this study are not whole life chronologies; they are series of critical incidents (Goodson, 1991), moments of identity formation or learning which have been identified by participants as significant in shaping identities and practices. These mini stories are micronarratives of experience which allow the illumination of the complex insider perspective of researcher, teachers, and leaders, within the context of school-based reform. The study's phenomena provided a frame for the collection of storied remembrances. The research product is this thesis, which presents composite participant stories which employ emblematic characters from literary fiction, as well as recognisable storytelling conventions such as illustrations and narrative voice. Layering narrative method, data, and product in this way was the vehicle through which to gain insight into the shaping of professional identities and into what makes (trans)formative professional learning and effective school change.

4.2 Ethics

Ethics underpins the research process and requires constant decision making which allows for overlap of problem solving and creativity (Kara, 2015). In particular, telling the stories of others has a moral and ethical dimension, and involves choice in the telling (Hunter, 2010). Researchers need to contend with the tension between protecting participants' anonymity and telling authentic stories, especially when researching a small community of potential participants, and particularly when that community may read the resultant writing, as in the case of this study. The constructed stories need to capture the truth, essence, and actuality of participants' lived experience, while protecting participants from being recognised. Narrative research needs to honour the humanity of its data and provide systematic collection, analysis, and storying.

Many have wrestled with narrative concerns around how to tell participant stories with both authenticity and sensitivity to confidentiality. Squire suggests that researchers may "omit or change more specific data, guaranteeing confidentiality at the expense of some of the data's richness" (Squire, 2008, p. 36). Wasley et al. (1997) took license with student stories, allowing some of their student participants to "represent some of the experiences of their classmates so that we might both protect their anonymity and provide readers with fewer personalities to come to know" (p. 20). For Wasley et al., the realness of the stories and personalities shone through, even though ethical decisions were made to

amalgamate some stories for both participants' anonymity and readers' accessibility. In another example, Connell (1985) grappled with the tension between protecting anonymity of participants and the importance of giving a real sense of teacher's stories. Her "uneasy compromise" (p. 3) was the construction of composite biographies which came entirely from the interviews, but in which different participants' stories were woven together. This thesis came to a similar compromise in order to protect participant anonymity. While the researcher story could stand alone, teacher stories were woven together into one story and school leaders' stories were woven into another story. In these composite stories, quotations and precise participant language were used, wherever possible, "in all their ambiguity and messiness" (Riessman, 1993, p. 42), to facilitate authentic and anonymous accounts of participant experience. In this way, stories protected the identities of participants while communicating their experiences faithfully.

The researcher's insider role, especially that of member and facilitator of the Teacher Growth Initiative, meant that ethical risks to the (especially teacher) participants needed to be minimised. Teacher participants, due to their more vulnerable position within the researcher's Teacher Growth Initiative team, were more stringently protected than the school leaders, who were in a less vulnerable position. Ethics approval for the study was granted by the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee.¹¹ Those strategies implemented to protect participant anonymity and professional relationships are explained below.

Teachers (White Rabbit story)

In order to protect teacher participants, the researcher was deliberately kept from knowing which of the 11 teachers volunteered, which did not volunteer, or subsequently which two of the initial four participants withdrew. The process involved the researcher emailing the Teacher Growth Initiative team in May of 2013 to inform them of, and invite them to participate in, the study. Information and consent letters are shared in Appendix C. Teachers were instructed to email their intention to volunteer, not to the researcher, but to her supervisors, who took on the role of communicating with the teacher participants and keeping their identities concealed from the researcher.

¹¹ This study's Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee project number was 2013/034. The information letters and consent forms received by participants can be found in Appendix C. These items have been amended to use the pseudonymic names Lutwidge School and Teacher Growth Initiative. Telephone numbers have been redacted and email addresses removed.

To minimise the influence on teacher participants of the researcher's role in the school or their professional relationship with her, it was important to consider the conditions under which the interviews took place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In order to address the issue of conflicts of interest, dependency, risks to those who chose not to participate, and the complexity of the researcher's embeddedness in the research context, a person other than the researcher interviewed teacher participants. This independent interviewer had no connection with the research site or the participants and was bound by a confidentiality agreement. The interviewer who conducted the teacher interviews is a published educational researcher, highly experienced in narrative methods and narrative interviews. She was briefed by the researcher on interview protocols which included the asking of specific open-ended, narrative-style questions followed by paraphrasing and probing questions which focused on drawing storied data from participants. Paraphrasing was an important in-interview veracity checking tool; it allowed participants to approve the way in which their stories were being understood, or to re-articulate them on the spot. The researcher was interviewed first, before the teachers, in order to give the independent interviewer a better understanding of the research being undertaken.

This approach to interviewing helped to enhance authenticity by minimising relationship complexities between interviewer and interviewee, helping to build rapport, trust, and openness, giving participants more scope to express the way they saw things (Arksey & Knight, 1999). The combination of using an external interviewer as listener and a few open questions with a focus on paraphrasing, was employed to encourage them to "speak in their own 'voices'" (Mishler, 1986, p. 118).

After teacher interviews were conducted, audio recorded interview data were then transcribed and de-identified. That is, the researcher's supervisors removed any identifying details from transcripts then sent them to participants for authentication. This step in veracity checking allowed teachers to approve or amend the transcripts before the de-identified, authenticated transcriptions were provided to the researcher.

For ethical purposes, teacher participants were invited to complete an anonymous survey which asked them to rate the following statements against a Likert-type scale (Strongly Agree; Agree; Neutral; Disagree; Strongly Disagree):

- The researcher's role and/or the participant's relationship with her influenced your decision to participate in the study.
- Participating in the study was of benefit to you.
- Participating in this study was a negative or challenging experience for you.

There was also the option of adding a comment about the experience of participating in the study.¹²

As the researcher only received de-identified transcripts of interviews and responses to anonymous web surveys, vulnerability, relationship, and professional risks to both those involved in the research, and those not involved in the research, were minimised. That only four of 11 teachers volunteered to participate, and that two withdrew, reflects the possibility that participants involved in narrative research may feel vulnerable, exposed (Chase, 2011), or at risk of having themselves and their stories identified.

After authentication, teacher data were formed into composite stories under the pseudonymic persona of the White Rabbit. The White Rabbit was used as a tool to both add a layer of meaning to the story, and to combine the stories in a way which protected participants and made them less identifiable.

The remaining number of two teacher participants raises questions around whether these stories should be shared, considering the small sample size and imbalance with the 11 school leader participants. This study's focus on a range of lived experiences, and these teachers' willingness to tell their stories, meant their voices, while few, are important ones to share. Care was taken to ensure that the two remaining stories were woven together to protect participant anonymity.

School Leaders (Cheshire Cat story)

School leaders were interviewed once by the researcher. As the school leaders were not in a dependent relationship with the researcher, it was not necessary for interviews to be undertaken by an independent interviewer. There were, however, still ethical

¹² One teacher responded to the survey. Their responses were:
a) The researcher's role and/or the participant's relationship with her influenced your decision to participate in the study. - Agree
b) Participating in the study was of benefit to you. - Agree
c) Participating in this study was a negative or challenging experience for you. - Strongly Disagree

complexities; in some cases, the researcher was line managed by these leaders, and in others she was independent of them. Furthermore, position alone does not equate to a lack of vulnerability. In order to address issues of dependency and minimise work relationship issues, school leaders were informed (in letters and at the beginning of the interview) that they did not have to answer any question with which they feel uncomfortable, could withdraw from the interview or study at any time, and would be given the opportunity to authenticate interview transcripts. The researcher made clear her separate role of researcher, as distinct from her role in the school, and that all data collected would remain anonymous and confidential. Information and consent letters can be found in Appendix C.

Again, in the interviews the focus on paraphrasing participant responses as part of the narrative listening was an in-interview veracity checking measure; school leaders were able to immediately approve or amend the way in which their stories were being understood.

After the interviews were transcribed, transcripts were sent to participants for checking, approval and amendment. After this transcript authentication, school leader data were formed into composite stories under the pseudonymic persona of the Cheshire Cat. Those data which might identify participants, such as subject area or specific leadership role, were removed to protect participant anonymity.

An anonymous web survey was offered to all school leader participants, as outlined above for teachers, after the final interview data generation which attempted to ascertain the influence of the researcher's role in the school and the research process to participants.¹³

¹³ Seven leaders responded to the survey. Their responses were:

- a) The researcher's role and/or the participant's relationship with her influenced your decision to participate in the study. – Strongly Agree (4), Agree (2), Disagree (1)
- b) Participating in the study was of benefit to you. – Agree (4), Neutral (3)
- c) Participating in this study was a negative or challenging experience for you. – Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (5)

One leader commented "The interview provided me with an excellent opportunity to reflect on past practices and ideas which has resulted in positive changes to both my leadership of staff and students as well as teaching practice."

4.3 Selection and description of participants

As explained in Chapter One, the research site was Lutwidge School. More specifically, the Teacher Growth Initiative was a catalytic professional learning context for participants' narrative reflections on being, becoming, teaching, learning, and leading. The intersecting multiperspectival participant stories of this study encompassed three spheres:

- Researcher / Alice (one): also a teacher in, and leader of, the Lutwidge School Teacher Growth Initiative;
- Teachers / White Rabbit (four; two withdrew): volunteer Teacher Growth Initiative participants in its first year (2013); and
- School Leaders / Cheshire Cat (11): middle and executive leaders at Lutwidge School, interviewed in the second year of the Teacher Growth Initiative (2014).

Researcher (Alice story)

The reflexive, embedded researcher was one participant group; that is, my own reflexive insider-outsider roles as researcher, teacher, and leader made my perspective distinctive. The researcher data, with its multiplicity of roles and perspectives, illuminated researcher-as-insider perceptions and experiences of the Teacher Growth Initiative. It offered additional meaning and supplemented the data of teacher and leader participants (Moustakas, 1990). The researcher data provided the basis for the Alice story in Chapter Five.

Teachers (White Rabbit story)

This study drew from the pool of 11 teachers who made up the Lutwidge School Teacher Growth Initiative 2013 team (not including the researcher, who was the team facilitator). This took up the opportunity to generate, share, and analyse data from teachers ranging in teaching experience, career stage, speciality of year level, and learning area. In this 2013 team, there were early, middle, and late career teachers; there were teachers from early learning, primary, middle, and secondary school; there were teachers of English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities, and Physical Education.

All 11 Teacher Growth Initiative first year team members were invited to participate in this study. Four of those teachers volunteered. The four teachers were to be interviewed (twice each) for the study by an independent interviewer, for ethical reasons outlined above. After receiving the interview transcripts for authentication, two of those teachers

chose to withdraw from the study. The two interviews of the two remaining teachers provided the data for the White Rabbit teacher story in Chapter Six.

School Leaders (Cheshire Cat story)

All 19 executive and academic middle leaders at Lutwidge School were invited to participate. They included 15 middle (for example, heads of faculty) and five executive (for example, the principal, senior leadership team) leaders at Lutwidge School. Five executive leaders and six middle leaders agreed. All leaders had a teaching role, although middle leaders' roles were made up of a higher teaching load and executive leaders' teaching loads were minimal. These 11 leaders were interviewed by the researcher (once each) during the second year of the Teacher Growth Initiative. These data provided the basis for the Cheshire Cat story in Chapter Seven.

4.4 Data generation

In the contested and complex field of narrative research, no narrative study is without laborious consideration of the type and process of generating data. In this study, thick empirical data were generated from researcher, teachers, and leaders, in line with Polkinghorne's (1988) outline of the data which trace events and construct authentic stories representing participants' experience. Data generation was aligned with the theoretical framework of the study. The phenomenological themes, which emerged from the context and literature, provided the frame for interview questions and therefore data.

Participants took part in individual, semi-structured, narrative-eliciting interviews similar to those used by Campbell et al. (2008) in their investigation of identity in pre-service teaching. These interviews posed sparing, open, story-inviting questions based around the phenomena, themes identified in the literature, and resultant research questions. The questions provided a format which allowed the desired depth and complexity of data, allowing the researcher to "reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible such as people's subjective experiences and attitudes" (Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2011, p. 529). Interview-gleaned stories provided up-close data for drilling down into the lived experience of phenomena. Data were therefore relevant rememberings of critical incidents (Goodson, 1991) organised around the phenomena of professional identity,

professional learning, and school change, with the Teacher Growth Initiative as a catalytic intervention. What follows is an explanation of the data generation design for this study.

Interview as primary data

Interview, a widely used method of creating field texts (Mishler, 1986; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), is a way to reveal underlying feelings and relationships, and explore the human world of beliefs, contexts, and meanings (Arksey & Knight, 1999). As people construct identities through talk (Johnson, 2009), interviews themselves are sites for the creation of meaning (Elliot, 2005). Stories are not fully formed in the minds of individuals, waiting to be recalled (Hawkins & Saleem, 2012). Rather, in research contexts, the kinds of questions asked and the structure of the interview, provide a frame within which participants shape the telling of their experience, make meanings on the spot, and produce knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Elliot, 2005; Gubrium & Holstein, 1998). In this way the storytelling process itself facilitates the construction of stories, as individuals continue to make sense of their experiences, thereby creating, refining, and adjusting the story as it is told (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Feldman et al., 2004; Gubrium & Holstein, 2010; Hawkins & Saleem, 2012; Mishler, 1986).

In particular, less structured interviews (sitting somewhere between semi-structured and un-structured, such as the semi-structured narrative approach used here) produce a wealth of qualitative data, leading to findings that can generate deep insights into people's understandings of their social worlds. The commonest narrative field texts generated are those used by this study: one to two hour semi-structured interviews (Squire, 2008). In this case, the open-ended interview questions and the choice of interviewer were designed to generate narrative data which provided access to the identity constructions of individuals (Larsson & Sjöblom, 2010), as well as potentially the shared identity constructions of groups. Similarly to Gronn's (2003) interviews of school principals, these interviews were designed to be broadly consistent for each participant, in terms of question order and focus, but the structure of the interview was flexible enough to explore tangents which emerged from each participant's responses. Few, open-ended, probing questions, and an interviewer listening pattern of "pause, paraphrase, ask question" (borrowed from Costa & Garmston's cognitive coaching, 2006) encouraged participants to direct their own responses, within the frame of the studied phenomena. This interview structure aimed to transform the interviewee-interviewer relationship to

one of narrator-listener (Chase, 2011). It encouraged participant storytelling, while allowing themes and patterns to emerge from the data. The planned interview questions can be found in Appendix D, with ideas for further prompting which emerged out of findings in the literature review. What unfolded during interviews, however, was that the prompts were not used; instead, four overarching invitational questions (around professional identity, professional learning, school change, and the Teacher Growth Initiative) led to participant talk, which was paraphrased by the interviewer, or which resulted in probing questions particular to an individual participants' responses.

The data generation plan is outlined in the following table and explained below.

Table 1: Data generation plan

| Participants (who) | Number | Process (how) | Data (what) |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Researcher (Alice) | 1 | 2 x semi-structured in-depth narrative-style interviews near the beginning and end of 2013; conducted by an independent interviewer. | Audio files and transcriptions (transcribed by the researcher). |
| Teachers (White Rabbit) | 2 <i>4 interviewed;</i> <i>2 withdrew</i> | 2 x semi-structured in-depth narrative-style interviews near the beginning and end of 2013; conducted by an independent interviewer. Anonymous online survey regarding experience of the research process. | De-identified transcriptions (transcribed by independent transcribers, de-identified by supervisors, authenticated by participants). Anonymous survey data. |
| School Leaders (Cheshire Cat) | 11 <i>5 executive;</i> <i>6 middle</i> | 1 x semi-structured in-depth narrative-style interview mid-way through 2014, conducted by the researcher. Anonymous online survey regarding experience of the research process. | Audio files and transcriptions (transcribed by an independent transcriber, checked by the researcher, authenticated by the participants). Anonymous survey data. ¹⁴ |

The Researcher (Alice Story)

The researcher's interview data were generated in a similar way to the teacher participants (see below): two interviews by an independent interviewer with the same questions and interview protocols as the teachers interviewed. The researcher was interviewed before other participants and the Alice story was written first, before reading and analysis of other participant data, so as to minimise the influence of other data on the researcher

¹⁴ The anonymous survey was an ethical requirement, but was not included in the storying of participant data.

story. When the interview data were storied for the Alice self-story, journal reflections and blog posts were considered, adding to the reflexivity of the iterative process of writing and building on these raw data.

Reflection on the researcher's own tacit knowledge and experience of the Teacher Growth Initiative helped to iteratively shape the data generation process and product. In line with the subjective relativist paradigm which underpins this study, the researcher "owned up" to her perspective on the study, accepting that research is ideologically driven and saturated with values (Janesick, 2000). This elucidated bias and provided insight into the researcher perspective, making transparent the researcher lens.

The Teachers (White Rabbit Story)

Each teacher was interviewed towards the beginning and again towards the end of the first year of the Teacher Growth Initiative (2013). The initial interviews focused on professional identity, professional learning, perceptions of Lutwidge School context, and initial impressions of the Teacher Growth Initiative. The later interviews focused on reflections on any shifts in thinking and on growing perceptions and experiences of the Teacher Growth Initiative. In the White Rabbit story, the early and late semi-structured interview data are combined. The focus is on the two teachers interviewed. As explained in the discussion of ethical issues, due to the need for the researcher to be unaware of teacher participant identities these interviews were conducted by an independent interviewer, transcribed by independent transcribers, de-identified by the researcher's supervisors, and authenticated by participants. The de-identified, authenticated transcripts provided the primary data for the White Rabbit teacher story. Appendix Table D1 outlines how the phenomena and research questions led to the development of interview questions and prompts around these areas. These were the questions used by the independent interviewer in the researcher and teacher interviews.

School Leaders (Cheshire Cat Story)

Each of the 11 school leaders were interviewed by the researcher towards the middle of the second year of the Teacher Growth Initiative (2014). Transcripts were authenticated by participants. The researcher had some additional interaction with school leaders around the transcriptions and research process, including follow-up emails and conversations. This was precluded for teacher participants as ethical issues meant that

their identities were withheld from the researcher. Appendix Table D2 outlines how the phenomena and research questions led to the development of interview questions and prompts around these areas for school leaders. These were the questions used by the researcher in the school leader interviews.

4.6 Data interpretation

A challenge of the narrative researcher is analysing data in a way which teases out their meanings and prompts the reader to think beyond the surface of the data (Riessman, 2008). Polkinghorne (2007) explains the purpose of an interpretative analysis of storied texts as to deepen the reader's understanding of the meaning conveyed in a story.

Interpretive analysis is not simply a summary of storied texts. It is a commentary that unmask meanings, draws out implications, deciphers realities, and reveals impacts of contexts on people's lives (Gabriel, 2000; Polkinghorne, 2007). While narrative research may focus on content, structure, form, performance (Elliot, 2005; Gee, 2011a; Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 1993; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), or genre (Bruner, 1991; Riessman, 1993), this study focused on the content of the stories and used direct and paraphrased participant language used to construct the narratives of lived experience presented in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven.

The problem of narrative data interpretation

In order to find form and meaning, the narrative researcher needs to wade through the multiplicity of traditions and approaches in order to formulate an appropriate system for analysis and interpretation. It is in grappling with the richness and complexity of data that many narrative researchers differ. Not only do scholars disagree about ways to conduct narrative analysis (Riessman, 2002; Riessman, 2008), but the thick and often extensive nature of narrative data can make them overwhelming, difficult, and open to endless interpretation (Larsson & Sjöblom, 2010; Riessman, 2008). Interpretation of narrative data has been described as defying systemisation (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998), a "pervasive and inescapable problem" (Mishler, 1999, p. 22), and a "mysterious, half-formulated art" (Miles, 1979, p. 593). Researchers need to make sense of, and find form in, the often convoluted texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). When designing narrative method it is important to acknowledge that narrative research offers no

automatic starting or finishing points (Squire et al., 2008; Squire, 2008), no canonical approach, no recipes, no step-by-step formulas or procedures (Kincheloe, 2001; Riessman, 1993, 2002). Narrative interpretations are less rule-derived and mechanical than those often found in more traditional research.

Despite the lack of a clear map or agreed-upon guidelines, any narrative research needs to take on a systematic method for interpretation (Feldman et al., 2004). If narrative interpretations are creative, subjective productions that stem from the researcher's cognitive processes (Polkinghorne, 2007), then those cognitive processes need to be clear, systematic, and transparent. During interpretation and analysis of narrative data, questions arise, such as those in this study: How to best share the essence of participants' stories while protecting their anonymity? How to honour data/voices and also present the reader with meaningful, accessible text? Should data be analysed holistically or categorically (Elliot, 2005), taking a taxonomic or more holistic approach to analysis (Creswell, 2013)? Should narratives be interpreted in their entirety or short sections of story placed into categories for analysis, or some combination? One challenge of the present study was in applying disciplined, systematic, rigorous analysis to the personal, human, subjective complexity of story (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 1997).

Not suited to this study were literary or linguistic discourse analysis (e.g. Barthes, 1975; Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972; Potter & Wetherell, 2001), cognitive discourse analysis (e.g. Billig, 2001; Guo, Li, & Shao, 2012), or critical discourse analysis (e.g. Gabriel, 2000; Gee, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c; Renkema, 2004; Rogers, 2011). Linguistic analysis was seen as limiting and decontextualising for the purposes of this study (see Gubrium & Holstein, 1998; Patterson, 2008; Squire, 2008; van Manen, 1997). The focus on cognitive capacities and the computational approach to data of cognitive discourse analysis did not fit with the paradigmatic stance of this study; it did not privilege stories or voices of participants but was concerned with patterns over people. Nor is the present study consistent with a critical discourse approach which focuses its analysis on power and power relations (Renkema, 2004; Rogers, 2011). Although it was intentional to give voice to teachers and school leaders, some of whom often have limited power and voice in the educational world, the primary aim of this study was not to reveal and analyse power relationships. As the researcher was leader of the teacher participants and led by the leader participants, she was immersed in Lutwidge School organisational hierarchies. There are certainly stories not told, such as those of the teacher participants who

withdrew, or those who chose not to participate. The researcher's contextual immersion, and the imbalance of participants between teachers and those in management, meant that the researcher did not feel free to tell stories about relationships of power in the school. Researchers, too, are vulnerable. That she was inside, and continues to be part of, the organisation being studied, influenced the decision to apply a hermeneutic experience-centred analysis which focused on the content of the stories of those participants who were comfortable to share their stories, using phenomena rather than power as the lens of analysis.

This study's data interpretation approach: Social constructionist experience-centred iterative interpretation

Social constructionist data analysis can be described as that which aligns with the paradigm of this study; it assumes that social worlds and selves are constructed through telling and retelling. This study examines relationships between story and social world (Rogers, 2011). Taking a social constructionist perspective sits within what Squire calls experience-centred narrative research, which looks for transformation and change in personal narratives (Squire, 2008). It involves valuing meaning over fact and believing that narratives "are of interest precisely because narrators interpret the past in stories rather than reproduce" it (Riessman, 2002, p. 704). This dominant conceptual framework of current narrative research rests on: the phenomenological assumption that experience can become part of consciousness through stories; and a hermeneutic approach to analysis, aiming at full understanding rather than structural analysis (Squire, 2008).

The study took Squire's (2008) hermeneutic approach to narrative interpretation which involved using a combination of inductive and deductive interpretive procedures. The hermeneutic approach involves an ongoing circle of iteration, analysis, and critique (Geelan, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 1988); the generating of research data and its analyses can "unfold, cascade, roll and emerge" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 10). In this case the three studied phenomena helped to provide a frame for the initial inductive approach to interview transcripts. Data were shaped by these phenomena, as evident in the research questions and interview questions, which guided participants to talk around their perspectives on professional identity, professional learning, and school change. So, taking Hardy et al.'s (2009) suggestion of allowing patterns to emerge from the data and be underpinned by relevant literature, this study's literature review yielded particular

phenomenological themes, leading to the formation of research questions and interview questions, leading to the shaping of participants' storytelling. That is, the initial theoretical frame of phenomena and research questions was a basis for the generation and initial interpretation of data.

After interviews were conducted and transcribed, transcriptions were coded for emerging themes, and for outlying perspectives. Data were then iteratively, hermeneutically, immersively studied for what was meaningful for participants, what themes emerged out of the data itself (similar to the approach outlined by Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Participant stories were visited again and again in order to develop an understanding of relations, patterns, divergences, and convergences. The evolving inductive and deductive spiral of reading stories, developing theories, and then revisiting the stories, retheorising, and so on (Squire, 2008), involved a non-mathematical analytical procedure (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), an iterative cycle of repeated re-reading of data against a chosen framework (Wood & Kroger, 2000). In this case the framework for analysis consisted of the three phenomena under study, the research questions, and the criteria for inclusion. Analysis continued, with time and struggle, until the researcher was satisfied that the research questions had been addressed and possibilities exhausted (Wood & Kroger, 2000). This study's method can be explained by the following table.

Table 2: Summary of method

| Method step | Sub-steps | Considerations |
|--|---|--|
| Exploration of literature | Identifying phenomenological themes Identify trends and gaps in literature | Patterns and gaps in existing knowledge |
| Research questions | Formation of research questions | Trends and gaps in literature |
| Planning, conducting, and recording of semi-structured narrative interviews | Writing of interview questions and protocols Employment of an external interviewer for teacher interviews; setting out of questions and protocols for those interviews | Based around central phenomena and research questions Interview protocols encourage storying (choice of few open questions, probing questions, focus on pausing and paraphrasing) |
| Transcription and authentication of data | Interviews transcribed Teacher interviews de-identified by supervisors Transcripts sent to participants for checking and approval | Capturing participant language Participant approval of their data |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Immersive, iterative, hermeneutic exploration of data for relationships, patterns and emerging themes | Reading and re-reading individual transcripts Identification of themes and patterns across participants Selection of evidence and quotations to be included Revisiting of data and stories to find and refine trends | What is important to group and individual? (Some key storied elements were very important to one participant; other storied elements emerged as a pattern from the interviews of many participants, such as being discussed by both teachers, or by four or more leaders) |
| Storying each story (researcher, teacher, leader) | Coding data under identified phenomena Identifying themes as they emerged Locating epiphanies Storying these data Footnoting elements of divergence and convergence | Protecting anonymity Honouring all voices Telling an authentic collective truth |
| Identifying convergence and divergence in participant data | Footnoting Analysis | Criteria for inclusion and emphasis (wonder; curiosity; commonality and convergence; universality and anonymity; equity) |

This is an approach which embraces the increasing “methodological hybridity” in narrative research approaches (Rogers, 2011, p. 10). It is a hybrid approach, a method bricolage drawing from the approaches of Maykut and Morehouse (1994); Gee and Green (1998); Hayler (2011); and Smart (1998). Maykut and Morehouse’s (1994) constant comparative method of data analysis influenced my approach. Its steps included inductive thematic coding, refinement of themes, exploration of relationships and patterns across themes, and integration of data yielding an understanding of people and settings being studied. The process began inductively, with the data and the themes which emerged from them. Like Hayler (2011), part of this process involved strategically selecting points of intersection and interaction, in order to find sites of interpretation which encompassed patterns and went beyond individual narratives to larger sets of meanings. Identifying converging and diverging data (along the lines of Smart’s approach to data analysis to explore the knowledge-making practices of a professional community, 1998) helped to identify shared or discordant perspectives among teachers and school leaders. Additional levels of analysis, taking on Gee and Green’s (1998) assertion that multiple analytical approaches enrich data interpretation, were arrived at in this study through the connection of participant stories with each other. The connecting of multiple stakeholder perspectives helped to strengthen the credibility of the study’s findings (following Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

As explained earlier in the description of ethical issues, data were woven together into composite stories for the teachers (into the White Rabbit story) and school leaders (into the Cheshire Cat story). Initially data were coded into the phenomena under study: professional identity, professional learning, and school change. From these sub-sets of data, themes emerged inductively, which became the sub-headings of each story. The criteria for inclusion of aspects of participant data into stories were influenced by the choice of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as a conceptual frame, as well as by balancing of perspectives, protecting anonymity, and communicating authentic meaning. These criteria are outlined below.

- *Wonder*. Experiences which participants deemed powerful in their own lives were included in the story. At times these reflected and were merged with the stories of other participants, at times they were singular experiences which were outliers from those of the group but were included because of their power for participants. “Powerfulness” or “wondrousness” of experience was determined by noting a combination of the vehemence of language, emotiveness of language, and length of time spent discussing an experience, relative to the participants’ discussion of other experiences.
- *Curiosity*. This criterion allowed for singular experiences, perhaps only emerging from the data of one participant, to be worked into the appropriate story. Singular experiences were considered curious, surprising, or unexpected by way of the vehemence of language, emotiveness of language, and/or length of time spent discussing an experience, relative to the participants’ discussion of other experiences.
- *Commonality and convergence*. Patterns of experience or perspectives shared by a number of participants were included. I have noted in the footnotes of the stories, those themes shared by both teachers, or four or more of the 11 leader participants. Four leaders, while only representing 36% of participants, was seen as important enough to note, considering that the things which emerged were specific participant responses to very open questions. That four or more (at times, 10 or 11) participants converged on a specific perspective or belief seemed worth noting for the reader.
- *Universality and anonymity*. Except in the Alice story, more general, rather than subject-specific or year-level specific, data were selected for incorporation into the leader story. This helped to construct a more universal story of “teacher” and

“school leader” while protecting participants from being identified by subject area, specialty area, or role title.

- *Equity*. Similar weight was given to all participant perspectives in each story. Anonymised participant identification codes were left in the stories until late in the drafting process, at which point they were removed from the story. Working with a story which included the participant codes for much of the storying process allowed for checking that all voices were included, honoured, balanced, quoted, and amalgamated. As well as facilitating the relatively equal weighting of participants’ stories, leaving the identification codes in the story until the final editing allowed for the examination of how many, and which, participants had converged and diverged on perspectives.

This approach allowed for authenticity and anonymity of participant experiences to be preserved, communicating the essence of shared experience without fracturing stories into clunky pieces, based on van Manen’s (1997) previously discussed contention that research not pulverise life into decontextualised fragments. Mishler (1999) and Riessman (1993), too, critique traditional narrative approaches to analysis which fracture, generalise, and decontextualise elements of narrative texts. The stories of Chapters Five, Six, and Seven attempt to make meaning by presenting stories which are whole, even while being composed of parts.

4.7 Writing the stories

As explained in this chapter, the storied data which follow in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven utilise extended literary metaphor and literary characters as emblematic, allegoric devices. As well as its important role of protecting participant anonymity, this approach to storying straddles, in the vein of other narrative researchers (Kallio, 2015; Kara, 2015; Watson, 2000; Wiebe, 2010; Wiebe, 2014), the imaginative and the real (Mus, 2014), fiction-like artistry and scientific systematisation. The present study does not fictionalise accounts, but alongside the systematic generation, analysis, and communication of data, it does draw on its reader’s cultural understanding of story (Mus, 2014). In this study, data are presented using the names and personas of emblematic literary characters and the Dreaming Alice researcher voice to tell the stories of participants. Characters from Lewis Carroll’s novel *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* were deliberately selected as the symbolic

characters to represent the researcher (Alice: curious wanderer and wonderer), the teacher (White Rabbit: time-watcher caught between hierarchical layers and pressured by deadlines), and the school leader (Cheshire Cat: disappearing, reappearing guide and advisor). This study was written with the intention of honouring the stories and voices of participants, capturing their essence, and, through compelling narratives, acting as a portal which transports readers into the experiences of others, while maintaining participant anonymity. The stories, through the use of emblematic literary characters, novel quotations, illustrations, and clearly demarcated voices, was deliberate in its use of fictional devices to construct a research storyworld and invite readers down the rabbit hole.

As with Coulter in her study of high school English language learners, every deliberate choice—such as that of narrative voice, tone, and language—was considered and reconsidered (Coulter & Smith, 2009). Before each story is a rationale and theoretical introduction to that story; after each story is a brief summary of the story. These book-end segments are articulated in the Waking Alice analytic-researcher voice, while the stories themselves, marked by the words “down the rabbit hole,” quotations from the *Alice* novel and illustrations of character, are told in the Dreaming Alice storytelling voice. In the Chapter Five Alice story the point of view use shifts from the distant third person to the personal first person, in order to tell my own story. The storytelling mode in Chapters Six and Seven is one which uses the words of participants, through paraphrasing and quotations, with the voice of a third person narrator rather than a commentating researcher analyst.

5. Alice: The researcher story

Alice opened the door and found that it led into a small passage, not much larger than a rat-hole; she knelt down and looked along the passage into the loveliest garden you ever saw. How she longed to get out of that dark hall and wander about among those beds of bright flowers and those cool fountains. . . . “Oh how I wish I could shut up like a telescope! I think I could, if I only knew how to begin.”

(Carroll, 2014, p. 6)

My own story fits within, emerges from, and helps to illuminate, the paradigmatic stance of this study, outlined in Chapter Three. No doubt my valuing of constructionism, reflexivity, and the power of story is evident here. As a key part of the research and storytelling context (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Hawkins & Saleem, 2012; Mishler, 1986) my story has three primary functions, as follows.

- It presents my participant story as Teacher Growth Initiative team member and facilitator.
- It foregrounds the context of the study and clarifies my role as facilitator and insider-member of the Teacher Growth Initiative.
- It elucidates my biases as researcher and self-conscious participant within my own research, making visible my individuality and its effects on the research process (Gough, 2003).

Additionally, in using writing as a medium of reflective and analytic thinking, like Hayler’s (2011), my story had another function: to help me know myself. As I worked to find the words to explore and articulate the interplay between my own professional identity and my experiences of professional learning I found, as Hayler did in his storying of his experiences as a learner and teacher educator, that mine was “a story I thought I already knew but I came to know the story in a new way as I wrote it” (p. 41). As Wiebe did in her doctoral thesis, “I wrote my way toward a deeper understanding” (2010, p. 114); or as Jones puts it, I was “writing the world [my world] into being” (2012, p. 225).

Charles Dodgson, author of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, used the pen name Lewis Carroll. With his more fantastical work signed “Carroll” and his more mathematic-logical work, “Dodgson,” he literally created author selves, an example which reflects how individuals write and rewrite their own stories of identity formation. In the novel, Alice observes her transformations of self and identity. For instance, she notes, “I can’t go

back to yesterday because I was a different person then” (Carroll, 2014, p. 115). There are moments in our lives after which we are not the same; we have been transformed by our experiences, and the ways we make sense of these experiences. The notion of transformational moments is explored in Denzin’s epiphanies (1989), Goodson’s critical incidents (1991), and Riessman’s turning points (2002).

In this chapter I present my story. It is not an autobiography or an attempt to recount the “truth” of my life. Rather, it presents a re-collection of critical epiphanic moments which surfaced for me as those which have shaped me as a learner, teacher, and researcher. These have emerged through talking and writing, and are framed through my own sense making and choice of storying language. As explicated in Chapter Four, my story is drawn in part from interview data from two semi-structured narrative interviews mirroring those generated for this study’s other teacher participants; that is, data shaped around the phenomena and research questions. In my case, however, these interview data formed the basis for further iterative introspection and writing. I worked in a hermeneutic circle of iteration, analysis, and critique (Geelan, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 1988; Squire, 2008) in order to refine and add to the interview data, to flesh out my story of myself as teacher, professional learner, Teacher Growth Initiative member, and researcher. I wrote my story before working with the other participant data, so it is uninfluenced by the teacher or leader interviews, and reflects how my own personal construct system (Bannister & Fransella, 1986) affects the ways in which I perceive, interpret, and re-story events. Direct quotations from my two interviews are interlaced through the storied narrative, which is structured around the phenomena under study.

The story, which is told in the more colloquial Dreaming Alice voice of storyteller, begins with a researcher-designed illustration of Alice (Figure 2), which uses the face of the researcher as a girl. The researcher’s brown hair, combined with the quintessentially-Alice blue dress and white pinafore, shows that the Alice character has been adopted as a persona. The messy rabbit hole dirt down either side of the image helps to situate the researcher-Alice both within and outside of the down the rabbit hole world. She is both waking and dreaming. The deliberate messiness of the rabbit hole dirt also reflects the messiness of narrative research. The “drink me” bottle is a nod to the transformations (mainly in size) which Alice experiences in the novel as she encounters different characters and experiences, as well as the transformations the researcher discusses in her story of identity shaping, learning, leading, being, and becoming.

~ down the rabbit hole and into the story ~

Round the neck of the bottle was a paper label, with the words “DRINK ME” beautifully printed on it in large letters. . . . Alice ventured to taste it, and, finding it very nice (it had, in fact, a sort of mixed flavour of cherry-tart, custard, pine-apple, roast turkey, toffee, and hot buttered toast,) she very soon finished it off.

“What a curious feeling!” said Alice. “I must be shutting up like a telescope!” And so it was indeed: she was now only ten inches high, and her face brightened up at the thought that she was now the right size for going through the little door into that lovely garden.

(Carroll, 2014, p. 8)



Figure 2: Researcher as Alice (mixed media, by the researcher)

5.1 Professional identity: Who is Alice as educator and researcher?

When I consider my professional identity, it is not grafted on to my sense of self; it is intrinsic to it. It is not something which exists merely by the fact and act of being a teacher. Much of my teacher identity was formed before I studied teaching at university. It is about my own approach to life, learning, and relationships.

“I think teaching is an intensely personal thing, and teachers are very passionate about the way their classroom operates. The same thing is important—student learning—but to get there each teacher has their own personal signature.”

Many people claim to be shaped by difficult relationships, challenging events, and negative experiences. My life has certainly been peppered with these experiences. There have been serious illnesses and deaths of friends and family; a severe car accident during my Fine Art degree that left me temporarily in a wheelchair and unable to use one arm; and the high school murder of a girl I knew by a boy I also knew which took place a few classrooms away from me. These incidents did affect who I became. Experiencing a murder at my high school involving fellow students affected my trust of others. My post-car-accident semester of Fine Art was challenging, with only the use of my left non-dominant hand, a couple of weeks in a wheelchair, and plenty of weeks with a walking stick and one leg in a cast. That semester taught me a lot about my capacity to push through difficulty and work with challenges, rather than be defeated by them. Similarly, during one year of this PhD research, I was holding down my school job and doctoral study while parenting two pre-school age children, often on my own and under some pressure from life’s stressors such as family sicknesses and deaths.

In reflecting on my own story, I realised the positivity of many of the moments which I consider as shaping me into who I became and am always becoming. In general, the factors shaping my sense of self have been ones which have allowed me to feel positive, successful, and confident in my choices and identity. When sad, difficult, or incomprehensible times have arisen, my grounding in life has largely enabled me to see life’s challenges as positive opportunities for growth and reflection.

Narratives of my parents: Stories within my story

The narratives of my parents are central to the formation of my own narrative of self; they are the foundational platform for my identity as person and therefore as teacher, school leader and researcher. What follows is not my parents as they are, or as they see themselves, but as they appear to me from my daughterly perspective and how I have written their stories into my own.

A sound and continuing unit as a couple, my parents remain together, an exemplar of an enduring, loving relationship, and a stable base from which their children and grandchildren fly and return. They travel together, rock and roll dance together, hold hands, and are best friends. The solidity of their relationship, or my perception of it, speaks to me of more than romance. On paper, the long-term union of a South African Jewish-raised daughter-of-an-academic artist-anthropologist-author-educator, with a small-town-Czech Roman-Catholic-raised accountant-computing-musician son-of-a-baker father seems like the improbable basis for a sitcom. Their pairing has always spoken to me about diversity, acceptance of the views of others, the freedom to walk our own paths, and the opportunity to find like-minded individuals in surprising places. More deeply than that, the story of their relationship shows me that identity is more than the sum of its parts. Our national, religious, social, and cultural backgrounds do not make us who we are; it is our choices, journeys, moments, and relationships that shape us. In fact, judging people on paper shows us little about them.

My parents' stories, which inspire and fascinate me, have been woven into a kind of mythology for me which frames my own life. When I was living in the UK and travelling a lot, my parents suggested that I do less travelling and think about more responsible life choices. I told them to look at themselves as the source of my wanderlust. They still travel internationally at least twice a year, not on tours, but the two of them doing their own thing, going all over the world and often staying in obscure places or seeking out the unusual.

My mother is an artist, educator, existentialist, high achiever, Doctor of Philosophy, activist, empath, compassionista, and creator. As well as a buoy for me in a way that means I have always felt supported no matter what, she is an exemplar to me of a life lived with passion, compassion, strength, and a deeply held belief in the ability to make a

difference on many levels. I have watched her, whilst suffering for most of her life with chronic pain, achieve much, not through ambition, but through a genuine desire to learn, help, or contribute. Through my daughter-lens this suggests that life is about perspective; that we choose how we define ourselves, rather than being defined by our circumstance; we choose our identities, our roles, and our behaviours.

My mother's successes have set the bar extremely high for me. In my schoolgirl attempts at anti-establishment rebellion, I knew such acts would never live up to the socialist hippie activism of my mother; yet her support of my actions and my voice allowed me to have the confidence to stand up for myself, even if it was about such retrospectively-insignificant things as the compulsory wearing of school uniform or environmental protection of a local wildlife habitat. She wrote her PhD in 18 months, while working full time and parenting three teenage children, leaving me to feel that even writing this thesis in what might be considered the normal amount of time (three years, while working at a school and parenting two pre-schoolers), is an underwhelming achievement by comparison. My mother, for me, is larger than life. She is nest, womb, foundation, cheerleader, and almost impossibly impressive role model of possibility, casting at once a formidable shadow to live up to, and a net which cocoons and catches me.

My father, an inexplicable combination of mild-mannered accountant, musician, rock and roll dancer, and escapee of the Russian occupation of Czechoslovakia, has inspired me in ways that may surprise him, as our outwardly-unemotional Eastern European-ness often prevents us from talking about it. A few stories persist for me when it comes to my father, stories which helped me as a child to paint him in my mind as enigmatic. One is his escape as a university engineering student, leaving Czechoslovakia on a three month student visa when he was 19 years old with only a few words of English (such as "test-tube" and other impractical scientific terms). He left his homeland knowing that he would be unable to return to see his family, as it turned out, for many years. He violated his visa and went to South Africa, later moving to Australia.

There are photographs of my dad which I find quite magical in their utopian vision of bohemian (both figuratively and literally for my dad; he is from Bohemia) adventurousness. For instance, there are images of him, bearded and driving a white Volkswagen beetle around South Africa, overlooking waterfalls; of a bear in Canadian mountains; of huts along a then-untouched Phuket beach in the 70s. My father has told

me about buying plane tickets from other passengers in airports in order to find his next destination, demonstrating to me a sense of adventure and a thirst for life experience and untethered freedom with which I feel affinity and aspiration. Piecing these old photographs together has me imagining my young father, the free exploratory soul, travelling so as to discover the world and himself, unencumbered by the expectations of others or the rules of life. Eventually he applied for a visa to Australia, where he studied accounting and met my mother. While in his day to day life he is a suited accountant in sensible shoes, he organises regular independent travel to curious destinations and is most likely to be found on the dance floor of a margarita bar, in blue suede shoes and a cowboy hat. I see my dad finding a way to live both a comfortable life and his creative personal truth. His example has enabled me to feel that my dreams, ideas, style, and lifestyle are ok, whatever they may be (and they are more conservative than that of my parents).

My student self informing my professional self

My own experience as a child and student shaped my identity as a teacher. If I think about my childhood as the foundation of my beliefs about learning, as a first child and older sibling, I sought praise and positive reinforcement. Mostly, I was told by my parents that I had the right and the capacity to achieve anything academic. This flowed over into my self-talk; I did not doubt my abilities in the classroom. In Year 3 I was moved up to Year 4. As a child at the very end of the school intake dates, this meant that I was always the youngest in my class, sometimes almost two years younger than some classmates. I never felt that my young age was an issue for me academically or socially, not even when I sat my university entrance examinations at 15, and started my first year of university at the age of 16. Teachers were supportive, but the positive reinforcement I received came mostly from my mother; she was always enthusiastic about my learning and proud of my achievements. My father, despite being a man proud of his C average (a deliberate, pragmatic decision to expend exactly the effort needed to pass and no more), was harder to please. An assessment for which I achieved 86% would be followed with the question “So what happened to the other 14%?” No doubt this contributed to my desire to look for the 110% in everything, and the view that no matter how well I have done something, there is always a way in which it can be improved. I see that now in my own teaching; no matter how successful a unit or lesson, I am always looking for how it might be better.

Growing up I didn't want to be a teacher. During my government school education, I rebelled against many teachers and remember saying "I never want to be a teacher." I could think of nothing worse. I think partly this was because of my dislike for those in authority who saw their role as to uphold what I saw as petty rules. While on the one hand I was a geek who strove for academic success, I did not want to fit into norms set by my peers or by my teachers. I skipped some classes. I did not want to conform to a particular peer group by subscribing to an outward expression of style, nor did I want to wear the school uniform, to me a symbol of conformity and homogeneity. One year in high school I called the State Education Department and checked their rules on wearing uniform, and then asked that they contact my school to tell teachers they were legally unable to enforce their uniform rules (it turned out that the only enforceable guideline at the time was that students in government schools be neat and tidy in appearance). In another minor example of my refusal to conform to expectations that my teen self saw as senseless, after approaching a teacher to transfer into his higher Mathematics class, I did not pursue the subject change after he told me he wouldn't speak to me unless I tucked my shirt in. In a more pedagogical example, one high school English teacher insisted that I rewrite a creative story entitled "Stop, thief!" Although I had worked hard and long to craft the story, she told me that a thief should not be good looking with a "chiselled jaw," and that I was to rewrite him as ugly with a hooked nose and hunched back if I wanted to pass. This felt to me to be an unjust response, one that not only supported what I considered to be an unrealistic and one-dimensional stereotype, but one which failed to acknowledge my effort and authorial decisions. These experiences contributed to my view of the identity of "teacher" as authority figure and stickler for petty rules, an identity I had no desire to emulate.

After deciding to eventually pursue teaching as a profession, my "I don't want to be a teacher" sentiment morphed into "I never want to be a teacher *like that* but I do want to be *this* kind of teacher." As a teacher I am often an advocator for looser rules (such as encouraging mobile technology in class, rather than banning mobile devices) and am guilty of ignoring those rules which I think are there for control and assertion of authority, rather than for learning and developing students into self-regulating, autonomous, responsible, thinking individuals.

At school I connected with teachers who I thought cared about me and my learning, who gave me some scope to try alternative methods and pathways of learning, and who did

unexpected things: the Literature teacher who helped the class read a difficult novel by providing coffee and breakfast while we listened to the audio book; the Drama teacher who would speak to us openly and respectfully beneath a tree on the oval; the Mathematics teacher who differentiated to allow her students to feel success; the English teacher who would surprise the class by wearing elements of costume while enacting scenes from texts. I try to emulate these things in my own teaching, thinking of little ways to surprise and inspire. I began one lesson while standing on a chair, conducting with a pair of drumsticks I had confiscated. In another, I surprised a very serious class of International Baccalaureate Diploma students, with whom I had been doing difficult laborious text analysis work, by providing them with textas, pencils, reams of paper, and chocolate biscuits. At the end of all our hard work trying to understand 800-plus page *Anna Karenina*, they were to spend a couple of hours creating a visual representation of the novel. The result was a thoughtful and inspired creation, a train driven by Tolstoy, in which each carriage visually represented a key moment in the novel, with a lit candle at the front of the train and a burnt-out candle at its end, representing Anna's journey.

My relative success as an academic student, in general, and a resulting feeling of being a good learner, especially in the arts and humanities, has led to my enthusiasm about teaching, especially in those areas for which I have aptitude and passion. My own love of praise and my own continuing nerdiness affects my teaching. I give a lot of positive reinforcement and I try to show students the magic, power, and empowerment of language and learning.

My childhood also consisted of experiences in which I was not successful. The Mathematics classroom and the sporting field were arenas in which I learned what it felt like to be a failure. I distinctly remember a moment in primary school when I asked my mother to keep me home from school on Sports Carnival day so that I wouldn't have to suffer through having my woeful lack of athleticism paraded for everyone to see, thinking of the events in which I would have to compete, against children at least a year older than me, and in which I would ultimately lose. I distinctly remember her answer, which has stuck with me: "You are good at school every day. You get to be the person who enjoys success in class and feels good about herself. Today is the day for other students to have success and feel good about themselves." I'm pretty sure her response was along the lines of, "Today is the day you get to be crap at something," and the insinuation that this was somehow valuable for me. Of course my primary school self was mainly upset that I had

to have a day of feeling sub-par and coming last, but even at that age it allowed me to feel grateful that I only had to feel that occasionally. What about the students who felt like failures every day in every lesson, for whom school was a place of constant embarrassment and not being good enough?

This is an experience and an outlook which has shaped my teacher identity. I try to remember in my teaching (especially as my subject is a compulsory one), that many of my students may not be enthusiastic about the subject or “good at” the subject; they may come with preconceived negative emotions, reactions, and expectations. They may have been imprinted with years of feeling failure in English, feeling exposed when asked to read aloud or feeling alarmed and distressed by corrections on their written work. How, I ask myself, do I engage and “get” those students for whom being in a(n English) classroom is a challenge or makes them feel like a failure, an idiot or a fish out of water? How can I make the experience of my classroom a more positive one? How can I make them feel understood and confident? These questions have led to my implementation of a number of classroom strategies and approaches over the years. My own positive and negative experiences as a student have affected the formation of my teacher self, especially the things which I value and on which I focus my self-reflective attention.

“I remember thinking—wow—about the impact a teacher can have on a young person. In my own classroom I have an awareness of throw away lines or things which might not seem much to me but might affect a young person. I might not remember, but they might carry it with them.”

A later experience, as a postgraduate student in a class during my Graduate Diploma of Education, supported and developed these earlier student cogitations on the emotional nature of being a student and on the impact of teachers and classrooms on student confidence. There I was, in a class of mature age Graduate Diploma of Education students and we were asked to share our memories of the best and then the worst teacher we had ever had. What I noticed as my fellow students, themselves future teachers, responded to this question, was the emotions they seemed to experience as they recalled their memories of teachers who either inspired and encouraged them, or who made them feel small, exposed, and uncared about. I was reminded of the famous quotation, attributed to a number of people including Carl Buehner and Maya Angelou: “People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” It occurred to me during this class that the impact of a teacher, and

their behaviour, on a student, each student, can be powerful and lifelong. That what for the teacher may be a throwaway line on a bad day, may for the student be a criticism which cuts deep and lasts a lifetime. It reminded me of the vulnerability of students and the turbulence of finding a sense of self. This led me to continually reflect upon the effect I am having on students, my building of relationships, and my self-monitoring of things which may be seen by students as hurtful. For instance, if I have ever thrown out a spur-of-the-moment barb, which on reflection might be taken in a negative way, I have approached the student and apologised, sometimes with an explanation of why the line reflects upon me and my state of mind, rather than on them. I hope that this models for my students that it is ok to be wrong, and that apologising, explaining, or discussing our negative interactions can be positive learning and relationship-building moments.

My educator self informing my professional self

My experiences as an educator have affected my educator self. When I first started teaching it was my own previous teachers who were models or anti-models of teaching for me. Over my career it is my experiences with students, teachers, leaders, and parents that have shaped my teaching.

In part, my teacher identity is driven by my passion for the things I choose to teach and my resulting desire to engage students in them. Many of my favourite moments have been the reward of seeing students' learning, their a-ha moments, an increase in self-awareness, a time at which I have been an important figure in a student's life. A non-reader who took to a novel and began engaging with class discussion, writing, and social media to explore ideas and unravel ambiguities in the text. A student who failed every assessment throughout the year and yet gave me a massive hug at the end of the year to thank me for helping her to see herself differently and believe in her capacity. A student who didn't know what he wanted to do after school but who tapped into his undiscovered aptitude for creative writing and went on to study English at university.

Before completing my teaching qualification, I was a tutor to high school students, a volunteer art teacher at a centre for children with cerebral palsy, and a freelancer running art and literacy workshops for teenagers at risk. Some of these experiences, before my official years as a secondary school teacher, have had a long lasting impact. My one-day-a-week volunteer role as art teacher for children with cerebral palsy was inspiring and

heartbreaking. I was a young university student who was able to skip in on a Friday morning full of ideas and energy. On my first day I discovered that art for these students meant them sitting quietly and waiting for a teacher to come to them and do the art on their behalf. The teacher would have a project which the students were physically incapable of actually doing themselves. For me, art was an outlet for expression, a creative release, and to see it become static, with the artist physically uninvolved, saddened me. I could, however, see how worn down these teachers were by the challenges they faced in constantly addressing their students' needs. Most of the afternoon was spent in "quiet time," and one girl who had a buzzer on her wheelchair was often told that she would be unplugged if she kept pressing it. My response to this first day was to go home and try to figure out ways to run art class for these students in ways with which they could engage. The result was messy, and wonderful. I made some crude art instruments which students could use in addition to paintbrushes or their hands. The first time I saw these children take the paint themselves, using hands, fingers, brushes, or sponges-on-sticks, was magical. I vividly remember the expressions of joy on their faces as they made their own creatively expressed and physically experienced marks; their own art, art they owned. Those looks of joy, wonder, and accomplishment made me feel that, with the right solutions, anyone can find joy and escape in learning, no matter their learning needs or their apparent limitations.

A much later educator experience, this time as an International Baccalaureate Diploma teacher, reminded me about individual student needs in a different way. I was teaching a class of very able students using a preference for my own style of learning. I white-boarded plenty of mind maps and colour-coded explosions of ideas. One day these students, who were primarily Mathematics and Science achievers, let me know resoundingly that they needed to learn in a totally different way. They wanted linear organisers for their information: tables and bullet point lists, not mind maps and crazy visual representations. This was a great lesson for me in the need to provide options for students so that they can learn to make sense of their learning in a way that is meaningful to them; the way I learn and what makes sense to me, is not the primary way to learn. Since that moment, I have an increased awareness of the variety of learning preferences and strengths of my students. I have developed a variety of graphic organisers which I model and provide as options from which my students can choose. I actively ask my students for their help in constructing learning experiences for them and talk through ways which might best help each of them to learn.

Many of my teaching experiences have been positive, and much of this has been supported by positive school environments. There are two exceptions to this which have developed my understanding of what sort of contexts work best for me as a teacher. One was a school which was so large, with so many staff and students, that I felt unnoticed to the point of invisibility. As someone who likes to work hard (and for someone to notice!) and work collaboratively, that wasn't somewhere that seemed a good fit for me. Another school had a large number of unhappy teachers who, in my observation, spent large amounts of the day angry about having to teach or shouting at students in frustration or infuriation. I remember thinking "Why would you do this job if you didn't find it intensely rewarding?" I have preferred, and been lucky enough, to work in schools which have teaching staff who are committed to being teachers, who are interested in teaching and who think deeply about what it is to be a teacher.

"I certainly remember about 8 years into my career, I was relocating and I was having to applying for new jobs so you have to sell yourself through C.V.s and covering letters. I realised how I had been marketing myself up until that point. I had graduated and I was the enthusiastic novice, ready to learn, who could be moulded and shaped. You know 'you can make me into whatever you want me to be.' And at that point I remember thinking: I can't be that teacher any more. I have to at this point redefine myself and say something about the fact that I have experience to draw from and I'm no longer a blank slate. Often it was through having to sit and define myself on paper for someone else that I thought about my professional self."

There have been career points, such as the one illustrated in here, in which I have realised that a professional identity I was holding onto was no longer a skin that fit me, and which have been catalysts for my rewriting of my teaching identity. Another aspect of my educator self has been formed around leadership roles I have held. Being a head of faculty at a few schools made me feel more credible and authoritative, a decision maker with a voice in the school, however moderate. Giving up a head of faculty role in order to pursue the Teacher Growth Initiative and my doctoral research, while being a parent to two pre-schoolers, was a difficult decision. My husband told me it was about my ego and he was right; I had been identifying myself as someone whose title and role bestowed some kind of expertise and authority. The Teacher Growth Initiative role was a different kind of leadership role, a strategic project manager role, but without the same authority or responsibility; I was not a boss or line manager, but a facilitator of a very collaborative

team. Leading the Teacher Growth Initiative teachers showed me the power of leading collectively; giving the team decision making power and trusting the capacity of individuals to run sub-committees proved a strategy with effective results and more engaged, invested team members.

My parent self informing my professional self

Another part of my life has shaped my teacher identity: being a parent.

“Seeing children learn as a parent has allowed me to see what learning can look like. My two very little kids will sit and obsess over something. They’ll be learning because they want to, because they’re interested, because they want to develop a skill. When I translate that into a Senior School class of students who don’t like the subject and resist learning, I think: how can I get them into that place of engaged flow?”

Seeing my own young children learn held many lessons about learning. As well as finding wonder in the minutiae of daily experience, small children immerse themselves in mastery activities: putting a straw into a juice box, rolling a play-doh sausage, climbing a rock wall. Watching my sons try to master a scooter or bike, continually falling over and relentlessly getting back up to try again, was a lesson in persistence, experimentation, and failure as crucial steps to success. Their pre-schooler play-based learning was fascinating and inspiring to me. For example, I have watched my children and their friends spend long stretches of time digging in the dirt with sticks in order to build monster truck tracks, or pretending to be birds collecting leaves and sticks to make nests. These tasks are always self-directed and are enacted with high levels of commitment. I often ask myself how as a teacher I can help ignite that passion, flow, engagement, seeking of mastery, and pushing learning boundaries into the teaching and learning of my older students, who may be reluctant to engage with classroom learning. Or, how can I make my classroom somewhere in which self-directed obsessive learning takes place?

Becoming a parent has also shaped my empathy for students and for their parents. Since being a parent I have a greater understanding of the parent perspective, and therefore more empathy for parents’ concerns, emotions, and vulnerabilities. My two children are very different people whose learning styles, emotional profiles and developmental progress have been parallel, but very different. They benefit from different approaches to

learning, connection, behaviour, and emotion. Watching them reminds me of the need for differentiation in my classroom.

Parenting has affected my belief in story as a living and learning medium. As well as stories in my own life providing critical transformative moments for me, my experiences as a parent of have allowed me to watch my sons' early language and storying develop, revealing the transformational power of stories from an early age. One moment that struck me was when my then two year old son was deliberately facing his fear (of a wooden snake that popped out of a Moroccan box when the lid was pulled). As he psyched himself up to open the box, I watched as he began chanting quietly "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can," directly quoting from the children's story *The Little Engine That Could*. This was an epiphanic moment for me about the power of stories to reach us on deep levels, throughout our lives. It was not the last time I heard him quietly use the mantra "I think I can; I think I can." I have continued to watch my sons connect themselves to the stories they read, like trying a new food after some reluctance and saying proudly "just like in *Green Eggs and Ham!*" They constantly put themselves into the stories: "Mummy, that's me and that's you" or "I'll be so-and-so." I have also used story as a parent to augment learning and understanding. As well as reading timely books at opportune times—such as those on using the toilet or starting school or getting a baby sibling—I created my own stories to provide a frame and an opportunity to talk about difficult concepts such as loss. I watched as these tailor-made books gave my children a language for talking about their feelings and experiences. As someone who had found reading stories in my life to be powerful for my own reflection, and as a teacher of English and Literature hoping to share the power of story with my students, this experience affirmed for me the importance of stories.

5.2 Professional learning: When and how does Alice learn?

My identity as student, teacher, parent, and researcher is wrapped up in learning, in my clichéd belief in ongoing, stimulating, inspiring, passion-building learning that is daily, lifelong, and deeply personal. I perceive myself as a student of the world (places, spaces, relationships, knowledge, skills); as a guide who helps my own children learn, wonder, discover, dream, feel, and think; and a teacher who aims to facilitate the process of my students finding and firing their passions, their learning, and their knowledge of why and

how to learn. I try to remind myself that, while my own experience of learning is a resource on which I can reflect and draw, this is my subjective experience; my children and the students I teach do not learn or experience learning in the same way as me; the same approaches, processes, and structures will not apply to all. So my conception of my own professional learning as an educator is entwined with the fabric of who I (see I) am. I am a particular kind of learner, one interested in self-improvement and self-reflection, and always searching for powerful learning experiences in which I have interest, some ownership, and a voice. I am someone who believes in educational catchphrases like “lifelong learning” and “school community of learners,” that these ideas can and should be embodied by leaders, teachers, and students. In one interview I said, “You can teach the same thing the same way for years on end, and get good results, but that’s not really the point.” The point of teaching for me is more about being a role model of learning and an encourager of learners in order that they can learn in self-motivated and self-directed ways.

Like most teachers, I have been involved in professional development opportunities including conferences, courses, and school-organised sessions. I have found, however, that labelling something “professional learning” does not guarantee an experience in which one professionally learns; rather, learning can be from surprising sources or in unexpected places. For me this has often meant immersion and a sense of connection with others. Collaboration has provided a safe place for me to learn through discomfort: to take risks, be challenged, and be vulnerable.

Regular interaction and collaboration

My teaching practice swells and expands when I work collaboratively. Experiences have included: professional friends with whom I can discuss my educational passions, explore ideas, find support, and receive advice; committees and other formal school sub-groups which work together with a clear focus, group protocols, and robust discussion or decision making; teaching or faculty teams; and the Twitter and blogging educational communities.

“It is other things in school or in life or in relationships that have changed what I do professionally, rather than a course that says that it will.”

Professional groups which have reflected on their own work together have been potent for me. For instance, on a number of occasions I have been part of steering committees or heads of faculty teams which have used tools which assess thinking and personality profiles (such as the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument or the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator). Each time, viewing my own profile results, in conjunction with that of the group as a whole, has been an important point of reflection, reminding me of people's different ways of learning, thinking, and operating. This has encouraged me to reflect on my self. In these tools I invariably come up as a blue-sky-thinking problem solver and word-loving, creative communicator, revealing my strengths while reminding me of where my aptitude and attitude is lacking. I question the way in which my own preferences may affect students' learning, and how I might address the preferences of those not like me. I consider the way my style of leadership might influence others. After being identified as someone who became an action-stations problem solver under stress, I have been more mindful to take people's feelings and personal experiences into account when the pressure is on, trying to adjust my approach to more fully consider the emotional needs of others, rather than focusing singly on the problem at hand.

Teaching is an intensely personal act and teachers are very individualistic in their approaches, each with his or her idiosyncratic signature. While this vulnerability and individuality makes many teachers protective of their classroom, I have found being in other classrooms a powerful learning experience. Experiencing how others do things differently reminds me of different styles of teaching and learning, and reminds me about areas in which I might improve or experiment. Observations of others' teaching, in team teaching situations (as a colleague, in my role as head of faculty, and as a member of the Teacher Growth Initiative team) have had a direct impact on my own classroom practice. I have often found that seeing another teacher's lesson has had a direct knock-on effect on my own subsequent lessons. One particular class I remember observing was that of a final-year Literature class, of a teacher I particularly admire. As head of faculty, I wandered in part way through and saw a buzz of excitement amid expert higher order questioning to provoke interesting cross-disciplinary thinking; lively discussion; students furiously writing notes as they heard each other's ideas and made new connections; the teacher seamlessly integrating technologies as enhancers of learning; students crowding around the whiteboard-paint wall at the back of the classroom chatting and scribbling together in a collective outpouring. After students were dismissed they stayed on, not wanting to leave the moment in which they were engrossed. The excitement and

enthusiasm of the students resulted in my staying in this classroom to experience their learning, rather than popping in and out as I had intended. Seeing such teacher and student excitement in a lesson reminded me of how engaging a classroom can be and how technology can be used to enhance engagement and learning. It was an example of how learning can be viral when we use the tools at our disposal to ignite the students' passions, get them involved in their own learning and allow them to share with each other and think for themselves. It makes me think that we should all visit each other's classrooms more often to experience the magic that happens that we always don't often get to share.

Working in teams, both within a school and with teachers from other schools, has proved valuable for me. Calibrating expectations of student work through dialogue with other teachers and planning learning programs together with other teachers has encouraged me to make incremental changes to my practice. Working in a team teaching environment has had an even greater impact on me. For two years I team taught with a teacher new to the school; we did not have an existing relationship and soon discovered that we had very different styles, approaches, values, and strengths. Our first instinct was to find a way to teach separately, but as our mandate was to literally teach our classes together, we were forced into a team relationship. As time went on, we found that our different ideas and strengths made us a great team, with our curriculum planning, pastoral care of students, and pedagogy all benefitting; we were better together. Differentiation was made easier as we could plan creative ways to group our classes in order to best address the needs of the students. This co-teacher has become a trusted friend and respected colleague. This was an early example of my growth emerging from a collaborative journey of discomfort, with benefits for me, my teaching partner, and the students.

“Team teaching in an intensive way with someone else, in a different year level and different environment, taught me a lot about engaging students, planning learning in different ways, delivering curriculum in different ways, approaching learning in different ways. I have found watching other people teach, or teaching with others, is one of the most rewarding types of professional learning because it immediately gives you examples in practice and a connection for conversation about your beliefs and your craft.”

Another experience for me was when I designed a team teaching opportunity with a friend teaching at another school. A secondary trained teacher, I ran a two-day highly-sensory creative writing workshop for her Year 3 students. We planned this together (including over our weekend) and delivered it together. Working with a passionate

experienced teacher and watching her work allowed me to see how someone else ran their classroom effectively, in a context different to my own. It provided insight into student learning by allowing me to see children of that age explore materials and words.

Another way of learning for me, this time to do with leadership, is having an unofficial mentor. Early in my career, at the age of 22, I was appointed as a Middle School head of faculty. My line manager at the time helped me to work through complex situations and ways of approaching problems. While she wasn't assigned officially as a mentor, she was someone to whom I could go for help and advice. I felt trusting enough that I could be open, honest, and vulnerable, without being judged. On the other hand I have had mentors assigned to me as part of school support programs, and these forced relationships have not been successful. I have also encountered many professional friends who have acted as inspirations, sounding boards, and fellow edu-nerds for me. These people have supported, challenged, and inspired me in my teaching and leading.

I mention Twitter here as for me it is a collaborative platform through which I interact with other educators, learners, and thinkers. I have found it a powerful tool for connecting with people and material of interest to me. By following hashtags (such as #edchat, #engchat, #phdchat or #acwri) I have connected with like-minded thinkers and those whose ideas resonate with me: an online community of people with whom I feel an affinity. Twitter's international reach means that it can make the world seem a smaller place, allowing me to participate in discussion with like-nerds, like-booklovers, like-researchers, and like-educators. In this way, even when I felt that there weren't many in my workplace exploring particular ideas, I could find support and thinking outside of my immediate environment. My engagement with Twitter has alerted me to trends, resources, blog posts, and articles which have expanded my knowledge, understanding, and awareness. Once I added blogging to tweeting, another world of deeper global conversation opened up. Writing blog posts, and connecting with educators and doctoral candidates through the Voxer walkie-talkie app, allowed me to express my views and explore ideas in over 140 characters and led to a great increase in the connections I made and conversations I had online and in person. A number of these relationships have resulted in ongoing connections in person, as well as online.

One-off professional development

Like all teachers, my professional learning has included in-house school-based professional learning, as well as conferences, as both participant and presenter, in areas of interest to me. These include technology conferences, English teaching conferences, leadership courses, school change courses, and writers' festivals. Being given the opportunity to self-choose conferences of interest and attend these has given me a sense of ownership over the trajectory of my learning. Listening to renowned keynote speakers, educators sharing their practice, or leaders sharing their stories, has been professionally invigorating.

“I seek out formal professional learning opportunities, but if I think about the things that are called ‘professional learning’ or ‘PD,’ I haven’t necessarily professionally learned, just because it’s called ‘professional development.’ Often it is the conversations with colleagues that happen afterwards which are most important.”

Those professional development experiences I have found useful have been carefully crafted around the learner, engaging, and take on board teaching and learning best practice. Connections and discussions with colleagues from my current school, or with others from other networks or schools, often seem the most useful and interesting part of PD. After attending a weekend-long conference with nine other teachers from my school, the group of us formed a little professional learning group in order to work through, implement, and immerse ourselves in the thinking to which we had been exposed; we met for lunches and organised termly evening get-togethers to discuss our career ideas, explore work/life challenges, and share professional reading.

Travelling as learning

Independent travel is another thing which reflects and shapes my identity, especially travel which challenges. Pico Iyer (2000) discusses travel as a journey of learning, self-discovery, and identity-making, suggesting that we travel to lose ourselves and find ourselves. Travel is a bit like Alice's journey down the rabbit hole in which the wanderer can see “everything I thought I knew in a different light, and from a crooked angle” (Iyer, 2000, p. ix), heightening awareness, receptivity, and openness to transformation. Philosopher Alain de Botton (2002) calls this the “travelling mindset,” a state of intense wonder,

receptivity, and humility. De Botton points to the attention to details we might not normally notice, as well as a sense of openness to wonderment and finding the fascinating in the everyday. Like Alice's adventures through Wonderland, each new place is an opportunity to meet peculiar characters and grow through curious, unfamiliar experiences.

This notion of transformative learning through travel is one that resonates with me. When I travel to unfamiliar places, I am in a state of heightened awareness, of noticing, of immersing myself in new languages, cultures and people. I have found myself lying on footpaths and in fields to take pictures. I have been fascinated by haphazard roof-top aerials in Portugal, badly translated signs in China, and the taste of tomatoes in Turkey. I spent one evening in the back of an Istanbul café smelling the owner's homemade sheesha tobacco and guessing the flavours, another being taught the finer points of vodka infusion by a Moscovian bar owner in New York City, and another drumming in a circle of musicians in Marrakech's Jamaa el Fna. These moments of engagement with people and places happen when immersed in the travelling mindset of receptivity, wonder, and openness to learning.

For me, travelling to America or the United Kingdom is enjoyable, but it is safe and familiar thanks to my Western experience of literature, culture, film, television, and media. Of the 33 countries I have been to so far, travelling to those where the language and culture are very different from my own and I must work to understand and make myself understood, is an invigorating challenge which immerses me in intense learning. One example was travelling independently in Russia with my sister in the off-season. Navigating inter-city train ticket buying, Metro travel, and spending time in a place where the alphabet is different, few people speak English, and stories of police corruption abound, made the trip both challenging and rewarding. In another example, I remember vividly the night I called my husband from Denizli bus station in Turkey; it was 11pm and I was waiting for a mini bus, the only woman in sight. Another night I spent searching through dark forest for an abandoned fortress on a Croatian island, with two friends and a couple of Zagrebians we had met on the ferry. It was made all the more interesting when we were later told by locals that the forest still had landmines from when it was a naval base. Apparently the 34 mines left over from World War Two have since been cleared from the island.

I've slept in monasteries, on boats, in caves, on beaches, in ex-prisons, and beneath starry skies. I've conquered the underground train systems of Moscow, Stockholm, London, Shanghai, Paris, Barcelona, and Berlin. I've ridden horses, camels, donkeys, elephants, scooters, tuktuks, ferries, and Bohemian one-carriage trains. I've scaled Mt Sinai at sunset, walked the Great Wall, bartered in Marrakech souks, dived Red Sea depths, made snow angels atop Icelandic glaciers, skinnydipped in the Adriatic, and been caught in a riot in Belgrade. I applied for my last head of faculty job from an internet café in Sarajevo. Travel feels like part of my DNA and some of my best learning.

In my teaching “responding with wonderment and awe” is one of Costa and Kallick’s Habits of Mind which I try to facilitate for my students. I have asked Literature students studying Romantic poetry to arrive to a lesson with a cool hat, a notebook, and a pen, then sent them around the school with instructions to write poetic lines about those things they normally do not notice; to look up, to look down, to explore nooks and crannies and minutiae, in order to see their everyday environment with new eyes, with a travelling mindset. Xavier de Maistre (1829) applied this mindset to his own everyday space. Taking the idea of journeying around familiar environments, a colleague and I once spent a week being tourists in our own workplace; each day we would take a holiday-style photograph of ourselves immersed in a workplace space. At the end of the week we produced a postcard of our “travels” which we sent to our colleagues. So while travel can facilitate learning and new perspectives, sometimes through openness or discomfort, it seems we can apply the mindset of travel to our daily experiences, to the learning we experience and the learning we seek.

Immersive learner-educator experiences outside the PD norm

I have been lucky enough to have had professional experiences which do not sit on the usual PD menu from which teachers might think they have to choose. These were experiences in which I was an active learner: supporting students’ learning in China; meeting with educators and researchers in New York; and this PhD.

The world as classroom: five weeks in China with 60 students

At one school I experienced one of the most powerful professional experiences of my career to date. With a colleague, I was responsible for taking 60 Australian students to an

international campus in China for five weeks. My colleague and I were the pastoral component of the experience for students; as the teachers they knew from school in Australia, we provided knowledge of those students and emotional support for them. The educational program was run by a Head of Campus and teachers who spoke both English and Mandarin. The five week learning program itself was one based on real world experience; students explored the sights, streets, shops, and eateries of the places we went, responsible for their own transport, map-reading, food-ordering, and bill-paying.

“Watching these students engaged in something different to the classroom, in hands-on learning and collaborating with each other, was the biggest real life example of all the powerful things you talk about in teaching, happening all at once. It was a powerful professional experience.”

Professionally, this experience has stayed with me for a number of reasons. It highlighted for me the essentialness of pastoral relationships with students. One of the students in my group had just discovered that they had Long QT syndrome, which required them to carry a defibrillator at all times, and for teachers to be trained in its use, should we need to restart their heart. Without the student’s parents around, I became important pastoral support, often counselling the student in the middle of the night and talking through concerns and fears. The student’s sense of awe and achievement at being atop the Great Wall was a reminder to me of the compelling experiences both education and travel can provide.

It showed me the influence of real life, authentic, experiential learning, for all students and especially those for whom “normal” school was difficult. Teachers in this context were problem-setters and facilitators. Each morning they set students a challenge for the day, such as to see a particular sight. Students then spent time planning how they would get there, where they would eat, how they would pay, and how they would keep track of each other. This pedagogy allowed students to collaborate in constructing their own solutions.

It opened up possibilities and questions for me about what a classroom might look like, about what and how students might learn. These students were outside their comfort zones and needed support while being allowed to grow. They expressed a sense that the program allowed them to mature as it encouraged them to succeed and assumed their capacity to do things they found challenging.

It showed me that the teacher could be effective as non-expert. I was not a Chinese-speaker, nor was I able to read Chinese. This allowed me to be led, helped, and taught by students. We worked together, looking out for each other in unfamiliar surroundings. While the students often provided solutions and support for each other, one memory is of me communicating frantically with a Shanghai train guard to let the last of 20 students on a train, after he had blocked the student from getting on.

Self-directed travelling professional development: NYC

At one school, I was fortunate enough to receive a travelling fellowship in order to undertake an investigative series of visits to educators, school leaders, researchers, and edu-experts in and around New York, in order to further my own learning and to bring back insights which would contribute to the strategic direction of the school. While I had help connecting with some people and organisations, I organised the visits, flights, transport, and accommodation. My learning schedule was my own. This was self-directed and organisation-supported professional learning travel which was driven by me as the learner and involved collaboration with others from outside of my normal professional sphere. It was experiential, real world, and deeply immersive.

Part of my learning experience was an experiment in social media. I had decided to use a blog to record my thinking, in a kind of public online journal, and share these posts on Twitter. This broadened my reach; I was able to share my writing and talk about it with others from around the world: educators, thought leaders, researchers, students, people in other industries, friends, and like-minded individuals. I was, for instance, delighted when Andy Hargreaves responded to my first blog post with a tweet. Here was social media linking me to one of education's thought leaders whose work shapes my classroom teaching, my school leadership practice, and my PhD research. After the trip, I shared my blog posts with those I had met while in New York. This sparked further conversations and kept the dialogue and learning going after the learning experience had officially come to a close. Blogging and tweeting helped me to be in a constant place of self-reflective and collaborative learning, and to extend this state to before and after the formal learning experience.

The journey of writing a postgraduate research thesis has been a key factor in my story of professional identity. As a learner I have been intellectually challenged, and have needed to find my own reserves of humility, persistence, and resilience. Even writing this self-story has necessitated my metacognition of my own learning, thinking about my thinking, thinking about my learning, and somehow finding words that make this explicit.

The experience of being a student, and being in a student-supervisors relationship, has encouraged me to reflect upon my own teaching. This is especially the case of teaching writing. As I have grappled with writing and with feedback on how to improve my written work, it has made me consider ways to help my students improve their written work. It has led to me be more explicit about scaffolding the planning, writing, and editing processes, and checking in with students about their understanding of my feedback on their work.

The postgraduate research student experience has interacted with my identity. Being a PhD candidate, a potential Dr of Philosophy, necessitated getting my head around what that meant for me. I would be an expert in something, someone who had completed a task of significant challenge and duration. Surely this meant somehow that I was different? Or that the perception of me, by myself or others, might be different. Would I be different from who I was pre-PhD?

I have been deeply shaped by my experience of the PhD. The shift can be encapsulated in my experience of an early supervisory meeting. In some consecutive meetings my supervisors kept telling me that I needed to be a more critical reader and a writer who could make the thread of her argument clearer. This advice bemused and frustrated me. As a teacher of English and Literature, and someone who has ghost-written, copy-written, and creative-written in various contexts, I felt like I was now the remedial student in class who could not comprehend what was expected of her, or what good (academic) writing looked like. At these meetings I would nod, and afterwards I would go home. I repeatedly went between my notes from my meeting with my supervisors and my draft chapter, trying to find a way to action advice that I did not fully understand; what would it look like if I was a critical reader and a clear academic writer? The proverbial sweat and tears on those early pages was intense and immense. I struggled, grappled, tried, yearned

to “do it right,” to understand what doing it right looked like, and still felt as though I was poking around in the dark with a flaccid stick, blind and impotent. This was a new experience for me: uncomfortable, squirmy, and difficult. And it was in that space in which I started to make incremental changes, small steps towards understanding, towards “doing good research” and “doing good academic writing.” It is that space in which I was growing, transforming, and learning. Meanwhile, my studying affected my teaching. That same week I provided my English classes with exemplars of good answers and worked through what it looked like to have written a piece which clearly addressed the criteria. While providing models is a part of my normal teaching practice, it certainly came to the fore while I was searching for it for my own writing.

That early experience has been repeated throughout this research process. Another example was when one of my supervisors said to me about a draft chapter, “When I read your research proposal, I thought you were a really good writer. And then I read this.” Again, this comment hit me where I am often most proud: in my crafting of writing to construct meaning. Again, I went home asking myself how I could be clearer, what good academic writing consisted of, and what I needed to do to address the gap between my intentions and the reader’s experience. Again, the result was a tussle with my thesis which resulted in more clarity of writing and understanding.

As time went on, I found that place of struggle less dark and more invigorating, because I grew to see it as a place of breakthrough, rather than a place of breakdown. The process of research and supervision, in which the supervisors’ role is to help the researcher, step by tiny step, to reach the next level in their work, has taught me a great deal about teaching and learning. About my own learning, I have realised that it is being questioned, challenged, or critiqued that, despite making me feel confused and uncomfortable, is catalytic for growth and improvement. The combination of care and challenge has provided a space for growth through supported struggle. For my teaching, I have been reminded of the importance and impact of feedback. The PhD experience is one which brings together discomfort and support.

Another facet of PhD study which was inspiring for me was interviewing the school leaders. It was a privilege to have these people share their stories and educational visions with me. These conversations in which leaders opened up about their leadership were

valuable professional learning around approaches to school leadership, allowing me to hear from a range of practitioners and immerse myself in their stories.

5.3 School change: What is Alice’s experience of school change?

The school context

For me, a place of work is one in which I need to want to be, which resonates with me; the sense of fit needs to be mutual between individual and school. One of the seven schools at which I have taught was a well-renowned award-winning school, but there wasn’t the sense of community, knowing, and caring for each other that I sought; it was an educational machine with glossy brochures, but not a place in which I felt invested and valued.

“I’m quite lucky in the sense that I’ve landed in a school at the moment where I feel the ethos and the community resonates with me as a person, a teacher, and a learner. It’s a place where in the staff room people are talking about their teaching and their learning and their passions. . . . If there is something important to you as a professional learner, those opportunities are supported and encouraged; there is space to grow. . . . It’s not just whether a place wants you, it’s whether you fit the place. . . . This is a place aligned with my professional self, which is important to me.”

My experience in the Teacher Growth Initiative at Lutwidge School is situated within my feelings about and connection to the school. I feel that I have landed in a school where I feel the ethos and the community resonate with me. Lutwidge School seems to value professional learning in quite a real way, rather than merely paying it lip service. I feel intellectually supported and respected as a professional learner and as an educator who is encouraged to follow my passions and improve my craft, which sits well with my own commitment to teaching and personal growth. Constant opportunities are available and encouraged. Leaders are generally open enough that I feel I can talk to them and be heard. Also, they seem to “walk their talk,” so I respect them as educators, learners, and leaders. I know that if there is a path I want to pursue, I will be supported in that. It’s a place where in the staff room there is a sense of excitement and teachers are talking about their teaching, classrooms, and own learning.

While this school fits me, I don't think it fits with everyone. I like to learn, grow, and be challenged. I have left schools in which I felt my role had stagnated. In my first interview for this research I said, *"I'm in a place where the things that are important to me are supported and it's aligned with my professional self."* This sense of alignment affected my experience and perception of the Teacher Growth Initiative.

Teacher Growth Initiative: The Alice experience

My role in the Teacher Growth Initiative was an idiosyncratic one. On maternity leave after the birth of my second child, with my newborn and toddler at home, the principal asked me to write a research paper on teacher quality, proposing a teacher quality initiative which utilised a framework and a coaching model. When I asked what the aim was, the principal replied that the initiative was intended to develop the professional learning culture of the school, an aim which was explicitly outlined in the school's strategic plan and which resonated with me.

"I asked the principal, 'What do you want the end point to be?' And the principal said, 'I want to develop the learning culture of the staff.' That's a nice, neat little goal, isn't it? (laughs) There was a genuine desire to get staff to work together and build the teaching staff as a learning community."

In this way, the Teacher Growth Initiative emerged out of a strategic intent and from what research outlined as effective practice. For me, it was a personal move away from faculty-based leadership and towards professional learning as a sphere of experience and project management. I was interested, not only as a leader of the project, but as a teacher in the process who wanted to be better at engaging my students, thinking with precision about my own classroom, encouraging the learning of my students, and developing relationships with my colleagues.

"My role in the Teacher Growth Initiative has affected my thinking about myself as a leader. I've very deliberately not been the 'boss' of it, especially in the first year. I've been the strategic organiser of it, but with accountability. I've wanted it to be 12 equal teachers around the table who are invested, involved, and own it, with equal power and equal voice."

After writing the research and proposal paper, and presenting it to the school board, I was appointed coordinator of the Teacher Growth Initiative, a pilot project intended to

experiment with research-based practice in developing teacher capacity, and to subsequently make implementation recommendations which would be rolled out at a whole school level. In this role I was both strategic designer, team facilitator, and team member, participating fully in the work while also planning and evaluating it.

In its first year, my initial impressions were shaped by the team's first meeting. I sat in a room with teachers from various spheres of the school who had been given the time, space and luxury of working together on a strategic initiative. There were those staff who I did not know at all, and some with whom I was familiar. We shared our motivations for volunteering for the Teacher Growth Initiative team and I was struck by the commitment of the teachers around the room: to their students, their teaching, their own continual learning, and to improving and honouring their teacher selves.

“My experience of the process has probably been different to other people's because I've been facilitating it and so have known at each stage where we are going and what we are doing.”

During the pilot years of the Teacher Growth Initiative I facilitated the team formation, planning, data generation, meetings, and work of the teams. Since the pilot years have finished, I have worked with others in the leadership team on the development of the pilot work into human resources processes, internal recruitment of the coaching team, team training, staff awareness, collection of data, supportive technologies, and ongoing iteration and accountability.

The pilot teams met regularly in person, as well as engaging in online on discussion boards. We observed each other's lessons and conducted coaching and meta-coaching conversations. Working collaboratively resulted in increased mindfulness brought into our own classrooms. It raised our awareness of our own thinking about teaching, engaged us in lively discussion about it regularly and (re)awakened our teaching passions and motivations.

In one meeting I asked the team about what they thought of our use of experts and a colleague said, “I know you're talking about experts from outside the school, but I am enjoying the expertise of the people around this table.” This was a wonderful example of the positive collaborative energy of the team; we saw each other, fellow teachers, as experts worthy of listening to and learning from. Working with these teachers reinforced

that I enjoy learning alongside others in a sustained and ongoing way which is about intellectual engagement as well as professional relationships.

Alice's a-ha moment: I grow when I am uncomfortable

Much like my doctoral student experience of growing when being both supported and challenged, I learned through Teacher Growth Initiative that when I am most inspired is not necessarily when I learn most; that feeling squirmily and sometimes unpleasantly uncomfortable, could lead to growth.

“The actual coaching side of things was challenging. It wasn't the most fun I've ever had because it is about reflection and that reflection isn't 'I'm the greatest teacher ever,' which is kind of the point. I didn't focus on the things I was really happy with, I focused on the things I wanted to improve, which made it positive in the sense of impact but not positive in the sense of fun. So where I was enjoying myself most was in chatting with colleagues about things that interested me, but that wasn't necessarily where I was learning.”

This epiphanic moment happened in my second interview for this research; it was talking through my ideas in an interview situation which brought this realisation to the surface. When I was doing what I liked I was not necessarily learning; I learned most when I am pushed beyond my comfort zone; what was enjoyable was not necessarily what was impactful. Being coached to reflect on the aspects of my teaching with which I was least comfortable was not enjoyable. Rating myself against the rigorous Danielson Framework for Teaching rubric could be disappointing, although my trust in the people coaching me allowed me the openness to expose this vulnerability. At times I would have liked to see myself higher on the spectrum. There was growth in the unease of honest reflection and subsequent experimentation with the aim to improve. The connections with other Teacher Growth Initiative teachers provided an emotionally secure space for this growth.

I added to my own discomfort by sharing one of my least effective lessons with the board of the school, in an attempt to demonstrate to them the intense vulnerability of teachers in a professional initiative such as this. On reflection, perhaps it is the alignment with and support by the school which allowed me to expose myself to those at the apex of power. Others in the team showed similar vulnerability when they volunteered to share their

Teacher Growth Initiative experiences, including moments of doubt, in whole-staff forums.

My favourite part of the pilot years was working with the Teacher Growth Initiative teams. These were groups of teachers from different areas of the school, various faculties, and diverse career stages. I didn't know many of the faces around the table before their volunteering and selection put them in a team with me. It was a luxury to sit around the table together as a group of passionate, thoughtful, articulate professionals and partake in focused targeted discussion around teaching, coaching, how students learn, and what is important in our work, our students' learning, and our own learning. I felt connected to the community at my workplace, with people with whom I normally wouldn't work. This affected my sense of belonging and intellectual engagement with my teaching, allowing me to theoretically and practically explore the core of my professional work, while having a voice in my school.

“I think for me, the things that have had the most impact, on my teaching, were experiences being in other people’s classrooms, especially those very different to my own, which got me asking questions about my own students, how I approach engagement in my own lessons and how I facilitate their learning. My role was to observe and coach teachers through their teaching, but seeing them teach definitely had an impact on my own teaching. Also working with the group. Having the time to sit together and have focused discussions about teaching and learning, observation and coaching, and how the brain works, was certainly what I enjoyed the most and where I felt most connected to my work community. . . . People have challenged me or extended my thinking about learning, teaching, students. . . . We were able to utilise the expertise of everyone around the table to come up with the model. Twelve heads are better than one.”

Another enjoyable and influential element of the Teacher Growth Initiative for me was the observing of other teachers' classrooms. Seeing other people's lessons encouraged me to reflect upon my own teaching. For example, as coach, I observed a primary school class. Seeing the engagement of primary school students and the learning of three year old kindergarteners got me thinking about engagement of students in my Year 12 lessons, about how to engage more kinaesthetic opportunities in class, about how to give students more open-ended choices. Being in another teacher's classroom showed me better ways to create a well-organised, engaging learning space. Coaching other teachers and listening to their reflections on their teaching and their students' learning helped me to think about

my own ideas about teaching and learning. Watching other teachers' lessons was, however, part of the Teacher Growth Initiative for the coaches, not for all teachers.

Alice's insider thoughts on the Teacher Growth Initiative experience

A frame for vulnerable, self-directed reflection and planning: the Danielson Framework for Teaching

The Danielson Framework allowed me to pinpoint specific aspects of my teaching practice for targeted reflection and discussion. Despite the non-inferential style of data generated for reflection against the Framework, whether observer notes or 360 degree video footage, I still felt vulnerable and exposed as a teacher. For example, in one of my videoed lessons, a student drew something inappropriate on the board during a part of the lesson where the class was up out of their seats whiteboarding their collaborative contributions into an organiser. Sitting down to talk about this incident, even in a non-judgemental setting, was uncomfortable, especially as it was unavoidably caught on video.

“We are using the Framework for Teaching as a rubric and an organiser for the elements of teaching, and a conversational point which looks at specific aspects, and that makes conversations much more targeted. . . . When you look at this extensive rubrics and its levels, with the ‘distinguished’ column all about what the students are doing, it really opens up that there is always so much more you can be doing as a teacher. It drills into much more specific things and much finer detail about what can be developed, rather than the vague feeling you get after a lesson. . . . The point of having this as a regular thing is that classrooms are opened up and it is accepted that this is a ‘thing that you do.’ But teaching is personal and when someone comes into your room, even if they’re not there to evaluate you, there is still a sense that you’re on show and what’s happening is on show. It is personal and even if it’s just you doing the reflection, having someone who is the witness to those reflections or ratings against a rubric, especially if they are challenging how you perceive yourself or how you’d like to be perceived, is still quite confronting.”

The extensiveness of the Danielson Framework is such that it is impossible to excel in all aspects at all times. This means there are always areas for development. It showed me how much more there always is to know or to do. Despite being someone who sees myself as a thoughtful, enthusiastic, and effective teacher, the Framework outlines plenty of room for improvement. Its extensiveness was somewhat intimidating and it was impossible to gloss over those aspects of teaching on which I might not normally dwell, taking me beyond my habitual patterns of my own tried and tested approaches. If

anything, I found myself drawn to frustrating aspects of weakness or challenge, rather than celebrating areas of strength. Like me, many members of the team developed conscious incompetence; as time went on and they knew more about the Framework, we felt we knew less and less, becoming more critical of ourselves as we became more aware of possibilities of practice. The rubric drills down into fine details of what “distinguished” teaching looks and sounds like. It was useful to remember that we were for the most part looking at the Framework in relation to a lesson or a moment in time, so any rating was not a reflection on us as a whole teacher.

I noticed that the Teacher Growth Initiative groups began to use the language of the Framework in discussion. It became a shared language for talking about our practice. Many including me felt that using the Framework for planning, observation, and reflection helped us to be guided and specific about our teaching. It wasn't about ticking an official box or filing a required human resources form; it was a directed, strategic, and scaffolded process during which we were at the centre.

Discovering the power of silence and conversation to develop thinking and reflection, through cognitive coaching

In some ways, cognitive coaching is liberating; a coach does not need the answers. For me, though, it was difficult to suppress the urge to tell someone they'd done a good job. Equally, it was difficult for teachers to go without feedback. Most of my conversations as coach finished with the teacher asking me, “So how did you (coach) think that lesson went?” There seemed to be an innate desire for or expectation of being told from outside ourselves how we have performed. This process began to break that down by requiring individuals to draw on their own capacities.

“The sort of questioning which allows the other person to do their own thinking, and having scheduled time to have conversations which encourage self-reflection, has affected me as a teacher and a leader. I can see how it can be liberating as a leader not to have to problem solve others' situations but to be a conduit for them to come to their own conclusions, but it is quite difficult to suppress my own urges to 'help' by giving advice, or to tell someone they did a good job. Some of the conversations I had ended with the person asking 'How did that go? Did I do a good job?' because we all want that affirmation.”

Training in, experiencing, and practising cognitive coaching also successfully challenged my beliefs that helping colleagues or students meant giving them positive feedback,

parallel autobiographical examples, or ways to solve their problems. Rather, it meant allowing the person to do their own thinking. While the content of the cognitive coaching course began my questioning of these long-held beliefs, it was my experience of conversations (as both coach and coachee) that showed me the power of asking open cognition-based questions in order to facilitate thinking, goal setting, analysis and problem solving by the person being coached. As someone who wants to be helpful, I had to keep asking myself what it meant to be helpful. I had to keep reminding myself “it’s all about them,” and if it’s all about them, then the best thing I can do is get out of the way of their thinking, while being an agent to help them through it. In a research interview I called the cognitive coaching approach to professional learning “a collegial mediation, encouraging professional reflection.” In realising the cognitive importance of pausing and waiting, I also had to attempt to overcome my uncomfortableness with conversational silence and my urge to fill that silence with my own words.

“I always saw learning as constructivist, as constructed by the learner, but cognitive coaching gets you thinking that it doesn’t do a staff member or a student any good for you to do the thinking for them. It has me thinking more about how I might ask questions to more deliberately help them come to their own understanding about things or be more independent learners, rather than giving them more direction. It’s about stepping back, letting go of your own stuff, not taking the power away from the person to find their own solutions and have their own growth. I’m not a total buy-in to cognitive coaching because I find that if people are floundering it is important to give them some support, consultation, direction. It’s affected how I speak to people whether it’s my students, my colleagues, my friends or my own kids. If you work with those kinds of talking, it becomes more a part of the way you talk and how you approach conversation whether in a classroom, a team or personal relationships. It hasn’t changed who I am, but it has changed how I might respond.”

The other realisation which changed the way I view conversation is realising the power of paraphrasing. When conducting a conversation in which the coach’s job is to listen deeply and paraphrase, clarify or change the level of abstraction of the coachee’s thoughts, amazing things happen. Not only could hearing my own words paraphrased back to me crystallise my thoughts, but the coachee experience of being truly and absolutely listened to, without interruption or judgement, felt like a self-indulgent luxury rarely found in life’s day to day conversations. The coach can sometimes see the coachee have their own a-ha moments as they suddenly clarify, extend or draw to the surface their own thinking, feelings, goals, and solutions. As both coach and coachee, it was those moments of—

“yes! That is what I mean and I didn’t have the words for it until now,” or “it seems so simple, but that is what I have to do here,” or “I never thought of it like that but suddenly it is crystal clear”—that were most powerful for me. In one conversation in which I was coach, the coachee (who had been doing all the talking and all the thinking and all the problem solving) began saying “yes, you’re absolutely right; that is the solution to my problem!” and yet I knew that it was them, and not me, who had come to their realisation. I was a sounding board and they had taken that journey in their own head. It was being in these cognitive coaching conversations which allowed me to experience the power of restraint, listening, pausing, paraphrasing, and asking questions which provoke or clarify thinking.

I had thought that, as a reflective practitioner, a conversation would not draw out different or extra reflection from me, but I found that in cognitive coaching, and in the interviews for this study, thinking aloud through talk did illuminate my own thinking and make me think on the spot in fresh ways, with new outcomes.

Another impact of cognitive coaching was my approach to interviewing school leader participants for this research. The training helped to bring to my awareness the importance of trust, rapport, body language mirroring, pausing and paraphrasing. Conscious of maintaining rapport, I did not take notes and often found myself mirroring body language. I was mindful of how participants used their bodies and hands to express their ideas and their relationships to things. This allowed me to pick up on the nuances of their thinking. For instance, were they sequencing points on their fingers or in the air in a linear pattern? Were they expanding themselves and their ideas out into abstraction or magnitude, or bringing them close to their chests, showing something was dear to them? These non-verbal cues helped me to better paraphrase participants’ responses, and this seemed to result in the further explication of their ideas.

I was also aware of leaving space in conversation for pausing and thinking, rather than jumping in when there was silence. Usually the silence didn’t last long but instead was a jumping off point for the participant to speak further; it was a space in which the interviewee was thinking. I found that, rather than asking questions, I was attempting to paraphrase, distil, clarify, or abstract the person’s thinking with a paraphrase. A few focusing questions were necessary to direct responses onto the research foci, but the cognitive coaching approach allowed me to develop the narrative aspects of people’s

stories, allowing them to direct and develop their own responses with less content input from me as interviewer. After a paraphrase the person would continue to develop their explanation or thinking. After the interviews I had feedback from a number of school leaders interviewed who said that for them it was “a great conversation” which “flowed;” that they felt like the interview was about them and led by them (rather than by me as researcher); and that their thinking was developed and incited by having that opportunity to verbalise their thinking with an active listener.

The training focuses on the processes, maps, and questions to ask, but grounds these details in larger philosophical and conceptual ideas: a constructivist view of learning and research about cognition which suggests that people learn and grow when they do the thinking themselves, and they have the capacity to be reflective deep thinkers. The philosophical and evidential foundation allows coaches-in-training to see the reasons for this approach to conversation. This was helpful for me in slowly chipping away at my initial reservations about cognitive coaching, which stemmed from my own innate desire for positive reinforcement (*Gold star! Doing well! Great job!*). It was then cognitive coaching conversations, as coach or coachee, which began to show me the transformative power of coaching which incites the coachee’s thinking. I found myself having a-ha moments in conversation, or finding my thinking bubbling up in the days after a conversation. Or having coaches coming back to me a week after our conversation and telling me how the conversation had sparked a series of subsequent changes, conversations or intentional events. Cognitive coaching affected the ways in which I participate in learning conversations and life conversations.

Change as chaotic. Change as possible. Change as needing both challenge and support.

So did my experience of cognitive coaching, the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and the Teacher Growth Initiative team and process change me? The ongoing nature of the process, use of a specific framework for conceptualising my teaching, and being asked questions which required me to do new thinking had an impact. They facilitated goal setting, implementation of strategies and (re)construction of my understandings. My thinking and understanding of the complexity of teaching has been sharpened. My approach to leadership has changed from one of more structured management to a more facilitative role of enabling others to contribute, have a voice, and realise their capacities.

“It will be a more useful growth process than current HR processes, because teachers will be reflecting, setting goals, and therefore improving. Is it the fastest way to make you a much better teacher? Probably not. Is it going to mean that people are talking about their teaching and talking about it in similar ways? Probably.”

My experience of the Teacher Growth Initiative has been one of an unfolding organic journey, a bit perhaps like a tumble down a rabbit hole through which I dove, unaware of what I would encounter along the way but intrigued by the possibilities. I have learned about myself in sometimes unexpected ways; my major a-ha moment was that my growth occurs most when I am uncomfortably working through challenge, rather than when I am engaging in activity with enthusiasm and enjoyment.

“The impact has been random, from all different directions. It has been a journey. We started in one place, it has unfolded and gone in different directions, and it has been with a group of people. For me it’s been about my learning, but I don’t know if I can articulate specifically how the TGI has affected me. But it has. There’s a viral, synaptic thing going on. I don’t know how I could measure the small moments which have fired off in different directions for me. It hasn’t been very linear.”

In my second interview for this study I said that I don’t think that I can articulate how the Teacher Growth Initiative experience has specifically affected me. Rather than a linear progression with neat and obvious outcomes, I have found the impact of my experiences to be viral, synaptic, and chaotic, with unmeasurable butterfly effects. I have seen my observations of other teachers’ lessons shape my own classroom practice; often my next classes had the imprint of the teacher’s class I had recently observed, as I tried out or “tried on” their ways of doing things. I have felt the aftershocks of cognitive coaching training on my personal, professional, and classroom conversations, on my conceptualising of learning and of what teaching is. I have heard my own language of practice altered by my immersive work with the Danielson Framework for Teaching. I have changed my thinking about professional learning by working, thinking, and talking with a diverse range of colleagues. I have watched as relationships which began as coaching conversations have developed into ongoing collaborative partnerships. Like a dandelion, I’m not sure in which direction each seed from this learning is going to grow, or which garden it might influence.

In reflecting on my own story of professional self and professional learning, I am struck by the interwoven aspects of discomfort and support. My experiences of team teaching, PhD study, travel, and the Teacher Growth Initiative, for instance, all contain within them challenges through which I have struggled, and in doing so shifted or changed. But this has happened within an environment of support, collaboration, or togetherness with one or more individuals.

5.4 Summarising the Alice story

~ out of the rabbit hole and into the beginnings of analysis ~

This chapter shared the researcher data through story, utilising Alice, of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, as a meaning-making symbol. This summary recaps the storied data in terms of the studied phenomena of professional identity, professional learning, and school change, moving back into the Waking Alice researcher voice in order to apply a researcher lens to the data. At this point, the “Alice” name is retained in order to present a compact critical summary.

Alice's professional identity was integrated with her personal one and influenced by a range of experiences from childhood through to the present. She reflected that “it is often other things in life or in school that have changed me, rather than labelled courses that say that they will.” These “things in life or in school” included her parents' stories, her positive and negative experiences as a school and postgraduate student, volunteering at a centre for youth with cerebral palsy, travel, and being a parent. Experiences as a teacher also affected her identity formation, especially those in which she noticed transformations or realisations in students, or in which students showed that their relationship with her as a teacher had been significant for them. Alice's identity shifted from, as a school student, not wanting to be a teacher, to being a committed teacher. For Alice it is wider life experiences (such as volunteering, travel, and parenting) as well as educator experiences (such as inspiring experts, mentors, collaborative learning, and online communities) which shape her identity.

Professional learning was viewed by Alice as ongoing and immersive; collaborative and individual; in life, school, and work; and requiring support and challenge. Alice learned

with others, including in teaching teams, with professional friends, and from professional mentors. She changed her own classroom practice by observing other teachers. She learned through conversation, including coaching meetings and the research interviews, experiences which she reflected brought her thinking to the surface and extended it. Alice also learned in self-directed ways, and on her own, yet even seemingly-individual experiences such as PhD study, a professional fellowship to New York, and use of social media tools (Twitter, Voxer, and blogging), were somewhat collaborative, relying on connection with and input from others. An a-ha moment came in an interview for this study in which Alice realised that her moments of growth tended to be those in which she felt discomfort, but was able to work through this in a supportive environment or relationship.

Alice's experience of the Teacher Growth Initiative led to learning. She noted that developing her understanding of the Danielson Framework for Teaching impacted her classroom practice and helped her to apply more specificity in her reflections about teaching and in professional goal setting. She commented that the Teacher Growth Initiative team began to use the language of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and cognitive coaching, and were beginning to develop a shared language for and understanding of what good teaching might look like, based on the Framework. From Alice's perspective, cognitive coaching training and practice impacted the way teachers perceived their roles, not only in the Teacher Growth Initiative team, but also in other arenas such as classrooms, their teaching teams, and even personal relationships. It influenced the way Alice conducted the research interviews. The training incited her reconsideration of what was actually helpful for a coachee, and that this might not be giving advice or solving problems. It affected how she thought about and conducted her professional conversations and life conversations, including those in the classroom and in personal relationships.

Alice was drawn to the Teacher Growth Initiative because of her alignment with its purpose, resonance with the school context, and a desire to have a voice in and an impact on the school's refinement of professional learning and culture. While senior management were involved in and informed about the process to some extent, it was Alice-as-facilitator and the team of classroom teachers who enacted the intervention's pilot year and developed subsequent recommendations to the governing board of the school about the direction their work should take in the future.

6. White Rabbit: The teachers' story

When the Rabbit actually *took a watch out of its waist-coat pocket*, and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waist-coat pocket or a watch to take out of it.

(Carroll, 2014, p. 2)

The previous chapter presented, in detail, the Alice story, my narrative as researcher and self-conscious teacher participant insider-member of the Lutwidge School Teacher Growth Initiative. As meaning is fluid, contextual, and can only ever be imperfectly represented, “our narratives about others’ narratives are our worldly creations” (Riessman, 1993, p. 15). This chapter, which adds to the narrative the layer of other teachers’ experiences of the first year of the Teacher Growth Initiative, is my worldly creation, informed by my own role as insider-teacher in the Teacher Growth Initiative, and constructed through my selection of detail and crafting of story. It is an amalgamation of Teacher Growth Initiative teacher perspectives, as emerging from interview transcripts, fused by me as researcher-participant. It conveys meaning by organising individual stories into a new whole (Elliot, 2005). Full, even composite, stories give more insight into the lives and minds of teachers than fragmented thematic cross-sectional presentation of data (Connell, 1985). The storying of teachers’ perspectives brings “stories of personal experience into being by means of the first person oral narration of past, present, future, or imaginary experience” (Patterson, 2008, p. 37). This narrative is more than a sequence of events that occurred; it is a contextually situated vehicle, meaning-making discourse (Riessman, 2002), which presents human sense making and self-making. Rather than a chronological life story, it tells of how the teacher participants make meaning out of their lived and perceived experiences of professional self, professional learning, school change, and the Teacher Growth Initiative as a contextual arena for these phenomena to intersect.

This story is told through the persona of Wonderland’s White Rabbit, using the gender marker “he.” Rather than necessarily reflecting the gender of participants, this is a deliberate decision to merge the teachers into one emblematic character for the smooth, meaningful, and ethical communication of the essence of their stories. It strengthens the anonymity promised to participants through the synthesis of their stories, the use of an unrelated persona, and that persona’s gender marker. Anonymity was of particular

concern in this story due to the small number of remaining teacher participants.¹⁵ The White Rabbit is an apt choice of representative character for “the teacher” in this story; he is someone in Wonderland who is between hierarchical layers (there are servants and creatures under him as well as leaders over him) so he is constantly negotiating an in-between role which puts various demands and pressures on him, as evidenced by his sometimes vexed state, his obsession with his oversized pocketwatch (which can be seen as a symbol of systematic controls, schedules and expectations) and his cries of “Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!” It is also the White Rabbit who sparks Alice’s childhood curiosity and she follows him down the rabbit hole and into Wonderland, mirroring the teacher’s role of igniting curiosity and guiding students through wondrous, unfamiliar territory on their quests for knowledge, understanding, and growth.

The illustration of the White Rabbit (Figure 3), which appears at the beginning of his story, shows him looking at his pocketwatch, symbol of his perpetual race against the clock. At the Rabbit’s feet is a red rose, among white roses, a visual allusion to the white roses in the novel which are painted red for the pleasure of the Queen of Hearts. The red rose reminds the viewer of the pressures on the Rabbit from those in leadership above him.

In order to respect and give voice to the two teachers remaining in the study, I have extensively employed direct quoting and paraphrasing, at times providing methodological clarification and academic reflection through the use of footnotes. Much of the story reflects areas upon which both teacher stories converged; footnotes have been used to differentiate where there were marked differences. Care was taken to equally weight both teachers’ perspectives; while the story reads as one person, it is the result of the meticulous weaving together of two people’s stories.

This chapter is structured similarly to the research story in the previous chapter; that is, around the key themes from the literature (which were the basis of the research questions and interview questions), and the themes which subsequently surfaced from the data.

¹⁵ Although initially four teachers plus the researcher volunteered to participate in this study, two of those teachers withdrew from the research.

~ down the rabbit hole and into the story ~

“It was the White Rabbit, trotting slowly back again, and looking anxiously about as it went, as if it had lost something; and she heard it muttering to itself

‘ ... Oh my dear paws! Oh my fur and whiskers!’”

(Carroll, 2014, p. 31)



Figure 3: Teacher as White Rabbit (mixed media, by the researcher)

6.1 Professional identity: Who is the White Rabbit as teacher?

The authentic, adaptable teacher self: The White Rabbit both fundamentally himself and fluidly changeable

It is important to the White Rabbit that his teacher self be a genuine authentic self, and not a performed persona.¹⁶ In his professional role as teacher there should be “not much of a personality change,” no “façade” or pretence. Coming to Lutwidge School, he worried that he might be expected to appear as a certain kind of teacher, but was relieved to find that at Lutwidge teachers are “allowed to be yourself.” “I haven’t had to change into something I wasn’t, which I think was really important. . . . if you just keep your personality, I think it’s an absolute key.” In some ways he thinks, “I’ll always be like that. I’m not going to change in a hurry,” indicating that for the White Rabbit the idea of being oneself is a deeply valued part of being a teacher.

The White Rabbit has been “reshaped,” “refined,” and “redefined” by experiences of professional learning, some of which have resulted in a “shift in my thinking” or “changed my thinking.” He is a “really keen learner” “who’s learning all the time,” “willing to change,” and who adjusts what he does based on feedback from parents, staff, and students. For him this is “a good quality to have because you’re trying to promote learning in the kids you teach.” Looking back on his experience, he reflects that he used to be “more creative” in his early days of teaching. “It was about putting new and creative ideas into practice” which the students enjoyed, but which weren’t necessarily strategically using pedagogy to enhance learning. He wasn’t “being specific” in what he was teaching. The desire to be creative overtook deliberate targeted teaching. He “let things lapse” and “wasn’t targeting specific areas in the kids’ development.” With the perspective of hindsight he reflected that perhaps he didn’t do “as good a job as probably I thought I did at the time. You always like to think you’re doing a great job but maybe, in reality, I wasn’t doing as well as I actually thought.” Comfortably self-reflective and adapting, he now feels more confident in his abilities to address his students’ needs.

“I’ve just seen myself improve so much as a teacher to the extent, now, where I’m actually confident that, no matter what class I get given and what kids I get in my class . . . I can actually develop those kids, whereas, in the past, I don’t know if I could’ve said that about myself at all. So I’m actually at

¹⁶ This discussion of being yourself came from one teacher participant.

that stage, now, where you could throw any mix of kids in the class with me and I think I can handle it now and I think I can adapt to that.”

As well as a balance of authenticity and adaptability, the White Rabbit consciously negotiates his teacher identity at different times. He reflected on a career crossroads at which time he felt that his professional identity was in flux, at a changeable point. At that time in his career he thought, “I wonder what I should do next,” and, “is being a teacher enough or should I be looking for something else?” He saw these questions as reflections about the parameters and pathways of his professional self, about who he wanted to be, or not to be. “I guess I don’t want to become one of those old jaded teachers so I think that is why that is a question I have got at the minute. I don’t want to be that person.” In negotiating his fit with school roles, the White Rabbit considered taking on, or choosing not to take on, particular leadership positions. He was guided by his belief in authenticity, by perceptions of what he “should” be doing according to others’ expectations, and by the desire to reject a potential identity (who he *doesn’t* want to be).

The teacher as positive relationship-builder and school community member: The White Rabbit as a central character in the tangle of Wonderland relationships

The White Rabbit’s teacher identity is linked to and shaped by his personal connections with members of the school community. He is centrally focused on his students, placing them at the centre of his professional world. He applies his “really, really positive” outlook to everything, including students, staff, parents, and professional learning, and with view that complaining or being negative only gets in the way of being a good teacher. “It affects the kids in your class because you could spend half an hour complaining about something. Better to use that half an hour to actually put something into place to make it better for the kids in your class.” Not only are the students central to the White Rabbit’s teacher identity, but he considers it important to be a “positive” person who is able to happily go about his work of teaching his students.

Finding a connection with each student is pivotal to the White Rabbit’s sense of himself as teacher and member of the Lutwidge School community; “with every kid, you’ve got to find something you can talk to them about.” This personal connection with each student impacts on the teacher student relationship. The White Rabbit explained: “They sort of don’t see you as someone completely different on a higher level. They see you as sort of

more of an equal. They can talk to you about things.” It is not just the academic part of the student which the Rabbit sees as important, but the student as whole person.

The White Rabbit also sees relationships with other members of the school community as central to his sense of teacher self. He described himself as a “social person,” a “person that works well in groups,” and a “people person as opposed to an academic.” The pastoral and relationship-building role of the teacher is an innate part of his teacher identity.

About relationships with members of the school community, including students, parents and colleagues, he said, “I think if any teacher has not got that right then it almost doesn’t matter what they do in the classroom because if they have not got that trust and respect and things like that then it is not going to work anyway.” For him, this element of relationships felt an innate, intrinsic part of him.

“I haven’t had lots of PD . . . in pastoral care throughout my career but I feel like that is something that has developed along with me as opposed to me consciously going, ‘Oh god. I need to work on that.’”

This building of relationships and membership of school community didn’t need a conscious decision to develop, but is one that naturally evolves for the White Rabbit.

Teacher as organised time manager: The White Rabbit and his pocket watch

The White Rabbit sees himself as “a very analytical person,” “a really organised and systematic person,” who likes “sequence” and for whom organisation and time management are significant strengths. He is a “do-er” at work and at home; someone who gets things done without delay: “if there’s something to be done, I just get it done.” His ability to “focus on what needs to be done” is “a huge advantage.”

Organisation and time management are an integral part of the White Rabbit’s professional identity. Being organised is essential to his life running smoothly and his ability to manage the busyness of the teaching job without becoming overwhelmed. In order to avoid feelings of “I’m late! I’m late” (a line for which his *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* namesake is famous) the White Rabbit makes sure he is organised. Using time well “takes the pressure away and stress away” and “gives you more time to do a better job of

things.” It allows him to be “more relaxed in class and confident in what I am teaching.” Rather than “worrying about a deadline approaching or . . . panicking about reports . . . you’re on top of them early in the piece.”

Not only that, but being organised is key to doing a good job as a teacher. Being organised helps to tighten up pedagogy and allow the White Rabbit to more successfully, confidently, and deliberately design learning for his students. “Over a number of years” he had gotten into a familiar autopilot pattern which no longer worked for the needs of his students, and he realised that his well-worn pattern of lessons and resources needed to change. In upskilling himself and refining his planning, he has made his programs and lessons “a lot more organised and tighter.” He had “forgotten how much time being organised frees up for you in a lesson. . . . If I am really organised I can be teaching and spending more time actually helping or being of more use as a teacher rather than being a bit on the back foot.” So organisation helps his teaching and students’ learning.

So, in order to survive and thrive within the pressures, pace and demands of being a teacher, the White Rabbit has become a resourceful organiser and time manager.

Teacher as shaped by peripheral life experiences: The White Rabbit outside Wonderland

The White Rabbit’s teacher self is shaped by his experiences outside of education. His life outside of his teaching role affects his sense of his professional identity and puts his role as teacher into perspective.

Volunteering in an out-of-school mentoring program with disadvantaged youth is a “leveller” for the White Rabbit.¹⁷ “It stops me from taking things for granted and makes me realise that this little bubble isn’t reality.” This external experience takes the White Rabbit out of the “bubble” of his school context and reminds him of the wider world.

Similarly to Alice’s story, travel broadens the White Rabbit’s own knowledge and also provides a role model for his students in terms of being active seekers of learning experiences in their lives.¹⁸

¹⁷ This experience of volunteering was from one teacher.

¹⁸ This reflection on teacher travel as important to teacher self was from one teacher participant.

The impact of having a family was a major catalyst for a change in the professional identity of the White Rabbit. For him this life milestone meant a “shift in your work/life balance.” Becoming a parent led to the realisation that constantly working “doesn’t necessarily make you a better teacher.” Rather, it “makes you someone whose work/life balance is tipped to the other side and you’re under pressure all the time and you’re thinking, ‘Oh if I spend more time on this I’ll do a good job’ and it doesn’t necessarily equate like that.”

“I don’t need to spend hours and hours on weekends planning. . . . I actually think I’ve become a better teacher since I’ve had that shift and I find I use my time at work a lot more effectively and use it for the right things and then that’s freeing up time to spend with my family.”

Being more targeted in his planning and more efficient in his management of time, so that he could address his own needs, those of his family and those of his students. Where previously he “might’ve spent double the time on things I did in the past and actually wasn’t doing . . . anywhere near as good a job as I am now.” Prioritising his time as a parent, with his own children, time which is “really precious” has made him reluctant to be “consumed” by work.

Developing a parental perspective helped him listen to and empathise with parents of his students. This widening of perspective and development of empathy was a result of reflecting on the development, learning and education of his own children. His “different [parental] view on things” allowed him to understand, empathise with and resist blaming parents for their children’s behaviours.

“Your kids are created. They’ve just got their own personality and you can sort of shape them but you actually can’t control every element in their personality. So your kids aren’t perfect and every kid in your class isn’t going to be perfect. . . . you’ve just got to work around that. You’ve got to manage that. You can’t change them and I think being a parent has definitely opened my eyes to that perspective of things and I feel like I can talk to parents now as fellow parents.”

His view is that this fellow-parental perspective and increased empathy makes his relationship with parents more “honest” and “open.”

In his case, volunteering, travelling, and being a parent are those peripheral life experiences which have influenced the White Rabbit's professional identity, shaping his self. The White-Rabbit-as-teacher is inseparable from the White-Rabbit-as-person; the whole of his life affects his teacher self.

6.2 Professional learning: When and how does the White Rabbit learn?

Professional learning as revelation, reaffirmation or reshaper of practice: The White Rabbit as learner

Sometimes professional learning was seen by the White Rabbit as comfortably “reaffirming.” This was learning that “gave me the message, ‘Oh yeah, you’re on the right track with what you’re doing here and what you’re thinking here.’” This kind of professional learning, perhaps more accurately described as professional affirmation, “can make you see a different perspective on things or see things from a different angle . . . you might be doing all the stuff already but sometimes it can just be reinforced that you’re on the right track.” No new learning is happening, but there is reinforcement and consolidation.

As well as being affirming, professional learning has at times had an impact on the White Rabbit's practice. For example, discovering the research basis for a particular approach to learning was a “revelation” and a “light bulb moment” which changed his view and his approach to teaching.

Despite professional learning being a potential catalyst for changing practice, the White Rabbit cautioned against knee-jerk change based on an experience of professional learning, against being “very impulsive,” rushing back, “excited” to impulsively “throw it on your kids the next day without processing it.” The White Rabbit resisted the urge to immediately reshape his teaching and throw out what he'd done before, instead choosing to “take stuff away and sort of tuck it away” for later, considered implementation. This relates to the White Rabbit's view that school change should be well-considered and slowly implemented, not enthusiastic-but-rushed.

Experiences of professional learning can be affirming and transformative, but the Rabbit takes time and care in deciding what action to take in his classroom as a result of his learning.

Professional learning as a combination of organisationally mandated and individually self-directed experiences: The White Rabbit in a tug-of-war between self and context

The White Rabbit sees professional learning as a balance between requirement and choice. “There is some professional learning that you choose to do and there is some professional learning that you don’t choose to do but you need to do.” He counted himself “lucky” in his own learning opportunities, grateful for the learning he has been able to experience.

He sees it as “good to be able to choose your direction” rather than “having to do things when either you don’t feel it is relevant or you don’t feel that is an area of strength or weakness that you need to work on.” Use of technology to enhance student learning was one area that he consciously sought to develop.

“I am constantly trying to keep up with technology. As we are getting older as a teaching population, kids know more than we do. And I don’t think we will ever know more than they do but we’ve certainly got to keep trying to . . . keep them in our sights. I know that is something I’m conscious of and constantly trying to do and looking for PD on because I feel like it is a weakness.”

While “conscious” and deliberate in identifying a “weakness” and intentionally “looking for” professional learning opportunities which will address this, he added that none of the PD he had done in this vein “springs out.” Despite a self-directed area of need and the act of consciously seeking to address that, meaningful professional learning—in the sense of accepted PD opportunities—was not perceived by the Rabbit to have occurred.

Bad speakers and salespeople: The White Rabbit disappointed by the uninspiring and commodifying

For the White Rabbit, disappointing professional learning was that which did not model good teaching or which was an obvious attempt to sell an educational commodity.

The White Rabbit remembers disappointing speakers.¹⁹ For instance, a keynote speaker at a national conference was “dreadful” to the point where people in the audience were getting up and leaving. He wondered how some speakers “get through.”

“All these teachers are desperate to learn something new and exciting . . . so things like that are disappointing . . . Because they are our teachers so I expect them . . . to be doing what they are preaching. And if they are preaching about people that have only got an attention span for 20 minutes and they are preaching about it for an hour and half.”

He expected that teachers of teachers, those who offer professional learning opportunities for teachers, would embody good teaching themselves, and felt frustrated when this expectation was not met.

The White Rabbit discussed another presenter who was ineffective in communicating a practice he thought was actually “brilliant,” “really good,” and something he uses regularly. But the ineffectiveness of presentation meant that he “saw the staff just switch off and . . . disengage;” it “turned people off so much that whenever they went away from there and thought about that program, they would tie it back to that negative experience and wouldn’t use it.” Despite trying to put his negative feelings about the presentation aside to focus on the content, he remembers that professional learning experience as “a really negative” one that “still sticks out in my mind. It really does.”

The White Rabbit also has a sceptical awareness of professional development as a saleable, marketed commodity on which some people build their careers.²⁰ “Sometimes people are just coming up with something new to sell and it’s a money making thing.” The Rabbit questioned the repackaging of ideas in order to sell them in a new format.

“Going to things where it is nothing new or going to things where they are just telling you the same kinds of things but calling it something different; that kind of PD would frustrate me. It is like there has been all the brain theory and then people sometimes start to come out with different jargon but it is the same. Like I get all the big concepts and don’t like all the glitzy packaging that comes with a lot of PD which I guess is marketing.”

¹⁹ The following examples of disappointing speakers come from one teacher.

²⁰ This “bad PD as someone selling something” point was made by one teacher.

Despite sometimes negative experiences, the White Rabbit takes responsibility for his own learning. He reflected that, “It is not really the PD that has been disappointing. Sometimes, I think, I have just made bad choices.” He also took control and responsibility of his own learning saying that, “I’ve learned to pick and choose what I do,” adding, “some people are really critical of PD but . . . if you can take a couple of things out of it and take it away and it can improve you, then that’s great.”

While the Rabbit is critical of professional development which uses ineffective teaching methods or a commodification approach to educational theory and practice, he takes individual responsibility for the opportunities he chooses, and for gleaning learning from them.

Professional learning from others: The White Rabbit looks to experts, mentors, and peers

The White Rabbit sees a multiplicity of others as sources of learning: inspiring experts, mentors, colleagues, and an online professional learning community.

In contrast to disappointing speakers, the White Rabbit sees hearing inspiring educational speakers as positive and potentially transformative professional learning.²¹ He discussed “the best PD [he’d] ever been on,” in which he was inspired and “changed” by a very inspiring conference presenter who changed his thinking. He had pencilled in one presenter for the first half day session and “found her so good, I scrapped every other session I had planned and I spent the entire four days with her and did not go to anything else.” Her reputation as an effective presenter snowballed at the conference.

“At the start of the [first] day, there was probably about maybe 15 teachers in the room. By the end of the conference, this lady . . . they had to open up the room next to her and the number of people attending her sessions had expanded, not just through one full room. It expanded into the room next to it, as well. It was jam packed. There were people standing in the back. People wanted to see her so much that, even if there were no more seats, they’d go down the back and stand up and listen to her.”

What resonated for him was that the presenter constantly pulled everything back to the needs of the student; “if you pull everything back to the needs of the student like she did,

²¹ This experience comes from one of the teacher participants.

I think that's the end of every argument. That seals the deal every single time." This focus on the student aligns with the White Rabbit's description of his teacher self as being centrally focused on the student. For him, this professional learning experience "completely changed [his] thinking." He "came back with this shift in [his] thinking." It "improved things like my parent communication. . . . At the end of the day, when I came back from that, you just pull the parents' focus back onto their child. Every single time it worked. Every single time." The other shift in his thinking was to engage students on management of their learning, rather than going first to parents.

In another example of learning from others, professional mentors in the form of supportive school leaders are seen by the White Rabbit as shapers of learning and identity. Two particular individuals across the White Rabbit's teaching career were shapers of his learning and identity. One was a deputy principal when the White Rabbit was a graduate and the other was a principal of a school at which he taught. Both of these people were "respected" educators who had particular lessons to impart. The deputy, for whom he has "ultimate respect," instilled in [him] that idea that in teaching it is your responsibility inside the classroom and outside the classroom." Saying to him, "if this a failure it will be your fault" spurred him to "get it right." The deputy was a "huge influence" who "instilled" a principle about the purpose of teaching. The "really well-respected" principal introduced him to then-cutting-edge educational theories, changing his thinking about pedagogy. This principal instigated "thinking" and ignited the beginning of a "path" to thinking about teaching and learning in a different way. The principal shaped the White Rabbit's beliefs about his teaching in a way that may have consequently affected his practice. The Rabbit felt he had encountered the right mentors at the right times in his career.

Collaborative learning groups resonate with the White Rabbit as positive professional learning communities. One example was a school-based action learning project,²² which was one in which teachers volunteered to be part of a group who worked on self-directed projects and met collaboratively. Along with an external consultant, the group sat down together and covered "different leadership concepts, like managing change, developing relationships with staff, strategic planning, time management." The experience was so impactful for him because he realised "jeez, I was a long way off in my thinking." The project aspect of the learning, in which he had to "actually do a project that . . . made a

²² This experience was drawn from one teacher participant's data.

difference,” “reshaped” and “refined” him. It redefining his approach to leadership in a way that is “different to what I thought before.” This combination of self-chosen and self-directed, with collaboration and expert consultation, was one which resulted in transformative changes to his approach to working with other teachers. “That has been, by far, the most powerful learning thing I’ve ever been through.”

Being a connected educator was an important source of learning for the White Rabbit, who uses Twitter as an online professional learning community.²³ For the White Rabbit, Twitter is a professional learning network in which connected learning happens. He sees it as a platform for finding like-minded individuals, connecting with educational people and contexts outside of his physical sphere and participating in ongoing learning. The White Rabbit articulated that “what’s actually improved professional learning is, now, that online community. That’s the biggest wealth of information.” He sees Twitter as “an endless supply of professional learning.” Using Twitter “every single day” allows him to see a stream of educational tweets, the latest thinking and different, sometimes opposing, professional perspectives. The White Rabbit calls this connected and self-directed learning as a “time effective” “constant PD” which helps him to be “ahead of the game.” The online educational community provides a global experience of professional learning communities: “We’re working on this personal learning communities here at school but it’s almost like you’re part of a worldwide personal learning community.” The platform of Twitter flattens the leadership hierarchy and dissolves geographical borders to allow the White Rabbit to access a web of colleagues, ideas, and expertise.

6.3 School change: What is the White Rabbit’s experience of school change?

Interconnectedness of school and teacher: The White Rabbit interwoven with Wonderland

The White Rabbit’s experiences of professional learning and the Teacher Growth Initiative are inextricably linked to his perceptions of Lutwidge School and its link to his professional identity.

²³ These experiences around Twitter are drawn from one teacher participant.

The school is seen by the White Rabbit as one which has been involved in continuous change.²⁴ At first he “wouldn’t have many good things to say about it [Lutwidge School]” but that as time has gone on, he has viewed the school context more positively. For him, seeing the benefits of school changes for his students is what gave him “a lot of faith in the school . . . in the strategic decision making” as he is “seeing the good outcomes of the kids as a result [of changes made at a strategic level in the school].” The perceived positive impact on students is what has allowed the White Rabbit to accept and feel positively towards the school and school changes.

It is important for the White Rabbit that Lutwidge School “walks its talk,” that it embodies its public values in its actions. He said that, despite reading the official promotional material on the school before beginning work there, “it probably took a few years for me to realise that it is a school that does value being more than just an academic experience for the students.” He thinks that “all schools would say they do [value more than just an academic experience] because that is the right thing to say, but in some of the decisions that have been made on a macro level and a micro level I think Lutwidge does try and follow through on it.”

The professional opportunities at Lutwidge School were, for the White Rabbit, “above and beyond” previous ones offered at other schools and a “privilege of working here.” He described some of the professional learning he has done as “unbelievable” opportunities which have allowed him to “accelerate” his growth. He could not recall a request for professional learning which had not been supported, as long as that is learning in some way aligned to the school. He sees Lutwidge “as a very supportive community when it comes to PD” that “you can show [is] going to be of use.” While he has been able to pursue his own learning opportunities, he has done so with the understanding that his learning should link to the school’s strategic foci. Lutwidge School’s commitment to supporting teacher professional learning, the White Rabbit thinks, is “a credit to the school.”

The support of his learning by the school affirms that “I work somewhere that values what quality teaching is and working out how we can get everybody to do it.” He felt, in regards to the Teacher Growth Initiative, that although the pilot group had been “a tester

²⁴ While both teachers talked about the fast pace of school change at Lutwidge, the quotations in this paragraph come from one teacher’s data.

group,” he was “really confident” that “the school will commit to” the initiative being “properly” supported with training and resources. He feels confident that the school will do things “properly,” with commitment to resourcing change.

The problem of innovation fatigue and the need for teacher buy-in: The White Rabbit juggling his responsibilities and realities

The White Rabbit sees Lutwidge School as in a constant state of impulsive, frenetic change and innovation. There is “something new every year” without “time to consolidate.” From the Rabbit perspective, Lutwidge has “jumped on a few too many band wagons rather than doing certain things a bit better.”

“[Lutwidge School has] been in such a massive change process the last few years. We’ve had so many changes it’s not funny, one after the other, that there’s people here who still haven’t adjusted to the changes two changes ago.”

For teachers in their classrooms, as well as leaders in their schools, “there’s a time and a place for putting new things into place and you’ve got to really resist that impulse” despite the excitement of trying something new. “Sometimes doing things properly,” he said, “can take remoulding and slightly changing things over time.” Taking time allows continuity and slow growth.

“If you’re just continually throwing out something and replacing it with something new, there’s no continuity and there’s no growth in what you’re doing. . . . you’ve got to manage things very carefully and think things through really carefully.”

The White Rabbit’s view is that “it is really important that there is a period of consolidation” and that “if something is going to work it needs to be decided on and then embedded and developed as opposed to, ‘Oh let’s try something else.’” In terms of the Teacher Growth Initiative he was concerned that the initiative would be perceived as “one more thing” on top of the constant changes which some teachers might find “quite confronting.” He had his “doubts” about how the initiative would roll out. If some teachers are “feeling not very confident about what they’re doing” and then “they learn you’ve going to be observed teaching by colleagues and admin, then that could really throw some people out.”

He said the whole school roll out needed to be “managed really carefully” and “be very tactfully” “introduced to staff.” “The group of staff selected,” the White Rabbit noted, “were never going to resist this or ever be upset about this or feel nervous that someone’s going to come in and observe them.” Rather, the group of volunteer teachers is not “really an accurate reflection of the impact this could have on people, personally.” The Teacher Growth Initiative group of teachers is not necessarily representative of Lutwidge School teachers as a whole. Their enthusiasm and views may present a skewed perspective on the eventual uptake, or not, of the Teacher Growth Initiative model.

Part of buy-in for the White Rabbit was a need to feel engagement in, and control of, his own learning; a sense of voice and purpose. During the Teacher Growth Initiative first year, his engagement in the initiative was related to his perception of its impact. He was “enthusiastic at the beginning” and “got a lot more engaged in it towards the end again, because you could see the, you could see the result coming together.” His engagement was linked to what he saw as the value of the initiative. “If I can see the value in it and if I can see that it’s something that I genuinely believe in,” he said, “then I do tend to pick back up in that enthusiasm and engagement.”

He saw the impact of the Teacher Growth Initiative as “positive.” He was “involved in something that can work” and that was “doable.” He could see its alignment with the school as a whole and its usefulness; “I can see how it’s going to fit into the school in the way that it’s going to be used.” It would be actioned, built upon and put into practice; it was valuable and worthwhile work which was contributing to the core business of the school. He saw the Teacher Growth Initiative team’s role as “helping put a plan in place to improve everything. That’s a positive outcome at the end of the day.” It was satisfying for the White Rabbit that “it can do what it set out to do, like, the goals of identifying what quality teaching is and working out how that’s displayed and then working out how we can get everybody to do it ... I can see that it could be of some use.”

Logistical school challenges: The White Rabbit’s race against time and timetables

While the White Rabbit perceived the positive value of his involvement in the Teacher Growth Initiative, he found significant challenges in the logistics of being a full time teacher in addition to being involved in a time intensive professional learning experience.

“Time” was the greatest challenge for him; “the only negative” of the experience. He pointed out that, when Lutwidge School offered the Teacher Growth Initiative time release or financial incentive, every teacher chose the financial incentive, but that meant that they were teeing up observations, coaching conversations and Teacher Growth Initiative team meetings in their normally free lesson times, lunch times or after school. Sometimes, even that didn’t work and they had to get relief cover for their own classes, which was a “minor frustration” as the teaching programs of their own classes were interrupted, so that they could fulfil their Teacher Growth Initiative work. The “logistics of committing time to something and then prioritising it and then saying, well ‘this is untouchable’” became a challenge in reality, especially as the timetables of Teacher Growth Initiative team members, and of coaches and coached teachers, did not match. He thought that “maybe my class has suffered at times” but saw this as part of “give and take” which had to happen in order for him to be able to balance his teaching and Teacher Growth Initiative commitments. Despite describing involvement in the Initiative as being “time intensive,” “frantic,” “tricky,” and “challenging” with some aspects being “rushed,” the White Rabbit described it as “a good time.”

Teacher Growth Initiative: The White Rabbit experience

Working with a sense of purpose and through a slow deliberate process: The White Rabbit goes slow to go fast

Reflecting his concerns about the constancy and pace of change at Lutwidge School, discussed in the previous section, the White Rabbit felt positively about the way in which the Teacher Growth Initiative work was built slowly over a period of time.²⁵

He discussed both the sense of group purpose and the slow deliberate process of the group. “What we’re doing as a group,” he explained, “is we try and map out the best way of doing this. . . . we’re mapping out the plan that’s going to be followed to improve teacher quality in the future.” He feels the Initiative is doing important work. He thought it was “positive” and he was “engaged in everything” during the Teacher Growth Initiative. He enjoyed, even “loved,” the reading, meetings, online discussions, and team

²⁵ While both teachers discussed their perceptions of the fast rate of school change, this section of story is taken from one teacher’s data.

work. He elaborated that, when he had Teacher Growth Initiative work on a given day, “you actually get up in the morning and you’re looking forward to the day and I think that’s important, too.” He had found himself thinking, “This is great. This is really good. This is what I want to be doing.” He felt that the Teacher Growth Initiative model provided “clear language that everybody can use” from the Framework for Teaching and also “the cog coaching which is getting us as a staff to really reflect back and all try and share that same common goal [of improving learning for students by developing teaching of teachers].” For him this work was coming from a well-considered research-based starting point.

“It’s based in research that other people have conducted . . . and the number one thing, aside from home environment, that’s affected student learning is teacher quality . . . so Lutwidge realised, ‘Listen to do a better job for our students we’ve got to improve our teachers. . . . we’ve got to invest some time.’”

He also highlighted the importance of slowly working through a process to find and refine the model. At first the White Rabbit struggled to see the Initiative’s direction and how the interconnected elements would come together; he couldn’t see where the Initiative work was going. Later, however, he saw the links between the Initiative elements. The go slow approach was appreciated by the White Rabbit; it was an antidote to his concerns around the frenetic pace of school change and with educators’ tendencies to jump into innovation before considering it thoroughly.

“Rather than just rushing into something then going, ‘Okay, run!’ the process we’re following is just looking at and working out, ‘Okay, that might not be a good idea. Perhaps we not do that. Perhaps we do it this way.’ And we’re sort of getting the kinks out of things before we actually put it into action.”

It was therefore important for the White Rabbit that time was given to the process and the individuals. Innovation fatigue and the pace of change was a concern from a macro/school and a micro/individual perspective.

Alignment with teacher identity: The White Rabbit’s fit

The White Rabbit reflected on how his teacher identity aligned with the Teacher Growth Initiative. “I identified with it,” “it really aligned with my values and what I see is important,” and “this was something I actually believed in and identified with and I

thought it was important I be a part of it. I'm not doing it for any sort of reward or recognition. It's just being part of something that I think's going to result in some positive improvements." It also "reinforced that view of myself as a learner."

He also saw it as helping to develop his skills and identity as an aspiring school leader. Here, the Teacher Growth Initiative allowed him to take a strategic leadership view, in which he was able to "look through the lenses an administrator would" and invest time in "improving skills in me which I'd be doing in an administrative job." He saw that teachers could be leaders without a leadership title, that leadership in schools could be distributed, and also that the Teacher Growth Initiative was allowing him to see the school and its teachers as a leader would, with a macro strategic perspective, combined with practical skills of classroom observations, meaningful data generation for teachers and holding professional conversations.

The White Rabbit also enjoyed the use of the Framework for Teaching as he saw himself as "someone who quite likes knowing the structure and knowing the guidelines, knowing the rules, and if you know the rules and you know that's what's expected, then you hold yourself accountable." The Framework for Teaching therefore "fit in with my professional approach." This aspect of the Teacher Growth Initiative work was one which he felt aligned with his idea of his professional self.

Collaborative team as a professional learning community: The White Rabbit working alongside others

For the White Rabbit, the Teacher Growth Initiative team as a professional learning group was an important and enjoyable part of the process. He liked that the team was school-based and diverse, allowing the sharing of varied perspectives.

"I like the fact that is in-house. I like the fact that we are there from Lutwidge and you are getting to work with people across the school that you have not worked with before. I think that is a really useful learning perspective."

He noted that the group had a "range of characters" who "wouldn't normally be in a group together," but that professional discussion around the "nitty gritty of teaching ... definitely built professional collegiality." He found connecting with different people from across the school, including those he did not know and those who he knew and highly

respected, to be “valuable” and “great.” The Teacher Growth Initiative was a vehicle for him to have time, “really, really interesting” conversations, and idea sharing with a range of “competent” colleagues.

It was important to the White Rabbit that the teachers in the Teacher Growth Initiative group were just that: teachers without formal leadership roles in the school. This meant that “we were all on the same page and the same level . . . we were all there for the same purpose, and we were all, like, ‘We’re all teachers and we’re all talking about teaching.’” He noted that it was important that there was a diversity of input, that “if just one person ran with this, it would be their way of thinking and that usually doesn’t work best.” Rather, a group of practitioners working together would end in a “better result.” The teachers in the Teacher Growth Initiative team were seen by each other as internal experts, educators from which to learn. It was a case of “using other staff to help other staff” and “looking at good examples of people in an area you need to develop at” and “getting people modelling good practice.”

The Teacher Growth Initiative was “a shared professional learning,” “a collaborative professional development where you’re sharing experiences. You’re getting different thoughts on things, different approaches.” Collaboratively working through a process of learning, trialling a model, then building and refining that model, was one which has “shaped my thinking slightly,” “opened me up to different ways of thinking.” The collaborative nature of “lots of shared minds working together” “really opened my eyes” and “made me more open minded.” The experience resulted in “shifting thinking,” in making incremental movements in perspective through “sharing experiences” and “getting different thoughts, different approaches. . . . That, to me, has been the beauty of it.”

Going into other teachers’ classrooms as a coach was also valuable learning for the White Rabbit as a teacher. He said that while “when people come in to observe you, you naturally have a natural tendency to sort of tighten up on different things,” “watching other teachers teach . . . crystallised in your mind maybe some of the areas you need to work on as well.” Seeing how others approach their pedagogy and classroom management “widens your viewpoint. It reinforces things you’re doing well and maybe identifies some bits and pieces that maybe you still need to work on personally.” “When

you're observing other teachers you just pick up lots of little tips, and even sometimes, you know, you learn . . . you change your practice because of it."

Working together with a range of teachers in a non-hierarchical team resulted in shifts in the Rabbit's thinking. The Teacher Growth Initiative team worked collectively to come to a common understanding and work towards a shared goal, shaping the White Rabbit as an in the process.

Danielson Framework for Teaching as providing a common language and explicit set of standards: The White Rabbit's precision reflection and refinement of practice

The Framework for Teaching was seen by the White Rabbit as "a refresher in exactly how complex teaching is . . . how complex and how interconnected different parts of your role are," which has "reaffirmed that I was on the right track with lots of things I'm doing" and been "invaluable in having conversations with staff." It was a "positive" tool which helped "us all to get a better understanding of what we all do" and "made me reflect on my teaching," facilitating the pinpointing of areas for development. It had made the White Rabbit "more aware of raising my standards in alignment with it" and "made me really reflect on what I do . . . that's naturally what we've ended up doing." This natural instinct of the Rabbit to rate himself against a teaching rubric and use it for professional reflection, even without formal structures, has resulted in shifts in practice. "I've definitely changed, even just little aspects of lessons and planning and things like that. Just from an awareness of that rubric and that framework."²⁶

The White Rabbit highlighted the Framework as allowing a precision of reflection and a common language with which to discuss teaching and with which "you can see progression" along a "continuum of practice." It offered something objective "to measure against." The Framework was a "structure that's explicit and clear," outlining an accepted wisdom of what teaching entails; "nobody could question that they're the things that make good teaching, not a good teacher, but good teaching" and that as the teacher "I really have to be accountable for what I do in this room." It was able to set expectations across faculty and year level boundaries and allow professional conversations about teaching for all teachers; "when you really break it down to what quality teaching

²⁶ For both teachers the Framework for Teaching was positive, affirming and a frame which promoted professional reflection and growth, but only for one teacher was it "the thing that's really opened my eyes"; for the other, cognitive coaching was the more transformative tool.

could be; it doesn't matter if you're teaching Pre-Kindy or Year 12, these factors actually all still fit." With this accepted "structure that's explicit and clear, then nobody can turn around and say, 'well, I didn't know that's what was expected' or 'where were we told that?' It's clear." It meant, across the school, teachers from diverse areas were able to understand common explicit standards as well as be "able to clearly articulate what quality teaching might look like using a common language and even having the rubrics to break it down."

The White Rabbit reflected on how the descriptors in the highest "distinguished" columns of the Framework had impacted his own teaching practice. As the "distinguished column in the framework is all about students being able to do things for themselves" he has questioned his own teaching, asking questions about the students' capacity for learning and independence of thought and action in his own classroom. According to the Framework rubric, "you've got to really empower the kids to do things," "throwing control over to your class." This has increased the White Rabbit's awareness of student independence of learning, encouraging him to "focus more" on "student-led things" and "students holding each other accountable." "It comes back to that student focus, that giving the kids control of the classroom."

A prior understanding of the Framework affected his classroom practice in lessons. Having the Framework in the "back of your mind" shaped his classroom practice. "There was one time when I was being observed and you could tell I absolutely nailed that. In the back of your head, you've got the Framework and I could tell I was actually hitting that far extreme of it." In speaking of another of his own lessons, he said that "I was doing that on purpose, because I knew that's on the rubric. ... I've been conscious of it." He reflected that, "if you keep doing that, that'll become new, that'll become more like a habit for me as a teacher."

"It's almost 'fake it until you make it.' . . . To form new habits, you just have to keep doing it. And if you know somebody is coming in and watching you, you'll be more likely to do it [consciously think about how to achieve 'distinguished' on the rubric]."

Having particular aspects of teaching "brought back up [into consciousness] and being encouraged to do them every now and again, it puts them back into your everyday teaching."

In these ways, the Framework for Teaching became a tool for collective understanding and individual shifts in thinking and practice. Even an awareness of the Framework led to self-commentary about lessons based on the descriptors in the rubrics and an understanding of what better practice might look like.

Cognitive coaching as liberating the coach from finding answers: The White Rabbit learns to help others do the cognitive work

At first, the White Rabbit felt like the group was “being pushed down the cognitive coaching line” and was not sure whether they were “getting an awful lot out of it that is new,” feeling rather that it was “common sense.” He later shifted to seeing cognitive coaching as an important, transformative tool, a “revelation.”²⁷ He said things like: “at every level I can see its value” and “I see how beneficial that can be in teaching as well as in any kind of management position.”

Cognitive coaching taught the White Rabbit more about the “logistics of questioning,” including who, when, and how to ask questions, whether that be in a staff group, classroom, or personal conversation. What was most revelatory was a sense of being “conscious” of many aspects of communication, with clear intent and protocols for conversation which facilitates the thinking of others.

An area of illumination for the White Rabbit was that the cognitive coaching approach makes the conversation about the other person, totally focused on the coachee and their cognition and growth.

“I like the way that it really gets you to think about making the other person think for themselves, to actually step back and let that person work out issues or solutions or reflections for themselves. . . . Your job as a coach is to get the best out of the other person, not to give them the answers or give them solutions.

But to get them to do that for themselves.”

He noticed that allowing the teachers’ ideas to lead the discussion, in which as coach he was mediator, listener, paraphraser, and artful question-crafter, meant that conversations were “completely different” to where he “would have taken that conversation.” For him,

²⁷ This reflects one teacher’s initial reservations. The other teacher had been “wanting to do” cognitive coaching and was pleased from the outset that the training was part of the initiative.

this was about honouring teachers' different ways of thinking and their own capacity for cognition and reflection; "cognitive coaching is not getting people to think the same but getting people to think more clearly about what they're doing. I think that was really interesting." He stressed the "teacher-focused and teacher-led" focus of cognitive coaching as on "the actual teacher themselves." "We're not really telling them, 'You're not doing this, you're not doing that, you're not doing that, you need to improve that.' They're figuring all that out for themselves." From his own perspective, and from the brain research on which cognitive coaching is based, he reflected that it's "human nature: you don't really listen to people when they tell you what you need to do, do you? You only really change what you're doing when you identify things for yourself."

Working with cognitive coaching was a catalyst for reflecting on the White Rabbit's professional identity. It made him "really stop and think" about the way he converses with students and staff; "whereas before I may have jumped in to try and help or rescue or answer... [now I] try and get people to self-actualise and do more for themselves rather than just be the person that sorts out all the problems." In an effort to encourage students and teachers to become more self-authoring learners, he now tries to use questioning, classroom interaction, and professional dialogue to "make people—students and adults—more self-aware and self-directed." He also felt liberated by the focus of cognitive coaching on facilitating the problem solving capacities of coached teachers.

"It's made it clear to me that there's less of a need for me to go in and be an expert and tell them, 'You need to do this, you need to do that.' Sort of facilitating the staff and sort of guiding them along and helping them identify their own direction. . . . I think they're going to be more willing to change when they're identifying the area for themselves, than me telling them what they need to do."

Cognitive coaching was a professional learning approach which the White Rabbit initially approached with caution and scepticism. As he became more immersed in the coaching theory and practice, the Rabbit's thinking and behaviours shifted as a result of the coaching training, and experiences of coaching and being coached.

Overall reflection: The Teacher Growth Initiative as transformative learning

The Teacher Growth Initiative was an experience the Rabbit "ended up learning a lot from." "It's been a much more positive journey" "compared to some other PD" where "you just feel like you've wasted a day of your life." The Teacher Growth Initiative not

only aligned with, but also reshaped his identity, helping him to become more the kind of teacher and leader he wanted to be. The White Rabbit reflected that he became impatient and frustrated when dealing with other teachers as he was “someone who sometimes rushes in and does things too quickly,” who “jumps in, and martyr-like rescues.”

Through the Teacher Growth Initiative he had the “realisation that that’s probably not the best option.” Rather, he liked the “idea of not being that person . . . but to actually stop and think, paraphrase, and get them to think.” Emerging from his work with the Teacher Growth Initiative, in which he was exposed to ideas about leading and helping which challenged his norms, the White Rabbit was “trying on” different ways of being an educator, reshaping his professional identity and ways of responding, helping, and being.

Specifically, “the part of it that is about assessing your own teaching and using the camera and being reflective . . . obviously that will tighten up certain areas of my teaching which will be good for me personally” helping him to “tune in to all of those aspects of teaching and managing or working with others.” He could “see the value of this” for his future aspirations. “I’ll be looking back to this as a key thing in shaping my views and shaping how you do things . . . you’ve got valuable stuff you can take with you.” While he wasn’t sure if it had changed his practice during the year he thought “for me it’s really going to be more of an impact in future years.” His reasoning here was about the Teacher Growth Initiative as a year-long experience for him, versus the power of the ongoing coaching cycle for teachers over time. He said, “It wouldn’t have changed me dramatically [this year] I don’t think. I think what will change me dramatically is when this comes into-into what we do in everyday life, and you’re getting observations all the time. I think that will change, definitely.”

6.4 Summarising the White Rabbit story

~ out of the rabbit hole and into the beginnings of analysis ~

This chapter shared the teachers’ data through story, utilising the literary character of the White Rabbit as a meaning-making metaphor. This analytic summary, using the Waking Alice researcher voice, draws together the key points from the White Rabbit story around professional identity, professional learning, and school change.

The White Rabbit perceived himself as authentic, desiring to be aligned with his context, and changeable. On the one hand he sought “being himself” in professional contexts and said he is “not going to change in a hurry.” On the other, he recognised moments in which his professional identity was in flux, and was open to modifying his practice based on learning and life experience. While he regarded aspects of self as inherently who he is (his ethical code, his central beliefs that drive his daily decisions and actions), he articulated that his professional thinking, beliefs, and practices had grown and changed with time and experience, noting times in which his core beliefs shifted or in which he grappled to reform his professional identity.

The White Rabbit emphasised the importance of the school organisation as a cornerstone of what being a teacher means to him; it was an adopted part of his identity in order to survive the pressures and pace of the role. The Rabbit felt personally supported by the school in his professional learning, and able to have some ownership over his learning to pursue his own interests, as long as they were organisationally aligned. Leaders were expected to walk the talk of the school and Lutwidge School’s strategic vision was seen by the White Rabbit as having a positive impact on students, helping him to generally trust and accept school change. The focus on students echoed the White Rabbit’s description of his teacher identity as one which revolved around his personal connections with and his facilitation of the learning and development of his students. He felt that his priorities—mainly his students—and his identity as a student-centred teacher, were aligned with those of the school; the school context was one in which organisational values were seen by the Rabbit as aligned with his own values. He was most engaged in school change in which he perceived the organisational identity and purpose to resonate with his personal identity and purpose. Although he understood the strategic intent behind much school change in the Lutwidge context, he did worry about the fast pace of change at the school and promoted going slowly to “do things properly.”

The White Rabbit reshaped his practice based on professional learning, but he wanted to internalise it and own it if he was going to use it; he felt uncomfortable with implementing new approaches if they were at odds with his professional identity. He learned with others, including in teaching teams and in collaborative action learning projects. Situations such as conferences and courses were opportunities, not just for individual learning, but for collaboration and learning from a group. In some instances, the White Rabbit found conference speakers to be inspiring, such as when the focus of what they

were saying resonated with his own beliefs, and when speakers enacted good teaching practice in their presentation. At other times, personal connections were the most impactful thing of those courses labelled “professional development.” Mentors, including effective and supportive school leaders, shaped the Rabbit’s perceptions of himself and his capabilities. Colleagues and professional friends provided safe places for the White Rabbit, in similar ways to Alice, to talk and garner advice. These relationships allowed the Rabbit to feel trusting enough to be vulnerable. Connection with others, in person or online through platforms such as Twitter, was seen as a key support for and motivator of learning. Twitter allowed the White Rabbit to connect, communicate, and learn from a global community of educators, including not only other teachers, but also school leaders, researchers, experts, and thought leaders. The social media platform flattened hierarchies and time zones; learning could occur with anyone at any time.

A combination of self-direction and collaboration seemed to be optimal for the White Rabbit’s professional learning. An opportunity which provided a balance of individually-focused and collectively-supported learning was an action research project in which he was supported through an individual project by a mentor and a team of colleagues. It “reshaped” and “refined” him. The Rabbit went so far as to say that it was “by far the most powerful professional learning” he had experienced. In his experience of the Teacher Growth Initiative, the team was an important, enjoyable, and supportive space, providing a trust environment which allowed for risk taking and challenge. The Rabbit saw the Initiative as a collaborative professional learning experience, which over time, and with the help of internal and external expertise, shaped his thinking and practice. Outside of the team, other teachers impacted the Rabbit’s classroom practice, especially when he observed their lessons. Like Alice, his observation of the lessons of others crystallised his own ideas about good practice and changed his own subsequent teaching. The ongoing nature of the Teacher Growth Initiative, and its exposure to new ways of doing things, led the White Rabbit to “trying on” different ways of being an educator, reshaping his professional identity and practice.

The White Rabbit used terms from the Framework for Teaching rubric in his research interviews. In particular, he reflected on how his knowledge of the “distinguished” teaching descriptors from the framework shaped his classroom practice, as he held these in the back of his mind when teaching. The Framework was a “structure that’s explicit and clear” which outlined an accepted wisdom of what teaching entails; “nobody could

question that they're the things that make good teaching, not a good teacher, but good teaching" and that as the teacher "I really have to be accountable for what I do in this room." The Rabbit saw the Framework as setting expectations across faculty and year level boundaries and allowing professional conversations about teaching for all teachers. The White Rabbit noted, "when you really break it down to what quality teaching could be; it doesn't matter if you're teaching Pre-Kindy or Year 12, these factors actually all still fit."

Training in cognitive coaching influenced the White Rabbit's conversations in school and in wider arenas, while also inciting his own reflections about, and potential shifting of, his professional identity. The White Rabbit emphasised the coachee-focused aspect of cognitive coaching as key; it was all about the person being coached and what they need to get to where they want to go. Like Alice, cognitive coaching training and practice impacted the way he perceived his role, not only in the Teacher Growth Initiative team, but also in other arenas such as classrooms, teaching teams, and even personal relationships. Like Alice, the White Rabbit rethought what it was that was helpful to teachers in growing their practice, reflecting that mediating thinking seemed more effective than giving advice.

For the White Rabbit, experiences of and engagement in the Teacher Growth Initiative intervention were inextricably connected to his feelings about the Lutwidge School context, including feeling supported in his own learning by the school environment. He volunteered for the Teacher Growth Initiative because he felt alignment with the school and with the purpose of the Initiative; he felt that it was valuable work. As part of the team, the Rabbit felt engaged by what he saw as the value of the Initiative; the common purpose and non-hierarchical nature of the all-teacher team; his perception of its effective progress; his sense of having a voice in school change; and that the process was moving slowly and deliberately, "getting the kinks out of things before we actually put it into action." He remained enthusiastic despite interruption to his own classes at times and difficulties finding time and logistically making it work from a personal organisational perspective. He noted difficulties in juggling his teaching and coaching loads, including being able to make it to Teacher Growth Initiative training, meetings, other teachers' classes, and coaching conversations.

The Rabbit noted that as a small group of enthusiastic volunteers, the team was not representative of Lutwidge School teachers as a whole. He worried that other teachers in the school might be anxious about their lessons being observed by teachers and leaders, pointing to the vulnerability of teachers in change processes and the need for clarity around the purpose of practices such as classroom observations. Despite his own buy-in to the process, he was unsure about how the teaching staff as a whole might respond as the work of the Teacher Growth Initiative continued to roll out towards a mandated model; he guessed it would be with more scepticism and less enthusiasm.

7. Cheshire Cat: The leaders' story

“All right,” said the Cat; and this time it vanished quite slowly,
beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin,
which remained some time after the rest of it had gone.

“Well! I've often seen a cat without a grin,” thought Alice; “but a grin without a cat!
It's the most curious thing I ever saw in my life!”

(Carroll, 2014, p. 69)

Building on the Alice (researcher) story and the White Rabbit (teacher) story, this section adds another layer, another perspective. It uses the character of the Cheshire Cat to emblematically represent the collective story of the school leaders at Lutwidge School. The interview data upon which this story is based comes from 11 leaders who were each interviewed once during the second year of the Teacher Growth Initiative. Leaders shared their senses of professional self, their visions, strategies, and journeys to leadership. Their interviews revealed the considerations, tensions, and conflicts with which school leaders grapple in their roles.

While at first glance, the Queen of Hearts is perhaps the most obvious leader in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, she is not an appropriate persona for the leaders this story represents. She is autocratic, aggressive, and unlikable. The King of Hearts, meanwhile, is not a leader at all, despite his name, but rather a submissive and flaccid figure who cowers in the shadow of the Queen. The Cheshire Cat, on the other hand, is fluid, changeable, approachable, and mysterious. It appears and disappears to Alice, depending upon where she is in her journey and what it is that she needs. In some ways, it seems omniscient, appearing out of nowhere to answer Alice's questions or offer advice. Often it only reveals part of itself, and Alice rarely sees all of it for very long. In this way it appears enigmatic and all-knowing. The Cat is one of the only Wonderland characters who actually listens to what Alice says. Its responses to her questions often encourage her to find her own way, answer her own questions, or think more deeply. The Cheshire Cat is therefore an apt choice of character to symbolise the Lutwidge School leaders in this narrative. It has an insider perspective on Wonderland; it sees the bigger picture, but like its body, it is selective about which parts of itself and which information it reveals to Alice. It is deliberate about sharing insights as Alice needs them, to help her on her journey. At times it is all infamous Cheshire grin: nurturing, positive, and careful to uplift

those around it. Sometimes it is body, a strong resilient trunk. At times it is an outlier, a disappearing tail. Sometimes, the Cat is only voice: the incarnation of advice, words in an ear, helpful, consultative, or challenging.

In the novel, the Cat's gender is ambiguous. For much of the book it is only referred to as "it" or "the Cat," although the Queen of Hearts does say "off with his head ... without even looking round." Movie adaptations, such as the 1951 and 2010 Disney versions, have used male voices to present the character. In this story, however, the gender marker "she" is utilised in order to counterbalance the societal stereotype of the leader as male and offset the Cat's conventional male representation. As almost equal numbers of leader participants were male and female, I was keen to emphasise the nature of the leader as embodying both feminine and masculine characteristics. I chose not to use "s/he" and "him/her," which seemed cumbersome and had the potential to interfere with the fluid telling of the story. Using "it" seemed too impersonal and animal for the story. Rather, female pronouns were chosen to depict a character, traditionally thought of as male, with a degree of gender neutrality. The illustration of the Cheshire Cat (Figure 4), appearing at the beginning of the story, shows its disappearing-reappearing nature. It is a head with signature brilliant-white grin, an outlying tail, and a shadow of a body. The usual perception of the Cat as male in film and popular culture is subtly questioned in Figure 4 by the inclusion of pearls in his grin and noticeable eyelashes. The background could be sky or forest, but the Cat's ambiguity and mystery is reflected in the vorticity of its surroundings.

Making up this leader story were 11 participants. There were five executive leaders and six middle leaders; five women and six men. These individuals were from a variety of levels of schooling; a broad range of education specialties and learning areas; and different spheres, levels and stages of leadership. All school leaders, including those at executive levels, taught one or more classes in addition to their leadership role.

In order to tell a story as close to the collective truth as possible, I applied a systematic approach to interpretation of data. The conceptual framework was applied through the interview questions, protocols, and criteria for inclusion of aspects of leader experiences into the Cheshire Cat story. These were made explicit in Chapter Four. The story employs direct quotations and paraphrases from the interviews to both respect and give authentic voice to the leader participants. Most of the words in this story, whether in

quotation marks or not, are taken directly from the interview data and re-storied by the researcher. This preserved authenticity of the leaders' voices within the story construct. Sub-headings were used to clarify emergent themes for the reader. Each theme is introduced by a longer quotation, in order to give the reader an insight into the authentic leader voice and to strengthen the integrity of the story. These longer quotations are not explained at that point, but are woven in to the rest of the narrative, within the story-as-analysis. Footnotes provide clarification about method, observations of the differences between middle and executive leaders where relevant, and additional outlying data, which might not fit the larger story or may detract from the storying. Those experiences which emerged from four or more leaders are noted in the footnotes.

At times I worried that amalgamating many stories into one made the Cheshire Cat seem like some kind of superhuman or schizophrenic character; that is, one who either seemed to have experienced too much, perhaps all nine of its lives, or one who was too disjointed. I worked to both honour the voices of participants and protect their anonymity, while telling the essence of their collective story in a way which was readable and relevant to the research questions of this study. Telling a "true" group story, one which included, and where appropriate melded, participant experiences, was paramount.

Similarly to the previous two sections, Chapter Seven is structured around the key themes from the literature, research questions, and interview questions: professional self, professional learning, school change, and the Teacher Growth Initiative as one example of a school-based professional learning model. When discussing school change, the leaders were able to provide additional insights into how they lead the learning of others, and what challenges and tensions arise when overseeing professional learning within their specific school context.

~ down the rabbit hole and into the story ~

“Do you play croquet with the Queen to-day?”

“I should like it very much,” said Alice, “but I haven't been invited yet.”

“You'll see me there,” said the Cat, and vanished.

(Carroll, 2014, p. 68)



Figure 4: School leader as Cheshire Cat (mixed media, by the researcher)

7.1 Professional identity: Who is the Cheshire Cat as educator and leader?

Leader as made through life: The Cheshire Cat a jigsaw of all its nine lives

“My whole life has probably shaped who I’ve become; role models have certainly shaped who I’ve become. My grandmother was a really strong role model for me. I spent a lot of time with my grandmother growing up, and she was a very very strong woman and a very resilient woman. But always there, always on the periphery, always there if you needed her. But always a no excuses woman: if you are going to do it, then do it; if something has gone wrong, then acknowledge that something has gone wrong, come up with a solution and fix it, don’t dwell on it. She was a huge influence on my life.”

Rather than focusing only on moments in teaching and leadership, the Cheshire Cat explains that her professional self is the “lifelong” sum of her entire life’s experiences; “not just experience at work, but life experience” has shaped her. The Cat’s professional self is “evolving continually” as a result of these key experiences in her education, teaching, and life. Her “whole life” has shaped who she has become and continues to become, leading her to the way she now looks at things. The Cheshire Cat was not a “ready-made” leader who fits an ideal mould of “this is a leader.” Rather, she has developed as a leader over time and continues to develop.

In her school years the Cheshire Cat remembers family members such as her grandmother as being a major influence, as well as teachers who “nurtured and developed” and “allowed” unplanned creativity, learning, and leadership “to happen.” She has “vivid memories of teachers who knew their stuff” but, more importantly to her, who “went way above and beyond the call to find whatever avenue they could get to get their kids to get their stuff,” including one who held seminars at her home. The Cat’s “memorable teachers” were those who revealed themselves “as people;” that is, she had a sense of who they were within and beyond the classroom and they showed an interest in her within and beyond the classroom. As a teenager, she had leadership positions and roles in the community which laid a foundation for thinking of herself as a leader.

Later, “quality tertiary education,” which “immersed” her in the theory and practice of education provided a “solid foundation” for her teaching and leadership. It left what she calls a “pretty good scar” of experience, in a positive way; it was a heavily formative time

for her. She did not, however, plan to be a teacher.²⁸ Rather, she “fell into” it and then “just loved it” as it allowed her to “empower people, students, in where they’re going, in their lives.” Becoming a teacher imbued the Cheshire Cat with a deep sense of purpose, especially by realising the power of teaching to empower those “excluded” or “different” or whom the “education system had failed.”

Early “autonomy” in “dynamic” school environments, country teaching service, and early school leadership roles²⁹ gave the Cheshire Cat a foundation for her teacher and leader self. These environments allowed for risk taking, giving her “freedoms to try different things” and “to fail.” Responsibility early in her career meant she was “busy” and “doing a lot of hard yards” but it also “meant I got great experience.” It didn’t always go well. In one of those early leadership roles, the Cat “tried to be authoritarian” but “with no support” from the school. This experience is one on which she now draws. She says, “I use the experiences. We talk about what happened when it was really negative and cautioned ourselves never to be the same.” In this way, what was a “brutal” experience became “a good learning experience.”

The Cat’s teaching contexts and experiences also influenced the development of her core belief that “education is an individual journey” with an “individual story.” One school was “one of the strongest influences” on her “development as a teacher” because of its philosophy about students as “individuals” rather than “a mass.” A particular class of students early in her career helped to solidify this idea that “every child is unique” and “education is very individual.” In that one class, the Cheshire Cat had one “kid who went on to be a Rhodes Scholar” and one whose lone academic success was passing the final exam, after having failed every other assessment that year. The Cheshire Cat had tried to engage the academically struggling student by finding out about their interests and finding “little ways to tap into” them, like making learning cards based on the student’s favourite sporting team. That helped to develop her philosophy that the classroom teacher’s “nirvana” is making a “personal connection” with each student and finding ways of learning right for each individual.

²⁸ Six leaders did not plan to be teachers. Of these six, two of these said they or someone they knew had said there was “no way” they would become a teacher. Five of the six began careers in other sectors before changing to teaching. One of the six did intend to become a teacher, but after a negative experience on teaching practicum, chose not to go into teaching after completing the degree, returning years later to the profession.

²⁹ Five leaders discussed having leadership roles early in their teaching careers.

Forward momentum, fit, challenge, and purpose are essential to the Cheshire Cat. She searches for roles in which she be challenged, make a difference, and enact her beliefs. She has left professional roles because she no longer felt she had a purposeful job to do or was too constrained to fulfil her brief or vision. In these cases she thought, “I love it here but I have to go. There’s nothing else for me to do.” So she “went somewhere else and got another job.” She has felt a need to be in a school environment in which she can be herself and which is a “good match” between organisation and individual. Currently, Lutwidge School is a good fit because what she values in education is “right here.”

One career event which shaped the Cheshire Cat as an educator was the tragic death of a student at a school in which she was a leader. This death shook the school community but affirmed for the Cat the role of educator as a person who accepts each student as they are and believes in them, while recognising and nurturing their individual talents. This tragedy served to solidify for her the importance of a connected school community which sees students as individual people and supports them and their families as part of the collective whole.

Another experience which shaped her was one in which a student, after listening to a guest speaker, came to her and said, “When I woke up this morning I was going to write my suicide note” but “I just realised from talking to today’s guest speaker that I’m not going to do it.” This showed the Cheshire Cat that “we don’t know at any moment what difference we’re making” and the value of being available for students amid the busyness of school leadership.

Non-educational life experiences have also influenced the way the Cheshire Cat sees herself as an educator. Working in other sectors gave her a sense of bigger picture and of the world for which she is preparing her students.³⁰ In these other sectors there was “always something missing” and she was drawn to education because it “makes a difference to kids’ lives.”

The Cat sees herself as an “explorer” of intellectual and physical worlds. Sometimes she feels that she spends her life “wandering the world, going to places” to “expand” herself, her experiences and her ideas.³¹ Travel and working in overseas environments have

³⁰ Five leaders had worked in sectors other than education.

³¹ Five leaders discussed travel or overseas experiences in different cultures and contexts as key experiences which shaped their identities.

shaped the Cat. For instance, working with teachers in a third world orphanage continues to impact her as a person. “Every time” she goes there it “changes my perspective” and helps her to realise the privileged position of those in her own country and school. Over time the Cheshire Cat has made friends with those she works with in the third world, people who have “no options” in their lives, compared to her own. Her closest friends in the third world “work for six days a week for 20 dollars a month, and have no say in that; there’s no option in their lives.” “We take for granted what we see as hardships, which are actually to them privileges.” She knows that “those kids and those teachers would give anything for the difficulties we face in life.” So when school leadership becomes stressful, the Cheshire Cat takes herself back there: “I put myself back on the balcony in 45 degrees, no running water, no power, cold potato curry for dinner. It’s actually alright.” This has amplified the Cheshire Cat’s feeling that she is “lucky” and “fortunate.”³² She sees that she has the power and luxury of choice. “If I work for 14 or 16 hours a day,” she says, “that’s my choice. ... I think I am really lucky to have that choice.” In some roles she has worked “24 hours a day” and “it was wonderful” as “I really love working.” The Cheshire Cat sees herself as having choices, and the independence and influence to be in control of her own work and learning paths.

Another life event which had an impact on the Cheshire Cat was being in Thailand when the 2004 tsunami hit. She was “very, very lucky to walk away from that.” What felt like a close call helped her reflect on what she wanted to get out of life, “because you only get one, so make the most of it, and give something back.”

Multiple selves encircle core beliefs: The Cheshire Cat wraps herself around her central trunk

“I think of my sense of myself as a leader in terms of like having a core. ... So there's core elements of my skills, abilities, characteristics as a person and that is central to how I connect with other people. So I think leadership is all about relationships, how you develop, initiate and nurture relationships with other people. To me that's the key thing about a leader and so for me to be effective I always am very aware and cognisant about what's happening in this internal core structure. ... like the iceberg model. So you've got all of this unconscious stuff, a lot of values and beliefs sit below the water, and the key is being aware of what's lying under there.”

³² Five leaders described themselves as “lucky” or “fortunate” in terms of their professional lives, career opportunities, and learning. One leader explained, however, that their religious background had prevented them from pursuing certain leadership opportunities at particular schools.

The Cheshire Cat sees herself in terms of the interlocking selves of learner, teacher and leader, within the “complex business” of school. She also sees herself as relationship manager, school marketer, organiser, difference-maker, and sometimes CEO, with a “well developed sense of justice.” It is imperative to her to be true to herself and to also be perceived as authentically herself. She would “hate to think” that she thought of herself one way and was perceived another way.

The Cheshire Cat sees herself as a “forever kind of learner.” She is someone who “must learn, even if it’s in my own time,” who “enjoys finding out things” and wants “to learn because I’m interested.” Her personal learning is ongoing and continuous. “The more I learn, the more I realise more stuff I don’t know.” “Even if things are working really well,” she says, “we can do it better; we can always improve.” In her view not only do “we all need to get better” but “we all need to want to keep getting better.” She believes in “that cliché about learning being a lifelong journey,” that “we’re all learners, not just students but also adults.” At the same time she acknowledges that “not everybody feels the same way” and that “even if it is something you want to get better at, I don’t think anyone finds it easy to admit the things that they don’t do so well.”

In order to work with and lead others, the Cheshire Cat is aware of the need for deep self-awareness, combined with an openness to the perspectives of others. She feels that she needs to be aware of her own “core” of “strong beliefs,” her “way of thinking about the world,” of “those things that pull you.” She uses her work with others to “uncover their thinking” and below-the-surface beliefs. She is “open, but not yielding” to the perspectives, ideas, and opinions of others. She believes that her role is to bring consciousness to deeply held beliefs and values for herself and others.

The Cheshire Cat applies the idea of a changeable, continuously evolving “core” or central self to herself and to all in her school community. The Cheshire Cat sees “any organisation” as “like a spider’s web” with intersecting relationships and interweaving threads. She imagines a web of connected cores. She sees her self as connected and networked with students, teachers, leaders and parents, who all bring their own beliefs, “past experiences, skills, abilities, knowledge and characteristics as a person,” which are central to them and how they interact, learn, teach, collaborate, and lead.

The Cat's core beliefs about learning, standing up for what's right, making a difference, and the importance of "self-directedness and supporting people's growth whether that be students or teachers," provide a "strong foundation" for her professional self. A central belief which "defines" the Cheshire Cat is that she is "making a difference" in the lives of students and adults and "empowering" them to be more successful in their lives. She believes that "what we [educators] do is important and therefore you can't just keep quiet, you have to stand up and you have to work for improvement and change." She strongly believes in the need to fight for what she believes is right and in the best interests of students and teachers.

As a student, she saw herself as being "a bit different" as a learner,³³ which impacted her ideas about how to think about learning and consider students as individuals. Later in her teaching career she also felt a little different; she had a "different philosophy" and her teaching was "in contrast" to what was seen as "traditional." She may have "shocked" her first students due to her non-traditional approach, by focusing on social implications and student exploration, in contrast to more traditional, linear, teacher-focused approaches.

Completing learning profiles as an educator helped the Cat to better understand her own learning and developed her realisation that her "brain was quite different to others but that in certain situations you need that kind of thinking." This empowered her to understand her own way of thinking, and accept that it "was ok" and that it was even needed in certain situations. She was "differently smart." This realisation, that not everyone thinks in the same way and that each individual has their strengths and areas for development, was a "turning point" that "blew" her "out of the water."

The Cheshire Cat has ingrained experience and deeply held beliefs as a teacher, and these impact her identity as school leader. She was surprised one day when a student asked her, "So you used to be a teacher once?" It appeared that in that student's eyes she was no longer a teacher. Yet, "I see myself very much as a teacher, who has just a slightly different role." She says, "My class is the teachers. ... You want them to be the best they can be." She has "entirely the same thinking" with her staff as she does in the classroom; it's about "working with an individual and how I can support them." As she moves from the classroom to more strategic roles, she sees herself more as leader-who-teaches than

³³ Five leaders saw themselves as "different" to the norm as learners and this clearly influenced their senses of self as educators attempting to help all students see that their way of learning is "ok" and even important.

teacher-who-leads.³⁴ Still, she tries never to “take off the shoes of a teacher,” but to rather remember “what it’s actually like at the front, right in the classroom” facing students, parents, and “trying to keep up with all the demands.” Identifying herself as a teacher-who-leads and a leader-who-teaches means the Cheshire Cat acknowledges and empathises with the demanding busy-ness of teachers’ daily lives.

Leader as sharer and collaborator: The Cheshire Cat co-learns and co-leads with Wonderland characters

“My philosophy of leadership is shared leadership and building capacity in others around you because my philosophy on education is: every student can learn, every student can reach success and it’s up to us as educators to find what inspires and how to actually build improvement in each student’s achievement. So through that I try and build leadership in every single teacher so every teacher is a leader, every student is a leader. We’re all leaders and can lead others and ourselves to get better at what we do. So I don’t like to think of myself as the top of the pyramid. I like to think about myself as part of a team. I try and engender and inspire those about me to actually think of themselves as leaders and gain the skills to improve not only the team, the organisation. The organisational goal is improvement in students so the more I inspire and empower those around me the more they’ll be able to empower the students to lead their own education.”

Learning and leading are seen by the Cheshire Cat as applicable to everyone; students, teachers, and school leaders; children and adults. While the Cat sees herself personally as “seizing every day and making every day better than the day before,” and as someone who “just keeps going,” she also sees herself as a collaborator and an “all-inclusive” leader. She is co-learner, co-teacher, and co-leader. As described by her spider web metaphor, she sees her self as part of a larger system. She believes that “it’s not about ‘me’; it’s about ‘we.’”

In this web of co-learning, students are seen as co-learners; “I learn from them as much as they learn from me.” She is a “passionate,”³⁵ “constructivist teacher” of “just-in-time teaching,” rather than “just-in-case teaching,” who provides students with problems, encourages them to think, work things out for themselves and “then we explore that

³⁴ This point is drawn from the trend that middle leaders tended to focus more on their teacher identities, while executive leaders were more focused on their leader identities.

³⁵ Middle leaders tended to talk about their subject area of specialty area as a passion, whereas executive leaders talked more broadly in terms of learning and pastoral experiences for students.

together” in order to “discover something.” In her classroom she is a co-creator, co-explorer, co-learner, and co-sense-maker who helps students to see that they can construct their own knowledge.

“We”—students, teachers and leaders—“are all leaders.” Being part of grass roots school experiences is important, “really rolling the sleeves up and getting in and being part of strategy, being part of learning, being part of crucial conversations with people.” She sees a reciprocity between herself and her team, where she tries to balance being a “giver” or a “taker.” The notion of collaborative learning and growth is evidenced by one of her mantras: “Everything is workable. We just have to work together to achieve it.” While “there are always constraints,” “there will always be crises” and “there will always be things that are really difficult to solve,” leadership is “all about relationships, how you develop, initiate, and nurture relationships.”

Although she is a collaborator with others, she finds that her leader role allows her the “power” to “instigate change” on a “bigger scale,” a “chance to be a part of the thinking ... rather than just sitting there like a pleb and waiting for it to be dumped” on her. It gives her “ownership” over what is happening in the school. Leading has allowed the Cat to make “a more significant contribution” to students because “it’s broader than my classroom.” The “capacity to influence teachers” and “the kinds of experiences students have in the classroom ... potentially has a greater impact on students” despite having a “diluted” direct classroom impact.³⁶ Not only that, but the Cat is “actually doing” what she “really wants to do;” there is enjoyment in the work of school leadership.

Believing in and building up teachers: The Cheshire Cat empowers others

“If I’m doing my job properly, this team that I’ve got at the moment won’t stay my team in five years because I should empower them to take the next step. I should build leadership within them so that they go. It’s like birds in a nest. Sooner or later they’re going to grow their wings strong enough so that they’ll want to fly further than what the little area around our tree is. So if I’m doing my job properly, three or four of my staff here within the next five years should be Deputies or Heads. And if they’re not, it’s not because I haven’t provided them the opportunity to gain experience, expertise, and skills.”

³⁶ At Lutwidge School, middle leaders teach less than teachers, while executive leaders teach less than middle leaders. This means that middle leaders have more classroom time in their role, while executive leaders are in the classroom less and are more focused on strategic and leadership work.

A major element of the Cheshire Cat's leader self is about belief and empowerment. That is, she sees her role as to believe in her staff and to empower them to grow and find success. There were times in her early career when she thought leadership meant being "the one with the answer," where people would come to a leader with problems and she would "solve them." Now "those days are gone" and "leadership is about sharing," which means "stopping, taking a breath, consulting widely and then having really good, rich conversations before decisions are made." She sees herself as "part of a team," not "the top of the pyramid," with a "philosophy of shared leadership and building capacity in others. ... Share the role, share the responsibility and empower." Rather than telling people what to do, "you need to eek it out of them ... draw it out of them" so that change is "coming from the teachers themselves." Collaboration is vital because "there's very rarely a time when I think I am the most intelligent person in the room and therefore I don't want to be telling people what to do when they are perfectly capable of working it out themselves." The Cat is not an autocratic leader who "rushes out and goes, 'This is the way we are doing it.'" Rather, she consults and collaborates to "move a group of people forward."

This approach of distributed leadership and empowering others relies upon earning trust and trusting others, including trusting the capacity of those with whom he works. Part of this involves a systematic and rigorous recruiting process to make sure she gets the right people, and the "right blend" of people for her teams. For her, the right people are those who are "open to new learning." The Cheshire Cat draws on the "breadth of knowledge" of her teams.³⁷ She deliberately surrounds herself with people that have different strengths to herself.³⁸ An awareness of the skills she doesn't have, and a willingness to utilise the expertise of others within and outside of the school, mean that she trusts others and delegates work, with the mantra: "Focus on your strengths and outsource your weaknesses." She acknowledges the need to "rely on the professionalism and the wonderful uniqueness of people." She says, "I believe in my staff. I believe that they are all excellent professionals."

³⁷ Six leaders talked about harnessing the expertise of the individuals in their teams in order to develop team and organisation.

³⁸ Four leaders talked about their understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses, and their deliberateness in selecting and utilising the expertise of others.

The Cat attempts to empower and build the capacity of her staff to succeed in their roles and grow professionally.³⁹ She never assumes that her staff are going to stay where they are permanently. “If I’m doing my job properly,” the Cheshire Cat explains, then her current team won’t be there in five years “because I should empower them to take the next step.” Her job is to give them the opportunities to “gain experience, expertise, and skills” which empower them to grow and to move to other positions and contexts. “We’ve got to skill you up for the organisation and skill you up if you want to leave as well.” Providing teachers with opportunities to be creative in their work and their learning can also be empowering. The Cat sees herself as someone who “mentors people through that process” of reflection, helping them to think about what they have done and ask, “How could you have done it better? How can we improve on that so that the outcomes are even better?” One measure of the success of developing capacity and leadership in others is outsiders not being able to tell who the leader is. “I want someone to walk into a meeting,” experience a collaborative conversation in which people are taking risks and giving valued opinions, “and think, ‘Who’s in charge here?’”

A “big turning point” for the Cheshire Cat was “realising that I didn’t have to fix people’s problems” and then developing “the skills to coach others to be self-directed.” This realisation—that the role of leader is about empowerment and facilitating the development of self-directed individuals—has “driven me ever since in terms of how I see leadership and all of the processes I put in place.” So, although sometimes it is “easier” and “faster” to do it herself, taking that approach “comes at a cost” to individuals and to the organisation, “because it enables people to not have to take full ownership, to just take ownership of the bits that they’re really comfortable in.”

The challenges of school leadership: How the Cheshire Cat approaches dissent and underperformance

“I do think that schools tend to be more supportive than a lot other business environments. If someone is under performing in a school, we are a lot more about trying to teach them and to support them in improving, as opposed to directing them out. So it’s about providing all of those opportunities to develop the skills and address the area, as opposed to being that strict, down the line, moving people out. It’s about developing accountability, but I think before you do the accountability you have to have done the other bit—shared vision—and giving people that opportunity to get on board and be given support to get

³⁹ Eight leaders saw their leadership role as one of building capacity and empowering their staff.

on board and all of the rest of it. But then yes, ultimately there does have to be accountability and a more directive element.”

One challenge for the Cheshire Cat is time; time to manage all the elements of her role and to keep abreast of all of the elements over which she presides. The Cat makes leadership decisions deliberately; “some things I’ll do explicitly; other things I’ll do quietly or by stealth.” She doesn’t “want to miss out” and “wants to be involved in everything,” but feels that she almost has to “want to really stick your nose in everywhere,” but is “running behind the cart” and constantly “catching up” with herself. “There’s so much to do and you’re not doing it all.” She attempts to balance “collaboration” and “agency,” distributed leadership and directiveness, especially in the situation of underperformance of individuals or teams. While she feels that her staff are most often “doing their absolute best” she is also aware of the “frustration” as a leader that “you can’t know everything,” you can’t be across everything. She realises that she “can’t do it all” and often asks herself, “How do I find the time to fit it all in?”

The Cheshire Cat values respectful disagreement and open communications as channels to successful collaboration and change.⁴⁰ While those staff who question and challenge change “used to really frustrate” her, the Cat now sees these people as keys to “recognising the obstacles” and working through school change processes. “If people are questioning and challenging, that’s great” because it means members trust each other enough to be honest, open, and find solutions together. “A little bit of conflict and challenge ... shows me that they professionally trust each other.” Educators who feel “free to challenge each other” can use dissent, challenge, and constructive disagreement as an “important part of growth.” Conversely, when people don’t feel free to disagree, the culture can become stagnant or toxic. In one instance, the Cheshire Cat deliberately encouraged dissent in her team when she saw that staff were particularly reluctant to share their concerns; she ensured that graceful disagreement was modelled for the group by “priming” one staff member to disagree with her at meetings “because I actually needed to start role modelling that it was ok to disagree and that we can have those conversations.” It was later written into the staff agreement that “everyone has the right to respectfully disagree in staff meetings.” Leaders, too, need to disagree. “Any idiot can say yes ... but sometimes as a leader, you need to be able to say no.”

⁴⁰ Four leaders discussed open challenge as a healthy part of organisational growth and change.

There is a tension between the expectations of the role as leader of people, and nurturing the relationships with each individual.⁴¹ When is it appropriate to use the encouraging Cheshire grin and when is it appropriate to apply the advisory voice? While she has conversations with individuals to check in, provide support, and mediate thinking, the “hard part is when they don’t think they need something but they really do.” She sees a “gap” between “fostering what people want to do” and managing performance. Sometimes there is a tension between the Cheshire Cat’s leadership desire to develop a person in ways she has identified as leader, and the desire to support that person in developing their self-identified needs. In each case, she takes individual and intuitive approaches, depending on the person, to try and “manoeuvre carefully” towards getting that person to think about their growth or areas for development. There is a deliberateness about approach and pace. In some instances the Cheshire Cat takes a “snail’s pace” while in some she moves with more enthusiasm and momentum. Below she explains an example of a “wonderful” moment of incremental development of one of her team.

“Someone I have been working with has had an a-ha moment, and has seen something, not from me, but has seen something that I have been trying to encourage for a few years, and suddenly they’re excited about it and they’re on board with it, and they’re directing it. That is an amazing thing, where you get to that point, and it’s as exciting as when a child in the class has the a-ha moment and gets something, when you know adults are getting excited and passionate about learning again.”

The Cheshire Cat questions whether sharing negative feedback with a team member would be “constructive” for their development, or if “it might not help” them in their learning and development. She asks herself, “Is it that person’s right to know and decide on what to do with the information? What is the “right thing” to do? Do I have the responsibility to tell that person?” Is it more helpful to have the “confronting conversation” or to avoid it? She also sometimes wonders if “we should be doing more to support” those struggling with difficult or new roles. “What are we doing to help?”

⁴¹ Four leaders discussed the challenges of balancing an approach of belief, empowerment, and self-directed teacher growth, with one of sometimes-necessary performance management.

7.2 Professional learning: When and how does the Cheshire Cat learn?

Courses, study and experts: The Cheshire Cat leaves its tree to learn from others

“With one [person] in particular that I was having difficulty with—and there was much tears and gnashing of teeth—I’d tried numerous ways to get alongside this particular person. I can still remember after my first couple of days of cognitive coaching, I changed where I actually spoke to him. So I spoke to him at a round table and had a document that we were working on there so that became the third party. And just setting up side by side just blew me out of the water. It just completely changed the dynamic and then having the third party thing there to refer to took all of the emotion out of it. So those sorts of things, realising that I didn’t have to fix people’s problems, that was a big turning point and then having the skills to coach others to be self-directed was the next sort of big turning point professionally in terms of how I operated as a leader. And really that’s driven me ever since in terms of how I see leadership and all of the processes that I put in place.”

The Cheshire Cate acknowledges that when it comes to professional learning “you’re never really done;” “you never reach the end.” She is “always on the lookout” for learning opportunities, believing that “the more you’re into things, the more you get out of them and the more you can make a difference.” When looking at a learning opportunity, the Cheshire Cat asks: “Is this going to benefit me professionally? Is this going to benefit the school? How does it impact on the bigger picture and on everything that I do?” She feels that she has “a responsibility to keep sharpening” skills and maintaining her “toolbox.”

While she has mostly been able to choose her own learning, the Cheshire Cat does some learning for herself and “a lot of things for compliance.”⁴² Those things for compliance include professional memberships and associations which help the Cheshire Cat to stay up-to-date with trends and connections. While she needs to “constantly update” because “new research changes things dramatically and that impacts on what we do in practice,” much of the time “going externally or having external people come in to tell me things” is “just interesting. ... eight times out of 10 it won’t change my practice.”

⁴² Whether or not courses were effective professional learning was a point of divergence of participants. Three middle leaders said that they could always get something out of a course, while two executive leaders and one middle leader explained that for them courses were mostly not worth their time. For executive leaders this was partly due to the impacts of being taken out of the school environment and role, and partly because their experiences of courses were that they do not change practice or transform thought.

For the Cheshire Cat, “learning is rarely the outcome of things that are told.” Rather, she learns from immersion in rich learning environments which allow her to “extract things” on a needs and interests basis. She likes being a learner in situations where she is “actually doing stuff,” not only thinking and being informed but also “actually doing the skills.” Active, collaborative learning such as workshops or action research are experiences which she reflects have shaped her practice as a teacher and a leader. One long-term action learning project at a school level involved the combination of working on her own self-directed personal learning, within a collegial group that met to learn together, share and hold each other accountable. It also included writing in an electronic journal. In a process of online collaboration and “mutual learning” she participated in a back-and-forth-of-ideas in an online journal. She and the action learning facilitator responded to each other’s musings in the online journal in “a professional interaction about exploring ideas.” For her, this collaboration was “extraordinary,” providing a “high level of intellectual engagement.” In examples like this, working together allowed groups to “live things, or talk about them together” and to develop “a shared sense of: what does it mean to us?” The Cat often chooses to learn alongside her teachers in order to build trust and “help them see me as a teacher.”

The Cheshire Cat seeks learning experiences which challenge or change her thinking and make her reflect on how she does things. This includes following educational thinkers, writers, researchers, practitioners, and experts. Technology such as Skype has changed the way the Cat can connect with global experts as there is “greater accessibility on a needs basis.” The “availability of information through the internet” also opens up a world of “instantaneous information. ... Now the availability of information is so huge there’s no excuses for us.” Sometimes following current trends and thinkers means that the Cheshire Cat goes to conferences or reads their texts. One national conference had her seeing and hearing “amazing ... passionate people talking about things that they are passionate about.” She found invigorating these experts’ sharing of their own “real life stories” of growth and adversity in education. It was the combination of personal story with data and theory that was inspiring to her. More than that, it was being “surrounded by intelligent passionate people, listening ... wanting to talk about those things.” The conference brought together a “community of learners in one place at one time,” working together to think, understand, grow, and incite change. The Cheshire Cat does wonder, however, if the learnings and experts she takes on board are those which are most like

her, and the ones she chooses to disregard are the ones which either don't fit her or with which she philosophically disagrees.

The Cheshire Cat has completed his Masters study,⁴³ for both “self-interest” and “career ambition.” While at times her Masters was a “chore” which she found herself “ploughing through” knowledge, it was also “powerful” in consolidating theory and practice, weaving them together “like a DNA strand.” It was also an opportunity for collaboration, connection and “bouncing off people” with a variety of perspectives, roles and contexts. “Everybody brings something that’s really rich.” While taking on a Masters researcher role “didn’t make me a better leader, it was about an intellectual discipline and a richness and a desire to do something that was personally rewarding rather than just reading other people’s stuff.” The Cheshire Cat uses professional reading as a natural extension of study, a “bucket of knowledge” which “keeps the tap dripping.” She wishes to keep abreast of current educational theory and practice, but often the desire to do professional reading is overrun by the busy reality of being a school leader.

Further study, or being in a classroom or course, was also a reminder of what it is like to be a student and that “one size does not fit all” in terms of professional learning. One example was a challenging course in which the Cat found the content “impenetrable.” Her struggle to master that course material allowed her to “understand how some students feel” when they struggle with content or skills and also the “incredible experience” of the mind “opening out and actually accessing what you’re supposed to be accessing.” This epiphanic experience is one that the Cheshire Cat always keeps in her mind because “that’s how some kids feel with learning.”

Role models, anti-models, mentors, coaches, professional friends: The Cheshire Cat learns from other Wonderland characters; the Caterpillar, the Mad Hatter, the March Hare

“I’ve worked under and with some really good leaders in my time ... and ... of all the leaders that I’ve probably admired, none of them were like me. I suppose the one thing they’ve got in common is they’re all true to themselves. ... So I’d like to think that at least I can be true to myself and stand on my own two feet with what I am.”

⁴³ Six leaders had completed their Masters study and all considered it a significant professional learning experience. For one leader, whose Masters was in Buddhist Studies, it was “the most significant piece of learning” they had done and also a part of who they now are.

The Cheshire Cat muses that “it’s funny in education” because good teachers aim for leadership roles and responsibilities, “but along the way you don’t necessarily get taught how to be a good leader or what makes a good leader.” Can good leadership be learned? It is “personality driven and contextual.” “It’s about being a good person, and being empathetic, having the courage to stand up ... having strong moral values And I don’t know that professional development gives you that.” She doesn’t “subscribe to a right way or a wrong way,” saying, “I don’t think there’s one right style. It’s really about the time and place and who you’re working with.”

Strong role models of leadership put their trust into the Cheshire Cat early in her career. A “remarkable” principal gave her “incredible” early-on leadership opportunities. Another principal who “quietly knew how to get the most out of different people” “prodded and poked me enough to light a fire underneath me quietly, to think, ‘I could be better than this.’” These leaders allowed the Cheshire Cat to see herself through their eyes, thereby opening up career possibilities she had not foreseen. These figures were “a person to believe in” her, who gave her “the confidence to take a next step” through saying “you’re good enough to do this.” Being “believed in” empowered and buoyed her. These leaders had in common that they were “all true to themselves,” so even though some of her role model leaders were nothing like the Cheshire Cat, what they modelled was an ability to lead impressively by drawing on their own strengths and remaining authentically themselves.

The Cheshire Cat sees herself as leader through the metaphor of the bower bird. She has picked and chosen aspects from her perception of other leaders with whom she worked, in order to build her own “nest” of leadership, her own patchwork (or bricolage) of leadership attributes, strategies and vision. “We watch,” she said, “and we take from each other. ... we collect the skills that we see.” She has seen “the strength of their strategic implementation,” “their ability to handle crises,” “what’s been really effective” and “what hasn’t worked.” Although the way another leader operates isn’t necessarily the way the Cheshire Cat can operate as a leader, she does “learn from dialogue with other leaders,” from “conversation.” Much of her leadership expertise and approach was learned “on my feet” and by making mistakes and being reflective, and especially through observing or experiencing very effective or ineffective leaders.⁴⁴ The Cat has “been able to take bits

⁴⁴ Six leaders discussed other leaders as a major part of their professional learning as leaders.

and pieces off that have either suited my personality, suited my style, or I've seen to have worked really well." Like a "magnet" she picked up things from other leaders.

The Cheshire Cat has come across leaders who she doesn't see as effective, but "it's not knowledge they need to learn; it's people skills and relationships." One leader with which the Cheshire Cat had a negative experience "used to write down all the things I wasn't doing right and then hand them to me on a Friday ... she never gave me any positives, and I need praise as a person." As a result of this continuous "overwhelming" and "basically negative" feedback, which was given without discussion, the Cheshire Cat "almost stopped" teaching. She sees "a direct correlation between that [experience] and the fact that I prefer collaboration rather than directive leadership." It has "definitely put me off" that style of leadership and feedback "forever" and made her consider how she wants her staff to feel. "It is far too easy to get fixated on the things that need improving rather than the things that need celebrating ... telling people what they're doing well is important."

External professional friends, mentors, and coaches have punctuated and shaped the Cheshire Cat's leadership journey.⁴⁵ These professional friends, coaches and mentors have included people from outside educational contexts who have broadened the Cat's perspective, allowing her to explore aspects of leadership such as organisational culture and dealing with people. While the external person may be "nothing like" her, it is their difference in both self and context which she finds "intellectually stimulating" and which helps her to grow. These relationships have also allowed collegial and open discussion in what can be a quite isolated professional place; "it's really lonely in the office sometimes." The role of the professional mentor or coach is one of "prodding and poking," of providing opportunities for the Cat to "open up," "be reflective," come up with her own solutions and develop as a leader. Having a coach has developed her "own self" and "conscious awareness" of "what I am good at" as well as "where I should look at spending more chunks of my time." Conversations with a professional mentor or coach have helped to develop her "openness," "consciousness," and self-awareness, while giving her the space to explore and work through school leadership problems.

⁴⁵ Five leaders discussed formal and informal coaching or mentoring relationships as important learning for them. Four executive leaders talked about formal coaching relationships, organised by themselves or by the school, as spaces in which they could explore their leadership in a safe and challenging environment. One middle leader talked about how their informal professional friends in non-school contexts help them to develop their teaching and leading.

Learning in unexpected and non-traditional places and spaces: The Cheshire Cat learns through work, conversation, and solitude

“I went over [to New York as an education consultant] with this sense of, I don’t know, maybe a slight sense of superiority that Australians were pretty good, or something. I mean after all I was being invited over there to do stuff. . . . and there are some cases you look at and you think, ‘Oh, this is a disaster.’ So I had gone with the sense of, it’s almost superiority, looking back at it now, and then developing what I could do and support, based on the notion I was working with people, and how can I support them? And doing quite well in some cases and in other cases not, and then coming back to Australia . . . and seeing the schools and thinking, ‘Nothing can change here, it is so stuck.’ In New York there were terrible things; there were good things. But it was dynamic, and so one of the things I came back with was that sense of, far from superiority, I saw [back in Australia] inability to change. . . . [In New York] change was possible and happening, and people were involved with it.”

Learning, for the Cheshire Cat, is not “sending someone on a thing” which can mean “next to nothing.” Rather, learning happens in places and contexts not normally associated with professional development, such as work environments, conversations, and solitude.

Some of “the best PD” is working in environments outside of schools, either at a district level in the education sector, or in non-education sectors.⁴⁶ On the one hand, these experiences can be seen as jobs, but on the other they are seen by the Cheshire Cat as professional learning experiences. Working at district level allowed the Cat to develop a sense of the bigger picture, the challenges of working at an overarching strategic level with a number of stakeholders, dealing with criticism, and understanding the machinations of external influences operating on schools. Other experiences in the non-education workplace amplified her understanding that in the “real world” people need to be self-directed, learn for themselves, and solve problems. This encouraged her to question whether her students’ education was preparing them for a life of work, problem solving, and creativity. It encouraged her to work to empower students to be self-directed, intrinsically motivated learners, rather than focusing on decontextualised skills or knowledge.

⁴⁶ Seven leaders discussed their out-of-schools professional experience as important learning. Of these seven, three leaders had worked at policy or district levels in education. Five had worked in other sectors. Four had worked in countries other than Australia, including in Asia, Europe, and the United States.

Conversation has also been a powerful learning space for the Cheshire Cat. This includes working with leaders, mentors, and coaches, as previously discussed, but also includes being interviewed for this study, which was “a pleasure,” a “privilege,” and an “indulgence” for the Cat. It gave her “valuable” time and space to reflect upon her own educator self and leadership, thereby allowing her to think differently.⁴⁷ Being allowed the luxury of talking extensively about her own professional journey and beliefs led to thinking of things in new ways; it was “the first time I thought of it like that.” She found it “very useful” as “there is so little time to reflect on what we do that I welcomed the opportunity in the form of the interview.” During the research interview the Cheshire Cat said, “You don’t know the difference even doing this for me has made. It’s an impact. I mean I’ve actually managed to think about my leadership style, that’s wonderful. It’s absolutely marvellous.” The research interview became a moment of learning for the Cheshire Cat.

The Cat wants “less stuff” and “more time” for her own growth and development. She feels “very strongly about maintaining my mental health and sense of self and wellbeing” through “health and exercise.” As part of aspiring to “a balanced life” for herself and her staff, the Cheshire Cat also works hard to find “good thinking space”⁴⁸ which gives her “time to think without getting distracted by meetings, emails and people. Protecting and carving out quiet time and mental space for her own processing and reflection has been powerful in terms of her own growth. This takes the form of physical or outdoor activity, meditation, travel, or quiet alone time. It does, however, come with challenges of a very busy and demanding schedule. She tries to strike a balance between “open door and being approachable” and being so available to others that she never gets anything done.

⁴⁷ Five leaders provided voluntary verbal or written feedback to explain that the research interview was a learning experience for them. In addition, one leader shared the interview data with their staff as a basis for discussion and reflection.

⁴⁸ Four leaders talked about their need for space in order to learn, grow and care for themselves.

7.3 School change: How does the Cheshire Cat enact and participate in school change?

Considering context while propelling forward motion: The Cheshire Cat balances empathy with momentum

“It’s understanding where your staff are now, what other pressures are on them, balanced with the fact that this is an organisation that moves really quickly and staff are aware of that. And finding that right speed at which to push them has been really critical because they’re open to moving forward especially when you justify why, but it’s also coupled with the busyness and also the complexity of so many different things that are on the go at one time. . . . And not wanting to make that an excuse either by saying, ‘Oh, look we are busy.’ We are busy, so let’s just stop, let’s just not do this. Because once you do that it becomes the easiest thing to say and then you’re in a period of consolidation—which I think is needed at the moment with this school—but then consolidation becomes static because you’ll always be busy. . . . It’s how much of that tap to turn on so that the engine is running and you’re going forward. And that’s a fine balance.”

When considering learning and change there needs to be a sensitivity to context as “no two places are the same.” That is, any school decision or initiative “depends on the people that you’re working with. It depends on the situation. It depends on where a school is at.”

The Cheshire Cat sees Lutwidge School in particular as “an organisation that moves really quickly,” full of “busyness,” “complexity” and “so many things on the go at once.” Lutwidge School has more “balls in the air in terms of strategies and structures” than any other school in her experience. She sees the school as “incredible for creating and insisting on wonderful educators . . . but it certainly pushes a lot of people out of their real area of comfort.” It is a place which “allows you to identify where you want to go with your career and then tries to support, encourage, and give you opportunities for growth.” Professional learning at Lutwidge School is “seen, it’s spoken about, and it’s resourced.” The school has “a strong culture of staff identifying what they’re interested in and the school supporting and facilitating that.” While the budget and resourcing of professional learning is not “an endless bucket” it is “much better” than that of many other schools in which the Cheshire Cat has worked.

Yet despite the pressure and busyness, the Cheshire Cat is focused on continuous improvement and forward momentum.⁴⁹ While real transformational school change “takes a lot of time,” can “be a slow journey,” and is “an evolution not a revolution,” being static or stagnant is not an option for the Cheshire Cat. She does not want to “make that an excuse by saying, ‘Oh, look we are too busy. . . . so let’s just stop, let’s just not do this’”; because “you’ll always be busy.” She wants to avoid inertia and keep individuals, teams and the organisation “moving forward” positively and dynamically.

A tension for the Cheshire Cat is one of “finding the right speed at which to push” teachers because “while you want to create a culture of really solid learning that creates change for the better,” this aim is not always compatible with the reality of teachers’ professional lives. There is a constant need to find the “fine balance” between “going forward” and “creating a strong culture for the better, of greater student learning, of greater professional satisfaction,” with slowing down enough to “bring people along.” She asks herself, “How do you get a school to where you want it without burning out your teachers, without asking too much, accepting they’ve got a life outside of school and a family and that to do the best job they can they actually have to have that life balance satisfaction in place?” In an attempt to address this he tries to make sure that she and her staff are “doing the right work and not doing extra work.”

Student at the centre: The Cheshire Cat focused on student learning and achievement

“Students feed a lot of my beliefs, that is, the benefit to students. So I don’t sit back and think about what’s going to benefit me. If it’s good for the student, then absolutely that’s what we go with. Myself, I’m second grid to that, so that’s where my belief comes from, and I think generally most teachers are like that. I really do have a strong belief that they are very much here for the student, not for their own self-indulgence.”

One of the things the Cheshire Cat remembers her first principal saying was, “schools are . . . about the students, and if you’re not putting the students first . . . then you need to find somewhere else to be.” For the Cheshire Cat the “students are the most important”

⁴⁹ Five leaders talked explicitly about forward momentum and “moving [people, groups, change] forward.” All 11 leaders were focused on the notion of continuous improvement for themselves, their teams, their staff, and their students.

driving factor in schools; the student is always “at the centre” in education.⁵⁰ Educators and schools “should imagine a kid sitting in the corner of the room, and that’s your child at school” and every decision “has to come back to them;” everything must “benefit students.” The job of teachers, leaders, and schools is to make a difference, even a “little tiny difference,” to the life of each “actual individual child.” Leaders, the Cheshire Cat believes, should continually ask themselves: “What is in the best interests of the child?” She believes that “every kid, every single student . . . has some sort of talent” and that “the ultimate goal of education is to unlock that talent and to broaden its impact.” A student’s mindset can be changed through nurturing success, facilitating each student’s experience of success and “infecting” students with enthusiasm and feelings of personal triumph. In leadership she feels it is still vital to continue to have “that direct relationship with kids.” The Cheshire Cat is “not prepared to give it up” but rather “struggles to fit” relationships with students into her role.

Teacher quality and teacher wellbeing are also a student learning issue for the Cheshire Cat. If the teachers are better, “the school’s better and so therefore the students gain so much more.” Leading teachers, then, is “about leading adult people such that you’ll get better or optimal outcomes for kids.” A leader needs to help teachers to realise “what the benefits to the students are” and what the benefits to themselves as an educator are.” The Cheshire Cat has to also be “cognisant about” teachers, their beliefs, and their wellbeing. “So much in schools is focused on the students . . . but staff are also important because if the staff are not happy or feel they’re supported” then there is an “impact on student learning.” The Cheshire Cat is armed with her belief in the capacity and reflectiveness of teachers, “how emotive” learning and change can be, and her understanding of the complexity of the teachers’ role. She feels she needs to “support people’s health and wellbeing” and to “ensure that they don’t burn out and that they feel good about themselves as workers” in order to ensure quality, satisfied teachers, and consequently well-looked-after students who are helped to unlock their talents and achieve to the best of their ability.

In order to assure the best outcomes for students, the Cheshire Cat thinks that school change should be research-based and “data-influenced.” “In education we’ve got a responsibility to keep up with research” because it “has changed our profession and

⁵⁰ 10 school leaders explicitly discussed the student as the core of school business around which everything else should revolve and on which all school decisions should be based.

therefore should change us as leaders.” It gives educators a “language” and a “science” for the profession “and that means we can empower both ourselves and our learners.” Schools should look to “broader sets of data” than “traditional external data sources” to gauge whether change is “having any impact for students.”

Enacting a coherent, shared, research-based vision: The Cheshire Cat as co-visionary

“As a leader I think you need to create a vision with the people that you are working with, so that you’re all working towards that common vision; you all have ownership of it. I believe the same should happen in the classroom. It’s not a journey we are imposing on the students; it’s a common shared vision of where you want them to be, that they have taken part in, so they’ve taken ownership over that as well.”

The Cheshire Cat is wary of “flip-flopping from good idea to good idea, because there’s hundreds of good ideas out there educationally.” She knows another leader who returns to school after attending a professional development course to “the looks on staff faces . . . and they think, ‘Oh here we go again, it’s going to be another idea, something else to change.’” Change needs to be “embedded in research and deliberate.” The Cheshire Cat has seen educational trends “come around . . . repackaged with a different name” so for her, transparent leadership and clear vision are required for effective change.

The Cheshire Cat believes that vision should drive what schools do, but this vision needs to be “shared”⁵¹ by the school community. It requires “shared understanding” and “collective buy-in” in order to be effective. The Cheshire Cat desires to co-create this “shared vision,” “growing that collaboratively with teachers and also with important stakeholders.” She believes in being deliberate and transparent about vision: “if I want them to see the bigger picture then I have to make sure that they know what the bigger picture is.” Innovation needs to be aligned with visionary purpose and balanced with a realistic view of teachers’ lives. The challenge is then to “empower others to live the vision,” to facilitate the understanding, living, and enacting of that vision by the school and all in its community.

⁵¹ All 11 leaders discussed the importance of alignment of work with organisational vision, but four leaders talked specifically about the need for vision to be shared.

Organisationally and for her teams, the Cheshire Cat sees backwards design as a key strategy for developing vision and subsequent action. Visioning, like teaching, requires a “very clear idea of where you want to go” and a very good understanding of context and the individuals within that context. “Where are they at? Where do I want them to go? Where do I think they’re capable of going, and a little bit beyond? I need to work back.” She balances knowing the end point (“where you want to go”) with the starting point (an understanding of context and “where the people that you’re working with are.”)

Without clear articulations of vision, working towards shared understanding and strategic planning, a good idea might happen briefly but then “die after you die or leave,” with the organisation moving “on to the next good idea.” In order for the shared vision to effect change and be sustainable, it is “really, really important” that team and individual vision and action “ties back to our vision.” So everyone has “gotten on the train” together; “we’ve all signed off on” and “we all work towards” that vision in clearly defined roles, “clear structures” and strategic plans at organisation, team and individual level. “And everything that we do comes back to that plan.”

Within the organisational vision, the Cheshire Cat wants to help individuals—her students and staff—to personally develop vision, to see “where they are going, and what they want to be.” The Cheshire Cat sees her role as “coaching” and “empowering” others to develop their own personal “vision within that [organisational] vision” so that each individual has their own vision aligned with the larger organisational vision. “Using that idea of vision-based mission based leadership” she hopes “to get everyone on board . . . moving towards the goal and owning the goal and being part of the journey.”

Balancing organisation and individual: The Cheshire Cat is across the macro and micro picture from its aerial view in the tree

“I see the vision as more like the trunk of the tree; it’s the main thing that we all sort of hang off, and we do. But we’re all going to be branches that come out from that trunk, and we do have our own little sub-branches occasionally that we can then look at as well, but we still are connected to that trunk of that tree.”

The Cheshire Cat thinks about staff learning and change management on a number of levels: the whole school organisational level, part-school level (such as faculties or other

teams), and individual level. There are “overarching” visions, goals, and policies under which sit action and detail. Balancing and aligning organisation and individual is challenge for the Cheshire Cat.⁵² “Almost every difficult decision is that balance between the individual and the collective.” Whether it is about a child, a teacher, a program, a structure, “it’s always: how do you balance that?”

At an organisation or school level, the vision and strategic direction is a “lighthouse,” representing the beaconic direction towards which the Cheshire Cat endeavours to steer her team. It includes “the vision and the goals that we share,” “big picture stuff” which is “like an umbrella” under which teams and teachers fit their own learning. The vision is “overarching but it’s collectively drawn, so that it’s not imposed on your staff, and that’s what you’re working towards, but you’ve also got the sense of the individual.” So while individuals are considered as part of the whole, “it is not entirely up to the people” as to what teachers pursue. Organisational, team, and individual development generally align with the school plan.

One way in which Lutwidge School approaches developing the enactment of the organisational plan is by using internal and external experts. The Cheshire Cat sees it as important to map out staff strengths, harness them for the development of others and value them as a “wealth of knowledge and experience that we just don’t call on enough.” “There’s an incredible amount of expertise and knowledge in the staff here.” People within teams and within the school are utilised to share internal expertise and push each other’s work and thinking forward or in unexpected directions. Then, “if we don’t have the skills in-house, let’s get somebody in to teach us those skills that we need to know” or “take us through the process of thinking we need to do.” External facilitators tend to have long-term (rather than drop-in) roles with the school, building relationships over time. These facilitators “help us grow organisationally to be able to manage the change,” helping those in the school to learn at a “meta level” about change management processes and skill sets. This is intended to build internal capacity so that as external experts step out, change is sustained and the organisation grows.

At a team level, learning and development needs are identified and addressed as they arise. Invitation, rather than obligation, is important. Staff are encouraged to say “I want to be

⁵² All 11 leaders explicitly identified and discussed the importance and challenges of balancing organisational vision and direction with individuals and their own learning and life journeys.

a part of it.” When people work together to “identify how to improve,” they’re “on board with improvement of self, improvement of pedagogy, improvement of curriculum.” The Cheshire Cat sees modelling best practice as a tool for getting staff engagement and change. “The most significant thing in terms of developing change is when people see me do things.” Driven by the notion of continuous improvement and learning through collaboration, the Cheshire Cat advocates for school-based cycles of action research, followed by sharing and celebration.

At an individual level, the Cheshire Cat sees each of the teachers with which she works as “all distinctly different.” “They’ve got different learning styles, different learning profiles, different professional goals and ambitions, different stages of their career, different openness to learning and to getting feedback.” “The challenge of a leader is: how do you honour all of each person and the collective?” The answer for her is knowing the context and also “knowing your staff.” She uses the metaphor of the tree, in which the overarching foundational team or organisational vision makes up the solid trunk of the tree with the organisational vision’s roots grounding the tree. Individual visions and journeys branch off from the shared trunk, connected and anchored to it but growing in their own organic directions.

While generally teacher learning “ties back to our [organisational] vision” which “we’ve all signed off on” and which “we all work towards,” the Cat is still supportive of teachers looking “outside of their teaching” for learning opportunities. Personal professional growth for teachers is seen by the Cheshire Cat as “very, very important.” For this reason, she sees part of her role as to “feed” the particular interests of individual staff and to support them in the direction they want to go. Even if it isn’t directly linked to organisational foci, “if it’s developing you personally and professionally, then I’m willing to get on board with it.” The Cheshire Cat believes that teachers should have the opportunity to follow some of their “own passions,” develop creativity and “go for it” with their own learning on “their own track.” They need to be able to feel like it is a journey they have controlled and chosen, rather than a journey which has been imposed upon them. Individuals should have a chance to “develop their own identity.” She uses the example of Google’s “20 percent time,” which encouraged engineers to “go off and do their own thing” for one day a week, working on personal passion projects that weren’t necessarily in their job descriptions but which encouraged creativity and innovation. “Allowing them that freedom of being able to explore their other interests

and to be able to do other things” can incite “left field” change and creativity. “Those left field things are actually quite important, because they really do change what people do.”

Supporting individuals in their growth also builds “empathy and trust and relationships.” Learning can’t be top down because “you burn trust; you get everybody off side; they stop taking risks; they’re not on board.” The Cheshire Cat feels staff should be supported to “go off and do those personal ones” or “they can feel too controlled” thinking “this is what we have to do and this is all we are allowed to do.” This is in part about having “trust in people’s capacity” and making them “responsible for themselves.” Teachers “are adults; they can make adult decisions” about their own learning. The Cheshire Cat sees her job as to “support and encourage,” to be “the person to guide them and bounce ideas off and then give the final ‘Yeah, do it’ encouragement.” She encourages individuals to ask: “Where are my current skills? Where am I heading? How am I going to get there?” Then she ensures that teachers feel supported in their learning. Her door is open; “you can come in when you want to come in. Is there someone here to help you? Well yes there is.”

Teacher Growth Initiative: The Cheshire Cat experience

Alignment with personal and organisational identity: The Cheshire Cat’s fit with the intervention

“The TGI really fits well with my idea that when I want to learn I want to be involved in the process, so it is a collaborative process, as opposed to someone telling you what to do. You have to figure out yourself from the evidence and it is evidence-based . . . that sits very well with me and the fact that it is coming from peers and as part of that process I think is brilliant. Ultimately it does mean that teachers are setting their own goals and being self-directed learners, taking ownership of that, so that all fits very well with my own beliefs about learning.”

The Cheshire Cat sees that, as developing teacher quality was part of strategic intent from the school board level, the Teacher Growth Initiative needed to deliberately align with the school’s underlying beliefs about leadership and learning. She felt that it needed to be sustainable, teacher-owned and to model what research says about learning and school change. There wasn’t a “fixed direction” but there were “fixed principles” which were protected in order to focus on the Teacher Growth Initiative as an opportunity for staff growth, based in seeing teachers as self-directed and empowered selves. It needed to be

based in “trusting that people have those capacities within them, just providing them with the opportunities to explore and reflect on that in real ways.”

As a non-invasive, non-judgemental model of continuous teacher growth, the Teacher Growth Initiative “aligns directly” and has “cohesion” with not only the organisation’s vision, but also the Cheshire Cat’s own philosophies about learning and leadership.⁵³ It is “the articulation” of her own beliefs about learning. “It actually helps bring all those [strategic and innovation] balls in the air together.” “It is about getting better at stuff” by developing “a professional learning community” which bases its practice in research. It “fits well with my idea that when I want to learn, I want to be involved in the process.” It intends to shift away from a “silo” mentality of schools and into a mindset that “it’s *our* curriculum, it’s *our* model, they’re *our* kids.”

The Danielson Framework for Teaching “is non-judgemental” and “gives structure to a very wide, open, fluid environment which is the teaching and learning experience.” It provides a common way of talking about teaching and “identifies and breaks down” teaching so that teachers can see “what it looks like when you’re doing stuff well.” Cognitive coaching, meanwhile, “naturally aligns” with “how I view empowerment” and with her philosophy of building the strengths of others, encouraging teachers to “become more self-aware, more reflective ...to express what you’re good at, where you need to go and how you need to get there.”

Questions of time, atomisation of practice, effectiveness of mandated change and measurement of success: The Cheshire Cat cautiously reserves judgement on the TGI

“I get concerned about atomising bits [of teaching] . . . the process then becomes decontextualised and . . . we have lost the big picture because we have focused on these little bits.”

While “overall” the Cheshire Cat sees the Teacher Growth Initiative “as being a real plus,” she reserves judgement for after full implementation. Her concerns include the challenge to “find time” to properly honour the principles and processes as they have been designed. She also acknowledges that the rate of acceptance and uptake will vary among Lutwidge School teachers and groups. While she knows that some teachers will “thrive” and “love it,” others may be “reluctant” with a “general inertia and unwillingness

⁵³ Five leaders discussed the Teacher Growth Initiative as a direct reflection and embodiment of their own values around learning and leading.

to buy into something new.” “Obviously in the early days there’ll be different levels of openness to those conversations, so there’ll be different levels of success. Some teams or people will embrace it quickly” and others won’t.

Despite being a character who compartmentalises herself into pieces of self (the grin, the voice, the tail), the Cat had a question around about “atomising” teaching into compartmentalised “bits” which might “decontextualise” teaching and lose the big picture. Partly this is to do with value of invitation and buy-in, and partly to do with her belief that “one size does not fit all” and that “different things apply to different people.” For example, using the Danielson Framework for Teaching with a “reductionist approach,” she thinks, might be more useful, even “fantastic,” for younger teachers, but not for very experienced teachers. For some professional learners she thinks learning comes more holistically or through “immersion,” rather than breaking practice down into identifiable segments. In the same vein, she wonders about the appropriateness for teachers to set specific “goals” which “are end points, things to be achieved” rather than finding another way to track their learning “journey.”

While the cognitive coaching approach sits well with the Cheshire Cat’s core belief about empowerment and facilitating self-management of growth and learning, she wonders if teachers might react negatively to that approach. She explains, “if someone came in to watch me teach and didn’t say anything nice afterwards at all, I think I might feel a bit rejected (laughs).” She also wonders about the possibility that “it could be too self-directed . . . or even peer-directed” in a way that leaves leaders out of the process of working alongside and guiding their staff, or leaves individual teachers without the tools and help needed to improve.

The Cat also has concerns about the possibility of it being corrupted from its original intent over time. Her worry is that the initial idea may “morph over time,” straying from its original purpose due to strategic or managerial pressures. She asks, “Could it be corrupted?” While the Teacher Growth Initiative is based in ideas about trust and self-directed learning, she worries that the social capital it seeks to create may be undermined by the fact that the Teacher Growth Initiative model is mandated for all teachers. The Cheshire Cat is somewhat “uncomfortable,” “wary,” and “cautious” about a model being “imposed,” she is unsure about the amount of “convincing” or “selling” which will be

required in order to get a “critical mass” of people “talking more positively than negatively.”

There is also the challenge of how to track and measure the impact of an initiative which is being invested with time and money. While “data’s really important” to drive practice and assess success, and schools should be “data-influenced,” education is a “human services industry” where progress isn’t “linear” or “easily measured.” The challenge is in using data effectively while “keeping it in perspective.” “Not everything we do can be measured in a quantitative way.”

Cheshire Catalytic change: Collaboration, reflection, and shared vulnerability to create cultural shift

“My real dream is that every teacher will be like me and will want to be seizing every day and making every day better than the day before, and of course my reality is that’s not the case. We don’t have all teachers who want to get better every day. We have some teachers who want to get better every day, some teachers who want to get better some days and other teachers who are actually in a pretty comfortable space of their career and just want to do the job. That’s not going to change, that’s always going to be, no matter what school you’re at. But if we can shift that critical mass and that critical mass generates momentum, then the snowball will get bigger and the snowball will get bigger and then we might have this vibrant professional space whereby we are prepared to share practice and collect some data so we can have a conversation around that.”

When the volunteer teacher-team-member positions of Teacher Growth Initiative were advertised there were more applicants than places to fill. “Wow,” thought the Cheshire Cat, this shows that “people are really keen to improve” and are open to taking “opportunities to improve their skills and expertise.” They’re willing to commit to a long-term initiative, to their own learning, and to the strategic direction of the school. It has been done in “a really non-threatening, non-evaluative manner” which is the thing that will “get people on board with doing it.” It will, however, “be more effective once it doesn’t sit to the side” but rather “becomes part of professional learning” across the school.” So despite her reservations about mandating the Teacher Growth Initiative, the Cat is hopeful about the reach of the initiative once it reaches full implementation.

The Teacher Growth Initiative is one which encourages collaboration so that teachers get to work with those outside their normal bubbles. “There’s opportunities to speak to each other. There’s opportunities to all be on the same page . . . you’re working with people you wouldn’t normally get the chance to because there’s that cross-section.” It allows “collaborative peers” to observe and engage in conversation. Benefits to be gained include the “extremely valuable deprivatising of practice” to hone “own teaching practice and share good teaching practice across the school.”

The Teacher Growth Initiative is about teachers testing and developing their own understanding about their teaching and their students’ learning. Rather than managers evaluating, each teacher is “challenging their own thinking and perceptions of their reality.” Mutually trusting coaching relationships are more likely to lead to “ownership” of learning and the active seeking of improvement, than “some external or top down evaluation.”

With the belief that the Teacher Growth Initiative can permeate school culture and be “a catalyst for a cultural shift,” a change in school culture, the Cheshire Cat believes the initiative has an “incredible capacity to improve teacher quality.” She thinks it has “got to make a difference.” She feels that what “will drive its success or otherwise” is “the conversations we have,” “what we do,” and the “preparedness to change our thinking in a space with other adults.” She notes specific implications for teaching, classroom practice, and professional learning culture. “We’re looking at a change of classroom practice to assist student learning.” The processes of the Teacher Growth Initiative deprivatise and open the classroom “which traditionally is a real haven or silo.” They break down the barrier of protecting one’s own area and move towards: “This is me; I’m exposing myself.” They encourage risk taking and communication, allowing teachers to know “that it’s ok to open yourself up.”

While “the ultimate goal” of the Teacher Growth Initiative is “improving student achievement,” the “student mark will look after itself” if “we focus on the process rather than focusing on the outcome.” The “dream” is “that we get this culture whereby we accept the fact that there’s always things to improve and we really want to improve and want to reflect.” “If we can shift that critical mass and that critical mass generates momentum, then the snowball will get bigger and we might have this vibrant professional

whereby we are prepared to” be open, vulnerable and continuously improving, together and individually.

The Cheshire Cat has a “qualitative” sense that already “there is a shift” in the professional culture of Lutwidge School.⁵⁴ Like “oil in water” it is “insidious” and “wonderful.” The Cat has found it rewarding to see and lead growth of staff by providing opportunities for that to occur; she sees the Teacher Growth Initiative as fulfilling its goal of growing staff as reflective self-directed professionals. Those involved so far have “enjoyed what it was,” “found it really interesting,” seen it as a “good product,” found it meaningful, and “significantly better” than the previous review processes. As a result of Teacher Growth Initiative coaching relationships and classroom observations, increased teacher collaboration is already occurring through the creation of small teams, peer support and across-school connections. “You don’t know where it’s going to go,” the “difference” it will make, or the “impact” it will have.

7.4 Summarising the Cheshire Cat story

~ out of the rabbit hole and into the beginnings of analysis ~

Through the symbolic tool of the Cheshire Cat, this chapter shared the story of 11 school leaders of Lutwidge School. The following brief summary, moving out of the rabbit hole and into the analytic voice of Waking Alice, reviews the salient aspects of the leaders’ story in terms of the studied phenomena, and links it to the stories of Alice and the White Rabbit.

The Cheshire Cat sees itself as centred around the axis of the belief that it is making a difference in the lives of students, empowering others, and standing up for what is right in terms of students. As well as leader, the Cheshire Cat also sees herself as teacher, perhaps in part because all school leaders at Lutwidge School taught at least one class. The Cat viewed each person in the school as a teacher, a learner, and a leader. As she moved from middle leadership to executive leadership, the Cat began to move from a view of herself as a teacher-who-leads, to a leader-who-teaches.

⁵⁴ Four leaders felt that there had already been a shift in Lutwidge School culture as a result of the Teacher Growth Initiative and teachers’ involvement in it.

Like Alice and the White Rabbit, the Cheshire Cat described herself as a learner, a core feature which drives her practice as teacher and as leader of teachers. She acknowledged that terms such as “lifelong learner” might be clichéd, but still accepts them as a foundational aspect of what it means to be an educator. The Cat perceived herself to be different to the norms of learning, teaching, and leading. She was focused on accepting diversity in others and in seeing strength in the differences each person brings to a school.

The identities of Alice, the White Rabbit, and the Cheshire Cat interact with their personal identities, lives as a whole, and the school context in which they work. The impact of outside-of-teacherly experiences emerged from all three stories. Alice, the White Rabbit, and the Cheshire Cat all feel that their selves are shaped by transformative moments in their lives. Those life moments considered as turning points for the Cheshire Cat included work in non-educational sectors, tragedy, travel, overseas volunteer work, and relationships with family members. Health, wellness, and a sense of personal balance were factors in the Cheshire Cat’s discussion of identity, seen as intrinsic to protecting and nurturing her professional self. The Cat, like Alice and the Rabbit, showed malleability of identity. For instance, while she discussed her identity as having a core, she also discussed how she had transformed and grown over time and so how her anchoring core had also shifted and changed. The move from a more autocratic to a more collaborative identity as a leader was another example of identity fluidity.

The Cheshire Cat was focused on the student as central to her purpose as a teacher and a school leader. While Alice and the White Rabbit also see themselves as primarily about serving their students, the Cat has an aerial view from its tree which encompasses the organisation as a whole, not just the classroom. As it reaches more senior positions, the higher it climbs, the more it tends to see increasingly strategically and less at ground level. Yet even at this perspective the Cat considers the individual within the system. The Cheshire Cat is deliberate about what aspects of itself it shows and the ways in which it gives guidance to others. It is deliberate about how it guides individuals along idiosyncratic journeys, while considering its understanding of the greater context. The Cat describes itself sometimes as the traditional leader—as captain, CEO, mother bird—and sometimes as the more surreptitious spider delicately navigating the organisational web.

Like Alice and the White Rabbit, when asked about professional learning, the Cheshire Cat discussed learning with others as crucial, including at conferences, in associations, in postgraduate study, and in professional coaching relationships which helped her talk through challenging leadership times and scenarios. The coaching relationship provided a dedicated space to work through professional problems outside of the school context, with a trusted individual who challenged it and promoted thinking. The coach relationship also provided a protected space for Cat vulnerability and space for thinking. At the most executive levels, the notion of space became increasingly important for the Cat, who found that it learned the most when given time and space to step away from the busyness of its daily responsibilities. As with Alice, the research interviews were perceived by the Cheshire Cat as a professional learning experience. The Cat found the interview cognitively challenging, stimulating its thinking, allowing it time and space in a busy schedule to reflect on its core beliefs about learning and leading. It was both an indulgence, in the sense of having time to sit and think, and a valuable professional experience.

Like Alice and the White Rabbit, the Cheshire Cat saw some professional learning in traditional ways, such as that from professional mentors or coaches, supportive or antipathetic leaders, and collaborative work or learning. The Cat complied with professional learning expectations, but did not consider attendance at courses required for compliance to be personal learning. Wider life experiences which were considered professional learning by the Cheshire Cat included regular trips to the third world to volunteer at an orphanage, world travel, family relationships, non-educational sector work experience, and Masters study. These experiences influenced the Cat's identity and shaped its professional journey. Immersive, ongoing experiences were perceived as powerful, especially self-chosen intensive paths which incited the reconsideration and reshaping of professional beliefs and practices. Learning experiences which require immersion and go on for a period of time, rather than one-off sessions, emerged as most formative.

The Cheshire Cat, with its aerial view from the tree, tries to keep abreast of the big picture and the nitty gritty, the strategic overview and grass roots, organisational leadership and classroom practice. It sees the importance of sharing visioning and leadership with others in the school community, including teachers, but is also aware of its individual accountability to those who reside above, to organisation and to community. Teachers,

the Cat thinks, are capable of driving and enacting change. The biggest challenge for the Cat is balancing the needs of the individual, the needs of the collective, and the need to move forward in a positive direction. One metaphor used by the Cheshire Cat illustrates the notion of the holonomous nature of the school or team. Like Koestler (1972) in his original illustration of the holon, the Cat used the metaphor of the tree. It saw the collective (school or team) vision as a tree trunk shared by the group or organisation from which personal individual vision and action grows in idiosyncratic branches. Yet the Cat also sees change, for individual and organisation, as less linear, like “oil in water.” These simultaneous but conflicting metaphors help to illustrate the complexity of the school leader role for the Cheshire Cat.

8. Turning the golden key in the lock: Discussion

Suddenly she came upon a little three-legged table, all made of solid glass; there was nothing on it except a tiny golden key, and Alice's first idea was that this might belong to one of the doors of the hall; but, alas! either the locks were too large, or the key was too small, but, at any rate it would not open any of them. However, on the second time round, she came upon a low curtain she had not noticed before, and behind it was a little door about fifteen inches high: she tried the little golden key in the lock, and to her great delight it fitted!

(Carroll, 2014, p. 5)

The literature and stories of this study confirm that educators are adaptive experts and lifelong learners whose students benefit when teachers learn, grow, and change. By addressing the need to look closely and deeply at real people and their complex, situated stories of lived experience, this study aimed to tease out understandings of what experiences, and what elements of school culture, are perceived by educators to be transformative. Undergirded by the global quest for improving teacher quality, it explored how teachers' and leaders' identities and learning shape, and are shaped by, their teaching, leading, lives, and contexts. Taking on suggestions that studies of teacher identity look at relevant others in addition to teachers (Beijaard et al., 2004; Lu, 2010), the researcher, middle leader, and executive leader perspectives in this study provide additional insights to those of the teachers, within the catalytic context of the Teacher Growth Initiative at Lutwidge School.

Following Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, which immersed the reader in narratives of Alice the researcher, the White Rabbit the teacher, and the Cheshire Cat the school leader, this chapter braids the three stories together. It explores their meaning while situating them within the wider context of existing knowledge and explaining how they extend current knowledge. Reflecting the above quotation from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, this chapter takes the golden key of this study's storied data and looks at which doors that key might open. What doors of meaning might be unlocked? What might the insights reveal? How might this study contribute to and expand existing literature? It is this chapter's role to elucidate and discuss what has been revealed about the studied phenomena as a result of the perspectives of researcher, teacher, and school leader presented here.

This chapter is organised around opening doors into the phenomena of professional identity, professional learning, and school change. It returns to the main research question of this study: In what ways might teachers' and school leaders' experiences of professional learning (trans)form their sense of professional selves; *and* in what ways might school leaders' professional identities, perceptions of professional learning, and strategic intentions, shape and be shaped by the culture and enacting of professional learning in a school context? This question is asked within a social constructionist paradigm which accepts that identities are situated, co-developed constructs tied to lived experiences in the social world (Allen, 2008; Holland et al., 1998; Lave & Wenger, 2005). While this study set out to explore the ways in which teachers' and leaders' experiences of professional learning (trans)form their sense of professional selves, what it found was that it is not just professional learning, but epiphanic experiences and relationships in life which shape professional selves and lead to growth and change. The study found that the professional identities of school leaders, and their own experiences of learning as teachers and leaders, were integral to their approaches to leading the professional learning of their staff. The words "shape and be shaped by" in the research question highlight the focus on how the individuals shape school contexts and how schools contexts shape individuals, reflecting the conceptualisation of the school as holonomous organisation (Costa & Garmston, 2006), and of identities as are informed by and informing the contexts in which they develop (Elias & Scotson, 1994; Glass, 2011; Mockler, 2011; Wenger, 1998). The study found that school context is a central influence in teachers' and school leaders' journeys of being, becoming, learning, and leading. Contextual factors were: individual alignment with the school; school-based opportunities for growth; and the valuing of the individual within the organisational system. In particular, this study contributes to existing knowledge in the following ways.

This study found that professional identity:

- is fluid, malleable, multiple, and in a constant state of becoming;
- thrives on deeply-felt purpose and alignment with organisational context;
- can be conceptualised in terms of metaphor as a vehicle of identity exploration.

This study found that professional learning:

- is more than the opportunities provided by schools, organisations, and systems, encompassing epiphanic life moments;

- can be facilitated by mapping frameworks which outline quality teaching, but these are not solutions in themselves;
- in schools should trust the capacity of teachers and focus on growth, while providing explicit support; and
- can be uncomfortable and chaotic.

This study found that school change:

- is dependent on and entwined with context;
- is collective and individual, requiring alignment of the two; and
- is fluid, viral, and unpredictable.

The elaboration of these findings, below, uses the subsidiary research questions (outlined on page 62 of this thesis) of each phenomena as a starting point for discussion of how this study's findings augment and extend existing knowledge. Like those of Watson and Drew (2015), these findings are localised to their particular time and place. Additionally, they are communicated through the insider-outsider lens of the researcher who was deeply embedded in the context being studied.

8.1 Professional identity

Professional identities, for the participants studied here, are fluid, shaped by their whole lives, and tied to belief, purpose, and context. This study found that, rather than lifelong learning being an ideal to strive towards (Danaher, 2014), lifelong learning and capacity for professional transformation were fundamentals part of participant identities. Teachers and school leaders in this study viewed themselves and each other as continuous learners with a capacity for deep reflection and growth, reflecting Sarason's (1996) assertion that ongoing, rigorous lifelong learning is a criterion for personal and school change.

In response to the research questions around professional identity—"In what ways and by what factors are teacher and leader professional identities shaped?" and "How malleable are the professional identities of teachers and leaders?"—this study found that teacher and leader professional identities are shaped in many ways and by a wide variety of factors. These teacher and leader stories add to the work of those such as Day et al. (2006) and Mockler (2011), who tease out the intersection of biographical, experiential, and

contextual factors in identity formation. The uniqueness of each participant's identity trajectory revealed the importance of considering the idiosyncrasies of teachers (Holly, 1989), of thinking of them as individuals with their own stories and their own journeys of professional identity, learning, and growth. While there were elements of themselves which some educators saw as foundational, such as beliefs, even these were shown to be shapeable through lived experiences. The perceived-as-important notion of "being authentically oneself," as expressed by participants, was not fixed. Rather, it was combined with the notion of "becoming oneself." While the sense of being oneself was valuable to participants, their professional selves evolved and shifted over time due to experience; the authentic self was not static. This suggests that while educators feel connected to a sense of a core professional self at any given point, over time their identity transmutes as a result of life and work experiences.

Professional identity is malleable, multiple, and in a constant, lifelong state of becoming

That little is understood about how teachers' identities interact with reform mandates (Lasky, 2005) indicates the usefulness of examining how educators in shared contexts respond to joint experiences in terms of identity creation. The Teacher Growth Initiative context provided an opportunity to do this, generating perspectives of the researcher, who also led the school-based initiative; teachers who volunteered to be part of it; and school leaders who were involved in leading the professional learning of their staff. This was a reform context in which teachers were given voice and authority to be an active part of school change, and in which the researcher was insider participant and outsider researcher. The key element of professional identity identified by this study was its state of lifelong fluidity and multiplicity.

Participants revealed that their professional identities were changeable and in a continuous state of becoming. This study found that "being a teacher" or "being a school leader" was seen as an important part of life, not just work, and that educators' professional identities are formed by a broad range of epiphanic life moments. While critical life moments have been the subject of literature (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Cole & Throssell, 2008; Denzin, 2001; Goodson, 1991; Riessman, 2002), and others have reflected that educator identities are formed within and outside of classrooms and schools (Mockler, 2011), this study links them directly to the formation and transformation of professional

identity. Participants from all groups discussed formative moments from childhood through to the present, showing that becoming a teacher is a lifelong process (Danaher, 2014; Glass, 2011; Goker, 2006). Consistent with arguments that professional identity is shaped in part by biographical experiences (Day et al., 2006; Jenlink, 2014; Mockler, 2011), these participants' professional identities were seen as reshaped, refined, and redefined throughout lives and careers. Yet while Jenlink (2014) asserts that the pre-teaching life of the teacher is overwritten by subsequent professional experiences, and that teaching identity is written in each moment of the teaching life in the classroom, this study found that it is whole lives which, rather than being written *over*, are written *into* teachers' and leaders' identities. Teachers and leaders were highly reflective about those stories which influenced who they had become and were continuing to become as professionals. These moments encompassed school, work, community service, travel, and tragedy. Retellings of what participants perceived as crucial life moments were keys to unlocking educators' senses of self (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996) and tracking the continual being and becoming of their professional selves. Supplementing others' findings that childhood years can be formative in shaping educator identities (Findlay & Jones, 2014; Minor-Ragan & Jacobson, 2014), this study found that professional learning and professional identities are intertwined. It is lives, not just official experiences of learning, which shape teacher's and school leader's perceptions, imaginings, and enactions of their selves.

Relationships were seen by participants as vital to the formation and shaping of professional self. These included relationships with people such as grandparents, parents, children, colleagues, managers, mentors, and coaches. Parenting was a life role which shifted some participants' priorities, their understanding about parents' perspectives, and perceptions of the vulnerabilities of students. The focus of participants on relationships when talking about formation of self affirms that identities are co-developed social products (Holland et al., 1998; Mishler, 1999; Walker, 1991), but are simultaneously owned by the individual.

An example of identity malleability was the shift of the researcher and six leaders around their identification with the role of teacher. These participants had each at one time perceived that they would not be a teacher. All showed a shift from the self-perception that teaching was not a profession for them. These self-perceptions transformed through time and experience into committed educator identities in which they see their role as to

serve and empower students. This shift from a “not a teacher” identity to a dedicated teacher identity was based in shifting beliefs about teachers, education, and self. Teachers’ and leaders’ identities also shifted in moments of reflection, such as applying for a new job or sitting down for the research interviews, which were themselves opportunities for identity work (Gronn & Lacey, 2004). Being asked to reflect on self and communicate identity in these contexts helped teachers and leaders to frame their professional identities.

Not only were professional identities constantly becoming and shifting throughout life and work; they were also multiple. The leaders described notions of distributed leadership in which all individuals, including teachers and students, were considered capable of leadership. Teachers saw themselves as having opportunities to lead within the school. The participants of the study echoed Freese’s (1999) deliberations on her sense of multiple self-perceptions as coach, co-inquirer, and reflective practitioner. This study’s participants all saw themselves as teachers. That is, even the most executive leaders considered themselves, at least in part, as teachers. Perhaps this was influenced by the contextual factor that at Lutwidge School all school leaders, up to and including the principal, taught classes. Adding to Sarason’s (1971) reminder that all principals were once teachers, the data from this study adds that school leaders continue to see themselves as teachers as they grow into school leadership roles. Leaders saw themselves as either teachers-who-lead or leaders-who-teach. Some leaders saw their staff as a class of learners, reflecting that even in the leadership of teachers, the leader was in a teaching role. This is reminiscent of Hargreaves’ (1995) argument that what we want for our children, we should also want for their teachers. Leaders also saw themselves as learners, embodying notions of ongoing learning and constant self-reflection to refine and improve their practice. This suggests that learner and teacher identities are deeply ingrained in educators’ professional identities.

The leader participants in this study revealed the tensions which exist in the fluid, sometimes contradictory professional identities of school leaders. Leaders’ perceptions of themselves as leaders were not fixed but ranged, depending on person and situation, from more directive to more collaborative, often shifting for one individual. Middle leaders tended to define themselves professionally in terms of their subject areas or the level of schooling which they led, whereas executive leaders were inclined to see themselves as strategic overseers of a wider environment. Two leaders also identified as a captain steering a ship towards a vision. In this metaphor, the vision was represented by a

lighthouse towards which the leader was steering the ship. One leader added that it was their job to steer away from the rocks, adding in a metaphor for negative or unproductive directions. The further up the school system leaders went, the more of the big picture they saw and the more holistic and strategic their sense of their leadership role, while still retaining their teacher identity which formed the basis of their core beliefs about learning, teaching, and leading. These multiple identities of the leader led to constant decision making about which role to shift into at any time. Leaders in this study constantly asked themselves when to lead and control, and when to share and collaborate. The leaders here focused on co-visioning, co-creating, and co-learning, but were aware of times which required a more directive approach. The fluid and multiple identities of the school leaders meant that the Cheshire Cat was an apt emblem; it is a shape-shifting creature, continuously assessing the situation and appearing in different ways accordingly. The leaders in this study were aware of the need to be cognisant and deliberate about the levels, roles, and positions from which they acted at any time. They needed to balance their accountable selves, which necessitated managing others' performance and being responsible for outcomes, with their role as supporter and positive coach of their staff. Leaders were constantly determining when to be the eyes in the sky, when to be the workers on the ground, when to be the keepers at the gate, and when to rule from the throne. They used their learner and teacher identities to make sense of the strategic whole picture, being deliberate and nuanced about how they navigated their multiple roles and identities. Leader professional identities were in these ways particularly fluid and multiplicitous.

This study therefore reveals a coalescing complexity of multiple educator identities. Learner, teacher, and leader are fluid, enacted self-roles available to everyone. These roles are seen to ebb and flow, depending on the context, situation, and role. This study's data show that identities are authentic and adaptable. In summary, the identities of these participants are fluid, evolving processes, in world and in action, anchored by a sense of an authentic self which is in a constant state of becoming.

Professional identities thrive with deeply-felt purpose and alignment with school context

A deep sense of purpose was a key part of professional identity in this study. The professional purpose shared by all participants—researcher, teachers, and leaders—was

that of benefitting their students and making a positive difference in student lives. “Making a difference” emerged as a core belief for teachers and leaders. Feelings of satisfaction and authenticity were dependent on the feeling of having a significant impact. Teachers talked about making a difference in the classroom or through pastoral relationships, highlighting the importance of making personal connections with each child. Middle leaders discussed both the classroom and their managerial influence on student learning and pastoral experiences. Executive leaders focused on making a difference in a big picture way, from a strategic or organisational perspective. One middle leader talked about their struggle with this layering of influence in making a difference to students; they were originally unsure about diluting their influence on students by taking on a leadership role, but realised that leadership allows them to affect a greater range of students within the organisation. Leaders had clear personal visions which drove their work in classrooms as teachers, as well as their work with teachers as leaders. Leaders saw part of their role as taking care of the wellbeing of themselves and their staff.

These in-practice stories of self and student-focused purpose reflect literature which argues that teacher learning be based around what will benefit students (William, 2014a). The heavy emphasis of participants on students affirmed literature which states that quality teachers believe that their students can learn (Wasley et al., 1997), design learning opportunities to help each student learn (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Bransford et al., 2005), and advocate on their students’ behalfs (Jackson, 1986; Wasley et al., 1997).

The school context emerged as a central aspect of professional identity. Participants saw themselves as connected to multiple people within the web of the school community, a demonstration that identity is relational (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). The student was at the centre of this web, but also important were relationships with colleagues and parents. Trust, understanding, and positive relationships within the school context were valued. This study also found that teachers and leaders felt the need to align with the school context, to feel that their individual identity aligns with the organisational identity. Alignment with context led to feelings of authenticity and belonging. For the studied teachers, this need for alignment manifested in their sense of authentic connection with the school and their leaders. For leader participants it meant a personal resonance as well as sensitivity to individual, departmental and organisational contexts and identities in terms of how they approach relationships and change.

Professional identities can be conceptualised in terms of metaphor

Emerging as an unexpected trend, the data from this study unintentionally revealed school leaders' use of metaphor to define and visualise self, and to explain visions and roles of leading learning. While leaders were not asked for metaphors, some volunteered metaphors for themselves such as: the iceberg which has much below the conscious surface; the spider who traverses a web of internal and external relationships; the bower bird who cherry picks leadership strategies; the mother bird who nurtures the young birds in her nest; the CEO who oversees business decisions; and the ship's captain who steers the school or team boat towards its lighthouse vision and away from rocky danger. These metaphors ranged from the pragmatic (CEO) to the lyrical (spider, bird, iceberg), and seemed to provide a way of thinking about self and its relation to the organisation. The CEO metaphor operated as a rational way to think about the business side of schooling, while images like the surreptitious spider navigating the school community web and the ship's captain navigating the elements to keep the ship on course, present complex value-laden images of leadership. The spider suggests a more furtive and subtle approach to leadership, while the captain suggests a more traditional version of leader as in charge, in control, and in command. So while some leaders said they didn't like to think of themselves as "top of the pyramid," metaphors such as the CEO of a business or the captain of a ship presented the leader as in charge and in control.

School leader participants also used metaphors for conceptualising vision, learning, and change. One used the image of the tree in which the trunk was the shared vision of the collective and each branch represented the individual vision and learning pathway of each person. This tree image helped the leader to visualise and communicate the simultaneous importance of honouring the collective and the individual. Another talked about the process of inciting school change as putting oil in water, allowing the change to spread through the community in unpredictable, organic ways. The researcher used the metaphor of a dandelion to represent the unexpected nature of change. These metaphors, volunteered by participants during their interviews, are compelling visualisations of identity and process, showing how educators chose to frame their understandings of their ways of being educators. They present different ways of viewing leadership, with the tree as a linear concept of growth, and oil in water as a more chaotic way of viewing leadership and change.

The mix of metaphors, and their various ways of placing the leader within the school system, helps to demonstrate the complexities of school leadership as discussed by participants. In their fluid Cheshire-Cat-like roles, leaders were constantly navigating different ways of being and leading. Metaphors for professional identity, as emerging from participant data, supported Martínez, Sauleda, and Huber's (2001) view that metaphors are a powerful vehicle for defining reality, structuring experience, and understanding intangibles like feelings, experiences, and beliefs; a coherent frame for imaginative rationality. They reflected Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) claim that thought processes and conceptual systems are defined and structured through metaphor. As the identity metaphors in this study were an emergent trend, they cannot reveal whether the professions of teacher or school leader have archetypal metaphors which are blueprints of the profession (Martínez et al., 2001), but they do add to the sparse literature on metaphors of educators' professional identities. This study adds some new images to the literature and points to metaphor as a compelling way to conceptualise professional identity.

8.2 Professional learning

This study responded to a call for research on the effectiveness of alternative strategies for professional learning and growth, involving collective and active learning (Bransford et al., 1999; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001). In asking under what circumstances educators perceive themselves to grow and change, it found that professional learning encompassed an individual's life and work. The complexity of teachers' lives and work (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Eisner, 1988; Goldenberg, 2004; Sarason, 1971) is a factor which professional learning initiatives would benefit from acknowledging and addressing. Often the subjective voices and intricate identities of teachers and school leaders are absent, marginalised, or simplified in research around effective professional learning. The global focus on teacher quality is framed in different ways by different scholars. Some warn that the intense emphasis on individual teacher quality, and its influence on professional learning, is misplaced and abused (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), but many see teacher quality, and therefore professional learning which improves teacher quality, as an important school-based focus for the educational arena (e.g. Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Ferguson, 1991; Hattie, 2015a; Rose, 2006; Wiliam, 2014b). The present study took the view that educational theory and practice would benefit from expanding understandings

of professional learning which causes positive changes in educator identities and practices, and in doing so improves teacher quality and student learning.

While large scale studies and meta-analyses have provided information about trends and effects of professional learning, they tend to overlook the complexity of the classroom (Snook et al., 2009), of teaching and of schools. Much work around professional learning relies upon brief accounts of learning which define professional learning as those things done within the parameters of what a school might call professional development (e.g. Baguley & Kerby, 2012; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001), rather than considering broader possibilities. While professional learning literature identifies best practice trends, some argue that studies of professional learning to improve teacher quality and influence student achievement need close scrutiny and that current evidence of best practice professional learning is scarce (Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Yoon et al., 2007). This study takes on board the claim that community members' points of view on what makes deeply transformative learning possible are valuable areas for research (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The participants of this study viewed professional learning as either reaffirmation, revelation, or reshaper of practice. Traditional professional development experiences were often perceived as supporting participants' current thinking and practice, while a-ha moments and changes in practices at times arose from unexpected experiences. In answer to the research questions pertaining to the phenomena of professional learning—"What is the role of professional learning in identity formation and professional growth?" and "What professional learning is perceived as (trans)formational?"—this study found that professional learning can shape identity and lead to professional growth. While traditional formal professional learning can provide inspiration, affirmation, and fertile ground for teacher growth, informal and epiphanic life moments emerged in this study as powerful learning.

This study's participant stories add a human element to what is known about how the brain shuts down thinking if it feels threatened (Costa & Garmston, 2003; Rock, 2009); how thinking, engagement in learning, and self-actualisation are ignited (Evans, 1996; Pink, 2009); and the assertion that each teacher is the best judge of what will improve the learning of their students (William, 2014a). The researcher, teachers, and leaders in this study learned the most when they were invested, engaged, and felt driven by purpose.

Those things which shut them down or turned them away from learning were negative feedback, being ignored, or being led by someone who they did not respect.

Lived experiences can be professional learning; life contexts can be arenas of professional learning

Transformational adult learning is that which actively changes how a person knows, shaping the fabric of self through shifts in cognition, emotion, and capacity (Drago-Severson, 2009). Transformation is the goal of school-based interventions such as the Teacher Growth Initiative. The participants in this study showed that teachers and school leaders are professionally learning from childhood, that all of our lived experiences can be perceived as times in which we have professionally learned, that all life contexts have the potential to be arenas of professional learning, and that our identities are deeply entwined with our learning. Participants considered professional learning to be those life experiences which transformed their identities through emotion, realisation, or relationships, showing that professional learning is a lifelong experience which occurs across settings (Tuytens & Devos, 2011).

Affirming others' findings that informal activities can be important influencers of classroom practice (Holly, 1989), and that biography influences professional learning (Day et al., 2006; Jenlink, 2014; Minor-Ragan & Jacobson, 2014; Mockler, 2011), the data here additionally indicate that travel, tragedy, and quiet space can operate as professional learning. Professional learning was also shown to include "do it yourself" approaches, pointing towards the study of self-determined learning, coined as *heutagogy* (Hase & Kenyon, 2000). In this study, heutagogical approaches included professional reading and online collaborative platforms such as Twitter and blogging. The study shows that life epiphanies or moving emotional experiences influence the self- and reality- creation of individuals, and affect professional practice (Cole & Throssell, 2008). It supports Cole and Throssell's (2008) claim that the study of epiphanies is a crucial field of largely untapped education research.

This study found a variety of types of professional learning, different from those often found in literature. Perhaps this was due to the narrative nature of the interviews, the discussion of identity, or the open question which asked participants to "tell me about your experience of professional learning." Instead of being asked about what professional

learning opportunities had been offered and taken up by schools (as in Baguley & Kerby, 2012; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001), participants were asked to recall those times when they learned in ways which shaped their identities, thinking, or practice. In response, they cast their nets wider than their experiences in education sector work or related courses. Participants chose to discuss (trans)formational epiphanic vignettes which included experiences which were professional and personal; formal and informal; in and out of educational contexts; and singular and collaborative. The range of professional learning experiences found in this study are shown in tabulated summary in Appendix Table E1. As the table indicates, there are a wide variety of experiences which teachers and school leaders consider to be times in which they have learned in ways that have shaped them professionally. These include school-based activities or courses labelled “professional development.” Participants were inspired by expert speakers and learned much from working closely in collaboration with colleagues. Postgraduate study was found to fulfil participant needs for self-learning and furthering career ambition. Participants learned from teachers and leaders who they considered to be the best, to be emulated, and the worst, to be avoided. Personal examples which participants considered to be professional learning experiences included family experiences and relationships, travel, tragedy, and space for self. As pointed out by the TNTTP (2015) report, teacher learning and development are highly individualised.

Formative professional learning experiences also included important relationships in educators’ lives. The researcher, teachers, and leaders all discussed pivotal personal and professional relationships which had been ongoing learning experiences for them. For example, one leader discussed their strong relationship with their grandmother. The researcher discussed the narratives of her parents as part of her own professional story. A teacher and the researcher explained that and being a parent had profoundly impacted their professional identities and practices. These personal relationships were seen as professional learning in the sense that they shaped educators’ self-perceptions, beliefs, and professional practices.

All three groups discussed the influence of professional mentors, school leaders, professional coaches, and professional friends. This study revealed how leaders see relationships as an important aspect which develops, over time, their perceived teacher selves into perceived leader selves. School leaders learned through positive and negative relationships with other leaders. These included supportive school leaders, as well as

those managers who have made them feel small or who have not been effective leaders. Two leaders saw themselves as the bower bird who picks and chooses aspects of leadership to adopt from their observation of other leaders. This metaphor allowed the leaders to explain their identities in terms of a bird which builds a nest from specially selected observed behaviours and characteristics of others' leadership, giving a sense of leadership as built over time, and influenced by experiences, especially of other leaders. Coaching was found to provoke thinking and provide space for reflection (Charteris & Smardon, 2014). The coach-coachee relationship was also seen as a key to teacher growth, affirming that trust and credibility in the coaching relationship are the key to productive open conversations (Heineke, 2013). The teacher-as-coach model was felt by these participants to be important, confirming that the relationship must be safe, confidential, and non-evaluative and that coaching relationships in which there is a hierarchical imbalance or an evaluation may be counter-productive (Costa & Garmston, 2003; Heineke, 2013). The importance of relationships in learning reflects that professional learning is a situated social practice and collective process profoundly influenced by environment (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Lave, 1991; Wenger, 2000), and by the social networks in personal and professional contexts. Participants were aware of the tensions in relationships, particularly as a result of imbalance of authority or confusion of purpose, and were able to articulate and navigate these tensions.

Also considered powerful professional learning were informal experiences in non-educational contexts. Leaders, one teacher, and the researcher, discussed volunteer work and overseas experiences, including travel, as transformational moments of self-development, professional learning, and world view shaping. The research interviews, too, were moments of professional learning, showing that research interviews can be meaning-making and knowledge-surfacing sites (Elliot, 2005; Johnson, 2009). Conversation, and being listened to (such as in research interviews or in cognitive coaching conversations), were identified as potent ways in to professional learning.

Professional learning was shown by this study to be both singular and collaborative, and influenced by environment. The researcher and teacher participants talked about their own individual goals and learning experiences, as well as those which were instrumental because of their collaborative nature. For teacher participants, collaboration with others encouraged open mindedness and changes in thinking, shaping their views about teaching practice and encouraging talking between teachers about how to get better and why they

might want to get better. This was evocative of Levin's (2009) contention that change is a matter of both will and skill. Leaders, too, discussed the balance between self and group, individual and organisation, in their own learning and in their leading of others' learning. As in Holly's (1989) research, this study's participants discussed the importance of informal and collaborative aspects of learning, such as the interactions with fellow conference delegates, meetings with fellow action researchers, or working in ongoing teams such as in the Teacher Growth Initiative. Colleagues and students were seen as co-learners. For leaders, protecting time for their own wellbeing or mental space was key to their own growth, allowing them to reflect away from the fast paced busyness of their days, often spurring learning on or allowing it the space to happen. While teachers and leaders articulated that they learned from project based professional learning as well as courses and study, they differentiated between the learning they did for themselves, the learning they did for a group, and the learning they did because of organisational compliance.

An example of a kind of "do it yourself" professional learning which emerged in this study was that of engaging in online platforms and communities to engage with content and individuals. The researcher found Twitter and blogging to be collaborative global platforms for connecting with like-minded thinkers and engaging in robust international conversations about education. One teacher saw Twitter as powerful, ongoing, up-to-the-minute professional learning. These participants discussed connected learning using social media as a way to learn and connect with people, trends, and resources. They described Twitter as constant, daily professional learning with a worldwide personal learning community in which hierarchies are collapsed, a description consistent with Gao, Luo, and Zhang's (2012) analyses of 21 2008-2011 studies on microblogging in education. These emergent findings are relevant to recent studies into Twitter, which was founded in 2006. Sheninger (2014), a principal-turned-digital-leadership-consultant who has almost 100,000 Twitter followers at the time of writing, promotes Twitter as a tool for cost-free, autonomous professional learning and collaborative connections. Educators use Twitter to filter, curate, and share educational content (Holmes, Preston, Shaw, & Buchanan, 2013), blurring the line between formal and informal learning (Gao et al., 2012). As an "organic and participatory platform," Twitter is both empowering to educators and an antidote to isolation (Carpenter & Krutka, 2015). The researcher reflections on the difference blogging made to the depth of her online professional connections and conversations adds to others' findings that Twitter is not always an appropriate platform

for engaging in lengthy professional conversations which require elaborated reflection on complex ideas (Gao et al., 2012; Holmes, Preston, et al., 2013). That is, for the researcher blogging allowed more rigorous contribution and comprehensive conversation than microblogging in 140-character bites, and Voxer helped to personalise and extend collaborative conversations. It also reflects Stewart's (2015) findings that online communities such as Twitter challenge traditional hierarchies and allow members to develop emerging confidences to contribute to global conversations with connections based on commonalities of identity, not role. While Twitter provides an individualised experience with a rich, interconnected personal learning networks of diverse educators sharing a wide variety of up-to-date educational material, anytime, anywhere (Carpenter & Krutka, 2015; Deyamport III, 2013; Gao et al., 2012; Holmes, Preston, et al., 2013; Sinanis, 2015), only some teachers are interested in using it for these purposes (Deyamport III, 2013; Gao et al., 2012). The emergent findings of the present study around learning technologies reflect what others have found: that these heutagogical means can empower educators who seek to be autonomous intellectuals, leaders, and learners (Carpenter & Krutka, 2015), as well as help to overcome isolation and build relationships in a fusion of personal and professional learning (Sinanis, 2015).

What emerged from the study was that it is often not those experiences labelled "professional learning" or "professional development" which are transformational for educators, but experiences of life, relationships, and emotions. In looking to teachers and leaders themselves for their perceptions of when learning had been transformational, the stories of this study suggest that professional learning interacts with professional identity. Teachers and leaders explained how their beliefs and practices had shifted through experiences such as listening to an inspiring speaker, being managed by an ineffective leader, doing volunteer work, or travelling to third world countries and seeing the realities of life for others around the world.

Professional learning can be facilitated by mapping frameworks which outline quality teaching, but these are not solutions in themselves

While frameworks which map teaching standards may provide a valuable starting point for conversations about teaching practice, this study points out that unquestioningly adhering to them is not a recipe for improving teaching. The Teacher Growth Initiative used the Danielson Framework for Teaching as a basis for reflection and coaching

conversation, but not, as it is used in some places, as a scorecard for assessing teacher performance. The success of the Teacher Growth Initiative approach in gaining teacher buy-in and inciting reflection on and change of practice, as evidenced in this study's data, suggests that a growth model focused on building teachers, rather than evaluating them, is an effective approach to building teacher capacity. The focus on using mapping frameworks for teachers to improve themselves, rather than to be scored by others, supports those who warn against negative drivers of educational change (Fullan, 2011; Hattie, 2015b; Sahlberg, 2015). Pink's (2009) work on motivation would also suggest that external evaluative scoring would be ineffective in resulting in improvement of practice. A formative focus on continuous improvement, as advocated for by Wiliam (2014b), is an appropriate lens for the use of teaching frameworks when growth is the focus.

This study agrees that a specific map of agreed standards and descriptors can help teachers to think systematically about the complexity of their task and apply a framework to big picture and individual aspects of their practice. Reflecting the results of the Measures of Effective Teaching study (Kane & Staiger, 2012), the present study found that the Danielson Framework for Teaching focused observers' attention on specific aspects of teaching practice; established common evidentiary standards for each level of practice; and created a common vocabulary for pursuing a shared vision of effective instruction. The Danielson Framework for Teaching was seen by participants of this study as having the potential to facilitate a common language about teaching in a school, and precise teacher reflection on practice. As one teacher noted, the Framework shows a continuum of possibilities of practice which can be used by any teacher regardless of discipline or year level. Teachers noted that they brought their mental recollection of the Framework into their lessons, adjusting teaching according to their shared knowledge of what excellent teaching could look like. It was also, however, questioned in terms of its compartmentalisation and atomisation of teaching into parts, with one leader wary of its potential to fracture teachers' discussion of their teaching, disregarding the complex and holistic nature of teaching.

By sharing teacher and leader perceptions of the use of a framework of teaching descriptors, in action, this study showed that these maps can be a useful tool for growth-based conversation, precise teacher self-reflection, and shifts in classroom practice. They were also shown to have the capacity to develop shared understandings of what good teaching is and a shared language of practice. This supports claims by Csikszentmihalyi et

al. (2011) that good work occurs when there are clear standards which become internalised by professionals.

Frameworks of and for teaching are not, however, seen by this study as a simple remedy for improving teaching practice, or as a tool for scoring teachers in evaluation processes. While the Danielson Framework for Teaching was an important element of the Teacher Growth Initiative, it was implemented alongside an observation and coaching model which helped to draw out teachers' reflections; the lesson data, conversation, and development of a collaborative professional learning culture, were vital parts of the application of the Framework. Rather than being solutions in themselves to developing quality teaching, mapping frameworks are tools which can be added to a school's arsenal of resources to help build clear, shared understandings of good teaching, incite rich professional conversations around practice, and encourage individual teachers to reflect and adjust their teaching.

Professional learning should trust the capacity of teachers and focus on growth while providing explicit support

Like the five participants in Baguley and Kerby's (2012) study of professional development opportunities in one Australian state school, this study found that teachers and leaders find some professional learning (often mandated or whole-staff activities) to be ill-conceived and irrelevant. While participants were willing to submit to professional learning mandates and expectations, they considered these experiences to be experiences of compliance rather than of learning. The Teacher Growth Initiative at Lutwidge School provided the opportunity to generate perceptions of school-based educators involved in an ongoing school intervention which demonstrated, in action, trust in the capacity of teachers. The Teacher Growth Initiative model and school change process, like the leaders interviewed for this study, assume that teachers are capable, reflective practitioners. Along the lines of Wiliam's (2014a) suggestion that classroom teachers are the best people to decide what to improve in their classrooms, in the Teacher Growth Initiative teachers being coached chose the foci for their improvement, the type of data to be collected (such as transcribed observation notes, video or audio), and the indicators of their success. The classroom data collected by Teacher Growth Initiative coaches were owned by the teacher coachees as material for meaningful self-reflection; these were not passed on to management or shared with anyone outside of the coaching relationship.

This approach provided ownership and engagement (Fullan, 2011), showed respect for the teachers, and trusted in their ability to grow from it, rather than assume a need to be evaluated on it.

Some participants in this study were initially unconvinced of the choice of the cognitive coaching model as the coaching approach of the Teacher Growth Initiative, while others, such as leaders who had previous experience of it, were enthusiastic about its use. The researcher and teachers, through their experiences as cognitive coaching trainees, coaches, and coachees, found cognitive coaching to be an effective choice for the non-evaluative, non-hierarchical Teacher Growth Initiative model. They felt it helped teachers feel in control of their learning even in the face of vulnerability. This supports arguments that developing a collaborative professional learning culture is best served by a non-evaluative minimally-hierarchical environment (Ackland, 1991; Joyce & Showers, 1988). Some leaders, however, questioned the lack of directedness in a cognitive coaching approach, worrying that teachers might need more explicit support in reflecting and developing ways in which to improve.

The researcher and teachers, by training in cognitive coaching, taking on the role of coach, and being coached themselves, found that they were reflecting on and adjusting their own classroom practices. Consistent with Wiliam (2014b), this shows, in action, in context, a coaching model which takes on board that traditional forms of feedback can be counter-productive. It focuses on the teacher as driver of their own growth, rather than as recipient of advice (Muijs et al., 2014; Timperley et al., 2007). Training in cognitive coaching shaped the way participants had conversations with colleagues, partners, students, and their own children, reflecting Batt's (2010) finding that cognitive coaching can work to shift professional perceptions and practices. A cognitive coaching approach aligns with those things outlined by Barber and Mourshed (2007) as keys to improving teachers' instructional practices: becoming aware of own approaches and specific weaknesses; delivering effective instruction; gaining understanding of best practices; and being motivated to improve. Cognitive coaching, as experienced by this study's participants, does work on cognition and self-directedness, developing an awareness of own practice, reflective capacity, and intrinsic propulsion to improve.

A cognitive coaching model does not necessarily, however, develop expertise or understanding of best practices. By relying on the internal capacities of the coachee,

taking a purely coaching role when cognitive coaching (as opposed to the other cognitive coaching support functions of evaluating, consulting, and collaborating) means that teachers do not have access, in the coaching conversation, to resources external to themselves. In this study there were questions from teacher and leader participants around the use of cognitive coaching and its appropriateness for all individuals and all situations. Some leaders worried that a one-size-fits all approach to coaching and professional growth was problematic. Teachers and leaders in this study echoed the concerns of other studies (Cordingley & Buckler, 2012; Goker, 2006) that some teachers might have difficulty being self-reflective or might lack self-awareness, diagnostic skills for own practice, a repertoire of language for reflection, or strategies for improvement. This suggests that a cognitive coaching approach, while valuable for accessing educators' existing internal resources, may not in itself be enough to build internal teacher capacity. It raises the question of where teachers might get help in knowing and understanding what strategies they might use or how their pedagogy might develop.

There are clues in the research site of this study as to what kinds of additional explicit support might benefit teachers in their growth and development. Lutwidge School seemed to be a school with a positive professional learning culture and available funding to support staff learning. It offered additional options for developing teacher's teaching such as instructional classroom consultants, traditional professional development courses, and collaborative action research opportunities. That the Teacher Growth Initiative coaching model is an intervention which sits alongside other work, such as professional learning communities and external pedagogy consultants, reflects Cordingley and Buckler's (2012) suggestion of a parallel approach of specialists working alongside coaches. A knowledge of best practices might also be assisted through the use of a framework like the Danielson Framework for Teaching which can show, through its specific rubric descriptors and examples, what excellent teaching might look like. As the researcher and teachers in this study discussed observing others' lessons as an impetus to making incremental changes to their own classroom practice, encouraging teachers to visit each other's' classrooms, in addition to a data-based cognitive coaching cycle, might result in the sharing of knowledge and in the collective development of teaching practices in a school.

This study was only able to glean insights into the perspectives of the two teachers who felt comfortable enough to participate in the study until its conclusion and have their data

shared; it did not gather data on those who might have felt alienated from the school or the Teacher Growth Initiative. That two teachers withdrew from the study part way through suggests that teachers feel exposed sharing their experiences, and perhaps do not feel trusted to speak their mind to schools or researchers. Supporting teachers in leading their own learning, and trusting in them as reflective professionals with the capacity for self-reflection, is a small step towards involving teachers as leaders within schools. Both Louis (2006) and Rose (2006) recommend that teachers be made fully able to lead initiatives, as was the case in the Teacher Growth Initiative. In school-based initiatives, having teachers actively leading the professional learning opportunities impacts positively on a range of student outcomes (Timperley et al., 2007). A tension remains, however, in ensuring non-hierarchical coaching relationships, as teacher vulnerability and the possibility of performative, rather than authentic, teaching increases when there is a hierarchical imbalance between observer-coach and coachee.

Transformational professional learning can be uncomfortable and chaotic

This study found that learning which changes beliefs and practice can be uncomfortable and chaotic. Of the six leaders who discussed their Masters study as an important learning experience, for one it was their most significant piece of learning and had become a core part of their identity. This leader talked about how the Masters content had at first seemed impenetrable and that it was in breaking through into understanding that their ideas about learning and teaching were transformed. Similarly, the researcher talked about the PhD process as a place of discomfort which, in conjunction with supervisory support, was a crucible of growth. Other researcher examples of uncomfortable growth moments included being a coachee in coaching conversations about less-than-successful lessons, or rating herself against the Danielson Framework for Teaching. With the support of a coach, these experiences of disequilibrium within an environment of trust (Costa & Garmston, 2003) resulted in learning and growth. These experiences reflect that it is a combination of care and challenge, discomfort and support, which can lead to breaking through learning barriers into new spaces of understanding, new ways of thinking or new levels of skill. These findings suggest that the notion of a holding environment in educational settings pay attention to being highly supportive yet highly challenging places for teachers and leaders to grow (Drago-Severson et al., 2013).

Schools need to work with an awareness of the vulnerability and anxiety of teachers in regards to opening their classrooms (Goodson, 1991; Louis, 2006), although this is difficult in the face of a global environment which privileges evaluation and measurement by external tests. The present study submits that schools which allow and encourage their educators to be vulnerable and take risks, without punitive consequences, may facilitate the development of growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). While Dweck's work on mindset focuses on the individual, recommending praise for process or strategy, it follows that an organisation can build a growth mindset culture for its educators by providing support, challenge, and interventions which are based in the belief that educators have the internal capacity for reflection and growth. This approach sits in opposition to punitive or performative schemes, which are based on keeping educators and schools accountable to externally-imposed, numerically-measured standards, rather than growing educators and schools through growth-focused interventions which operate from a starting point of accepting teachers as reflective professionals with the capacity to improve.

As well as being uncomfortable, these participants showed that professional learning and growth can be surprising, nonlinear, and messy. For instance, the researcher and teachers, while observing lessons for the purposes of coaching others, found that observing the lessons of others impacted their own teaching practice; they found themselves borrowing or drawing from other teachers' teaching. These kinds of unexpected, synaptic learning happenings reflect Smylie's (1995) discussion of unplanned, incidental learning which occurs in surprising and unpredictable ways. It is also reminiscent of Garmston and Wellman's (2013) dynamical school principle "tiny events create major disturbances;" seemingly minor moments can have substantial impacts on educators and their practices.

The researcher's, teachers', and leaders' stories reflect rhizomatic—that is, fluid and nonlinear—growth with a multiplicity of intersecting, sometimes contradictory, influences.⁵⁵ Rather than considering the rhizome as rapidly colonising a person or school with genetically identical forms, perhaps the rhizome can be seen for its unexpected

⁵⁵ While not situating this research within the philosophical world view of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), it seems worthwhile and interesting to burrow in an unforeseen direction towards their conceptualisation of the rhizome as it embodies the notion of unpredictable butterfly-effect learning which emerged from participant data. Rhizomatic growth is viral and nonlinear, spreading "like a patch of oil" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 7), reflecting the oil in water metaphor of one of the leader participants of this study. For theorisation of the rhizome see also Gough (2006), Gregoriou (2004), O'Riley (2003), and Roy (2003). Rhizomatic learning as a theory has also been appropriated in educational contexts (Cormier, 2008; Mackness & Bell, 2015). In this thesis the term is an unexpected diversion. The term "rhizome" is appropriated from its original context in order to explore alternative thinking around professional learning and growth.

diversionary pathways, tentacling out in all directions with false starts and unexpected twists and turns. Rhizomatic growth is viral and nonlinear, reflecting the oil in water metaphor of one of the leader participants and the dandelion seeds on the breeze metaphor of the researcher, which are in contrast to the linear tree metaphor of another leader. Professional growth can be like a rhizome in that is continuous, ongoing, and adaptable. It breaks off at some points and shoots off at others, without clear pattern or order. Small, unexpected epiphanic moments can be vital for the growth and (trans)formation of teachers and leaders. Data from this study expose “minor disturbances” as those impactful moments, relationships, conversations, and life events which have the potency to shift core beliefs, shape senses of self, and alter learning trajectories, in nonlinear, viral, and synaptic ways. Small things, not necessarily called “professional learning” or “professional development,” can be catalysts for deep and lasting personal learning and individual change.

Garmston and Wellman compare school systems to weather systems, labelling them “nonlinear” and “dynamical” systems in which “cause and effect are not tightly linked” (2013, p. 8). Even participating in the research interviews created ripples in people’s thinking about their own leadership or learning. The researcher’s epiphany that she grows in times of discomfort came during a research interview, suggesting that talking aloud can surface realisations which would otherwise go unrealised. The interview itself was a site for generation of new knowledge, of professional practice, of making new sense and new meaning, as with Johnson’s (2009) interview of an Australian principal. This research has provided evidence of the butterfly effects of change in schools. Leaders in particular were hopeful that the Teacher Growth Initiative was a catalytic context which was resulting in positive shifts in collaboration, reflection and school culture.

8.3 School change

School culture has been found to impact teachers’ professional identities, satisfaction, commitment, and motivation (Day et al., 2006). It is pivotal to organisational and individual change. In weaving together the perspectives of teachers, middle leaders, and executive leaders, this study found that school change is context-specific, nonlinear, and encompassing the collective as well as the individual. It was crucial to include teachers in this study as they are frequently overlooked in school reform efforts (Hargreaves, 1995;

Sahlberg, 2011). Also importantly, the leaders of this study are a combination of both executive level and middle leaders, a move away from looking at the principal as the primary school leadership figure (as in Comer, 1980; DuFour, 2002; Holmes, Clement, & Albright, 2013; Louis, 2006). By looking across one school context at multiple perspectives of a school intervention, this study answers the call for more perspectives on school change and professional learning (Fullan, 2000; Goldenberg, 2004; Sarason, 1996). The discussion of school change which follows is influenced by the researcher and teacher participants, and especially by the 11 leader participants who shared considerations and tensions of leading professional learning and school change in their context.

This study's data reflected Senge's (2012) claims that teacher improvement requires shared vision, developing professional communities, and adequate resourcing. The data from all 14 participants showed an understanding of a shared organisational vision, working professional communities within the school context, and a commitment by the school of time, money, and staff to research, trial, and develop a new intervention over time. Participant reflections on the Teacher Growth Initiative, however, fall short of Senge's other recommendations of an emphasis on unlearning and a fearless community of inquiry. While participants discussed shifts in their beliefs and developing of new practices, there was not a sense of unlearning old ones. Certainly, the Teacher Growth Initiative intended to allow teachers to risk being vulnerable in order to grow, but the participants approached challenges with willingness and trepidation, rather than fearlessness. The withdrawal of two teacher participants from the study, even with the ethical measures taken to protect them, reflects the continuing vulnerability of teachers and their wariness to engage honestly and publically with school change.

In answer to the research questions posed about the phenomena of school change—"What factors of school change are perceived as impactful by teachers and school leaders?" and "How do school leaders' identities shape their strategic approach to teacher professional learning?"—this study found that alignment and the feeling of "making a difference" were constant themes. The researcher, teachers, and school leaders saw their identities as entwined with the school context in which they worked. They desired alignment of their personal vision with the organisational vision, as well as that organisational vision would be mirrored in organisational action or "walking the talk."

School change is dependent on and entwined with context

The school is a site of individual teachers' practice, of teachers' learning and growth, and of leaders' leading of teacher learning and school reform. People's experiences are inextricable from their contexts (Moen, 2006). While this study shows that there are many non-school sites of professional learning, the school emerged as a major player in the identities and learning of its teachers and leaders. The findings affirm the importance of school environments of safety and trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Comer (1980) argues that school change needs to be matched with the needs of a particular school and its particular students and families. This study would add that school change also be matched to its particular teachers and leaders. The Teacher Growth Initiative was slowly and deliberately borne out of the Lutwidge School context, including its vision, work, students, and teachers. While its approach and tools seem to be working for that school, it can not necessarily be lifted and applied to another environment. Rather, as the leader participants noted, any school decision or intervention would benefit from being founded in its context; each school can assess its own context and develop aligned, tailored interventions.

Those interviewed for this study found that a school intervention which is perceived to be aligned with the collectively understood organisational vision is more likely to be taken on board by teachers and school leaders. The researcher and teachers in this study felt that the school and its leaders walked their talk. Most leaders felt that the Teacher Growth Initiative felt like an extension and enaction of their own beliefs about what learning should be. The Teacher Growth Initiative was seen, not as a disconnected superficial project as warned against by Fullan and Quinn (2016), but as an intentional move which resonated across individual, collective, and organisational senses of identity. This reflects that from the outset, the Teacher Growth Initiative was articulated by Lutwidge School at the planning stage as building on the school's strategic foundation and existing work. On the one hand participants, in this case from a self-selected group of volunteers, accepted and respected that the initiative explicitly emerged out of published research on teacher quality and from the school's strategic intents. On the other, there were reservations about it as an approach which expected one size to fit all teaching staff, and about the large amount of constant change happening at Lutwidge School.

Participant data showed a clear association between individual professional identities and the school context, suggesting that schools consider the identities of their teachers and leaders when considering change and its implementation. It also indicates that school contexts be the starting point for school change. The researcher, teachers, and leaders expressed the need to feel alignment with the school context in which they worked. This included alignment of core beliefs and values, as well as a confidence that the school would make ethical, student-centred strategic decisions. A shared focus on positive impacts for students was a thread which tied researcher, teachers, leaders, and the school together in common purpose. Leaders expressed that the Teacher Growth Initiative was an embodiment of their personal and professional beliefs and visions. The need for contextual fit between teacher or leader and school, builds upon Hammerness' (2006) findings that teachers search for a place which aligns with their visions for their students and their classrooms, sometimes going from school to school in search of one which feels right. It is possible that those Lutwidge School educators who chose not to participate in the study, or who withdrew from it, did not feel an alignment to the school, but the researcher, teachers, and leaders who volunteered for this study were willing to engage with school change precisely because they felt that sense of rightness which came from a feeling that they could be authentically themselves and were aligned with the vision, purpose, and action of the school. This included a belief that the school and its leaders walked the talk, that school vision was more than words on a prospectus, but vision in action. This builds on Evans' (1996) claim that new initiatives rely on real engagement, genuine investment, and extra effort on the part of teachers; and with Pink's (2009) contention that people need a foundation of clear individual and organisational purpose. Individual purpose and identity need to be aligned with organisational purpose and change.

This study also found that schools need to be mindful of innovation fatigue in order to keep teachers and leaders feeling in control of their lives, excited about their work, and with enough mental space to be learners themselves. While leaders were constantly balancing sensitivity to context with the need for forward momentum, teachers and leaders acknowledged the busyness of the Lutwidge School environment. That is, the constant pressures to innovate and change, and the tendency for individuals to feel fatigued by the amount and pace of change. For teachers this manifested in feelings of stress and being rushed, while leaders often felt like they were racing to keep up. For leaders, there was the challenge of keeping up with all aspects of their roles, combined

with protecting their own wellness, and the challenge of finding space and quiet for their own thinking and reflection. Both teachers and leaders saw time and the logistics of change as challenges, but each group had different ways to deal with those challenges. Teachers were able to self-regulate and find personal organisational strategies for managing time, deadlines, workload, and stress. Leaders needed these strategies for managing their own time, workload, and responsibilities, but had the additional layer of strategically considering how to manage the need for forward-moving school change with their understanding of the pressures on teachers.

Teachers also talked of innovation weariness in which the pace of change was draining. They preferred slow deliberate change processes, built on the foundation of vision aligned with the beliefs and values of their teacher identities. The Teacher Growth Initiative was seen as potentially embodying a slow process with a research-based school-aligned vision, which allowed collaboration. In slowly building positive responses and buy-in from teachers, a deliberate “go slow” process which involves teachers and allows them to feel ownership, may help school change to “go fast” by ensuring that new initiatives are positively received by staff. Teachers in this study identified that adequate resourcing and provision of time is a necessary aspect of school change (Timperley et al., 2007; Senge, 2012). They wanted to feel confident that the school would think through any new initiatives and commit time and resources to properly supporting them. In the case of the Teacher Growth Initiative, they felt that this change need had been attended to.

However, the data of this study suggested that implementing change slowly and deliberately with adequate resourcing is no guarantee of a problem-free implementation. In regards to the Teacher Growth Initiative teachers were cautious about how all Lutwidge School teachers would respond once the initiative moved from a pilot program to a fully implemented and mandated process. As the pilot group had been volunteers they were not a representative sample of the whole Lutwidge School teaching staff and their potential responses to the teacher growth model.

The school context itself loomed large in the phenomenon of school change. The holonomous relationships between individuals and the collective or the organisation were shown to be mutually transformative. They interacted and intersected, with each shaping the other. Alignment between individual and school was overwhelmingly important for participants. School leaders’ identities were seen to shape and be shaped by the school

context in which they operated; in times when identities were discordant with school culture, school leaders had chosen to leave that school. A key belief underpinning the school and its intervention were a belief in teachers at the school to have the capacity for self-reflection and growth. This led to the choice of a cognitive coaching model of coaching in which non-hierarchical trust-focused coaching relationships were utilised to facilitate teachers' growth in self-directedness, reflection on practice, efficacy, and willingness to take risks and be vulnerable. This study showed cognitive coaching, used in combination with the Danielson Framework for Teaching, to be potentially transformative for coach and coachee, and an effective choice for a growth-focused professional learning model. The study's findings suggest, however, that the approach be combined with supports—such as consultants, tailored learning opportunities, and teachers working together, including observing each other's lessons—to support learning through a variety of parallel approaches.

School change is collective and individual, requiring alignment of the two

This study found that school change is concerned with balancing individual and organisational, singular and collective. Participant responses to the Teacher Growth Initiative, as an example of a school change intervention, revealed that individuals can be accepting of, engaged in, and excited about school change, when they share the vision of the school and feel that their personal vision matches the organisational one. This study reveals what distributed leadership can look like, in action, in one school context, showing that when a school embraces the notion of collective leadership, leaders empower their teachers, and schools trust teachers to lead change, such as in the Teacher Growth Initiative. The researcher and teachers in this study felt that leadership was distributed and shared with them as they were given the opportunity to be a voice in the development of change and the building of the organisation. Distributing leadership, this study shows, means sharing power, not just tasks. In the Teacher Growth Initiative, teachers were charged with designing, piloting, developing, and recommending change. This gave them a sense of having a voice and shared purpose with school leaders. Not only does effective school change require shared vision to be put into collective action, but this sharing of vision needs to include the personal investment of, and identity alignment with, individuals. The researcher and teacher participants did invest and align personally with the school and the intervention.

Working together and being part of the collective, in a professional learning community team, was an important aspect of the Teacher Growth Initiative intervention for the researcher and teachers. Collaboration with others and building of networked communities was seen by teachers and leaders as helpful during times of change. Teachers saw each other as experts from whom to learn, despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that the Teacher Growth Initiative team was made up of teachers who did not have a position of responsibility within the school. High-performing schools view teachers as researchers (Jensen et al., 2012); and participatory action research approaches recognise teachers as experts, co-researchers, and knowledge producers, leading to transformative professional learning (Hudson-Ross, 2001). Here, teachers improved their knowledge and practice by engaging with research, evidence, and each other (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). There was diversity, commonality, mutual respect, and trust within the non-hierarchical team, as experienced by the two teachers who were willing to share their experiences through this study. Collaborative school cultures serve both the individual and the organisation, building on the personal strengths, purpose, and vision of individuals, and transferring improved individual quality into amassed organisational competence, purpose, and vision, thereby serving the school's goals (Fullan, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2005).

Moreover, leadership is in some ways collective. In contrast to claims that the school leader is the primary feedback-giver and evaluator of teachers (Tuytens & Devos, 2011), teachers in this study saw each other as valuable resources and internal experts. Leaders, too, while sometimes choosing to be directive, often chose to take a more distributed and collectively responsible approach to leading. Fluidity between directed and distributed leadership was based on the leader's purpose and their understanding of the person or people being led. When their aim was to empower, leaders stepped back or helped others to step forward. When they perceived a staff member needed support or to be performance managed, they made the decision to approach leadership a more traditional, top down way. In these ways the leaders were aptly represented in the character of the Cheshire Cat; they were aware of and deliberate about their shifting roles, considering what their staff might need, and revealing different parts of their leader selves at different times and in different situations. The leader responses also, however, revealed what Watson (2013) calls the control/collaboration paradox, in which leaders grappled to find a way to be both controlling and not controlling; to ensure discipline while allowing collaboration; to lead while also trusting others to lead.

The participants of this study valued the collective and individual alignment of purpose in which the student was at the centre of their work. Teachers saw student centrality as pertaining to their classrooms and their building of positive individual relationships with students. Leaders saw student centrality from a balcony strategic perspective in which the student is pivotal to school change and school-wide decision making. The agreed collective purpose of school change from teachers and leaders was that of best serving each student; the individual and collective purpose was aligned, resulting in engagement with the change initiative.

As well as the collective, the individual and their sense of aligned authentic self within the larger whole, emerged as an important part of effective school change from researcher, teacher, and leader perspectives. Teachers and leaders preferred to feel a sense of ownership, voice, purpose, and impact in their schools. Feeling purposeful, in control, and with ownership of their role, and having an impact on school issues, led to increased feelings of engagement, efficacy, and the ability to have a positive influence. Teachers involved in the Teacher Growth Initiative felt that their involvement in the team gave them a voice and a feeling of doing valuable work which had a research-based starting point and student learning as a central motivator. It was this which had one teacher saying they were looking forward to each day thinking “this is what I want to be doing.” Teachers were propelled through the Teacher Growth Initiative as it was work in which they believed and with which they identified. This study confirms that teacher growth is benefited by helping teachers to see themselves as constantly able to improve their practice and by rewarding hard work and self-reflective practice (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2011; Dweck, 2006). This study found that it is not only tapping in to teachers’ feeling of doing valuable work that leads to engagement in school change initiatives; teacher, leaders, and the school need to agree on and share the purpose of the work, in this case, their core purpose of helping students learn.

School leaders added an important aspect to the puzzle as they were those managing the change and leading the learning of their staff. Leaders attempted to work through the competing challenges of the need to move forward, often quickly, with the need for a coherent, research-influenced vision. Momentum and vision were also balanced with the need to look after the wellbeing of teachers. Leaders were focused on the continual challenge of balancing the needs of the organisation with the needs of the individual. The organisation provided the trunk of vision, but each of their teachers was a branch which

needed tending and attention. The findings that in professional learning and professional leading, the individual and the organisation need to be honoured, build upon the notion of holonomy (Costa & Garmston, 2006) in which individual and organisation work symbiotically together. The perceptions of leaders in this study cement the view that schools need collective capacity and independent purpose (Fullan, 2001), communal choreography and individual effort (Rosenholtz, 1991).

The need for schools and systems to consider and allow for the individual's self in change initiatives was also reflected in the scepticism from some teachers and leaders around the mandatory nature of any change; that when an intervention such as the Teacher Growth Initiative changes from a voluntary opt-in model to a compulsory-for-everyone model, it may develop challenges. The questions here were around whether it was possible to apply a one-size-fits-all process of professional learning, whether the Teacher Growth Initiative model differentiated enough for the range of academic staff at Lutwidge School, and whether individuals would feel that the change was meaningful for them or being done to them. Would academic staff perceive that the change was internalised and about them as individuals, or externally assigned to them? There was also the question of whether school governance might lead to the Teacher Growth Initiative evolving over time into a more top down, less teacher-trusting approach.

School change is fluid, viral, and unpredictable

The Teacher Growth Initiative appears to have been working towards fulfilling some of Lutwidge School's intended aims and expectations, such as depersonalising of classroom practice, increased reflectiveness of teachers, and development of a more collaborative, risk taking, professional learning culture. For instance, participants noted the development of pedagogical collaborations between previously unconnected teachers across the school, increasingly reflective conversations around pedagogy by teachers, increasingly shared language about classroom practice, and a shift in the professional learning culture of the school.

The presented stories, however, additionally suggest that the Teacher Growth Initiative has had some unexpected consequences. For example, the researcher and teachers found themselves using the paraphrasing, pausing, and questioning tools of cognitive coaching in classrooms with their students, as well as with colleagues and in out-of-school

relationships. The increased collaboration between teaching staff, who would not have otherwise worked together, also resulted in ongoing collaborative, not just coaching, relationships. The dandelion seed and oil in water participant metaphors, in contrast to the linear tree and ship-sailing metaphors of other participants, are like Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) rhizomatic change that spreads like a patch of oil, reflect the fluid, viral, and unpredictable nature of school change interventions such as the Teacher Growth Initiative, which can have far-reaching and hard-to-measure impacts.

8.4 This study's contribution

As discussed in this chapter, this study took an approach which intended to add a contextual and perspectival layer to what is known about professional identity, professional learning, and school change. In using narrative inquiry to delve into the perspectives of the teachers, middle leaders, and executive leaders at one Australian school, it added middle leaders and well-resourced independent schools to the conversation around the studied phenomena. It drew together three fields not often considered simultaneously, and explored the complexities of and interactions between them.

School context emerged as a major point of importance in professional identity, professional learning, and school change. While the Teacher Growth Initiative emerged out of the Lutwidge School strategic plan, it was then teachers who had driven the initiative and developed the model with the view to building a meaningful, contextually-appropriate growth experience for teachers at the school. Participants were generally optimistic about the potential of the Teacher Growth Initiative to shift learning culture, improve teaching practice, and build collaborative communities of practice across the school, but it was not without reservations. The balance of the individual with the collective, which was a central focus of the school leader participants in their leadership work, was a constant and necessary consideration for teachers and leaders as they worked to grow themselves, grow other individuals, and grow the organisation, in coherent ways.

Alignment between identity, learning, and school was the thread which tied individuals to their organisations, allowing them to engage authentically and with purpose in the work of the collective. In this case a shared purpose emerged as a theme across participants and

one to which they were committed: making a difference to the lives and learning of students. This very particular group of teachers and leaders viewed a commitment to being lifelong learners themselves as a key identity and practice for ongoing growth towards serving the students of their classrooms and their school.

Professional learning was revealed to be a lifelong process made up of epiphanic life moments which are professional and personal, formal and informal, in schools and out of schools, singular and collaborative. Transformation of teacher and leader identity and practice occurred in environments which were supportive, challenging, and growth focused, rather than evaluation driven. Frameworks which provided a map of what good teaching looks like, through explicit shared standards, were shown to provide some commonality of language and a starting point for conversations, but were catalysts for reflection rather than models of growth in themselves. Individual professional change and collective school change were both revealed to be potentially messy, unpredictable, and fluid processes in which small unexpected moments can have minute and far-reaching butterfly effects.

9. Everything's got a moral: Conclusion

“Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it.”

(Carroll, 2014, p. 98)

This study used a bricolaged lens—weaving narrative with a social constructionist, phenomenological perspective—to peer into one school context. It focused on the phenomena of contextually-embedded professional identities, professional learning, and school change, as they coalesce in one Australian, independent school. A close look at narrative data from the researcher, two teachers, six middle leaders, and five executive leaders, was a portal into one school which was perceived by participants to be walking its talk and embodying notions of shared coherent vision and distributed leadership. Unlike other studies which examine socially disadvantaged schools (Comer, 1980; Louis, 2006) or government schools (Baguley & Kerby, 2012), this adds to existing literatures an example of a school which is applying research recommendations and working from positive change drivers, rather than accountability or performativity agendas. While many of the findings are not new, the contribution of the thesis lies in its holistic approach in bringing together personal, professional, and school change, which has implications for school leaders, policy makers, and providers of professional learning.

As explained in Chapter One, in which the context and warrant for this study was outlined, this thesis utilises as a symbolic and structural frame *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and the rabbit hole as portal into a land of phenomenological wondering. Chapter Two explored existing perspectives on professional identity, professional learning, and school change, leading to the formation of the study's research questions. Chapter Three delineated the bricolaged paradigmatic stance underpinning this study, while Chapter Four outlined the narrative method used. Chapters Five, Six, and Seven presented this study's data in storied format. Utilising the Dreaming Alice voice of storyteller, these necessitated going down the rabbit hole, transporting reader and researcher into the storied worlds of Alice, the White Rabbit, and the Cheshire Cat. The character names operated as literary emblems of researcher-insider, teacher, and school leader, with each story ending with a brief summary of findings. Chapter Eight braided the stories together, situating this study within existing literatures and discussing in what ways it adds, elaborates on, and contributes to meaning.

Specifically, this study was found to have contributed to the theorisation of professional identities as fluid, malleable, multiple, and in a constant state of becoming; thriving on deeply-felt purpose and alignment with organisational context; and sometimes conceptualised through metaphor. Professional learning was found to: encompass epiphanic life moments; be facilitated by mapping frameworks which outline quality teaching; be most effective when based on trust of teacher capacity and focused on growth; and be potentially uncomfortable and chaotic. School change was found to be dependent on and entwined with context; collective and individual, requiring alignment of the two; and fluid, viral, and unpredictable.

The ending of the novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* shows readers how our experiences shape us and shape others through their telling and retelling. On the last page of the novel, Alice awakens and tells her sister about her “curious dream” of Wonderland and its creatures. Her sister then imagines Alice telling and retelling the story of “the dream of Wonderland of long ago” to others as she grows up (Carroll, p. 141). Alice herself has been transformed by her experiences down the rabbit hole, and in the sharing of her story she influences her sister and others with whom she will share her story in the future. Similarly, this study has shaped the identity of the researcher, as revealed in the Alice story of Chapter Five, and perhaps this thesis-retelling of the stories of researcher, teachers, and school leaders of Lutwidge School will have a role in influencing others. This final chapter, the conclusion of the thesis, looks at the implications of this research for theorising the phenomena under study; research method; educational policy and practice; and future research.

9.1 Theory

Identities, including those occurring in ordinary ways in ordinary lives, are worthy of study (Lawler, 2014). This study adds to the conversation around theories of professional identities and professional learning, finding that identities are malleable and in flux, and that professional learning is identity shaping, practice-developing, and made up of a range of epiphanic life moments. While the relationship between school reform and educators' professional identities has not been the subject of extensive research, research and reform which address professional identity are likely to connect with the long-term learning needs of educators and students. This study contributes to the theorising of professional

learning by finding that educators consider their professional learning to encompass, not just work and study, but life events and relationships.

Life and learning experiences were found to be collections of moments which have the capacity to shape or move beliefs, or open up new directions of thinking as a teacher or leader. Identity can be conceptualised as a learning trajectory, in which we define who we are by where we have been and where we are going (Wenger, 1998). By finding that professional identities are multiple, fluid, and shaped in unexpected ways by moments that leave deep “scars”⁵⁶ of experience, this study contributes to debates around the theorising of identity. That is, its findings are in opposition to the conceptualisation of identity as embodying a core essence of self which is unwilling to change. While some participants studied here discussed their professional identities as needing to be authentically performed in the school context, their stories demonstrated that these identities, their underlying beliefs, and the ways in which these were enacted, shifted and grew over time. Educators studied here sometimes perceived that they have a core self, but their discussion of the evolution of self-perceptions and core beliefs showed that identities are liquid (Dervin, 2011; Findlay & Jones, 2014) and idiosyncratic. Teaching, coaching, and leading were shown to be identity work, as part of educators’ fluid being and constant becoming. This study supports the theory that identities are complex, shifting, plural, contextually-bound processes in progress which are constantly evolving over time. Contributing to the theorising of identity, this study shows that identities are linked to contexts and that educators feel a deep desire to align their senses of identity with the contexts in which they work. This affirms discussions of identities as situated.

This study reveals that what forms or transforms educators can be any experience in their lives which influences who they are and what they believe. Identity is inextricable from learning and learning is inextricable from identity. Studying professional identity in conjunction with professional learning has the potential to continue to enrich understandings of what shapes professional identity, facilitates growth, and shifts practice. Emerging from this study is the additional layer that life-wide epiphanies are a key area for study around professional learning. Layering the perspectives of teachers, middle leaders, and executive leaders resulted in a rich view of how those in one school context view themselves, their learning, and school change, implying that additional studies which take

⁵⁶ One school leader participant referred to professional learning and identity-forming experiences as leaving “scars” on their self, shaping who they became and continued to become.

into account a variety of perspectives, and which move away from a view of the hero-principal as central leadership protagonist, would be valuable in continuing to develop understandings about identities, learning, and change. Studies like this one, which draw together interrelated phenomena, are useful in providing a fresh, holistic lens through which to view fields which are often treated as discrete entities.

9.2 Method

This study, and especially its method and thesis form, finds its place within and contributes to the realm of creative research methods. It is situated with those who have experimented with fictional, literary, and metaphorical concepts and tools. Examples include Findlay and Jones (2014), Jones (2013, 2015), Kallio (2015), Kara (2013), Wiebe (2010), and Wiebe (2014). Utilising narrative method, data, and product, this thesis threads together pasts, presents, and futures (Jones, 2012) while tackling the challenges of narrative inquiry. In finding solutions to challenges of making meaning and preserving participant anonymity, this study chose not to parameterise itself with prescribed linear procedures, such as those used by Labov (1972, 1997). Rather, it experimented more flexibly and creatively with narrative at the more playful end of the narrative research continuum (Smith, 2007).

While some caution that researchers who use fictional and artistic devices risk not being taken seriously as researchers (Barone, 2007; Rhodes & Brown, 2005), others see literary artefacts such as novels as partners of narrative research, as sources of meaning, models of inspiration, and examples of artistry (Czarniawska, 2007). While all accounts are story-like to some extent, in narrative inquiry fact and fiction are muddled, with some blurring genre boundaries between fiction and non-fiction (Barone, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), sometimes into what Kallio (2015) calls “factional stories.” Some researchers write fiction as their way of representing lived experiences (Leggo & Sameshima, 2014; Wiebe, 2014), or use poetry (Loch, 2015), or photography (Harrison, 2002) as method. Viewing research as a creative act allows researchers to explore the relationship between fact and fiction, and experiment with ways in which literary concepts and tools can assist researchers in communicating meaning in their research texts (Rhodes & Brown, 2005). Creativity in science can enrich inquiry and deepen meaning (Eisner & Powell, 2002; Slattery & Langerock, 2002). In the case of this research, a systematic process of data

generation and analysis was combined with creative elements of literary metaphor and storytelling voice, contributing to the field of creative research methods. Importantly, it was also an effective way to tell the stories of the participants in a way that protected their anonymity.

This study was conducted with the intention of honouring the stories and voices of participants and capturing the essence of their stories in terms of the phenomena under study. It aimed to use imaginative narrative-telling as a portal to transport readers into the experiences of others while maintaining their anonymity. The literary work *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* provided the golden key to the study's data. It provided an extended metaphor and structural frame of the research, establishing the research as a rabbit hole portal and a phenomenological wonder-ing. It organised the presentation of data through the names, personas, and visual representations of emblematic literary characters, using a storyteller voice to tell the tales of participants. The research was deliberate in its use of fictional devices to invite readers down the rabbit hole into a subterranean world of story. These theoretical and research-reporting devices provide an example of how the literary can be used by researchers to conceptualise narrative research, infuse meaning-making threads, and draw readers into research narratives.

Adding to Kara's (2013) suggestion that fiction writing techniques could be used more widely in academic writing, and Watson's (2015) argument that research should delight and spark the imagination, this thesis shows, in action, some tools available to a researcher who mines the rich depths of literary concepts and characters. These tools can be meaning making and methodological, helping to communicate the meaning of participant data in ways which enrich conceptual frameworks, while developing compelling reports in which participants are honoured and protected. Drawing on the reader's lifelong understanding of story—through the use of well-known characters and storybook conventions such as narrative voice and illustration—can engage readers in the meaning-making process. By drawing on traditions of literary story in research, readers and researchers may, like Alice, return from their journey through the research storyworld portal with new insights and heightened understanding of those phenomena being revealed and illuminated through narrative.

9.3 Practice

This study surfaced teachers' and school leaders' perceptions of an in-practice, school-based teacher growth intervention. Its findings were consistent with research which advocates for positive drivers for education, based on how people respond to different types of feedback and what incites and sustains learning. These include studies which show that positive, collaborative, and self-authored learning experiences create an upswing of growth (Boyatzis et al., 2013; Costa & Garmston, 2003; Jack et al., 2013). Participants here felt more positive, and reflected on experiences as transformative, when their learning experiences felt self-authored or in which they felt their own capacity was trusted. Teachers were seen as leaders of practice and classrooms as deprivatised sites of collaborative learning (Conway & Andrews, 2016). Teachers and school leaders were driven in their learning and work by a deep sense of purpose (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2011; Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

The theoretical findings of this study have relevance to educational practice, particularly to approaches to professional learning and to teacher growth interventions at school and system levels. This includes the view of professional identities as fluid amalgams (Day & Kington, 2008) that are profoundly linked to practice (Watson, 2006). For this study's participants, identity amalgamations consisted of elements from individuals, contexts, relationships, and lived experiences. Identities shifted and grew as they fused lived experiences with beliefs and self. This study's findings are consistent with Gronn's (2003) claim that individuals want to identify with the collective identity. Teachers and leaders in this study showed the desire to align with a team or organisation's identity and were attracted to its purpose. While Gronn (2003) suggests that individuals rework their perspectives in relation to their contexts, this study found that, while context affects professional identity, individuals also choose their contexts to fit their individual identities. That is, contexts shape individuals, individuals shape contexts, and individuals can choose contexts with which they feel an identity fit, or leave contexts in which they feel they do not fit. Participants indicated that they stayed in schools which resonated with their senses of professional self, and left schools in which they did not feel aligned with organisational purpose and action. The importance for all participants in this study of a sense of fit between individual professional identity and the school context suggests that school-based interventions consider how to harness identities and internal purpose.

The paramount importance of school context in school change is a consideration for schools undertaking initiatives. The Teacher Growth Initiative grew out of the Lutwidge School context. While this study found that it was generally positively received by these participants and was perceived to be having positive effects on individuals and school culture, it does not propose that the model be lifted from Lutwidge School and applied to other schools. Identifying conditions conducive to teacher learning is not the same as understanding the complexity and relational aspects of those conditions (Smylie, 1995). The contexts in which teachers work are so variable that research cannot tell systems, schools, and teachers what to do, but it can identify which directions are likely to have the greatest benefits for students (Wiliam, 2016) and for teachers. As Hargreaves (2015) and Wiliam (2016) suggest, educational success does not come from copying other schools or systems, but by inquiring into their underpinning principles and practices. Not only does one size not fit all teachers or all leaders, neither does one size fit all schools; any change initiative needs to be borne out of the context from which it emerges.

The Teacher Growth Initiative was built from a focus on teacher growth, a belief in teachers' capacities for learning and reflection, and the principle that "teaching is forever an unfinished profession . . . never complete, never conquered, always being developed, always changing" (Grundy & Robison, 2004, p. 146). Believing in the capacity of teachers for reflection and growth implies that everyone is able to benefit from coaching to develop and draw on internal capacity. Yet issues remain of the effects of hierarchical relationships on the individual, and the possibility of performative teaching-to-the-observation (Wiliam, 2014b), rather than authenticity in observed lessons. These issues have implications for who might be the best person to coach teachers in their practice when growth and positive change are the aims. Schools should consider the ways in which trust, rapport, and emotion influence learning. Coachees might be best served by coaches who are not also their managers, as unequal power and managerial authority is potentially damaging for the coaching relationship. If the purpose of a school-based coaching intervention is teacher professional growth and improvement in practice, as with the Teacher Growth Initiative, then coaching should not be conflated with evaluation, performance management, mentoring, or consultation.

The importance of the relationship between context and individuals—the holonomous ecosystem of schools—is worth taking into account when schools and systems consider the definition, design, and implementation of professional learning. Schools can work

from their own contexts to research, pilot, design, and implement a teacher growth model starting from their own mission, vision, values, students, staff, and current structures. As one of the leader participants said, school change is “an evolution not a revolution,” slow and grounded in context. Although the Teacher Growth Initiative was introduced in a school with multiple interventions, it is an example of one which deliberately grew slowly and allowed change to iterate from the bottom up as well as the top down. A balance of top down and bottom up practices, as advocated for by Malone (2015), appeals to both teachers and school leaders, as evident in the participants of this study. The important question, raised by leaders in this study, of whether school governance might lead to the Teacher Growth Initiative evolving over time into a more top down, less teacher-trusting approach, suggests that schools consider ways to protect, maintain, and explicitly communicate, the initial intents of change interventions so that they are not undermined over time.

The characteristics of professional learning found by this study are ones which can allow schools and systems to consider alternate possibilities for educators’ learning opportunities. The stories of this study’s participants reveal that the best professional learning is more than collaborative, targeted, and ongoing; it also deeply involves educators’ notions of self. Teachers and school leaders build their learning out of experiences, but also out of identities. It is learning which taps into who educators perceive that they are which seems to have the most impact on belief, thought, behaviour, and therefore practice. Educators’ professional identities might be shaped by learning which focuses, not only on ways to improve practice, but on the kind of teacher it is possible to be (Mockler, 2011). Schools and systems would likely benefit from considering, acknowledging, and allowing exploration of identity in professional learning endeavours.

The revelation that professional learning encompasses a wide range of lifelong experiences also impacts how schools and systems might consider professional learning. Opportunities can be provided for educators to place themselves and their lived experiences squarely in the centre of their own self-directed learning. Verbal and written reflection and conversation, whether through collaborative groups, coaching conversations, blogs, microblogging, interviews, or online communities, can be built into professional learning in order to focus individuals on how their learning knits together with the fabric of their professional identity and with their community.

This study revealed that cognitive coaching and the Danielson Framework for Teaching can be congruent tools for positive teacher growth, requiring a slow bottom-up approach to change, an organisational culture of trust, and coaching relationships free from judgement or power inequity. Maps of what teacher quality looks like, such as the Danielson Framework for Teaching, can be utilised to develop a common understanding of what makes good practice and as the basis for professional conversation. Coaching in this school context was found to be an identity-shaping experience with unexpected and far-reaching impacts, demonstrating that the combination of being a coach and coachee can facilitate empowerment, professional growth, and changes in belief and practice. The Teacher Growth Initiative's use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching in conjunction with cognitive coaching reflects a focus on growth and building efficacy—advocated for by Hattie (2015a), Hargreaves and Skelton (2012), and Wiliam (2014b, 2016)—rather than evaluation, contrived collegiality, and compliance.

Schools, school systems, and policy makers would profit from carefully considering initiatives which focus on teacher quality, being deliberate about their purpose, and aligning action. This study supports recommendations that schools and systems avoid negative, competition-based, and fear-generating drivers of education that can be damaging to educators' identities (Baguley & Kerby, 2012), and can encourage performance teaching (Wiliam, 2014b). The school's use of coaching as a positive teacher growth process is a practical example from which schools, systems, and policy makers might draw. The research design of the present study offers one approach for studies in other schools which intend to explore insider perspectives around coaching. Rather than focusing on fixing teachers, growth, collaboration, and empowerment are ways into developing educators' learning and the learning cultures of schools (Hattie, 2015a; Hattie, 2015b). While there is an important place for evaluation, performance management, and directive consultation, if the purpose of an intervention is teacher growth and improvement in practice, as with the Teacher Growth Initiative, then the use of merit pay schemes or performance review systems which score and rate teachers, do not seem appropriate.

9.4 Limitations of this study

Like any study, this one is limited in its scope and by its method. While presenting some important insights into the phenomena of professional identity, professional learning, and school change, limitations of this study include its specific context, small unrepresentative sample of participants, narrative methodology, duration, and the lens of the researcher.

The very specific context of this study can be considered one of its limitations. Unlike other research which has been undertaken in disadvantaged or government schools, this study examined participants within the context of a well-funded independent school. Lutwidge School had the resources to spend time and money on an intervention like the Teacher Growth Initiative. It was willing and able to allocate a staff member, in this case the researcher, to lead that intervention. This meant that in her school role she was responsible for leading the initiative, presenting to the school board, selecting a team, and coordinating their work. It also meant that teachers were given a time or monetary incentive to participate in the intervention. This is a very specific set of circumstances, which cannot be generalised to all schools, teachers, and school leaders (following Rogoff, 2003).

Studying 14 participants narrowed the study's focus to the experiences of those people. Not only that, but the teacher participants were volunteer members of a school-based intervention, suggesting that they were not a representative sample of the teachers at Lutwidge School as a whole, a point that the participants themselves identified. That these participants were volunteers, means that the study was unable to consider the perspectives of those who Day et al. (2006) drew attention to: those whose identities do not fit within their school and who feel alienated from the values and practices of their organisation. The data also reveal that Lutwidge School as an organisation was perceived by participants as aligned with their own identities; it would be unlikely that this would extend to all teachers at the school. The small unrepresentative sample, while allowing this study to reach a deep understanding of phenomena from very specific perspectives, makes transferability problematic (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

Narrative inquiry as used here, has, like any method, its strengths and limitations. While the study aimed to present participant stories in ways that were faithful to and respectful of those stories (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007; Ely, 2007), like much qualitative analysis which is

dependent on the perceptions and words of people, the participant data of this study are limited to participant experience, full of the complexity of being human, and may not be logically or factually consistent (Gronn, 2009; Van Maanen, 1983b). Data analysis could only focus on what was said; not those details participants chose to omit or those stories not told. The data generated are also influenced by interview questions, the interviewer, and transcription decisions (Riessman, 1993), as well as the choices made in constructing the written research report. Some argue, however, that personal narratives are of interest precisely because narrators interpret the past in stories, rather than reproducing it (Riessman, 2002). Poetic license in the storying of lives can be seen to enhance, rather than impede, the usefulness of human data (Gabriel, 2008). The fallibility and humanness of narrative data can help to illuminate an understanding of lived experience and people's perceptions of it, revealing internal truths of lived experience (Personal Narratives Group, 1989). Narrative standards of truth accept that storytelling has a meaning making, rather than a fact verification function (Sandelowski, 1991). In this way the deliberate choice of narrative method aimed for interpretive descriptions which were full and communicated the fundamentals of participant experiences (van Manen, 1997).

Generating data over a two year period means that the present study provides a microanalytic view of the beginning of a school-based intervention, rather than providing insights into how it evolved over an extended period of time. As I have continued to be a teacher, coach, and Teacher Growth Initiative coordinator after data generation for this study was finished, I can see the benefit of taking a more longitudinal view than a time-constrained PhD study allows. In my school role, since finishing this study's data generation, I have watched the Teacher Growth Initiative develop into a fully implemented, whole-school model of observation-and-coaching-conversation based growth. Continuing to be a Lutwidge School insider has shown me the potential for applying an approach like that used in this study for longer periods, to track individual and organisational change over time, and canvas a wider variety of perspectives.

As all authors are present in and inseparable from their work (Bakhtin, 1986b), the final limitation of the research may be considered to be me, the researcher, embedded as I was in the context of the research as a teacher and middle leader at Lutwidge School and the facilitator of the Teacher Growth Initiative. My own specific lens, made explicit in the Alice story, reflects how I brought my own context and world views to the study (Personal Narratives Group, 1989); the storying and analysis of data were unavoidably

influenced by me (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). While I have made my own perspective explicit, I was positive about the studied school and intervention, and was also assimilated into the organisation and accepting of its norms. On one hand, the insider researcher self is an important lens through which to view school reform and educator perspectives, but being an entrenched insider also colours analysis and communication of data, impeding the ability to look with a critical external eye.

9.5 Future research

The illumination of the link between identity and context in this study, through the perspectives of teachers and school leaders, points towards further investigation of the ways in which teacher and school leader identities interact with the worlds of schools. While numerous studies have investigated identity formation of pre-service or early career teachers, further research is required to examine the ways in which professional identity continues to be re-constructed across teachers' lives and careers (Munter, Argus-Calvo, Tafoya, & Trillo, 2014), including as they move into leadership. While school leader perspectives often focus on the principal (e.g. Gurr & Day, 2014), there is little research which explicitly examines how school leaders' own teacher identities shape their approach to the strategic management of professional learning at their schools, and how school reform and teacher development efforts are shaped by the strategic motivations of leaders. There is even less research which takes the school change role of middle leaders into account. As teachers' identities are frequently overlooked in school reform efforts (Hargreaves, 1995), studies of professional identities in schools would benefit from examining teachers, school leaders, and others, within the specific context of the place, space, and meanings of the in-world, in-practice, in-action context. Likewise, studies of schools would benefit from taking identities into account, especially those transformational moments which shape identities. The field of professional identity would benefit from better understanding of the complex, interrelated forces which shape it (Bridges et al., 2012).

One issue of consideration in educational research which can be implied from this study is that of teacher vulnerability. While 11 of 19 invited school leaders volunteered for this study, only four teachers of the invited 11 volunteered, and two consequently withdrew after receiving their interview transcript. I cannot be sure of the reasons for this

discrepancy, especially as the ethical procedures of this study prevent me from knowing teacher participant identities, but it is possible that teachers feel a sense of professional vulnerability which researchers would benefit from taking into account. This example generates questions for educational researchers about stories not being told. How do we access and share the perspectives of teachers, and others, who might not be enthusiastic volunteers? How do we ensure that the voices of those who do not feel supported by and aligned with their contexts are included in research literature?

Metaphor as a tool for identity exploration arose from this study as an area for future research. Some studies have investigated the use of metaphor in defining self. For example, Lindsey (2011) used fine art prints to incite participants to explore personal metaphors for leadership. There is scope for using artefacts to further probe what metaphors might tell us about professional identities, and also for studies which encourage educators to consider how they might envision their professional selves in terms of metaphor. Investigating the role of metaphor in professional identity conceptualisation would provide more insights into how educators define themselves.

This thesis used *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as a literary metaphor to structure and make meaning from narrative research, yet this metaphor could be taken further. The dark side of Wonderland and characters such as the autocratic Queen and the nonsensical Mad Hatter provide fertile material for researchers investigating educational policy discourses. Carroll's sequel, *Through the Looking Glass*, has the potential to add another layer again to notions of language, sense making, and self making.

Coaching in education contexts, as a form of professional learning and a tool for school change, surfaced from this study's literature review as a contested, tangled, and under-researched field. While this study provides insights into one type of coaching in one school context, it revealed a number of tensions around the purpose and design of models for coaching teachers in schools. Coaching literature and practice would benefit from additional perspectives on a variety of coaching models in a range of contexts.

Another emergent professional learning finding, arising from the data of two participants, was the potential of Twitter and other technologies for autonomous, personalised, heutagogical learning. Gao et al. (2012) note that there is little relevant and comprehensive research on microblogging for learning, and call for rigorous future

research on how learning occurs in microblogging-enhanced environments. As a relatively new area of professional learning, much remains to be understood about how social media can be used for educator professional learning (Carpenter & Krutka, 2015). The present study adds to these calls for the more targeted examination of social media platforms such as Twitter and collaborative technologies such as Voxer, to see what part they have the potential to play in the professional learning of educators.

The importance of epiphanic life moments in professional learning, as found in this study, suggests that the definition of professional learning needs to be expanded from traditional school and educational learning experiences. Not only is a widening of definition necessary, but so is a broadening of the scope of studying professional learning. Studies into professional learning, and indeed schools and districts, would likely benefit from looking at more than courses attended or professional development offered. Those examining the phenomenon of professional learning could cast their nets wider than those interventions happening within schools, at the variety of ways in which life learning might shape the identities and practices of teachers and school leaders. The study of epiphanies, a field largely untapped in education research (Cole & Throssell, 2008), would benefit from a multiplicity of perspectives from diverse educators in varied contexts, providing insights into professional learning which taps into educators' deep connections to what, where, and why they learn.

The holonomous relationship between individual and school context was revealed in this study to be a crucial factor in individual and school change. As considering the context in which learning and change occurs helps us to understand it (Wood & Kroger, 2000), the relationship between individuals and their contexts is a central dynamic which shapes the identities of human beings and deserves continued investigation (Kincheloe, 2005). Schools would benefit from considering the complex, organic, symbiotic relationships within them. Often research surrounding school change is based on single perspectives such as teachers, or leaders, or students. Studies which bring multiple perspectives of school stakeholders together, and which investigate multiple types of schools in multiple global contexts, would help to present a more robust picture of how teachers and school leaders (and students) experience and interact with school change. More studies of school interventions from their outset would help develop an understanding of how the whole and the parts of schools can work interdependently and successfully (Goldenberg, 2004). Sharing and analysing the stories of both the teachers involved in the school-based

professional learning model, *and* the school leaders who are responsible for the strategic direction, management, and resourcing of the initiative, revealed insights that can be applied to knowledge, theory, and real life educational contexts in which teacher growth, transformative professional learning, teacher buy-in, and positive change management are the goal.

9.6 Final thoughts

By privileging and celebrating teachers' and leaders' voices through narrative method, this study examined rich stories of lived experience. Situating its analysis of individuals firmly within the specific in-world, in-practice, in-action context of one school, it illuminated how professional learning shapes teachers' and leaders' professional identities, their constantly shifting self-perceptions and self-constructions. It provided insights in response to its central research question: In what ways might teachers' and school leaders' experiences of professional learning (trans)form their sense of professional selves; *and* in what ways might school leaders' professional identities, perceptions of professional learning, and strategic intentions, shape and be shaped by the culture and enacting of professional learning in a school context? The study painted some highly detailed and idiosyncratic brushstrokes onto the canvas of what it is that incites teachers and leaders to want or enact change. It extended knowledge of how teachers' and school leaders' lives and work affect their senses of self, their classrooms, their schools, and their professional practices. It additionally provided insights into the ways in which professional learning cultures might be shaped by the professional identities of school leaders.

Educators have the capacity to change and grow, and schools can develop context-specific growth-focused interventions to facilitate the development of teachers, including heightening their awareness of their practice, increasing their understanding of what good teaching might look like, and improving their teaching practice. Not only does professional learning have the capacity to transform educators' identities, but the definition of transformative professional learning was expanded by participants' stories to be those epiphanic life moments which are professional and personal; formal and informal; in and out of educational contexts; singular and collaborative. Learning and professional identity formation was, for these participants, happening everywhere, all the time, throughout their lives and work. Embodying the notion of continual becoming,

participants showed that becoming a teacher, becoming an educator, becoming a coach, or becoming a school leader, are unending lifelong processes. Moreover, they were aware of and committed to their identities as lifelong learners who constantly reflect, grow, and transform, adding to the argument that professional learning interventions consider beginning from a positive belief in teachers' capacity and willingness for learning, not from a negative mindset which assumes that there are deficits which need fixing.

This study revealed what adequate resourcing and provision of time—emerging themes in professional learning and school change literatures—might look like in action. In this case a school charged a dedicated person with facilitating an intervention, including allowing time and money for that person to commit their time and thinking to working with various stakeholders and consultants in order to develop change, with buy-in from multiple groups over time, appropriate to the school's context. Teachers were invited to be a part of the change process and were offered money or time for their involvement. The Teacher Growth Initiative teachers were provided with training in key aspects of the intervention, and given time to work with each other and others in the school to grow their own practice and meet about the teacher growth model they were developing. This provision of resourcing and time was a commitment to the school change, although also one made possible by the independent well-resourced nature of the school context.

Finally, while idiosyncratic and value-laden, research such as the narrative study here can provide insights which may alter the perspectives of others. Exploring specific individuals within particular contexts, in depth, can shine a light on the complex relationships between educators' identities, their places of work, and their practices of teaching and leading. Finding what works in particular schools, or what makes particular schools work, can help to build global collaborative expertise. Travelling down the rabbit hole—into stories of teachers and school leaders' professional identities, learning, and experiences of a school change intervention—provided insights into the how of educator learning and identity (trans)formation. Specifically it illuminated a facet of how school-based professional learning in context impacts on professional identity and makes deeply transformative learning or re-forming of identity possible. Readers of this research text, like Alice in her Wonderland adventures, may return from their journey through the research storyworld portal with new insights and heightened understandings of professional identity, professional learning, and school change.

Postscript: Waking Alice

Alice opened her eyes sleepily and looked around. She was back on the grassy riverbank where she had begun, but she didn't feel as though she was in precisely the same spot as she had been when she drifted into her strange Wonderland dream. She grasped the stiff material of her white starched pinafore as though the tangible feeling of the fabric would anchor her into the present.

"I've had the strangest dream," she thought to herself.

Alice remembered how she had fallen slowly down the strange and marvellous rabbit hole, touching the creased spines of books and the smooth wood of ornaments as she fell down, down, down. She thought of the Rabbit and the Cat she had met and whose stories she had heard along her curious journey.

Here Alice was, in the same clothes and with the same ribbon in her hair, but she was also different. "Each person," Alice thought, "is in a state of perpetual change. How real," she wondered, "are the events and creatures I am remembering?"

She had known who she was when she got up that morning, but Alice had changed so many times since then! The process of adventuring down the rabbit hole and through all the tangled paths of Wonderland had been a cocoon in which she had been transformed, and from which she had emerged ablaze with new colours and fresh insights.

Alice stood, brushed the crinkled leaves from her pinafore and headed back to her house, sensing the softness of the grass beneath the soles of her black shoes and feeling the warm breeze against her face. She could still see the pocket watch of the Rabbit and the smile of the Cat in her mind's eye, as though Wonderland and its creatures were still with her beyond the rabbit hole.

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Appendix A: Timeline of the Teacher Growth Initiative work alongside the present study

The following table outlines the adjacent work of the Lutwidge School Teacher Growth Initiative, and of this doctoral study. The researcher was involved in the school’s Initiative as the person who wrote the school’s proposal paper in 2012 and the facilitator of that intervention from 2013-2016; she is still in that role at the time of writing. “Deborah” has been used in the Teacher Growth Initiative column of the table to indicate the researcher’s role at the school and “the researcher” in the doctoral study column to indicate her role in the study.

While the participants were selected from the researcher’s school and the Teacher Growth Initiative in which she was immersed, this study was not intended as an evaluation of the intervention. The teams responsible for the Initiative were involved at a school level in collecting data to evaluate its impacts. Any data collected in the researcher’s role as facilitator of the Initiative was not part of this study. Rather, the intervention acted as a background context to the generation of teacher and leader situated stories of identity, learning, and leading, for this PhD.

Table A1: Teacher Growth Initiative and doctoral study work

| Year | Teacher Growth Initiative (TGI) | This doctoral study |
|------|---|---|
| 2012 | <p>Proposal year</p> <p>(July) Deborah co-wrote school proposal paper for a teacher growth initiative, with rationale from research and Lutwidge contexts. To include investigation of quality teaching, how it can be recognised, and what research suggests about what works in improving it.</p> <p>(August) Deborah presented the proposal paper for Lutwidge School which included recommendations for a model which involved cycles of lesson observations and coaching conversations, using the Danielson Framework for Teaching and cognitive coaching.</p> <p>(November) Presentation to academic staff on the TGI. Call for volunteers. 25 teachers volunteered for the TGI. 11 teachers were selected by the principal for the 2013 TGI team based on: forming a group of individuals small enough to be optimal for effective team work; individual teachers’ situations; and the desire to include a diverse range of teachers, including those from early learning to senior secondary; in career stages from novice to veteran; and from a variety of learning areas.</p> | <p>(October) Course enrolment.</p> <p>(December) Research proposal presented to panel.</p> |
| 2013 | <p>First pilot year</p> <p>(Across the year) The TGI team was trained by a Danielson Group consultant in the Danielson Framework for Teaching and in taking non-inferential lesson observation data. The TGI team was trained in cognitive coaching by an agency trainer for Thinking Collaborative.</p> <p>Team members observed each other’s lessons and coached each other. Team members designed and trialled a survey instrument for tracking teacher self-perceptions against the Danielson Framework for Teaching.</p> | <p>(February) Research approval letter received from Lutwidge School principal.</p> <p>(March) Program of Study submitted and accepted.</p> <p>(May) Ethics approval for generation of teacher data granted. The Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee project number was 2013/034. 11 TGI team member teachers were invited to participate in the study. Four volunteered. The researcher met with the independent interviewer who was to conduct the teacher interviews.</p> |

| | | |
|------|--|--|
| | <p>(October-November) The TGI team designed its recommended teacher growth model. Deborah presented the model to the principal and school board. The team requested a further pilot year to test and refine the model.</p> <p>(December) Call for volunteers for second pilot year of the TGI. 13 teachers volunteered; all 13 were accepted to be part of the second pilot year TGI team, led by Deborah. Four plus Deborah had been involved part of the 2013 team. Nine were new to the TGI.</p> | <p>(June) First round of interviews of the teacher participants and the researcher, by external interviewer.</p> <p>(August) Teacher interviews transcribed. Transcripts de-identified by supervisors.</p> <p>(December) Second round interviews of the teacher participants and the researcher.</p> |
| 2014 | <p>Second pilot year</p> <p>(Across the year) The TGI team trained by a Danielson Group consultant in the Danielson Framework for Teaching and in taking non-inferential lesson observation data. The TGI team trained in cognitive coaching by an agency trainer for Thinking Collaborative.</p> <p>Team members observed each other's lessons and coached each other. The team additionally worked in sub-committees to develop: plans and resources for data generation and analysis of the TGI work; human resources processes and documentation; alignment of the Danielson Framework with the Australian National Professional Standards for Teachers; and a clear model for implementation from 2015.</p> <p>(July-October) Teachers outside the TGI team were asked to volunteer to be coached by the TGI team. 14 volunteered and participated in a coaching cycle (pre-observation conversation – multiple short lesson observations and data collection – reflecting into planning conversation).</p> <p>(October) Focus groups and surveys of TGI members and coachees. Human Resources processes for implementation in 2015 finalised. Danielson Framework for Teaching alignment with National Professional Standards completed. Teacher pre-survey designed. Data generation plan complete. Report submitted to the school board.</p> <p>(November) Invitation for teachers to apply for the position of Teacher Coach. Eight coaches selected via interview process which included conducting a coaching conversation and answering interview questions. Six coaches were previous members of a TGI team.</p> | <p>(January) Supervisors organised transcription of 2013 teacher interviews. Transcripts sent to teacher participants for veracity checking and approval.</p> <p>(February) Two teachers withdrew. Researcher received the de-identified, authenticated transcripts of the two remaining teacher participants.</p> <p>(April) Ethics amendment for school leader interviews approved.</p> <p>(May) 19 academic school leaders invited to participate in the study. Six middle leaders and five executive school leaders volunteered to participate.</p> <p>(June-July) School leader interviews by the researcher.</p> <p>(July-August) School leader interviews transcribed.</p> <p>(November) School leader transcripts authenticated by participants.</p> |
| 2015 | <p>First implementation year</p> <p>(February-April) All teachers at Lutwidge School completed initial online reflection against the Danielson Framework for Teaching. All coaches and managers trained by a Danielson Group consultant in the Danielson Framework for Teaching, in taking non-inferential lesson observation data. Coaches and managers trained in cognitive coaching by an agency trainer for Thinking Collaborative.</p> <p>(October) Focus groups with coaches and managers. Anonymous survey of coachees.</p> <p>(November) Refinement of model, processes and documentation for 2016.</p> | <p>(February) All participants invited to complete an anonymous online survey about impacts of the researcher's role and the research on them.</p> <p>(August) Summary of research findings emailed to participants.</p> <p>(October) Thesis submitted.</p> |
| 2016 | <p>Continued implementation and refinement of Teacher Growth Initiative model for all Lutwidge School's teachers.</p> | <p>(February) Thesis revised and completed.</p> |

Appendix B: Description of the Teacher Growth Initiative

In 2012 the principal asked Deborah⁵⁷, then on maternity leave from her head of faculty role, to write a paper which explored research on teacher quality and quality instruction (its effects, definition and components), ways to build teacher capacity, how this sat with a Lutwidge School context, and the beginning of a proposed approach to the development of a pilot project in teacher growth at Lutwidge School. That paper identified that: the quality of instruction and of a school's teachers make a positive difference to student learning and achievement; there need to be explicit and transparent standards for teachers which outline and depersonalise teaching while providing a common language for meaningful professional conversation; and multiple classroom observations over time, self-reflection, collaboration (such as in professional learning communities) and coaching create more professional, collaborative and skilled teachers, particularly when this is achieved in an authentic, safe, non-judgemental, adequately-resourced environment in which continuous growth (rather than evaluation or external judgement) is the focus. It also outlined a model for trial by a team of teachers which included use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching within a coaching-and-observation cycle using cognitive coaching. The annual cycle involves the following steps:

1. Self-reflect: Teacher/coachee completes online self-reflection against Danielson Framework for Teaching.
2. Touch base: Pre-conference with coach (2013-2014 Teacher Growth Initiative team member; 2015-2016 teacher coach), identifying possible foci, deciding on type of lesson data to be collected.
3. Collect data: 2 x 20 minute observations.
4. Reflect & Plan: Post conference with coach following the Cognitive Coaching reflecting-into-planning conversation map and using Danielson Framework for Teaching.
5. Repeat 2, 3 and 4.

Data collected in the third step includes non-inferential data such as verbatim scripting, video recording, or audio recording. That is, data that captures the lesson without making judgements or suggestions. Teachers being coached chose the data that will be most meaningful for them.

A cognitive coaching approach was chosen by Lutwidge School for its emphasis on building internal capacity and self-actualisation. The coaches are experts in coaching to develop coachees' thinking; they are not givers of advice or providers of solutions. Teacher Growth Initiative members were trained in cognitive coaching by an agency trainer for Thinking Collaborative, the body which

⁵⁷ Again, here I have used "Deborah" to indicate my role in the school, as separate from my role as the researcher of this study.

provides the course. Teacher Growth Initiative team members coached each other in 2013. In 2014 they coached each other and teachers who volunteered to be coached and to provide feedback via focus groups and an anonymous survey. In 2015 and 2016 the team of coaches each coached approximately eight teachers per year, as well as coaching each other.

While the Australian National Professional Standards for Teachers provide an overarching national context for Lutwidge School's understanding of what teacher quality is and what this looks like for teachers at different career stages, these do not provide specificity about what these standards might look like in practice. Lutwidge School selected Danielson's Framework for Teaching—explained in the most detail in *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching* (Danielson, 2008)—as a map of what excellence in teaching might look like, providing a set of shared, explicit descriptors. Grounded in research, it is a thorough, multi-layered definition of good teaching which identifies a comprehensive range of teacher responsibilities. The Framework is intended to be part of transparent, active processes such as teacher reflection, professional inquiry, classroom observations, mentoring, coaching, and evaluation of teacher performance. The use of such a framework depersonalises conversations about teaching, focusing discussion on specific elements of practice, rather than on the individual.

The Framework clusters its twenty two components of teaching into four domains of teacher responsibility:

- Domain 1: Planning and Preparation
- Domain 2: The Classroom Environment
- Domain 3: Instruction
- Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities

The components are intended to be applicable to diverse settings and independent of any particular teaching methodology. Whilst components are separated for the purpose of the Framework, they are acknowledged as interrelated parts of teaching as a complex holistic endeavour. In action, the Framework is more web-like than grid-like. This is reflected in the choice of cover artwork for *The Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument* (Danielson, 2013) which shows the four domains as an intersecting Venn diagram. Each component is broken down into a series of descriptors and examples of what it looks like when it is “unsatisfactory,” “basic,” “proficient,” and “distinguished.”

The Teacher Growth Initiative used the Danielson Framework in the following ways:

- Teacher Growth Initiative team members were trained by a Danielson Group consultant in generating lesson data and using the Framework in professional conversations.

- The Teacher Growth Initiative team designed an annual online self-reflection for teachers to complete against the Framework, in order to surface reflections about their teaching, help them set goals, and guide their thinking as they plan for the year ahead.
- During coaching conversations, coaches help teachers to consider their lesson data against the Danielson Framework, looking closely at the descriptors and facilitating reflection against the rubrics.
- The Danielson Framework sits alongside the Australian National Professional Standards for Teachers as a tool for deepening reflection and conversation about practice, allowing teachers to more specifically envisage, articulate and enact excellence in teaching practice.

This use of the Danielson Framework fits with the Lutwidge School philosophical beliefs that everyone is capable of growth, that all teachers have the will and skill to improve, that coaching should develop internal capacities, and that the coach is always in the service of the coachee.

The intention of the first two years of the Teacher Growth Initiative was to trial tools and processes for improving teacher quality through collaborative professional learning, appropriate to the school's context, building on and aligning with the foundational values, mission and intents, and dovetailing with other related School initiatives and processes. The aim was to refine individual practice and capacity for self-reflection, and to facilitate the creation of a reflective community of professional learners, a community of practice in which individual teachers participate in communal activity to continuously develop the effectiveness of student learning by improving the quality of their teaching.

Appendix C: Information letters and consent forms

Information Letter – Teacher Participants

Down the rabbit hole: Professional identities, professional learning, and change in one Australian school.

Dear Lutwidge School TGI team member

We invite you to participate in a research study which intends to illuminate the effects of professional learning on teacher identity. This study is part of my Masters of Philosophy Degree through the School of Education, supervised by Dr Judy MacCallum and Dr Amanda Woods-McConney at Murdoch University.

Nature and Purpose of the Study

Schools and education communities around the world are focusing on ways to improve the quality of their teachers and of teaching. Research has focused on identifying those aspects of teaching which enhance student achievement and on the effects of teacher quality on student achievement; the relationships between teacher quality, teacher learning and student learning; and investigation of teacher identity, communities of practice and professional learning.

This study will investigate teachers' identity in the context of their professional learning, through the perspectives of teachers themselves and with the added perspective of their school leaders. The study aims to contribute to a better understanding of teacher identity and of what constitutes powerful professional learning. It aims to give teachers a voice within the literature of teacher learning, 'quality' and identity.

If you consent to take part in this research, it is important that you understand the study's purpose and the activities you will be asked to participate in as part of the study. Please ask any questions you may have, and ensure that all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction before you agree to participate.

What the Study will Involve

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Participate in two interviews of approximately one hour in length (in Term 2 2013 and Term 4 2013). The interviews will involve questions and discussion of your perspectives on professional learning, your professional identity as a teacher and your experience of the Lutwidge School Teacher Growth Initiative. The interviews will be conducted at Lutwidge School by an external interviewer bound by a confidentiality agreement. Your responses will be audio recorded by the external interviewer and then transcribed by a third party, with only de-identified transcripts being provided to me.
- Participate in an anonymous web survey in Term 4 2013. The survey will ask questions about your experience of the research process.

OR (if not randomly selected for interviewing)

- Participate in an anonymous web survey in Term 4 2013. The survey will ask questions about your perspectives on professional learning, your professional identity as teacher, your experience of the Lutwidge School Teacher Growth Initiative and your experience of the research process.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal from the Study

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You will volunteer directly to Dr Judy MacCallum and Dr Amanda Woods-McConney at the Murdoch University School of Education. If more than seven teachers volunteer, they will randomly select five to seven teachers to participate in the interviews. Teachers not randomly selected for interviewing will be asked to instead complete an anonymous web survey. In this way, I will be unaware of who has volunteered for, and of who ultimately participates in, the study.

All information is treated as confidential and no names or identifiable data will be used in any publication arising from the research.

You may withdraw without discrimination or prejudice, but withdrawal will not be possible once data from your first interview is de-identified. If you withdraw before de-identification of data, all information you have provided will be destroyed.

Privacy

Your privacy is very important. Whilst all teachers of the Lutwidge School Teacher Growth Initiative will be invited to participate, whether you elect to participate or not will be kept entirely confidential.

In order to manage any issues arising out of your relationship with me as a fellow staff member of Lutwidge School, only Dr Judy MacCallum, Dr Amanda Woods-McConney and the external interviewer will know of your participation. Who volunteers and what information they share will not be known to me. This is intended to minimise any impact on my relationship with you.

Your interview data will be coded so it will not be possible to identify you, neither will you be identified in any publication arising out of this study. Your web survey data will be anonymous so it will not be possible to identify your responses. At no time will any research data be released to Lutwidge School.

Benefits of the Study

Involvement in this study will give voice to your experiences as teacher and professional learner, whilst providing an opportunity for deep reflection on your professional learning and teacher identity. There will, however, be no monetary or direct material benefit to you from participation in this study.

While there is no direct material benefit to you, the knowledge gained from your participation will contribute to a better understanding of teacher identity and professional learning. In particular, your contribution will give educators a voice in the research literature. Your contribution has the potential to help other educational organisations design worthwhile professional learning experiences for their teachers.

Possible Risks

There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study. Although unlikely, if you find that you become distressed or uncomfortable during the interviews, or after having completed the web survey, you are welcome to contact my supervisor, Dr Judy MacCallum, on *****. She can arrange for your responses to be reviewed or removed if they have not yet been de-identified, or she can refer you to a Murdoch University counsellor.

If you have any questions or concerns about this project please feel free to contact either myself on mobile *****, or my supervisor, Dr Judy MacCallum, on *****.

Once we have analysed the information from this study we will email a summary of our findings. You can expect to receive this feedback by December 2014.

Please notify Dr Judy MacCallum of your willingness, or not, to participate in this study by emailing her at *****. She will then forward to you the appropriate Consent Form.

Thank you for your consideration and openness to positively impacting educational practice.

Sincerely

Deborah Netolicky

This study has been approved by the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval 2013/034). If you have any reservation or complaint about the ethical conduct of this research, and wish to talk with an independent person, you may contact Murdoch University's Research Ethics Office (Tel. 08 9360 6677 or e-mail ethics@murdoch.edu.au). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Participant Consent Form – Teacher

Down the rabbit hole: Professional identities, professional learning, and change in one Australian school.

Researcher: Deborah Netolicky

1. I agree voluntarily to take part in this study.
2. I have read the Information Sheet provided and been given a full explanation of the purpose of this study, the procedures involved and of what is expected of me.
3. I understand that I will be asked to participate in two interviews and one anonymous web survey.
4. The researchers have answered all my questions and have explained possible problems that may arise as a result of my participation in this study.
5. I understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any time before my data has been de-identified, without needing to give any reason.
6. I understand that my participation in this study will be confidential and that I will not be identified in any publication arising out of this study.
7. I understand that my name and identity will be stored separately from the data, and these are accessible only to Dr Judy MacCallum, Dr Amanda Woods-McConney and the external interviewer. All data provided by me will be de-identified before it is given to Deborah Netolicky. It will be analysed anonymously using code numbers.
8. I understand that all information provided by me is treated as confidential and will not be released by the researcher to a third party unless required to do so by law.
9. I have been informed that this study will provide me with an opportunity to contribute my views and reflect upon my experiences, but that I may not receive other direct benefits from participating in this study.

Name of participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date:/...../.....

I confirm that I have provided the Information Letter concerning this study to the above participant; I have explained the study and have answered all questions asked of me.

Signature of researcher: _____ Date:/...../.....

Information Letter – School Leader

Down the rabbit hole: Professional identities, professional learning, and change in one Australian school.

Dear School Leader

We invite you to participate in a research study which intends to illuminate the relationships between professional learning, school change and teacher identity. This study is part of my Doctor of Philosophy degree through the School of Education, supervised by Dr Judy MacCallum and Dr Amanda Woods-McConney at Murdoch University.

Nature and Purpose of the Study

A central focus of current educational practice is the development and learning of teachers. This focus is based on evidenced assumptions that individual teachers can impact student learning and achievement; that each teacher's quality as an educator can be developed; and that the growth of teachers - into more and more masterful designers, facilitators and enactors of learning - is important.

This study will focus on teachers' and leaders' perceptions of their own identities and professional learning, through the perspectives of teachers and school leaders. It aims to contribute to a better understanding of teacher identity and of what constitutes powerful professional learning. In particular, the study hopes to explore how school leaders' own teacher identities shape their approach to the strategic management of professional learning at their schools, what tensions are at play, and how school reform and teacher development efforts are shaped by the strategic motivations of leaders.

If you consent to take part in this research, it is important that you understand the study's purpose and the activities you will be asked to participate in as part of the study. Please ask any questions you may have, and ensure that all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction before you agree to participate.

What the Study will Involve

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Participate in one interview of approximately one hour in length in Term 2 or 3 of 2014. The interview will ask you to share your experiences and stories of how you define yourself as an educator and leader; of your approach to the strategic management of the development and learning of teachers; of your own professional learning; and of the Lutwidge School Teacher Growth Initiative. If there are any questions with which you are uncomfortable, you may choose not to answer them.
- The interview will be conducted at Lutwidge School by me. Your responses will be audio recorded and then transcribed. You will have the opportunity to authenticate these transcripts, including deleting any responses which you do not wish to be used in the study.
- Participate in an anonymous web survey at the end of 2014. The survey will ask questions about your experience of the research process.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal from the Study

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

All information is treated as confidential and no names or identifiable data will be used in any publication arising from the research.

You may withdraw without discrimination or prejudice at any time, upon which all information you have provided will be destroyed.

Privacy

Your privacy is very important. Whether you elect to participate or not will be kept entirely confidential. You may withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to give any reason.

Your interview data will be transcribed, de-identified and coded so it will not be possible to identify you, neither will you be identified in any publication arising out of this study. Your data will be anonymous so it will not be possible to identify your responses. At no time will any research data be released to Lutwidge School.

Benefits of the Study

Involvement in this study will give voice to your experiences as an educator and school leader, whilst providing an opportunity for deep reflection on your professional identity and the strategic management of school-based professional learning.

While there is no monetary or direct material benefit to you from participation in this study, the knowledge gained from your participation will contribute to a better understanding of teacher identity, professional learning and school leadership. In particular, your contribution will give educators a voice in the research literature. Your contribution has the potential to help other educational organisations design worthwhile professional learning experiences for their teachers.

Possible Risks

There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study. Although unlikely, if you find that you become distressed or uncomfortable during the interviews, or after having completed the web survey, you are welcome to contact me. I can arrange for your responses to be reviewed or removed.

If you have any questions or concerns about this project please feel free to contact either myself on mobile *****, or my supervisor, Dr Judy MacCallum, on *****.

Once we have analysed the information from this study we will email a summary of our findings. You can expect to receive this feedback by December 2015.

Please notify me of your willingness, or not, to participate in this study by emailing me. I will then forward to you the appropriate Consent Form.

Thank you for your consideration and openness to positively impacting educational practice.

Sincerely

Deborah Netolicky

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| <p>This study has been approved by the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval 2013/034). If you have any reservation or complaint about the ethical conduct of this research, and wish to talk with an independent person, you may contact Murdoch University's Research Ethics Office (Tel. 08 9360 6677 or e-mail ethics@murdoch.edu.au). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.</p> |
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Participant Consent Form – Leader

Down the rabbit hole: Professional identities, professional learning, and change in one Australian school.

Researcher: Deborah Netolicky

1. I agree voluntarily to take part in this study.
2. I have read the Information Letter provided and been given a full explanation of the purpose of this study, the procedures involved and of what is expected of me.
3. I understand that I will be asked to participate in one interview and one anonymous web survey.
4. The researchers have answered all my questions and have explained possible problems that may arise as a result of my participation in this study.
5. I understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to give any reason.
6. I understand that my participation in this study will be confidential and that I will not be identified in any publication arising out of this study.
7. I understand that my name and identity will be stored separately from the data, and these are accessible only to Dr Judy MacCallum, Dr Amanda Woods-McConney and Deborah Netolicky. It will be de-identified and analysed anonymously using code numbers.
8. I understand that all information provided by me is treated as confidential and will not be released by the researcher to a third party unless required to do so by law.
9. I have been informed that this study will provide me with an opportunity to contribute my views and reflect upon my experiences, but that I may not receive other direct benefits from participating in this study.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date:/...../.....

I confirm that I have provided the Information Letter concerning this study to the above participant; I have explained the study and have answered all questions asked of me.

Signature of Researcher: _____ Date:/...../.....

Appendix D: Interview questions

Table D1: Researcher and teacher interview questions

| Researcher & teacher interview questions | | | |
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| Phenomena | Research questions | Interview questions | Examples of prompts |
| Professional identity | In what ways and by what factors are teachers' identities shaped? | Tell me about your professional identity. | How would you define yourself as a teacher? What shapes your approach to teaching? |
| | What contributes to the malleability, or not, of teachers' identities? | | Tell me about the most powerful experiences in your teaching career. |
| | Has, and if so how has, the contextual school-based professional learning initiative (the Lutwidge School Teacher Growth Initiative) facilitated teachers' learning and shaped teachers' identity? | | How do you see your teaching identity as linked to, or not linked to, Lutwidge School and your place within it? |
| Professional learning | How and what professional learning impacts professional identities or contributes to growth and change? | Tell me about your experience of professional learning. | What have been your most powerful experiences of professional learning? Tell me about any other life experiences that have shaped you as a teacher. |
| | What affects teachers' perceptions of improving instruction and refining practice? | | |
| School change | What insights might be gleaned from examining teacher perceptions and experiences of the TGI? | How would you describe the culture of teacher learning at Lutwidge School? | |
| Teacher Growth Initiative (as an example of a professional learning context) | What insights might be gleaned from examining teacher perceptions and experiences of the TGI? | Tell me about your experience of the Teacher Growth Initiative. | What drew you to the TGI? Why did you volunteer? How is the TGI similar or different from your other professional learning experiences? |
| | Has, and if so how has, the contextual school-based professional learning initiative (the Lutwidge School Teacher Growth Initiative) facilitated teachers' learning and shaped teachers' identity? | | What do you hope to get out of / did you get out of your involvement in the Initiative? |

Table D2: School leader interview questions

| School leader interview questions | | | |
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| Phenomena | Research questions | Interview questions | Examples of prompts |
| Professional identity | In what ways and by what factors are school leaders' identities shaped? | Tell me about your professional identity. | How would you define yourself as a teacher, educator and school leader? What shapes your approach to leading teachers? |
| | What contributes to the malleability, or not, of school leaders' identities? | | Tell me about the most powerful experiences in your career. |
| | In what ways and by what factors are school leaders' strategic intentions and actions in regards to teacher learning shaped? | | How do you see your teaching identity as linked to, or not linked to, Lutwidge School and your place within it? |
| | How do school leaders' identities shape their strategic approach to teacher learning? | | |
| | In what ways might school leader professional identities shape the culture of learning in a school? | | |
| Professional learning | How and what professional learning impacts school leaders' identities or contributes to growth and change? | Tell me about any experiences of professional learning. | What have been your own most powerful experiences of professional learning? Can you think of a personal story which encapsulates professional learning at its best? |
| School change | What affects school leaders' perceptions of improving instruction and refining practice? | What are your experiences and considerations as a leader of professional learning? | How do you see your leadership role in professional learning? |
| | What insights might be gleaned from examining school leader perceptions and experiences of the TGI? | | How might your role in leading professional learning be influenced by your own identity as an educator? |
| | How do the phenomena of teacher identity, teacher learning and school change intersect and interact? | | What is your vision for professional learning for teachers? What is your vision for the professional culture of the school/faculty? What kinds of strategic considerations factor into your support of teacher development and learning? |

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| | | | What sorts of tensions exist when managing the learning and development of teachers? Can you tell me about a time when these tensions or factors came into play? |
| Teacher Growth Initiative (as an example of a professional learning context) | <p>What insights might be gleaned from examining teacher perceptions and experiences of the TGI?</p> <p>Has, and if so how has, the contextual school-based professional learning initiative (the Lutwidge School Teacher Growth Initiative) facilitated teachers' learning and shaped teachers' identity?</p> | Tell me about how you see the Teacher Growth Initiative in terms of your ideas about professional learning and school culture. | <p>What do you see as the value, or not, of the TGI?</p> <p>What is your experience of the impact the TGI might have on teachers, leaders or the school?</p> |

Appendix E: Tabulated summary of findings about professional learning

Table E1: Tabulated summary of findings about professional learning

| <i>Experience</i> | <i>Researcher</i> | <i>Teachers</i> | <i>Leaders</i> | <i>Professional</i> | <i>Personal</i> | <i>Formal</i> | <i>Informal</i> | <i>School context</i> | <i>Non-school contexts</i> | <i>Singular</i> | <i>Collaborative</i> |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Watching or working with educational role models & anti-models | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Collaborative work in schools | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Watching inspiring experts | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Observing other teachers teach | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Relationships with coaches, mentors, & professional friends | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Connecting with others: conferences, associations, study, & online communities | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Reflecting, by self & with others | | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Postgraduate study | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Pursuing own professional interests: professional reading & online platforms | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Non-educational workforce experience | | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Times & relationships with family | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Travel | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Tragedy | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Quiet time & space to think | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |