'Right from the Start': An Exploration of the Lived Experiences of Qualified Teachers in Maintained Early Years Settings

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I love you

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Abstract:

This thesis addresses a gap in the research currently used to inform policy related to the professional development and retention of teachers in England. It investigates the lived experiences of qualified teachers in maintained settings (QTMEYS) from a psycho-social perspective using a theoretical framework which incorporates ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000) and Festinger's (2001) theory of cognitive dissonance.

This narrative inquiry used an innovative six point data collection and analysis strategy to explore three key questions: how do QTMEYS conceptualise their professional practice; what factors shape their experience of practice; and what are the implications of these findings for the professional development of QTMEYS.

Written narratives of professional practice were collected from five participants at various stages in their careers, including two who had left teaching, one who had moved to the private sector, a Reception teacher and a teacher based in a Maintained Nursery. These narratives were analysed using The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982). The I-Poems developed at this stage of analysis formed the stimulus for co-analytical interviews with each participant. Finally, the corpus of data was interrogated using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The result are rich, illustrative findings which contribute towards the body of data on the lived experiences of teachers.

The findings of this study suggest that QTMEYS experience neglect, isolation and conflict 'right from the start' of their professional journey. At the heart of these experiences is a lack of understanding and respect for Early Years pedagogy shared not only by policy makers, but by other members of the teaching profession. These findings have implications for my professional practice as an ITE lecturer and wider implications for both ITE providers and policy makers.

The central thesis arising from this study is that changes in initial teacher education (ITE) could significantly improve the lived experiences of QTMEYS.

Acronyms

ECEC	Early childhood education and care: provision for young children outside the home from birth to five
ECE	Early childhood educator
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage: the English school system is broken into Key stages. The term EYFS refers to the period from birth to five but Primary schools contain Reception classes which cater for children aged 4-5 and many also include Nursery provision for 3 year olds, from 5-7 is Ks1, 7-11 is Ks 2, 11-14 is KS3, 14-16 is KS4 and 16-18 is KS5
EYP	Early Years Practitioner: a person who works in Early Years/ a qualification awarded at level 6
EYTS	Early Years teacher status: a level 6 qualification which focuses on early childhood but is not awarded with qualified teacher status
ITE	Initial teacher education
ITT	Initial teacher training
QTS	Qualified teacher status
QTMEYS	Qualified teachers in maintained Early Years settings (nursery and reception classes)
NNEB	National nursery Education Board- a qualification awarded at level 3 which is still ailed as the 'gold standard' of Early Years qualifications
OFSTED	Office for standards in Education
PVIs	Private, voluntary or independent setting: Early Years provision which is not maintained by government funding, usually but not exclusively catering from children from birth to four
RBA	Reception baseline assessment
SAT's	Statutory attainment tests
SLT	Senior leadership team

Chapter 1: Introduction

This doctoral study explores the lived experiences[1] of qualified teachers in maintained Early Years settings[2] (QTMEYS). The focus of this study has arisen from my current role as an initial teacher education (ITE) lecturer and my own lived experience as a former QTMEYS. This focus is justified by three factors which bridge empirical, policy and practice terms. First, QTMEYS are liminal professionals. Little is known about their experiences of practice as Early Years professionals, but they also lack the statistical significance to be 'heard' in studies focused on the lived experiences of qualified teachers. Second, this study takes place at a time where there is significant concern about the retention of teachers, however, policy related to retention has not been informed by the unique perspectives of QTMEYS (this claim will be explored later in this chapter). Finally, the focus of this study is pertinent to my role in supporting QTMEYS and preparing them for professional practice.

This study aims to answer three key questions emerging from the factors identified above:

- What is the lived experience of professional practice as QTMEYS?
- What factors shape this experience of professional practice?
- How can this information be used to inform initial teacher education and support the continued professional development of QTMEYS.

The central thesis of this study is that changes in the content of the ITE programmes offered to Primary school teachers could significantly support the continued professional development of QTMEYS. The findings of this study contribute towards existing scholarship on teacher retention and will be used to inform my future practice as an ITE lecturer. In this

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[1] Lived experience refers to the choices and experiences of an individual and the subjective knowledge they have gained from them (Given, 2008).
[2] Reception and Nursery provision within Primary Schools and separate maintained Nursery school provision

chapter my relationship to the research problem is foregrounded, the importance of ITE and continued professional development is defined, and a warrant for the focus of this doctoral study is established by problematizing the evidence used to inform policy related to ITE and teacher retention. I begin by setting the context in which QTMEYS operate.

1.1 The standardisation and 'schoolification' of ECEC in maintained Early Years settings

Professional practice in maintained Early Years settings has changed over the last twenty five years as the balance between care and education has shifted in policy related to school based provision. While New Labour's (1997-2010) Early Years policies could be seen as progressive and child centred, the principles which underpinned Sure Start Centres, Birth to Three Matters (DfE, 2003), Every Child Matters (2003), and The Statutory Framework (DCSF, 2008)[3], were not reflected in policy related to the Reception year[4] (Burgess-Macey, Kelly and Ouvry 2020). Instead, it is widely agreed that policies relating to school-based Early Years provision, and particularly the Reception year, became increasingly prescriptive, focusing on centralised control, prescribed curricula, and linking pupil outcomes to inspection results (Burges-Macey et al, 2020; Bradbury, 2019a; Nutbrown, 2018; McDowall Clarke, 2017; Conkbayir and Pascal, 2014). Osgood (2008, 2006) explained that the constant references within policy documents to raising quality and improving standards disguises a 'paternalistic' attempt to commodify, control and dominate ECEC rather than a sincere desire to promote social justice and improve children's outcomes. Consequently, there now appears to be an emphasis on child care in

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[3] Original versions of these documents are no longer available online
[4] The reception year marks the entry of most children to full time education but provision is guided by the Statutory Framework for the EYFS (DfE, 2021a) which means that, although reception classes are located in Primary Schools, they are still Early Years settings.

policy related to provision for children up to the age of three, and on a functionalist construct of 'education' for three to five-year-olds.

Successive governments in England have attempted to formalise the Early Years 'curriculum' and impose a pedagogically inappropriate transmission model of teaching functional skills in the Reception year (Burgess-Macey et al, 2020; Clark, 2019). The process of formalising the curriculum, which has come to be known as 'schoolification', has resulted in "a new paradigm war" (Wood, 2004:4) between policymakers and Early Years professionals about the type of provision and pedagogic approach that young children need.

A significant body of evidence indicates that forcing children to engage in formal learning before they are developmentally ready is likely to have negative effects in the short term and long-lasting consequences for their future development (e.g. Brill et al, 2018; Bingham and Whitebread, 2012). Scholarship suggests that school readiness is best achieved, not by formalising Early Years, but by increasing play-based provision in Key Stage One in line with practice in many other European countries (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj- Blatchford and Taggart 2004; Fisher, 2011; Roberts-Holmes, 2013; Nicholson, 2019). However, Bingham and Whitebread (2012: 4) argued that:

> The well-aired arguments about whether, how and why a child should be 'made ready' for school in England are symptomatic of the far deeper tension growing within the Early Years education sector in relation to a widening conceptual divide.

This 'conceptual divide' (Bingham and Whitebread, 2012: 4) pertains not only to competing constructs of the value and purpose of ECEC but also to how the 'quality' of provision is defined.

Constructs of 'quality' in ECEC and how it is achieved are contested (Nutbrown, 2013; Osgood, 2006). Longitudinal research suggests that the surest way to achieve improvements in the quality of provision is through adequate funding and investment in the workforce (Sylva et al, 2004; The National Audit Office, 2004). This approach runs counter to neoliberal ideology which promotes austerity and privatisation rather than investment and nationalisation (Chomsky, 1998). Consequently, over decades of neoliberal leadership, the construct of 'quality' in education has been redefined as compliance with imposed standards which can be measured through testable outcomes (Ball, 2015; Sims and Waniganayake, 2015). While neoliberal constructs of 'quality' have impacted the whole education sector, Moyles (2001)[5] pointed out that QTMEYS are faced with unique paradoxes in their professional practice as they struggle to combine developmentally appropriate relational play-based pedagogy with professional practices which promote conformity and standardisation. In the last twenty years, this has become increasingly challenging as the British government has attempted to take greater control of the 'curriculum'[6] in Maintained settings. This curriculum incudes the structured programme of systematic synthetics phonics (SSP) that was introduced in Maintained settings and throughout Key Stage One in 2007. Scholars such as Wyse and

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[5] Moyles (2001) is drawing on the results of a research partnership with ten Early Years practitioners led by Moyles and Adams (2001). The partnership involved self-observation through video, interviews, reflective writing and professional discourse.

[6] Rather than following a prescribed curriculum, the Statutory Framework (DfE, 2021) continues to state that provision should be planned around the needs and interests of the child.

Bradbury (2022) have observed how the introduction of SSP and the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check have re-shaped perception of the purpose of the Reception Year and the quality of educational experience children receive in Reception as a result of government intervention.

Issues of evidence regarding the purpose and 'quality' of EY education are central to this study's interest in the professional development of QTMEYS. There is little reliable empirical evidence to support the efficacy of SSP in enabling young children to learn to read (Clark, 2020; Wyse and Goswami, 2008). Indeed, having conducted a meta-analysis of experimental trials and a survey of 2205 teachers, Wyse and Bradbury (2022) conclude that the way teachers in England are being forced to teach reading is at odds with practice in other English-speaking regions. Teachers have observed that SSP has conceptually separated the ability to decode words from the ability to read for meaning or enjoy reading for pleasure (Walker, Sainsbury, Worth, Bamforth and Betts, 2015). Despite the evidence against SSP, not only are QTMEYS required to teach formal phonics lessons, but children are increasingly streamed for these sessions, with children labelled and subjected to interventions if they are failing to make expected progress (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2017). Scholars have long argued that labelling and streaming children has negative effects on self-esteem and academic outcomes (Barker Lunn, 1970). Thus, it appears counterintuitive that such techniques should be recommended for younger learners (Wyse and Goswami, 2008). The commitment to SSP appears to be an ideological one rather than one based on evidence (Clark, 2020) and, as Walker et al (2015) pointed out, the single most attractive benefit of SSP as far as policy makers are concerned is that it produces testable outcomes.

The neoliberal belief that focusing on testable outcomes can drive improvement in the quality of provision is further exemplified in recent changes to the focus in the Early Learning Goals and non-statutory guidance materials. During the consultation stage, the proposed changes, which moved away from the broad areas of learning and development towards a narrow, prescriptive curriculum, were widely criticised (see, for example, Moylett and Stewart, 2020; Early Years Alliance, 2020; Rawstone, 2020). However, as Chief Executive of the Early Years Alliance, Neil Leitch (Lawler, 2020) lamented:

> At every stage of the process, well-informed and constructive contributions were submitted from a variety of experts in Early Years development and they have almost entirely been ignored by the government.

Leitch's comments resonate with the findings of a study collating the views of over 3,000 Early Years professionals (Bamsey, Georgeson, Healy and Ő Caoimh, 2019) which found that those with lived experience of ECEC suggested it was funding rather than a lack of clarity about learning and development that was the biggest barrier to securing improvements in the quality of provision. Nonetheless, in line with Wyse and Bradbury's (2022) findings that practice in England is not sufficiently informed by research evidence, the proposed changes were made and the focus on testable outcomes in specific areas (such as phonics) has increased.

As political ideology rather than research evidence from within the teaching profession continues to dominate discourse about early education, top-down testable approaches have radically changed practice in Primary schools and Maintained Early Years settings (Wyse and Bradbury, 2022). Wyse and Bradbury (2022) point out that the frequency with which

assessment practices change in England makes tracking long term trends in progress challenging but that teaching to the test has now become the norm. It is striking that these assessments are no longer disguised as attempts to monitor progress but as a way of assessing the 'quality' of teaching in schools.   While previously the first formal assessment children undertook was the Year 1 phonics screening check, the most recent addition to the barrage of statutory assessments children face is Reception baseline assessment (RBA).

Despite widespread objection, and the disruption to education caused by the global pandemic, RBA became statutory for all children in 2021. On reviewing the 2015 iteration of RBA, an expert panel convened by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (Goldstein, Moss, Sammons, Sinnott and Stobart, 2018) concluded that, as RBA has no formative purpose, it is ethically questionable. Furthermore, Goldstein et al (2018) pointed out that the reliability of the RBA and its comparability with SATs data is methodologically unsound.   Other scholarship has raised concerns about the impact of RBA on children's learning, development and wellbeing (Roberts-Holmes et al, 2019; Bradbury, 2019b). One of the key concerns raised by QTMEYS was that, by focusing on narrow testable aspects such as SSP, RBA positions children in a deficit model, a position which is at odds with the strength-based model on which the humanist philosophy which underpins the EYFS is predicated (Bradbury, 2019b; Roberts-Holmes et al, 2019). This concern was echoed by senior leaders in schools that participated in the RBA trial (Bradbury, 2019b). Of particular interest for study, Bradbury (2019b) reported that head teachers expressed satisfaction with the way QTMEYS

currently assessed children through observation[7] and raised concern about the impact of the re-introduction of RBA on teacher workload and wellbeing.

The impact of RBA, and the other issues discussed in relation to the 'schoolification' of provision in Maintained Early Years settings shapes the lived experience of QTMEYS. The conceptual divide between policy makers and practitioners and the way that Early Years professionals are perceived at policy level are central to understanding this experience and how the professional development of QTMEYS can be better supported in future.

1:2 My relationship to the research question

The decision to engage in doctoral studies may be motivated by personal and professional factors (Pilkington, 2009; Wellington and Sikes, 2006), particularly when studying for a professional doctorate, but Hammersley (2013) suggested that the choice of research topic itself is ultimately a political act. Hammersley's (2013) assertion resonates with Benwell and Stokoe's (2006:28) reflection that our personal, professional, and political identities are linked to the 'passionate identifications' we make with particular groups. Accordingly, this doctoral study is intimately linked to my personal and professional biography and rooted in my passion for promoting the best possible start for all children by ensuring the teachers who work with them are well prepared for professional practice and well supported in their role.

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[7] A significant body of work supports observation as the most effective way of assessing children's progress in the EYFS (Drummond, 1993; Carr, 2001; Clark and Moss, 2001; Athey, 2007).

I trained to teach in the 1990s, entering the profession around the same time as the introduction of the National Curriculum, Key Stage One and Two statutory assessment tests (SAT's) and Ofsted. The rationale for the introduction of these measures was the desire to raise the quality of teaching in schools. These strategies have been criticised as little more than accountability measures, designed to erode teacher confidence and autonomy (Ball, 2010). Studies have suggested that teachers' expertise, and therefore the quality of their teaching, improves with experience (Euade, 2011; Timperley, 2011; Lave and Wenger 1991; Schön, 1983). My first post was in a school full of experienced teachers. It soon became apparent that, rather than supporting teacher retention, the new measures that had been introduced to improve the quality of teaching appeared to be increasing dissatisfaction and accelerating an exodus from the profession.

As an early career teacher (ECT) in a small all-through Primary School[8], I was also confronted with the paradoxes of professional practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), as described by Moyles (2001)[9]. While provision for children over the age of five is guided by the National Curriculum (DfE, 2013), provision for younger children is based on The Statutory Framework for the EYFS (DfE, 2021a). The statutory guidance for the EYFS (DfE, 2021a) focuses on the whole child, prioritising personal social and emotional development, physical development and communication and language. In contrast, the National Curriculum (DfE,

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[8] All-through Primary schools include provision for children aged 4-11. Those with Nursery provision will also include provision for 3 years olds and possibly even children as young as 2 ½. Although there are still some Infant (Key Stage One- catering for children aged 5-7) and Junior schools (Key Stage 2- catering for children aged 7-11) schools in England, the majority of Primary schools are all-through primaries.
[9] Moyles (2001) explore how the emotional dimension of practice with young children challenges traditional constructs of professionalism leading to a set of unique paradoxes in professional practice.

2013) prioritises testable outcomes in English and Maths and core knowledge in other subjects. Consequently, although all-through Primary schools include Early Years provision, there is a defined distinction between pedagogy and practice in Early Years and elsewhere in the Primary school. This distinction in pedagogic practice is problematic when attempting to define the quality of provision within each Key Stage and across the Primary school as a whole.

Throughout my career, competing constructs of 'quality' have redefined professional practice (Elwick, Osgood, Sakr, Robertson and Wilson, 2018; Sims and Waniganyake, 2015; Osgood, 2009, 2006; Moyles, 2001). The dissonance between the humanist principles[10] which underpin the EYFS (DfE, 2012, 2017, 2021) and the school readiness agenda (Ofsted, 2014) requires QTMEYS to negotiate between the demands of policy makers, and their professional discernment about the needs and interests of the children in their care. Although my colleagues were experienced teachers, none of them had taught in the EYFS. Without relevant experience, my colleagues were unable to support me as I struggled to manage these complex negotiations. Fortunately, my mother had competed an NNEB qualification and, while I did not receive the support I needed in my professional life, I was well supported by someone with an advanced understanding of child development and play-based pedagogy at home. Realising that ITE left those who wished to work in Maintained Early Years settings unprepared for the challenges they might face, I became committed to supporting trainee and novice teachers to develop the professional confidence to stay true to their pedagogic

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[10] Four key principles underpin practice in the EYFS; 1. Every child is unique, constantly learning and capable of being resilient, confident and self-assured, 2. This strength and confidence comes from positive relationships, 3. In order to learn and develop, children need an environment which responds to their needs and interests and where adults support their development overtime, 4. All children learn and develop at different rates. These principles are based on humanist philosophy which emphasises individual agency and the importance of human connection. (DfE, 2021, Early Years Coalition, 2021).

principles in the face of pressure to conform with regular pedagogically inappropriate policy directives.

I retrained as a home-based childcare provider when my son was born. While working from home and caring for my own children, I continued to act in a training and consultancy capacity. I returned to teaching once both my children were in full time education. In the intervening years the government had invested heavily in systematic synthetic phonics, introducing a highly structured teaching programme and phonics screening checks in Year One. Children as young as four were now being streamed for focused teaching sessions based on research conducted by economists such as Machin, McNally and Viarengo (2016) and government think tanks. I noticed increased concern amongst my colleagues about children's behaviour and a dramatic rise in the number of children with learning support plans. While continuing to teach in Early Years, I began to work as a link tutor, supporting students from the same university I had attended at a student. This role led to the offer of a full-time post as a senior lecturer in Early Years and Primary Education. My identity as an ITE lecturer has been shaped by my experiences as a QTMEYS, experiences I recognised in the stories of my participants to be common to those who work with the youngest children in Primary schools.

My lived experience as a former QTMEYS who now works in ITE have shaped my choice of research focus. The students I work with are motivated by a desire to help the youngest, most vulnerable members of society. From personal experience I am aware of the emotional investment required to prioritise the needs and interests of young children while navigating the paradoxes of professional practice in the EYFS. Colley (2006) suggested that this

emotional investment makes QTMEYS particularly vulnerable to exploitation and exhaustion, but there appears to be a lack of research about what could be done to support them. The focus of my study has arisen in direct response to the lack of research available on the lived experiences of QTMEYS, and my desire to ensure that my students are adequately prepared for the unique challenges they will face.

1:3 Understanding how QTMEYS are prepared for professional practice

Education policy in England recognises the EYFS as a critical stage of rapid growth and development, acknowledging that the experiences children have before the age of five have a lasting impact on their future life chances (DfE, 2021a). Statutory guidance materials concede that young children learn predominantly through play and that learning and development is supported by strong positive relationships between children and the adults who care for them (DfE, 2021a). With research demonstrating the impact well qualified staff can have on early learning and development (Nutbrown, 2012; Sylva et al, 2004), it would seem logical that the qualifications offered to those who work with the youngest children would emphasise the importance of play-based relational pedagogy.

International studies have found that the Early Years Workforce in England is one of the least qualified in the developed world (Christie and Co, 2019). This leads to a lack of recognition and respect for those who work with young children (Nutbrown, 2012; Sylva et al, 2004). Previous scholarship has urged a review of the qualifications available to those who work with young children and promoted the desirability of a graduate led workforce (Elwick et al, 2018; Nutbrown, 2012; Sylva et al, 2004). At policy level, the desirability of a graduate led workforce

has been acknowledged (DfE, 2017a; DfES, 2006) but the ability to realise this ambition is complicated by the complexity of the Early Years sector in England. While it is a legal requirement for provision in Maintained Early Years settings to be led by qualified teachers, eighty percent of provision for children under the age of five takes place in Private, Voluntary, or Independent settings (PVI's) (DfE, 2019). There is no legal requirement for private, voluntary or independent settings (PVIs) to employ graduates, and, as these settings are run for profit, levels of qualification remain low within them.

While Early Years specific degree level qualifications exist, these are not awarded with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and those who achieve them are not permitted to lead provision in Maintained Early Years settings. As a result, the majority of QTMEYS will have followed Primary Education pathways which may not have contained sufficient focus on early childhood development to fully prepare teachers for professional practice in the EYFS (Nutbrown, 2012). The need to review existing qualifications remains pressing, but it is also important to recognise that professional development continues beyond ITE. Reflective practice supported by experienced mentors is pivotal in the development of teacher expertise (Shanks, 2017; Siraj and Hallet, 2013; Aubrey, 2011; Moyles, 2004; Moyles, Adams and Musgrove, 2002; Schön, 1983). It is also well documented that the development of expertise increases with experience over time (Euade, 2011; Timperley, 2011 for example). Recognising the importance of mentoring and that expertise develops over time, recent policy decisions have focused intently on supporting teacher retention.

1.4 Problematizing the data used to inform retention policy

The retention of qualified teachers has become the subject of intense study (recent research includes DfE, 2019a; Foster, 2018; DfE, 2018b; NFER, 2018; Sibieta, 2018; Allen, Belfield, Greaves, Sharp and Walker, 2016) as awareness of the numbers of teachers leaving the profession before retirement has grown at policy level. In response to evidence which suggests that attrition rates are highest in the first five years after graduation (DfE, 2019a; Allen, et al 2016, 2014), significant changes have been made in ITE (DfE, 2019b) and the support teachers receive on entering the profession (DfE, 2019c). However, much of the empirical evidence that informs recent teacher retention policy is quantitative in nature, with a propensity towards large scale studies using fixed response surveys. My argument here is that while fixed response surveys may be easy to analyse, by predetermining which responses are possible, the opportunity to respond authentically is limited[11]. The ability of this approach to adequately capture the ethical complexity of human concerns is questioned by humanist researchers who suggest that an over reliance on descriptive statistics dehumanises people and oversimplifies the problems they face (Plummer, 2004). Dehumanised data that does not sufficiently capture the complex factors which influence teacher retention can only provide a partial understanding of the situation as there may be factors which remain unidentified.

A second issue is revealed when the data that has been used to inform retention policy (e.g. DfE, 2018) is scrutinised further. Data from different Key Stages is often aggregated, but Secondary school teachers are statistically more significant as provision in Secondary schools is led by subject specialists, while children in Primary schools are typically taught by just one

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[11] A recent example of this is the survey used to gather opinion on whether Britain should return to the imperial measurement system. The survey did not allow participants to express a desire to continue to use metric measurements; all possible answers supported a change to imperial measurements. The only option for those who do not wish to return to imperial measurements was not to complete the survey which meant that all the data collected supported the move being proposed.

teacher each year which means that there are simply more Secondary teachers than Primary. As QTMEYS account for only one in seven or eight[12] Primary school teachers, they are very much a minority group and, as such, their responses may lack the statistical significance to warrant further scrutiny. The statistical insignificance of QTMEYS raises an important issue around how policy makers conceptualise teachers and understand the issues which impact retention. Studies have indicated that, as teachers in different types of educational settings and different phases of education operate in different ways, the issues and challenges they face may be very different (Hunter-Quartz et al, 2010; Billingsley, 2004). In light of the marginalisation of the experiences of QTMEYS, the extent to which recent retention strategies (DfE, 2019a; DfE, 2019b; DfE2019c) will support this specific group of teachers must be questioned.

Factors which impact the retention of QTMEYS remain relatively under researched. The propensity towards large scale fixed response surveys and aggregated data from teachers in different phases of education means that the voices of those who work in Early Years are rarely heard in the development of ITE (Elwick et al, 2018; Dyer, 2018) or in discourse around teacher retention (Osgood, 2006, 2009). Studies suggest that due to long standing issues around funding and the status of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in England, the retention of QTMEYS has steadily deteriorated in recent decades (Sylva et al, 2004; DfE, 2018a; Bonetti, 2018, for example). As someone who has lived experience of professional practice as a QTMEYS, it seems to me that further research is required to identify the nature of the challenges QTMEYS face and to provide greater insight into the factors which could

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[12] There are seven-year groups in most all-through primaries (Reception to Year Six) and eight in those that include Nursery provision.

support their retention. This study has been conducted from the premise that the people best placed to offer suggestions about how to support the retention of QTMEYS are qualified teachers with lived experience of professional practice in maintained Early Years settings.

1:5 Foregrounding the context in which this study has taken place

This study was conducted during the Covid 19 pandemic. Concern has been raised that the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on the early educational experiences of young children has placed additional pressures on QTMEYS and negatively impacted retention (for example, La Valle, Lewis, Crawford, et al 2022; Grenier, 2021; Campbell, 2021). Early years experts and experienced practitioners have cautioned that, given the cruciality of children's early educational experience, there is an urgent need to focus on supporting QTMEYS (La Valle et al, 2022; Grenier, 2021; Fullard, 2021).

The pandemic presented personal and scholarly challenges in terms of how to pursue doctoral research while working full time and home-schooling my own children, but it also exacerbated existing professional challenges in ITE. Among these challenges is the threat posed to the future of ITE provision by the ITT Market Review (DfE, 2021b). Written by an 'expert panel' with vested interests in school centred initial teacher training SCITT), the report has been widely condemned for the lack of consultation with key stakeholders (Teacher Education Advisory Group, 2021; Universities Council for the Education of Teachers, 2021; and the British Educational Research Association, 2021). It is difficult not to perceive the ITT Market Review (DfE, 2021b) as a direct threat to university based ITE and a deliberate attempt to undermine the professional status of the teaching profession.

During the period in which this study was conducted, the UK left the European Union. The development of ECEC in England and the qualifications available not only to QTMEYS but all those who work in Early Years were heavily influenced by early European pioneers who advocated humanist approaches, valuing early childhood as a distinct phase rather than a preparation for adulthood. While these influences will be discussed in later chapters, it is pertinent to note at this point that in the devolved parts of the United Kingdom, policy related to provision for young children is closely aligned with that in Europe, focusing on holistic development and wellbeing (Education Scotland, 2020). In contrast, in England, both ITE content and professional practice are increasingly prescriptive and focused on standardised measurable outcomes. The current direction of policy related to ECEC appears to be at odds with the humanist principles of the EYFS which state that every child is unique and will learn and develop at different rates in environments which respond to their needs and interests.

A further challenge has arisen from the introduction of the ITE Core Content Framework (CCF) (DfE, 2019b). The ideological basis of the CCF (DfE, 2019b) is evident in its increased emphasis on performativity, particular styles of teaching and theories about learning. As part of the reaccreditation process instigated by the ITT Market Review (DfE, 2021b), ITE institutions have been forced to map the content of their modules to the CCF (DfE, 2019b), an activity criticised by the Teacher Education Advisory Group (2021) as diverting time and energy from processes which could have a greater impact on student experience. Critically, the CCF (DfE, 2019b) stipulates not only what teachers should be taught but also, which research they should be exposed to. Exploration of the research that has been used to inform the CCF (DfE, 2019b) reveals that only two studies relate to Early Years, neither of which have been

conducted in the UK and both of which focus on performative aspects of Early Years practice. Furthermore, the CCF (DfE, 2019b) contains no reference to child development, making it unclear how those training to become QTMEYS will be prepared for professional practice. Without adequate preparation and appropriate support, it seems uncertain that the current generation of QTMEYS will remain in the profession long enough to develop the expertise they need to support young children during the vital early years of learning and development.

1.6 Outlining the research design

This study has been conducted through a humanist lens (Plummer, 2021, 2004) which positions QTMEYS as agentic beings whose experiences are influenced by psychological and social factors. Psychoanalytical tools have been employed to enable me, as the researcher, to explore the moral, ethical, political and emotional dimensions of the lived experiences of QTMEYS, and to focus on their needs and interests. To develop an insight into these experiences, a narrative methodology has been used.

Five participants[13] were recruited through my professional networks and invited to share a written narrative, or testimony, of their journey towards becoming a QTMEYS and their day-today experience of professional practice. The narrative methodology emphasises the subjective, emotional dimensions of professional practice which scholarship suggests are most pivotal in decisions about whether to remain in or leave a professional role (Archer, 2007; Baard, Deci and Ryan, 2004; Ryan and Deci, 2000).

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[13] Each participant had trained to teach through a different route and had different levels of experience. Two participants had left the profession and one had moved into the private sector

The participants' testimonies were analysed using the relational voice centred feminist method of analysis outlined in The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982). Gilligan's (1982) method of analysis involves multiple 'listenings' to explore the emotional dimensions of the participants lived experience and will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 4. During this stage of analysis, I-Poems were developed to reframe and return the narratives to the participants. These poems were used to guide individualised interviews during which the participants and I co-analysed their narratives, exploring alternative interpretations and steps that could have been taken to reduce any dissonance they had described. The corpus of data collected through the written testimonies and the interviews was analysed and common latent themes emerged. These themes were compared with those present in policy around retention and are presented as three shared narratives: neglect, isolation and conflict (see Chapter 6).

Butler (2005) explained that when individuals share their stories, the wider social story, or bigger picture, is also revealed (Butler, 2005) and the social and cultural resources available to others to guide them about how to act in a given situation are increased (Biesta and Tedder, 2007). Following analysis of the narratives shared in this thesis, the implications for ITE and the continued professional development of QTMEYS have become clear. In light of growing concern about the retention of teachers, particularly those in Early Years, my main argument is that changes must be made in ITE to better support QTMEYS 'right from the start'[14] of their careers.

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[14] 'Right from the start' is used throughout this thesis as an argument that lived experiences of professional practice and the ambient support offered to those who will become QTMEYS must begin in ITE.

1:7 Structural overview

This chapter has briefly introduced my identity as a researcher and rationale for the choice of research focus. A rationale for necessity of research focused on the lived experiences of QTMEYS has been introduced and will be developed in the next chapter.

Chapter 2 contextualises the retention of QTMEYS through a review of existing literature. Key debates around the value and purpose of ECEC are explored. These debates feed into those around the status of QTMEYS, a contributing factor in their 'absent presence' (Criado-Perez, 2019: xi) in discourse around professional development and retention. Policy responses to the 'crisis' in teacher retention are interrogated and a warrant established for developing a psycho-social understanding of the lived experiences of QTMEYS is presented.

Chapter 3 presents the psycho-social lens through which this doctoral study has been conducted. I discuss the theories and concepts which frame this study and develop a theoretical framework for exploring retention. This framework combines a focus on how individuals are influenced by the multiple systems they navigate (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), individual agency and motivation (Archer, 2007; Baard, Deci and Ryan, 2004; Ryan and Deci, 2000); and how cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 2001) is experienced and resolved.

Chapter 4 utilises the theoretical framework previously to establish the rationale for the research design and strategy used in this study. The selection of data collection and analysis tools on the grounds of their ability to retain narrative authenticity and support narrative

imagination in the context of the lived experience of QTMEYS is explained. Ethical considerations which have been navigated in this study are also discussed.

Chapter 5 presents the analysis of the participant's written testimonies, or their individual narratives. This chapter identifies how categories and themes emerged which led to the development of shared narratives following a second round of data collection through individual interviews.

Chapter 6 builds on the findings presented in Chapter 5, collating the corpus of data collected through the written testimonies provided by each participant and the co-analytical interviews which took pace following initial analysis using The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982). Three shared narratives are presented based on the latent themes found to be common across all five participants' testimonies: neglect, isolation and conflict

Chapter 7 draws together the key findings of this study highlighting the tactic knowledge that has been revealed about the lived experiences of QTMEYS, the factors which shape these experiences and what could be done differently to support their professional development 'right from the start'.

Chapter 8 summarises the findings in relation to the aims set out in Chapter 1 and considers the effectiveness of the data collection and analysis methods used in this study. This final chapter proposes tentative recommendations for my practice as an ITE lecturer, the development of existing ITE provisions, and wider policy relating to the professional development of QTMEYS.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This study focuses on the lived experiences of QTMEYS, arguing that there is a need to review existing ITE provision and the ongoing professional development of this particular group of teachers. The liminal status of QTMEYS (as discussed in Chapter 1:1) presented a critical issue in developing a strategy for sampling relevant literature for this study. While there is a wealth of literature exposing the challenges faced by the teaching profession (Goodson, 2016; Ball, 2013 for example), and a body of scholarship which focuses on the professional experiences of the Early Years workforce (including work by Dyer, 2018 and Elwick et al, 2018, who focus on the impact of EYTS), there is relatively limited literature focusing exclusively on the experiences of qualified teachers in maintained Early Years settings. However, as I will discuss later in this chapter, a distinction persists between EYTS and QTS that means that, while there may be parallels between these groups there will also be key differences in terms of the training they have received, where they are employed and their status and pay. To address this issue, I have drawn on both these bodies of scholarship to explore the particularities and peculiarities of QTMEYS as liminal professionals who are both qualified teachers and members of the Early Years workforce.

2.1.1 Key terminology

Several key terms are used throughout this chapter which bear definition and clarification:

Early childhood education and care (ECEC): Although many children begin to attend school full-time from the September after their 4th birthday (DfE, 2023) compulsory 'education' in

England does not begin until the term after a child's 5th birthday. ECEC refers to provision available to children below the age of five (DfE, 2019a).

Expertise: Expertise can be defined as the specialist knowledge or skills required or valued in a particular field (Euade, 2011).

Professional identity: the term 'professional has traditionally been used to describe those in knowledge based occupations (Olgiati, Orzack and Saks, 1998). Professional identity is conferred on those whose occupations are not only based upon a specific body of knowledge but who use this knowledge to serve an important role in meeting the needs of society (Evetts, 2003).

Professional development: professional development describes the process of acquiring the specialised knowledge necessary in a particular occupational sphere and developing the ability to apply this knowledge autonomously with increasing confidence and competence (Young, 2010). Young (2010) insists that professional development should be seen as an ongoing reflective process of building expertise while Enser and Enser (2021) insist that opportunities for ongoing professional development are essential to ensure job satisfaction and promote retention.

Retention: Scholars note that it takes time to develop expertise (Euade, 2011 and Schön, 1983 for example). Persuading people to stay in professions long enough to develop their expertise and share it with others has become both a challenge and a problem (Kelchtermans, 2017) which has led to an intense focus on retention at policy level in recent years. Recent initiatives relevant to this study have focused on how teachers are prepared for professional practice (DfE, 2019b) and the support they receive during the early stages of their careers (DfE, 2019c)

To understand how the liminal identity of QTMEYS shapes their professional lives, this chapter begins by exploring debates around the nature and purpose of ECEC. Debates centre on the tension between education and care and between policy and curriculum (Neaum, 2016) which must be highlighted in order to understand the unique position of QTMEYS. QTMEYS may predominantly work within or in close association with Primary schools, but their practice is guided by the Statutory Framework for the EYFS which focuses on early childhood education and care (ECEC) rather than Primary education. As Bamsey, Fogarty, Encinas and Andrews (2019) point out, the emphasis on care in the EYFS means that the 'education' has become confused with 'school' and the educational value of play based relational pedagogy is often overlooked at policy level.

Having reviewed debates around the nature and purpose of ECEC, I concur with Osgood's (2006, 2008) suggestion that the development of ECEC has been impeded by patriarchal conceptualisations of the role of women in society and neoliberal understandings of the value of high-quality provision for young children. Analysis of scholarship related to the status and experience of QTMEYS and other Early Years professionals supports Moyles' (2001) contention that those who work with young children face unique paradoxes in their professional life. Central to the experience of QTMEYS is the persistent challenge of defending play-based pedagogy within a system which focuses on teacher centred models of education (Moyles, 2010). As Cullen and Johnston (2017) argued in their study of how play-workers are perceived in Primary schools, this can lead to issues of professional 'mis-

recognition' and the perception that those who promote play-based pedagogy are somehow less qualified than other educational professionals. This exploration of debates around ECEC highlights the minority status of QTMEYS within the education system, reinforcing the significance of this study in terms of foregrounding their voices.

Next, this chapter investigates debates around how QTMEYS are prepared for professional practice. The parity between Early Years specific qualifications and qualified teacher status (QTS) is explored, refuting the suggestion that those who work with young children are perceived as equal to those who teach older ones (DfE, 2017). The policies and scholarship reviewed in this chapter substantiate Hargreaves' (2003) claims that teaching has been redefined as a technical act, focused on performativity and compliance, rather than the needs and interests of children. Scholarship related to the way the professional identity of teachers has been destabilised by successive governments is explored (Flynn, 2020; Perryman and Calvert, 2019; Tarpey, 2018, for example), and the impact this instability has had on retention is examined; this foregrounds the need for scholarship which focuses on the lived experiences of QTMEYS.

Finally, the way that retention, as an indicator of professional dis-satisfaction, has been conceptualised at policy level is examined. I contrast this with studies which focus on the interrelation of social factors and the way individuals think, feel and behave (for example, Ryan and Deci, 2020, 2000; Archer, 2007). I contend that this psycho-social conceptualisation offers a more holistic understanding of the factors which could support retention. However, exegesis of the evidence used to inform retention policy also reveals a misconception that all

teachers share the same challenges regardless of which phase they work in, and that a single approach to professional development will offer the same support to all. From the literature reviewed, it appears that there is a gap in the research used to inform policy, much of which uses aggregated data or focuses solely on the experiences of secondary school teachers. This study aims to address this gap by focusing specifically on the psycho-social experiences of QTMEYS and the challenges they face in professional practice in order to identify ways they could be better supported right from the start in ITE and throughout their professional lives.

2.2 The nature and purpose of ECEC

This section interrogates key events and significant studies concerned with ECEC, developing a genealogy which locates the research question in the socio historic and political context from which it has arisen. In order to appreciate the current status of QTMEYS and begin to understand how this shapes their professional lives as teachers, it is necessary to acknowledge that teachers develop their identities and live their professional lives in a context which has been shaped by what has gone before them (Goodson, 2016). Bertram and Pascal (2000) suggested that discourse about ECEC has been influenced by a trilogy of factors which continue to have relevance to this day: the desire to support maternal employment, enhance children's development and promote the social integration of economically disadvantaged children. The genealogy developed in this chapter identifies the priority ascribed to each of these factors in educational policy and in professional practice at different phases of children's lives. From this analysis, the only conclusion which can be drawn is that, while the deliberate erosion of teacher's professional identity and autonomy

by successive neoliberal governments is well documented (Ball, 2015 for example), QTMEYS face a unique set of challenges that have not yet been fully explored.

The minority status of QTMEYS within the Primary Education system and the challenges they face in professional practice are the result of an ongoing struggle for recognition of the importance of early childhood development and respect for those who work with young children. The origins of the struggle for recognition and respect must be acknowledged before the lived experiences of contemporary practice can be understood. I begin with a brief consideration of ECEC from a European perspective and across the devolved nations.

2.2.1 ECEC: perspectives and policy in Europe and the devolved nations

While ECEC has come to prominence on political agendas in recent years, comparative studies of policy and practice are less prevalent than in other sectors of education (Sousa and Moss, 2022). The first point of difference that can be noted is that while UNESCO (2023) define early childhood as birth to eight years of age, the age at which children start formal education varies from country to country but the average school starting age across Europe is 6 (Christie & Co, 2019). In 2021, the European Commission adopted a proposal to establish a European Child Guarantee to promote social inclusion for all children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with additional needs. Among the key services identified by the commission that all children should have access to was free early childhood education and care. However, provision for children before they reach statutory school age continues to vary tremendously across Europe.

Across EU countries, one in three children under the age of three attend some form of ECEC rising to 90% of children aged 3-5 (Mubashar, 2023). There are few countries where there is universal access to a single centrally funded service. Only Belgium, Denmark, Lithuania, Norway and Slovenia provide fully funded access to ECEC children below the age of 5. In France, for example, provision is split between optional care based settings catering from birth to three and compulsory 'ècoles maternelles' for children aged 3 to 6 (Dimitrijevic, 2023). Almost all provision for children aged 0-6 in France is means tested, meaning that parents pay what they can afford with fees varying from €50 to €400 each month. In Germany and Austria, parents can expect to dedicate up to 5% of their income to ECEC. Similarly, once child benefits have been taken in to account, low earning parents in the Netherlands also only pay approximately 5% of their income to ECEC providers despite the market being dominated by private settings. In contrast, parents in England spend far more than in any other country on childcare which can cost up to 75% of their income (Mubashar, 2023). Consequently, statistics released by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (2022) show that the number of children who access 'free childcare' in England continues to be significantly lower than the number who are eligible.

Most countries in Europe have some form of 'curriculum'[15] which helps to guide practice in ECEC. Many of these curricula, or frameworks, focus on the development of holistic learning skills such as perseverance, motivation, self-regulation and self-esteem rather than prescribing specific content and advocate a play-based pedagogic approach (Bertram and

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[15] The OECD (2013) define a curriculum as what content is taught to support learning and development and the pedagogic approach taken to teaching this.

Pascal, 2016). I have already discussed the way that policy shapes provision for children in England (see Chapter 1 section 1), prioritising testable knowledge over holistic development. However, it should be noted that this is not the case elsewhere in the devolved parts of the United Kingdom where policy related to provision for young children is closely aligned with that in Europe, focusing on holistic development and wellbeing (Education Scotland, 2020). As previously discussed, the ECEC curriculum in England has become increasingly formal and focused on testable outcomes as a means of assessing the quality of provision. However, the construct of 'quality' remains contested.

Gromada and Richardson (2021) point out that the international sustainable development goals set a mandate that all children should have access to high quality ECEC and suggest that, given the disparity of provision across Europe, the best indicators of quality might be adult to child ratios and minimum level of staff qualifications. While Gromada and Richardson (2021) were unable to secure reliable comparable data about levels of qualification in England, Christie & Co (2019) found that although it is a requirement in much of Europe for those who work in Early Years to be qualified to Masters-level, England continues to have one of the lowest qualified Early Years workforces in the developed world. This point will be explored in greater depth in section 2.3.3 of this Chapter, but speaks to the way those who work with young children are perceived on an international stage and is particularly pertinent for this study which focuses on the lived experiences of QTMEYS. In order to develop a fuller understanding of how QTMEYS are perceived in England, it is necessary to examine the development of provision in greater depth.

2.2.2 The origins of ECEC in England

The origins of ECEC in England emerges from a conflation between care, education and economic productivity (Payler, Georgeson and Wickett, 2013). The connection between maternal employment and ECEC can be traced back to the industrial revolution, when mass migration to towns and cities reduced the intergenerational way of living which had previously supported maternal employment (Valenze, 1995). This migration necessitated the development of provision for young children outside the home (Honeyman, 2000). Payler et al (2013:257) argued that the development of ECEC in England occurred through a combination of "philanthropy, pluralism, propagation and pragmatism". Indeed, the first nurseries and infant schools were opened by early industrialists such as Robert Owen to raise the productivity of female workers and as an investment in the future workforce (Gillard, 2018). As demand grew, publicly funded Primary education for all children over the age of five was introduced, but Primary schools continued to admit children as young as two years of age to support working parents.

While Owen, and other philanthropists like him were inspired by European pioneers to establish provision which emphasised holistic development and relational, play-based pedagogy, Primary school teachers at the time had been instructed in the use of didactic teaching methods and were seldom equipped to meet the needs of younger children (Valenze, 1995). It appears that while it was increasingly evident to policy makers in England that provision for young children was necessary to support maternal employment, there was a reluctance to consider what type of provision might best meet the needs and interests of

young children and to invest accordingly. This reluctance persisted as provision expanded with economic rather than educational drivers continuing to take precedence at policy level.

2.2.3 The expansion of ECEC in England

The World Wars further and irrevocably changed family structures. These changes challenged the paternalistic myth of the nuclear family (Oakley, 1981) and made provision for children under the age of five an economic necessity. Between 1939 and 1945 a proliferation of hastily established, underfunded and overcrowded day care centres led by untrained staff appeared, as women were forced into the workplace at unprecedented rates (Mathivet, 2011). When peace was declared and men returned from war, the economic necessity of infrastructure to support maternal employment reduced, and much of the funding that had been put in place to support provision for young children was withdrawn. It seems that women, even those whose husbands did not return or who were unable to work, were simply expected to resume their domestic duties. However, it was not only the role of women in society but also the understanding of the value of ECEC that changed in the post war period.

Post war research (Pringle, Butler and Davie, 1966; Wedge and Prosser, 1973) demonstrated the long-term economic benefits of provision for young children outside the home. Findings from the longitudinal National Child Development Survey (Pringle, Butler and Davie, 1966) offered significant insight into how ECEC and socio-economic status impact life chances. These findings informed the Plowden review (1967:25) which urged politicians to ensure that the connection between health, education and social care was recognised by placing the child "at the heart of the educational process". Plowden's (1967) plea was reinforced by the publication of 'Born to Fail', a book based on the findings of the National childhood data study

(NCDS) (Wedge and Prosser, 1973) which highlighted that one in seven British children were growing up in poverty[16]. Wedge and Prosser (1973) also used the NCDS data to demonstrate a direct connection between early childhood experiences of poverty and life chances and economic potential in adulthood.

In response to evidence around the long-term impact of ECEC, the DfEE (1998) pledged to increase the availability of high-quality childcare in deprived areas by offering start-up grants to Private, Voluntary and Independent settings (PVIs). However, despite some initial expansion, growth was not sustained (National Audit Office, 2004). Oppenheim and Archer (2021) suggest that the legacy of historic, chronic and deliberate underfunding is a system which fails to meet the needs of parents and children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This legacy can be seen to disproportionately impact the recognition and respect afforded to QTMEYS as liminal professionals within the Early Years workforce.

2.2.4 ECEC in England today

In England today, the only area of ECEC that continues to be fully funded is the Reception Year of Primary Education and Maintained Nurseries, which are also legally constituted as schools (Paull and Popov, 2019). Decades of parsimonious policy decisions have resulted in a system that is on the point of collapse (Solvason, Webb and Sutton-Tsang, 2020). Following pressure from Early Years Organisations, documents[17] were released after under the Freedom of

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[16] A figure which has increased today to one in four according to research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2021)

[17] These include Early Years Spending Review Scenarios (DfE, 2015) and notes to minister Sam Giymah written in 2018.

Information Act (Ministry of Justice, 2000) which revealed that policy makers have deliberately underfunded ECEC in order to force privatisation as part of the neoliberal agenda[18]. These decisions have created a "hostile environment" for Maintained Nurseries, traditionally led by graduates and located in areas of deprivation, in particular (Bradbury, Hoskins and Fogarty, 2023:171). Evidence that high quality graduate led ECEC can significantly impact children's long-term outcomes, particularly those from disadvantaged background and those with additional educational needs has grown in the last fifty years (Oppenheim and Archer, 2019; Nutbrown, 2012; Sylva, et al 2004; Wedge and Prosser, 1973; Pringle, Butler and Davie, 1966). In addition, despite the decline of the Children's Centre programme introduced by New Labour in 2004 which aimed to support families by creating hubs which multiple services could operate from, many Maintained Nurseries continue to provide essential support for parents that extends far beyond 'free childcare' (Hoskins, Bradbury and Fogarty, 2020). Yet there appears to have been a shift in the focus of ECEC from supporting economically disadvantaged children towards supporting working parents. Pascal, Bertram and Cole-Albäck (2021) note that rather than improving access to ECEC, the 30 hours 'free childcare' policy (DfE, 2017), has meant that the children who would most benefit from high quality ECEC are most affected by underfunding.

The future of Maintained Nurseries seems uncertain (Solvason, et al, 2020) and the Covid 19 pandemic has further exacerbated the financial issues they face (Gibbons, 2020). The quality of provision in Maintained Nurseries has long been recognised by practitioners in the UK and

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[18] An political and economic philosophy which aggressively promotes austerity and privatisation (Chomsky, 1998)

beyond (Solvason, et al, 2020). Provision in these settings has been praised by politicians (Early Education, 2016: np) and endorsed by Ofsted (2021) who have graded 97% of Maintained Nurseries in England as good or outstanding. However, a report by the Educational Policy Institute confirmed a funding gap for Maintained Nurseries of £662 million in 2019 (Hutchinson, Bonetti, Crenna-Jennings and Akhal, 2019). As a result, despite their reputation for excellence, the number of Maintained Nurseries in the UK has dropped from over 600 to just 388 in the last 30 years as a result of funding cuts (Paull and Popov, 2019) and the remaining nurseries are struggling to remain open (Solvason et al, 2020). Stewart and Reader (2020) point out that the quality of provision in the remaining settings is under threat as head teachers are forced to reduce the number of graduates they employ in an attempt to reduce costs. This has implications not only for maintained Nurseries, but also for practice in Reception classes.

A direct relationship has also been observed between the deliberate underfunding of preschool provision and the increase in the number of children in Reception classes who have additional needs or developmental delays (Tracey, Bower-Crane, Bonetti, Nielson, D'Apice and Crompton, 2022). Failure to provide adequate funding and appropriate training to enable early identification of specific educational needs to take place can have dramatic consequences for children as they move through the education system (Timpson, 2019). Timpson (2019) noted that, without early intervention, greater long-term expenditure is necessary as children become increasingly unable to access provision without significant support. It would seem that policy makers are more concerned with saving costs today than investing in the future.

The extent to which teachers in Reception classes will be able to identify and meet the needs of children who have developmental delays is debateable, as studies suggest that ITE contains insufficient focus on child development and relational pedagogy (Tracey et al, 2022; Nutbrown, 2012). The lack of specialist input can leave QTMEYS feeling disempowered and inadequate (Moyles, Adam and Musgrove, 2002). Furthermore, although many schools ensure that Reception classes have a teaching assistant as well as a teacher, DfE (2021:29-30) guidelines state that, where a qualified teacher is present, a ratio of one adult to thirty children is sufficient. This ratio raises a challenge for teachers in Reception classes as it betrays a misconception that one person can adequately identify and meet the needs of thirty young children with unique and diverse needs at various stages of learning and development.

There is no requirement for Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCOs) or Senior Leaders in Primary Schools to have any Early Years specific training or experience. So, while the government is quick to point out that QTMEYS should be supported by the SENCO in their setting (gov.uk: nd), the level of support they are able to provide in identifying and meeting the particular needs of children in Reception classes may be limited. It appears that the quality of education and care in Reception classes may not only be impacted by parsimonious policy decisions but also by the extent to which existing qualification requirements leading to QTS adequately prepare teachers for professional practice in Early Years. It is also evident that the recent pandemic has exacerbated the extent to which these decisions are impacting the retention of QTMEYS (as highlighted by Grenier, 2021 and La Valle et al, 2022). These issues will be explored later in this chapter.

2.3 Key debates about the Early Years Professional

Scholars have argued that the status of Early Years professionals makes it easy for policy makers to ignore their concerns and the evidence they provide to support them (Oppenheimer and Archer, 2019). Goodson (2016) suggested that policy makers also struggle to engage with evidence which contradicts their ideological position or indicates a failure on their part. However, Osgood (2006) suggested that, in order to fully understand how QTMEYS as members of the EY workforce are conceptualised through dominant political discourse, it is necessary to deconstruct the cultural, historical and political significance of the term 'professional'.

This section examines how constructs of 'professionalism' have been critiqued in broader scholarship. It examines the value and purpose of specific qualifications available for those who want to specialise in ECEC, and the extent to which recent changes in ITE are likely to prepare students for the realities of professional practice as QTMEYS. This section advances the argument that a review of existing qualifications and the extent to which they prepare QTMEYS for professional practice is necessary.

2.3.1 Developing expertise

In order to ensure that those who work with the youngest children are confident, competent practitioners, it is essential that they remain in the profession long enough to develop their expertise and to share it with others. However, retention is 'both a problem and a challenge'

(Kelchtermans, 2017:961). Kelchtermans (2017) explained that, while it is inevitable that, as teachers approach retirement age, they will leave the profession, the problem is that many teachers are choosing to do so before this point, and the challenge lies in persuading them to stay (Kelchtermans (2017). In order to meet this challenge, it is important that an appreciation of the factors which influence decisions to leave the profession should be developed.

Day, Kington, Stobart and Salmons (2006) suggested that teachers' identities are fundamentally unstable, as the context in which they work is constantly changing and subject to numerous influences. When teachers feel alienated from or a lack of commitment to the structures and practices within a school, they are likely to begin to question their own identity as a member not only of that particular institution but of the teaching profession as a whole (Maclure, 1993; Giddens, 1984). As teachers' identities are negotiated through personal and professional relationships (Nias, 2005, Nias, Southworth and Yeomans, 1989), relationships with colleagues have been identified as a supportive factor in retention (Gallant and Riley, 2017; Kelchtermans, 2006; Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002). However, scholarship (Towers and Maguire, 2017; Biesta, 2016; Kelchtermans, 2011, 2009) suggests that, as teaching involves the care of others, the decision to leave the profession can be seen as an agentic 'choice', made in a relational context in which one no longer feels able to achieve one's moral purpose.

Retaining teachers long enough to develop and share professional expertise can be seen as an issue which has moral, ethical, political and emotional dimensions. Studies which focus on

factors which support retention, most notably the work of Archer (2007), Baard, Deci and Ryan (2004), and Ryan and Deci (2000), will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 3, along with Festinger's (2001) framework for reducing cognitive dissonance. What is pertinent at this point is the extent to which the factors which impact teacher retention have been understood at policy level.

2.3.2 Defining professional identity

Constructs of professional identity have changed over time but remain contested. Historically, professional identity has been endowed on those engaged in intellectual rather than physical labour; those who are able to use their specialised knowledge to resolve situations concerning conflict, physical, mental, spiritual or financial well-being; to maintain social order; educate or to entertain others (Olgiati et al, 1998). Evetts (2003) concluded that professions can be conceptualised as occupations that are both knowledge and service based and which play an important role in society. As discussed in the previous chapter, ECEC is not only essential for maternal employment, but also has the potential to significantly impact the holistic development of young children and support their long-term outcomes. It would appear then that both Olgiati et al's (1998) and Evetts's definitions of professional identity could be applied to those who work in ECEC as they provide an essential service to society in enabling women to work and utilise their specialist knowledge to promote the education and wellbeing of young children.

However, Johnson (1995) pointed out that the importance ascribed to particular occupations is determined by the state or government. Johnson's (1995) suggestion raises two challenges

for those who work in ECEC. First, as discussed in the previous chapter, the importance of ECEC has only been recognised at policy level when the economy has demanded. Second, as the previous chapter has also highlighted, knowledge and expertise from within the sector does not appear to be valued at policy level. Part of the reason for this lack of recognition and respect may be because the caring professions appear to be held in low regard at policy level.

According to Perryman and Calvert (2019), people are motivated to join caring professions such as teaching, nursing or social work by an altruistic desire to help others. However, prior scholarship by Olgiati et al (1998) suggested that the lived reality of many caring professionals is that a significant proportion of their time is consumed by administrative, bureaucratic activities. Davies (2005) explained that the effect of this reorientation of activity is a distortion of moral purpose and responsibility which has a profound impact on the way caring professionals experience their work and the level of satisfaction they derive from it. Davies' (2005) argument supports the assertion of Collins (1981) who observed that the reorientation of professional activity frequently results in an occupational identity crisis. Collins (1981) explained that occupational identity crises are experienced most acutely by experienced professionals who perceive the imposition of external standards, increase in bureaucracy and decrease in autonomy as having a negative effect on the level of service they are able to provide. This scholarship is of significance as this study aims to explore the lived experiences of QTMEYS and the factors which shape this experience in order to understand how this liminal group of professionals could better be prepared for and supported in professional practice.

Davies (1996) claimed that the gradual erosion of professional autonomy has disproportionately impacted female graduates, particularly those in the caring professions, leading to an occupational dissatisfaction which undermines their professional identity. Davies' (1996) claim is significant for this particular research as studies show that less than 15% of teachers in Primary schools (Gov.UK, 2022[19]), and less than 3% of the Early Years workforce (CEEDA, 2019; Bonetti, 2019) are men. The gendered nature of the Early Years workforce and of debates pertaining to ECEC are particularly pertinent when studying the lived experiences of QTMEYS as part of the wider Early Years workforce, and the factors which shape their experience of professional practice.

2.3.3 The professionalization of the early years workforce

England continues has one of the lowest qualified Early Years workforces in the developed world (Christie & Co, 2019). Less than 10% of the workforce holds a degree level qualification and average pay within the sector is 40% lower than that of the average female worker in England (Bonetti, 2019). The National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA, 2019) found that, due to funding cuts, the number of graduates within the sector has fallen from 13% to just 5% in the last three years. The National Audit Office (2004) has highlighted that the lack of skilled, well qualified staff is the biggest barrier the government faces in ensuring that all parents have access to high quality, accessible childcare. The National Audit Office (2004)

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[19] Gov.UK (2022) report that 14.1% of Primary and Nursery teachers are male but do not specify the percentage in each Key Stage.

pointed out that sustained investment would be required to raise levels of qualification and improve the quality of provision.

In the last twenty-five years, there have been significant changes in the qualifications available to those who work with young children. In response to the EPPE report (Sylva et al, 2004), which suggested that a graduate led workforce could significantly improve the quality of Early Years provision, a consultation was held to establish the specific skills and knowledge required to support early learning and development (DfES, 2006). Early Years experts have proposed two models of qualifications, one based on the Danish pedagogue, the other on newly developed model of Early Years teaching developed in New Zealand. Both models have been rejected and, instead, the decision was made to rebrand an existing Early Childhood Studies Degree (ECSD) as Early Years Professional Status (EYPS).

Following the Nutbrown (2012) review, the EYPS qualification was renamed Early Years Teacher Status but the DfE continued to withhold QTS and ignored Nutbrown's suggestion to introduce an Early Years specific QTS pathway. In 2017, the DfE promised to review the feasibility of the awarding of EYT with QTS, but six years later, the lack of parity in terms of status and pay between EYTS and QTS persists[20] (see figure 2.1). It appears that, at policy level, those who work with young children are still perceived as less important than, and professionally inferior to those who work with school age children. The DfE (2013:27) professed "we need to move decisively away from the idea that teaching young children is

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[20] Research by PACEY and Voice (2018) found that only 37% of those with EYTS had seen an increase in pay compared to 66% of graduates who took a QTS route. Despite this, the same survey found that those who had followed the EYTS route reported a far greater impact on professional confidence and day to day practice than those who had pursued QTS. It is interesting to note that, despite being cited often, the full results of this survey are no longer readily available online.

somehow less important or inferior to teaching school-age children". Retrospectively, there

has been little progress in this direction.

	EYTS	QTS
Entry requirement for UG route	GCSE grade c or equivalent in maths, English and science (+ Bachelor's degree for post graduate training)	GCSE grade c or equivalent in maths, English and science (+ Bachelor's degree for post graduate training)
Duration of study	Postgraduate: typically 1 year Undergraduate: 3- 4 years	Postgraduate: typically 1 year Undergraduate: 3- 4 years
Cost	Up to £9,250 per year (however government funding is available for postgraduate routes and is paid directly to the training provider)	Up to £9,250 per year
Number of providers offering this course of study	18 including online providers	226 accredited providers
Framework assessed against	Early Years Teacher Standards	Teaching Standards
Level qualification awarded at	Level 6	Although PGCE is a level 7 qualification, QTS is awarded at level 6
Starting salary on graduation	£20, 598- £25, 831	£30,000- £36, 745

Figure 2.1 Comparison of entry requirements, costs and outcomes for EYTS and QTS[21]

The distinction between EYTS and QTS highlighted in Figure 2.1 appears to reinforce the lower

status ascribed to those who work with young children. It is significant that, while entry

requirements are the same for EYTS and QTS, and both qualifications are awarded at level 6,

they are assessed against different frameworks. Osgood (2006) pointed out that professional

identity is strengthened through the negotiation of regulatory competence frameworks

rather than through compliance with them. Similarly, Ang (2014) insisted that rather than

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[21] Information amalgamated from the government's 'Get into teaching' website and The Education Policy Institute.

following a set of rules and regulations, Early Years professionals must challenge practice and exercise their autonomy in deciding how best to meet the needs of the unique children in their care. However, narrative inquiries into the lived experiences of EYTs (McMahon and Dyer, 2014; Dyer, 2018) concluded that the EYTS qualification increases the tension between the values which draw people to work with young children and externally imposed standards for professional practice. Furthermore, funding cuts have meant that PVIs have had to reduce levels of qualification in a bid to reduce their overheads and recruitment to EYTS courses has dropped significantly in the last five years (Pascal, Bertram and Cole-Albäck, 2020a).

The highest concentration of graduates continues to be in Maintained Nurseries and Reception classes (Christie & Co, 2019) where provision is led by qualified teachers. In 1992, Pascal and Bertram's international study of professional qualifications concluded that the degree programmes offered to teachers in England did not include sufficient focus on theoretical knowledge of child development to adequately prepare them for working with children under the age of five. The same concern was raised by Nutbrown (2012) twenty years later. It is telling that, 30 years after Pascal and Bertram (1992) asked for the lack of emphasis on child development in Primary Education degrees to be addressed, the content of ITE programmes has undergone a major revision, but the extent to which the needs and interests of QTMEYS has been considered is still questionable. Reflecting on the progress made in terms of professional qualifications since the Nutbrown (2012) review, Pascal et al (2020) insisted that, rather than perpetuating the perception that those who work with young children require different qualifications to other Primary school teachers, there is still a case to be made for increasing the focus on child development in all Primary ITE programmes. An examination of recent changes in ITE enables a deeper understanding not only of how

QTMEYS are currently prepared for professional practice, but of the wider issues in education and the unique challenges these present for QTMEYS.

2.3.4 The ITE/ ITT debate

In order to appreciate the liminal status of QTMEYS, it is necessary to locate the preparation they receive for professional practice in wider debates around ITE. It has been a requirement for all teachers in State schools (including maintained Early Years settings) in England to be educated to degree level and to hold QTS since 1972 (Robinson, 2006). There are a number of routes through which QTS can be achieved in England including undergraduate degrees, intensive postgraduate courses, Work Based Routes and School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT's).   In order to gain QTS, trainee teachers must complete 120 days training in school over a minimum of two placements in two consecutive Key Stages (Teaching and Development Agency for Schools, 2008). During these placements, the trainee is assessed against the teaching standards (DfE, 2011). The same set of standards are used for all teachers from Early Years to KS4[22]. Educational scholars (including Sachs, 2016; Ball, 2015 and Young, 2010) have debated the impact the introduction of these standards has had on teacher identity and professional confidence.

In keeping with neoliberal ideology, Ball (2013:224) observed that, rather than promoting professional development, the teaching standards (DfE, 2011) have led to a "discourse of performativity".   Similarly, Sachs, (2016:417) posited that, rather than being a "catalyst for

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[22] KS4 includes the year in which students take their GCSE's. It is possible to teach post 16 students, including those studying for A-levels without having QTS. It is also possible to teach in Independent, Free schools and Academies without QTS (Teaching Regulation Agency, 2014)

authentic professional learning" which supports confidence and autonomy, what is most apparent in the teaching standards (DfE, 2011) is the focus on compliance and accountability. Young (2010) pointed out that education should be conceived as a process rather than an outcome and reminds us that teaching is a relational activity. Young's (2010) point has particular resonance in relation to the imposition of teaching standards (DfE, 2011) and the attempts of recent governments to rebrand ITE as ITT as the focus on outcomes ignores the transformative dimension of learning through which students develop the autonomy to know how to act in response to the needs and interests of the unique children they work with. Furthermore, Young (2010) cautioned that rather than encouraging a sense of relatedness, or shared identity, which inspires professional confidence, the neoliberal agenda has redefined teaching as a technical act. Evidence to support Young's (2010) assertion can be seen in the way that, without discussion or debate, the term initial teacher **training** (ITT) appears to have replaced initial teacher **education** ITE in policy documents. The relational nature of professional practice in Early Years could mean that QTMEYS have been particularly affected by the redefinition and reorientation of professional identity under neoliberal regimes.

As education has arguably become increasingly prescriptive and performative (Ball, 2003), there has been pressure at policy level to move ITE out of universities and into schools, as exemplified in the recent ITT Market Review (DfE, 2021b). This pressure began with the 1994 Education Act which introduced increased responsibility for ITE in schools and the establishment of the Teacher Training Agency (now called the Teacher Development Agency). The act was criticised for failing to recognise that the devolution of responsibility would require investment in training for mentors and commitment to releasing mentors from their teaching duties (Hobson, 2002; Furlong and Smith, 1996). Failure to recognise the need for

investment increased pressure on an already strained system. The 1994 Education Act was also criticised as a regressive move towards the flawed apprenticeship approach to ITE that the current system had replaced (Blake, 2006; Maynard, 2000). Subsequent policy has continued to attempt to move ITE out of Universities, a move that can only be seen to be indicative of the desire to de-professionalise teachers (Apple, 2015) by redefining teaching as a technical act, and place control of the whole sector, if not responsibility for it, firmly into the hands of the government rather than educational experts.

This rapid shift in control and content of ITE from universities to schools is in stark opposition to the policy direction elsewhere in Europe where, despite the higher entry point to the profession, rather than a retention crisis, there is a glut of teachers and competition for jobs is high (Magni, 2019). Concern has been raised about the quality of provision within school centred initial teacher training (SCITT), and the impact this will have on retention (Hodgson, 2014). Criticism has been levied against SCITTs for placing insufficient emphasis on theory and research (Brown, 2018). Disquiet has also been expressed that, because those who follow SCITTs are isolated in individual schools, or training with students in all phases of education, they may lack the peer support and expert mentoring necessary to support reflexive practice and the development of professional identity (Hodgson, 2014). The lack of access to peer support and mentoring is particularly problematic for QTMEYS who are already a minority within Primary schools and within the wider education sector.

Many SCITT's are located within Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), who have been allowed to develop their own programmes of ITT (Long and Danechi, 2023). Ofsted (2019) reported that one of the key benefits of MATs is that they are able to achieve economies of scale through

centralising resources such as cleaning, catering, IT and administrative support. Other benefits include professional development within subject teams through cross phase skill sharing (Ofsted, 2019). However, unease has been expressed around prescribed practices and reduced local decision making within MATs, aspects which reduce autonomy and the ability of those trained within the trust to transfer their knowledge and skills into new contexts (Whitty, 2014; Ofsted, 2019). Once again, the minority status of QTMEYS poses an increased risk that the style of teaching they are exposed to may not be appropriate for younger children and that the mentor they are allocated may not have the necessary experience in Early Years to understand the unique challenges they may experience when working as liminal professionals within a larger education system.

SCITTs not only focus on the technical, performative aspects of teaching that are privileged at policy level, they also have the added benefit of ensuring that there is a body in the classroom (Douglas, 2020). This serves the function of masking the true extent of the current retention crisis. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (Allen et al, 2016, 2014) has monitored the costs and benefits of different routes into teaching. They conclude that, with the exception of the Teach First[23] Route, the short-term cost-benefits of SCITTs is limited (Allen et al, 2014). In the long term, as 40% of all those who train to teach and 60% of those who train through Teach First leave within five-years, for those who teach in Primary Schools, full time undergraduate degrees still represent the best value for money for schools and the government (Allen et al, 2016). Furthermore, in terms of completion of training and the awarding of QTS (Ofsted (2020), there is very little difference in outcomes for graduates from HEIs or SCITTs.

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[23] Teach First is a graduate trainee programme led by a charitable organisation which places trainees in deprived areas to support school development. Bursaries are given to trainees who must commit to remain in the profession for two years after completing the course.

Given the availability of the evidence presented above, it is puzzling why SCITTs continue to be promoted. However, exploration of the identity of the 'expert group' (see Appendix 1.1) responsible for the ITT Market Review (DfE, 2021b) reveals that although 70% of ITE still takes place in universities (DfE, 2020e), the authors of this report are all heavily invested in SCITTs. The investment of the expert panel explains the clear bias towards SCITTs in the face of the evidence against them. However, it is not just where ITE takes place that is changing, the introduction of the ITT Core Content Framework (CCF) (DfE, 2019b) means that the content of ITE programmes has become increasingly prescriptive. The changes in the content of ITE programmes has particular significance for potential QTMEYS.

The British Educational Research Association (2021), along with others, have condemned the CCF (DfE, 2019b) for being overly reliant on evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation[24], and over simplifying learning theory in a way which prevents trainees from developing a nuanced understanding of how children learn.   For example, the CCF (DfE, 2019b) promotes the teaching of metacognition, a strategy shown to support Primary and Secondary aged pupils (Education Endowment Fund, 2021) but does not mention relational pedagogy or developmental theory, suggesting that these critical elements of professional practice are still not valued.

Of particular significance for this study focused on QTMEYS, is that the evidence which has been used to inform the CCF (DfE, 2019b) contains only two studies based in Early Years, neither of which have been conducted in the UK (see Appendix 1.2 for analysis of the evidence

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[24] Established by former Conservative Education Minister Michael Gove to provide evidence of 'what works'

used to inform the CCF). Of these studies, one relates to developing automaticity in mathematics, the other to SSP. Even more alarming is that ITE providers are regulated by Ofsted who have cautioned that providers who do not "ensure that trainees **only** learn to teach decoding using systematic synthetic phonics as part of early reading" will be graded as inadequate (Ofsted, 2019a: 41). The current trajectory indicates a dangerous bias towards a singular theoretical basis for teaching and learning and a lack of appreciation for the vast body of knowledge about the way that young children, in particular, learn. If ITE is to adequately prepare students especially those who will become QTMEYS, for professional practice there is an urgent need to ensure that programmes also include sufficient focus on child development and relational pedagogy. This study will later argue that not just QTMEYS but all Primary Education students should have knowledge of these important aspects of early learning.

2.3.5 The impact of neoliberalism on teacher identity

Neoliberalism has radically altered the professional identity of teachers. Hargreaves (2003: 61) observed that seismic changes in education such as the introduction of the National Curriculum (1988), statutory testing (1991) and Ofsted (1992) have led to a "counterproductive obsession with standardisation" that has decimated the sense of shared identity and purpose that teachers have enjoyed in the past. Similarly, Ball (2015) explained that the standards agenda has not only altered professional practice but has also redefined teacher identity. Ultimately, rather than raising standards, it has been suggested that the shift towards increased regulation and control has impoverished the quality of teachers' work

(Evetts, 2013) as they are increasingly focused on teaching children to learn prescribed content rather than supporting them to develop a love of learning.

The neoliberal focus on using performative measures to assess teacher competence has eroded teacher autonomy and their ability to relate the realities of their role with their perception of what their role should be (Apple, 2015). In redefining teaching as a technical act of compliance, teachers have been de-professionalised and their sense of purpose, self-efficacy, motivation, commitment and job satisfaction has diminished (Day, Kington, Stobart and Sammons, 2006). The impact of neoliberalism on teachers has been well documented. For example, Tarpey's (2018) study of the experiences of Secondary school English teachers also reflects a lack of satisfaction with shifts in policy over time. Flynn's (2020) and Hendy's (2007) narrative inquiries provides further evidence that, as autonomy has been eroded, satisfaction has been reduced. Concurrently, Perryman and Calvert (2019) identified that a climate of fear has developed in schools as surveillance of performance has increased, impacting teachers' mental health and wellbeing. However, while there is a great deal of work on the experiences of Primary and Secondary school teachers and significant work on the impact of neoliberalism on Early Years Professionals internationally (e.g. Fenech and Lotz, 2018; Sims and Waniganayake, 2015) and in England (Dyer, 2018; McMahon and Dyer, 2015), relatively little scholarship appears to focus directly on QTMEYS. It appears that the impact of neoliberalism on this liminal group of educational professionals requires further investigation. My study contributes towards existing scholarship by focusing explicitly on the lived experiences of QTMEYS in order to identify how QTMEYS conceptualise their practice,

what factors shape their experience of professional practice and what lessons can be drawn to inform ITE and support professional development and retention.

2.4 Conceptualising the 'crisis' in teacher retention

Thus far, the genealogy of ECEC in England has been interrogated, the professional status of teachers in a neoliberal political system has been investigated and the minority status of QTMEYS identified. The way that professional qualifications have been redefined at policy level has been analysed and the impact of neoliberalism on teacher satisfaction has been examined. Statistics suggest that almost one in six newly qualified teachers will leave the profession within their first year of professional practice, a quarter within the first three years of teaching and only two thirds will remain in the profession for more than five years (DfE, 2022). Kelchtermans (2017:961) defined retention as "both a problem and a challenge", explaining that the problem is that too many teachers are leaving the profession within the first five years of professional practice and the challenge lies in identifying what can be done to persuade them to stay. This study aims to explore possible responses to the problem and challenge of retention of QTMEYS by identifying how they could be better supported 'right from the start' of their careers.

This section begins by exploring why retention is desirable. It then examines how retention has been conceptualised at policy level, contrasting this with the more nuanced conceptualisation of retention offered by psycho-social studies. Next, it investigates research around the factors which impact retention in the Early Years workforce in particular. Here, I

argue that there is a need for further research that focuses specifically on the lived experiences of QTMEYS.   This is because prior scholarship has included specific work exploring the Early Years workforce, but these studies exclude those qualified teachers working in Early Years within Primary schools. Education policy related to ITE and teacher retention is often ideologically driven and based on research which aggregates data from different sectors which means that the complexities, this means that the specific challenges facing QTMEYS as liminal professionals in specialised roles within larger institutions may not have been fully explored. Indeed, throughout the course of this doctoral study, I came across research which included QTMEYS (e.g. Allingham, 2009; Moyles, 2001) but only one study which focused specifically on the lived experiences of QTMEYS and how they conceptualise their practice (Goouch, 2010). The minority status of QTMEYS means that their voices may not have been 'heard' and that there may be factors which impact retention that have not been fully understood at policy level.

2.4.1 Why retention matters

Retention matters because, as Euade (2011) pointed out, no teacher can be expected to emerge from their initial training fully formed because it takes time to develop their expertise and to learn how best to use their knowledge and skills to help the children in their care. Competence and confidence increase with experience and reflection on professional practice (Schön, 1983). The ability to reflect on practice and become increasingly autonomous in knowing how to meet the needs and interests of individual children can be supported by guidance from more experienced colleagues (Timperley, 2011). Retention can be seen to be desirable then not just because it allows the individual the time to develop their competence

and confidence, but because the presence of experienced colleagues in schools is necessary to support the development of newly qualified teachers too. It should also be noted that training to teach requires a significant financial[25] and emotional investment. Retention could be seen as desirable for personal reasons, because of the commitment and investment the individual has made in becoming a teacher; for professional reasons, because it raises the quality of teaching; and for political reasons, because good quality teaching will improve children's academic outcomes. Therefore, the extent to which the factors which influence decisions to leave the profession have been understood at policy level bears interrogation.

2.4.2 How the retention crisis is conceptualized at policy level

Recent policy initiatives including the Teacher Retention Strategy (DfE, 2019a), [26] ITT Core content framework DfE, 2019b), ITT market review (DfE, 2021b), and Early Career Framework (DfE, 2019c) have sought to significantly alter the way teachers are prepared for and supported in professional practice. These initiatives have focused on improving retention right from the start not only by reforming ITE, but by simplifying the "ITT market" (DfE, 2019a:31). The term 'market' indicates the neoliberal ideology which underpins how retention has been conceptualised at policy level as an issue of supply and demand. As previously discussed, the preference for SCITT helps to mask the extent of the retention crisis but there is little evidence to suggest that those who train to teach in SCITTs remain in the profession long enough to develop expertise (Allen et al, 2014, 2016; Douglas, 2020). SCITTs have also been criticised for the lack of focus on theory and research (Brown, 2018). The lack

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[25] The average cost of tuition is £10,000 per annum for full time students.
[26] See Appendix 1.3 for an overview of the evidence used to inform this strategy. The reader will note the lack of focus on studies which have included QTMEYS.

of focus on theory and research is particularly problematic for QTMEYS who, as identified by Nutbrown (2014), need a secure understanding of developmental theory if they are to be able to meet the needs and interests of the children in their care.

The introduction of the CCF (DfE, 2019b) raises further concerns about how well QTMEYS are prepared for professional practice. The CCF (DfE, 2019b) has standardised and simplified the content of ITE programmes and is designed to be used with all teachers regardless of the phase for which they are training. Of concern for this study is that the evidence used to inform the CCF (DfE, 2019b) is based predominantly on studies related to secondary school pupils. Little consideration has been given to ensuring that future QTMEYS receive sufficient input on child development to enable them to be able to identify and meet the needs and interests of the children in their care (see section 2.2.5). Instead, performative academic outcomes have been prioritised and the only Early Years specific research which has been used to inform the CCF (DfE, 2019b) is an American study about SSP and a study about Singapore Maths, a system which promotes rapid recall of number facts. However, recent research suggests that increasing numbers of children are beginning full time education with significant developmental delays (e.g. Tracey et al, 2022). The extent to which these children are ready for the methods prescribed in the CCF is questionable as before they can develop automaticity, they first have to want to learn, enjoy learning and feel successful as learners (Stewart, 2011). The failure of the CCF (DfE, 2019b) to recognise the characteristics of effective early learning could increase the dissonance QTMEYS feel between their desire to help children and to comply with external contingencies.

Successive studies (Worth, 2020; Perryman and Calvert, 2020), and statistical analysis (e.g. DfE, 2019) point to the need to extend the support teachers receive beyond their initial training period into the first two years after they enter the workforce. The need to think of the professional development of teachers as an ongoing process that extends beyond completion of ITE is recognised in the Early Career Framework (ECF) (DfE, 2019c). Focusing on teachers in the first five years of their career, the ECF (DfE, 2019:4) explicitly acknowledges that novice teachers require ongoing professional development and support

> Just as with other esteemed professions like medicine and law, teachers in the first years of their career require high quality, structured support in order to begin the journey towards becoming an expert.

In addition to extending the induction period (where retention is poorest) from one year to two, the ECF (DfE, 2019c) pledges £130 million every year to support schools in releasing early career teachers (ECTs) from teaching to allow additional time for planning, preparation and professional development. All support and training offered is to be quality assured by an 'appropriate body' who will also assess the ECT's progress against the teaching standards, reporting on the ECT's progress against the teaching standards and the support offered to them by the school to the aptly named 'Teacher Regulation Agency (DfE, 2021c). However, as previously discussed, the Teaching Standards (DfE, 2012) do not adequately capture the complexity of working with young children. It does not appear that the specific competencies that are needed to work with young children have been considered in the development of this policy. Failure to include any focus on early learning and development in the Teaching Standards (DfE, 2012) means that the specific competencies needed by QTMEYS could be neglected 'right from the start' in Primary ITE pathways and compounded by the lack of support offered to early career teachers in maintained Early Years settings.

The ECF (DfE, 2019) also pledges to ensure every ECT is supported by an experienced, trained mentor. As Hughes (2021:1) points out, the focus on mentoring in the ECF "is one of the most exciting developments in education for many years". Mentoring has been identified as central to ensuring novice teachers receive the support they require (DfE, 2021; Papatheodorou and Moyles, 2009). The benefits of working with more knowledgeable others who can scaffold learning and support the development of autonomy are explicitly recognised in the statutory framework for the EYFS (DfE, 2021a). This approach has also been found to have a transformative effect in adult education (Mezirow, 2003) where skilled mentors can foster the skills, insight and dispositions necessary to develop critical reflection in action and on action (Schön, 1983) which leads to improvements in practice. However, the appointment of a mentor for early career QTMEYS may be problematic, as their minority status within Primary Schools could mean that their mentor may be from another Key Stage and may not have any experience of Early Years. As outlined in Chapter 1, practice in Early Years is frequently at odds with that elsewhere in the school and, without experience of Early Years, it is difficult to see how colleagues from other Key Stages can effectively mentor QTMEYS. This study aims to explore the extent to which this could be one of the factors which shapes the lived experiences of QTMEYS.

The importance of mentors being trained for their role (Shanks, 2017; Aspfors and Fransson, 2015; Moyles et al, 2006) and having recent, relevant experience has been highlighted in previous scholarship (Aubrey, 2011; Papatheodorou and Moyles, 2009; Robins, 2006; Pegg, 2000). Mentors not only draw on their previous experience to help novice teachers decide how to act in challenging situations (Zachary, 2000) but also support them in translating policy

into practice (Papatheodorou and Moyles, 2009; Callan and Copp, 2006). The ECF (DfE, 2019c) aims to introduce extended mentoring programmes and a qualifications structure whereby experienced teachers can access training which supports them in developing the skills necessary to be an effective mentor. However, the framework and qualifications proposed focus on the necessity of subject specific mentors rather than phase specific ones, once again highlighting that policy has been based on the needs of Secondary, rather than Primary school teachers, and that QTMEYS have been overlooked completely. The lack of consideration of the needs of QTMEYS can also be seen in other aspects of the ECF (DfE, 2019b) related to continuous professional development and subsequent policies designed to support retention.

National (McCrea, 2020 and Hoyle, 2005, for example) and international studies (e.g. Creehan, 2016) highlight the value of continuous professional development (CPD) not just in developing teachers' competence, but in supporting job satisfaction and therefore retention. Similarly, Freire (1993:52) explained that "liberating education consists of acts of cognition, not transference of information". In transformative education systems, the aim is not to educate others but to provide the conditions in which they can discover how to educate themselves. However, the CPD opportunities offered to teachers in England have been found to focus on compliance rather than promoting transformative professional learning (Kelly, 2006). Kennedy (2014) found that action research had the greatest impact on practice but there is little in the ECF (DfE, 2019b) or National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) (DfE, 2020) available to more experienced teachers to promote research activity.

In sharp contrast, the form of ITT and CPD teachers in England receive appears to be consistent with neoliberal ideology which positions all learners, including teachers, as operating from a deficit model[27]. In a deficit model, didactic methods that focus on transmitting core knowledge rather than developing autonomous understanding are used and progress is measured through assessment and external regulation. Furthermore, there is a clear focus on subject specific teaching and knowledge-based outcomes which are at odds with the play-based pedagogy and child centred approach in ECEC[28]. The professional development of QTMEYS appears not to have been considered.

While the ECF (DfE, 2019) has points to commend it, not least the focus on mentoring, in seeking to provide a single 'one size fits all' solution to the complex issue of retention, the needs of QTMEYS have been neglected. The reason for this neglect could be because QTMEYS lack the statistical significance to be 'heard' in aggregated data or their "absent presence" (Criado-Perez, 2019: xi) could simply be further evidence of the persistent second-class status of those who work with young children. It could be suggested that retention has been conceptualised as desirable at policy level not because it supports the quality of the teaching profession, but because the exodus from the profession indicates that the government cannot

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[27] SSP was discussed in Chapter 1 as an example of a neoliberal policy which position learners in a deficit model. The deficit model is connected to the school readiness agenda and the idea that the accumulation of testable core knowledge rather than a child's socio-emotional development amongst other factors is the best predictor of a child's readiness for the next stage of their education (Allingham, 2022).

[28] Standard 2 focuses on how children learn. Analysis of the evidence used to inform core content for this standard reveals a reliance of studies based in America. Analysis of who the research was conducted with reveals that, of the 22 sources referenced, 1 is a book about why we have a retention crisis, 8 are based on research conducted with adults, 4 are based on studies conducted in secondary schools, 8 aggregate data from primary and secondary schools and just one American study aggregates data from high school, elementary and kindergarten and could be seen to have considered how young children learn. Analysis of the entire evidence based used to inform the CCF and ECF reveals similar results, suggesting a lack of consideration for the developmental needs of young children.

control the workforce. At the time of writing, industrial action across the education sector and in other public sectors too suggests growing dissatisfaction with the status quo[29]. However, recent policy appears to continue to attempt to exert greater control over ITT and CPD and, in doing so, over teachers themselves. This conceptualisation focuses on the needs of policy makers. Conversely, scholarship from within the sector appears to view retention as a psycho-social issue. The psycho-social approach aims to develop a more holistic understanding of factors which impact retention and can be seen to have utility in exploring how to support QTMEYS.

2.4.3 A psycho-social conceptualisation of retention

Teaching is a relational activity (Young, 2010) with moral, ethical, political and emotional dimensions. Giddens (1984) and Maclure (1993) suggested that when teachers feel alienated from or a lack of commitment to the structures and practices within a school, they are likely to begin to question their own identity as a member not only of that particular institution, but also of the teaching profession as a whole. It seems reasonable that, in order to understand what prompts decisions to leave a profession, and how to support retention, systematic, social and psychological factors should be explored. Reviewing literature around the lived experiences of teachers internationally (Gorozidis and Papaioannou, 2014; Eyal and Roth, 2011) and in the UK (Worth, and Van den Brande, 2020; Hobson and Maxwell, 2016) I noticed that other scholars were drawing on self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan and Deci,

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[29] The National Education Union (NEU) is taking action against the failure of the secretary of state for education to provide sufficient funds to ensure that teachers' salaries match the cost of living, and the Universities College Union (UCU) is taking action about pay and conditions.

1985) and was keen to see how it could be useful in this study of the lived experiences of QTMEYS.

SDT suggests that behaviour such as the decision to enter or remain in a profession is motivated by a desire for self-development and growth, and that social contexts have a dramatic influence on the extent to which these desires are met (Ryan and Deci, 1985). Growth and development are best supported in contexts or systems where individuals experience social contexts or systems where individuals experience a sense of competence, autonomy and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2000). These conditions (competence, autonomy and relatedness) also support intrinsic motivation, the ability to regulate 'extrinsic contingencies' with personal values and motivations.

Ryan and Deci (2000) found that when there is consistency between the role an individual is asked to perform and their personal or professional values, they are not only likely to demonstrate the ability to perform their role competently, but also to derive higher levels of satisfaction from doing so. This satisfaction comes from feeling that one is able to be autonomous. Ryan and Deci (2000) also found that when individuals work in proximity to others, a sense of connection and relatedness can support initial and sustained motivation for such behaviours. In other words, where specific behaviours are valued and modelled by people around the individual with whom they are driven to form attachments, this offers "ambient support"[30] (Ryan and Deci, 2000:73) to adopt these behaviours too. Research by

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[30] Ambient support refers to the extent that social contexts foster a sense of belonging which encourages individuals to adopt certain behaviours and practices. When this is not available, Ryan and Deci (2000) suggest that the opposite effect can occur and individuals become increasingly isolated and othered.

Baard, Deci and Ryan (2004) found a positive correlation between job satisfaction and the extent to which the need for autonomy, competence and relatedness had been met in the workplace. These findings are reflected in Archer's (2007, 2000, 1998, 1995) extensive work on structure and agency, which has explored educational contexts from a sociological perspective.

Archer (2007) pointed out that what is often overlooked in social research is the decision-making process whereby individuals determine if they can achieve their aims or fulfil their needs within the constraints of a particular context. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, Archer (2007) argued that the structural and cultural systems in which we operate are subjectively mediated through our reflexive inner dialogue and it is this that guides our actions and outcomes in these systems. Archer (2007) explained that the degree of freedom or autonomy we experience depends on what we accept and what we challenge. She also noted that our sense of self-worth depends on the success of these actions in pursuit of our own goals and the extent to which we feel we have been supported or constrained by the systems we navigate.

From a psychological perspective, Festinger (2001) suggested that when there is dissonance, or a lack of harmony, between an individual's thoughts and actions in a particular context, they are compelled to take action to reduce the dissonance they are experiencing. Archer (2007) concluded that when teachers feel disconnected from their role, they react either by becoming vitriolic critics of the system or by choosing to leave the profession. Archer's (2007) conclusion confirms the assertions of Giddens (1984) and Maclure (1993), that decisions to

leave the sector are the result of an existential crisis in teacher identity where the role teachers are asked to perform is no longer compatible with their personal or professional values. It appears then that if the factors which impact retention are to be understood, sources of dissonance must be identified and the reflexive inner dialogue of the individuals concerned must be examined.

It is evident from Archer's (2007, 2000) work that systematic factors influence the way people feel and behave, but Ryan and Deci (2000) claimed that social factors, in the form of the relationships teachers form with other people within their settings, also significantly impact levels of satisfaction. The negotiation of power relationships within professional practice, especially in relation to the legitimisation of particular practices, is an emotional process (Zembylas, 2014). Where teachers are unable to form connections with their colleagues, they may experience "professional loneliness" (Ings, 2017:187) and, where there is insufficient support, symbolic violence[31] against the principles which underpin their professional practice resulting in an existential crisis and decision to leave the profession (Zembylas, 2014). If this is true, then the fact that practice in Early Years is at odds with practice elsewhere in Primary schools poses a unique challenge as it could mean that QTMEYS receive less "ambient

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[31] The term symbolic violence was coined by Bourdieu in the 1970's to describe how hierarchies, particularly pertaining to social class, are reinforced through the legitimisation of particular forms of knowledge and behaviour (Bourdieu and Passeron, 2013). Following on from Bourdieu, Adkins and Skeggs (2004) use the concept of symbolic violence to describe the rupture between the symbolic cultural capital valued by individuals or groups of individuals and that which is recognised or legitimised by others. While Bourdieu and Passseron (2013) focus on pedagogic action as a form of symbolic violence, the symbolic violence neoliberal policy inflicts upon those who work in education has been explored by scholars such as Amsler (2011), and Watkins (2017) who focus on how policy not only shapes the experiences of students but of those who work in education too.

support" (Ryan and Deci, 2000:73) than their colleagues in other Key Stages which means their ability to meet their needs within these settings may be compromised.

2.4.4 Conceptualising the retention crisis in ECEC

In contrast to scholarship around teacher retention, studies which have focused specifically on the Early Years workforce argue that understanding the emotional, reflexive dimension of occupational experience is vital in identifying how to support retention (Osgood, 2010). Hochschild (2012) noted that ECEC is dependent on the commercialisation of emotional labour, and that the necessary regulation of emotion can positively strengthen professional identity. Similarly, Moyles (2001) pointed out that a passionate commitment to young children is an essential quality in all those who work in ECEC. Recent research focused on how Early Childhood Educators (ECE) navigate the dissonance between their pedagogic principles and policy directives has found that, as ECE struggle for consistency, many find ways to subvert policy-directives, prioritising children's needs and interests, while outwardly appearing to practice compliance (Archer, 2022; Zembylas, 2014). Through analysis of career narratives and focus group discussions, Archer (2022) found examples of ECEs engaged in both collective acts of resistance, such as attending demonstrations, and individual acts of activism and resistance within their own settings. While activism is often seen as loud and confrontational, in accordance with their professional identity as caring professionals, the activism of the participants in Archer's (2019) study and others was relational (O'Shaughnessy & Kennedy, 2010) and compassionate (Dove & Fisher, 2019). This suggests that there may be ways to navigate the emotional and ethical complexity of professional practice in Early Years but further research is necessary in order to understand what this means for QTMEYS. My

study investigates how QTMEYS can be better supported in these complex negotiations 'right from the start' of their professional development.

2.4.5 Towards a psycho-social understanding of the lived experiences of QTMEYS

I have argued that while scholarship has explored the factors linked to the retention of teachers (Burge, Lu and Philips, 2021; Perryman and Calvert, 2019) and how ECEs navigate the paradoxes of professional practice (Archer, 2022; Moyles, 2001), there appear to be few studies which have focused specifically on the lived experiences of QTMEYS. Little is known about how QTMEYS conceptualise their professional practice as a minority group within the Primary Education system and further research is needed to understand the factors which contribute towards their retention.

The extent to which existing qualifications adequately prepare QTMEYS for professional practice has been discussed earlier in section 2.3.3. Although Primary Schools contain three Key Stages, the lack of focus on Early Years in Primary QTS programmes presents a challenge to QTMEYS that extends beyond their own understanding of the EYFS. As Moyles, Adams and Musgrove (2002: 477) reflected: "Early Years pedagogy is an extremely complex phenomenon". It is unsurprising then that without a strong theoretical and research-informed understanding of the characteristics of effective learning, QTMEYS may struggle to justify relational play-based pedagogy in practice.

It is possible that the minority status of QTMEYS may influence the degree of relatedness, competence and autonomy they experience as they navigate the emotional geography of their professional landscape. This in turn may affect the amount of 'ambient support' QTMEYS receive when asked to regulate 'external contingencies' (Ryan and Deci, 2000:73) such as counterintuitive policy directives such as SSP and RBA. A systematic review of evidence has identified the culture within schools is shaped by the senior leadership team (SLT) (The Education Development Trust, 2014). Bradbury (2019b) found that many head teachers expressed a deep respect for the professional judgement of their QTMEYS in relation to assessing and monitoring children's progress, valuing this above the information offered by RBA. However, one of the key issues QTMEYS could face when communicating with their senior leadership team (SLT) is a lack of shared vocabulary (Sakr and Bonetti, 2021). One of the reasons for this could be that, while QTMEYS work within the statutory framework (DfE, 2021a), many head teachers are more familiar with the National Curriculum (DfE, 2014) and some, particularly in multi academy trusts (MATs), may be from a Secondary school background. As part of the inspection process, Ofsted have committed to reviewing the extent to which SLT promote the ongoing professional development of staff and the extent to which SLT understand the pressures that staff are under (Ofsted, 2022). However, without a shared understanding of professional practice, it is unclear how senior leaders in Primary Schools can support the ongoing professional development of QTMEYS or understand the particular challenges that they face.

 Moyles et al (2001) demonstrated the importance of shared reflection and mentorship in ongoing professional development. Studies suggest that systems advocacy, or sense of self-efficacy as an agent of change within a setting and on a wider scale, can be increased not only

through exposing students to theory and research but through explicit teaching of how policy is formed interpreted and applied (Garner and Pagliarulo McCarron, 2020; Fenech and Lotz, 2018). Garner and Pagliarulo McCarron's (2020) study has implications for ITT but also for leadership in schools as it could provide "ambient support" (Ryan and Deci, 2000:73) for regulating "external contingencies" (Ryan and Deci, 2000:69) as well as challenging points of dissonance. Without this support, QTMEYS may struggle to develop the activist identity described by Archer (2020) and the ability to accommodate policies which advocate anti-theoretical approaches (such as SSP) with the child centred relation pedagogy necessary to support learning and development in the EYFS.

Scholarship emphasises the importance of leaders and mentors who have a shared vision (Siraj and Hallet, 2013), experience of practice (Moyles, 2004), and an understanding of the impact policy has or may have on practice (Aubery, 2011). Given that there is no expectation that Senior Leaders in Primary schools will have any specific training in or understanding of Early Years, they may be unaware of the challenges QTMEYS face in terms of managing the complexity of levels of need and navigating the paradoxes of professional practice. Without this understanding, they may be unable to support QTMEYS in developing the ability to manage these challenges autonomously. Further, the pressure Senior Leaders are under to ensure that required academic standards are met in order to maintain the school's Ofsted status may lead them to focus on academic outcomes over the personal, social and emotional dimensions of learning that support school readiness (McDowall Clark, 2017). In doing so, they could compound rather than alleviate pressure on QTMEYS by reducing rather than supporting autonomy.

The minority status of QTMEYS also poses a unique challenge in relation to supporting ongoing professional development through mentoring. Hughes (2021) highlights subject specific knowledge and relevant experience as two of the qualities most valued by recently qualified teachers in their mentors. Hughes' (2021) findings present a problem for QTMEYS that requires further investigation as, particularly in one form entry Primary schools, QTMEYS may have a mentor who has never worked in Early Years. Without relevant experience, their mentor may have a very different understanding of the role of the teacher, and lack the lived experience of professional practice in Early Years to be able to support their mentee in accommodating 'external contingencies' (Ryan and Deci, 2000:73). As a result, the constant battle between humanist principles and neoliberal practices that QTMEYS face in schools could become a key point of dissonance. This dissonance could result in existential crisis and, ultimately, be a contributing factor in the decision to leave the profession.

Wiles (2018) found that a sense of connection with colleagues was arguably the single most important factor in supporting teachers to manage stress at work. Workplaces can be described as communities of practice where groups of people are engaged in and passionate about a shared endeavour (Wenger, 1998). Wenger, McDermott and Synder (2002) defined three key features of communities of practice: a domain of knowledge, a sense of community and a shared practice. Within these groups, members are able to share information and experiences leading to personal and professional development (Lave and Wenger, 1991), actively participating in strengthening practice and constructing a more secure sense of their professional identity (Wenger, McDermott and Synder, 2002). Goouch (2010: xi) reflected on her experience as a novice teacher, recalling an incident where her head teacher, observing

her dancing with a child with complex physical needs, said 'now that's what I call teaching'. Goouch (2010) recalled the profound impact this confirmatory cognition had on her professional confidence and future research into the lived experiences of others within her professional community. However, not all QTMEYS are as fortunate as Goouch (2010) and may lack the confirmatory cognition of being part of a community of practice where one's professional expertise is recognised and respected. Without the support of belonging to the community of practice within their own setting, the ability of QTMEYS to develop a sense of competence, autonomy and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2000) may be compromised but it is apparent from the literature reviewed that further research is necessary.

2.4.6 Conclusion

This section has explored why retention is desirable and demonstrated that decisions to leave the profession are often motivated by the psycho-social factors which shape professional experience. I have argued that understanding these factors is essential to support retention. However, I have also highlighted that QTMEYS have been largely overlooked in studies focused on the Early Years workforce and lack statistical significance in studies related to teacher retention. The absence of scholarship focused specifically on the lived experiences of QTMEYS has made it challenging to gain a secure understanding of the individual, cultural and systematic factors which impact their experience of professional practice. However, by bringing together studies focused on specific aspects of professional practice in Maintained Early Years Settings, this chapter has revealed key points of dissonance and highlighted that QTMEYS face unique challenges in professional practice.

Previous scholarship has explored the impact of neoliberalism on ECE and on teachers, but the dual identity of QTMEYS means that their needs, and the possibility of their needs being met within the current system, may not have been fully understood. As a minority group not only in the hierarchical education system but also within Primary school settings, QTMEYS stand at the intersection of humanist and neoliberal constructs of practice. QTMEYS must navigate the complexity of balancing the pedagogically inappropriate school readiness agenda with the necessity of meeting the needs and interests of the unique children in their care. These complex negotiations may limit their autonomy and affect their sense of competence, factors essential to self-determination in the workplace (Ryan and Deci (2000:68) which may not have been evident in evidence used to inform discussions about professional development and retention to date.

This chapter has highlighted that the minority status of QTMEYS poses a challenge in relation to the ambitious aims of the ECF to provide trained, experienced mentors for all early career teachers. It is evident that the lack of focus on ECEC in Primary ITE could be a contributing factor to the level of "ambient support" (Ryan and Deci, 2000:73) QTMEYS receive in professional practice. Without this support, the ability of QTMEYS to develop a sense of 'relatedness' with their colleagues may be compromised. Understanding how to address this could enrich discussions about the continued professional development of QTMEYS and inform discussions about ITE provision but further research is necessary.

This study situates QTMEYS as a dual identity minority group who are simultaneously qualified teachers and early childhood educators navigating the emotional complexity of professional

practice within the Primary Education system. In the following chapter a theoretical framework for understanding the lived experiences of QTMEYS, the factors which shape this experience, what could be done to support their professional development and the implications for ITE is developed. This framework explores the research question from a psycho-social perspective and has been used to guide the methodological design of this study.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

The aim of this study is to explore the lived experiences of QTMEYS and to develop an understanding of how they could be better supported in their professional practice. Existing scholarship, reviewed in Chapter 2, identifies and interrogates the way policy regimes and other structural factors shape how individuals experience their professional role and the level of satisfaction they derive from it. From the literature reviewed, three key questions arise:

- How do QTMEYS conceptualise their practice?
- What factors shape their experience of professional practice?
- How can this information be used to inform initial teacher education and support the continued professional development of QTMEYS?

The central thesis of this study is that changes in ITE could better support the retention of QTMEYS 'right from the start' of their careers.

From the literature reviewed in previous chapters, it is apparent that both the retention of qualified teachers, and the development of the Early Years workforce, have been the focus of significant scholarly and political attention over the last few decades. However, despite the introduction of Early Years specific graduate level qualifications, the largest number of graduates in the Early Years workforce continues to be QTMEYS. A number of studies have focused on the EYTS qualification (e.g. Elwick et al, 2018; Dyer, 2018), but there are few which focus specifically on QTMEYS. Instead, data about QTMEYS is often aggregated with that collected from teachers in other Key Stages. This is problematic because, as a minority group in the larger education system, QTMEYS may lack the statistical significance to be 'heard' in aggregated data. Consequently, the assumption that a 'one size fits all' approach can be

taken in policy related to ITE and teacher retention may mean that the needs and interests of QTMEYS are not being met.

I am arguing here that there is a need for a more nuanced approach, one which, as Foucault (2020) recommended, challenges assumptions and bias. Hughes (1990) explained that the research design invariably reflects the researcher's commitment to a particular form of knowledge as, inevitably, all research is conducted through a lens (Popper, 2002). There is an obvious tension between the neoliberal ideology which underpins education policy and type of research which is used to inform it and the humanist principles which underpin ECEC. This study is part of a Professional Doctorate and, as such, demands reflexive questioning of the tensions between personal, professional, cultural and methodological norms in the various domains that the research question spans (Burnard et al 2018). In the light of political pressure to reject the range of perspectives that could inform educational research, in favour of the "new orthodoxy" of positivism and "the primacy of objectivist methods" there is a need for research which exposes "the hidden partiality of such work" (Hodkinson, 2004:23). In direct challenge to the dehumanised data used to inform policy, this research adopts a humanist[32] lens which focuses on the psycho-social and cultural dimensions of professional practice. By considering both individual subjectivities and the broader structural factors that shape professional practice in maintained Early Years settings, I contend that a fuller understanding of how QTMEYS make sense of their professional lives can be developed.

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[32] I draw on the work of Plummer (2021) to define what this means in the next sub chapter.

In Chapter 2 three key theories which have been used to challenge the partisan nature of the dehumanised data that is often used to inform policy around professional qualifications and teacher retention were identified; Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory (EST), self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan and Deci, 2000) and Festinger's (2001) theory of cognitive dissonance. Vansteenkiste and Sheldon (2006), who advocate a 'marriage' between SDT (Ryan and Deci, 2000) and motivational interviewing techniques (Miller & Rollnick, 1991), explained that researchers should aim to combine explanatory theory with practical techniques in order to further understanding of the psychological and social dimensions of their research problem and reveal ways of resolving it. In this chapter, I argue that, in combination, EST (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), SDT (Ryan and Deci, 2000) and Festinger's (2001) theory of cognitive dissonance, create a theoretical framework which can be used to understand the research problem at the heart of this doctoral study and to guide the research design and data analysis.

I begin this chapter by revising the tension between the neoliberal ideology which shapes professional practice in Early Years and ITE and the critical humanist philosophy which guides my professional practice and the way I have approached the research problem. Next, I define each theory, identify how they have been used in isolation or in combination with other theories in previous scholarship. I conclude by summarising how these theories work together within the critical humanist philosophy that underpins this doctoral study to contribute towards a fuller understanding of the lived experiences of QTMEYS, the factors which shape these experiences and what could be done to support their professional development 'right from the start' of their careers.

3:1 Critical Humanist Philosophy

The approach to learning which underpins the EYFS is based on existential, humanist principles[33] (Stewart, 2011). With roots in phenomenology and existentialism, humanism is a philosophy which emphasises human subjectivity, potential and the importance of human agency. Humanist research utilises relational methodologies, and transactional analysis, positioning behaviour as a form of communication (Maslow, 1987). From a humanist perspective, understanding the needs of the individual and their subjective assessment of the extent to which these needs are met within the systems they occupy is at the heart of building systems which support individual fulfilment (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009). In contrast, neoliberal policy makers appear to prioritise the needs of the economy, favouring research which provides evidence of the success of policies which prioritise conformity and increase centralised control (Ball, 2015, 2010; Hargreaves, 2003; Freidson, 1994). The tension between these diametrically opposed perspectives has shaped my experience of professional practice as a QTMEYS and continues to shape my experience as an ITE lecturer. It is useful to revisit these values-based perspectives here as critical humanism defines my identity as a researcher and is the theoretical tool which has shaped the design of this doctoral study.

Ideologically, neoliberalism places the needs of the economy over the needs of individuals, prioritising profit over people (Ball, 2012). Ball (2012: 27) explained 'education policy,

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[33] Every child is unique, constantly learning, and has the potential to be resilient and confident. Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships with others. They learn and develop well in environments which respond to their individual needs and interests but every child develop at different rates. (Early Years Coalition, 2021: 8).

education reform are no longer simply a battleground of ideas, they are a financial sector, increasingly infused by and driven by the logic of profit.' Ball's (2012) words have a particular resonance in discussions about the Early Years sector which, as previously discussed, has been chronically underfunded at policy level, meaning that preschool provision is largely dependent on private, voluntary, and independent organisations who explicitly operate for profit rather than for the benefit of individuals. There is little evidence to suggest that the needs and interests of young children or those who work with them have been given sincere consideration at policy level (Cameron and Millar, 2016). Instead, neoliberal narratives around ECEC, ITE and teacher retention have become increasingly dehumanised, prioritising short term economic gains over long term outcomes.

Humanism or humanist thinking is "a reaction to the danger of dehumanization', (Fromm, 1999:5) or the existential threat posed by authoritarian regimes such as patriarchy and neoliberalism. Fromm (1999), and others of his generation, were making sense of a world recovering from the atrocities of the World Wars and the various regimes that persisted in their wake. However, the theories developed by Fromm (1999) remain significant in developing understanding of the impact of authoritarian regimes in the modern world (Carveth, 2017; Frie, 2016; Cortina, 2015) and can be seen to have direct relevance for this particular study. As explored in Chapter 2.4.3, when individuals experience a lack of competence and autonomy in their professional role, and where a sense of connection with the role and others around them is not nurtured, the satisfaction they derive from their work is reduced (Baard, Deci and Ryan, 2004). This can profoundly impact the individuals' sense of identity and self-worth (Archer, 2007), as they experience a sense of dissonance or lack of consistency between the way they think and feel and particular behaviours they are

compelled to engage in (Festinger, 2001). As the dissonance between the individual's values and the role they are asked to perform increases, an existential crisis can occur (Zembylas, 2014; Maclure, 1993; Giddens, 1984) in which the individual no longer feels that their professional role is compatible with their personal identity.

The detrimental effect of the symbolic violence inflicted by policies which dehumanise not only those who work in education at all levels, but also the children and young people they work with, is revealed in data around mental health. One in six children between the ages of five and sixteen are estimated to have a possible mental health disorder (Lifestyles Team, NHS Digital, 2020), and the number of adults in England experiencing poor mental health has soared to unprecedented levels (Laccobucchi, 2022; Leach, Finning, Kerai, and Vizard, 2021). Studies have demonstrated that a lack of ambient support in occupational contexts can have a negative impact on mental health and wellbeing (Ryan and Lynch, 1989; Ryan, Plant and O'Malley, 1995) and this can contribute towards the existential crisis in identity that is often at the heart of decisions to leave a profession (Ryan and Deci, 2000). If Maslow's (1987) suggestion that behaviour is a form of communication is accepted, then the question arises of what the exodus from the teaching profession is communicating about the lived experiences of teachers.

The critical, humanist perspective explicitly acknowledges the social and political challenges faced by human beings (Kozlarek, 2020) while positioning them as agentic actors within those systems (Plummer, 2021). From a theoretical perspective, perhaps the most widely referenced model for understanding how socio-political systems shape our lived experiences

is offered by Bronfenbrenner (1979). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model has been used widely in key scholarship, as explored in the previous chapter. The utility of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory in developing understanding of the lived experiences of QTMEYS bears consideration.

3: 2 Ecological systems theory: conceptualising the systems which shape professional experience

Bronfenbrenner (1979) identified five key systems, as illustrated in Figure 3.1. The first of these systems is the micro system. This is the system where the individual has direct contact with others and, to varying extents, can exert a bi-directional influence on the ideas, values and opinions of others within this system. Micro systems include the home or family, work context and any other groups or organisations to which the individual belongs. The interaction between these groups, is called the meso-system. Political, economic and social structures, with which individuals do not have direct contact, create an exo-system, which shapes their experience. Individual experience also occurs within a particular cultural context, or macro-system and within a socio-historic context, or chrono-system.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasised the mesosystemic interaction or intersubjective relationship between the individual and each system they inhabit, explaining that this relationship impacts the way individuals perceive the systems they inhibit and their sense of agency within them. This, in term, impacts individual development and wellbeing.
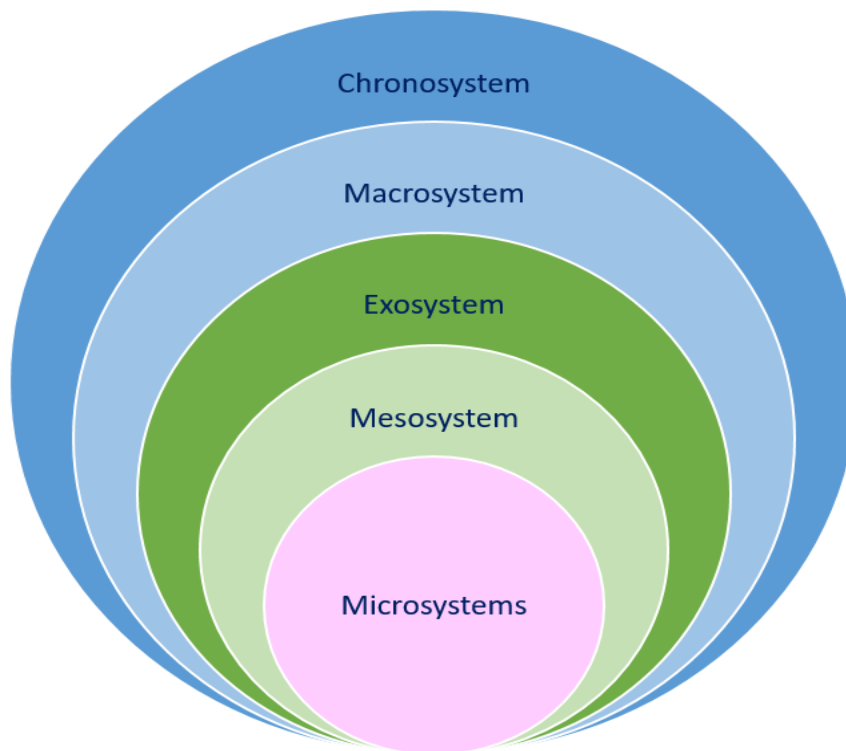
Figure 3.1: Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (1979)

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Model was originally designed to support understanding of the multidimensional nature of the factors which influence child development. The complexity of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model means that the level of investigation required to identify all the factors which shape development can become unmanageable in practice (Watts, Cockcroft and Duncan, 2009). Although the image of nested circles appears simple, Neal, Watling and Zachary (2013) pointed out that studying mesosystemic interaction is pivotal to understanding why people behave in certain ways in specific contexts or lived experience and the factors which shape it.

The utility of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) work in conceptualising the factors which shape lived experiences means that it has subsequently been utilised in numerous psychological and

sociological studies which focus not only on child development but on the experiences of adults. His influence is evident in Archer's work on systems and agency (2007, 2000, 1998, 1995). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model has also been used to examine transitions in the professional identity of pre-service teachers internationally (Sheridan, Williams, Sandberg, and Vuorinen, 2011) and in England (Rose and Rogers, 2012). Significantly, EST (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) has been used to explore the emotional dimensions of professional practice (Cross and Hong, 2012) and teacher wellbeing (Price and McCallum, 2015) in comparable neoliberal education systems. In England, it has also been used to explore the impact of Early Years specific qualifications (Dyer, 2018), and the importance of collaborative models of continued professional development which position experienced teachers as researchers in their own practice, rather than enactors of research about practice (McLaughlin, 2011). Furthermore, EST has been used internationally, to explore factors which impact teacher retention (Zavelevsky, Benoliel, and Shapira – Lishchinsky, 2022). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory can be seen to have relevance for this study focused on the lived experiences of QTMEYS as it explicitly acknowledges that it is through the subjective experience of navigating multiple ecological systems simultaneously that individuals construct meaning, develop understanding and consolidate their identity. EST can be seen to have particular utility in this study focused on the factors which shape the lived experiences of QTMEYS as liminal professionals within the wider neoliberal education system.

The literature reviewed in the previous chapters' documents how QTMEYS have been perceived historically and their current socio-political position, structural factors defined by

Bronfenbrenner as chrono and macro-systems respectively. Scholarship has stressed that, as it takes time to develop professional expertise (Euade, 2011; Timperley, 2011; Kelchtermans, 2009; Schön, 1983), the retention of those who have gained professional qualifications is desirable. However, scholarship has also emphasised the need to review existing qualifications for those who work in Early Years (Nutbrown, 2012; Sylva et al, 2004; Pascal and Bertram, 1992). From an historic and socio-political perspective, it appears that the needs and interests of QTMEYS have not been fully understood or prioritised by patriarchal and/or neoliberal regimes. By focusing explicitly on the lived experiences of QTMEYS, this study aims to contribute new knowledge about the factors which shape their experience.

While Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model offers a way to conceptualise the factors which shape the lived experiences of QTMEYS, it has been criticised for failing to fully capture the socio-emotional dimension of experience (Christensen, 2016), or how individuals make sense of their experiences (Engler, 2007; Bernard, 1995). The socio-emotional dimension of professional experience is explored in self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan and Deci, 2001). Like the ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), SDT has been widely used in the scholarship reviewed. In combination with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, SDT offers a way to understand not only the socio-political, but also the socio-emotional dimensions of the lived experiences of QTMEYS.

3: 3 Self-determination theory: towards an understanding of factors which support retention

SDT (Ryan and Deci, 2000: 76) focuses on the 'dramatic power' of social contexts to provide developmental structures which foster integration and growth, thus influencing the degree to which universal needs are met. As discussed in Chapter 2 Section 4.3, SDT posits that there are three needs which are essential to growth, social development and personal wellbeing: 'competence, relatedness and autonomy' (Ryan and Deci, 2000:68). Ryan and Deci (2000) suggested that when an individual behaves in a way that is authentic to their own values and self-determined purpose, they are not only likely to demonstrate competence, but also to derive greater satisfaction from enacting from their role. The extent to which they are able to do this depends on the degree to which they are able to integrate external contingencies with something they are already motivated to do as this supports the sense of autonomy. Ryan and Deci (2000) found that when individuals work in proximity to others, a sense of connection and relatedness can support initial and sustained motivation for regulating external contingencies which requires the adoption of behaviours which may not be aligned with individual beliefs or values.   In other words, where specific behaviours are valued and modelled by people around the individual with whom they are driven to form attachments to, this offers "ambient support" (Ryan and Deci, 2000:73) to adopt these behaviours too. Studies suggest that developing a connection with colleagues can be a supportive factor in the development of professional confidence and have a positive impact on retention (Archer, 2007; Jerim, Sims and Taylor, 2021). As a minority group, not only within the education system, but also within the Primary schools where they are physically located, the level of ambient support within the workplace experienced by QTMEYS is of particular interest in this study.

Despite the body of evidence which exists about how to support motivation, Patall, and Zambrano (2019) reflected that practices which would enhance the psychological wellbeing of teachers and students are yet to be adopted[34]. Instead, neoliberal policy such as the introduction of SSP (DfE, 2006) and RBA (DfE, 2022) has redefined professional practice and reshaped how students are prepared for it. Ryan and Deci (2020) themselves identify that this has negatively impacted teacher retention as professional practice is increasingly at odds with the humanist ideals which motivate people to become teachers.

Internationally, SDT has been utilised to explore how the erosion of teacher autonomy impacts motivation to implement government policy (Gorozidis and Papaioannou, 2014). The connection between levels of autonomy experienced by teachers in Secondary schools and retention has been confirmed by research based on SDT in the UK (Worth, and Van den Brande, 2020). International research has also utilised SDT to identify that leadership within schools now leans towards a transactional rather than transformational approach (Eyal and Roth, 2011), compounding the erosion of autonomy by focusing on performative practice rather than professional development. In England, SDT has been used to explore the wellbeing of early career teachers in Secondary schools (Hobson and Maxwell, 2016), and scholars have argued that the level of ambient support received from colleagues is a critical factor in teacher retention (Wiles, 2018; Noddings, 2016). However, the lack of studies which focus on the lived experiences of QTMEYS make it challenging to develop an appreciation of

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[34] It is interesting to note that Ofsted used a number of studies to inform their new inspection framework which includes a focus on teacher wellbeing. However, none of the studies they used to inform their assessment of the factors which impact teacher wellbeing included QTMEYS (see Appendix 4)

the level of ambient support this particular minority group of teachers receive from colleagues in Primary schools as they navigate the ethical complexity of counter intuitive policy and emotional dimension of professional practice.

3: 4 Cognitive dissonance: towards an understanding of the ethical, emotional dimensions of professional practice

The ethical and emotional complexity of professional practice in Early Years leads to unique paradoxes in professional practice (Moyles, 2001). Osgood (2010) argued that an appreciation of the emotional, reflexive dimension of the professional experience of those who work with the youngest children is vital to understanding why so many choose to leave the profession. To explore this dimension of the lived experiences of QTMEYS, a third model has been included in the theoretical framework used to guide methodological decisions about how to gain insight into the lived experiences of QTMEYS and how to make sense of these experiences, Festinger's (2001) theory of cognitive dissonance.

Festinger (2001) explained that human beings strive for consistency between their thoughts, feelings and behaviour. When they are unable to achieve this internal consistency psychological tension occurs (Festinger, 2001). Festinger (2001) called this tension between what is known, believed or felt and how an individual behaves, cognitive dissonance. Festinger (2001) pointed out that, as unique individuals, levels of tolerance for dissonance vary significantly. However, Festinger (2001) cautioned that, when an individual experiences cognitive dissonance, they are compelled to act to reduce it by either seeking confirmatory

cognition (social support), or by avoiding situations which exacerbate their sense of inconsistency.

The impact of living within a culture that does not reflect one's own values and beliefs can be profound (Archer, 2007; Fromm, 2002). If individuals are unable to find "ambient support" (Ryan and Deci, 2000:73) or confirmatory cognition (Festinger, 2001) alienation and other psychopathological traits, such as failure to function and even mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety or addiction, can occur (Ryan and Lynch, 1989; Ryan, Plant and O'Malley, 1995). These psychopathological traits are often symptoms of an existential crisis in which the individual is confronted by the lack of meaning, value or purpose in their particular situation. As previously explored scholars have noted that decisions to leave a profession are often the result of an existential crisis (as identified by Zembylas, 2014, Maclure, 1993; Giddens, 1984). Festinger (2001) suggested that where an existential crisis has occurred, it is necessary to first identify the cognitive elements involved, consider the correlation or dissonance between them and then explore possible ways of reducing this. In this particular study, Festinger's model for reducing cognitive dissonance can be seen to be helpful in identifying what actions can be taken to identify and reduce the dissonance experienced by QTMEYS.

Cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 2001) has been widely used in educational research which directly relates to the focus of this particular study. Internationally, Festinger's (2001) work has been used to explore shifts in identity that occur during the transition from pre-service to novice teacher (Bulut-Albaba, 2017), and the importance of ambient support from

co-workers during this period (Pearce and Morrison, 2017). It has also been used to explore working practices within schools and how these impact teacher identity and wellbeing (Seniwoliba, 2013; Pyhältö, Pietarinen and Salmela-Aro, 2011). Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) suggested that understanding how people feel and what motivates them to act in a certain way can be invaluable in designing any educational programme. Wang and Gu (2014), for example, have utilised Festinger's (2001) theory to this end to explore the efficacy of professional development programmes offered to teachers.

Festinger's (2001) work has also been used to interrogate the relationship between policy and practice from organisational and individual perspectives (Celestin, 2011). Festinger (1957:97) cautioned that "public compliance without an accompanying change in private opinion occurs when a reward is offered for compliance or when some punishment is threatened for failure to comply." This statement can be seen to have particular resonance in neoliberal education systems and was found to be the case in a study of US Kindergarten teachers (Wills, 2010). Indeed Wills (2010) reported that the teachers whose narratives she analysed revealed dissonance between personal beliefs and values and policy directives, and between the beliefs and values of kindergarten teachers and their colleagues in other key stages. Wills (2010) concluded that a lack of mentoring and CPD significantly contributed towards the 'dissonance' experienced by the kindergarten teachers who participated in her study. While I have been unable to locate similar studies conducted in the UK, Wills (2010) demonstrated the utility of Festinger's (2001, 1957) theorisation in identifying how QTMEYS conceptualise their work, the factors which shape their experience of professional practice and the steps that they take, or that could be taken, to reduce dissonance.

3: 5 Conclusion

Returning to the aim of this study, my intention was to develop understanding of the lived experiences of QTMEYS and the factors which shape these experiences and explore how this insight can be used to inform ITE and ongoing professional development. Through the review of existing scholarship presented in Chapter Two, three key theories have emerged which have been used by other researchers to explore aspects of professional experience and factors which impact retention: Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan and Deci, 2000) and Festinger's (2001) theory of cognitive dissonance. I contend that, by combining these theories, a theoretical framework can be developed which could offer insights which could enrich discussions about the professional development of QTMEYS.

Each theory focuses on a different dimension of the research question (see Figure3.2). First, ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) supports identification of the systems which influence or shape professional experience, helping to locate this experience within a wider socio-political context. Next, SDT (Ryan and Deci, 2000) focuses on the needs of individuals and the extent to which they are able to meet these needs within their specific context. Finally, Festinger's (2001) theory of cognitive dissonance helps to explore the inner, reflexive process through which individual QTMEYS strive for consistency between their thoughts, feelings and behaviour, and the actions they take to achieve this. Although these theories come from different disciplines (psychology and sociology) they appear to work harmoniously within a critical humanist approach to address gaps in existing scholarship by

offering a lens through which the lived experiences of QTMEYS can be examined and understood.
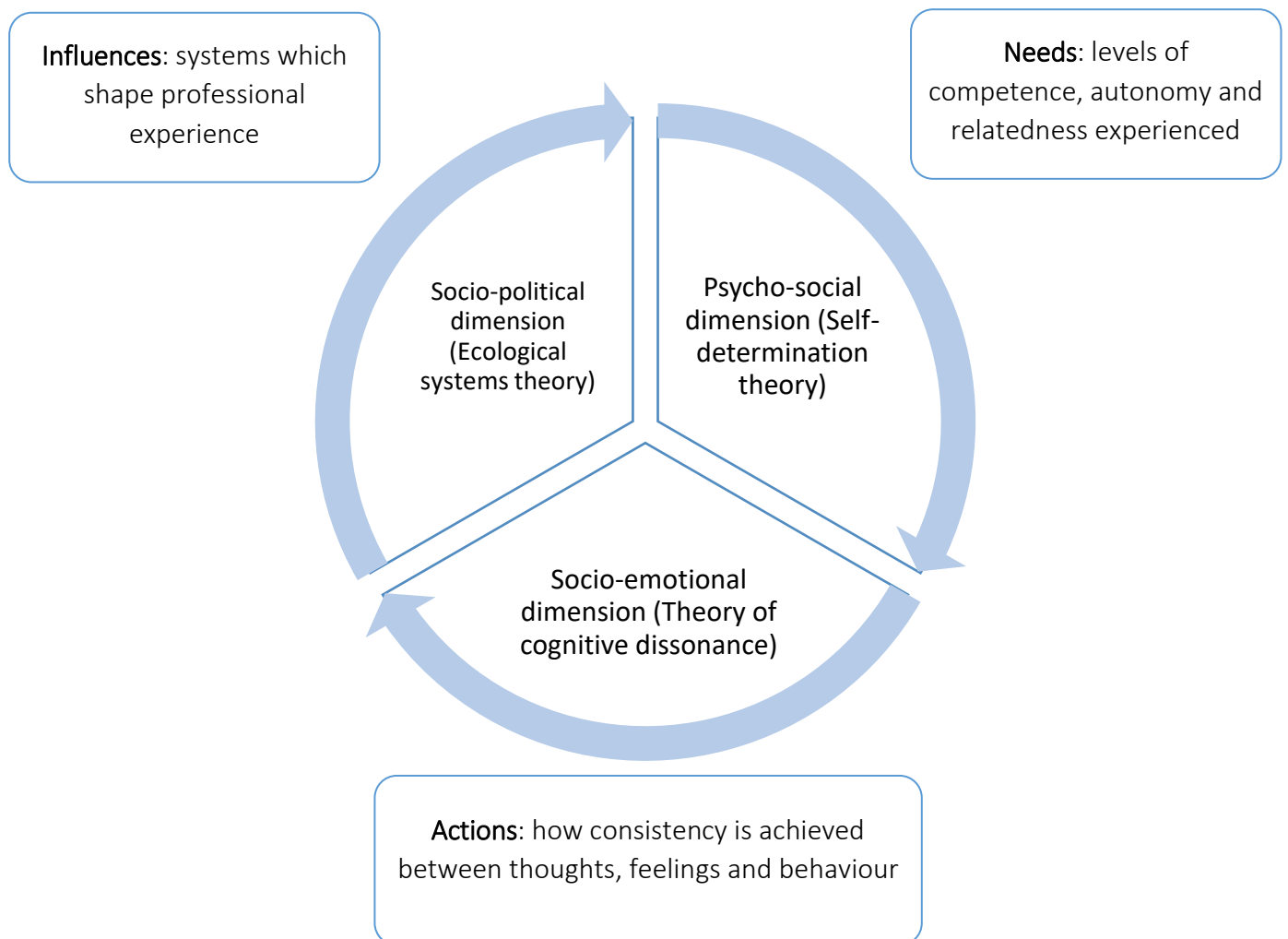
Figure 3.2: Theoretical framework

In the following chapter, the way this framework and the philosophical stance that shapes my identity as a researcher have influenced the research design will be examined and the rationale behind the choice of data collection and analysis methods will be discussed.

Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

From the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, it is possible to establish that decades of neoliberalism have destabilised the teaching profession (Sachs, 2016; Ball, 2015, 2010) and to postulate that the way in which this has impacted QTMEYS, as liminal professionals, may require further investigation. In Chapter 3, I argued that a psycho-social approach is necessary to develop a holistic understanding of how QTMEYS conceptualise their professional practice and of the factors which shape this experience. This chapter provides an overview of the ethical and epistemological basis for the methodological approach adopted in this study.

This chapter begins by foregrounding the paradigm that underpins the methodological design of this inquiry into the lived experiences of QTMEYS. It then explores how other scholars (e.g. Vincent, 2021; Dyer, 2018; Tarpey, 2018; Goouch, 2010) have approached narrative inquiry before justifying my data collection and analysis strategies. Ethical considerations are discussed throughout, and a summary is provided at the end.

4.2 Research Paradigm

Research design is guided by beliefs and assumptions about knowledge and how it is developed (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014). The beliefs and assumptions, or paradigm that has guided the design of this particular study are illustrated in Figure 4.1.

Interpretive axiology : research is value bound and inextricably linked to the researchers subjectivity	Subjective/ constructivist ontology: we experience the world subjectively
Interpretive Paradigm	
Transactional/ interpretive epistemology: knowledge is constructed through experience and interaction	Narrative methodology: knowledge can be communicated through narratives

Figure 4.1: Paradigmatic features

This study has been conducted from an interpretive axiological position. From the outset, I have foregrounded my relationship to the research focus as one based on subjective first-hand experience as a former QTMEYS who now works in ITE. I concur with the assertions of Popper (2002) and Hughes (1990) that all research is value laden and conducted through a specific lens. However, issues of power are key here in regards to what research approaches and accounts are privileged. De Beauvoir (2018) pointed out that, in a patriarchal, neoliberal society, the needs of the economy and those in positions of power are prioritised. In prioritising the needs of the powerful, the needs of others become subordinated and this can, as Plummer (2021) asserted, particularly disadvantage children, women and other marginalised or less powerful groups (see Chapter Two). Rather than attempting to deny my subjectivity, I see this as a source of strength within this study as it gives me a sensitivity towards the subject which encourages me to develop counter hegemonic knowledge that can be used to inform initial teacher education and support the continued professional development of QTMEYS.

Ontologically and epistemologically, this study follows Polanyi's (2009) perspective that knowledge does not exist independently of the knower, rather, it is constructed through experience or interaction and is often tacit. My tacit knowledge and lived experience positions me as 'cultural activist' (Mezirow, 2003: 62) able to "subvert and challenge the existing structure" (Hooks, 1994:183) by crossing borders between the tacit knowledge of QTMEYS and the knowledge about QTMEYS available to ITE providers and policy makers. In this respect, this study reflects Muller and Young's (2019) conviction that there is a difference between the powerful knowledge (PK) of those with first-hand experience of a situation and knowledge of the powerful (KOTP) who rely on descriptive statistics and dehumanised data.

In Chapter 2, I demonstrated that the nuanced diversity of teachers in different Key Stages is lost in dehumanised aggregated data. The result of relying on this type of data is a dominant narrative that reproduces a 'one size fits all' approach to ITE and retention policy. I concur with Goffman (1990:15) who pointed out, "we do not as a matter of fact lead our lives, make our decisions and reach our goals in everyday life either statistically or scientifically". Instead, I follow Polanyi's (2009:19) suggestion that 'it is not by looking at things, but by dwelling in them that we understand their joint meaning'. I contend that by exploring subjective individual constructs of social reality, dominant narratives about ITE and how to support teacher retention can be challenged.

To this end, humanist psychologists such as Maslow and Brunner advocate the use of methods which capture the lived experiences of those concerned (Plummer, 2004) rather than relying on dehumanised data and descriptive statistics. Lived experience has been recognised as a

form of knowledge which has particular value in educational research (Van-Manen, 1990). Barnacle (2004:60) explained that the lived experience approach not only legitimises the researcher's own personal experience, but also the use of narrative or 'artistic' modes of enquiry. As Plummer (2021) asserts, by focusing on the critical, human experience, a narrative can be developed which guides the development of stronger, just and loving institutions. Plummer's (2021) perspective is shared by Biesta and Tedder (2007) who suggested that the social and cultural resources available to guide individual decisions and systematic change are developed through the sharing of narratives. For these reasons, a narrative methodology has been adopted in order to develop insights which may not only have a transformative impact on my own practice as an ITE lecturer, but also can add to the body of knowledge available to policy makers and ITE providers about how to meet the needs of QTMEYS.

4:3 Approaches to narrative methodology

Narrative methodology can be approached in a number of ways, and indeed, there is considerable variation in how narratives are defined and developed (Riessman, 2004; Mischler, 1995). Canadian teacher educator, Granger (2011), adopted an auto-ethnographic approach to explore moments in her own experience of learning to teach from critical discourse and psychoanalytical perspectives, disrupting the idea of narrative as seamless and illustrating the complex way teachers learn in and from practice. Although a former QTMEYS, I have not been employed full time in a maintained Early Years setting for nearly fifteen years and the currency of my experience could be questioned due to the pace of change within the sector (see Chapter 2). I rejected the auto-ethnographic approach because I wanted to build

a picture of contemporary practice and was eager to develop a methodological approach that engaged the participants in co-analysis of their own experiences.

I considered the use of interviews as a means of gathering narratives of lived experience. Scholars have noted that interviews provide an opportunity to actively listen to the participants and respond to emerging themes (Kvale, 1996) in order to collaboratively construct new knowledge (Oakley, 1981). This approach was adopted by Vincent (2021), for example, who employed a playful technique she termed 'carnavalesque conversations' to explore stories about how those involved in higher education for Early Years practitioners conceptualise their practice and learn their craft. Similarly, Goouch (2010) used observations as the basis of reflective conversations in individual interviews and discussion groups to analyse how two veteran Early Years teachers conceptualised their role within an increasingly regulated and performative system. I was drawn to Goouch's use of different modes of data collection, particularly how observations of practice were used as the basis for reflective dialogue. However, because I wanted to focus on the psycho-social dimensions of professional practice, the nature of my inquiry did not easily lend itself to observations. The global pandemic was a further complicating factor as it meant not only that visiting settings was prohibited, but also that face-to-face interviews were initially not possible, and subsequently unadvisable. I t was clear that a different strategy would be necessary, and a different stimulus for reflective dialogue would need to be found.

I was keen to develop an approach that would help me to understand not just how my participants conceptualise their practice, but the factors which have shaped their experience of professional practice and the subjective and inter-subjective struggles they have faced.

Munro (1998) advocated the use of a life history approach in studies seeking to explore agency and resistance in professional practice. Following Goodson (2013), the life history approach was used by Tarpey (2018), to examine the narratives of London based veteran Secondary school English teachers with the aim of encouraging practicing teachers to realise greater agency in contemporary discourse around the role of the teacher. Tarpey's (2018) approach was more socially orientated than Goouch (2010) or Vincent (2021) in that it explored social conditions and broader political structures. However, as discussed above, this study took place during a global pandemic which meant that the way data could be collected had to be considered creatively. Furthermore, cognisant that I was working with a marginalised group who have been under-represented in previous studies, I was anxious to allow my participants the opportunity to decide how to present their narratives.

My subjectivity placed a particular burden on me in terms of representation. Lincoln and Denzin (2003:618) noted that "all texts are personal statements" but as both a former QTMEYS and current ITE lecturer, I was aware that my position was one of both insider and privileged stake holder within the research process, and that it was necessary to ensure that the voices of my participants were not subsumed by my own. However, within the context of an educational doctorate, there was also the need to ensure that the reflexive dimension of my own practice was considered. Villenas (1996:716) in particular, cautioned those who have transcended the marginalised group they are seeking to represent and are now "university sanctioned" researchers "situated in oppressive structures". While these scholars focus on marginalised ethnic communities, my own background growing up as a white child in an ethnically diverse working-class community has made me acutely aware of my privilege as an ITE lecturer. Furthermore, the liminal and marginal status of QTMEYS meant that the

work of 'native' or 'indigenous' researchers has resonance within this study, and challenged me to consider how to develop a data collection strategy that would lighten the burden of representation within my own work.

4:4 Developing a data collection and analysis approach

My data collection and analysis approach has been heavily influenced by critical humanist philosophy. I was determined to find a strategy which would enable the participants to have as much autonomy as possible over how their narratives were presented. Moses and Knutsen (2012:220) explained that our narratives are "shaped by the way we choose to present them." The rights of individuals to tell their own stories has been discussed by numerous scholars (e.g. Criado-Perez, 2019; Ngozi-Adiche, 2014; Malik, 2019; DeBeauvoir, 2015; Said, 2003; Foucault,2020). In the stories we tell about ourselves, we do more than merely describe phenomenon: we construct, deconstruct and reconstruct the moral and ethical choices we made at the time and in so doing to transform our interpretation of the experience and our own identities (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009; Calhoun 1984; Woodward, 2002). However, I was cognisant that ultimately, the way the shared narrative would be presented was my choice. I began to explore ways of eliciting narratives and then providing opportunities for the participants to step away from and reflect on their own narratives.

Further research revealed a significant body of work focused on understanding lived experiences through analysis of written narratives and reflective writing (e.g. Flynn, 2020; Nieminen 2019; Dyson, 2018; Devereux, Heffner, Doane, Gosser and Nolan, 2015). In the psychological field, Devereux et al (2015) used written narratives to explore how older people

regulate their feelings when dealing with emotionally upsetting events.   Similarly, Dyson (2018) used an ongoing process of creative writing and journaling to support trainee teachers in navigating their changing identity and growing awareness of the complexities of professional practice. The focus and methodology used by Devereux et al (2015) and Dyson (2018) were of interest but did not fully meet my desire to engage the participants in 'imagining alternative possibilities', or considering how things could be different, a process Festinger (2001) suggested is essential in identifying ways to resolve cognitive dissonance.

The approach taken in this study is more closely aligned to that of Nieminen (2019) who used written narratives to capture teachers' memories of changes to the elementary school system in Finland. Nieminen (2019: 253) argued that, when examined in the context of the larger socio-historic context and juxtaposed with the grand narratives promulgated by the dominant political party at the time, the "highly sensitive, grass-roots level personal perspectives" offered by these written narratives provide new insight into the impact of the changes on those who experienced them first-hand. Similar approaches have been used and similar subject matter covered by Flynn (2020) and Hendry (2007). Flynn's (2020), Nieminen's (2019), and Hendry's (2007) work explores the impact of policy change on teachers experiences and perhaps, for this reason, particularly resonated with what I wanted to achieve myself. I now felt confident that I would begin my research into the lived experiences of QTMEYS by collecting written narratives and using these as the basis of reflective conversations.

The constraints of the global pandemic meant that I had to develop creative, responsive, flexible data collection strategy.   In response to these challenges, I decided to collect my

initial narratives via email, a decision which now seems almost prescient as my fieldwork spanned multiple public health crisis and lockdowns. In Chapter 2.3.4 I examined how accountability measures have led to a climate of fear in education; this was now accompanied by the fear of contracting a potentially life-threatening disease, as schools and maintained nurseries remained open for the children of Key Workers throughout the pandemic. The relational pedagogy of ECEC meant that, although social distancing measures were in place, those who work with the youngest children were often unable to observe restrictions strictly. There can be little doubt that this study took place during a global public health crisis. It would not have been possible to proceed with my research if I had wanted to gather narratives through face-to-face interviews.

However, I still wanted to use the narratives I gathered as the basis for reflective conversations. I felt strongly that involving the participants in a double hermeneutic (Giddens, 1987) was necessary to ensure the veracity of my understanding of their experiences. It became apparent that there would need to be at least two points of data collection (as illustrated in Figure 4.2) and that interviews would need to be conducted online too.

Stage 1

•Collection of individual written narratives looking back at the participants experience of professional practice

Stage 2

•Individual interview using written narrative to promote reflection and narrative imagination of alternative possibilities in ITE and professional practice
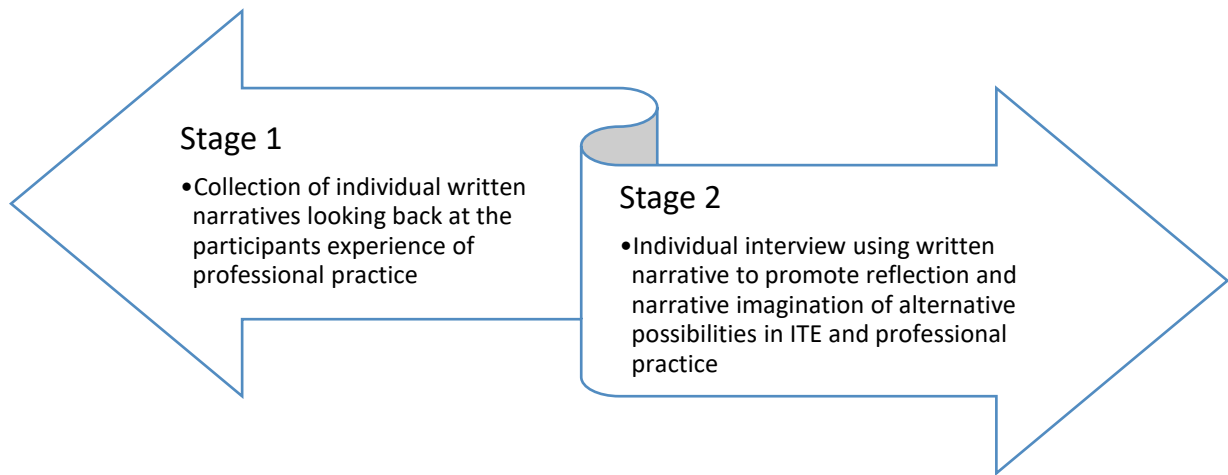
Figure 4. 2: Data collection strategy

Following the global pandemic, a number of studies have explored the advantages and disadvantages of online interviews (Latkovijka and Popovska, 2019 for example). The rapid acceleration of video conferencing platforms as a common mode of communication during the pandemic was an exciting development which meant that I was able to access participants in a wider geographic region than might otherwise have been possible (see Gray, Wong-Wylie, Remple & Cook, 2020) without the fear of infection or incurring additional costs related to travel and time. Nonetheless, I remained cognisant of the ethical challenge of navigating the potential emotional complexity of the narratives of QTMEYS during this period of intense stress and the need to find a method which would enable me to do this while working online.

4.5 Navigating the emotional complexity of narratives using the 'Listening Guide'

Previous scholarship has cautioned that the process of sharing and reflecting on your own story can be both cathartic and traumatic (Niles, Haltom, Malvenna, Leiberman and Stanton, 2014). However, Cook (1988) advised that emotion is a source of insight which often serves

to highlight disparity in social reality. It could be suggested that the "absent presence" (Criado-Perez, 2019: xi) of emotion in political discourse indicates a cultural fear of emotion as a sign of weakness (Ahmed, 2014:2-3). If this is true, this would go some way to explaining why emotion has been "outlawed" (Jagger, 1989:167) in discourse relating to the education and retention of QTMEYS and the Early Years sector in general (Osgood, 2009). The political decision to outlaw emotions in discussions about ITE and teacher retention may be short sighted though as Ahmed (2014) claimed that emotion has greater power to shape our actions than logic or reason. With Ahmed's (2014) words in mind, it was fundamentally important to me to find an approach which would encourage my participants to confront their emotions in order to reveal the factors which shaped their own experience and the way they conceptualised their practice.

I was mindful that the quality of analysis would be fundamental in this study and that the way the written narratives were used to guide the interviews would require careful consideration to avoid potential harm to the participants (BERA, 2018). To discover how I could 'minimise and manage any distress or discomfort that may arise' (BERA, 2018: 19) as a result of participation in my study, I explored how other researchers had navigated the emotional complexity of narrative inquiry.

The emotional dimension of practice in Early Years has been previously been explored by

Moyles (2001) whose findings are summarised in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4. 3: The emotional dimensions of professional practice as identified by Moyles (2001)

Moyles (2001) highlighted the paradoxes faced by ECEC professionals as they navigate the

emotional and ethical complexity of wanting to make a difference in the lives of young

children while feeling powerless to resist pedagogically inappropriate policy decisions.

Moyles (2001) suggested that the pain that this causes can lead to existential crisis. As

discussed in Chapter 2.4, understanding what causes this crisis is critically important if

changes are to be made which will support retention. Far from being something that can be

ignored, it is the emotional, affective dimensions of existence that most impact self-

determination and job satisfaction (Archer, 2007; Baard, Deci and Ryan, 2004; Ryan and Deci,

2000). In order to develop an understanding of what can be done to support QTMEYS, it was

necessary to find a way to foreground the vital emotional dimensions of their lived experience

that would not cause further pain to the participants.

The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982) offered the potential to help explore the emotional complexity of the cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 2001) experienced by QTMEYS. The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982) is a both a way of working or a method, and a relational feminist methodology which emphasises the psychological complexity of human experience (Gilligan and Eddy, 2021). The technique is, according to Woodcock (2016), most appropriate for questions which ask participants to draw on internal dialogues they may not previously have shared. In doing so, the complex, intertwining factors that have shaped their experience and internal dialogue are highlighted (Woodcock, 2016). Based on psychological, psychoanalytical, literary, and musical theory, it is a method which focuses on voice and emotion (Gilligan, 2015). The approach has developed and evolved over time (Woodcock, 2016) as it has been used and adapted in a range of interdisciplinary research. Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg and Bertsch (2006) insisted that each researcher must decide for themselves how to utilise the technique based on their specific research question and what emerges about their study through the research process.

A growing number of educational researchers (e.g. Faughey, 2020; Dyer, 2018; Reid, 2016) have recognised the value and potential of The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982) as a means of exploring and communicating the lived experiences of those who work in education. In line with the recommendation of Coffey and Atkinson (1996:13) who advocate a "playful approach" to analysis, each researcher had used The Listening Guide slightly differently, adapting it to meet their purpose. The varying adaptations of The Listening Guide used by other researchers gave me the confidence to explore how it could be adapted for use in my study as did the advice of

The Listening Guide involves collecting narratives and analysing them in several stages or 'listenings' (Brown, Tappan, Gilligan, Miller and Argyris, 1992). Initially, the researcher 'listens' for the plot, gaining an overview of the narrative and its emotional resonance. This first 'listening' allows the researcher to assess how the participant characterises their lived experiences or the type of story that is being told (Byrne, Canavan and Millar, 2009). In the second 'listening', the psychological landscape is mapped as the researcher listens for the voice of the participant; their needs, desires, emotions and the conflicts they face. The researcher scans the text highlighting statements beginning with 'I', 'you', and 'we'. This generates what Gilligan (1982) calls 'I-poems'. These 'found poems[35]' highlight the participant's sense of self and their relationship with others. Finally, the researcher conducts contrapuntal 'listenings', focusing on the way the participant characterises their relationship with others. This may involve the extraction of new poems from the text which focus on statements beginning with 'they', 'them' or 'It' to explore political themes. Gilligan and Eddy (2017:78) explained:

> The listening guide tunes our ear to the multiplicity of voices that speak
> within and around us including those voices that speak at the margins and
> those which, in the absence of resonance or response, tend to be held in
> silence

Rather than coding narratives or transcripts in search of prescribed criteria, The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982) utilises open coding (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to approach research from a place of genuine curiosity and openness. By allowing the codes to emerge from the narratives, rather than coding data using predetermined criteria, Gilligan and Eddy (2017)

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[35] The term 'found poem' refers to the process of taking words or phrases from oral or written narratives and reframing them as poetry (Butler-Kisber, 2005).

suggested that The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982) positions participants as experts in their own experiences. In doing so, the associative logic, or tacit knowledge, that exists outside the participant's conscious awareness, or where they have disassociated from their knowledge in an act of self-preservation (as explored by Potter, 2013) is revealed. It is here that new knowledge about their lived experiences, with the potential to resolve cognitive dissonance lies (Festinger, 2001). The key strength of this approach, according to Mauthner (2017), is its ability to reflexively develop theories about how situations have arisen and how they impact people. The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982), in tandem with Festinger's (2001) model for resolving cognitive dissonance, appeared to offer a way not only to navigate the emotional complexity of my participants narratives, but also to encourage them to explore alternative possibilities which could inform my future practice in ITE and the support available to QTMEYS throughout their careers.

My decision to use The Listening Guide (Giligan, 1982) to analyse reflective writing was legitimised by further exploration of how it has been used by other scholars. Gilligan et al (2006) persuaded researchers to adapt the guide to suit the nature of their own enquiry. I was particularly influenced by Petrovic, Lordly, Brigham and Delaney's (2015) use of Gilligan's (1982) framework to analyse the reflective narratives of under-graduate students. Despite limited literature documenting the use of The Guide (Gilligan, 1982) in this way, Petrovic et al's (2015) successful adaptation gave me the confidence to design a six-point strategy for collecting and analysing data (see Figure 4.4) which combined the use of written narratives and interviews to develop an insight into the psycho-social factors which shape the lived experiences of QTMEYS.

Stage 1	• Individual written narratives shared via secure email
Stage 2	• Individual written narratives analysed for plot using the Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982)
Stage 3	• Psychological landscape of individual written narratives mapped using I-Poetry (Gilligan, 1982). Sources of dissonance identified (contrapuntal listening)
Stage 4	• Interviews conducted via Zoom using I-Poetry (Gilligan, 1982) to reframe the written narrative, encourage reflective analysis of the factors whch shape the participants' experience and narrative imaginings of alternative posibilities
Stage 5	• Contrapuntal listening (Gilligan, 1982) conducted through thematic analysis of corpus of data collected through written narratives and interviews
Stage 6	• Themes within narratives compared and brought together to create shared narratives

Figure 4.4: Overview of methods used to collect and analyse data

I conducted a trial of my research design using my adapted version that drew on aspects of The Listening Guide to explore the plot of the written narratives and map their psychological landscape through the creation of I-poems. Gilligan and Eddy (2021) suggest stripping the poems down to subject and verb in order to highlight 'raw emotion'. Although this generated stark, moving verses, I wanted the I-Poems to serve several purposes: to highlight the psycho-social dimensions of the participants' experiences to the reader; as a tool to navigate the emotional complexity of the written narrative by reframing and returning it to the participants in a new form; and finally, as a site of co-analysis that would promote reflection and imagination of alternative possibilities. I decided that the approach taken by Dyer (2018) and

Petrovic et al (2015), where some level of detail was retained, was more appropriate for this study as it contextualised the emotions in specific temporal events and interactions.

The trial of my data collection and analysis strategy using a convenience sample of finalist Undergraduate QTS students was successful on several levels. First, the collection of written narratives demonstrably enabled students to reflect on their professional journeys and identify key events that had shaped their professional practice thus far. Second, the use of I-Poetry (Gilligan, 1982) proved a useful entry point to further discussion around the written narratives by highlighting the participants' agency within their own narrative and the systemic/ social (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and relational/ psychological (Ryan and Deci, 2000) factors which shaped their experience. Finally, the trial demonstrated that this strategy also enabled me to problematize situations and interactions within the participants' narratives that felt familiar or which resonated with my own experience of professional practice as a QTMEYS. In this way, I was able to connect with my participants emotionally, without projecting my emotions onto the situations and interactions they described.

4.6 Sampling strategy: identifying groups of participants and utilising professional networks

Analysis of samples used to inform the recent policy documents related to ITT and teacher retention (DfE, 2019a 2019b, 2019c) reveal that the voice of QTMEYS is absent. As Ball (1990) explained, it is vital that the sample used within a study has the relevant knowledge and experience of the subject of focus. Arguably, despite the size of the sample used to inform

these documents, there is an assumption that all teachers share the same concerns and that a 'one size fits all' policy can address them.

For this study, I tried to identify a representative purposive sample (Flick, 2014) whose lived experience could offer unique insight into the factors which impact the lived experiences and professional development of QTMEYS. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) suggested that the suitability of the sampling strategy used in a piece of research is a key indicator of its quality. Of paramount importance is that the sample is representative of the population that the research is concerned with. With this in mind, two key inclusion criteria were established: participants must hold QTS and participants must work or have worked as QTMEYS in England. In order to provide a 'multifaceted account' (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009) of the lived experience of EYPs, I determined to include three groups of participants in my sample (See Figure 4.5) [36].

QTMEYS with 0-5 years experience

QTMEYS who have left the sector

QTMEYS with more than 5 years' experience
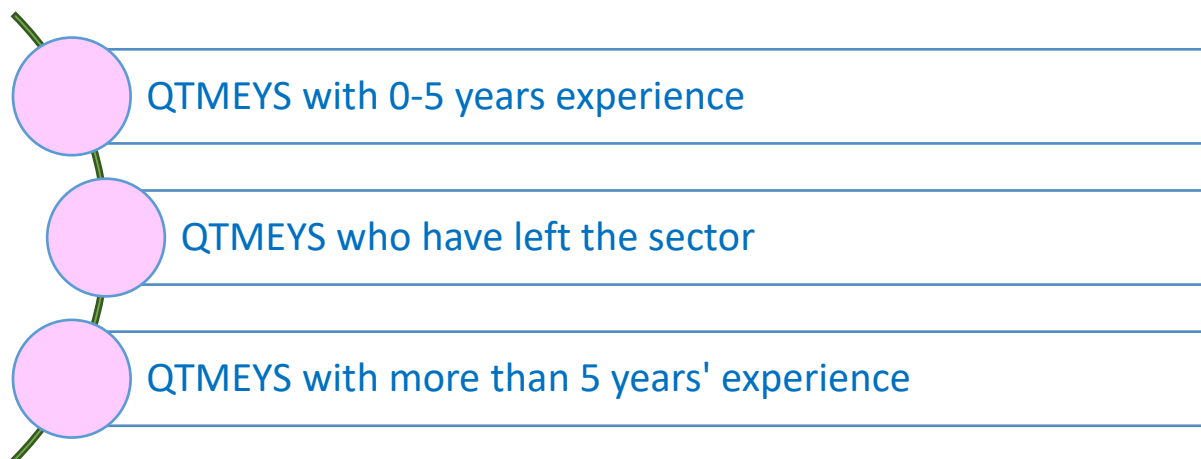
Figure 4.5: Groups of participants I was keen to include in this study

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[36] 15.3% of qualified teachers leave within the first year after graduating, and a further 32.6% leave within the next five years (DfE, 2019). This suggests that understanding what happens in the first year after graduation and how teachers are supported over the next four years is critical; after this point, the risk of attrition reduces dramatically.

Having identified homogenous groups (see Figure 4.5) who could provide unique insights into the factors which impact the lived experience of QTMEYS at different stages in their careers, I was able to draw on my professional networks to initiate a snowball sampling strategy. By relying on interpersonal connections, I attempted to partially equalise power relationships and promote a sense of shared endeavour (Noy, 2008) in line with the participatory, emancipatory nature of feminist research (Acker, Barry and Esseveld, 1991). However, this approach was not without its challenges.

I had three key concerns about the use of a snowball sampling strategy: my ability to access those who had left the sector, the possibility of bias within my sample, and the prospect that I would fail to gain sufficient interest. My concern about how I would reach QTMEYS who had left the sector was alleviated somewhat by the advice of Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009: 51) who suggested that, when examining complex human phenomena, a "concentrated focus" on a smaller sample can be advantageous. I was reassured that I did not need to recruit a large number of participants. My second concern was that snowball sampling can be prone to bias (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) as participants self-select to take part in the study. Archer (2007) pointed out that, when people are dissatisfied within their professional lives, they often become 'vitriolic critics' of the system and it could be suggested that my approach to sampling could be criticised for attracting those who were most dissatisfied. However, the extent of the crisis in teacher retention suggests that levels of satisfaction are low and that, while a self-selecting sample may express their views and perspectives strongly, these views and perspectives would almost certainly be representative of the experiences of other QTMEYS. Finally, Geddes, Parker and Scott (2018) cautioned that the success of snowball sampling relies on the researcher having the breadth and security of connections

needed to allow recruitment of participants to gain momentum. While this may have posed a problem for a researcher outside a sector, as a trustee and member of a number of Early Years specific policy and professional bodies I was confident that my network, and that of my potential participants, was diverse and secure enough to defend the reliability and validity of this approach.

Initially, twelve people contacted me to find out more about my study. In accordance with BERA (2018) guidelines, voluntary informed consent was obtained. An information sheet (Appendix 5) and consent form (Appendix 2.3) were supplied to each participant. An initial, informal conversation took place by telephone to explain the study, confirm that they matched the inclusion criteria[37] and agree a timeline for them to write in. Following these conversations, five potential participants returned their consent forms via email and agreed to participate in the study. The final sample included participants from each of the three categories detailed in Figure 4.5. Furthermore, each participant had followed a different route towards QTS, had a unique career path and a different level of experience (see Figure 4.6[38]), making the final sample more heterogeneous than previously imagined while ensuring the sample size remained manageable for someone in the position of conducting doctoral level research with a fulltime job and caring responsibilities during a global pandemic.

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[37] All participants needed to have gained QTS and had experience working in a maintained Early Years setting in England
[38] Please note, participants were asked to choose the name their narrative would be presented under. Two participants chose to use both a first name and a surname, while three did not. This will be explained further in Chapter 4, section 10.

Nancy Forester
- **Current role:** Career break
- **ITE:** Part time Primary PGCE
- **Experience:** Reception class in State Primary School
- **Level of experience**: 0-5 years

Ben Ford
- **Current role:** QTMEYS (for now!)
- **ITE:** Early Years PGCE
- **Experience:** Nursery and Reception class teacher in State Primary schools
- **Level of experience:** 5-10 years

Coco
- **Current role:** Link tutor and self employed supply teacher
- **ITE:** BA Education Studies, Graduate Teacher Programme
- **Experience:** Playgroup/ preschool, QTMEYS, QTS in Independent Primary school
- **Level of experience:** 10+ years

Etta
- **Current role:** QTMEYS
- **ITE:** BEd Hons in Primary Education
- **Experience:** Key Stage Two, Nursery and Reception class teacher in State school and Maintained Nursery
- **Level of experience:** 10+ years

Merida
- **Current role:** QTS in Independent School
- **ITE:** Canadian equivalent BA QTS hons with Early Years specialism
- **Experience:** Reception class teacher in State Primary schools
- **Level of experience:** 10 years

Figure 4.6: Overview of participants

4.7: Elicitation of written narratives

The data collection process took place over a six-month period between June and November 2021 as different networks met and new participants came forward. Once informed consent

had been obtained, participants were asked to tell me the story of their professional journey, from how they trained to where they were today, sharing the opportunities and challenges they had experienced along the way. I explained that these stories would form the basis of an interview where we would discuss their experience in greater depth.

The biographical details and plot revealed in Listening One (Gilligan, 1982) have been summarised in Figure 4.6 and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.2. Listening Two (Gilligan, 1982) focused on the psycho-social dimensions of the lived experiences of the participants and generated the I-Poems (Gilligan, 1982) that were used to reframe the narratives and return them to the participants for co-analysis during the interview (see Chapter 5.3). As previously explained, face-to-face interviews were not possible due to the global pandemic and we were forced to conduct our conversations online instead. This strategy not only safeguarded us from the risk of infection but also reduced the time commitment involved as the interviews could take place in a time and place of the participants choosing. Although I was cautious that having to conduct interviews via Zoom would reduce the rapport between myself and the participants (see Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018), our shared experiences more than mitigated this.

4.8 The interview process

Interviews were scheduled to last a maximum of ninety minutes in order to avoid making excessive demands on the participants' time. Although the purpose of the interviews was to engage the participants in a process of co-analysis, they were led by my initial analysis of their written narrative. I began each interview by explaining to the participants how I had analysed

their narrative. Fay (2000) explained that I-Poetry (Gilligan, 1982) allows key points of dissonance to be extracted from a larger narrative, directing the reader to the complex, subjective experience of the participant (Koelsch, 2016). In this study, I also used them to reframe the written narratives created by each participant in order to access their practical (Gudmundsdottir, 1995) or tacit (Polyani, 2009) knowledge, not only about what had happened to them and around them, but how the dissonance they felt could have been reduced (Festinger, 2001). Having explained how I had analysed their written narrative, I then shared the I-Poem I had extracted from it with them and asked if they would like to read it aloud themselves or hear it in my voice so they could step away from it.

The individualised interview schedules also emerged from the use of The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982). After reading each section of the participants' I-Poem, clean questions were asked to elicit further details of their experience and the factors which shaped it. Psychologist David Grove pioneered the use of 'clean questioning', a technique designed to reveal emergent knowledge and support clear communication (Wilson, 2017). The technique involves opening questions with the participants' exact words and then asking 'how did that feel?' or 'what did that look like?' (Wilson, 2017). 'Clean questioning' is designed to avoid leading the participant and to encourage them to consider their experience from different perspectives. While the individualised nature of these questions may have made comparison more difficult, it enabled me to interrogate the psycho-social dimensions of their experiences and develop detailed illustrations of the symbolic violence they encounter in professional practice. Interviews concluded with a series of questions which recapped the aim of my study (using the same wording as in the participant information sheet) and asked them what

different groups of people[39] needed to 'hear' about their experiences (see Appendix 6). The inclusion of these questions enabled me to ensure that the recommendations of this study (see Chapter 7) came directly from those best placed to know what actions would better support QTMEYS in ITE and in professional practice, QTMEYS themselves.

4.9 Interpretation and presentation of shared narratives: from constructivist knowledge to constructionist claims

The aims of this study were to explore three key questions:

- What is the lived experience of professional practice as a QTMEYS?
- What factors shape this experience?
- How can this information be used to inform initial teacher education and support the continued professional development of QTMEYS?

One of the key challenges for narrative researchers is deciding how to bring together individual narratives or subjective interpretations of a situation, in order to make claims about how that situation could be addressed (Letherby, 2002, Skeggs, 1995). Polkinghorne (1995) argued that some researchers see their role in a narrative inquiry as supporting the development of narrative imagination by facilitating the sharing of lived experiences. Researchers who adopt this constructivist approach see the narratives of their participants as complete analyses of their experiences in their own right which should be accepted as such rather than subjected to further interpretation (Frank, 1995). This approach to narrative research raises a tension for humanist researchers engaged in Educational Doctorates as the researcher is required not only to explore a phenomenon, but to identify implications for their future practice and the wider research community.

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[39] Based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model

Conversely, by analysing several narratives and identifying themes, researchers who adopt a constructionist approach are able to step back from the data and theorise what it reveals (Polkinghorne, 1995). It could then be argued that, by combining recurrent themes across a number of individual narratives, grounded theories about complex situations are generated, rather than simple answers to the research questions (Charmaz, 2001). Charmaz (2001) appeared to offer a resolution: narrative research not only supports people in developing an understanding of the lived experiences of others, but also enables the generation of claims in the form of grounded theory about how their situation could be improved. From a feminist perspective, Woodiwiss (2017:16) highlighted that stories not only tell us about the past, they are also "guides for living". In this study, thematic analysis of the corpus of data collected through written narratives and reflective interviews enabled the development of claims about how QTMEYS could be better prepared for and supported in professional practice.

Braun and Clarke (2006) explained that, when thematic analysis is done well, the position from which the analysis has been conducted is explicitly clarified. The development of grounded theory which can guide future action resonates with the critical humanist perspective this study has been conducted from, the interpretive transformative paradigm which has informed its design and the theoretical framework presented in Chapter Three. To explicitly address how the tension implicit in conducting an exploratory constructivist inquiry which needs to make constructionist claims has been resolved, I return to the theoretical framework presented in Figure 3.2. The complexity of making institutional and broader claims from individual narratives cannot be understated. However, the use of I-Poetry

(Gilligan, 1982) to lead co-analysis of individual narratives aligned with the balanced axiological approach in this study by ensuring the veracity of my understanding of the participants' subjective lived experiences. Thematic analysis of the corpus of data collected through all five written narratives and reflective interviews enabled the development of a shared narrative and claims about the lived experiences of QTMEYS.

To ensure the quality of a study can be evaluated, and to enable the research design to be replicated by others, Attride-Stirling (2001) insisted that researchers must clarify how their thematic analysis has been conducted. To this end, I have included a full analysis of each written narrative in Appendix 3[40]. Initial analysis of the written narratives using The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982) led to the identification of emotional codes (Saldana, 2016) which closely correlated with those defined by Ryan and Deci (2000): competence, autonomy and relatedness. From here, evaluative categories (Saldana, 2016) were identified relating to sources of ambient support or dissonance (Festinger, 2001) within the participants' lived experiences, including SLTs, colleagues, policy makers/ Ofsted, CPD, Early Years experts, external communities of practice, and children and their families (see Chapter 5 Section 3 for further details). These evaluative categories linked closely to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model and to Ryan and Deci's (2000) work on self-determination, in that they identified systemic and relational factors which impacted the participants. Having coded and categorised the written narratives and interview transcripts, latent themes emerged

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[40] These working documents have been included to demonstrate the process of analysis; as such the reader may find their readability impacted by the colour coding that has taken place.

which provided a theorised description of the participants' experiences and the factors which shaped them (Braun and Clarke, 2006). These themes were neglect, isolation and conflict.

The recommendations of Brown et al (1992) have been followed to present the findings revealed at each stage of analysis or at each 'listening'. This mode of presentation has consistently been used in other studies which have utilised The Listening Guide (1982) (e.g. Dyer, 2018). Where I have deviated from Brown et al's (1992) presentation guidelines is in combining the corpus of evidence gathered through the written narratives and co-analysis interviews and presenting this thematically in Chapter 6. While this approach could be described as unorthodox, the latent themes highlight the emotional, affective dimensions of professional practice as a QTMEYS and enable specific claims to be made about these experiences and what could be done to improve them 'right from the start' in ITE.

4.10 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations have been at the core of this inquiry. Atkins and Wallace (2012:30) explain that researchers have a "moral responsibility" to ensure that every aspect of their study is ethical from design to dissemination. I have demonstrated throughout this chapter that my study has been conducted within an "ethic of respect" (BERA, 2018: 5) for the participants at every stage. In this section I have also demonstrated how the proposal has been developed in line with the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018).

BERA (2018:8) explicitly states that "researchers should not undertake work for which they are not competent" and that each individual researcher has a duty "to protect the integrity and reputation of educational research by ensuring that they conduct their research to the highest standards". To ensure my research meets these standards this study has undergone a rigorous process of approval. On submission of the initial proposal, ethical consent was obtained (see Appendix 2.1). Following the Confirmation of Doctoral Research Interview, the research design was revised, reducing the number of data collection points to one written narrative and one interview rather than breaking the story into three parts as originally planned. These amendments fell within the original ethical approval. Regular meetings were held with the supervisory team to support revisions and discuss ethical issues as they arose, including those relating to the researcher's workload.

The Academy of Social Sciences (2015) insisted that social research which represents the values, ideas and experiences of different groups is fundamental to a democratic society and that researchers should use the most appropriate methods to ensure that the perspectives of their participants are captured accurately. The narrative approach allowed the participants to tell their stories in their own words and the decision to capture these narratives in written rather than oral form assured the participants the flexibility to create them in a time and space of their choosing, avoiding making "excessive demands" on their time (BERA, 2018:25).

Although BERA (2018:25) advise against sharing data via email as there is a possibility of email accounts being breached, the necessity of collecting data in creative, flexible ways has become more pronounced due to the current pandemic. This approach further supported the wellbeing of the participants and the researcher by minimising unnecessary travel in line

with the (then) current government guidelines at the beginning of the study (Department for Transport, 2020) and reducing the risk of infection (National Health Service, 2020). While these guidelines were constantly reviewed and updated, I was aware that some form of restrictions would remain in pace for the foreseeable future.

Informed written consent was obtained prior to data collection (see Appendix 2.3). Participants were made aware that they were under no obligation to participate and had the right to withdraw from the study. Timelines for stories and interviews were arranged around the participants' schedules, and they were informed that, should they choose to withdraw, their story would not be included in the final thesis or used for any other purposes.

I wanted to be open and transparent with my participants from the outset, not only about how their narratives would be collected, stored and used but also about who I am and what I stand for. To enable them to identify me and be knowledgeable about my professional credentials, a brief biography was included in the participant letter (see Appendix 2.2). The use of snowball sampling meant that there was both a degree of separation and connection between myself and the participants. As explained in Chapter 4, this was a deliberate strategy to minimise the risk of prestige bias by ensuring I had not worked with or supervised any of the participants, while our shared professional networks provided reassurance of my identity and the sincerity of my research. This did raise issues of operating in a small community and meant the rejection of some people known to me who were keen to participate. However, it was important for participants to be able to share and discuss their stories without fear of being personally recognised, or potentially identifying anyone they referred to in their narratives (BERA, 2018: 14).

I had to decide how to present my findings. My subjectivity was, in this regard, both a source of strength in that I could empathise with the participants' experiences, and I wanted to ensure that my interpretation of their experiences was accurate. Although it is not possible to fully eliminate the tension in representing participants accurately (Woodiwiss, 2017), three key steps were taken to reduce this tension. First, the use of I-Poetry (Gilligan, 1982) and clean questioning in interviews helped me to navigate the emotional complexity of the written narratives and ensure the veracity of my interpretation of the participants' subjective experiences. Second, the co-analysis of individual narratives that took place in our conversations meant that "conflicting interpretations" (BERA, 2018: 8) were minimised. Finally, returning the shared narratives to the participants once they had been written and the oral elements had been combined and analysed further minimised the possibility of "falsifying, distorting, suppressing, selectively reporting or sensationalising" the participants' stories (BERA, 2018: 33). There were critical moments within this process where, having reflected on metaphors or images they used to describe their experiences and emotions, participants asked for parts of their stories to be redacted to avoid causing offence to others. While this meant that some powerful imagery was lost, I respected my participants' wishes to retain control over their narratives, even after they had been anonymised. While Edwards and Weller (2012) note that modes of analysis are not inherently inferior or superior, just different ways of interpreting data, the use of both co-analysis of individual narratives and development of shared narratives through thematic analysis indicate the rigour and ethical sensitivity with which this study has been conducted.

A "fictionalising approach" (BERA, 2018: 21) was taken when presenting the stories to ensure that neither the participants or any individuals or institutions they refer to can be recognised in the narratives. The participants were asked to provide pseudonyms themselves rather than these being created by me. The reader will note that two participants chose both a first and second name, while the others chose to use a first name alone. While this may lend a degree of inconsistency to how the narratives are presented, I did not attempt to persuade the others to choose a second name or to suggest that Ben Ford and Nancy Forester use just their first name of choice. Allowing the participants to choose the name their story would appear under recognised their authority and autonomy within the study and respects that the data they are providing is a gift (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008). In the following chapters, the gift of the narratives shared by participants will be unwrapped and presented. In each of the following chapters, the process of analysis and reflexive deliberations about how to present the data will be discussed. The next chapter introduces the participants and presents the first listening.

4.11 Conclusion

This study takes an interpretive approach to understanding the lived experiences of QTMEYS, the factors which shape this experience and how this information can be used to inform initial teacher education and support the continued professional development of QTMEYS. A narrative methodology has been developed which enabled the participants to tell their story in their own way through the creation of a written account of their lived experience. These narratives were analysed using The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982) and returned to the participants as I-Poems (Gilligan, 1982) which formed the basis of reflective interviews in which the participants and researcher co-constructed an analysis of the narrative and explored alternative possibilities for ITE and CPD.

The corpus of data collected through written narratives and interviews was analysed using emotional codes, evaluative categories and latent themes to develop three shared narratives, namely neglect, isolation and conflict. At each stage of the research process, ethical considerations have been paramount. In the following chapters, each stage of analysis is presented. Part 1 focuses on the analysis of the written narratives, Part 2 on the analysis of the corpus of data.

Chapter 5: Findings: Analysis of written narratives

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided an overview of the data collection and analysis strategies that have been used to gain insights into the lived experiences of QTMEYS. The following chapters will present and discuss the empirical evidence that has accumulated through this study about how QTMEYS conceptualise their practice, the factors which impact their experience of professional practice and how this information can be used to inform both initial teacher education and the continued professional development of QTMEYS. My intention here is to support the reader in developing a narrative imagination of the subjective reality of professional practice in school based Early Years settings.

Chapter 5 presents the analysis of the individual written narratives (Appendix 3) conducted using 'The Listening Guide' (Gilligan, 1982). The Listening Guide advocates analysing the data in discrete stages described as 'listenings'. The first stage of analysis begins to address the question of how QTMEYS conceptualise their practice and to build a picture of what day-to-day practice as a QTMEYS is like. In the second 'listening', how the participant represents themselves within their narrative is explored using I-Poetry. The analysis of I-Poetry supports the reader in developing narrative imagination about the emotional and affective dimension of the participants' professional experiences, furthering their understanding of how QTMEYS conceptualise their practice. The I-Poems developed at this stage of analysis were later used as the basis of individualised interviews which enabled me to gain further insights into the factors which shaped the participants' experience of professional practice. The third listening

focused on the participants' relationships with others within their narrative and the impact of those relationships on their day-to-day experience of being a QTMEYS.

5.2 Listening One: Introducing the participants and their narratives

The details presented in this section were gathered through 'listening one' (Gilligan, 1982) of the written narratives which focuses on understanding "who is telling what story" (Byrne et al, 2009: 69). Coffey and Atkinson (1996:13) encouraged researchers to take a "playful approach" to exploring the diversity of approaches available to them to support analysis of data. Consequently, I explored different ways of analysing plot structures and self-characterisation (see Appendix 4) but these felt artificial, as if I were imposing structures upon the narratives rather than genuinely listening to them. Reassured by Edwards and Weller (2012) that modes of analysis are not necessarily superior or inferior, just different ways of understanding the data, I abandoned literary forms of structural analysis and have used a fictionalising approach. The fictionalising approach provides a counterpoint to the dehumanised data used at policy level, reflecting my critical humanist commitment to sharing stories of lived experience in a way which enables the reader to immerse themselves in the subjective realities of the participants.

5.2.1 Nancy Forester[41]: A story of isolation, frustration and neglect

Nancy Forester studied drama and English at university. On graduating she worked in events organisation before securing a post working with county councils to develop drama projects

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[41] As noted in Chapter 4, Nancy was one of the participants who chose both a first and second name.

in schools. It was her experiences as a parent that led her to consider a career change but, unable to find an Early Years Specific course in her local area as these are only available in 43 universities nationwide, she enrolled on a Primary PGCE course. It was here that her sense of isolation and frustration began.

5.2.1.1 Isolation

Although Nancy Forester was passionate about Early Years, on communicating this to her cohort, Nancy reflects "no one really 'got' that so I didn't talk about it anymore!" (Appendix 3). Nancy explains that her tutors had no experience of teaching in Early Years that they could draw on in their lectures and so she received just one hour of Early Years input during her course which was led by a visiting QTMEYS rather than a lecturer. She organised a placement in an Early Years setting but, as this placement was unassessed, Nancy received no guidance from either the university or the school. Undeterred, on graduating, Nancy accepted a post in a Reception class.

5.2.1.2 Frustration

Although her colleagues were "kind and helpful" Nancy Forester recalls "I did not have the adequate specialist support to feel confident in my role" (Appendix 3.1), and she began to feel neglected. Nancy Forester describes her mentor as supportive, but, along with the rest of her SLT, he lacked any experience in Early Years. Due to their lack of experience, Nancy Forester felt that neither her mentor nor the SLT understood the complexity of her role. While they were sympathetic to her humanist ideals, it appeared that they were more focused on academic outcomes than children's wellbeing. Nancy Forester began to feel that not only were her developmental needs being neglected, but those of the children too. She illustrates

her growing frustration in her description of the response of school leaders to a group of neurodiverse children:

> There just wasn't the correct level of staffing. Senior leaders undertook risk assessments and fitted locks on the classroom doors to stop the children from escaping quite as regularly, but didn't really understand that the children needed that enabling environment to thrive and doubts began to form - is this going to meet their needs?
>
> *(Appendix 3.1)*

Funding is the biggest barrier to meeting the special educational needs of children (Griggs and Bussard, 2017) as it means that there is a lack of specialist support available in schools. The lack of funding for staffing places additional pressure on QTMEYS making high quality training essential (Sammons et al, 2004; Tymms, Merrell and Henderson, 1997; Davie, 1996), a fact recognised in successive policy documents (e.g. DfE, 2021; DHSC and DfE, 2020; DfE and DoH, 2015). Nancy Forester asked for guidance and training but this, along with basic resources and adequate staffing to meet the needs of her class, was not forthcoming. Nancy Forester paid to attend training in her own time and continued to read and research to inform her pedagogic practice. The changes she implemented as a result had demonstrable impact on the children's personal and academic outcomes but:

> There was pressure. The children should be in assemblies. They need to feel part of the school. They have to learn to sit for a long time later in KS1, so they might as well start now. How will you know that you have covered the curriculum? The classroom looks messy. It's noisy when you go in Early Years. When a TA comes in to cover they don't know what to do because there are no formal groups to run. Should those children really be doing the hoovering? They have been building that same den for a week now. Shouldn't the maths resources be in the maths area? The displays look a bit dull with that brown paper and hessian. When are you hearing them read?
>
> *(Appendix 3.1)*

The collection of observations and questions Nancy presents demonstrates the downwards pressure placed on QTMEYS to adopt pedagogically inappropriate strategies that align more closely with those used in Key Stage One and Two (Burges-Macey et al, 2020; Nutbrown, 2018, McDowall Clarke, 2017).   Nancy Forester's experience here mirrors the paradoxes of professional practice discussed by Moyles (2001), suggesting little has changed in the intervening years. Seeking 'confirmatory cognition' to reduce the dissonance she was experiencing (Festinger, 2001), Nancy joined a local Early Years network. However, within her school setting Nancy Forester felt increasingly "isolated" (Appendix 3.1) and overwhelmed. As a result of the pressure she was under, she was diagnosed with severe anxiety and depression and signed off work for six weeks.

5.2.1.3 Neglect

Arrangements for cover during her period of leave were "rudimentary" (Appendix 3.1). She was just managing to get herself and her class back on track when the pandemic hit. Post pandemic research (e.g. La Valle et al, 2022) and Early Years experts such as Grenier (2021) suggest that QTMEYS may have been particularly affected by the demands placed upon them during the lockdown and once the children returned to school. Nancy Forester found herself delivering supplies to children so they could continue their learning at home and offering guidance to their families on how to support self-regulation. Once the children returned to school, rather than being given the opportunity to consolidate what she had learned in the two fragmented years she had spent in Reception, Nancy Forester was told that she would be moving to Year Two.

Studies suggest that expertise and professional confidence develops over time (Euade, 2011; Timperley, 2011; Lave and Wenger 1991; Schön, 1983), but Nancy Forester's confidence was "at rock bottom" (Appendix 3.1). Previous scholarship has highlighted the impact of a lack of ambient support in the workplace (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Ryan and Lynch, 1989; Ryan, Plant and O'Malley, 1995). It is perhaps unsurprising that Nancy Forester felt her mental health "sliding" and she decided to resign (Appendix 3.1). At the time of writing, Nancy Forester is not planning to return to teaching. Like a quarter of teachers, Nancy Forester's career lasted less than three years. Her story is full of frustration and regret that she was not able to fulfil her potential as a QTMEYS.

5.2.2 Ben Ford[42]: A story of desire, determination and despair

Ben Ford comes from a working-class background; his mum worked in a supermarket and his dad in the local factory. Ben Ford enjoyed school and excelled in drama. Both parents were adamant that Ben Ford would go to university, but never really thought about what he would study or what he might do when he graduated. Although he wanted to be a teacher as a young child, this desire was not nurtured by the adults around him and, without formal career guidance at Secondary school, Ben Ford lost sight of his dream to teach.

5.2.2.1 Desire

At university, Ben Ford completed a degree in Theatre Studies and, after "a slow and very boring start in the Civil Service" (Appendix 3.2), he moved into a career in arts education that lasted over a decade. Although he was already working in education, it was during a

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[42] Like Nancy Forester, Ben Ford chose to use both a first and second name

storytelling project for young children that he re-connected with his dream of becoming a teacher. He recalls:

> I had looked at the options for teacher training a few times over the years and was generally put off by one thing or another, primarily the need to continue working. I was told by one local University that I would never get on a PGCE course and that even if I did, I would never get a job in (location redacted to protect Ben's identity) I was told my first degree was not good enough and I would need an MA to even be considered.
>
> *(Appendix 3.2)*

5.2.2.2 Determination

Now determined to pursue his dream, three years later, Ben Ford had completed a Master's degree with the Open University and gained experience of practice by volunteering in a Foundation Stage unit in a local school. He was accepted onto an Early Years specific PGCE at one of the 43 providers in the UK who offer this course. He was also one of eight students selected to participate in a pilot Teaching School programme. With men accounting for less than 3% of the Early Years workforce and just over 14% of Primary school teachers are male, it is possible that his gender was an advantage in being accepted onto this programme, but it did not always feel like one. As the only man on his PGCE course Ben Ford "felt at times like somewhat of a novelty or peculiarity" (Appendix 3.2). Despite this, he reflects:

> It was an amazing experience that, overall, I enjoyed immensely. I learned so much and felt confident that I had the necessary skills to become an effective Early Years teacher.
>
> *(Appendix 3.2)*

His first post was in the same setting he had volunteered in while preparing for his PGCE. "Being a teacher felt like an honour" but, "it was an extremely difficult year" and he began to

question his decision to change career (Appendix 3.2). Ben Ford made the decision to move to a new school where he has now been employed for seven years. Reflecting on his current role, Ben Ford explains that although he consistently receives positive feedback from parents and the children "it does, however, increasingly feel like I am not doing enough" (Appendix 3.2). He elaborates:

> I remembered the many times teachers had told me how important that it was to have senior managers who understood and valued the Early Years. I found myself with a head teacher without knowledge, experience or value for the foundation stage of learning. What I considered the most important years of a child's education weren't appreciated or recognised as important and so I frequently heard "well you're Early Years…" This meant a number of things and was used as grounds to make many unreasonable demands. "Well you're Early Years… so you can paint the fences in the garden", or "well you're Early Years… so cleaning is part of your job description".

(Appendix 3.2)

5.2.2.3 Despair

Studies suggest the cruciality of professional development and opportunities for progression in maintaining job satisfaction and promoting growth (e.g. Enser and Enser, 2021, Archer, 2007, Baard, Deci and Ryan, 2004, Ryan and Deci, 2000). Although Ben Ford entered the profession with a five-year plan to move into management, this is not possible in his current post. He explains:

> There are absolutely no opportunities to move forward. No career development, no autonomy, no agency for change, no access to continuing professional development, often not even the technology or resources I require to successfully do my job.

(Appendix 3.2)

Given that evidence released under the Freedom of Information Act (including The Early Years Spending Review Scenarios (DfE, 2015) and notes to minister Sam Giymah written in 2018) revealed that the government has deliberately underfunded Nursery provision, Ben Ford's reflections are unsurprising, but he has also been affected by other policy changes:

> In recent years I have witnessed a slowly increasing formality demanded in Reception. It is a formality that many of the children are just not ready for when they first start school and yet it is a requirement despite the obvious opposition to the needs of the cohorts of children arriving at our school. There is simply no room for discussion or professional judgement.

(Appendix 3.2)

Despairing of and angered by pedagogically inappropriate government policy and unsupported by the Senior Leaders in his school who have no understanding of Early Years and a "tendency towards labelling children, and adults", Ben Ford concludes:

> My story will continue, but if I'm honest I cannot say right now for how much longer. I do question the sustainability of the role going forward and I certainly know that I'm looking for a new role in the next year or two. I know there is conflict between my current position and my ethos and values as an Early Years educator, and I know that this conflict must at some point come to an end.

(Appendix 3.2)

Having worked so hard to become a QTMEYS, Ben Ford's future as a member of the Early Years workforce at the time of writing is uncertain.

5.2.3 Coco[43]: A story of constant conflict and competing constructs of education

Coco "stumbled into Early Years by accident" (Appendix 3.3) twenty-five years ago when she began working in the pre-school setting her sons attended.

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[43] Coco chose to use a first name only

Coco noted in her account that she felt that those who worked in Early Years were seen as "second class citizen(s)" (Appendix 3.3) in the education system and her narrative was replete with the impact of constant conflicts around competing constructs of education. The status of those who work with the youngest children was confirmed when Coco took a post as a teaching assistant in the Foundation Stage within a Primary school. She was struck by the attitude of her colleagues in Key Stage One and Two towards Nursery and Reception, recalling:

> Generally, the understanding of the importance of EY was not acknowledged. I think they genuinely believed the children just appeared in Year 1 with all the groundwork done and the basic skills in place.
>
> *(Appendix 3.3)*

Although the Early Years team were often asked to cover in other year groups, staff in Key Stage One and Two were reluctant to reciprocate and openly made comments like "I'm not going in Reception, they're all snotty and cry" (Appendix 3.3). It appears that the lack of understanding and respect for the work of those in Early Years, meant that Coco's need for relatedness in the workplace (Ryan and Deci, 2000) was unmet.

Coco was also studying for a BA in Education. Rather than finding confirmatory cognition (Festinger, 2001) in her cohort, she found that they shared the attitude towards ECEC she had encountered in her school, she explains:

> I was frustrated by the lack of acknowledgement of the foundations that were being laid by the learning in EY. This is where the myths of "they're just playing" and "they don't do work" stem from.

5.2.3.2 Competing constructs of education

Having completed her undergraduate degree, Coco moved to a Maintained Nursery based in an Independent school and enrolled in the Graduate Teacher Programme. The funding formula for Early Years was being reviewed and Coco became involved in a panel responding to the proposed changes. She reflects:

> This was the point at which it became clear that, not only did other staff consider EY to be second class citizens, but the government also felt the same.

<div align="right">

(Appendix 3.3)

</div>

This lack of respect was exemplified by the iteration of Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) that Coco was forced to use.   Each assessment took between 45-60 minutes but "concentrating for this length of time was completely unrealistic for children of 4" (Appendix 3.3). Coco maintains that own teacher assessments were far more valuable but realises that teacher assessment through observation, an approach supported by early childhood theorists and contemporary research (e.g. Drummond, 1993, Nutbrown, 1999; Carr, 2001, Clark and Moss, 2001; Athey, 2007) relies on "the professional opinion of the Early Years Teacher, which clearly is not valued" (Appendix 3.3). Coco's distain for RBA is shared by participants in large scale studies focused on the most recent iteration of RBA (Bradbury, 2019; Roberts-Holmes et al, 2019), which demonstrates that lessons could have been learned from the past and the costly mistake of reintroducing such a strongly opposed pedagogically inappropriate strategy avoided.

Coco was also conflicted by the fact that the time she was required to spend on performative and administrative tasks not only reduced the contact time she had with the children in her setting, but also with her own children at home. Coco highlights the humanity of QTMEYS, reminding us that they are not just teachers but also often women and mothers juggling multiple and overlapping gendered responsibilities and commitments as described by Hochschild (2012). Coco explains the impact these competing roles had on her:

> I constantly felt as though I was failing in one area or another; working at home took time away from my own family and not working at home meant I was letting my class down.

(Appendix 3.3)

5.2.3.3 Counting the cost of constant conflict

Despite the conflict and frustration Coco felt about workload, and its impact on both her professional and personal life, she was determined to remain working as a QTMEYS and to continue her professional development. However:

> After 18 years working in EY and 12 as a qualified teacher, I was becoming increasingly frustrated by the lack of opportunities for professional development.   The courses that were available were provided by local authority at minimal cost and whilst these might have been useful for those new to the sector, there was minimal benefit to those who had been in the profession for a long time and there was certainly no encouragement to get involved in research and development projects.

(Appendix 3.3)

Opportunities to engage in high quality continuous professional development (CPD) have been found to be a key factor in supporting retention (Enser and Enser, 2021; Worth and van den Brande, 2020; McCrea, 2020,).   CPD which involves action research has been demonstrated to be particularly meaningful (Kennedy, 2014).   Despite this, when Coco enrolled in a Master's degree, which she planned to complete in her own time and at her own

cost, she found herself having to offer her Head-Teacher the "bizarre" (Appendix 3.3)

reassurance that it would NOT impact her teaching. Studying for her Masters renewed Coco's

confidence but, as Archer (2007) noted often happens when people have become

disillusioned, she became a vitriolic critic. Coco felt compelled to embrace the role of critic

even though it led her into conflict with her colleagues. She confesses:

> I became quite disruptive in staff meetings, questioning anything and
> everything, and not settling for the standard answers; I was desperate to
> make others think about what they were doing rather than just following
> the crowd or doing something because it was trendy. I felt that everything
> was a token representation of what should be done, and nothing was ever
> followed through to its conclusion.   Part of this was because schools are
> constantly trying to adapt to the latest guidance from government and part
> is because of parental expectations.   This was particularly apparent in
> Reception class, where it was always a balancing act of providing a play-
> based environment which the children needed to explore their own ideas
> and preparing them for Key Stage One where they are suddenly expected
> to sit and follow the instructions.
>
> *(Appendix 3.3)*

Coco began to feel like every day was "a constant battle between what is right for the

children and what is expected by the wider school community (Appendix 3.3). In the face of

"constant criticism and disrespect" she became increasingly disillusioned (Appendix 3.3).

She confides:

> I have reached the point in my life where I am fortunate enough to not have
> to work.   I felt I was completely exhausted by the constant battles, from
> having to justify my every decision and from not being given the
> professional courtesy that other teachers received.
>
> *(Appendix 3.3)*

While Coco found herself constantly having to defend her pedagogy and fight for what was

best for the children in her care, she does not think that all QTMEYS have the confidence to

do so. For Coco, the lack of recognition and respect QTMEYS receive is a feminist issue

which traps women in a self-perpetuating cycle. She explains:

> I think there is a difficulty across the EY workforce who are predominantly
> female, in that we do not recognise our own worth and so others are happy
> to think that what we do is not important.

(Appendix 3.3)

Coco's observation is consistent with that of Dyer (2018) and Osgood (2006) who asserted

that, if patriarchal attitudes to women and young children are to be challenged, then those

who work in ECEC must be prepared to be the ones to challenge them. However, without

confirmatory cognition, they may lack the confidence to realise their own agency (Archer,

2007; Butler, 2005), and may instead succumb to immanence (De Beauvoir, 2018) and

passively accept the status quo. Coco's story shows that it is possible to pursue professional

development as a QTMEYS, if you have the funds to do so. Maybe Coco's story should also

come with a cautionary note that well qualified women may be harder to control; perhaps

this is why successive policies seem determined to keep levels of qualification in the Early

Years workforce so low. Indeed, it appears from Coco's narrative that it could be argued that

successive policies are deliberately deskilling QTMEYS and eroding professional confidence in

order to repopulate the sector with teachers who comply with rather than challenge the

status quo.

At the time of writing, Coco is working as a link tutor, supporting PGCE students on school

placements. In this role, Coco feels that she is, in some small way, preparing the next

generation of QTMEYS for the battles that may lie ahead of them. She has no plans to return to a fulltime teaching post herself.

5.2.4 Etta[44]: A story of mentoring, motivation and resistance

Before enrolling on a four-year Bachelor of Education degree, Etta was a play worker. She found her job, working in culturally diverse settings, building relationships with communities and learning from her highly skilled and experienced colleagues extremely satisfying.

5.2.4.1 Early mentoring

Under the mentoring of her colleagues, Etta began to develop her understanding of play work. When funding cuts changed how the service was structured, Etta knew that she wanted to continue working with children and saw teaching as the best way to be able to do this. The four year ITE course that she enrolled in gave her ample opportunities to learn about professional practice and to develop the knowledge of educational theory she needed to be confident in her ability to support children's learning and development. Etta reflects:

> I loved every minute of this course and never missed a lecture or tutorial. I enjoyed the time to read, discuss and debate, being able to write thoughts and ideas down and formulate an argument in essays. The course enabled us to have four teaching practices and numerous visits to schools.

> *(Appendix 3.4)*

Unfortunately, the course that Etta pursued is no longer available and the government are promoting fast track ITE programmes which allow just 120 days in school in two block placements or SCITT initiatives which have the advantage of masking the extent of the retention crisis instead.

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[44] Etta chose to use a first name only

Etta entered the teaching profession in the late 1980s, before the introduction of the National Curriculum. Etta was based in Key Stage 2 in a school which was based in a culturally diverse community with high numbers of pupils with EAL. Although she was based in Key Stage Two, the school used an integrated day model, teaching all aspects of the curriculum through topics.   However, the introduction of the National Curriculum, then the Literacy and Numeracy Hours closely followed by statutory attainment testing (SATs) dramatically changed pedagogic practice within Etta's setting. Etta recalls:

> Throughout this period I had tried to stay true to my pedagogical beliefs, which included taking part in a national boycott of SATs but found it hard to do so.

(Appendix 3.4)

"To maintain motivation" (Appendix 3.4), Etta enrolled in two distant learning Master's modules and conducted research on children being involved in decision making in school. By this stage, she was working in Year One "which was holding on to some play-based learning" (Appendix 3.4) but, keen to conduct further research on EAL and early development, she made the decision to move to Early Years:

> This was a place, in the first six years of my teaching at the school I had only ever wandered through thinking "what the hell is going on here! " When a vacancy came up for a teacher in the unit, I asked to work there as I was now absolutely sure I wanted to be part of whatever the hell was going on there!

(Appendix 3.4)

The "ambient support" (Ryan and Deci, 2000:73) that mentors with relevant skills and experience can provide in the workplace is well documented (Aubrey, 2011; Papatheodorou and Moyles, 2009; Robins, 2006; Pegg, 2000). The Nursery Team were "highly skilled" and had "a great knowledge and understanding of early childhood development" (Appendix 3.4) and it is clear that Etta had once again found wise mentors, in the guise of the experienced Nursery team, to guide her in developing her expertise. She reflects:

> Here the theory I had learned both at university and in the MA modules I had studied, welded together with exciting Early Years practice and I was part of a team collectively shaping it. It was a steep learning curve for me and one that brought back a joy to my teaching day and I would say a dynamism to my practice.

(Appendix 3.4)

The Nursery Team was a community of practice that offered Etta the "ambient support" (Ryan and Deci, 2000:73) she needed to thrive. The team led training for the rest of the school each year, raising awareness of Early Years pedagogy and practice and challenging their colleagues in Key Stage One and Two to question the performative, 'teacher-centric' practices that were coming to dominate. She explains:

> The team knew that the practice in the nursery was at odds with that of the main school and often would comment on how the children they saw go into it every year, lost their agency and became passive learners no longer in control of even accessing their own resources.

(Appendix 3.4)

After seven years, Etta took a career break. She reflects:

> When I moved from the school I knew that I would never return to teaching in KS1/2. The high stakes testing was beginning to embed in what had become a subject based curriculum and would later come to drive it, indeed right down to Reception as we know now.

Instead, Etta took a post in a Maintained Nursery attached to a Sure Start Centre which also housed a Family Worker Team, Health Visitors, Midwives, voluntary and community groups as well as a community café. She explains:

> Proper integrated working on a local level was fantastic. We were able to liaise about children and families quickly to meet need, we were able to use expertise to signpost, we were able to support families often for the whole of their child's Early Years. We developed a common approach to building up relationships with parents and developed trust among the community.

(Appendix 3.4)

Etta witnessed firsthand the deliberate decimation of the Maintained Nursery sector and destruction of integrated services. "Year on year budget cuts and reorganizations mean the Health Visitors and Family Workers are no longer based on site, the café has disappeared, and the Nursery Team has been halved, with the Head-Teacher (the most expensive member of staff) one of the first to go. Reduction in staffing has necessitated a reduction in capacity. To remain open, the Nursery has been forced to join a Federation which includes two other Maintained Nurseries. She reflects:

> It is amazing that myself and my colleague who lead the team pedagogically are able to continue to remain motivated and ready to initiate and extend aspects of our work.

(Appendix 3.4)

It is the children and her colleagues that inspire her to remain in the profession. However, she in unequivocal about the conditions that impact her professional practice:

> What drags me down is the consistent attempts by government to undermine and eradicate child lead learning and play in our Early Years

sector. I think their failure to provide sustainable funding for state maintained nurseries is a conscious strategy to shut them down slowly. It would be problematic and difficult to close us down directly as our sector has a reputation for quality practice, we know what we are talking about and have lots of research to support us. Our sector is also the last stronghold of real child centered learning and we have campaigned hard to stay in existence. The new EYFS is a challenge to our pedagogy, again not outright and clothed in rhetoric but already there are a plethora of models for recording progress that can be measured and used in conjunction with other standardized tests across the Primary school. The narrowing of the curriculum and expectations that seem at odds with a child development model will be damaging and lead to further undermine play as the medium for young children's learning. I look at Reception classes and find the constant drive for phonics and numeracy, for handwriting and passive not active learning demoralizing. I stand in solidarity with those Reception teachers trying to remain true to their pedagogical beliefs.

(Appendix 3.4)

Etta uses the term "demoralising" (Appendix 3.4) to describe the impact of the systematic violence that has been inflicted on the Early Years sector and about being dragged down by constant attempts to "undermine and eradicate child led learning and play". Etta's voice resonates with many of those raised in the literature reviewed for this study about the impact of neoliberalism on professional practice (e.g. Elwick et al, 2017; Ball, 2015; Kelchtermans, 2009; Osgood, 2006; Hargreaves, 2003) and the existential threat it poses to the humanist ideology on which ECEC is based. Although she is demoralised by the systemic change she has witnessed, she "stand(s) in solidarity" with all those trying to "remain true to their pedagogic beliefs" (Appendix 3.4). Despite all the changes she has seen and the challenges she has faced, with the support of the mentors she has met throughout her career, and the communities of practice she has worked in, Etta remains committed to defending the shared humanist values of the Early Years workforce, concluding:

> We are a small part of the state education system and I believe our destiny
> is entwined with future resistance to the type of state education system the
> government is enforcing. I remain an optimist.

(Appendix 3.4)

Etta remains in practice after twenty-five years. Etta speaks of the collective "destiny" of QTMEYS to resist pedagogically inappropriate policies. Like Ben and Merida, whose story we will hear next, she holds onto the hope that things will change.

5.2.5 Merida[45]: A story of conviction, courage and consequences

Merida hated school. Although she was "academically driven" it was not until she was in senior school that she met a teacher who saw her potential and connected with her (Appendix 3.5).

5.2.5.1 Conviction

She developed a firm conviction that no other child should have to wait so long to meet a teacher who made them feel special, and decided to become the teacher she wished she had had throughout her Early Years. She recalls:

> I wanted to be a fantastic first impression for children of what school could
> be like for them. I wanted young children to love school, to love learning.

(Appendix 3.5)

Merida trained to teach in her native Canada where her ITE lasted four years. Although her training included a strong focus on learning theory, Merida felt that it was her placements

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[45] Like Coco and Etta, Merida has chosen to use a first name only for her pseudonym. When we met, Merida had not yet thought of a name. We discussed several possibilities, settling on Merida in homage to the character in the 2012 Disney film 'Brave'. Brave tells the story of a fearless girl who defies tradition and is determined to write her own story rather than complying with the future fate has determined for her.

where she learned the most. It was these placements that gave her "real life experience of what it was like being a teacher" (Appendix 3.5) and it was this that gave her professional confidence. After she graduated, Merida continued to take advantage of all the training opportunities she was given, sharing everything she learned with her team on her return. There is a strong sense of collective identity in Merida's reflections on her first few years of teaching. Merida reflects "we were a team and everyone loved what we were doing for the children" (Appendix 3.5). She appeared to have found a community of practice.

5.2.5.2 Courage

However, like England, Canada has a neoliberal political system. The impact of neoliberal policy making has been well documented (Scheuetze et al, 2018; Sim and Waniganayake, 2015; Ball, 2010; Schön, 1983), and it was not long before Merida started to notice its impact on her professional practice. She developed a firm conviction that what was happening was wrong:

> Budget cuts started happening, class sizes were growing, support for children with any additional need was disappearing faster than a bowl of popcorn on a Friday night. I saw how children were no longer people but numbers on a spreadsheet and dear God, they better make progress or you'd have some explaining to do! Old books weren't being replaced and if toys were broken, they went in the bin never to be replaced either. How can we teach children to love to read if we are teaching them to read with a book their parents probable learnt to read with? It just wasn't right. This wasn't supposed to be what school was for these children.

(Appendix 3.5)

Underfunding meant that resources were not being replaced and she was frustrated that the children's needs were not being met. After watching the system deteriorate for a few years, she had had enough. Merida moved to England to travel and to gain experience of

international education systems. Initially Merida did supply work but she soon secured a permanent post as a QTMEYS. Within a year, she had been promoted to head of Early Years.

Merida had a strong team and everything was going well until and Ofsted inspection was due. This was Merida's first experience of Ofsted and she was bewildered by her colleagues' reactions and by the power the inspectors seemed to wield. The impact of Ofsted on staff morale has been well documented (Wrigley, 2004; Patrick et al, 2003; Moyles, 2001; Fielding, 2001; Scanlan, 1999). Merida was appalled by how her colleagues were reacting and expresses her distain for the English inspectorate system:

> What the heck is Ofsted anyways? People that know nothing about your school and come in, grade you, make you feel horrible about yourself and then leave. Only to later publish a review of your school that is like life or death for some schools. I mean, call me crazy but I don't see how an inspector can judge a school after mere hours of building in the building! But hey, this is what I'm an Early Years Teacher and not an inspector.

(Appendix 3.5)

Despite making them feel "horrible" (Appendix 3.5), Ofsted graded Merida's team as outstanding, but she was ready for a new challenge and moved to a new school.

Merida saw her latest role in a newly built school that had only been open for a year as an exciting opportunity to build a team from the beginning. However, the reality left much to be desired:

> I arrived and there was nothing. It was a brand new building but that was it. The team was over worked and miserable. Our resources were plastic everything and a whole lot of nothing. The playground was not fit for

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purpose. Our SEND support was non-existent. Everything about the place just screamed nightmare. But I took the job. I accepted the challenge. I was going to turn this Early Years setting around.

<p align="right">*(Appendix 3.5)*</p>

It appeared that, lacking input from experienced Early Years practitioners, money had been spent by the senior leadership team (SLT) on inappropriate resources, and consequently the Early Years team were struggling to meet the children's needs.

5.2.5.3 Consequences

Merida set about training her team and sharing best practice. She recalls "we worked hard and we were brave" (Appendix 3.5). Two years later, this setting was also graded as outstanding by Ofsted, but Merida was exhausted. She was supporting her team, a newly qualified teacher and four other schools but her needs were not being recognised or met. She recalls:

> I was burning the candle at both ends. I was showing up for my team every day and encouraging them to be their best selves. Meanwhile I was falling apart. Working 7-7 most days just to make sure that my team had the support they needed and that everything would be ready the next day. I was an NQT Mentor and had no support in this role whatsoever. I was then mentoring 4 other schools in their Early Years and trying to revamp their curriculum in a way that worked for their individual needs. I was sharing best practice and giving all I could give to the schools I worked with. Meanwhile getting nothing in return.

<p align="right">*(Appendix 3.5)*</p>

Merida was shocked by how little CPD was provided for teachers. She points out that although schools have five INSET days a year and staff meetings every week, in seven years she had attended just three Early Years specific INSET days or staff meetings. Her narrative also details

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her increasing frustration about the attitude towards Early Years that she encountered from SLT and other teachers who did not appear to recognize or respect relational play-based pedagogy. She explains:

> It's no secret that Early Years practitioners are not respected by other teachers in the school. They think we "play all day". We don't know what real teaching is like. How hard it is. I got so tired of feeling the lack of support from my other SLT members and colleagues in school.

(Appendix 3.5)

Given the vital importance of appropriate, high quality CPD (Enser and Enser, 2021; Worth and van den Brande, 2020; McCrea, 2020; Hoyle, 2005) and the ambient support (Ryan and Deci, 2000) offered by communities of practice (Wenger et al, 2002; Wenger, 1988; Lave and Wenger, 1991), it is unsurprising that Merida's feelings towards her profession changed dramatically:

> Three years ago I left the state school system because I wanted to leave teaching altogether. I hated it. I hated myself. I was tired. Sick. Angry at the Government and the system for the way that Early Years teachers have been allowed to be treated all these years.

(Appendix 3.5)

Merida's words powerfully demonstrate the connection between the three strands of my theoretical framework. The systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) that Merida was working within did not support her needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2000), which caused dissonance (Festinger, 2001). At this stage, Merida not only hated the system, but also hated herself for being part of it. To reduce the internal dissonance she was experiencing, Merida, like many of the participants in Archer's (2007) study, moved to the Independent sector in search of greater autonomy.

The Head teacher of Merida's current school has a Master's in Early Years. Merida feels that consequently there does appear to be a more inclusive agenda for staff training and development. She is still exhausted but holds on to the "little voice" (Appendix 3.5) telling her that things will get better; she is just not sure that they will do so in her career lifetime. Merida's use of the term "little voice" in her written narrative (Appendix 3.5) suggests that her hope of a better funded system that respects young children and values those who work with them is fading.

5.2.6 Summary: Individual narratives, shared feelings

It is clear that although each of the participants took different routes towards becoming a QTMEYS, and have different professional biographies, there is a commonality within and between their professional experiences. It appears that, although Early Years provision in Primary Schools is led by those with QTS, Primary ITE routes do not always contain sufficient focus on Early Years (Nancy and Coco's narratives).

It also appears that the developmental needs of QTMEYS are often neglected after graduation too (Ben, Coco, and Merida's narratives), as available CPD focuses on the needs of the majority group within the Primary School- Key Stage 2. The lack of focus in ITE on all three Key Stages that co-exist in Primary Schools, may also contribute towards a feeling that QTMEYS are not valued and respected by their colleagues (Nancy, Ben, Coco, Etta and Merida's narratives), which can lead to conflict and feelings of isolation.

Finally, the lack of understanding about Early Years extends beyond schools to policy level (Ben, Coco, and Merida's stories). Johnson (1995) explained that the level of respect afforded to a particular group is determined by how important that group are to the government, and, as seen in Chapter 2, the needs and interests of QTMEYS have rarely been a priority at policy level. It appears that all five participants have experienced a sense of isolation, that their needs for CPD and basic resources are often neglected, and that they are constantly engaged in conflicts with colleagues and SLT who do not appear to understand or value their work. It also seems that the paradoxical demands of professional practice create a sense of dissonance which compounds the sense of isolation, neglect and conflict that characterize the professional lives of the participants in this study.

The commonality between the narratives is significant because the themes of isolation, neglect and conflict that are emerging may not adequately have been captured in previous studies focused on teacher retention (e.g. DfE, 2019a; Foster, 2018; DfE, 2018b; NFER, 2018; Sibieta, 2018; Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2016). Doubtlessly, the emergence through reflexive analysis of the written narratives of themes which indicate such high levels of dissatisfaction will be uncomfortable for policy makers as they indicate the need for systemic change rather than simple solutions (Edwards and Protts, 2008). However, the emergence of these new themes demonstrates the value of narrative methodologies when exploring lived experiences (Plumber, 2004). The experience of isolation, neglect and conflict, impact the level of competence, autonomy and relatedness that the participants experienced and the ambient support that they received in their settings. In the next chapter, the emotional impact

neglect, isolation and conflict have on QTMEYS will be explored through the I-Poetry (Gilligan, 1982) extracted from the written narratives in the second 'listening'.

5.3 Listening Two: Mapping the psychological landscape

The second 'listening' deepens our understanding of how QTMEYS conceptualise their practice and the emotional, affective dimensions of the participants' lived experiences as QTMEYS. The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982), is both a methodology and a form of analysis specifically designed to draw out "previously un-noticed and underappreciated voices" (Petrovic et al, 2015); in doing so, their humanity and subjectivity is emphasized. As discussed in Chapter 4.5, this approach must be interpreted by the researcher in the light of their particular research question (Gilligan et al, 2006). While the same could be said for any approach, I found the process of how to structure and present the I-poems I extracted from my participants narratives particularly challenging. I begin this chapter by revising how I navigated this challenge.

5.3.1 Approaches to I-Poetry

The utility of experimenting with different versions of I-Poetry cannot be understated. It was through this experimentation that I conducted my initial analysis and identified what further information was necessary to develop a narrative imagination about the professional lives of the participants, the factors that shape their experiences and how this information could be used to inform initial teacher education and support the continued professional development of QTMEYS. Through my research I discovered two broad approaches to I-Poetry. These could

be summarized as the subject verb approach (advocated by Gilligan and Eddy, 2021) and the extended sentence approach (advocated by Dyer, 2018). The I-Poems I extracted from the written narratives using Gilligan and Eddy's (2021) stripped down subject/ verb approach highlight agency and emotion (see Appendices 5). These poems were useful to map the emotional landscape of each participant. However, Dyer's (2018) extended sentence approach contextualized the emotions of the participants and I determined that this would be a more effective entry point for our interviews (see Appendix 6 for extended I-poems and individual interview schedules). In the following section, I use both iterations of I-Poetry to illuminate the participants' psychological experience of being a QTMEYS.

5.3.2 Identifying emotions

The subject-verb I-poems (Gilligan, 1982) highlighted the emotional journey of each participant within their written narrative. Strong emotions were expressed which broadly reflected those identified by Moyles (2001) as commonly experienced by Early Years practitioners: love, fear and pain. Across all five narratives, the professional love that characterizes the relational pedagogy of the EYFS (Osgood, 2008; Moyles, 2001) was evident as was a passionate desire to make a difference in the lives of young children. Love and the desire to make a difference were what motivated the participants to become QTMEYS. However, when describing their experience of professional practice, fear, pain and even anger were more prevalent than love or passion. Both Gilligan and Eddy's (2021) and Dyer's (2018) approaches have been used in mapping the emotional journey of the participants within their written narratives as discussed below.

5.3.3 Nancy Forester: from positive to powerless

At the outset of her written narrative, Nancy Forester describes her enthusiasm for Early Years and excitement about becoming a QTMEYS. However, when she shared this enthusiasm with others, first at university and then within her setting, she failed to find confirmatory cognition (Festinger, 2001). Nancy Forester describes feeling "isolated" (Appendix 3.1) in her setting due to the lack of understanding and respect shown by her colleagues towards relational play-based pedagogy.

Although Nancy Forester could demonstrate that her practice had a positive impact on the children, she was constantly questioned and, post pandemic, was told she would be moved into Key Stage One. Evidence suggests that, within the current retention crisis, the recent pandemic may have hit QTMEYS hardest (Education Policy Institute, 2021). Grenier (2021) cautions that the levels of needs that children are now presenting within Early Years is unprecedented and unless support is put in place, there will be an exodus of teachers from maintained early years settings, teachers like Nancy Forester. Nancy Forester's sense of fear and powerlessness about the move are highlighted in the following extract which describes the point just before she decided to resign:

> I was told
>
> I argued
>
> I knew
>
> I couldn't
>
> I handed in my notice.

(Appendix 5.1)

The impact of working in an environment which does not reflect one's beliefs and values is discussed by Archer (2007) and Baard et al (2004). Nancy Forester tells us that, at this point, she felt her "mental health sliding" (Appendix 3.1). Emotion is a source of insight which often serve to highlight disparity in social reality (Cook, 1988). In the extract from Nancy Forester's Poem above, it is evident that the emotional distress that having her autonomy, agency and professional identity constantly undermined caused left her feeling defeated and powerless. It is possible that, had she been better supported, she would have remained in practice, a possibility which was explored later in our co-analysis interview.

5.3.4 Ben Ford: to be continued…?

Ben Ford repeatedly uses the word "lucky" (Appendix 3.2) when describing how he became a QTMEYS. It is clear though that, while he was supported by his partner, he showed great determination and commitment in pursuing his dream. In professional practice, Ben Ford is "disgusted" by the "non-progressive, discriminatory, judgemental and dysfunctional" attitudes he encountered (Appendix 3.2). As in Nancy Forester's narrative, there is a strong sense of the pain Ben Ford feels as he fights to protect the needs and interests of his charges. This is expressed in the following section comes just before the end of his written narrative:

My story will continue, but if I'm honest

I cannot say right now for how much longer.

I do question the sustainability of the role

I certainly know

I'm looking for a new role in the next year or two.

> I know there is conflict between my current position and
>
> My ethos and values as an Early Years educator,
>
> I know that this conflict must at some point come to an end.

(Appendix 6.2)

Ben Ford's use of the term 'conflict' is striking and it is evident that the conflict he refers to shapes his experience of practice, posing a threat to him continuing to be employed as a QTMEYS. From this 'listening' it seemed possible that, if Ben's commitment to child centered relational pedagogy was shared by his colleagues, he might be persuaded to remain in professional practice. Ben Ford and I explored this possibility more fully in our co-analysis interview, along with how the conflict between his professional values and his role as a QTMEYS could be resolved.

5.3.5 Coco: disillusioned and defeated

Coco was motivated to become a QTMEYS by her fascination (Appendix 9) with child development. In professional practice, she feels like a "second class citizen" (Appendix 9) whose expertise is not recognized or respected. Like Ben, Coco, who has stepped away from fulltime employment and now works as a supply teacher and link tutor, also uses a battle metaphor when describing her growing disillusionment and exhaustion towards the end of her career:

Coco	I became increasingly disillusioned
	I became quite disruptive
	I was desperate to make others think
	I felt that everything was a token … a constant battle
	I was completely exhausted

(Appendix 6.3)

Coco's emotional journey reflects that of the participants in Archer's (2007) study; she becomes a vitriolic critic of the education system and practice within her own setting, but the constant battle takes its toll, and she is ultimately forced to leave the profession she took such a circuitous route to join. It is heartening that Coco continues to advocate for the EYFS through her work as a link tutor, supporting trainee teachers facing the harsh realities of professional practice in ECEC. Among other things, Coco and I explored alternative possibilities for ITE in our co-analysis interview.

5.3.6 Merida: tired, sick and angry

Merida dreamed of being "a real-life Miss Honey"[46] (Appendix 3.5). She wants to ensure that every child has the best possible start to their educational experience. As her career progresses, her efforts to ensure this become increasingly desperate. She is fearless in her commitment to educating and empowering others but her own needs are constantly

---

[46] Miss Honey is a fictional character created by children's author, Roald Dhal in his book called 'Matilda'. Miss Honey had a challenging childhood but has dedicated her life to the children in her care. She finds ways to ensure every child feels loved despite the challenges they face, not least in the form of a terrifying head teacher called 'Miss Trunchbull'.

neglected. Merida makes a painful disclosure when explaining why she moved to the Independent sector:

Merida	I was burning the candle at both ends. I was showing up for my team every day and encouraging them to be their best selves. Meanwhile I was falling apart. I left the state school system because I wanted to leave teaching altogether. I hated it. I hated myself. I was tired. Sick. Angry at the Government and the system for the way that Early Years teachers have been allowed to be treated all these years. I decided to give teaching one more go and moved to an Independent school in the hopes that it would be different.

(Appendix 6.5)

The pain in Merida's I-Poem is visceral. She was "tired", "sick", "and angry", she hated the state school system and hated herself for being part of it. It is little wonder that emotion has been "outlawed" (Jagger, 1989:167) in discourse around retention and professional development when the emotions that are expressed reveal uncomfortable truths about how unhappy people truly are. The emotions expressed in the narratives shared by the participants in this study present a challenge to policy makers and senior leaders: persist in outlawing emotion in discussion around retention and risk continued policy failure, or resist the urge to suppress emotions, listen to what QTMEYS have to say and be prepared to act on it. Merida and I explored how leaders at policy level and in schools could better meet in needs of QTMEYS in our co-analysis interview.

5.3.7 Etta: support and solidarity

Maintained Nurseries have been systematically underfunded by successive neoliberal governments with many of the remaining settings facing permanent closure of academisation (Solvason, et al 2020). As a teacher in a Maintained Nursery, Etta has arguably experienced the fullest impact of neoliberal policy decisions, but, unlike the other participants, her story reveals that she has also been the best supported throughout her career, benefiting from mentors and being part of strong teams with a shared identity. Etta describes herself as standing in "solidarity" (Appendix 3.4) with Reception teachers, who she perceives to be the most vulnerable QTMEYS, forced to defend their practice on a daily basis. However, Etta is undefeated, as the following extract explains:

I now feel confident and proud to say

I am an experienced Early Years teacher.

I remain an optimist.

(Appendix 6.4)

Etta's use of the term "resistance" (Appendix 3.4) indicates a commitment to collective action and to supporting others to "stay true to their pedagogic beliefs" (Appendix 3.4). It is possible that, if the supportive networks that Etta has enjoyed could be replicated, the exodus of QTMEYS predicted by Grenier (2021) could be reversed. Etta and I discussed this possibility further in our co-analysis interview.

5.3.8 Summary: representation and characterization

This chapter maps the emotional journeys of the participants and how they have represented themselves in their written narratives. The challenge of representing others in feminist research is well documented (Skeggs, 1995; Letherby, 2002). These challenges include the burden of representing the participants accurately while also bringing in one's own voice as a researcher. I experimented with ways of characterizing how the participants represented themselves (see Appendix 4), but was uncomfortable with any of the models I found because they seemed to reduce the way the participants characterized themselves to mere caricatures. What struck me though was that the participants had such a strong sense of commitment to relational, play-based pedagogy, which they often referred to as "best practice" (a term used in all five narratives). This shared vision of 'best practice' is perhaps a credit to the Statutory Framework (DfE, 2021) which, in its current and previous iterations, clearly outlines what best practice in the EYFS should look like. It was also striking that all five participants experience significant cognitive dissonance in their roles and are extremely dissatisfied with elements of professional practice.

Having identified that there is, in fact, cognitive dissonance in the narrated lived experiences of QTMEYS and that this is impacting the wellbeing and retention of QTMEYS (Archer, 2007; Baard et al, 2004; Ryan and Deci, 2000), Festinger's (2001) model for reducing dissonance suggests that the next step is to identify what the points of dissonance are. While there have been clear indicators in the scholarship reviewed, the greatest insights come from exploration of the lived experiences of QTMEYS.

5.4 Listening Three: Identifying points of dissonance

This chapter identifies the factors which shape the participants' experience of professional practice. Petrovic et al (2015) suggested extracting first person, second person, first person plural and third person pronouns from the narratives to identify the relational factors which shape participants' lived experiences. Developing an appreciation of the relational factors which shape the participants' experience of professional practice is of particular importance as Ryan and Deci (2000) suggested that relationships in the workplace can significantly impact levels of satisfaction and commitment.

Again, I followed Gilligan (1982) and experimented with how best to adapt the guide to further my understanding of my specific research focus. Now familiar with the participants' narratives, I collated extracts which identified positive and negative relational factors (Appendix 7). I present these graphically here to support the reader by summarizing the result of this stage of analysis. These results became themes that I used alongside those identified by Ryan and Deci (2000) in my initial analysis of the results of the co-analytical interviews conducted with each participant.

5.4.1 Supportive factors in the professional experiences of QTMEYS

The importance of ambient support (Ryan and Deci, 2000) in the workplace was discussed in Chapter 3. Four key factors were highlighted in listening three (Gilligan, 1982) as sources of ambient support in the lived experiences of QTMEYS: colleagues, children and their families, Early Years experts and role models and external communities of practice (see Figure 5.1).
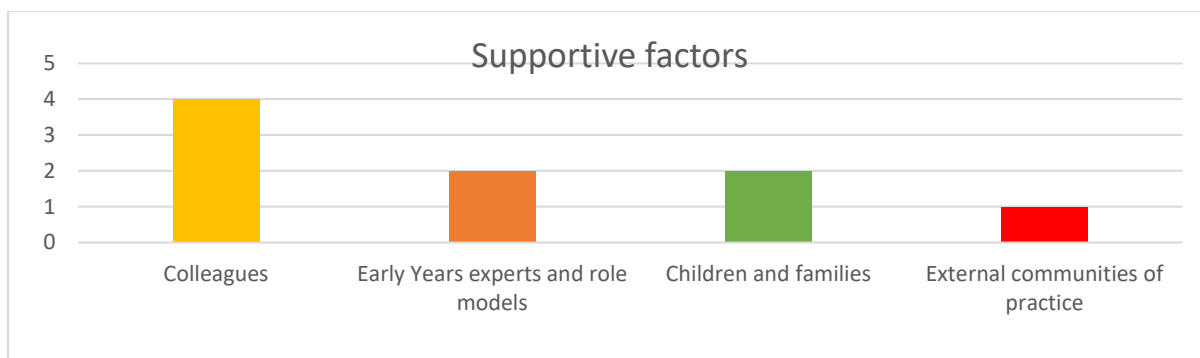
Figure 5. 0.1: Supportive factors which shape experiences of professional practice as a QTMEYS

With the exception of Coco (see Appendix 7), the participants highlighted the value of working alongside experienced colleagues as part of a team. This finding reflects prior scholarship (Wiles, 2018; Timperley, 2011; Ryan and Deci, 2000). Similarly, (Moyles, 2001) emphasizes that it is the relationship with children and their families that sustains Early Years practitioners as they navigate the paradoxes of professional practice.

It is noteworthy that Nancy Forester and Merida (see Appendix 7) both highlighted the importance of external experts and role models. With no one to turn to for support within her setting or even during her ITE, Nancy relied on self-funded and self-directed study to develop her Early Years expertise while Merida is shocked by the lack of CPD offered to QTMEYS. Nancy Forester also talks about seeking an external community of practice in the form of the local Early Years group, describing it as "at once supportive and intimidating" (Appendix 3.1). The reliance on external support suggests a lack of support within the participants' immediate contexts which bears further exploration and which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

5.4.2 Negative factors in the professional experiences of QTMEYS

A significant body of work has highlighted the impact of neoliberal policy on teachers' experience of professional practice (e.g. Sachs, 2016, Osgood, 2008, 2006, Moyles, 2001). The negative impact of governmental policy on QTMEYS was confirmed by all five participants (see Figure 5.2)
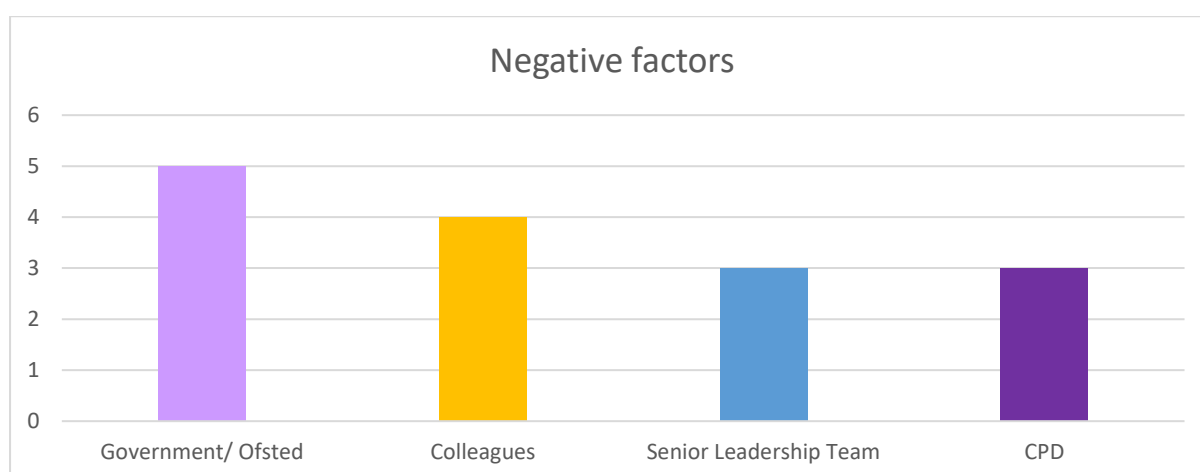
Figure 5.0.2: Negative factors which shape the experiences of QTMEYS

It is salient that colleagues are identified as both a positive and negative factor in the professional experiences of QTMEYS as the significance of communities of practice is well documented (Wenger et al 2002; Wenger, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Nutbrown (2012) noted that Primary ITE routes do not contain sufficient focus on Early Years to adequately prepare students for practice as QTMEYS, but the findings of this study suggest that this may also impact the relationship between QTMEYS and their colleagues. The lack of understanding of ECEC could also account for the negative impact of Senior Leaders and lack of availability of appropriate CPD. Notably, three different issues were raised in relation to CPD: opportunity (Ben), expectations (Coco) and relevance (Merida). Each of these issues will be addressed in the shared narratives presented in Chapter 6.

5.4.3 Summary of relational factors in the lived experiences of QTMEYS

Listening 3 highlighted that colleagues, including senior leaders, can be both the greatest source of support and also one of the most negative influences in the lived experiences of QTMEYS. It is evident that the participants' relationship with the government and their 'independent' inspectorate was overwhelmingly negative. However, in order to understand *how* these relational factors influenced the lived experiences of the participants, I proceeded to the next stage of analysis and data collection.

5.5 Conclusion

Although analysis of the written narratives provided insights into the lived experiences of QTMEYS and the factors which shape these experience, it also raised questions which required further investigation. The questions raised through this preliminary analysis were explored in the next phase of the data collection process: the individual co-analysis interviews.

From the preliminary analysis conducted using The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982), personalised interview schedules were developed (see Appendix 6 for the individual interview schedules used to guide co-analysis interviews). These interviews not only gave the participants the opportunity to provide further details of what had happened, but also the chance to consider alternative interpretations of events. Through our reflective conversations, alternative possibilities were explored, developing insights into how

dissonance could be reduced in the future. The insights developed in these co-analytical conversations contained implications for ITE and the continued professional development of QTMEYS.

The corpus of data collected was analyzed thematically (see Appendix 8 for an example of thematic analysis of an individual transcript). The first set of themes were those identified by Ryan and Deci (2000): competence, autonomy and relatedness. The second set of themes explored were the systematic and relational factors which shaped the participants lived experiences that had been identified through the use of The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982). When combined, three key themes stood out: neglect, isolation and conflict (see Appendices 9-11).

Chapter 6 explores these themes, combining the co-analysis of the individual written narratives conducted through individual interviews, thematic analysis of written narratives and interview transcripts, and the literature explored in previous chapters to create three shared or collective narratives about the lived experiences of QTMEYS.

Chapter 6: Findings: Analysis of the corpus of data

6.1 Introduction: Collating the corpus of evidence

The aims of this study are to explore the lived experiences of QTMEYS, discover the factors which shape these experiences, and identify how this information can be used to inform ITE and continued professional development. Chapter 5 explored the lived experiences of QTMEYS and the factors which shape that experience using The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982). The second stage of analysis involved reframing and returning the narratives to the participants in the form of I-Poetry (Gilligan, 1982) and using clean questions (Wilson, 2017) to explore the implications for ITE and the continued professional development of QTMEYS.

Returning to the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3, through the individualised interviews each participant was invited to reflect on the extent to which their needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2000) had been met in their ITE and were met in their professional lives. I was also able to pinpoint *how* the factors identified in Chapter 5 shaped their professional experience (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and identify actions that were, or which could have been taken to reduce the dissonance they have experienced (Festinger, 2001). This inductive process, driven by the data, produced rich sources of insight into the subjective realities of professional practice as a QTMEYS and tacit knowledge about how this experience could be improved.

The third stage of analysis involved collating the corpus of data and exploring the recurrent themes across the accounts of all five participants: neglect, isolation and conflict. Latent

themes of precarity and fear were also present. These themes will be unpacked and examined in this chapter. In doing so I address the third aim of this inquiry: identifying what the implications of the participants' experiences are for ITE and the continuous professional development of QTMEYS.

6.2 Narratives of Neglect

The first theme that emerged from analysing the written narratives using The Listening Guide and from reviewing the co-analytical interviews conducted with each participant was neglect (see Appendix 9 for collated comments). It became evident that the opportunities for QTMEYS to develop competence (Ryan and Deci, 2000) and confidence were neglected 'right from the start' in ITE and continued to be neglected in practice through a lack of mentoring and access to meaningful, appropriate CPD. It was also evident that this experience had been shaped by multiple systems including the historical patriarchal attitude towards ECEC (chrono-system), neoliberal policy pertaining to education, care and initial teacher training (macro-system) and how these policies have been interpreted within the micro-systems of ITE institutions and the various settings in which the participants have worked. In this section, I unpack the ways in which the needs of QTMEYS have been neglected and the psychological impact this has on them.

6.2.1 Funding

The decimation of Maintained Nurseries has been a deliberate neoliberal strategy to force privatization (DfE, 2015, and notes to minister Sam Giymah written in 2018). However, Etta

does not think that the motivations for eradicating maintained nurseries are purely financial. She explains:

> *… I don't think it's just that we're expensive, it is also that we are a challenge pedagogically you know.*

<p align="right">*Co-analysis Interview with Etta*</p>

Etta is referring here to changes in policy such as the introduction of systematic synthetic phonics and the 'schoolification' of ECEC. If neoliberal policy remains unchecked, a line could irrevocably be drawn between care, which will only be available in the private sector, and education which will only be available in schools. Already, the result of this ideological strategy has been a reduction in levels of qualification within the sector as nurseries are forced to make cuts to remain financially viable (Paull and Popov, 2019; Hutchinson, Bonetti, Crenna-Jennings and Akhal, 2019; Faulkner and Coates, 2013). It is not just levels of qualification that have been impacted though. Etta describes how her setting is barely able to replenish basic consumables like paper and paint or buy in cover when members of the team are off sick. Etta explains the existential impact this strategic underfunding has had on her:

> *in a day sometimes I feel that I can move from being completely at one and comfortable and happy and engaged in what I'm doing and it can very quickly turn to being very stressed and annoyed and upset.*

<p align="right">*Co-analysis Interview with Etta*</p>

Etta's account highlights the physical and emotional exhaustion resulting from the precarious nature of her role. She explains:

> *So people are really, really struggling you know. But you know … yeah, I kind of think my personal feeling is I will probably end up being made redundant unless we win something soon, and our setting will disappear basically.*

The sense that QTMEYS are on the 'losing side' in what has become a battle between policy makers and the ECEC workforce, demonstrates the impact that patriarchal policy or top down attempts to redirect pedagogy is having. Etta sees this as a deliberate attempt to destroy professional confidence:

> *It kind of makes me reflect back to how I used to look at the nursery team in the school and think why are they so confident and happy. And it was because of their self-confidence about what they were doing, why they were doing it, their role you know. And what we do is … I think they need to get rid of us, to swipe if off basically.*

<p align="right">*Co-analysis Interview with Etta*</p>

However, it is not just Maintained Nurseries that have suffered. Lack of funding and limited resources also shape the lived experiences of Reception teachers as Ben Ford points out:

> *The school can't provide you with the equipment you need, but you're expected to do this in your own time, you're expected to go out and buy the equipment. Yeah I am sitting here with a laminator next to me which is … how many laminators I've bought and broken because (laughs) … it's a fixture on my dining room table because there's just no time in school time to do what you need to do. And you know I've got a bag of stuff up there ready to go to take back with clipboards and stickers and pens, you know, to be able to do what I need to do – I need certain things. And the easiest way of getting them sometimes is to just buy them yourself, because then I can do what I need to do.*

<p align="right">*Co-analysis Interview with Ben*</p>

Ben Ford's account illustrates the tension between his personal agency and the structural factors that impact his professional practice. There is a strong sense of how the lack of resources makes Ben Ford feel that he is not valued or respected. The same sense that finance is used to constrain autonomy is evident in Merida's account. Reflecting on her experience in a newly opened school Merida suggests:

I think when that school opened the executive head teacher and the governors had a lot of say over what was going in the building. And none of the teachers – at the time it was just Early Years because then it grew each year, but at the time none of the Early Years staff were included in that decision at all, so you know it was filled with tables and chairs … because people who didn't have the Early Years experience (inaudible 29:12). And then by the time it was all furnished our budget was blown and we couldn't get anything else, so we just had to work with what we had. So you know it did have the potential to be an amazing setting, but everything about it was all wrong, and I think it's just because there wasn't the right people designing it.

Co-analysis Interview with Merida

From Merida's experience it seems that, because school leaders fail to consult QTMEYS on what resources are desirable, money may be spent on resources that do not meet the needs of the children. The lack of consultation suggests that the expertise of QTMEYS is not valued by school leaders. What Merida is describing could be seen as an ignorance amongst Senior Leaders in schools around how the needs of young children differ from those in other phases of education. However, failure to consult QTMEYS about the type of provision which would be appropriate betrays the same dismissive attitude towards the expertise of Early Years professionals that is present at policy level. This suggestion is echoed by Nancy Forester who also talks about the lack of access to appropriate basic resources, recalling:

There are some areas that were alright, that were well resourced when you looked at it, for me, so you know, there was a lot of formal maths resources, but I didn't necessarily always want to work with those resources. And so I wanted to make sure there was an environment which was…You know full of other more open ended objects which could be used in multiple different ways and those transformative resources. You can use it, you know yeah yeah yeah exactly yeah I'm just that goes through even things like role play and everything that you just there wasn't so they were kind of firemen outfits and princess outfits.

Co-analysis Interview with Nancy Forester

It is widely accepted that transformative play resources support the characteristics of effective learning by promoting creativity and critical thinking, often at a lower cost than fixed play resources so it is doubly frustrating that what limited funds there are, are misspent.

Returning to the theoretical framework offered in Chapter 3, it appears that the lack of funding and consultation about how funds are spent impact the extent to which QTMEYS needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2000) are met at policy level and within their own settings. Although Etta, Ben Ford, Nancy Forester and Merida see their roles as creative and dynamic, their reflections suggest that their autonomy is limited because their needs for basic resources are neglected. The lack of consultation about what resources would best meet the needs of young children also reveals a lack of respect for the competence of QTMEYS and this, in turn, impacts the extent to which QTMEYS experience a sense of relatedness with their colleagues, particularly those in Senior Leadership positions. However, it is not just physical resources that are lacking in schools, human resources have also been impacted by funding cuts as the developmental needs of QTMEYS appear to be neglected.

6.2.2 Support and mentoring

These issues regarding lack of investment in Early Years extended into the issues of professional development. Coco and Nancy both discussed the impact of having staff with no experience of Early Years placed with them and the reluctance of staff from other year groups to cover where additional support was required, but, as Nancy Forester reflects, "development does not seem like a priority" (co-analysis interview with Nancy). Nancy

Forester describes how this impacted her when struggling to meet the needs of a particularly challenging cohort alone:

> *I would have probably felt better about that if I felt that my understanding of the needs was better and because it would have felt like I was talking from a place of experience and knowledge, whereas I was, you know… I felt very naive about how best to support the children and how to juggle it all.*

<div align="right">

Co-analysis Interview with Nancy Forester

</div>

Reflecting on her University experience, Nancy Forester, who completed a part time Primary PGCE, recalls:

> *Perhaps that university did sort of discussions around ADHD things like that, with a more focused on once you've already identified a particular neuro thing, I think, so I mean there was some…I'm trying to dredge up in my memory, now that, and you know, there was some sort of discussion around best practice around…you know visual timetables and all the tools that we can use in the classroom to make things more accessible. And there was certainly a great you know kind of push on inclusion and inclusive practice, and that was. But again, that early is environment is so different isn't it.*

<div align="right">

Co-analysis Interview with Nancy Forester

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There is a clear implication here for ITE. Because Nancy Forester's needs were neglected in ITE, she doubted her competence to deal with the complex needs of her class. Nancy Forester also felt unsupported by the colleagues on whose expertise she was relying. Nancy Forester explains that her SENCO had no Early Years experience and that support within the school was targeted towards children in higher year groups who already had ECHP's in place. She recalls a particular incident where she sent the parent of a child, whose behaviour represented a significant cause for concern as she was violent, aggressive and kept running out of the classroom, to ask the SENCO for advice:

> *I signed posted her to the SENCO who was in school, but then the SENCO came and said, why did you send that woman to me, and you know so didn't necessarily always feel like I was always as well supported as, maybe I could have been.*

As a novice teacher, Nancy Forester was reliant on others to support her in developing her confidence and competence. While it is not possible to ascertain what other pressures her SENCO was under, it was not unreasonable for Nancy Forester to expect support; however, the SENCO's lack of experience meant this was not forthcoming and this negatively impacted Nancy's confidence and meant that her needs were not met.   This story highlights a key issue the liminal status of QTMEYS, particularly those working in Primary schools, presents, that is the lack of focus on early childhood development in Primary ITE means that there is a lack of support for QTMEYS once they begin professional practice and the availability of mentors with Early Years experience in Primary schools is limited.

Issues of professional confidence and competence ran throughout the participants' accounts. Successive studies have demonstrated that it takes time to develop professional confidence and competence, and that mentoring, particularly in the first two years after graduation, is essential (Worth, 2020; Perryman and Calvert, 2020; DfE, 2019; Papatheodorou and Moyles, 2009). Mentors can help ECTs to reflect on their practice (Mezirow, 2003; Schön, 1983), support them in translating policy into practice (Papatheodorou and Moyles, 2009; Callan and Copp, 2006) and guide them in knowing how to act in challenging situations (Zachary, 2000). However, in order to be able to do this, the importance of mentors having recent, relevant experience has been identified (e.g. Aubrey, 2011; Papatheodorou and Moyles, 2009; Robins, 2006). Etta describes herself as standing in solidarity with Reception teachers. She explains:

> I think it is highly likely you can come into a reception class and there won't be anyone who has a memory of practice – that's what I feel about my setting is that

in my setting you can see how we work, it's a memory of change and development and the implementation of new sort of ideas, you know it's all contributing to how we work now.   What you will have in reception – the memory – is highly likely to be that of what the government has implemented.

Co-analysis Interview with Etta

Professional cultures of memory is a key resource in Etta's account. Here memory serves to support professional confidence and guide early career teachers as they navigate their liminal status within the wider education system. The benefits of professional memory and experience is also implicit in Merida's account where she recalls that it was on placement rather than in university that she learned the most as she was able to draw on the tacit knowledge of those she worked alongside to develop her confidence. Without lived experience of professional practice in Early Years, it is little wonder that Nancy Forester's mentor was insufficiently equipped to offer her the ambient support (Festinger, 2001; Ryan and Deci, 2000) she required.   As illustrated in the following vignette[47], the lack of shared experience meant that Nancy Forester's mentor was unaware of the challenges she faced and how to guide or support her:

The person who was my mentor was like a really lovely person, but he was, his experience was predominantly key stage two and he was also deputy head of the school. And he was our phase leader for infant. And he was teaching full time will pretty much four days a week in year two. And that was quite new for him and he really liked all my ideas. And he could see the benefit in terms of you know, when you came into the… He could see that the children were more happy and engaged and that when he came in sort of a group session or something that you know my teaching was good and everything and, but when I had a question or a suggestion or, and I mean he was actually one thing that he was really good with his sort of… his support for dealing with the parents, because that was yeah I think probably quite consistent across I mean obviously there's Early Years things. Things that happened just in Early Years but that was really good so he helped me with that a lot and, but I think it was almost like he was just so busy, and he could see that I was doing a good job, and he kept saying no you're fine you don't you don't need any more you're doing fine. And, which was lovely to hear but…It didn't necessarily

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[47] I use the term 'vignette' here to describe a specific incident within Nancy's story. It is presented here without my affirmatory or empathetic interjections to support narrative flow.

make me feel that, and so, when I say, like, for example, I had a group of, you know, it's probably a bit of a stereotype that a group of quite physical boys when, and you know different strategies that I tried to engage them… And he didn't have anything else to offer, for example, in essence, so the little, little things that you know kind of make a big difference to environment yeah.

Vignette compiled from co-analysis Interview with Nancy Forester

It is not uncommon in Primary schools, particularly one form entry schools, for mentors to have multiple roles and very little time to dedicate to any of them. While in some ways Nancy Forester's mentor's lack of experience and time to dedicate to her development meant Nancy was given the autonomy to make considerable changes to provision within her setting, it also suggests an indifference to the quality of provision and neglectful approach to Nancy Forester's developmental needs. Reflecting on her experience, Nancy suggests 'that specialist mentor is key' (co-analysis Interview with Nancy Forester). This reflection is consistent with scholarship which has found that mentoring is most effective not only where the mentor has relevant experience, but where adequate time is dedicated to nurturing the relationship between mentor and mentee and where the mentor has received relevant training (Shanks, 2017; Aspfors and Fransson, 2015; Moyles et al, 2006). However, the lack of relevant experience not only impacts the opportunities QTMEYS enjoy to develop competence and confidence through the quality of mentoring they receive, but it also impacts the level of support they receive from Senior Leaders within schools.

6.2.3 Educated leaders

Merida moved to a new setting as a member of the Senior Leadership Team. She was the only member of the team with Early Years experience and soon began to notice issues with provision within the setting which she tried to discuss with the head teacher:

For the first two terms we were still doing topic-based learning and I went to my head teacher going into summer term and I said 'I can't do this anymore, we have no resources, we're failing the children, the learning sucks, it's boring, I don't even want to be here. The behaviour of the children is horrible, you can see why – school's boring, I want to change it. I want to go with the children's interests, I want to go all down the route of child-led learning, I don't want any forward planning aside from phonics. You know no forward planning maths – nothing.

Co-analysis Interview with Merida

The head teacher was completely opposed to the changes Merida had proposed and, frustrated by their lack of understanding about the developmental needs of the children and why the existing provision was failing them, Merida decided to implement child-led learning anyway. She explains:

I lied about what we were doing in Early Years in terms of our curriculum, because I wanted the evidence to prove in September when we looked at our curriculum that the way I wanted to do it was better. And I knew that if I asked again to change things I would be told categorically no, so I was very unprofessional and I went behind SLT's back and my governor's backs and I did it anyways, and I changed everything. And I trained my staff, I lobbied to not be included in the rest of the school staff meetings and I did my own trainings, and we had those every week. And every Tuesday morning we had team meetings where we would digress from the week, and we would talk about what's going well, what do we need to work on. And anyway, we did that for all of the summer term, and then in August when I had our SLT meeting to talk about the curriculum I said 'So this is what I have been doing'.

Co-analysis Interview with Merida

The possibility that SLT were completely unaware of what Merida had done until she confessed highlights the indifference of some school leaders towards Early Years. Merida's depiction of this incident emphasises that this indifference borders on professional misconduct as it is the role of SLT to oversee practice throughout the school. Her account also highlights the existential impact of professional indifference.

While Merida's actions were extreme, scholarship has shown that when employees feel disconnected from their role, they may either shutdown or become vitriolic critics who rebel against it (Archer, 2007). Studies also suggest that most teachers are motivated to join the profession by an altruistic desire to make a difference (Perryman and Calvert, 2019; Ball, 2010). It is evident that Merida felt she had no other choice but to rebel because the curriculum that was in place did not meet the needs of the children in her care. Unlike Nancy Forester, Merida's confidence came not only from courses she had been on but the experience she had gained in professional practice and her position as a member of the SLT herself. However, within Merida's account the latent theme of the precarity experienced by QTMEYS as liminal professionals in Primary Schools is once again evident:

> *I got in huge trouble from the governors and everything – a lot of trouble - I had to sign a document saying I'd never do it again. It was my fault, I shouldn't have done that, I appreciate I was deeply unprofessional from going behind their backs – however I couldn't get through to these people that were running this school … it was like trying to fit a square inside a circle, like it just was never going to happen. And I had the evidence to back me because I knew … well actually I went into that meeting in August thinking that I'm going to come out of it without a job, because I thought I was going to get fired, because I knew what I had done was wrong. And I went in with a huge folder, like 3 inches thick of evidence, on why we need to change our curriculum, and they accepted it.*

> *Co-analysis Interview with Merida*

Although she was a member of the SLT, it was evident that Merida's professional experience and Early Years expertise was not valued or respected and her actions were driven by the desire to provide evidence to support her convictions in order to educate others. While her actions were the direct cause of her precarity, her professional discernment was vindicated by the fact that the SLT relented and moved towards child-led learning in Early Years not just within the school but across the whole trust.

Merida's account highlights the barriers QTMEYS face in being 'heard' in decision making processes within schools. Merida is unequivocal that QTMEYS need to be better supported by their SLT and that, in order for senior leaders to be able to offer ambient support, they need to have a better understanding of ECEC:

> *We need support. We need educated leaders, you can't have a head teacher that's never been in Early Years. You know our head teachers need to be teaching in all of the year groups, we need discussions. And I appreciate it's difficult to run a school when you're busy, you can't listen to every single staff member, but Early Years practitioners need to be heard, and every year that's … you know you go to these seminars and that's what comes up every single year – 'I'm not heard, I'm ignored' and I think our SLT, our head teachers, they need to wake up to that, they need to hear what we're screaming out at them.*

> *Co-analysis Interview with Merida*

The impact of policy makers and SLT constantly neglecting, or perhaps simply failing to understand the needs of young children, featured in Ben Ford's account too. Unlike Merida, Ben Ford has tried to comply with pedagogically inappropriate directives, but this has led to significant dissonance or internal conflict. He explains:

> *I wonder how far … you know at what point … how does that happen, how do you get to decent rational people accepting terrible things because that's just what is happening, and what you have to do. I wonder how far you can move away from your core ethos, how many times your values are tested before you say right … or how far do you get down the line before you look and think hold on a minute I'm labelling kids or I'm doing things that I know is…abusive you know - I'm there to protect them. If I am carried along down a line to a point of being abusive, that's something that's seriously wrong and dangerous, scary.*

> *Co-analysis Interview with Ben Ford*

Ben Ford is clearly troubled by the narrow academic focus promoted by recent policy changes and is not willing to be complicit in what he views as an abusive system that labels children. As Ben Ford and I explored his feelings, the extent to which compliance with external

contingencies has been normalised and discourse around their potential impact controlled within his setting became increasingly evident. With a new Framework soon to be introduced when we spoke, he confided that the planned meetings to discuss the changes had been cancelled by SLT in favour of a discussion about Year 4 swimming lessons. Ben Ford explained that an Ofsted inspection could be imminent but SLT's actions in neglecting to dedicate time to discussing the new framework were indefensible, so his response, if questioned about why nothing had changed, would be:

> Go and speak to the head teacher, you know. I know what I'm doing, but yeah the wider – why haven't we had the discussions, why isn't the policy in place, why isn't this … you know – speak to the head teacher. Why are you still doing (inaudible 1:25:36) why are you still focussing on all the wrong things? 'Well go and speak to the head teacher' - that's going to be my response.

Co-analysis Interview with Ben Ford

Ben Ford seems to feel powerless to act against SLT but held onto his autonomy by refusing to accept responsibility for their decisions. While new professional qualifications have been introduced for head teachers and senior leaders as part of the recent retention policy (DfE, 2020), there is still no requirement for those who move into whole school leadership positions to have taught in all three key stages. Neglecting to include this caveat means that head teachers may have very little understanding of the impact policies will have on children and may be unable to help QTMEYS to regulate "external contingencies" (Ryan and Deci, 2000:69) such as pedagogically inappropriate policy directives. As Sims and Waniganayake (2015) pointed out, without an understanding of professional practice, leaders focus on compliance with externally imposed notions of 'quality' that may be at odds with the needs and interests of young children. Sims and Waniganayake (2015) concluded that this 'top down' approach can further erode professional confidence and impede professional development, issues which are explored in Ben Ford's account.

When he joined the profession, Ben Ford had envisaged moving into a leadership position himself; he no longer sees this as compatible with his values and ethos. In his written narrative he explained:

> *In recent years I have witnessed a slowly increasing formality demanded in Reception. It is a formality that many of the children are just not ready for when they first start school and yet it is a requirement despite the obvious opposition to the needs of the cohorts of children arriving at our school. There is simply no room for discussion or professional judgement. I find increasingly that there is a tendency towards labelling children, and adults too. An insistence on defining individuals by gender, class, sexual orientation, parental status, disability, special educational need or mental health status. It is troubling and I resist it, yet it is very clearly there in the motivations, actions and words of management.*

> *Ben Ford's written narrative*

Ben Ford's account highlights the invidious impact of neoliberal constructs of management evident in the "motivations" of his SLT. He now sees leadership as management and recognises that becoming part of SLT would mean focusing on compliance rather than ensuring he has the autonomy to pursue relational pedagogy and influence decision making within his setting.

6.2.4 Continued professional development (CPD)

It is not just that Ben Ford no longer sees leadership as compatible with his identity as a QTMEYS, as he revealed in his written narrative:

> *In my current position there is absolutely no opportunity to move forward, no career development, no autonomy, no agency for change, no access to continuing professional development'.*

> *Ben Ford's written narrative*

As CPD has been identified as a key factor in supporting retention it is surprising perhaps that all five participants felt that their professional development had been neglected. Studies have found that it takes time to develop professional confidence and expertise (Euade, 2011; Timperley, 2011; Schön, 1983; Lave and Wenger 1991) and that, in addition to expert mentoring, access to high quality CPD is essential as a means to support retention (Enser and Enser, 2021; Worth and van den Brande, 2020; McCrea, 2020). Local education authorities have a responsibility to provide CPD for Early Years settings and for newly qualified teachers, but as Coco explains:

> *I think professional development in Early Years is really quite difficult. There are a huge number of local authority courses, but they're aimed at people that are starting out …*
>
> *It's all about can you tick those boxes, and it's not about are you developing in your own practice and as a person able to fulfil that role?   And I think again this comes back to the funding situation.*

Co-analysis Interview with Coco

Coco's comments reflect the concerns expressed in previous studies that CPD for teachers in England focuses largely on performative aspects of practice rather than supporting the development of autonomy and professional confidence (Whitty, 2014; Kelly, 2006; Hoyle, 2005). This is confirmed by Nancy Forester's account. As an ECT the only training available to Nancy Forester appears to have been that which was funded and this appears to focus on compliance with performative testable elements of professional practice:

> *School just didn't have any money, and when I asked to go on some training for an around maths and, and best practice in maths and maths in the continuous provision, it was funded, because it was maths.*

Co-analysis Interview with Nancy Forester

Funding cuts go some way to explain the neglect all five QTMEYS experienced in relation to their own development at points in their career journey, as discussed by Merida:

> *…sending six Early Years practitioners to go to this hotel in the middle of London to learn about how to use the sand tray to teach maths and spend thousands is just not practical – schools aren't willing to do it.   So I think in terms of training it's just inaccessible for schools that don't have big budgets to send their teams on these trainings.*

> *Co-analysis Interview with Merida*

However, CPD does not always happen offsite, nor does it have to have a cost implication as Merida points out:

> *Staff Inset in a school is free – the head teacher plans it and puts it on, or SLT plans it and puts it on.*

> *Co-analysis Interview with Merida*

The liminal status of QTMEYS within Primary schools means that their needs may be neglected, as Merida discusses in her written narrative:

> *I was so tired of attending staff meetings and training that were always geared towards SATs or science, or anything that wasn't Early Years.   Since 2015 I have had three staff meetings or Insets or training days that were aimed towards Early Years.   Three – how jaw dropping is that.*

> *Merida's written narrative*

As an experienced teacher, Coco also found there was very little appropriate CPD available for her locally. She reflects:

> *I'd been in that classroom for 8 years and I was like 'I need more, I need more mental stimulation for me' and then you go back to the professional development and that side of things.   And it's like I can't just keep doing the same thing and … I'm good at what I do, I know I'm good at what I do, but I want to be better, I want to be more.*

> *Co-analysis Interview with Coco*

It seems that, despite the significant body of evidence supporting the importance of CPD as a supportive factor in teacher retention, the lived experiences of the participants in this study suggest that the CPD of QTMEYS is often neglected.

Etta is part of a team of experienced professionals in a Maintained Nursery. She explains "because there's no money we train each other" (co-analysis interview with Etta), but this is not practical for school-based settings where QTMEYS may be solo practitioners or in small and possibly inexperienced teams. This is particularly problematic for ECT's like Nancy Forseter who describes herself as "woefully unprepared" (Co-analysis interview with Nancy) for professional practice as a QTMEYS. Nancy Forester's experience does not appear to be unique, as Merida reflects "teachers coming into Early Years now are more and more set up to fail" (co-analysis Conversation with Merida). Lacking support in their own setting, Etta has noticed inexperienced QTMEYS turning to online communities. While these communities are an important source of support, they are far from satisfactory as she elaborates:

> *The Early Years WhatsApp group depresses me because it's mainly reception teachers asking at the moment which is the best model to use for assessment, and which tablet or form of recording, and then all about different ways to teach the phonics.   I physically read it and my heart sinks you know.*
>
> *Co-analysis Interview with Etta*

 It should be noted that communities of practice are not always benign. Significantly, the lack of professional memory within the online community that Etta describes means that performative aspects of practice are focused on by ECT's in a desire to demonstrate that they have met required standards (Scheuetze et al, 2018). However, as these standards have been set by people with no understanding of Early Years, they may not directly relate to the needs

and interest of young children and their pursuit may lead to behavioural issues as young children struggle to communicate that their needs have not been met. Furthermore, even where ECT's are able to enter a community of practice with experienced teachers outside their own setting, it is possible that while the confirmatory cognition (Festinger, 2001) provided by these groups can support the development of a stronger sense of identity as an Early Years professional, they could also increase the sense of isolation from colleagues in other Key Stages.

6.3 Narratives of Isolation

The second theme that emerged from thematic analysis of the corpus of data was isolation from colleagues. From the participants narratives and oral accounts, it was possible to extrapolate that the sense of isolation begins 'right from the start' in ITE. Although there are three Key stages in Primary schools, Primary ITE tends to focus on Key Stage One and Two. As a result of Early Years being neglected in ITE provision, the majority of teachers enter the profession with very little experience or understanding of play-based relational pedagogy. This lack of understanding of the purpose and practice of ECEC means that there is a lack of "ambient support" (Ryan and Deci, 2000:73) for QTMEYS in Primary Schools in particular. As a result, QTMEYS may struggle to develop a sense of 'relatedness' (Ryan and Deci, 2000) and shared endeavour with their colleagues in other Key Stages, leading QTMEYS to feel isolated and 'othered' in their own settings (see Appendix 10 for collated comments on the theme of isolation and othering). This section explores the ways in which the participants felt 'othered' and consequently 'other' their colleagues in response, and how this defence mechanism potentially increases the participants' sense of isolation within their settings.

6.3.1 Connection with colleagues

As demonstrated in the participants' accounts in the previous chapter, there are limited opportunities afforded to QTMEYS in ITE and in professional practice to develop competence and confidence. Although Early Years specific courses exist (EYTS), practice in maintained settings is led by those with QTS and Early Years specific pathways are only available in 43 universities nationwide. For example, Ben Ford worked hard to secure a place on a course which offered QTS and an Early Years specialism. Ben Ford came from a working-class background and perceived teaching as a middle-class profession. In conversation, Ben Ford explains that he had perceived his social class, sexuality[48] and gender as barriers that would prevent him from training to teach. The number of men working in Early Years suggest that these barriers are very real and Ben Ford explains that this made him feel like "the elephant in the room" (co-analysis interview with Ben Ford) throughout his studies.

Given the gendered nature of the Early Years workforce (Gov.UK, 2022; CEEDA, 2019; Bonetti, 2019), it is unsurprising that he was the only man on his course. Nutbrown (2012) raised the point that the gendered nature of the workforce must be addressed, but very little, if anything, appears to have been done at policy level to combat the socially sustained perception of ECEC as 'women's work' (Criado-Perez, 2019; Lawler, 2014; Hofstede, 2001; Davies, 1996). Indeed, as Nutbrown (2018) observed, the issues of respect and recognition raised by pioneers like McMillan and Isaacs a hundred years ago persist today because the

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[48] Ben's concerns around his sexuality were realised when he was involved in discussions around sex and relationships education in a faith school. Ben was appalled by the "old fashioned and prejudicial" attitudes he encountered towards LGBTQIA+ relationships and sexual identity.

status of young children and those who work with them has changed little. As Coco explains, the status of QTMEYS is perpetuated by the gendered nature of ECEC:

> *I think there is a difficulty across the EY workforce who are predominantly female, in that we do not recognise our own worth and so others are happy to think that what we do is not important.*

Coco's written narrative

Reflecting on her experience of working alongside teachers from other Key Stages as part of her GTP, Coco observed "it was clear that Early Years was considered a second-class citizen to main-stream education" (Coco's written narrative). Nancy Forester encountered similar attitudes when she shared her passion for Early Years with members of her PGCE cohort (Nancy's written narrative). Crucially, each of the five participants gave accounts of incidents where their professional practice had been dismissed or demeaned by their colleagues and described how this made them feel isolated from teachers in other Key Stages.

A significant number of studies have highlighted the importance of interpersonal relationships as a source of ambient support and confirmatory cognition in schools, and demonstrated the impact poor relationships can have on teachers' self-perception, job satisfaction and wellbeing (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Day et al, 2006; Gee, 2001; Wenger, 1998; Sikes et al, 1991;). The connection between colleagues is a key factor in supporting retention (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Archer, 2007; Jerim et al, 2021). Positive working relationships between colleagues in all three Key Stages present in Primary Schools then can be seen to be essential.

Schools are communities of practice where individuals are engaged in a shared endeavour (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Within these communities, identities are shared through interaction and the professional relationships that develop there (Wenger, 1998). Nias (2005) found that shared beliefs and values are essential to developing effective professional relationships in schools, but the narratives shared by the participants in this study suggest that QTMEYS do not always feel that the humanist values which underpin their practice are valued and respected by their colleagues in other Key Stages, as Coco explains:

> *Key stage 2 staff just have no interest, they have no care, they have no understanding. And I think for me the difficulties come with the fact that quite often the teachers that are in Year 1 have just as little understanding of what's going on in Early Years, and that means that they're not able to support those children.*
>
> Co-analysis interview with Coco

It could be that, in common with the foundation of a building, the reason the pedagogy of QTMEYS is not respected is because the foundations for learning are rarely considered once they have been established. However, the lack of focus on Early Years in Primary ITE is problematic as it means many teachers are not aware of issues which impact early childhood development and this leads to a perception that education begins in Key Stage One, as Coco reflects:

> *Generally, the understanding of the importance of EY was not acknowledged. I think they genuinely believed the children just appeared in Year 1 with all the groundwork done and the basic skills in place.*
>
> Coco's written narrative

While ECEC focuses on enabling children to follow their own interests through the development of the characteristics of effective learning[49] and the provision of an enabling

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[49] Playing and exploring, active learning, creating and thinking critically.

environment (DfE, 2021), Etta observes that what constitutes effective behaviour for learning changes dramatically once children enter Key Stage 1:

> *The team knew that the practice in the nursery was at odds with that of the main school and often would comment on how the children they saw go into it every year, lost their agency and became passive learners no longer in control of even accessing their own resources.*

<div align="right">

Etta's written narrative

</div>

Although pedagogy can be expected to change at developmentally appropriate points in children's academic lives, the lived experiences described by the participants suggest that QTMEYS experience high levels of isolation from colleagues, who do not understand or value the relational, child centred, play-based pedagogy of QTMEYS. Merida explains "it's no secret that Early Years practitioners are not respected by other teachers in the school. They think we *'play all day'*. We don't know what real teaching is like. How hard it is" (Merida's written narrative). It is evident that here is a need to address this perception if the dissonance between QTMEYS and their colleagues is to be reduced.

Coco points out "the gap between Early Years and key stage 2 is huge" (co-analysis interview with Coco). The 'gap' that Coco refers to may always have existed, but doubtlessly the introduction of separate frameworks for Key Stage One and Two (DfE, 1989, 1993, 1999, 2014), and Early Years (DfE, 2008, 2013, 2017, 2021) codified the different approaches taken in these distinct Key Stages. With each review of the National curriculum (DfE, 1989, 1993, 1999, 2014), and the Statutory Framework (DfE, 2008, 2013, 2017, 2021) the way that children are taught has become more formal and what they are taught, more knowledge based. It is perhaps unsurprising then that colleagues who have no understanding or

experience of Early Years struggle to recognise the skill it takes to provide meaningful opportunities for child-led learning, as Coco recounts:

> *You know the idea that children have freedom to explore and investigate for themselves is a completely alien concept.   You know go out in the garden, go and play, I don't care what you do – dig a hole, fall in it, you know … but we've lost that because children are only allowed to do what they're assigned to do.*

> *Co-analysis interview with Coco*

While many within the Early Years sector continue to fight against attempts to redefine practice by shifting the focus of QTMEYS from supporting learning to transmitting knowledge through formal teaching, Nancy Forester found that, in other Key Stages, some professionals appear to have developed an affinity bias towards the formal teaching approaches used with older children. This was highlighted to Nancy Forester when her teaching assistant left and cover was shared between staff from other Key Stages:

> *I think we certainly found that as different adults came in, you know for one to one support or whatever, we kept going back, going back to the beginning again. They didn't always feel that what we were doing was authentic with their practice which it's understandable. So it was like I've been teaching another way and here you are… and you're an alien!'*

> *Co-analysis interview with Nancy Forester*

Prior scholarship has repeatedly emphasised the impact that the play-based relational pedagogy of the EYFS can have on children's long-term outcomes (Tymms, Merrell and Bailey, 2017; Sylva et al, 2004; Centre for Longitudinal Studies, 1958- ongoing), particularly when it is led by qualified teachers (Melhuish, 2016; Hall, 2019).   However, it is easy to see how inexperienced colleagues could perceive practice in the EYFS to be 'alien' as Coco explains:

> *I was friends with the Year 4 and the Year 5 teachers in that school and we were quite friendly, but the joke was always that that wasn't the real teaching – Early Years is not real teaching.   And we're not coming down there because all you do is*

wipe bums and noses, you know, and what can we do down there. And it was
about them not understanding everything that was taking place in there.

<div align="right">*Co-analysis interview with Coco*</div>

As Coco's account illustrates, it appears to be the emotional, relation dimension of practice, the care part of ECEC, and the developmental needs of children that teachers in Key Stage One and Two seem to find so difficult to appreciate. Nancy Forester's account of SLT putting locks on the doors to stop children "escaping" rather than trying to understand the reason why the children wanted to run away also illustrates a lack of understanding of the skill involved in supporting children to learn how to regulate their behaviour. The lack of understanding or appreciation of relational play-based pedagogy described by the participants not only led to feelings of isolation but also a sense of being drawn into constant battles to defend their pedagogy and fight to have the needs of the children in their care recognised.

6.3.2 Constant battles

As previously discussed, the early identification of additional needs has been recognised as vital (DfE and DoH, 2015). However, the process of having children's needs recognised is emotionally exhausting as Coco describes in the vignette below:

> *I had a child who clearly had some difficulty and I worked so hard with her parents. I managed to get her a diagnosis and appropriate resources, and the Year 1 teacher cried and said I don't know how you survived the year, but no one had recognised the struggles I had had while she was in my class. I felt completely demoralised, and I think that was the tipping point.*

> *This little girl was amazing … but eventually her diagnosis was ADHD and dyspraxic and hypermobility syndrome. That child is never going to sit still anywhere – ever. (Laughs) But she was really bright so everything just came out of her mouth, yeah? So you've got that going on. I had other children in the class who were already on Year 1 maths and working beyond. I had others who couldn't hold a pencil.*

That particular child's parents were amazing, and they were completely aware that although she was their eldest first, it was only when the second one came along that they realised that you know 'Ah, they're not all quite as mad as she is'. (Laughs) So her mum used to come in and cry because she hadn't slept and she hadn't … you know she wouldn't eat, she'd only eat things if they weren't touching each other on the plate … you know there was all sorts of things going on with her. And so you're dealing with parents who are quite anxious under normal circumstances, and this was not a normal circumstance … as well as dealing with the whole class and then you feel as though you're failing the rest of the students because you're having to focus on making sure she's got what she needs. You're having to create a whole new set of resources so that she can do her best as well as create the resources for everybody else. It was just like I'm seriously firefighting.

And when I got to the October half term of that year and I said to my then deputy head it's not working, this is not working, I need some support, I need some help, I need some time – 'Well what's the problem?' And I says well this this this this, and she went 'Oh well that's just a normal class'. Okay then. And the fact that all of the teachers in the infants' part of the school knew this child before she'd even been at the school for a term tells you that it wasn't just a normal situation.

Vignette complied from co-analysis interview with Coco

This vignette highlights several key points. First, it emphasises the responsibilities placed on QTMEYS who are often the first to identify specific learning needs. This can lead to them feeling like they are "firefighting" as they try to meet individual needs without "failing the rest of the students" (co-analysis interview with Coco). Second, it is evident that Coco had to work hard not only to establish a relationship with the child in order to identify her needs, but was also offering vital support to the child's parents who were struggling to meet the child's needs at home too. Third, Coco's experience suggests that, as other teachers within their setting may not fully understand the EYFS, there may be a lack of guidance and support available for QTMEYS, as illustrated by her deputy head teacher's attitude that she was dealing with a "normal class" rather than a cohort which included children with multiple complex needs. Coco's story here echoes Nancy Forester's description of locks being put on doors to stop children escaping, but demonstrates that even veteran QTMEYS feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities that are placed upon them.

For example, Merida's story about changing the curriculum without telling SLT demonstrated the strange mixture of neglect and autonomy that QTMEYS experience and this is also evident in Coco's vignette above. The fact that this little girl was known by members of staff in the next Key Stage highlights that her behaviour was unusual despite the deputy heads protestation. What frustrates Coco is that she was completely unsupported by her colleagues. It was not until the little girl was in Year One that her colleagues recognised how emotionally exhausting it had been trying to meet the needs of everyone in the class while fighting for a diagnosis for this particular child (Coco's written narrative). Her sense of isolation from her colleagues and SLT is evident in the following quote:

> *it's very easy when you're teaching in a school because it's so demanding – you go in, your head's down, that's your school, that's what you're dealing with, and you never look up, and you never see the bigger picture.*

Co-analysis interview with Coco

While it is clear that Coco felt as if she were working in a silo, it is important to remember that the role of the SLT is to have oversight of learning in each Key Stage and throughout the Primary school; it is their job to see the "bigger picture" (co-analysis interview with Coco) that Coco refers to both within their setting, and beyond it. From the accounts shared by the participants, Merida, Coco and Nancy in particular, it is evident that this may not always be the case.

The pressure that school leaders are under is immense but, as Ben Ford points out, failing to ensure they understand all three Key stages they lead is a dereliction of duty that contributes to a culture in schools where QTMEYS are isolated and othered:

It just staggers me that actually you can be a teacher and not understand where these children have come from.

I've heard a lot from the head teacher 'Well you're Early Years' - well you're Early Years, so you're not really a teacher is the implication. Never mind I have to teach them to read and write, you know – and there are questions if they can't do that by the end of the year … but how do you expect me to teach them to read and write and maintain an outside classroom as well as an inside?

I do understand that head teachers have you know a really really difficult job and their necks are on the line, you know, I understand that. And they have mortgages and children to pay for – I worry that their mortgages are actually more important than the children in the school in a lot of cases. I worry that the people who get to be head teachers are … you know there are two types of teacher, there are those that are creative and rebel and want the best for the child, you know child centred, and there are those that like ticking boxes. And I think those that like ticking boxes are yes people, they're not the 'yes but', you know they're just 'yes'. So they get promoted and they're not the mavericks that I learnt from when I did my PGCE.

Vignette compiled from co-analysis interview with Ben Ford

Ben Ford's assessment that "there are two types of teacher" (co-analysis interview with Ben Ford) and that the 'wrong ones' move into SLT reflects the thoughts of scholars who have explored the impact of neoliberalism on the teaching profession. Although neoliberal education policy focuses on compliance and performativity, it also offers a seductive rhetoric of rewards and promotion (Ball, 2010; Davies, 2005) which re-orientates activity and the moral purpose of those in positions of power in educational settings. While those in positions of power in schools may be called 'senior leaders', as neoliberal subjects, their role is very much to perpetuate the status quo rather than challenge it (Sims and Waniganayake, 2015; Waugh, 2014; Ball and Olmeda, 2013). In many ways, the role of school leaders is managerial rather than democratic, focusing on controlling outcomes rather than building relationships which empower others (Whitty et al, 1998; Apple, 1996). This approach stands in stark contrast to the relational, child centred pedagogy of QTMEYS and it is little wonder that, in order to resolve the dissonance this creates, the participants seem to develop a 'them and us'

attitude towards their colleagues. However, this appears to be a coping mechanism that reinforces their sense of isolation and othering.

As a minority in the Primary school, perhaps it is inevitable that QTMEYS experience "professional loneliness" (Ings, 2017:187). Having achieved a position as a member of SLT, Merida showed tremendous agency in attempting to break down barriers between QTMEYS, SLT and other colleagues as she explains in the following vignette:

> *I just had enough and I wrote a letter to the governors actually, and I just said listen, you talk about budgets and this and that and the other thing, but from September to now May we've spent 28 hours in these staff meetings learning all of these different topics, but when … so you're investing all of that, you're paying us to be here for all of those staff meetings, but not one of them is relevant to Early Years, so can you not spare two hours, can I not have two hours to plan an Inset or to plan an evening where I train the whole school on this is what we do in Early Years, these are the characteristics of effective learning, like in the statutory requirements – what do you mean you don't know what creating and thinking critically even means, why can you not give me … you know it just baffled me. And she said yes, do it and we'll see how it goes – and I trained the whole school …*
>
> *My first training was on the characteristics of effective learning.   And they all moaned, how was this relevant, you know – why do I need to care about active learning, and they just moaned.   And by the end of it there were more teachers leaving thinking 'Oh I could implement that in Year 2' 'I could do that in Year 3' 'I could do that in Year 1' – because it was engaging you know, it wasn't just listening to me talk, we had games, we had to match things, we had to watch videos of the children playing and write an observation about it.*
>
> *It was just so hands-on, just like Early Years is, and it inspired more teachers to change their practice, never mind come down and visit Early Years, it was 'Oh I could implement this Early Years strategy in my Year 3 teaching'.*

Vignette compiled from co-analysis interview with Merida

It is ironic that having endured training that did not feel relevant to her, her colleagues questioned the relevance of training focused on Early Years pedagogy. However, Merida's vignette demonstrates that the principles which underpin practice in the EYFS and the

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characteristics of effective learning that are focused on with young children are equally relevant for other age groups. It is possible that promoting awareness of these elements of the Statutory Framework (DfE, 2021) could help to raise levels of recognition and respect for the outstanding work that QTMEYS do. However, as Etta points out, "it's incredibly hard especially if you are one or two reception teachers to stand your ground because you are on your own to some extent in that setting" (co-analysis interview with Etta). If the confirmatory cognition that supports a sense of relatedness is not available within their own settings, QTMEYS may be forced to seek support elsewhere, as illustrated in Chapter 5 section 4.

6.3.3 Seeking reinforcements

Nancy Forester describes feeling isolated 'right from the start' of her professional journey. This feeling persisted when she began professional practice "woefully unprepared" and found herself in a setting where no one had any Early Years experience and were therefore only able to offer limited support and guidance. Seeking confirmatory cognition and professional development, Nancy Forester joined a local Early Years network. She describes them as a group that was at once supportive and intimidating; she explains:

> *I guess it was an opportunity to yeah to learn, you know in person, a bit more about those differences, but you know you don't want to appear too stupid.*
>
> *…especially as being the only teacher in early years in a school, you know you sort of think well I can't appear to be lacking in in knowledge, because otherwise they'll think the whole school is rubbish and so you know you're there is that. Yes, you are an NQT, but at the same time, you know you have this responsibility.*

> *Co-analysis interview with Nancy Forester*

She expands that taking part in the group made her painfully aware of all she had to learn and frustrated that there was no one in her setting to guide her. In contrast, Etta has benefited

from experienced mentors throughout her career, but maintains that professional networks provide an additional vital source of support. For Etta, even as an experienced QTMEYS, talking to people outside her setting has helped her to navigate new challenges:

> *I think what's been good about some of the people that I've met … you know I'll talk to them not just about organising activity, but I'll talk to them about … so for example when the under 3 unit came down to us I was thinking how do we work this. And so having people to go and talk to who had integrated … and actually talk to them about how it worked and what didn't work, and it was quite interesting because one had tried it and they stopped it, another one you know they loved that way of working.*

> *Co-analysis interview with Etta*

The importance of communities of practice has already been discussed (see Chapter 2.4.5) but what is important here is that they not only support competence but a sense of relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2000), of belonging to a wider professional network and of "the bigger picture" (co-analysis interview with Coco) of what is happening in education. This sense of belonging is vitally important because, as Etta reflects, "when there's some sort of fight collectively going on that involves beyond our setting I think that has kept me going". However, without mentors to direct them, not all QTMEYS may be able to find these networks.

Although she has taught in the UK for many years, Merida did not discuss being part of any wider professional networks and appears to have been working without mentors or support. In her written narrative she describes being burnt out, hating the system and hating herself. In our co-analysis interview, she continues to explore the psychological impact of isolation and the struggle to be "heard" in a setting and a system where your professional expertise is not recognised:

Unfortunately the practitioners that are really good and really passionate are so few and far between that they just get burnt out because they try and try and try to make change but no one hears them. So eventually they do the easy thing which is just give up.

Not all of them, there are some still fighting for us. You're still fighting for us! You know there's brilliant people out there still fighting for Early Years, but so many people … you know especially with mental health all around us now think okay well what's more important – my career where no one's listening to me, or my family at home and my children never see me because I'm working such long hours trying to sort out my Early Years.   And when I am home I'm not present because I'm so stressed about what failed in the day, so now I'm failing my children – now my relationship's falling apart because my mind is somewhere else.   And then you have to think when does it stop?

Co-analysis interview with Merida

Recent industrial action demonstrates that the teaching profession, as a whole, struggles to be heard at policy level, but what Merida is discussing is that QTMEYS struggle to be heard within their own setting and that the psychological damage this does is significant. Her plea for "educated leaders" could be extended to include 'educated colleagues' or 'allies' with an understanding of Early Years and respect for QTMEYS, who can provide confirmatory cognition and ambient support on a day-to-day basis. However, what is evident, not only from Merida's account but from all five participants, is that there is some way to go to achieve this but without these allies, QTMEYS will continue to face a battle to defend their pedagogic principles in Primary Schools.

6.4 Narratives of conflict

The third theme that emerged from the corpus of data was conflict. As Bronfenbrenner (1979) pointed out, we navigate multiple systems constantly that have a bidirectional influence on each other. Although the narratives explored in the previous sections of this

chapter have focused on relationships (isolation) and competence (neglect), it is the erosion of autonomy and redefinition of professional practice that arguably leads to the greatest conflicts in the lived experiences of QTMEYS.

Scholarship has charted the problematic impact of decades of neoliberal policy on education and educators (e.g. Knight, 2021; Ball, 2015; Evetts, 2013; Osgood, 2006; Day et al, 2006,). ECEC rarely is prioritised at policy level unless economic imperative arises as seen in the expansion of provision for young children during the second world war (as discussed in Chapter 2:2). However, ECEC has become the focus of intense policy activity in recent years (McDowall-Clark, 2017). Successive policies have attempted to create a formal curriculum for Early Years with testable outcomes that can be compared with outcomes at Key Stage One and Two and used to measure school effectiveness.

As expressed in the accounts presented in this chapter, resistance from within the sector has been fierce, forcing policy makers and practitioners, including QTMEYS, into conflict over the nature and purpose of ECEC. Despite the vast body of evidence supporting the value of relational play-based pedagogy (e.g. Nutbrown, 2018; Sylva et al, 2004), professional confidence has been eroded by the constant battle to prioritise the needs of the child in the face of counterintuitive policies. Three key points of contention were identified: assessment, curriculum design and accountability (see Appendix 11 for collated comments on this theme). This section interrogates each of these points and presents evidence from the participants' accounts about how they impact the lived experiences of QTMEYS.

6.4.1 Assessment and curriculum design

Concern was raised by each participant about the impact of the assessment culture within schools. Although QTMEYS follow the Statutory Framework (DfE, 2021) rather than the National Curriculum (DfE, 2014), the existence of the National Curriculum has introduced a downward pressure to introduce formal learning (Moss and Penn, 1996; Blenkin and Kelly, 1994). Studies suggest that since the introduction of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy, QTMEYS have been encouraged by policy makers and school leaders to introduce formal Literacy and Mathematics lessons (Smidt, 2002) and to promote SSP. The introduction of SSP (systematic synthetic phonics) has fundamentally changed the way that children learn to read. As a consequence of this change, studies have identified an increase in labelling by ability and 'interventions' to promote progress (Bradbury and Roberts-Homes, 2017) in preparation for the Year One Phonics assessment test and Key Stage One spelling tests. Scholarship has found that these tests cause high levels of stress and anxiety for parents, teachers and, most detrimentally, for children (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2017; Walker et al, 2014). In response to calls to scrap tests, the government agreed to remove SATs (standardised attainment tests) at the end of Key Stage One, and replace them with Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA). This decision demonstrates that none of these tests have any benefit for children, they are simply used to hold schools accountable for pupil progress.

Accountability itself is not the issue here, for the participants in this study there are issues around who is accountable to whom and whose needs are prioritised. It is evident from their accounts that each participant holds themselves accountable for the children in their care and

ensuring their needs are prioritised. The need to negotiate external contingencies such as anti-theoretical policy directives such as Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) seemed to be the cause of significant cognitive dissonance, as described by Nancy Forester:

> *It felt like it was moving away from child led learning and it felt like there would be a tendency towards one style of learning that it kind of was gearing up for that more formal learning environment and the baseline...really scared me.*

Co-analysis interview with Nancy Forester

Nancy Forester's key objection to baseline was its narrow focus on specific areas of learning (literacy and maths) rather than holistic development. Like the participants in Roberts-Holmes et al's (2019) study, Nancy Forester also expressed concern for the stress and anxiety the trial of RBA caused children and parents, and distain for the way it positions children within a deficit model 'right from the start' of their academic journey. For Nancy, like the thousands of QTMEYS who protested against RBA, this policy begs the questions "what's being valued here" and 'why are we doing this?' (co-analysis interview with Nancy Forester). In answer to her own question, Nancy Forester points out "it's not for the child, it is for the government" (co-analysis interview with Nancy Forester). In this way RBA can be contextualised as a neo-managerial strategy designed to increase government control of what is taught in Early Years, ostensibly in a drive to raise standards of literacy and maths. However, this strategy is based on ideology rather than evidence and betrays a lack of understanding at policy level about how young children learn and the type of 'curriculum' they need.

6.4.2 Curriculum design and assessment

The Statutory Framework for the EYFS (2021) outlines the principles which underpin practice[50], the characteristics of effective learning[51] and the seven key areas of learning and development[52] for children under the age of five. It also contains the early learning goals that most children will reach by the end of Reception. When the Statutory Framework was first released (DfE, 2008), non-statutory guidance called 'Development Matters' (Early Education, 2012) was produced by the sector to support practitioners in planning appropriate learning opportunities. While learning opportunities should be based around the needs and interests of the unique child, Merida observes:

> *I found when I first moved here teachers were afraid to leave Development Matters behind. I know that the Early Years curriculum is now shifting, which is brilliant, but if that child didn't hit that statement in that 40 to 60 band it doesn't matter, or if they're doing this amazing learning in the garden where they've counted the worms they've found when they're planting beans for Jack and the Beanstalk, but that doesn't link to a statement on development matters, we won't observe them we'll move on. And that wasn't the practitioner's fault, it was the way the curriculum has been built, and it's the pressure that Early Years practitioners have to have the evidence, because teacher judgement does not exist. Anyone who says teacher judgement – they're wrong, okay they're wrong. If it's not on a piece of paper, if it's not written down on an observation, if it's not photographed it didn't happen, the inspectors don't care, the head teacher doesn't care – they need the proof. And I've found when I first moved here that so many practitioners were ignoring those beautiful moments with children because they had to get the evidence, they had to get the data … and I hated it to be honest with you.*

> *Co-analysis interview with Merida*

The accountability culture in schools is now so pervasive that many QTMEYS are constrained by it, particularly those who lack professional confidence. Etta makes an interesting observation that the focus on outcomes and evidence is perpetuated by moving teachers

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[50] Every child is unique, children learn best when they have positive relationships with care givers and are in an enabling environment and they all learn and develop at different rates.

[51] Playing and exploring, active engagement and creating and thinking critically.

[52] The three prime areas are personal social and emotional development, physical development and communication and language, these are followed by four specific areas: literacy, mathematics expressive arts and understanding the world.

around within schools or moving people with less experience and expertise in Early Years

pedagogy into Reception:

> *I often hear that people are being placed into reception or even nursery, you know,*
> *from higher up. And I think it has a major impact. Especially I think in reception,*
> *because it means that these teachers are coming, driven by the SATs you know,*
> *and the whole thing about assessed learning and what have you.*

> *Co-analysis interview with Etta*

Etta sees the government's appropriation of Development Matters as an assessment tool

(DfE, 2021) as further evidence that there is a deliberate and destructive attempt to colonise

Early Years. In response to this appropriation, an Early Years coalition formed and produced

Birth to Five Matters (Early Years Coalition, 2021) which is based around the principles which

underpin practice and aims particularly to support novices in planning provision for young

children.   The continued refusal to listen to the advice of experts and experienced

practitioners within the sector is discussed by Coco, who asks:

> *Why are we not allowed to know what we're doing? I think that's one of the key*
> *things. You know you've given me this framework, and it's a great framework for*
> *focus and it's really good for those that are coming into the profession, it's an*
> *amazing piece of equipment to help them understand how learning develops. And*
> *I haven't looked at the new one because I just can't bring myself to do it, but I know*
> *that there was talk of the knowledge and understanding disappearing completely,*
> *and you're like – well okay then so we don't need to worry about whether it's*
> *raining and there's puddles to jump in and what happens to them when the sun*
> *comes out.*
>
> *Can they read, can they write, that's all you need to worry about? What a sad*
> *reflection.*

> *Co-analysis interview with Coco*

For Coco, the knowledge-based curriculum is not just eroding professional confidence but

also having a devastating effect on children's confidence too:

You know we've got this whole society now who think that if somebody's got an opinion that's different to theirs its wrong and they shouldn't listen to it. No – you have to listen to everything and make your own decisions.

So if you get something wrong what did you get from that? If you did something right – great, how are you going to move forward? How are you going to explain that to somebody else?

Co-analysis interview with Coco

Ben Ford fears that the redirection of practice in Early Years could have disastrous consequences not only for children today but for the future economic growth of the country:

If we are to survive seriously as a species in the future we will need critical thinkers, we need creative minds. We're not going to survive with yes people, people who do as they've been told, you know. That assumption that children are falling behind, missing out – you are labelling the whole generation as peculiar or missing something important as not being as full as they should be. But also the idea that you know I can as a teacher just keep inputting data, and that these little robots will… keep taking it.

Co-analysis interview with Ben Ford

Ben Ford frames the colonisation of ECEC through coercive assessment policies as an existential crisis. His investment in humanist values is evident in the language he uses which eloquently explains the key conflict between policy makers and practitioners: the perception of children as human beings or mere machines. This conflict is also evident in Coco's account:

We try our very best in Early Years to give them the idea that they can do things for themselves and they can explore for themselves and they can investigate for themselves, and then we take it away. You are squashing them right at the beginning. These are things we know, we know these things.

Co-analysis interview with Coco

Coco emphatically insists throughout her account, that experienced practitioners and Early Years experts know what is best but patriarchal, neoliberal policymakers seemingly refuse to acknowledge their expertise and seem determined instead to standardise practice in order to

produce homogenised 'future workers' rather than well rounded human beings. Ben Ford offers the government some advice about how to resolve the conflict between neoliberal and humanist values:

> *Leave us alone for a little bit. Let humans have authentic human relationships with other humans, and stop interfering, you know. It really is quite simple – stop interfering.*
>
> *Just to dictate is not leadership.*
>
> *Co-analysis interview with Ben Ford*

However, it seems to Ben Ford and the rest of the participants that rather than ensuring their policies are informed by expert evidence and designed to benefit young children, the ideology of the English government is more concerned with making teachers culpable for the failure of the policies they themselves have introduced than supporting the learning and development of young children.

6.4.3 Who's afraid of the big bad wolf? The impact of Ofsted

A latent theme across all five accounts was the culture of fear created by neoliberal accountability strategies. Among these is the existential impact of Ofsted, as discussed by Merida:

> *…teachers are petrified of … literally petrified of OFSTED and what they're going to say. And that is a huge problem with our curriculum. Even though OFSTED have nothing to do with our curriculum, teachers feel such pressure to teach everything that's on the national curriculum and Development Matters and get the evidence – that they miss all of those moments that actually they could link together.*
>
> *Co-analysis interview with Merida*

Merida gives a full account of her first experience of Ofsted and how it impacted her colleagues in Key Stage One and Two:

> *So my first inspection, not so much Early Years, but the rest of the school they stayed until 9 o'clock at night, they were hiding terrible books in the boot of their car so it wasn't in school, they were ripping down displays and changing displays. They were moving better teachers into more trickier classrooms so that the pupil behaviour would be better, even though they had never taught that class before.*

> *Co-analysis interview with Merida*

At the time, Merida was bewildered by the behaviour of her colleagues; on reflection, she tells me:

> *I was so naïve.   I knew what OFSTED was obviously, at least I did my research, but I just thought we've got nothing to worry about, we're amazing, we're brilliant.*

> *Co-analysis interview with Merida*

But the sense of fear and the panic induced by the impending inspection infected her team who began to question whether they should also be changing displays and preparing to perform. As the inspection drew closer, her team's anxiety reached a crescendo:

> *…the night before OFSTED came my team and I had a huge blow-out because they were like 'You have no idea what you're doing, you're not from this country, we've done this before'.   You know one of my TAs was like twice my age 'I've been doing this longer than you've been alive, you're going to fail us, we're going to fail'.*

> *Co-analysis interview with Merida*

Undaunted, she describes sitting her team down and trying to reassure them that there was nothing to worry about before sending them home to rest. However, from her account, it is clear that her actions were not appreciated by the head teacher:

> *My head teacher called me into her office and gave me a huge scolding for sending them home, I didn't have the right to send them home. I went above her and made that decision – no one was to leave until 9pm.   She made me cry, I felt this big – yeah it was ridiculous.*

The toxic impact of Ofsted inspections[53] has been explored in previous scholarship (Osgood, 2006; Wrigley, 2004; Fielding, 2001; Scanlan 1999) but given the strange mixture of neglect and isolation QTMEYS experience in schools on a day-to-day basis, it could be argued that QTMEYS suffer more than other teachers from the insecurity of senior leaders when the inspectors are imminent.

Merida's account of her encounters with Ofsted provides evidence of how the culture of fear in Primary Schools reinforces the neoliberal 'schoolification' agenda. Merida describes how, when the inspectors arrived, she continued to stand her ground defending the outstanding practice in her setting rather than moving the learning indoors as her SLT suggested:

> *I just told my team to carry on like a normal day – and we did, we carried on like a normal day.*

<p align="right">*Co-analysis interview with Merida*</p>

Merida was adamant that, as head of Early Years, she should have the autonomy to lead her team in continuing to support learning and development through child-led provision. From Merida's account, she knew that her team were doing a good job and that they had nothing to fear but, not understanding Early Years pedagogy, the SLT in her school seemed to feel like they had to perform differently during the inspectors' visit. The culture of fear created by Ofsted's imminent arrival that leads to Merida being 'othered' by her own team. To Merida, having neglected Early Years up until this point, SLT's suggestion to change everything Merida

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[53] At the time of submission there was outrage among the teaching profession at the role Ofsted played in the suicide of Head Teacher Ruth Perry with a neighbouring school refusing to admit inspectors and national petitions for an inquiry into the inspection that ultimately led to Ruth's decision to take her own life.

has put in place to support the children, to their preconceived Key Stage Two centric vision of what the inspectors will be looking for is ridiculous.

Nancy Forester describes a similar situation when inspectors were due to visit her school. Having made significant changes in Early Years with the help of her job share partner which had been praised by the local authority and were having a marked impact on children's progress, conflict arose when Ofsted were due and her SLT asked her to change everything for the inspectors as explained in the vignette below:

> *Ofsted was coming, and there was concern about all we're trying this new thing, and… and we need to maybe… maybe we need to redress the balance you don't want to go back to how it was… maybe we went a bit too far, that way.*
>
> *I know that Early Years gets its own writing doesn't it, but so rare that you get an Ofsted inspector he has a really decent understanding what it should look like and because I felt I felt certainly towards the ending, Ofsted kind of looming, obviously we didn't know when it would actually happen, but, that that was definitely part of you know, a cog in the wheel of kind of changes. We've been a bit experimental but now Ofsted's coming we better kind of pull ourselves together*

Vignette compiled from co-analysis interview with Nancy Forester

Nancy Forester makes an important point; not only is there little understanding of Early Years amongst teachers and Senior Leaders in schools, but there is also no requirement for the inspectorate to have any Early Years' experience (Gov.UK, 2022a; Gov.UK, 2022b). It is little wonder then that, when inspections are imminent, SLT begin to panic and the pendulum swings from neglecting what is happening in Early Years to trying to make the Early Years department of the school look more like the other year groups. Knowing how pedagogically inappropriate this would be, QTMEYS are forced to decide whether to comply and perform for the inspectors for the duration of the visit or draw on their professional confidence and defend their child centred, play-based, relational pedagogy.

Muller and Young (2019) made an important distinction between powerful knowledge and knowledge of the powerful. Merida's courage is inspiring. Her confidence enabled her to share her powerful knowledge about the learning that was taking place in her setting even though it was clear to her that this confused and perplexed the inspector who did not appear to have any relevant or recent experience in Early Years. Although Merida had the confidence to do this, perhaps QTMEYS should not have to be so brave; perhaps those in positions of power should have powerful knowledge gained through relevant experience too. It appears evident to the participants that without experience of Early Years, inspectors are unable to make accurate judgements about the quality of provision. In the absence of recent relevant experience, inspectors are forced to base their decisions on dehumanised data about academic outcomes rather than observations of children's learning and development and the quality of their interactions with practitioners. Given the power of the inspectorate, many of whom may be former head teachers as leadership experience is a prerequisite for becoming a school inspector even though experience in all three Key Stages is not (Gov.UK, 2022b), it is little wonder that there is so much focus in schools on academic outcomes and so much fear around what the inspectors will think.

6.5 Summary of findings

This chapter has demonstrated that there are parallels in the experiences of all five participants which indicates that, although the sample size is small, shared narratives of the lived experiences of QTMEYS can be developed. Thematic analysis suggests that this shared

experience is one of isolation, neglect and conflict caused by the lack of understanding and respect for early childhood development demonstrated by policy makers and other educational professionals. The written narratives and oral accounts of the participants detail the psychological impact this experience has on QTMEYS and suggest that, if QTMEYS are to be better supported in professional practice, then changes must be made 'right from the start' of their professional journey by reviewing the content of ITE provision.

6.6 Conclusion

Within this chapter, the five individual narratives have been brought together to investigate *how* the factors identified in Chapter 5 shape professional experience (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Actions have been identified which are, or which could be taken to reduce the dissonance the participants have experienced (Festinger, 2001). These actions relate to the extent to which ITE provision promotes competence, autonomy and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The findings presented in this chapter have clear implications for ITE provision and the continued professional development of QTMEYS. These implications will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 7: Synthesis of findings

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the lived experiences of QTMEYS and identify how this knowledge could be used to inform ITE and continued professional development. This was important as QTMEYS are liminal professionals who lack the statistical significance to be 'heard' in studies which aggregate data from the teaching profession as a whole, but whose experiences may not be fully explored in studies focused on the Early Years workforce. In response to the dehumanised data and prevalence of fixed response surveys often used to inform policy, this study has focused on the psycho-social dimension of professional practice.

This narrative inquiry has used two points of data collection and three points of analysis, as discussed in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, I used the Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982) to analyse the written narratives of five QTMEYS. This analysis enabled me to identify how they conceptualise their professional practice and the factors which shape their experience of this practice. The I-Poems (Gilligan, 1982) developed during the first stage of analysis were then used as a stimulus for co-analytical interviews which explored *how* each factor shaped the participants experience and produced rich insights into their professional worlds. The corpus of evidence was then analysed thematically to generate shared narratives of professional practice as a QTMEYS.

From these shared narratives, modest claims can be made about the lived experiences of QTMEYS and implications identified for ITE and the continuing professional development of

this particular group of teachers, whose needs may not have been fully explored in the evidence used to inform recent DfE initiatives, including the CCF (2019b), ECF (DfE, 2019c) and Teacher Retention Strategy (DfE, 2019a). This chapter brings together the findings of this study. Returning to the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3, this Chapter discusses how the findings complement or challenge taken for granted assumptions about ITE and the continuing professional development of teachers.

7.2 Exploring the tacit knowledge within the data

The main findings from Chapter 5 were that QTMEYS experience significant dissonance in professional practice. This is consistent with prior scholarship which has focused on the impact of neoliberalism on the teaching profession as a whole (e.g. Ball, 2015). However, the findings from Chapter 6 suggest that, while dissonance may originate with policy decisions, it is exacerbated by the lack of ambient support QTMEYS receive from Senior Leaders and colleagues in schools. Neglect, isolation and conflict were consistent themes across all five participants' accounts. This presents a challenge in that, although this is a small-scale study, the commonalities in the experiences of the participants suggest that it can be claimed with credibility and veracity that the needs of QTMEYS are neglected at policy level. As a consequence, the support and professional development opportunities they receive in ITE and in school are also limited.

Issues of limited or isolating professional development were threaded throughout all five accounts. These findings are consistent with those of Nutbrown (2018, 2013) who observed

that not only are existing graduate pathways for QTMEYS inadequate, but that despite the vast body of evidence demonstrating the importance of Early Years, issues of respect and recognition for the unique skills and knowledge needed to work in Early Years persist (as discussed in Chapter 2.3 and explored in Chapters 5 and 6). Nancy, who followed a Primary PGCE route, describes feeling marginalised from the outset of her course which, consistent with Nutbrown's (2013) findings, left her unprepared for professional practice. The fact that a teacher who, like Nancy, has had just one hour of formal input on Early Years and no formal assessed placement in the Foundation Stage could be given a post as a Reception teacher illustrate the lack of value ascribed to Early Years by policy makers and Senior Leaders in schools.

Nancy's experience was not unique. Coco, gained a great deal of experience in ECEC throughout her circuitous journey towards becoming a QTMEYS but also describes experiencing a high degree of "professional loneliness" (Ings, 2017:187) throughout her training. For Ben and Merida, who followed specialist Early Years pathways, this feeling developed later, once they had entered professional practice and for Etta, it emerged when she made the transition from Key Stage 2 to Early Years. These accounts suggest that more could be done to prepare potential QTMEYS for professional practice. However, the failure to include sufficient focus on Early Years in Primary ITE programmes has wider implications too.

It can be claimed that failure to ensure that Primary ITE programmes contain sufficient focus on the EYFS perpetuates the lack of understanding of and respect for QTMEYS that is endemic in English schools and results in "professional loneliness (Ings, 2017:187). This failure means

that rather than being inclusive communities of practice, schools are places where QTMEYS feel isolated and 'othered'. Given that anyone who follows a Primary ITE route could teach in Early Years or become a senior leader or mentor at some point in their career, there is an urgent need to ensure that all ITE routes contain sufficient focus on Early Years to enable them to do so. The lack of focus on Early Years also means that the majority of teachers in Primary schools have little understanding of the skills and knowledge required to teach young children. The narratives presented in this study document the impact this has on the level of recognition and respect QTMEYS receive from colleagues and senior leaders in practice (as explored in all five narratives).

Ensuring that Primary ITE is inclusive of all three Key Stages could not only significantly impact how well prepared QTMEYS are for professional practice, but also improve the level of ambient support they receive through from colleagues. Merida provides an account of how providing training for colleagues around the characteristics of effective learning for all staff built recognition and respect for Early Years pedagogy and enhanced practice in other Key Stages. This account suggests that ensuring that all Primary teachers have a secure understanding of each key stage of Primary education could build connection between colleagues, improve standards of teaching and support retention by reducing the sense of isolation and othering that QTMEYS experience. Similarly, the inclusion of a formally assessed placement in Early Years would enable all Primary Teachers to develop understanding of how theory works in practice and a respect for the skilful application of appropriate knowledge that is necessary to support the learning and development of young children.

Ofsted (2021) acknowledge that the culture in schools is set by SLT. If the culture in schools is to become one that is more supportive of QTMEYS then, as Merida suggests, "we need educated leaders" (co-analysis interview with Merida). While NPQs exist that support the development of managerial skills, and new mentoring qualifications have also been introduced, the necessity of leaders and mentors having relevant experience has been neglected. This shared experience could significantly impact the professional development of QTMEYS by increasing the ambient support mentors and SLT are able to provide.

However, the content of ITE programmes has become increasingly prescriptive with the introduction of the CCF (DfE, 2019b) and the escalated promotion of fast track, school-based training routes advocated in the controversial ITE market review (DfE, 2021). With QTMEYS already isolated and 'othered', there is now an existential threat that if these policies are pursued, QTMEYS will become even more marginalised. Criticism has been levelled against the promotion of SCITTs in the ITT Market Review (DfE, 2021b).   The academic content of these courses has already been questioned by Brown (2018), and other studies have raised concern about their long-term cost effectiveness (Allen et al, 2014). It has been suggested that, just as decisions to underfund the Early Years sector have been deliberate, the government is deliberately trying to destroy teacher confidence by eradicating University based ITE (Hodgson, 2014). Ben explains why he believes university based ITE is so important and why the shift towards SCITT is potentially damaging:

> *I think it's really dangerous.   I think you miss out on university and having that input from academia which is important.   You miss out on the child development, the phonics teaching.   You might have a teacher in school who the head teacher thinks is great at phonics but actually might not be such a great person to learn from, you know.*

Well we've had … there are a couple of teachers who work in our school who've been through this process in our school, and they have only ever taught in our school, and they – you know they are beloved of the head teacher because they know her way and they fit her way and they don't question her.

Vignette compiled from co-analysis interview with Ben

Ben's vignette points at the dangers of a system of ITE that focuses on compliance. Teaching is a relational activity and QTMEYS, in particular, need to have a range of strategies at their disposal if they are to be able to develop the autonomy and confidence to adapt their provision to meet the needs of the children in their care.

It is easy to succumb to the belief that we are powerless to challenge the grand narratives of neoliberalism, patriarchy and the supremacy of dehumanised data (de Beauvoir, 2015). As Etta observes, this sense of immanence is fostered by policy makers through regimes of regulation and control which deliberately erode professional confidence and autonomy (Evetts, 2013):

In hindsight and looking at what's happened to teacher education I think you know … I can see why the government want to have as much condensed university based stuff or whatever and more in the settings, because there was a big focus, and having four years was just amazing. So I'm not saying it wasn't intense or what have you, but it meant that you know you could start off with your first placement just really going in observing, going into different schools, getting a feel for it, you know it gradually increased with the amount of responsibility you would have. So by the time you came to your fourth year and that final placement and you took the whole class and led it, you know you had a level of confidence. You'd been with different settings and different teams and what have you. So all of that I love the practical, but then having a back-up as well of you know college and tutors to support you.

I think courses like mine … and in fact the one that I was on, the 4 year B.Ed, are invaluable, absolutely invaluable. And look at me – it's kept me in the profession you know. And I'm sure there are other people who've done a one year PGCE and what have you, but I think it was good value for money in the long term really.

Merida followed a similar route in Canada and insists that the focus in ITE in England has shifted so much towards performative aspects of teaching that "it needs to come back to the children":

> *Even the NQT I had last year, I said, you know, what are you learning in university. Oh we learn about safeguarding and the right questions, and what to look out for in abuse and you know how to do a lesson plan like this. And I'm just thinking that's awesome, yeah you need to learn that safeguarding is so crucial, but what about your actual day when something goes wrong. What about when you have reports, parents' evening's data, phonics assessment, and you have to mark all your books within 5 days, like how do you manage that? And you talk about the wellbeing of a child, well what about yourself, because if you come in to work stressed out the children will be stressed out.*

> *Co-analysis interview with Merida*

BERA (2021) have also criticised the lack of focus on child development and professional confidence in recent policies designed to support the professional development and retention of teachers, suggesting that the developmental theory included in ITE has been simplified to the point that trainees will not be able to develop a nuanced understanding of how children learn, as Merida discusses:

> You know you're dictated by what you need to do, but actually you need to evaluate, and we need to acknowledge what we're not good at and how we can make that better, because no one is perfect.

> *Co-analysis interview with Merida*

It could be argued that there is a lack of sincerity in the desire professed in policy documents to promote teacher retention; after all, a workforce that lacks confidence is a compliant workforce. But as Merida points out, education is too important to allow this to continue:

So many good really brilliant teachers are leaving the profession and they're leaving with such a horrible taste in their mouth because they hate the job now. And you know it shouldn't be like that – especially in Early Years.

Co-analysis interview with Merida

By focusing on the emotional, affective dimensions of the lived experiences of QTMEYS, this study supports narrative imagination of the psychological impact of the conflict between policy makers, senior leaders and QTMEYS. Elwick et al (2017:516) claimed that "ideological policy making, led by the pursuit of an idealised and ill-defined notion of quality, disregards the views and opinions of those actually working in the sector at its peril". Coco points out "things only change if you speak out" (co-analysis interview with Coco). There is an urgent need to ensure that teachers are equipped with a sound knowledge of child development and learning theory so that they have the knowledge to be able to support the children in their care. But ITE programmes also need to ensure that they foster professional confidence so that all teachers are able to engage with and challenge the policies that shape their practice.

7.3 Conclusion

The participants in this study have provided rich, illustrative accounts of their professional lives. Analysing these accounts through a psycho-social lens (as discussed in Chapter 3) has provided a narrative understanding of the factors which shape their lived experience of professional practice. Festinger's (2001) theory of cognitive dissonance, was used to focus on the socio-emotional perspective of the participants. This study has found that QTMEYS experience significant dissonance when trying to regulate external contingencies such as anti-theoretical polices like RBA or SSP. This dimension of their experience was highlighted through the use of I-poetry. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) encouraged

a focus on the socio-political dimension of the participant's experience. It is apparent that the systemic source of the dissonance they experience is the clash between the neoliberal ideology which underpins policy decisions and the humanist philosophy which guides ECEC. This dimension was evident from the written narratives, but the third reading of these narratives also revealed other sources of dissonance. QTMEYS receive little ambient support from colleagues and senior leaders within their settings. From a psycho-social perspective, this means that QTMEYS struggle to achieve self-determination throughout their professional lives as their competence is not recognised, their autonomy is curtailed and they struggle to develop a sense of relatedness with colleagues; needs identified by Ryan and Deci (2000) as crucial to support job satisfaction.

The actions the participants take to resolve the dissonance they experience include becoming vitriolic critics of the system (e.g. Coco), moving to the independent sector (e.g. Merida), or leaving the profession (e.g. Nancy). These actions are consistent with those identified by Archer (2007). However, there are also acts of micro-resistance as identified by Archer (2019) such as Nancy's participation in protests against RBA, Etta's determination to support others and the statement of solidarity with Reception teachers, and Ben's refusal to defend SLT decisions to Ofsted. These acts give hope that QTMEYS can find ways to occupy the margins they are forced into by their liminal position within the education system. Crucially, the findings of this study suggest that what QTMEYS need most of all is "educated leaders" (co-analysis interview with Merida) and 'educated colleagues', who are able to offer them the recognition, respect and ambient support they need to continue their professional development in a neoliberal education system.

This Chapter has brought together the key findings of this narrative inquiry into the lived experiences of QTMEYS. In the next Chapter, I revisit the aims of this inquiry and the claims arising from my findings. I consider how these findings contributes to existing scholarship, the implications of the findings for my professional practice and make recommendations for ITE and CPD providers.

Chapter 8: Conclusion and Implications

8.1 Introduction

My argument throughout this thesis is that changes in ITE could significantly improve the way that QTMEYS experience professional practice. The previous Chapters have explored the way ECEC is perceived at policy level and demonstrated that the needs and interests of this liminal group of teachers have been overlooked in the evidence used to inform policy related to ITE, professional development and retention. The findings and discussion Chapters have illustrated the lived experiences of QTMEYS and highlighted the psycho-social impact of the symbolic violence they encounter on a quotidian basis. This final chapter summarises the key findings of this study in relation to the research questions:

- What is the lived experience of professional practice as a QTMEYS?
- What factors shape this experience?
- How can this information be used to inform initial teacher education and support the continued professional development of QTMEYS?

The conclusions which can be drawn from these findings and the recommendations they lead to will then be discussed. Reflections on the limitations of this study and the impact it has had on my professional development as an ITE lecturer, Early Years advocate and researcher are shared. The contribution this study makes towards existing scholarship about the lived experiences of QTMEYS will be acknowledged. This chapter concludes with a consideration of how the findings of this doctoral study could be disseminated and suggestions for further research.

8.2 Aims and claims: summary of findings

I begin by summarising my findings in relation to the research questions set out in my introductory Chapter. In doing so, I highlight the extent to which each question has been addressed and where the evidence for each claim can be found.

8.2.1 What is the lived experience of professional practice as a QTMEYS?

This study claims that QTMEYS may experience isolation, neglect and conflict in their professional lives. A significant body of evidence suggests that ECEC provision led by well trained, highly qualified staff can have a significant impact on young children's learning and development (see Chapter 2.2). The narratives and accounts presented in this study (see Chapters 5 to 7) reveal that, although the participants have a strong vision of their practice as relational and child centred, 'right from the start' of their careers they begin to conceptualise[54] themselves as perceived to be second class citizens in relation to other teachers. This sentiment is expressed by all five participants, but its origins are perhaps best expressed by Etta who had spent the early part of her career in Key Stage 2:

> This was a place, in the first six years of my teaching at the school I had only ever wandered through thinking "what the hell is going on here! "

(Appendix 3.4)

It appears that the quotidian isolation, neglect and conflict QTMEYS may experience originates in the lack of understanding amongst colleagues about relational play-based pedagogy.

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[54] By the term 'vision' I mean that they have a strong mental image of what they role entails and how it should be enacted. In contrast, I use the term 'conceptualise' to suggest that they have constructed a concept of how they are perceived based on their lived experiences of professional practice.

8.2.2 What factors shape this experience of professional practice?

The next claim that can be constructed from the findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6 is that relational factors significantly impact the way that QTMEYS experience professional practice and that these relationships may be less supportive for teachers who work in Early Years than they are for those in other Key Stages. The lack of understanding within Primary schools about play-based relational pedagogy leads to a lack of ambient support (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Consistent with previous scholarship (as discussed in Chapter 3), the relationships the participants had with those they worked in close proximity to impacted not only their sense of connection with colleagues but also the extent to which they experienced professional competence.

Concurrent with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979), the dominant political ideology also shapes the participants professional lives. The tension between neoliberal education policy and the humanist principles enshrined in the Statutory Framework for the EYFS (DfE, 2021) was described as a source of dissonance which significantly impacted professional competence and the satisfaction the participants derived from their work. This finding is congruent with scholarship, discussed in Chapter 2 and Ryan and Deci's (2000) suggestion that competence is one of the key factors in self-determination.

The participants were highly critical of neoliberal policy and practice, giving examples of how neoliberal policy direction has undermined their ability to act competently and autonomously

in the best interests of those they teach. While neoliberalism holds that the market has the solution to all problems (Giroux, 2015), is raises ethical challenges to the values of those who embark on careers in education, motivated by an altruistic desire to make a difference in the lives of those they teach (Grace, 2013; Biesta, 2009). Theory and research highlights that, when people are unable to act in ways which feel authentic in their professional practice, they experience mental anguish and are compelled to take action to reduce this (Archer, 2007; Evetts, 2006; Baard et al, 2004; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Foucault, 2020; Freire, 1993). One of the possible actions available to those who no longer feel that their professional role aligns with their personal values is to seek alternative employment.

8.2.3 Informing ITE and continued professional development

The third question this study asked was 'how can this information be used to inform ITE and support the continued professional development of QTMEYS?' As discussed in Chapter 2, it takes time to develop expertise and professional confidence. Unfortunately, concern has grown in recent years that teachers are leaving the profession before they are able to achieve this. Declining teacher retention statistics across the education sector indicate a general lack of satisfaction with neoliberal education policy, but the narratives shared in this study suggest that QTMEYS face unique challenges that may not have been identified or fully explored in previous scholarship. Returning to the theoretical framework constructed in Chapter 3, QTMEYS navigate multiple systems simultaneously which shape their experience of professional practice (Bronfenbrenner 1979). The dissonance (Festinger, 2001) experienced by QTMEYS appears to stem from a systematic bias within the current education system

which impacts children right from the point they enter full time education, and QTMEYS 'right from the start' of their careers when they enter ITE.

Existing scholarship supports the necessity of those in leadership and management positions in schools having recent, relevant experience (see Chapter 2.4). While the claim that leaders should have relevant experience is not new, the narratives shared in this study highlight the reality that many senior leaders have no experience of Early Years at all and illustrates the negative effect this has on QTMEYS. The central thesis that has emerged from this study is that changes in the training and education offered to all Primary school teachers could improve the lived experiences of QTMEYS and support their retention.

The initial aim of this study was to identify how the training and education of QTMEYS could be improved. However, the findings imply that it is not just the training, education and ongoing professional development offered to QTMEYS that needs to be improved, but that offered to **all** Primary specialists. The challenges QTMEYS face appear to arise from the lack of value ascribed by policy makers towards the education and care of young children (see Chapters 2 and 6). The low status of Early Years professionals and lack of recognition and respect for the developmentally pedagogic approach advocated by Early Years influences the extent to which QTMEYS are able to meet their need for competence, autonomy and relatedness within their professional lives (Ryan and Deci, 2000). While there is a pressing need to address the status of ECEC and EYPs at policy level, the findings of this study suggest that much could be done to improve the lived experiences of QTMEYS 'right from the start'

of their careers by acknowledging that there are three Key stages in every Primary School and reflecting this in ITE provision.

The failure to address all three key stages equally in Primary ITE perpetuates inequality in the amount of respect and professional recognition afforded to those in Early Years. As QTMEYS attempt to reduce the dissonance they experience between their commitment to relational child centred play-based pedagogy, they are forced into conflict with colleagues and policy makers. The findings of this study suggest that if Primary ITE were diversified to include equal focus on and assessed placements in all three key stages, all Primary teachers would be equipped with the necessary knowledge and understanding to teach effectively in Early Years or to be better allies and advocates for those who do.

8.3 Reflections and consideration of limitations

There were a number of challenges that arose during this study which could be seen as limitations. Some of these challenges emerged from the purpose and nature of the study itself, others from unforeseen events beyond my control. I discuss these challenges and limitations here.

One of the key challenges I faced in this study resulted from my position as an insider researcher, a subjectivity I have foregrounded from the outset. I have tried to remove myself from the narratives, but there was an inevitable resonance in our shared experiences that could lead to accusations of affinity bias. I believe that the narratives and accounts the

participants shared were a gift. In response to the dehumanised data often used at policy level, I have tried to unwrap them carefully, respecting their individuality but this causes a tension as the requirements of the professional doctorate mean that ultimately, claims must be made and implications identified for future practice. I am not certain this tension could ever fully be resolved, but the use of thematic analysis to create shared narratives has gone some way towards doing so. It should also be noted that while there is a school of thought which suggests that research should be objective and value free, policy is often driven by ideology rather than evidence and there is a tendency to reject research which contradicts dominant narratives. This tension is explored by scholars such as Biesta (2009) who asserts that the evidence used to inform policy **should** focus on the values and purpose of education rather than ideology. While the value and purpose of education remains contested between policy makers and educators, a balance must be struck between studies which provide descriptive statistics **about** education and those which focus on subjective experiences **of** the education system.

Alongside epistemological and ethical challenges, broader global and structural factors also shaped my research journey. Conducting doctoral research during a global pandemic was also challenging. The research design enabled the study to progress despite disruptions to daily life, maintaining social distancing and reducing unnecessary travel through the collection of written narratives and use of online interviews. The scale of this study could be seen as a limitation. However, expanding the number of participants would not have been possible, given the depth of analysis required, the resources available and the timescale of this study. Furthermore, the aim of this study was to gain rich, illustrative data. It is argued that the

research design and the form of analysis not only ensured the verisimilitude of the narratives presented in Chapters 5 and 6, but also the authenticity and credibility of this study. The similarities between the participants' accounts indicate that sufficient data was collected to make tentative claims about the lived experiences of QTMEYS. These findings could be confirmed through a larger, funded study.

I am aware that there is a negative bias running throughout the narratives presented in Chapter 6. It could be suggested that this bias is due to the context and timing of the study which took place during a global pandemic when morale was particularly low. This is a psycho-social study, a term which is elastic and subjective but also socially constructed and contingent on situational and relational factors. As such it captures a 'snapshot' of how the participants felt at a particular moment in time. However, although the participants' narratives are temporally and situationally constructed, they are not static. The narratives may have been constructed during the pandemic, but they catalogue the systematic, systemic, symbolic violence the participants have endured 'right from the start' of their careers and evidence the psycho-social impact this has had on their professional identity and aspirations.

This study deliberately set out to identify the factors which shape the lived experience of QTMEYS and the sources of dissonance within this experience. Recent studies have documented how the pandemic impacted the mental health and wellbeing of teachers (e.g. Jerrim, Allen and Sims, 2022) and it is possible that this is reflected in the participants' narratives. However, should the study be repeated in the near future, it is likely that the

findings would be similar as it has been suggested that unprecedented numbers of children are entering education with developmental delays and additional needs due to the ongoing impact of Covid 19, and that this is particularly impacting QTMEYS (Grenier, 2022). Furthermore, subsequent policy level discussions around reducing childcare ratios[55] continue to imply a lack of understanding, value or respect for those who work with young children and the narratives presented reflect the negative impact this lack of understanding has on the lived experiences of QTMEYS. Vaish, Grossmann, and Woodward (2008) suggested that we tend to learn more from and react quicker to negative experiences. By focusing on the dissonance experienced by the participants, the need for change is highlighted and by exploring ways of reducing dissonance, an alternative possibility has been revealed.

8.4 Contribution to knowledge

Another challenge faced in conducting this study was sifting through the abundance of scholarship to identify research relevant to this study's focus on QTMEYS. As discussed in Chapter 2, ECEC stands at the intersection between debates about the status of women and children in society and about the skills and knowledge necessary to support the learning and development of young children. QTMEYS occupy the borders between two competing constructs of education, facing unique paradoxes in their professional practice (Moyles, 2001) as they struggle to navigate the emotional and ethical complexity of balancing the needs and interests of children with the imposition of pedagogically inappropriate policy demands. While separate studies have focused on retention within the Early Years workforce (see

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[55] In March 2023 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that ratios would be increased and 'free childcare' expanded to support working parents. The use of the word 'childcare' continues to demonstrate a lack of focus on the educational value of the EYFS and the skill of the Early Years workforce.

Chapter 2.3) QTMEYS are often overlooked in research concerned with teacher retention or lack the statistical significance to be 'heard' (see Chapter 2.4) in aggregated data. As a consequence of their liminal status, the experiences of QTMEYS remain under researched and the extent to which existing policies meet their needs could be questioned.

By focusing explicitly on QTMEYS, this study contributes towards knowledge about how to support the retention of this minority group of teachers. Building on the work of Nutbrown (2013, 2018), this study suggests that changes need to be made not only to how QTMEYS are prepared for professional practice but to the training and education offered to all teachers who work in Primary Schools.

The theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3 is also considered a contribution to knowledge. Previous scholarship has drawn on ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to examine the systemic factors which shape practice (e.g. Archer, 2006; Price and McCallum, 2015; Dyer, 2018; Zavelevsky, 2022). Scholarship has also utilised SDT (Ryan and Deci, 2000) to explore the psycho-social impact of these systemic and institutional factors on individuals (e.g. Gorozidis and Papaioannou, 2014; Noddings, 2016; Hobson and Maxwell, 2016; Wiles, 2018). Other studies have used Festinger's (2001) theory of cognitive dissonance (e.g. Seniwoliba, 2013; Pyhältö, Pietarinen, and Salmela-Aro, 2011) to interrogate how teachers attempt to resolve the dissonance they experience in professional practice. By combining these theories, the framework I have developed explores the socio-political, psycho-social and socio-emotional dimensions of practice and the extent to which multiple factors influence individuals' ability to meet their needs within a specific context, explaining

the actions they take or which could be taken to resolve the dissonance they experience. This framework should have utility in future studies around the lived experiences of teachers or other professionals, particularly those studies concerned with supporting teacher retention.

Finally, this study is also considered to have made a methodological contribution to scholarship around the lived experiences of teachers. Other scholars have used The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982) to analyse written narratives (notably, Petrovic et al 2015), but the six point data collection and analysis strategy presented in Chapter 4 can be seen to develop and extend how written narratives are analysed to ensure an interpretive verisimilitude which results in a nuanced and tacit appreciation of human concerns and actions. This relational analytical approach could be used more widely to emphasise unheard voices in research around teachers' professional experiences and as a tool for critical reflection on and in professional practice.

8.5 Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the findings discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, and the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 3, the following recommendations are made about how to support the professional development of QTMEYS:

- All Primary pathways should include a greater focus on child development and an assessed placement in an Early Years setting so that all teachers have the opportunity to gain an understanding of developmentally appropriate pedagogic approaches.

- Those who mentor QTMEYS should have recent, relevant experience of ECEC and QTMEYS should continue to have access to relevant, appropriately challenging CPD throughout their careers.

- Primary school leaders should have experience and understanding of ECEC, ensure that all three Key Stages are given equal respect and recognition and that teachers in all three Key Stages enjoy equality of opportunity in order to nurture connection between colleagues, and foster the competence and autonomy of QTMEYS.

In addition to the recommendations made for ITE providers and school leaders, a suggestion is made for policy makers that changing the way the evidence used to inform policy is conducted, in order to ensure the nuanced differences between different groups of teachers are captured, could lead to more effective policy decisions which have a far greater, positive impact on the retention of QTMEYS as a minority group within the education system as a whole.

8.6 Implications for my professional practice

This study was conducted as part of an Educational doctorate and, while I have always been committed to supporting those who wish to become QTMEYS to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to enter professional practice, it has had a transformative impact on how I conceptualise my role in ITE.

When I began this study, I thought that I would gain insights into how to empower my Early Years students so that, when they became QTMEYS, they would have the academic armour

and professional confidence they need in professional practice. What I have found instead is that in order to empower QTMEYS, we need to educate everyone about the importance of Early Years and child-centred, play-based relational pedagogy.   This changing realisation echoed my own experiences as a QTMEYS and as an ITE lecturer and gave me the confidence to revise my approach to how I act as an advocate for the EYFS. To use a colloquial term, I realised that I had been 'preaching to the choir'.

The implications for my own practice are that there is a need to advocate for greater emphasis to be placed on ECEC across all Primary ITE pathways offered within my institution. While I do not have the power to insist that each of the ITE pathways in my own institution offer assessed Early Years placements, I am in a position to empower my colleagues to promote the characteristics of effective learning and the principles outlined in the statutory framework (DfE, 2021) as equally relevant to all Key Stages. By embedding the language of the EYFS throughout our modules, the feeling that Early Years is "alien" (a phrase used by both Nancy and Coco) might be reduced and attitudes towards play-based relational pedagogy might change. To begin this process, a Primary team meeting is planned in which subject teams will be briefed and challenged to identify how they can promote awareness and appreciation of the EYFS in their modules.

However, systemic change takes time. In the interim, perhaps there is also more that I could do within my own ITE setting to educate leaders and mentors. In addition to ITE, we run a range of postgraduate courses including Master's level provision for school leaders. I am now committed to seeking the opportunity to develop an Early Years module for those on Master's

level leadership programmes. It is my hope that through this module, recognition of the importance of ECEC and respect for QTMEYS within schools could be promoted and the neglect, isolation and conflict experienced by QTMEYS may begin to be addressed.

8.7 Dissemination

The findings suggest that one of the best ways to support QTMEYS would be to reduce the level of isolation experienced by those who work in Primary Schools in particular by ensuring that all Primary school teachers have the opportunity to develop a secure understanding of ECEC. The first place I have sought opportunities to disseminate these findings is within my own setting, sharing my research in themed talk times, Primary Team meetings and at the Institute of Education research conference in 2023. To further reduce the "professional loneliness" (Ings, 2017:187) described by the participants, I intend to share Nancy, Ben, Coco, Merida and Etta's stories in teacher facing professional publications and platforms so that QTMEYS who feel the same way know that they are not alone.

I have applied to present at the International Professional Development Association (IPDA), British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society (BELMAS) and British Educational Research (BERA) conferences in 2023. I am also exploring other opportunities to disseminate my work in order to provoke further discussion and debate around ITE, and the support QTMEYS receive after they have graduated. In addition, I have been privileged to have the opportunity to contribute a chapter towards an edited text on pedagogy in higher education. This chapter will focus on critical pedagogy, challenging ITE

providers to remain cognisant that it is our students and the pupils they will work with who are the key stakeholders in ITE, as such, it is their needs and interests which must be prioritised. To prioritise these needs and interests, the CCF (DfE, 2019b) must be interrogated and interpreted rather than simply implemented so that all Primary ITE students are equipped with an understanding of the characteristics of effective learning and the principles which underpin practice in the EYFS.

As policy direction in England moves further and further away from the humanist ideals on which ECEC was founded, I am reminded of the words of Yateman (1994) who insisted that those engaging in research must use their intellectual authority to serve the non-dominant members of society and legitimise their voice in policy development. This speaks to the purpose of this study in that it has focused on liminal professionals within the education sector, raising awareness of their lived experiences of professional practice and concerns around neoliberal policy directives. To this end, I continue to attend all party parliamentary meetings and have contributed towards several policy documents highlighting the importance of ECEC and advocating for changes in ITE provision and the CPD offered to teachers. The findings of this study have informed these contributions and will continue to do so.

8.8 Suggestions for further research

This study has highlighted the dissonance that QTMEYS experience in professional practice and the psycho-social impact it has on them. However, Etta's account offers a narrative of

hope. Etta alone has been guided by experienced mentors throughout her career. These mentors have shaped her professional identity and guided her development. The qualities necessary to be an effective mentor are already well documented and have been discussed in Chapter 2, but further research could be conducted to explore how QTMEYS in one form entry schools could be better supported at the early stages of their careers. Such research could be used to inform discourse around aspects of the ECF (DfE, 2019c) aimed at addressing the gaps in provision for the professional development of QTMEYS. However, I acknowledge that it is unlikely that such a study would identify simple solutions to the lack of ambient support available for QTMEYS.

It is easy for neoliberal policy makers to dismiss evidence from within the sector which challenges grand narratives in favour of evidence which points towards simple solutions to complex problems (Edwards and Protts, 2008). As discussed in Chapter 2, this tendency has meant that for too long the wrong questions have been asked, and the wrong people, or, more accurately, not all the right people have been consulted. Instead of focusing on the data about how many people are leaving the teaching profession, or which of the preselected criteria occur most frequently amongst their reasons for leaving, further research is needed which provides evidence about the lived experiences of QTMEYS, and teachers in all phases of education. Rather than aggregating data from different Key Stages, the key to supporting teacher retention could be in developing an appreciation of the different challenges that are faced in each Key Stage and an understanding of what could be done to reduce the dissonance that teachers experience in professional practice. To do this, this study could be repeated with teachers in different Key Stages.

This study has demonstrated that narrative enquiry has the potential to provide insight into the messy and complex issues which surround decisions to stay in professional practice. The use of the Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982) in particular has highlighted sources of dissonance that may not have been identified in other forms of enquiry. However, to gain the attention of policy makers, it may need to be conducted on a much larger scale. Nevertheless, ultimately, perhaps the best way to understand the lived experiences of QTMEYS, and indeed of all teachers, would be through a longitudinal narrative study. Such a study could utilise the theoretical framework and six-point strategy used in this thesis but collect data at multiple points within teachers' professional lives to document how their needs and perceptions change over time.

8.9 Summary

The central thesis of this narrative enquiry is that changes in the training and education offered to all Primary school teachers could improve the lived experiences of QTMEYS and support their retention. I have argued throughout that failure to acknowledge the value and importance of the EYFS means that our current system fails the most vulnerable children and those who work with them. I remain committed to advocating for the changes necessary to support young children by ensuring they have teachers who understand their needs, have the confidence and autonomy to meet these needs and the support of their colleagues as they endeavour to do so. I believe that my study will go some way to providing the evidence needed to achieve this aim. My conclusion is that the process of building recognition and respect for QTMEYS begins 'right from the start' in the ITE offered to all Primary specialists.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Analysis of key documentation

Appendix 1.1- Unmasking the expert group behind the ITT Market Review

Dickens (2021) posted an article in Schools Week optimistically lauding the appointment of so many former teachers to advisory positions in Westminster.

While it is reassuring to imagine that teachers are being consulted on matters of policy pertaining to education, on closer exploration many of these advisory experts have close affiliations with particular forms of education that the government has been trying to promote. Having worked closely with Multi-academy Trusts and SCITT's, it is little wonder that the 'expert panel' conveyed to create the ITT Market Review (DfE, 2021b). Their identities and potential bias are explored below.

Name	Current role	Former roles and responsibilities	Education
Ian Bauckham Secondary specialist **Vested interests in SCITT**	Chair of OFQUAL CEO of Tenax Schools trust Trustee of Sabre Education Trustee of Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Board Member of the Confederation of Schools Trusts (CST) Chair, Project Board Oak National Academy	Board member of NFER Elected member of HTB supporting the work of the Regional Schools Commissioner on academies and free schools Executive Head teacher (from 2015, previously Head teacher) Bennet Secondary school and Teaching school hub Teacher of MFL Cardinal Newman Catholic School, Cardinal Newman Catholic School, · 5 yrs	1881-1984-Cambridge University MA Modern and medieval languages 1984-1985- University of Nottingham PGCE 1992-1994- UCL MA language acquisition 1995-Heythrop College MA Philosophy
John Blake	Head of Public Affairs and Engagement and former Curriculum Research and Design Lead – Ark	Director of policy and strategy- Now Teach Head of Education and Social Reform- Policy Exchange History consultant and ITE lead Harris Federation	2001-2004- Oxford University BA History 2006-2007- UCL PGCE

Secondary specialist **Vested interests in SCITT**		Assistant head Academy of Excellence London Plashet school head of humanities Parliament Hill School Acting and Deputy head of humanities King Edward VI grammar school Deputy head of history and politics/ teacher of History	2012-2021-Cambridge University MSt Advanced History Teaching
Richard Gill Secondary specialist **Vested interests in SCITT**	Chair of the Teaching Schools Council, CEO of the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership	Principle examiner and consultant Cambridge Examinations Head teacher Deputy Head Teacher Arthur Terry National Teaching School Assistant head Chase Terrace Technology College Head of Year/ Head of Alternative Curriculum/ Music teacher The Friary School Teacher of music The Blessed William Howard School Peripatetic music teacher Staffordshire County Council	University of Huddersfield-BA hons Music[56]
Ruben Moore Secondary specialist **Vested interests in SCITT**	Executive Director of Programme Development – Teach First	Director of ITT Star Academy- current role	1993-1997- Edinburgh University MA History and Politics 1995-1996_ Georgetown University MA Political science and Government 1997-1998- Cambridge University PGCE Education
Professor Sam Twiselton	Director of Sheffield Institute of Education – Sheffield Hallam University	Executive Dean University of Cumbria Trustee of SHINE (a charity supporting teachers and disadvantaged children in the North of England)	1984-1987- Oxford University BA hons Philosophy and Theology

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[56] Further details not available except that he was a student at the first school he taught in

		Vice President Chartered College of Teaching	1987-1988 Charlotte Mason College- PGCE Primary 1998-2002- University of Birmingham PHD Education
Primary Specialist			

While each of the 'expert panel' has experience of teaching, with the exception of Sam Twiselton, they are all secondary school teachers and may not fully understand the difference between the roles of Primary and Secondary teachers and the nuanced difference in the training and education that Primary teachers require. Furthermore, while Professor Twisleton does work in a University, she is also affiliated with MAT's and SCITT as an advocate of school based ITT and continued professional development.

Dickens, J. (2021). The Westminster Teacher Takeover. Available at: https://schoolsweek.co.uk/the-westminster-teacher-takeover Accessed 24/7/2

Appendix 1.2- Analysis of the evidence used to inform the CCF

Given that there is a significant body of research that focuses on the fact that young children learn predominantly through play, I have chosen to present the evidence used to inform Standard 2 which focuses on how children learn.

Evidence	Details	Other	Secondary	Primary	EYFS
Adesope, O. O., Trevisan, D. A., & Sundararajan, N. (2017) Rethinking the Use of Tests: A Meta-Analysis of Practice Testing. Review of Educational Research, 87(3), 659–701	Meta-analysis predominantly American studies		(green)		
Agarwal, P. K., Finley, J. R., Rose, N. S., & Roediger, H. L. (2017) Benefits from retrieval practice are greater for students with lower working memory capacity. Memory, 25(6), 764–771	American	College students (green)			
Allen, B. and Sims, S. (2018) The Teacher Gap. Abingdon: Routledge	Book aimed at policy makers advising them how to make teaching a more attractive profession. Includes narratives from both primary and secondary teachers but NOT QTMEYS- it is unclear what this has to do with how children learn but it does focus on the negative impact of testing.				
Baddeley, A. (2003) Working memory: looking back and looking forward. Nature reviews neuroscience, 4(10), 829-839.	Theoretical	Does not specify (green)			
Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (2009) Developing the theory of formative assessment. Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability, 21(1), pp.5-31.	Book aimed at teachers		(green)	(green)	
Chi, M. T. (2009) Three types of conceptual change: Belief revision, mental model transformation, and categorical shift. In International handbook of research on conceptual change (pp. 89-110). Routledge.	Subject specific to science		(green)		
Clark, R., Nguyen, F. & Sweller, J. (2006) Efficiency in Learning: Evidence-Based Guidelines to Manage Cognitive Load. John Wiley & Sons.	Book- heavily focused on technology	Adult Education (green)			
Cowan, N. (2008) What are the differences between long-term, short-term, and working memory? Progress in brain research, 169, 323-338.	Theoretical- focuses long term memory decay	Lifespan- mostly geriatric (green)			

Reference	Description				
Deans for Impact (2015) The Science of Learning [Online] Accessible from: https://deansforimpact.org/resources/the-science-oflearning/.	10 page American pamphlet aimed at teachers and teacher educators		🟩	🟩	
Dunlosky, J., Rawson, K. A., Marsh, E. J., Nathan, M. J., & Willingham, D. T. (2013) Improving students' learning with effective learning techniques: Promising directions from cognitive and educational psychology. Psychological Science in the Public Interest, Supplement, 14(1), 4–58	American- explores different techniques for improving memory and retention	College students	🟩	🟩	
*Education Endowment Foundation (2018) Improving Secondary Science Guidance Report. [Online] Accessible from: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/	Subject specific to science		🟩		
Gathercole, S., Lamont, E., & Alloway, T. (2006) Working memory in the classroom. Working memory and education, 219-240	Working memory of adults and school age children	Adults	🟩	🟩	
Hattie, J. (2012) Visible Learning for Teachers. Oxford: Routledge.	Meta-analysis		🟩	🟩	
Kirschner, P., Sweller, J., Kirschner, F. & Zambrano, J. (2018) From cognitive load theory to collaborative cognitive load theory. In International Journal of Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning, 13(2), 213-233	Collaborative learning in face to face, online and asynchronous situations	🟩	🟩		
Pachler, H., Bain, P. M., Bottge, B. A., Graesser, A., Koedinger, K., McDaniel, M., & Metcalfe, J. (2007) Organizing Instruction and Study to Improve Student Learning. US Department of Education.	American instructional guide for how to design and implement programmes	high	middle	elementary	
Pan, S. C., & Rickard, T. C. (2018) Transfer of test-enhanced learning: Meta-analytic review and synthesis. Psychological Bulletin, 144(7), 710–756.	Meta-analysis and systematic review- ambiguous but	🟩			

Reference		Age range
	appears to be adult learning?	(highlighted)
Roediger, H. L., & Butler, A. C. (2011) The critical role of retrieval practice in long-term retention. Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 15(1), 20–27.	Review of evidence that supports that regular testing supports retention of information- age arranges not specified	
Rosenshine, B. (2012) Principles of Instruction: Research-based strategies that all teachers should know. American Educator, 12–20.	American	(highlighted)
Simonsmeier, B. A., Flaig, M., Deiglmayr, A., Schalk, L., & Well-being, S. (2018) Domain-Specific Prior Knowledge and Learning: A Meta-Analysis Prior Knowledge and Learning. Accessible from:	Meta-analysis of pre and post-test domain specific knowledge	Not specified- appears to be adult orientated?
Sweller, J. (2016). Working Memory, Long-term Memory, and Instructional Design. Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition, 5(4), 360–367	Theoretical-cognitive load theory	Not specified
Willingham, D. T. (2009) Why don't students like school? San Francisco, CA: JosseyBass.	American- explores approaches of veteran and novice teachers	Kindergarten (highlighted)
Wittwer, J., & Renkl, A. (2010) How Effective are Instructional Explanations in Example-Based Learning? A Meta-Analytic Review. Educational Psychology Review, 22(4), 393–409	Meta-analysis of how effective worked examples are as a teaching technique	Not specified

Analysis of all the evidence used to inform the ITT Core Content Framework (DfE, 2019a) reveals just two studies that are specific to Early Years: one concerned with SSP, the other with Singapore Maths- both methods which focus on automaticity and testable outcomes. This reveals a concerning bias towards transmission models of education, denial of relational pedagogy and refusal to acknowledge the vast body of evidence about how young children learn.

Appendix 1.3: Analysis of evidence used to inform the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy

DfE (2019a:6) state 'this strategy is specifically about teachers working in schools. We will consider whether any initiatives will be extended to other phases'. It can be assumed then that the strategy does not extend support to teachers in Maintained Nurseries despite their cruciality and the fact that they too will have gained QTS, but, as Reception teachers work within Primary schools, their needs should have been considered in the development of the strategy.

Evidence	Key message	Focus
Department for Education (2018), National pupil projections – future trends in pupil numbers: July 2018	Demand for secondary school teachers is growing	Secondary
Sims, S. (2017), What happens when you pay shortage-subject teachers more money? Simulating the effect of early-career salary supplements on teacher supply in England	Science and maths teachers are in particularly short supply- paying them a supplement will help support retention	Secondary science and maths specialists
Department for Education (2018), School workforce in England: November 2017. Figure for 2-year retention based on cohort beginning teaching in 2015,	Over 20% of new teachers leave the profession within their first 2 years of teaching, and 33% leave within their first 5 years	Aggregated data
Department for Education (2016), Schools workforce in England 2010 to 2015: trends and geographical comparisons; Sibieta, L. (2018), The teacher labour market in England: shortages, subject expertise and incentives.	Retention is particularly low in areas of disadvantage where secondary schools in particular struggle to recruit specialists in certain subjects	Aggregated data/ Secondary specialists
Sibieta, L. (2018) The teacher labour market in England: shortages, subject expertise and incentives.	Outside London the picture is even poorer and maths specialists are in particularly short supply	Secondary specialists
Sims, S. (2017), TALIS 2013: Working Conditions, Teacher Job Satisfaction and Retention	Workload is a key factor in low job satisfaction	Secondary

Micklewright, J., Jerrim, J., Vignoles, A., Jenkins, A., Allen, R., Ilie, S., Bellarbre, E., Barrera, F. and Hein, C. (2014), Teachers in England's Secondary Schools: Evidence from TALIS 2013; Higton, J., Leonardi, S., Richards, N., Choudhoury, A., Sofroniou, N. and Owen, D. (2017), Teacher Workload Survey 2016	Less than half the time teachers spend working is spent actually teaching	Secondary
Worth, J., Bamford, S. and Durbin, B. (2015), Should I stay or should I go? NFER analysis of teachers joining and leaving the profession	Teachers often leave for jobs that pay less but where they have a better work/ life balance (analysis of the report also so issues with number of applicants, attrition on ITE and increased likelihood of secondary school teachers leaving)	Primary and Secondary
Department for Education (2018), School workforce in England: November 2017; Office for National Statistics (2018), EMP01 NSA: Full-time, part-time and temporary workers (not seasonally adjusted), released December 2018 (figures refer to employees only, Oct-Dec 2017	Teachers leaving the profession often move into part time posts but there are relatively low numbers of part time posts in schools	Aggregated data including maintained nurseries
Barmby, P. W. (2006), 'Improving teacher recruitment and retention: the importance of workload and pupil behaviour', Educational research, 48(3) pp. 247–265; Department for Education (2017), Analysis of school and teacher level factors relating to teacher supply	Pupil behaviour significantly contributes to teacher stress and decisions to leave the sector	Secondary
Sims, S. (2018), What happens when you pay shortage-subject teachers more money? Simulating the effect of early-career salary supplements on teacher supply in England.	Same study used twice- to justify paying maths and science teachers more- but introduced as new data/ 'increasing evidence'	Secondary science and maths specialists
Worth, J. (2017), Teacher Retention and Turnover Research – Research Update 2.	Within MAT's teachers tend to move to more disadvantaged schools (however, Wroth also shows that movement within trusts is ten times higher than would normally be expected particularly where the schools are geographically close to	MAT's (does not specify phase but can assume it includes Primary)

	each other- possibly teachers in search of promotion?)	
Department for Education (2018), School workforce in England: November 2017; Office for National Statistics (2018), EMP01 NSA: Fulltime, part-time and temporary workers (not seasonally adjusted), released December 2018, figures refer to Oct–Dec 2017.	Reusing same data to support encouraging part time positions- a possible ploy to be able to say the number of teachers has increased later on?	Aggregated data including maintained nurseries
Worth, J., Lynch, S., Hillary, J., Rennie, C. and Andrade, J. (2018), Teacher Workforce Dynamics in England	Secondary school teachers in particular move into part time positions when they leave	Primary and Secondary
Department for Education, (2017), Censuswide survey on behalf of Get Into Teaching	Teaching is seen as a rewarding career but people don't want to train to teach	Potential trainee teachers
Source for applications data: UCAS (2018), ITT monthly statistics: applicants, 'UCAS Teacher Training applicants at Monday 17 September 2018'	over 150,000 people registered on the Get Into Teaching website, but only 45,000 people applied for mainstream postgraduate teacher training	Potential trainee teachers
YouGov Analysis of the market size and profile of career changers for Teach First, cited in Teach First (2018), Britain at a crossroads: what will it take to provide the teachers our children need?	Over half those on PGCE courses are career changers rather than recent graduates	Potential trainee teachers

It is evident that increasing the number of trainee and qualified Secondary school teachers, particularly maths and science specialists is the governments' priority. Although they claim that secondary school teachers are more likely to leave, this could be statistical misrepresentation because there are more of them. There is a pressing need to address the short fall of secondary maths and science specialists but the fact that primary teaching remains a popular choice of study does not conceal the fact that attrition rates are high and retention is low within the sector. While QTMEYS may not have been a priority at the time the strategy was written (pre-pandemic), there is evidence to suggest that QTMEYS may be leaving in larger numbers than ever and the retention of ALL teachers must be considered.

Appendix 1.4- Analysis of the evidence used to inform the Ofsted Inspection Framework

Evidence used	Methodology	Key findings	Participants
UK Health and Safety Executive, 'LFS – Labour Force Survey – Self-reported work-related ill health and workplace injuries', 2017; https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/lfs/index.htm.	Uses data gathered from employers	teaching is one of the three professions with the highest reports of stress and depression, at a rate of 2.64 cases per 100 professionals compared with 1.23 cases for all occupational groups (Ofsted, 2019:52)	National survey of all occupations in Britain. Teachers have been homogenised into a single group
'Retaining and developing the teaching workforce', National Audit Office, 2017; https://www.nao.org.uk/report/supporting-and-improving-the-teaching-workforce/.	Online survey , Case studies two primary schools, three secondary schools and five teaching schools , Written submissions from unions	in 2016, 35,000 teachers left their jobs for reasons other than retirement (Ofsted, 2019:52)	10,000 school leaders 285 primary and 201 secondary. Data has been aggregated
J Higton, S Leonardi, N Richards, A Choudoury, N Sofroniou and D Owen, 'Teacher workload survey 2016', Department for Education, 2017.	Online survey	Workload impacts well-being (Ofsted, 2019:52)	3,186 teachers from 218 schools. responses were then weighted to represent the larger population of secondary
3 P Sellen, 'Teacher workload and professional development in England's secondary schools: insights from TALIS'. Education Policy Institute, 2016	Stratified survey	teachers in England work longer hours than those in other countries, and there is evidence that occupational well-being can be low (Ofsted, 2019:52)	100,000 secondary school teachers internationally
The big question 2017', National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, 2017; https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/article-listing/big-question-survey-report-2017.html.	Online survey	79% of teachers reported that their job had impacted negatively on their well-being, and 60% stated that they felt that their well-being was not considered important by their school (Ofsted, 2019:52)	7,000 teachers- data aggregated so minority voices may be lost
Ofsted's own survey	Online survey, follow up case study visits	Lack of support (from senior leaders), pupils' behaviour, workload and marking pupils' work key negative factors, ambient support	Aggregated data from 499 teachers, 94 members of SLTs and 88 classroom assistants

		from relationships, in particular those with colleagues and pupils (Ofsted, 2019:53)	
C Day, P Sammons, D Hopkins, A Harris, K Leithwood, Q Gu and E Brown, '10 strong claims about successful school leadership', National College for School Leadership, 2010.	Surveys completed by the heads and a range of other stakeholders. 20 case studies of primary and secondary schools conducted over 2 years	effective school leaders strive to develop positive relationships with staff and ensure that relationships between members of staff are positive (Ofsted, 2019:53) NB: Only included schools where here had been improvement in pupil outcomes over 3 years under same head teacher	Unable to find number of participants but study included aggregated data from primary and secondary schools
D Osher, J Sprague, R P Weissberg, J Axelrod, S Keenan and K Kendziora, 'A comprehensive approach to promoting social, emotional, and academic growth in contemporary schools', in 'Best practices in school psychology', edited by A Thomas and J Grimes, Volume 5, 5th edition, National Association of School Psychologist, 2007, pages 1263–1278.	Meta-analysis of studies on social and emotional learning	Student misbehaviour and a disruptive classroom can lead to emotional exhaustion for teachers. (Ofsted, 2019:53)	NA- learning theory
R Pianta, C Howes, D Early, R Clifford, D Bryant and M Burchinal, 'Observations of quality and practices in pre-k classrooms: associations with child outcomes and teacher attributes', paper presented at the biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, 2003	American literature review advocating inclusion of SEL programmes- does not focus on teacher well-being	Teachers tend to express negative emotions in response to student misbehaviour, which then leads to a detrimental classroom climate perpetuating negative patterns of behaviour (Ofsted, 2019:53)	Focuses on SEL Programmes in Early Years settings but uses secondary sources and focuses on designing programmes for children, not teacher well-being
C Maslach, W B Schaufeli and M P Leiter, 'Job burnout', in 'Annual Review of Psychology', Volume 52, 2001, pages 397–422.	American- theorises burnout and what can be done about it	high workload leads to teacher burnout such as exhaustion and the coping mechanism of distancing oneself emotionally and cognitively (Ofsted, 2019:53)	Not about teachers
M T Ford, B A Heinen and K L Langkamer, 'Work and family satisfaction and conflict: a meta-analysis of cross-domain relations', in 'Journal of Applied Psychology', Volume 92, 2007, pages 57–80	Meta- analysis	work–life balance highlighted as an important predictor of well-being in a number of studies (Ofsted, 2019:54)	Not about teachers

M R Frone, 'Work–family conflict and employee psychiatric disorders: the National Comorbidity Survey', in 'Journal of Applied Psychology', Volume 85, 2000, pages 888–895	Representative national sample of 2,700 employed adults who were either married or the parent of a child 18 years old or younger.		
T A Judge and J A Colquitt, 'Organizational justice and stress: the mediating role of work–family conflict', in 'Journal of Applied Psychology', Volume 89, 2004, pages 395–404	Postal survey 174 faculty members employed at 23 U.S. universities		
1 E M Eatough and P E Spector, 'The role of workplace control in positive health and wellbeing', in 'Work and Wellbeing', Volume 3, 2014, pages 21–32, page 92	Chapter in edited book	Importance of professional autonomy and agency (Ofsted, 2019:54)	Relevant but not about teachers
Breaugh 1999, as cited in E M Eatough and P E Spector, 'The role of workplace control in positive health and wellbeing', in 'Work and Wellbeing', Volume 3, 2014, pages 21–32, page 93	Chapter in same book as above	distinction made between control over how the work is done ('method autonomy'), the working hours ('schedule autonomy') and about what should be done ('criteria autonomy') (Ofsted, 2019:54)	Relevant but not about teachers
J Micklewright, J Jerrim, A Vignoles, A Jenkins, R Allen, S Ilie, E Bellarbre, F Barrera and C Hein, 'Teachers in England's secondary schools: evidence from TALIS 2013', Department for Education, 2014.	Stratified survey	most secondary school teachers in England either disagree (56%) or strongly disagree (15%) with the statement that they lack the autonomy they need to do a good job as a teacher (Ofsted, 2019:54)	100,000 secondary school teachers internationally
A Bandura, 'Self-efficacy: the exercise of control', W H Freeman/Times Books/Henry Holt and Co, 1997.	NA	Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their capability to exercise control over challenging demands (Ofsted, 2019:54)	NA- Psychological theory
E M Skaalvik and S Skaalvik, 'Dimensions of teacher self-efficacy and relations with strain factors, perceived collective teacher efficacy, and teacher burnout', in 'Journal of Educational Psychology', Volume 99, 2007, pages 611–625	Not found	low self-efficacy is related to teacher stress and a higher likelihood of leaving the profession (Ofsted, 2019:54)	523 Norwegian teachers in senior high school

R M Klassen and M M Chiu, 'The occupational commitment and intention to quit of practicing and pre-service teachers: influence of self-efficacy, job stress, and teaching context', in 'Contemporary Educational Psychology', Volume 36, Issue 2, 2011, pages 114–129	cross-sectional survey		434 practicing teachers and 379 pre-service teachers in Canada
J Micklewright, J Jerrim, A Vignoles, A Jenkins, R Allen, S Ilie, E Bellarbre, F Barrera and C Hein, 'Teachers in England's secondary schools: evidence from TALIS 2013', Department for Education, 2014.	Stratified survey	The TALIS study suggests that UK secondary school teachers have relatively high levels of self-efficacy (Ofsted, 2019:54)	100,000 secondary school teachers internationally

It is interesting that Ofsted have covered such a breadth of sources, drawing on psychological literature, theory and research. This appears to be a genuine attempt to understand the issue. However, they have relied on international studies to highlight the positive factors that support teacher well-being along with the international study which comments on the experiences of secondary school teachers in England.

There does not appear to be an understanding that QTMEYS, Primary and Secondary school teachers may have different experiences and therefore that factors which negatively impact their well-being may be different.

There is a need for evidence that does not aggregate data and which allows for open ended responses as there is a tendency to rely on survey based data.

Ofsted's proposed new inspection headings

Appendix 2: Evidence of ethical processes
Appendix 2.1 Confirmation of ethical approval

St Mary's University Twickenham London

24 March 2023

Dear Viki

I am writing to confirm that your application for ethical approval of your research enquiry was approved at Level 2 on 26 April 2021.

Researcher's name: Viki Veale
Regnum: 911150

Title of project: What factors affect recruitment and retention in the early years workforce?

Supervisor: Christine Edwards Leis and Fiona Cullen

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

M Mihovilović

Dr Mary Mihovilović
Institute of Education Ethics Sub-Committee Representative

St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

Approval Sheet

(This sheet must be signed at all relevant boxes)

Name of proposer(s)	Viki Veale
Name of supervisor(s)	Christine Edwards Leis Finn Cullen
Programme of study	EdD
Title of project	What factors affect recruitment and retention in the early years' workforce?

Supervisors, please complete section 1. If approved at level 1, please forward a copy of this Approval Sheet to the Faculty Ethics Representative for their records.

SECTION 1: To be completed by supervisor.(for student research projects)

☐ Approved at Level 1.

☒ Refer to Faculty Ethics Representative for consideration at Level 2 or Level 3.

Name of Supervisor:	Dr Christine Edwards-Leis		
Signature of Supervisor:	*LEdwards Lis*	Date:	13/7/20

SECTION 2: To be completed by Faculty Ethics Representative.

☐ Approved at Level 2.

☐ Level 3 consideration is required by Ethics Sub-Committee.

Name of Faculty Ethics Representative:			

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Appendix 2.2 Information sheet shared with participants

St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

Participant Information sheet

Who am I?

My name is Viki Veale. I have worked in early years for over twenty years as a teacher, homebased childcare provider, consultant, mentor and trainer. I am now employed as a senior lecturer in early years and primary education at a higher education institution.

Why am I contacting you?

I am undertaking an unfunded research project as part of my doctoral studies. The working title of my study is:

Qualified teachers in maintained early year's settings: the implications for initial teacher training, professional development, and retention revealed through narratives of lived experience

The purpose of my study is to reveal the story behind the statistics to re-humanise the way initial teacher training, practice and policy are understood.

I am inviting you to participate in my study because I believe your story could provide insight into:

- what motivates people to work in early years,
- how well existing pathways to qualified teacher status prepare teachers for professional practice in maintained early years settings
- the opportunities and challenges faced in professional practice and how these affect the way teachers in maintained settings feel about their work.

What am I asking you to commit to?

Once I have received your form, I will ask you write and to share your story with me as a word document via email. How you write it is up to you, but I'd love to know why you wanted to work in early years, what it felt like to be a recently qualified teacher in a maintained early years setting, what kind of challenges and opportunities you've had since then, and how these have led to where you are now.

Once you have shared your story with me, I will email you back to arrange an interview in which we can reflect on your story together. This will take place via zoom at a mutually convenient time. I am very aware of how long it might take to write your story, so I will try to ensure that the interview takes no more than 90 minutes.

What will happen to your story?

Any information you share with me will be kept on a secure server under a pseudonym of your choosing. Within legal limits, any information you share with me will not be shared with anyone outside my supervisory team.
Within three months I will have shared with you a draft of how your story will appear in my thesis. At this point, we can arrange to have another conversation if you would like to discuss anything further.

You have the right to withdraw your story up to six months after you have shared it with me. This deadline is in place to ensure that you are happy with the way your story will be presented. If you do choose to withdraw you simply need to complete the withdrawal slip on the attached consent form and email it to me.

PLEASE RETAIN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP TOGETHER WITH A COPY OF YOUR SIGNED CONSENT FORM

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Appendix 2.3 Informed consent form

St Mary's University Twickenham London

Consent form

Research focus:

> Qualified teachers in maintained early years settings: the implications for initial teacher training, professional development, and retention revealed through narratives of lived experience

Main investigator: Viki Veale

Contact details: 911150@livestmarys.ac.uk

Members of the research team: Christine Edwards-Leis- Supervisor (Christine.edwards-leis@stmarys.ac.uk), Fiona Cullen- Supervisor (Fiona.cullen@stmarys.ac.uk)

1. I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet which is attached to this form. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, for any reason and without prejudice.

3. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded.

4. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.

5. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

Data Protection: I agree to the University processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me.

Name of participant (print) ___ _____

Signed: _____   Date: _____

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please complete the form below and return to the main investigator named above.

Title of Project: _____

_____

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY. Name: _____

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Appendix 3: Written narratives

Appendix 3.1 Nancy Forester's written narrative

1st person (I, me, my, myself)	2nd person (you your)	1st person plural (we, us, our)	2nd person plural (they, their, them, others)

Nancy Forester's narrative	Plot commentary
It was witnessing the incredible early years practice in my son's primary school, and as parent governor at my daughter's maintained nursery school, that inspired me to seriously consider a career change. When researching different routes into teaching I hoped to find an early years specialist option that would suit the logistics of studying alongside caring for my young children, but I ended up taking a part time primary PGCE route. When I arrived at ▮▮▮▮▮▮ and told everyone I loved early years no one really 'got' that so I didn't talk about it anymore! In the one-hour lecture on early years during my teacher training I re-connected with my passion for early years. Where others felt slightly 'put off' by the apparent chaos and mess, I was inspired by the craftsmanship of writing observations of children learning in their own chosen way, and the magic of the practitioner who described how she planned using her environment and play. After a mini placement in a reception class I knew that I was in the right place and I threw myself into absorbing the outstanding practice in this child-led environment.	Strong sense of purpose- wants to work in Early Years Feels isolated on Primary PGCE mostly aimed at Primary, rest of cohort not interested
Returning to a primary school where I had been on placement in year 6 (gulp!) for an interview, I was offered a role as reception class teacher 3.5 days per week - job share with the school SENCO. I hope that the Head was pleased with my enthusiastic response!! I spent the summer holidays engrossed in a Masters assignment about best practice in transition from reception to year one, and through that study came across Julie Fisher, Alasdair Bryce-Clegg and Anna Ephgrave. I was so grateful to these practitioners with their in-depth understanding of the needs of very young children. They became my guides for planning the teaching and learning in my new classroom, and I began to shed the incumbent practice of maths groups, work sheets and termly Topics.	Wanting to please the head- insecurity? The only guides she has are the books she reads
As an NQT in a one form entry primary school with no nursery I soon found that, whilst my colleagues were kind and thoughtful, I did not have the adequate specialist support to feel confident in my role. My job share was stretched with her dual role in school. The infant phase leader had come 'down' to teach year 2 for the first time after many years in key stage two and, as well as full time teaching and phase leader, was also juggling a busy Deputy Head role. He was very encouraging as my mentor and told me that he trusted my practice, but without any specialist early years leadership in the school I felt isolated. When the school leaders requested data returns	Complete lack of support within setting- job share too busy, mentor has no experience, SLT don't understand EY

there was little understanding that in early years we have 17 areas to observe and assess, so my request for additional lead in time, or perhaps even extra release time, was met with suspicion and leadership felt it would not be fair on other year groups to allow this.	Felling isolated
The town's local early years network was at once a supportive and intimidating group to join as it made me acutely aware of everything that I was yet to learn, but also motivated me to keep going! Mindful of my lack of experience, I paid to attend a course led by Anna Ephgrave on planning in the moment and began to develop the confidence to lead training with support staff and adopt a new style of writing observations, liaising with parents and establishing an enabling environment. Although with little budget it was hard work to create the environment that I hoped for - many of the resources were paid for out of my own money. When the moderators came they liked the direction of travel, so the Head was pleased!	Seeks a community of practice- needs a mentor! Shows agency and commitment- attends courses, trains support staff Head happy because moderators are happy
The class TA, who was actually a Nursery Nurse, left after I had been in post for half a term, and wasn't replaced. I had three one to one support staff in the class, who did their best to help fill the gap. Then my job share was suspended, and ultimately dismissed, following an allegation from within the team. The team did their best but it was a challenging time for everyone as we were called in for interviews by the Head and governors. I went full time to enable consistency for the class. It was hard but also enabled me to move on with some of the best practice, and make further changes to the environment.	She was an NQT!!!- Her needs were being completely neglected, she had absolutely no support!
A new school year came around and my new job share was open minded about trying new ways of working. Having read 'Can I Go and Play Now' by Greg Bottrill we presented to the Head a new idea - of extending the children's time in play by taking out their formal registration, morning break time and requirement to attend assemblies. I explained the benefits of maximum engagement and involvement enabling progress, and suggested that the only 'formal' elements of our day should be daily phonics, daily sharing of a book, maths a couple of times a week and Helicopter Stories a couple of times a week. The Head gave us the go ahead to give it a try. The children's Characteristics of Effective Learning blossomed, the end of year Early Years profile results were the best for a while, and a year later the year one phonics results were good as well.	Shows the confidence to take the initiative and make changes which positively impact children's outcomes
But there was pressure. The children should be in assemblies. They need to feel part of the school. They have to learn to sit for a long time later in KS1, so they might as well start now. How will you know that you have covered the curriculum? The class room looks messy. It's noisy when you go in early years. When a TA comes in to cover they don't know what to do because there are no formal groups to	The head does not understand EY- what Nancy is doing is getting results but

run. Should those children really be doing the hoovering? They have been building that same den for a week now. Shouldn't the maths resources be in the maths area? The displays look a bit dull with that brown paper and hessian. When are you hearing them read?

Somewhere around this time I was made subject leader for PSHE and school council coordinator. I learned more about best practice in PSHE and led whole-school mental health weeks. I provided support and resources to other teaching staff to enable them to embed PSHE in their class practice. I cemented my understanding of the correlation between children's emotional wellbeing and mental health and their ability to thrive academically, as well as growing my understanding of the vital role of school in many children's lives to support their emotional and mental health. It felt more vital than ever to ensure time and space in the school day for this important subject, but of course the pressure of progression in English and Maths will always be more important in the current system. Teachers told me that they didn't have the time to get through the PSHE scheme of work. However the school behaviour policy was reviewed and the new approach sat really well with my ethos - we had already done away with public shaming of children in early years and it was wonderful when the rest of the school followed suit!

Then the government announced its plans to bring in a statutory baseline test. I spoke out on regional radio and attended a protest at Westminster against the plan. The leadership of the school were supportive and respectful of my feelings, but ultimately they knew that they would have to implement the changes that were coming. Along with a reformed Early Years Framework it started to feel that the system was shifting in a direction that I wasn't comfortable with.

Then came a cohort with a high level of neuro diverse children, toileting issues and speech and language delays. There just wasn't the correct level of staffing. Senior leaders undertook risk assessments and fitted locks on the classroom doors to stop the children from escaping quite as regularly, but didn't really understand that the children needed that enabling environment to thrive and doubts began to form-is this going to meet their needs? The baseline data showed that there was a need to focus on communication and language, and personal social emotional development. Modelling language and turn taking in the environment, developing a shared language for emotional regulation, enabling risk and teaching risk-assessment...these were the tools of the early years practitioner's trade...but with little support for the additional needs of our class we felt that we were spread very thin...it was certainly a challenging cohort of parents as well. I was diagnosed with severe anxiety and depression and signed off work for 6 weeks.

	appears counterintuitive- it doesn't look like school!
	This is her second year of teaching- too much too soon?
	Recognising the pressure of performativity- yes mental health matters but we must get results- lack of understanding that MH comes first
	Activist identity- those around her have already given up
	Children's needs were not being met- LOCKS ON THE DOORS!!!
	Knew what was needed but support was not there- neglect
	Emotional impact

I went back to work on a phased return and was just getting back in my stride. Still many challenges and there was a lot to 'catch up' with as the cover arrangements for my sick leave had been rudimentary. Then along came COVID, and lock down. We tried to provide virtual resources for the class that would enable child-led learning. But some parents wanted a more formal approach, so we signposted to websites and worksheets which might support this style of learning. For other families any kind of school felt too difficult, so we encouraged connection and celebrated their individual learning journeys through lock down. I delivered colouring pencils to children who didn't have them. We emphasised well-being and emotional regulation. We worried about some children whose families disconnected from us entirely, where there were already welfare concerns. When we returned to school it was in small groups. It felt fragmented and some families were reluctant to return at all. It enabled us to work in smaller groups to support and focus on the needs of the children who did come back, but it meant that others didn't have that same connection and we had less time to support them virtually. Some children were still, worryingly, absent.

Then I was told that I would be moving from reception and working in year 2 the following academic year. Various school staff changes and logistics meant that this was the preferred option and the Head told me that I should be happy about the chance to expand my experience. I argued that I knew I wanted to be an early years specialist, and what was the problem with that? No problem, but not at this stage in my teaching career she told me. My self-confidence was at rock bottom and I didn't feel able to say no. They clearly wanted a change in early years.

Having spent days setting up my new classroom in year two, including adding a book corner, and being met with barriers to developing an environment with some element of continuous provision, I felt my mental health sliding and knew that I couldn't return to teaching for the academic year. I handed in my notice mid-August and the school decided to recruit someone to start the year with the class, so I never did teach year two. Or get to do many other things that I had hoped for.

Having spent the last few months providing intervention support and covering in a lovely reception class as well as taking a qualification in Understanding Children and Young People's Mental Health, and applying for a range of different roles outside of teaching I am now working for a charity supporting children 1:1 and in small groups, as part of the local CAMHS service. It is a steep learning curve but feels like a more authentic way to support and celebrate children. I am sometimes working with schools, but in this role I feel that I am more able to support and represent the voice of the child and work in partnership to make changes and adaptations where appropriate.
In this role I have received much specialist training in the needs of neuro diverse children, which I am sorry not to have had while I was in class. I am also deeply sorry not to be spending my days enabling children's learning through play - although maybe I still am….

The pandemic seems to have helped Nancy develop a sense of herself as part of a team with a shared endeavour

But returning to school felt fragmented- some back, not all back, sense of shared endeavour ends?

Not given a choice- told she should be happy about it

Emotional impact- felt her work was not valued

Demoralised

Did she know what she was getting into as a teacher?

Teaching didn't feel authentic- why? Was it the

	system or just this particular school? Would she go back? Lack of CPD/ support

Appendix 3.2 Ben Ford's written narrative

1st person (I, me, my, myself)	2nd person (you your)	1st person plural (we, us, our)	2nd person plural (they, their, them, others)

Ben Ford's narrative	Plot commentary
I am a male early years practitioner in my mid-forties. I come from a working-class background in the West-Midlands but I am now based in ▮▮▮▮▮▮. I have been an early years teacher in a maintained English primary school for the last eight years. I've been in my current school for seven of those years and I have taught both Nursery and Reception classes. I currently teach Reception. I am going to try to tell you the story of how I got here.	Ben's background is central to some of the conflicts he talks about in this narrative- he has transcended hi roots but does not feel a sense of belonging
As a young child I had the ambition to be a teacher but I somehow lost hold of that idea as I grew up and navigated my way through education. I was lucky, in that my education was good. I attended the closest local maintained schools and did okay. I liked learning and I enjoyed my time at school. I enjoyed stories and the English language, I liked science, nature, geography and social sciences. I had some very memorable and inspirational teachers too. I found drama as an extra-curricular activity about mid-way through my life at school and I loved it. Drama then became a subject, one that I excelled in and so that became my focus in education. I studied Theatre Studies, Drama and English for A level and then as my first degree.	He refers to himself as lucky several times- does he realise his own agency in his development? He describes a love of learning here- what was it about drama that captivated him?
After a slow and very boring start in the Civil Service, my career began in the education department of the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ theatres in ▮▮▮▮▮. The ▮▮▮▮▮ having been one of the first theatre companies in the UK to realise that education was a key strategy to ensure survival. I was very lucky thereafter; I moved into management positions and sustained a career in arts education in Liverpool that lasted for over a decade. During that time, I worked in comedy teaching stand-up, worked for the Arts Council and what was known then as Creative Partnerships, I ran a children's touring theatre company and a youth theatre. I worked with and on behalf of	He was in drama but teaching

a huge range of teachers and educators in primary and secondary schools and beyond. I was able to work in theatres, Museums, parks, Art galleries and venues across ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮	
It was amongst the many projects that were a part of ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ in 2008 that I found my inspiration. One of the most interesting and creative I was involved with was a small partnership with the library service; a storytelling project for early years that would tour to primary schools, libraries and children's centres. This is where my early years story began. The work was some of the most amazing of my career in terms of the impact it had. The children were amazing, but the parents and early years professionals were fantastic to work with too.	Confidence to shift from andragogy to pedagogy He saw a way to make a difference and help others
I considered myself as working in education. Arts education, I thought was vitally important, not only as a subject, but as a means of supporting mental health, for developing self-confidence, self-esteem and resilience, an audience development tool and a cultural inheritance. I had led many drama workshops, theatre tours or education sessions but I did not consider myself a teacher. I planned education programmes, designed projects and managed teams of practitioners but I had never really been taught how to teach. I found the 'how' of teaching fascinating and something I was increasingly keen to learn. I began to believe that a career as an early years teacher would enable me to make a positive difference, whilst also continuing to be creative.	He begins to realise his potential Describes teaching as a way to make a difference and to be creative- sincere commitment to helping others
I had looked at the options for teacher training a few times over the years and was generally put off by one thing or another, primarily the need to continue working. I was told by one local University that I would never get on a PGCE course and that even if I did, I would never get a job in ▮▮▮▮▮▮! I was told my first degree was not good enough and I would need an MA to even be considered. So, this time I persevered and enrolled in an MA course with the Open University. After three years part-time study I had achieved an MA in Education. The next task was to prove to my employer that I could do my contracted 40hr working week in four days, so I could take Fridays off and volunteer at a local primary school to gain more experience working in the early years directly. I volunteered in the	Barriers to becoming a teacher: Financial necessity Lack of availability of work-based route Not good enough

Foundation stage unit of a local school and I loved it. I was finally ready to apply for my PGCE and the only choice for me was to follow an Early Years specialism.

I was accepted for an Early Years PGCE at ███████████████ University. It was a full-time course so I gave up work for a year and embarked on a new journey towards becoming a teacher. It was a fantastic course and I had a great experience, albeit an exhausting year that seemingly passed by at light speed. I was the only man on the course and felt at times like somewhat of a novelty or peculiarity. It was an amazing experience that, overall, I enjoyed immensely. I learned so much and felt confident that I had the necessary skills to become an effective early years teacher. One of the best parts of my PGCE year was the opportunity to work alongside some highly experienced headteachers as a part of a Teaching School Pilot with four schools based in the ██████ area of ████████ I applied for the pilot as it offered additional sessions for eight students, led by exemplary headteachers. The experience ensured that all my teaching placements would be within these inner-city, culturally diverse schools.

My first teaching post was at the primary school in ████████ city centre where I had undertaken my voluntary practice prior to my PGCE. Being a teacher felt like an honour. My intention was to become a good teacher, to learn my craft and survive the day to day challenges. My five-year plan was to hone my teaching skills and then look to progress towards management. I taught in Nursery and although grateful that this enabled me to achieve my QTS, it was an extremely difficult year and certainly gave me a new insight into the daily working life of a teacher in a maintained school. It was a difficult introduction to my new profession. I encountered extremely bad management (the head and deputy were eventually removed) and an institutional, non-progressive, discriminatory, judgemental and dysfunctional organisation the like of which I had never experienced before. After my first year I began to question my decision to change career but, determined to continue, I sought a new position.

Marginal notes:

Needing to prove himself

Financial commitment

Isolation because of gender?

Additional opportunities because of gender?

Went into teaching with experience and a plan

Knew the school but had not known it in the same way as he did now- more detail here?

Is the first year hard for everyone?

I feel at this point I should outline my ethos as an early years teacher, to better explain my rationale as an educator. I believe that early years education should be child-centred and should also be fun. It should provide children with a love of learning and foster a love of coming to school. I seek to work in collaboration with parents and believe that I work for children, on the behalf of their parents and guardians. I value diversity and represent that in my classroom and believe that inclusive practice in the early years should allow all children to make progress and feel valued and enabled. Early years education should provide the tools for children to begin to read and write, but to value these skills and understand why they are vital skills to learn. They should leave Reception with a love of stories and books, and an understanding and a sense of wonder at planet earth and the natural world. They should be interested and care about other people and have developed good relationships with peers and key adults. The early years are really the most vital in a child's education and I hope that I can help prepare them for the many years ahead.	Ben's professional identity is expressed in his creed
After my first year I found my second teaching position in my current school. I started as Nursery teacher and was tasked with modernising the school nursery. This I did. I also did everything else that was asked of me and more. All children in my care have always made progress. SEND children have been included and most have made rapid progress in my care. I have made a positive contribution to early years, the school and I do everything I can to support the wider school community. Lesson observations are consistently good and many parents have told me, and children continue to tell me, that they 'love' coming to school and 'love' 'reading', or 'writing' or 'animals' or 'science' or 'PE' or 'being outside'. It remains an absolute honour to be their teacher and I appreciate all the positive feedback. It does, however, increasingly feel like I am not doing enough.	Huge responsibility for a teacher in their second year! Ben is a good teacher- why does it feel like he's not doing enough?
I was promised that there was never a better time to become an early years practitioner at the time I started my journey as a teacher. Yet I have continually found myself being asked some quite remarkable questions or having to argue the case for something I had taken as a given, or at least as something that would be well understood. I came with the mind and positivity of an early years practitioner but I was asked things like "What is this best practice that you always speak of?" and "Well, where are you getting this [information] from?"	Ben feels isolated in practice because EY is not understood by others He is constantly having to explain things

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as if a teacher reading research or keeping up with new developments in practice was unusual or unheard of. I was told, quite seriously, not to "google things".	
I remembered the many times teachers had told me how important that it was to have senior managers who understood and valued the early years. I found myself with a headteacher without knowledge, experience or value for the foundation stage of learning. What I considered the most important years of a child's education weren't appreciated or recognised as important and so I frequently heard "well you're early years…". This meant a number of things and was used as grounds to make many unreasonable demands. "Well you're early years… so you can paint the fences in the garden", or "well you're early years… so cleaning is part of your job description".	EY is not valued- QTMEYS are looked down on, Cinderella's who do all the dirty work
I have been assured that "play is okay" or told "you can use videos you know" and any number of patronising and misjudged comment that show a complete lack of understanding about the unique importance of the early years, but also the unique challenges that the early years can face. Decisions are made that can have a profound effect on the children in Reception without any discussion, professional dialogue, or consultation. There is very little value afforded to the early years in my school. We are extremely under resourced, as is the whole school I should point out, and so there are no TLR posts are available at all for subject leadership. Indeed, early years is not considered valuable enough in itself to warrant a 'lead', so as a Reception teacher I lead on phonics and reading.	Patriarchal attitudes- patronising comments, put downs

Lack of respect- no funding, not seem as important |
| In recent years I have witnessed a slowly increasing formality demanded in Reception. It is a formality that many of the children are just not ready for when they first start school and yet it is a requirement despite the obvious opposition to the needs of the cohorts of children arriving at our school. There is simply no room for discussion or professional judgement. I find increasingly that there is a tendency towards labelling children, and adults too. An insistence on defining individuals by gender, class, sexual orientation, parental status, disability, special educational need or mental health status. It is troubling and I resist it, yet it is very clearly there in the | Lack of autonomy- Gov and SLT don't understand practice but want to control it

Children are being made to conform to expectations or are labelled as deficient in some way- an abusive |

motivations, actions and words of management. Children in the early years are too eagerly put into boxes and labelled. Labels that may stick for a very long time.	system that Ben tries to resist
I also find that in my current position there are absolutely no opportunities to move forward. No career development, no autonomy, no agency for change, no access to continuing professional development, often not even the technology or resources I require to successfully do my job. As a teacher I find it is not only my time that is increasingly expected for nothing, but now as a matter of course I often provide other essential resources too.	He is being abused too
To add to the challenges of recent years, we have of course had the last 18 months of the Covid pandemic to deal with. To say working in a school has been extremely challenging does not accurately describe the situation at all. It has been indescribably difficult in a myriad of ways; isolations, remote teaching and learning, a complete lack of external support for SEND children, dwindling resources, bereavement and the virus itself to name just a few.	Needs of those working in schools were neglected during pandemic- they were expected to just get on with things but they were not valued
So, my story will continue, but if I'm honest I cannot say right now for how much longer. I do question the sustainability of the role going forward and I certainly know that I'm looking for a new role in the next year or two. I know there is conflict between my current position and my ethos and values as an early years educator, and I know that this conflict must at some point come to an end. Being a teacher is still the best job in the world. It is an honour to work on behalf of children and their families, to do my best each day to equip those in my care with the vital skills they will need for a life-long relationship with learning.	Conflict between his values and what is valued in the system

1st person (I, me, my, myself)	2nd person (you your)	1st person plural (we, us, our)	2nd person plural (they, their, them, others)

Coco's narrative	Plot commentary
I guess I stumbled into early years by accident: 25 years ago, I took time out from my then career to care for my new-born twins. I was fascinated by their joy when they achieved something new, whether it was putting on their own socks or recognising numbers and letters while we were out walking. A job was advertised at the pre-school they attended, and I applied. The Foundation Stage document was quite new at this point and was already impacting on the people who worked in such settings. Up until this point, pre-schools had been somewhere children went to play and socialise and suddenly staff were expected to observe and assess. It was expected that staff would have a minimum qualification level and for many this was not something they were comfortable with on the basis that they were paid a low-level rate. I, on the other hand, have been a perpetual student and so was keen to add another qualification to my assortment. I completed, what was then, a Diploma in Pre-School Practice and this allowed me to lead a pre-school group, which I did. The pre-school served a very mixed community and was also the social services recommendation for children in need. This opened my eyes to the importance of providing opportunities to the most deprived in society and providing them with the eureka moments that all children should experience. We had many children attending who had specific learning difficulties, from physical disabilities to undiagnosed autistic spectrum conditions, which gave me a fantastic opportunity to realise that a multi-sensory approach to learning is better for all children. However, even at this early point in my career it was clear that early years was considered a second-class citizen to main- stream education. I then moved on to work as a teaching assistant in the Early Years department of a school, where I supported the Reception and Nursery Classes. During this time, I also completed my BA Education Studies. I was fascinated by the dynamics between the Early Years team and the rest of the school. If other areas in the school needed staff cover, it was taking from EY but when EY needed cover, KS1 & KS2 were extremely reluctant. Comments like "I'm not going in Reception, they're all snotty and cry" from a Year 5 teacher, reflected the feelings of the staff, as a whole. The P.E. teacher, who taught across the whole school, would deliberately schedule other activities during the EY P.E. lesson so that he was not available, because he said they "just muck about". Generally, the understanding of the importance of EY was not acknowledged. I think they genuinely believed the children just appeared in Year 1 with all the groundwork done and the basic skills in place.	An unintentional career change? The EYFS was changing as she entered it- she could see the desirability of qualifications - reflects challenges within sector around upskilling Gained new insight as gained experience Part of a team Second class citizens-outsiders othered within the education system Progression Growing awareness of outsider status of QTMEYS and lack of understanding/ respect for EY

Whilst I was studying for my BA, I became very aware of the complete lack of understanding around EY. I remember having heated discussions about problem solving in Mathematic: The majority on the course felt that there was no such thing as problem solving in EY. I argued that just because they do not record it in the same way, does not mean they are not doing it or learning how. I gave the example of working out how many knives and forks were needed for dinner in the home corner. The other students did not comprehend that this was the beginning of the process… How many people are going to eat dinner? To eat dinner, they all need a knife and fork? So how many do they need? The process of identifying the important information and extrapolating the data is the same. I was frustrated by the lack of acknowledgement of the foundations that were being laid by the learning in EY. This is where the myths

Having completed my degree, I moved on to lead an EY department whilst I completed my Graduate Teacher Programme and so became a qualified teacher. This was an independent school, but the EY department was a maintained nursery which accepted local authority funding for pupils. At the time, the funding formula was being reviewed and I became involved in the panel responsible for settings responses to this. This was the point at which it became clear that, not only did other staff consider EY to be second class citizens, but the government also felt the same. Whilst EY settings were supposed to have graduate level leaders (qualified teachers), the funding did not match the salary expectations. Something had to give; it was not possible to pay a teacher's salary, level 3 support staff as well as provide the resources needed to allow the children to thrive and this is the predicament most EY find themselves in.

Staff go beyond the remit of their role in terms of time and resources, but this has become the expectation; not only do they work their hours in school, but they spend their own time and money creating resources and completing paperwork. At this point in my own life, I was in school from 7.30am – 5pm, would come home to the usual family life of cooking, organising my own children's activities and taxi services, and then would prepare activities for the following day. The role takes over your life very easily. As an EY teacher I would always want to do the very best for the children in my care, but I constantly felt as though I was failing in one area or another; working at home took time away from my own family and not working at home meant I was letting my class down. The time spent filing in paperwork and keeping what felt like unnecessary repetitive records took me away from doing what the children needed.
As a teaching professional, I was able to spend time with the children getting to know them and their interests and scaffold their learning in the way that suited them best. In one setting I was expected to spend time completing PIPs assessments with each child when they entered Reception. This was an online assessment which took approximately 45 – 60 minutes per child and was online; the pupils were not able to read independently and concentrating for this length of time was completely unrealistic for children of 4 years and so these assessments were only even as good as the first 10 minutes of their concentration, whereas I knew what the next steps were for that child because I had spent time with them. I believe using this more holistic view of the children gives a much truer picture of where they are in their development than an hour sat in front of a screen, but it also relies on the professional opinion of the Early Years Teacher, which clearly is not valued.
I think there is a difficulty across the EY workforce who are predominantly female, in that we do not recognise our own worth and so others are happy to think that what we do is not important. I have had children who were in desperate need of support for specific

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Margin notes:

Other students did not value or respect QTMEYS/ EY- demonstrates that this is a societal issue not just a school one

Coco has to explain things that are obvious to anyone with any experience

As career progresses awareness increases of how undervalued EY/ QTMEYS are.
Rumpelstiltskin- spinning straw into gold

Unreasonable expectations- emotional investment and level of commitment is not commensurate with pay and respect

Gov do not respect teachers professional opinions- drive to dehumanise data- children should be seen (or their test results anyway) but never heard!!!

Patriarchy- women and children are not important so

learning difficulties, and it did not matter how hard I tried, there was no support available. On one particular occasion, I had a child who clearly had some difficulties and I worked so hard with her parents, who were completely willing to do anything she needed. By the end of her time in my Reception class I had managed to get a diagnosis and therefore by the time she went into Year One they were prepared and had appropriate resources. The Year One teacher came into my class one day in October and cried, because she was exhausted from dealing with this child and feeling as though she was letting the other pupils down, even though she was prepared for what was coming into her class. Her comment to me was "I don't know how you survived the year." And yet no-one recognised the struggles I had while she was in my class because it was Early Years and "it's developmental". I felt completely demoralised that no-one recognised my professional judgements and opinions because I was in an Early Years classroom and this is echoed by many other EY teachers I have spoken to. I think this was the tipping point for me. Whilst I still love working with the children and the pure joy they get from learning something new, I feel like the expectations, workload and paperwork has taken over from actually spending time with the children and supporting them in their play and development.

After 18 years working in EY and 12 as a qualified teacher, I was becoming increasingly frustrated by the lack of opportunities for professional development. The courses that were available were provided by local authority at minimal cost and whilst these might have been useful for those new to the sector, there was minimal benefit to those who had been in the profession for a long time and there was certainly no encouragement to get involved in research and development project. Further up the school, there always seemed to be enhanced CPD, focus groups and development projects. I decided to complete a Masters' degree at my own cost and in my own time, even then I had to reassure my Head that there would be no impact on my teaching (which I felt was incredibly short-sighted and surely the point of any CDP is to impact your teaching). I became increasingly disillusioned, with an education system that did not value its staff, did not work for the benefit of the students, and was constantly criticised by parents, press and government.

While I was studying, I became quite disruptive in staff meetings, questioning anything and everything, and not settling for the standard answers; I was desperate to make others think about what they were doing rather than just following the crowd or doing something because it was trendy. I felt that everything was a token representation of what should be done, and nothing was ever followed through to its conclusion. Part of this was because schools are constantly trying to adapt to the latest guidance from government and part is because of parental expectations. This was particularly apparent in Reception class, where it was always a balancing act of providing a play-based environment which the children needed to explore their own ideas and preparing them for Key Stage One where they are suddenly expected to sit and follow the instructions. When children moved into Year One, staff were quick to blame EY staff if the pupils were not ready for KS1 rather than considering what they needed to do differently because they did not understand the EY curriculum, despite my efforts. As a teacher in EY it felt like a constant battle between what is right for the children and what is expected by the wider school community.

women think they are not important so other people think they are not important- a vicious cycle of self-fulfilling prophecy	
No one is listening- no one's cares- abusive system that neglects the needs of those it is supposed to serve	
Demoralised- abused	
Lack of opportunity for CPD	
Lack of recognition and respect	
Disillusioned	
Behaviour communicating unmet needs- does not feel safe and secure in her setting	
Tries to challenge the status quo- fight response	
Constant battle against the system to fight for the needs of the children	

I have reached the point in my life where I am fortunate enough to not have to work. I felt I was completely exhausted by the constant battles, from having to justify my every decision and from not being given the professional courtesy that other teachers received. I took a step back from being in school full-time and now work as a supply teacher. The funny thing is I am now the preferred supply for several infant schools because I bring a wealth of EY experience. At the supply agency I work with many teachers will not go in an EY classroom, which I think further shows the lack of understanding of EY. I do not think I am the only EY teacher who has stepped away from full-time teaching because of the lack of respect for the sector. In the last 2 years I have been working as a link tutor for student teachers on placement. I have also delivered a lecture to PGCE students about EYFS. I feel this is a token gesture in building some understanding for those starting out in their teaching career. Many of these teachers will find themselves in a Year 1 classroom with no experience of EY. When 30% of pupils do not meet the expected levels at the end of EY, KS1 teachers are not equipped to meet their needs. Whilst I have done my best to educate others of the importance of EY, after all you cannot build a house without strong foundations, <u>the constant fight takes its toll</u> and I do not have the mental strength to continue in the face of constant criticism and blatant disrespect.	Emotional impact-exhaustion/ burn out Realises it is not just in her setting but across the education sector that EY is not understood Trying to transcend- to educate others Knowing they are set up to fail

1st person (I, me, my, myself)	2nd person (you your)	1st person plural (we, us, our)	2nd person plural (they, their, them, others)

Etta's narrative	Plot commentary
At the age of 19 I was working on a summer scheme at XXXXXXXX Adventure Playground. This comprised of an outdoor area with large wooden structures built and maintained by the play workers. The most popular of these structures was The American Swing which was both challenging and exciting for the children and young people who came to the playground. It was located in the middle of one of the council estates in what was a wealthy part of London and the children and young people aged 5-18 years old who came to and from the site after school, at weekends and during the day when holidays came with no need for adult permission. For them the site was a safe haven where they would be welcomed, supported, played with, and challenged by the adults who worked there. It was a place they felt was theirs. At the end of the summer I remained as a volunteer on the site and started to visit other Adventures across London where I got to know other playworkers and learn more about how to engage with children and young people through play. I joined the ███████ ███████████ and █████ the trade union for council employees. Both of these became important in shaping my understanding of teamwork, a collective approach to working and the importance of solidarity in the broadest possible sense.	Began career in play-work

Found mentors very early on

Joined professional networks- found solidarity |
| After six months I was successful in interview and began working full time at ███████████ Play center which was on the ██████ ████ Council estate at the base of the(███████████████████████. This was one of Westminster Councils two play-centers. Here I worked as part of a team of 5 with children and young people many of whom were of African Caribbean heritage. Again this was an invaluable experience, I learnt much about the importance of reflecting in the setting the heritage of the community in order for the children and young people to feel welcome and connected. The walls of the main hall, a high ceilinged concrete cold space, were enriched by murals of the faces of Black Heroes and Heroines historically and in present day. Here we worked to build a float and make costumes for the Notting Hill carnival and from here we took children to learn canoeing on the river Thames. | Learning on the job from others, developing cultural understanding |
| After a couple of years I moved from ███████ to work at a Play Centre near ███████ for Camden council. The team here was newly formed and very diverse. I worked part time and continued to develop my skills and understanding of communicating and building relationships with the children through their play. I worked here for three years before beginning my career in teaching. The decision to do this was motivated by two things. Firstly the council's decision to reduce the number of play settings they had (far greater than Westminster's two) and make them dependent on entrance payment and a move to make play workers take on the role of loco parentis, meaning there would no longer be an open door approach of come and go as you please. Secondly, the play-center I worked at burnt | Witnessed impact on neoliberalism on children's services- redefining practice, dehumanising it and cutting costs |

down and we were relocated to become a mobile team. At this point I turned to teaching. This I decided would enable me to continue working with children and be part of their learning and provide a stable income.

I began a 4 year BED Honours in Primary education with geography/history as my specialism at ████████████████████.
I began this course under the mature student umbrella as I was 25. I loved every minute of this course and never missed a lecture or tutorial. I enjoyed the time to read, discuss and debate, being able to write thoughts and ideas down and formulate an argument in essays. The course enabled us to have four teaching practices and numerous visits to schools. I was challenged studying Geography and History to degree level, alongside being introduced to and becoming immersed in theories of child development and pedagogy based on child centred learning. I continued my relationship with the geography department in my early years of teaching KS 2 in a primary school in ████ where I carried some action research on enquiry based learning. I left Uni with a First Class Honours degree.

My first post was teaching a mixed year three/four class in a two form entry primary with a large Indian and Pakistani intake and with a 52 place (at that time am and pm with 12.5 hour sessions each) Nursery unit. I began my teaching here pre National Curriculum and with my year 3 team partner also being an NQT. We used what was then called the integrated day model of teaching which was based around chosen topics through which we taught all aspects of the curriculum. It was also based on what we thought was a child centered approach to learning. My trajectory teaching at this school was impacted on by two external factors which shaped my understanding of children's learning. Firstly the National Curriculum came in and we were faced with a standardized curriculum for every subject area with each one having what seemed millions of attainment targets. As a school we spent much of our staff training trying to cut up all these attainment targets and match them to our existing topics. As the curriculum became more streamlined and the focus on numeracy and literacy as distinct subjects prominent, the sheer workload involved in trying to maintain an integrated day dictated that the school submitted and moved to a more subject based curriculum . The numeracy and literacy hour was now looming for KS2 and the imposition of SATs. Throughout this period I had tried to stay true to my pedagogical beliefs, which included taking part in a national boycott of SATs but found it hard to do so.

I maintained motivation by carrying out research on children being involved in school decision making by setting up a school group made up of teachers parents governors and children. I also took on a job share in the KS1 year 1 class to enable me to complete 2 distant learning MA modules, one on Bilingualism in Education with ████████ University (which the LA funded as part of an upskilling of school staff to meet the needs of EAL children in their schools) and another on Children Developing in Family Schools and Society with the Open University. These courses were excellent and alongside the fact I was now working in Year 1 which was holding on to some play-based learning I was motivated to develop the schools EAL provision and explore early child development in practice. It was obvious the only place left to really do this would be in the school Nursery. This was a place, in the first six years of my teaching at the school I had only ever wandered through thinking "what the hell is going on here! " When a vacancy came up for a teacher in the unit I, asked to work there as I was now absolutely sure I wanted to be part of whatever the hell was going on there!

Did a 4 year degree, enjoyed academic challenge learning about child development and learning theory and having the opportunity to go into school to see theory in action.

She found solidarity in not being the only NQT.

The introduction of the NC and NLH and NNH reshaped practice in schools and made it less responsive / child centred

This did not fit with Etta's vision of education

LA invested in training to meet needs of children in local area

As learning became more formalised, Etta saw early years as the only place that was holding on to child led

The Nursery team was made up two teachers, one of whom was the team leader and three nursery nurses, one of whom was bilingual, Punjabi speaking and section 11 funded to focus on EAL children and their families. I realized very quickly that it was a highly skilled team with a great knowledge and understanding of early childhood development. The team knew that the practice in the nursery was at odds with that of the main school and often would comment on how the children they saw go into it every year, lost their agency and became passive learners no longer in control of even accessing their own resources. I was part of this team for seven years and have to say was privileged to be so. Here the theory I had learned both at university and in the MA modules I had studied, welded together with exciting early years practice and I was part of a team collectively shaping it. It was a steep learning curve for me and one that brought back a joy to my teaching day and I would say a dynamism to my practice.

One of the interesting things we did each year was to lead a training day for the rest of the staff in the school. This was aimed at informing them about what went on in the Nursery and why it was important for the future learning of our children as they moved through the school. We also consciously challenged staff to question their practice with the aim of pushing child lead learning back into KS1/2. It is interesting that at this time we had no PPA time but we did have the half hours after each session to replenish and enhance continuous provision and to meet as a staff team. With the arrival of the EYFS we had begun to have Key children and develop each child's 'Special Book' which contained observations of what we called Magic Moments. At this time these were the only place you would find written observations of children's learning. All other observations were shared and discussed by the team and we also reflected on our practice at meetings during the week. We also as the experienced practitioners we were, at that stage felt confident in being able to intuitively interact with children and respond to their needs. Funding issues resulted in our Leading teacher moving to the Reception class and I became lead in the Nursey unit. We started to have a meeting each week with Reception staff as it was clear there was a wish to develop child lead learning there and to establish continuous provision.

When I moved from the school I knew that I would never return to teaching in KS1/2. The high stakes testing was beginning to embed in what had become a subject based curriculum and would later come to drive it, indeed right down to Reception as we know now. After a break of 2 years living in London for family reasons, I moved to ████████ Here I took up a part time teaching post, working with 3-4 year olds in a nursery within a large children's center, with a catchment area that included one of the city wards with a high level of deprivation. Working here has been a continual learning curve and after fourteen years I now feel confident and proud to say I am an experienced early years teacher. My trajectory has never included becoming part of the senior management team which in my setting would be to become a head or deputy. However I have always believed everyone can be enabled to lead and within my setting I have been able to do so from the nursery floor in numerous ways. I have a TLR for Equalities which has enabled me to embed what I would call Equalities led practice within the setting. I have led training days every other year on an aspect of Equalities (this year it will be on Anti-Racism and why BLM,) introduced new practices like bilingual story reading and established two parent workshops I run each year. I have been able to work with ██████ Uni PHD students exploring children's perceptions of difference and empathy.

learning and she wanted to be part of it.

The team were highly skilled and their practice was evidence informed

Etta had once again found skilled mentors to guide her development

The team were united and had a strong shared identity

They were activists- actively seeking to educate staff in other key stages about EYFS

Funding cuts once again impact practice

Etta moved to a Children's centre nursery and has had the opportunity to skill share and lead training for others, shaping practice and creating a collaborative community of practice that works together to support children's learning and development

I have also always lead a curriculum area which has again impacted on practice like using Gussey Palins work on story to inspire what we call Helicopter stories and reorganizing the setting to make communication friendly spaces. I have led staff meetings on sustained shared thinking and more recently planning in the moment which we have established now the across nursery. At the moment my lead is PSE	
Initially we were a large and integrated team by that I mean our Head Teacher led the Family workers and a large 0-3 what was called day care unit. She liaised with the health visitors who worked out of the center and the midwives and voluntary groups for the community. We had a community café which was run by our kitchen staff and local volunteers. This aimed to provide cheap healthy meals for families as they were coming to or picking up their children from nursery or the numerous groups run by the family workers (who also had a crèche worker in their team).The café also aimed to compete with the drive in McDonalds located at the center of the ward. Proper integrated working on a local level was fantastic. We were able to liaise about children and families quickly to meet need, we were able to use expertise to sign post, we were able to support families often for the whole of their child's early years. We developed a common approach to building up relationships with parents and developed trust among the community. Our setting at that time felt alive and buzzing and a place people wanted to be with their child.	Being part of an integrated service meant children's needs were met in ways that would not otherwise have been possible
Before the onset of Covid all this had already been devastated by year on year budget cuts and re-organizations that eventually saw the severing of the family workers from nursery and the café disappear. The Health visitors we now hardly see. Ourselves, we have lost over half our team including our fantastic Head Teacher. The under three unit now only take 2-3 year olds and have moved out of their part of the center which was given back to the county. They have joined us as we reduced teaching staff and 3-4 year olds intake We have become a very small nursery school and are part of a federation joining with two other MNS in the city. We have left 1.4 teaching posts and a full time deputy head (with no teaching responsibilities). It is amazing that myself and my colleague who lead the team pedagogically are able to continue to remain motivated and ready to initiate and extend aspects of our work. Covid has taken its toll on us all and we have team members with long covid and some off with serious symptoms at the moment. We are only just beginning to re-establish our setting. Though it is true to say the challenges we faced working with key worker children and to support families virtually and with resources for home play was another learning experience, built on our already good practice.	The physical and emotional impact of the changes is staggering- the sector has been decimated
So what keeps me in the profession? The Children, their joy of learning and when that's not there, the way we can nurture that in them. Being able to become part of their play, enter their world and go with them to new places then step away. Observing them and being able to reflect and discuss what is going on what could be going on and what needs to be provided for them, whether it be adult interaction, what type of interaction or provision to be made available. We one year worked extensively observing and understanding schemas and how to support their development when observed in the children's play. We have developed a large grass area with trees, a campfire, rope swing and climbing tree trunk. It has a mud kitchen and a hill and a large willow cave. Here the children play all year round in all weathers. Our work is exciting and challenging. You never stop learning or wanting to. Every year we meet or welcome back	It is the children that keep her in the profession As a QTMEYS, you are constantly learning and developing

families, we are welcoming a whole new cohort of children each with their own individual developing personalities and learning styles and needs. What drags me down is the consistent attempts by government to undermine and eradicate child lead learning and play in our early years sector. I think their failure to provide sustainable funding for state maintained nurseries is a conscious strategy to shut them down slowly. It would be problematic and difficult to close us down directly as our sector has a reputation for quality practice, we know what we are talking about and have lots of research to support us. Our sector is also the last stronghold of real child centered learning and we have campaigned hard to stay in existence. The new EYFS is a challenge to our pedagogy, again not outright and clothed in rhetoric but already there are a plethora of models for recording progress that can be measured and used in conjunction with other standardized tests across the Primary school. The narrowing of the curriculum and expectations that seem at odds with a child development model will be damaging and lead to further undermine play as the medium for young children's learning. I look at Reception classes and find the constant drive for phonics and numeracy, for handwriting and passive not active learning demoralizing. I stand in solidarity with those Reception teachers trying to remain true to their pedagogical beliefs.	The existential threat of neoliberal policy is decimating the sector and damaging children- it is abusive
Alongside the children it is this commitment and resolve of my early years colleagues, whom I feel have become more radicalized over the pandemic, that drives me on and makes me want to return each year. We are a small part of the state education system and I believe our destiny is entwined with future resistance to the type of state education system the government is enforcing. I remain an optimist.	But the battle isn't over- united we rise!

1st person (I, me, my, myself)	2nd person (you your)	1st person plural (we, us, our)	2nd person plural (they, their, them, others)

Merida's narrative	Plot commentary
I first set out to be an Early Years teacher because I had a terrible time in school. I didn't have very fond memories of my teachers and in fact my first teacher that was kind to me was my Spanish teacher in senior school. I was very academically driven and I was never challenged enough in class. After meeting this amazing Spanish teacher I instantly knew that I wanted to be an Early Years teacher. I wanted to be a fantastic first impression for children of what school could be like for them. I wanted young children to love school, to love learning.

I trained to be a teacher in Canada, where my whole programme was around Early Childhood Education. Or so the title says. In University I learnt everything under the sun from Blooms Taxonomy to Plato and Pythagoras. None of which I really use in my daily practice now. I learnt the most when I went on my teacher placements. I got real life experience of what it was like being a teacher. I saw the older teachers burnt out, the younger ones moaning in the staff room about everything that was wrong with the system. But that didn't seem to put me off. I loved being with the children. Teaching them how to count to 10 through songs, and read through phonics rhymes and dances. I made learning fun. My first placement teacher told me that I was a breath of fresh air and that any child would be lucky to have me as their teacher. And you know what? I truly believed her. I knew I was setting myself out on a path where I would fuel my students with such a passion to learn. And I did. I graduated from University and got to teaching straight away in Early Years. My childhood dream of becoming the real life Miss Honey from Matilda had come true.

There I was, a young girl, full of ambitions and dreams to make school amazing for every child I taught.
We had INSET and Professional Development days where we could sign up for courses in our District (Borough) and our school would support us on going on them. I would then come back to school and organise a mini training to my Early Years staff on what I had learnt while away. We were a team, and everyone loved what we were doing for the children.

Then budget cuts started happening, class sizes were growing, support for children with any additional need was disappearing faster than a bowl of popcorn on a Friday night. I saw how children were no longer people but numbers on a spreadsheet and dear God, they better make progress or you'd have some explaining to do. | Merida's early experiences at school inspired her to teach in early years.

Although she enrolled on an early years specific course, she learned the most when she was on placement.

She was undeterred by the complains she heard about how the system was changing

She loved being with the children- her dream had come true

She was well supported and felt like part of a team

Then everything changed- children were dehumanised and data became more important |

Old books weren't being replaced and if toys were broken, they went in the bin never to be replaced either. How can we teach children to love to read if we are teaching them to read with a book their parents probable learnt to read with? It just wasn't right. This wasn't supposed to be what school was for these children. Fast forward a few years. I moved to England to pursue two dreams: Teaching in Early Years in a variety of schools, and to be able to travel and visit school around Europe. My first supply teaching job I was offered a full time contract. I was Head of Early Years after my first year of being there. The second year, I trained my team on what it was like to be a fantastic Early Years Practitioner. You know, the sort of training where we teach children to write letters, and then teach them about road safety, and the value of a £1 coin. Then we would give them the real life experience of walking to the post office to post the letter. We would write shopping lists in preparation for our Christmas baking. We would write apology notes if we were unkind to a friend. We would use anything and everything to help us learn our Maths skills. Why count with cubes on a table when you can sit outside, hunt for conkers and then count them? Early Years was my passion and I transformed my team to be passionate about it, too. Queue Ofsted. What the heck is Ofsted anyways? People that know nothing about your school and come in, grade you, make you feel horrible about yourself and then leave. Only to later publish a review of your school that is like life or death for some schools. I mean, call me crazy but I don't see how an inspector can judge a school after mere hours of building in the building! But hey, this is what I'm an Early Years Teacher and not an inspector. Moving on. We got Outstanding! Our progress our children had made was like none other before, and all of our children were intrinsically motivated to learn and they all felt happy and safe at school. It was a great accomplishment in my career. I felt like Miss Honey, when she finally got her childhood home back. This was it. I was destined to make people love Early Years again. Fast forward another year and I got another Head of Early Years job in a shocking school. I arrived and there was nothing. It was a brand new building but that was it. The team was over worked and miserable. Our resources were plastic everything and a whole lot of nothing. The playground was not fit for purpose. Our SEND support was non-existent. Everything about the place just screamed nightmare. But I took the job. I accepted the challenge. I was going to turn this Early Years setting around. And I did. Not just me this time though, the whole team. I provided training that was relevant and hyper focussed on Early Years. My team knew about curriculum and Government updates as and when they happened. We had valuable meetings and everyone had a voice. We re-learnt how to do everything from writing purposeful observations, to engaging our parents to feel a part of our community, to interacting vs. interfering and even how to set up an open-ended learning environment where the children choose their learning each day. We worked hard and we were brave. After two years I took that school from failing in Early Years to another Ofsted Outstanding Judgement.	There was no money and no one seemed to care She moved to England and very quickly moved into a leadership role, training her team and sharing her passion for early years She was bewildered by Ofsted but they validated her practice and it felt like an outstanding achievement She saw that people had fallen out of love with early years, and saw her role as helping to rekindle that passion Snow White calling the animals to help her clean the cottage- she inspired confidence and reminded people why they were there

This inspection was different though. It wasn't my first time and I was fiercely willing to promote Early Years to the inspectors. In this Inspection, the Inspectors spent a total of 1.5 hours in our setting, over 3 days. I then had a meeting where I was on my own with the Inspector for 4 straight hours. It was painful, I had no support from other members of my SLT and I was being drilled so much I blanked most of the meeting out. I then demanded that the Inspector come with me and walk through my setting. Talk to the children, observe how they play. Look at the micro progress that happens in every interaction with every single child. It was important to me that the Inspectors spent time in Early Years. Really understanding what we were doing and really seeing how much the children loved school. The children planned their day, we had no forward planning, it was all child led.	But when the inspectors came, she was alone- she had to fight to make them understand what was happening in early years and help them to understand child led learning
During these years I was starting to get burnt out. I was so tired of attending staff meetings and training that were always geared towards SATS or Science or anything that wasn't Early Years. Since 2015 I have had 3 staff meetings or INSETs or training days that were aimed towards Early Years. THREE. How jaw dropping is that? This is why when I became Head of Early Years I fought to have separate meetings and trainings with my team. We stopped going to the pointless meetings that were never inclusive of Early Years and we really worked as a team to develop our skills and find our WHY. It's no secret that Early Years practitioners are not respected by other teachers in the school. They think we "play all day". We don't know what real teaching is like. How hard it is. I got so tired of feeling the lack of support from my other SLT members and colleagues in school.	Emotional impact of the isolation of constant battles with SLT and other teachers and of trying to motivate a team who lack professional confidence, all while her own needs are being neglected, taking on more and more and getting nothing back in return
I was burning the candle at both ends. I was showing up for my team every day and encouraging them to be their best selves. Meanwhile I was falling apart. Working 7-7 most days just to make sure that my team had the support they needed and that everything would be ready the next day. I was an NQT Mentor and had no support in this role what so ever. I was then mentoring 4 other schools in their Early Years and trying to revamp their curriculum in a way that worked for their individual needs. I was sharing best practice and giving all I could give to the schools I worked with. Meanwhile getting nothing in return.	
	The system is abusive!!!!!
Three years ago I left the state school system because I wanted to leave teaching altogether. I hated it. I hated myself. I was tired. Sick. Angry at the Government and the system for the way that Early Years teachers have been allowed to be treated all these years. I decided to give teaching one more go and moved to an Independent school in hopes that it would be different. It is, in a way. We are valued more and we are included more in staff meetings. But is this just because my Head Teacher has a Masters in Early Years Education? We will never know. I am still tired. Still burnt out, still holding on to that little voice in the back of my head saying that schools can be great again, and to not give up. But quite honestly, I'm struggling to see how they will get better during my career lifetime.	She has moved to the private sector Merida has not completely given up hope but her hope is fading.

Appendix 4: Playing with structural analysis and character archetypes

Labov (2013) explains that, when telling stories, we utilise a range of narrative devices to influence the way the stories are perceived by the reader. In this way, the narrator is able to portray characters and events in ways which support narrative imagination and understanding of their lived experience. Perhaps the best known analysis of story plot was offered by Booker (2006) who identified seven story types, each with distinctive features. Further research, reduced this list to six key types based on their emotional profile (Reagan et al, 2016). These are illustrated below:
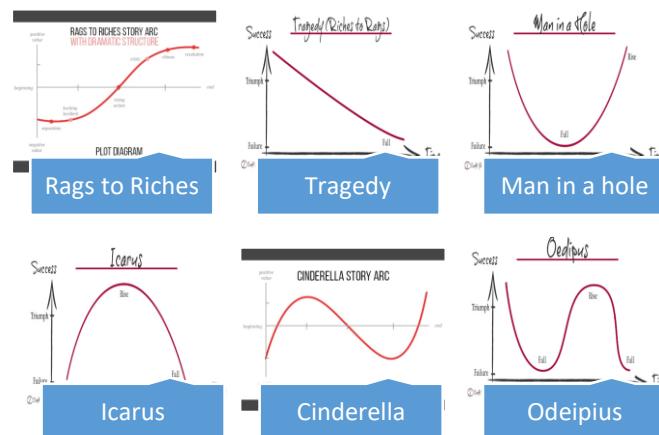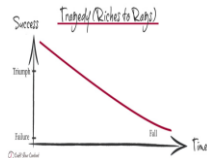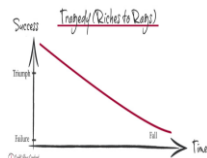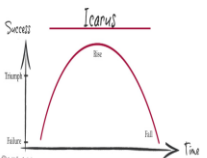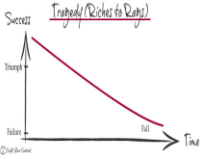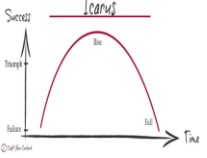
Emotional profile of key story types adapted from Reagan et al (2016)

The graphs created by Regan et al (2016) illustrate emotional highs and lows, or when the main character in the narrative was feeling positive or negative. These highs and lows happen as a result of events within the narrative. It is important to be cognisant that Regan et al (2016) used artificial intelligence to analyse the emotional profiles of fictitious narratives while the narratives presented in this study are based on ongoing lived experience.

It should also be noted that the stories presented in this study are snapshots of how each QTMEYS feels at the specific point in time they were created. These stories are told with the benefit of hindsight as illustrated in Coco's comment 'the warning signs were there – and you

just choose to ignore them don't you' (Conversation with Coco), however, they reveal a

similar narrative arc- one where happiness and satisfaction diminish. This is arc is consistent

with retention data about the sector

Participant	Story type
Nancy	Tragedy- Nancy's passion for early years was not supported 'right from the start' in ITE. Here need to develop competence was neglected at University where there was no Early Years input and in practice where her mentor did not have the necessary experience to support her adequately. She was given autonomy but there was no connection with her colleagues and she grew increasingly disillusioned.
Coco	Tragedy- Coco quickly became aware that EY wasn't valued and QTMEYS were not respected in primary schools. As her career progressed, she became increasingly aware that the government did not value or respect QTMEYS or EY either. Her professional development was neglected and once she did manage to engage in Masters level study, she became a vitriolic critic of the system furthering her isolation from her colleagues.
Ben	Icarus- Ben fought hard to train to teach. He loved his course but his enthusiasm for being a QTMEYS has slowly been dwindling ever since. He feels isolated in his setting, appalled at the way children are labelled and dehumanised and as if he is never doing enough to support them. He is proud to be a teacher, having never thought it would be possible, but he is demoralised and unsure whether he will rise again.
Etta	Cinderella- Etta did not set out to be a QTMEYS. In her career, she has faced may highs and lows, witnessing how government policy changes practice and the gradual decimation of the sector. She takes strength from her professional networks, her colleagues and the children she works with and, against the odds, is determined that through collective effort, change is possible.
Merida	Oedipus- Merida was determined that every child should love school. She has worked hard to share her passion with others and achieved fantastic results. She is exhausted from the constant battles, the isolation and conflict. Her needs are consistently neglected while she gives everything she has to supporting others. She is certain things will change, but perhaps not in her career lifetime.

It could be said that identifying narrative types merely serves to emphasize to the reader *what* they are reading. It is evident that these are tales of dissatisfaction. Comparison the types of stories told by each of our five QTMEYS highlights this lack of satisfaction found in their professional roles and their perceived failure to actualise their potential (Maslow, 1987). This lack of professional growth stems from an inability to develop 'competence' and 'autonomy' and the lack of connection or 'relatedness' they feel with their colleagues (Ryan and Deci, 2000:68). The lack of connection they feel with colleagues is further emphasised through exploring character archetypes.
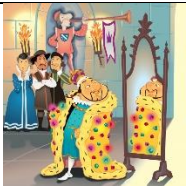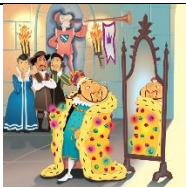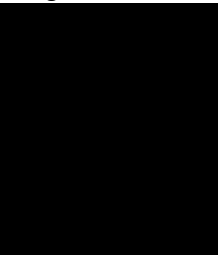
Kim (2016:1) emphasises the 'artistic quality of narrative inquiry, encouraging the use of interdisciplinary lenses, methods and tools. Psychologist Karl Jung (1959) believed that there are specific archetypal characters that represent the range of human motivations (see below).

The Lover	The Hero	The Magician
Passionate and humane but prone to naivety. Motivated to connect with others intimately.	Honourable, Courageous, rises to face challenges but can be overconfident. Motivated to gain mastery & leave a mark	Prone to corruptibility and arrogance. Motivated by power and the desire to leave a mark on the world.
The Outlaw	The Explorer	The Sage
A rebellious independent thinker who refuses to follow convention. Motivated by a need for freedom and desire to leave a mark.	Curious and motivated by self-improvement, driven to challenge the status quo. Motivated by autonomy & spiritual growth.	A mentor possessed of wisdom and experience, but often content to let others shine. Motivated by knowledge and spiritual growth.
The Innocent	The Artist	The Ruler
Kind, sincere and virtuous but often naïve and powerless. Motivated by safety and spiritual growth.	Creative, full of conviction but also potentially short sighted. Motivated to innovate and provide structure.	Omnipotent, aloof and removed from reality, often disliked. Motivated by a desire for control and structure.
The caregiver	The Everyman	The Jester
Honourable, loyal, selfless but may lack ambition. Motivated to serve others and provide structure.	Grounded, relatable, unremarkable. Motivated by a desire to belong and to connect with others.	Amusing, superficial but occasionally insightful. Motivated by pleasure and the desire to connect.

Adapted from Jung, 1991 (originally published in 1959), Pearson, 2016 and Romanyshyn, 2020

Jung's theory that these archetypes reside in biologically inherited collective unconsciousness has been criticised and debunked by neurological evidence. Contemporary studies argue that the archetypes Jung identified have been culturally created and reproduced (Merchant, 2009,

Roesler, 2012) and they continue to be widely used both in the study of literature and in behavioural psychology to identify ways of being and behavioural motivation. The characterisation of self and others in the narratives presented in this study is explored below.

Self	Children	Colleagues in other key stages	SLT	Government
Nancy- Innocent		Onlookers	Arrogant magicians	Detached, destructive rulers
Ben- caregiver		Ugly sisters	Arrogant magicians	Detached, destructive rulers
Coco- explorer		Ugly sisters	Arrogant magicians	Detached, destructive rulers
Etta-sage		Onlookers		Detached, destructive rulers
Merida- outlaw/ hero		Ugly sisters	Arrogant magicians	Detached, destructive rulers

It was challenging to select just one character for each participant which shows the limitation of this interpretive approach. I also found that none of the existing archetypes accurately

captured the way the participants characterised their colleagues the isolation they felt and casual cruelty they inflicted through their lack of respect. Realising the limitation of this approach, I made up my own character types- the ugly sister: not necessarily deliberately cruel but following the lead of the person they are in thrall to in order to protect their own interests, and the onlookers- keeping their heads down and not getting involved.

Ultimately, the use of archetypes and story structures is limiting and these means of analysing the narratives were rejected.

Appendix 5: Stripped I-Poems
Appendix 5.1 Nancy Forester's stripped I-Poem

I hoped

I ended up

I told everyone, I didn't

I re-connected

I was

I knew

I was I had

I was, I hoped

I began

I did not

I felt

I went, I was made

I spoke out

I wasn't, I was

I went back

I was told

I argued

I knew

I wanted

I felt

I knew

I couldn't

I handed in my notice.

I am, I come

I have, I have, I had

I grew, I was, I liked, I enjoyed

I had, I found

I loved, I excelled, I studied

I was, I worked I was

I found I was

I considered, I did, I planned, I had, I found I was

I began

I had I was

I would, I would, I was, I would

I persevered, I had

I volunteered, I loved, I was

I gave I had, I was, I learned, I had, I applied

I believe, I seek, I work, I value

I hope, I can

I taught, I encountered

I had, I began

I sought, I found, I started

I also, I have, I do, I can

I appreciate I am

I was, I have, I had, I was, I was

I remembered, I found

I considered, I frequently, I have

I lead, I have, I find

I resist

I also, I find, I often

If I'm honest, I cannot, I do

I certainly know, 'm looking, I know, I know

I guess, I stumbled

I took, I was

I applied

I completed

I then, I also

I became

I was, I moved

I completed

I was

I constantly, I was, I was

I knew

I tried, I had

I worked I managed, I don't

I had

I felt

I think

I still, I feel

I was

I decided, I had to

I became, I became

I was, I felt

I was I took

I am, I have

I delivered, I have

I do not

I was, I remained

I got, I joined

I was, I worked

I learnt

I moved

I worked, I worked

I began, I loved, I enjoyed

I left

I tried, I maintained

I took

I was, I was, I had, I was

I realized, I was, I would

I became, I knew I would

I moved

I took, I now

I have, I have, I have

I have, I have, I have

I have

We were, we had

We were we were, we were

We developed

We have, we have, we have

Our work

You never

I think, I look, I stand, I feel

We are, I believe, I remain

I first, I had, I didn't, I wanted, I wanted

I trained I learnt, I got, I saw

I loved I was

I truly

I moved, I was, I was

I trained

We got

I felt, I was

I got, I arrived

I took, I accepted

I was

I did. I provided

We worked, we were brave

I was, I had, I was

I then I took

I was, I was, I got, I was

I was, I was

I left

I wanted

I hated

I hated

I was, I decided

I am

I'm struggling

Appendix 6.1 Nancy Forester's extended I-Poem and interview schedule

I hoped to find an early years specialist option.

I ended up taking a part time primary PGCE route.

I told everyone I loved early years no one really 'got' that so,

I didn't talk about it anymore!

I re-connected with my passion for early years.

I was inspired by the craftsmanship of writing observations of children learning in their own chosen way, and the magic of the practitioner who described how she planned using her environment and play

I knew that I was in the right place.
I had been on placement in year 6
I was offered a role as reception class teacher.
I hope that the Head was pleased with my enthusiastic response!!
I began to shed the incumbent practice of maths groups, work sheets and termly Topics

Part 1: Beginning

1. You said that it was witnessing the incredible early years practice in your son's primary school, and as parent governor at my daughter's maintained nursery school, that inspired you to seriously consider a career change.

   What did you do in your former career?

2. You said that you had hoped to find an early years specialist option that would suit the logistics of studying alongside caring for your young children, but ended up taking a part time primary PGCE route where, when you told everyone about your love for early years no one really got it so you stopped talking about it.

   Why do you think your cohort reacted like that and what did that feel like?

3. You described how you re-connected with your passion for early years in the one-hour lecture on early years.

   Can you tell me a bit more about that lecture?

4. You said that after a mini placement in a reception class you knew you were in the right place and threw yourself into absorbing the outstanding practice in that child led environment.

   What was your role within that setting during that placement?

5. You described how excited you were when you were offered a part time post as a reception teacher and said you hoped the head was pleased with your enthusiastic response.

   How prepared did you feel to take on the responsibility of leading early years provision at that stage?

   What were your expectations of workload and what would have helped you to feel better equipped for what lay ahead?

I did not have the adequate specialist support to feel confident in my role.

I felt isolated.

I went full time to enable consistency for the class.

I was made subject leader for PSHE and school council coordinator.

I spoke out on regional radio and attended a protest at Westminster.

I wasn't comfortable.

I was diagnosed with severe anxiety and depression.

Part 2: Middle

1. You described your colleagues as kind and thoughtful, but said you did not have the adequate specialist support to feel confident in your role and felt isolated.

   What did that look like on a day to day basis?

2. You described the town's local Early Years network as a supportive but intimidating group to join.

   How did you find out about them and what kind of support did they offer you that wasn't present in your own setting?

3. It seemed that there were budgetary concerns with you paying for your own courses and staff who left not being replaced. You also described having to pay for resources yourself.

   Why was that?

4. With your new job share, it sounds like you finally had an ally and were able to work together to advocate for changes which had demonstrable impact on children's outcomes but that there was still pressure.

   What did that pressure look like and where did it come from?

5. With the revision of the early learning goals and plans to introduce baseline you explain that you felt it started to feel that the system was shifting in a direction that you weren't comfortable with.
   What was it that made you so uncomfortable?

6. On top of this you had a cohort of what you describe as a cohort with a high level of neuro diverse children. You explained that there just wasn't the correct level of staffing and you were spread very thin.
   Aside from additional staffing, is there anything else that would have helped you to feel better equipped to meet the challenges you were facing at this point? For example, you mention later that you have now had much more training on neuro diversity and were sorry not to have had this while you were still teaching.

7. You said the cohort of parents were very challenging too.
   What was it about the parents that was so challenging?

   What could have been done to better prepare you for or support you in dealing with a challenging cohort of parents?

I went back to work on a phased return and was just getting back in my stride.

I was told that I would be moving from reception and working in year 2 the following academic year.

I argued that I knew I wanted to be an early years specialist, and what was the problem with that?

I felt my mental health sliding.

I knew I couldn't return to teaching for the new academic year.

I handed in my notice.

Part 3: End

8. You returned to work on a phased return and were just getting back into your stride when covid came along. You've described in detail how that impacted you and the concern you felt for the children who were still worryingly absent when face to face

teaching resumed. Shortly after that you were told you would be moving to year 2 in September.

> Tell me a little more about that conversation.

9. You are in a new role where, although you hadn't been able to do all you wanted to do as a teacher, it sounds as if you now feel more able to support and represent the voice of the child and work in partnership to make changes and adaptations where appropriate.

   This study is trying to make sure the voice of qualified teachers in maintained early years settings is heard in ITE programme development and in policy level decisions about how to support teacher retention.

   What do you think ITE providers and policy makers need to hear? What changes do they need to make?

Checklist:

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I am a male early years practitioner in my mid-forties.

I come from a working-class background

I have been an early years teacher … for the last eight yearsI have taught both Nursery and Reception

I had the ambition to be a teacher (as a young child), somehow lost hold of that idea as I grew up and navigated my way through education

I was lucky, I liked learning I enjoyed my time at school

I had some very memorable and inspirational teachers

I found drama, I loved it, I excelled

I studied Theatre Studies, Drama and English for A level and then as my first degree.

I was very lucky thereafter;

I worked with and on behalf of a huge range of teachers and educators in primary and

secondary schools and beyond. I was able to work in theatres, Museums, parks, Art galleries

and venues

I found my inspiration.I was involved with … a storytelling project for early years

I considered myself as working in education, I did not consider myself a teacher.

I planned education programmes, designed projects and managed teams of practitioners

but I had never really been taught how to teach.

I found the 'how' of teaching fascinating I was increasingly keen to learn.

I began to believe that a career as an early years teacher would enable me to make a

positive difference, whilst also continuing to be creative.

I had looked at the options for teacher training a few times over the years

I was told by one local University …I would never get on a PGCE course I would never get a

job

I was told my first degree was not good enough I would need an MA to even be considered.

I persevered, after three years part-time study I had achieved an MA in Education.

I volunteered in the Foundation stage unit of a local school, I loved it.

I was finally ready to apply for my PGCE… the only choice for me was to follow an Early Years specialism.

6. You had a long journey to becoming an early years teacher but said that while you were involved with was a small partnership with the library service; a storytelling project for early years that would tour to primary schools, libraries and children's centres, you began to believe that a career as an early years teacher would enable you to make a positive difference, whilst also continuing to be creative.

    But you had looked at the options for teacher training a few times over the years and were generally put off by one thing or another, primarily the need to continue working. But you were also told you would never get on a PGCE course, would never get a job in Liverpool, that your first degree was not good enough and that you would need an MA to even be considered.

    What was it that made you so determined to become a teacher, what was driving you?

7. So, you did your MA in education while working and volunteering and finally got onto a full time PGCE course. You were the only man and said you felt like a novelty or a peculiarity. Obviously men are a minority in the EYFS and this is something Cathy Nutbrown has been saying for years we need to address.

    Can you tell me a little more about the male experience on an early years PGCE course?

8. And what about the course itself? You say it was a fantastic course, a great experience, albeit an exhausting year that seemingly passed by at light speed, an amazing experience that, overall, you enjoyed immensely.
    You say 'I learned so much and felt confident that I had the necessary skills to become an effective early years teacher'
    (Could also mention amazing head teachers on the teaching schools pilot and placement in inner city culturally diverse schools.
    Where did that confidence come from, can you tell me a little more about the course itself and what you covered?

I gave up work for a year and embarked on a new journey towards becoming a teacher.

I had a great experience

I was the only man on the course

I learned so much

and felt confident that I had the necessary skills to become an effective early years teacher.

I applied for the (teaching schools) pilot

My first teaching post was at the primary school …where I had undertaken my voluntary practice

Being a teacher felt like an honour.

My intention was to become a good teacher,

to learn my craft and survive the day to day challenges.

My five-year plan was to hone my teaching skills

and then look to progress towards management.

I believe that early years education should be child-centred and should also be fun.

I seek to work in collaboration with parents

I work for children, on the behalf of their parents and guardians.

I value diversity

I hope that I can help prepare them for the many years ahead.

I taught in Nursery (It was a difficult introduction to my new profession.)

I encountered extremely bad management and an institutional, non-progressive, discriminatory, judgemental dysfunctional organisation the like of which I had never experienced before.

I began to question my decision to change career

I sought a new position.

Part 2: Middle

9. On graduation, your first job was in the nursery of the school you had volunteered in.

   How did that schools demographic compare to the schools you and been in on your placements?

10. So here you were, with a class of your own and you said 'Being a teacher felt like an honour. My intention was to become a good teacher, to learn my craft and survive the day to day challenges. My five-year plan was to hone my teaching skills and then look to progress towards management' But you encountered extremely bad management) and an institutional, non-progressive, discriminatory, judgemental and dysfunctional organisation the like of which I had never experienced before and began to question your career change.

    Tell me a bit more about what that was like on a day to day basis.

11. So you moved to a different school and were tasked with modernising the nursery. You've outlined almost a creed which describes your philosophy of early years and it seems to have struck a chord with children who report loving coming to school and parents who say their children love learning

Tell me a bit more about your interactions with parents and children, how do they make you feel?
So is this what has kept you going for the past seven years?

I found my second teaching position

I started as Nursery teacher and was tasked with modernising the school nursery.

I also did everything else that was asked of me and more.

I have made a positive contribution to early years, the school

I do everything I can to support the wider school community.

I appreciate all the positive feedback.

It does, however, increasingly feel like I am not doing enough.

I was promised that there was never a better time to become an early years practitioner

I have continually found myself being asked some quite remarkable questions

Or having to argue the case for something I had taken as a given, or at least as something that would be well understood.

I was asked things like "What is this best practice that you always speak of?" and "Well, where are you getting this [information] from?" as if a teacher reading research or keeping up with new developments in practice was unusual or unheard of. I was told, quite seriously, not to "google things".

I remembered the many times teachers had told me how important that it was to have senior managers who understood and valued the early years.

I found myself with a head teacher without knowledge, experience or value for the foundation stage of learning.

What I considered the most important years of a child's education weren't appreciated or recognised as important

I frequently heard "well you're early years…"

I have been assured that "play is okay" or told "you can use videos you know"

We are extremely under resourced

I lead on phonics and reading

I have witnessed a slowly increasing formality demanded in Reception.

I find increasingly that there is a tendency towards labelling children, and adults too.

I resist it, yet it is very clearly there in the motivations, actions and words of management.

I also find that in my current position there are absolutely no opportunities to move forward. No career development, no autonomy, no agency for change, no access to continuing professional development, not even the technology or resources I require to successfully do my job.

I find it is not only my time that is increasingly expected for nothing,

I often provide other essential resources too.

My story will continue, but if I'm honest

I cannot say right now for how much longer.

I do question the sustainability of the role

I certainly know that I'm looking for a new role in the next year or two.

I know there is conflict between my current position and my ethos and values as an early years educator,

I know that this conflict must at some point come to an end.

Part 3: End

12. So you have all this wonderful feedback and you know you are making a positive contribution to the school and the wider community but you increasingly feel like you are not doing enough.

    What does that look like on a day to day basis? Where does that come from?

13. You describe this constant need to justify yourself and it almost sounds like you are being encouraged not to think, to question to research- you said you've even been told not to google things and been asked where your idea of good practice is coming from. You said 'There is simply no room for discussion or professional judgement'

Where is this coming from? Why would they want someone who just keeps quite and doesn't question things?

14. You talked about the increasing formalisation of reception and the labelling of children and adults. You say: It is troubling and I resist it, yet it is very clearly there in the motivations, actions and words of management.
    Tell me a bit more about that.
    Who are they motivated by?

15. You said at the beginning that you are from a working class background and it's clear you've taken a winding path to the classroom.
    To what extent does your own background support you in having a wider understanding of what the children and families you work with are going through?

16. You explain that in your current position there are absolutely no opportunities to move forward. No career development, no autonomy, no agency for change, no access to continuing professional development, often not even the technology or resources you require to successfully do my job. It's not only your time that is increasingly expected for nothing, but now as a matter of course you often provide other essential resources too. And you are beginning to question the sustainability of the role.
    What impact is this having on you personally and in your family life?
    What needs to change in your school to make this role sustainable?

17. You write: 'Being a teacher is still the best job in the world. So, my story will continue, but if I'm honest I cannot say right now for how much longer.' You are looking for a new role in the next year or two because you know there is conflict between your current position and your ethos and values as an early years educator, and this conflict must at some point come to an end.'
    What are the key points in that conflict?
    Who is on either side of the battlefield?

18. So if we were asked to take on the role of mediators in this conflict…
    What do you think ITE providers, school leaders and policy makers need to hear? What changes do they need to make?

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I guess I stumbled into early years by accident.

I took time out to care for my new born twins

I was fascinated

I applied

I completed a diploma in Pre School Practice

I then moved on to work as a teaching assistant in the early years department of a school

I also completed a BA in Education Studies

I became very aware of the complete lack of understanding around EY

I was frustrated by the lack of acknowledgement

I moved on to lead an EY department

I completed my graduate teacher programme and became a qualified teacher.

Part 1: Beginning

19. You said that you stumbled into early years by accident and had always been a perpetual student.

    What did you do in your former career?

20. You completed a diploma in preschool practice, worked as a teaching assistant in a primary school and did a BA in education studies before completing the graduate teacher program but that, working in school, you became very aware of the lack of understanding around early years.

    What did that lack of understanding look like?

    Where do you think it stems from?

I was in school from 7:30-5pm

The role takes over your life very easily.

I constantly felt like I was failing

I was expected to complete pips assessments

I knew what the next steps were!

It did not matter how hard I tried

I had a child who clearly had some difficulties

I worked so hard with her parents

I managed to get her a diagnosis- appropriate resources

'I don't know how you survived the year' (the year one teacher) (cried)

No one had recognised the struggles I had had while she (the child) was in my class

I felt completely demoralised

I think this was the tipping point

Part 2: Middle

21. Having trained on the job, you said that once you had qualified, the role takes over your life and later you talked about the expectations and paperwork taking over.
How does that happen?

22. You said that you constantly felt like you were failing and talked about specific tasks such as completing baseline assessment, and of having to fight to get a child a diagnosis for her needs only to be told by the year one teacher that she didn't know how you had survived the year.

What was it that made these tasks so demoralising?

23. You said that you think there is a difficulty across the predominantly female EY workforce, in that we do not recognise our own worth and so others are happy to let others think that what we do is not important.

What does that lack of self-worth look like in a setting?

I still love working with the children

I feel like the expectations, workload and paperwork has taken over

I was becoming increasingly frustrated by the lack of opportunities for professional development

I decided to complete a masters

I had to reassure my head that there would be no impact on my teaching

I became increasingly disillusioned

I became quite disruptive in staff meetings

I was desperate to make others think

I felt that everything was a token … a constant battle

I was completely exhausted

I took a step back

I am now the preferred supply for several infant schools

I have been working as a link tutor

I delivered a lecture to PGCE students about EYFS… a token gesture in building some understanding for those starting out in their teaching career

I have done my best to educate others on the importance of EY

I do not have the mental strength to continue

*I naïvely thought I could change the world.

*Taken from email

Part 3: End

24. You said that after 18 years in early years, 12 as a qualified teacher, you were becoming increasingly frustrated by the lack of opportunities for professional development and decided to complete a masters at your own cost, in your own time, but still having to reassure the head that it would not impact your teaching.
Why did you decide to do the masters?

25. You said that you became increasingly disillusioned by the education system which doesn't value its staff, work for the benefit of the students and is constantly criticised by parents press and government.

There is a lot there! Let's talk about not valuing the staff- tell me a bit more about that?

And what about not benefiting the students, what does that look like?

And the constant criticism, can you give me some examples?

26. You talked about tokenism and the constant balancing act, particularly in reception, between parental expectation, government guidance, play-based pedagogy and preparation for year 1. You describe this as a constant battle.

What could be done to make this balancing act easier to manage or this battle easier to fight?

27. You are now working as a supply teacher and it sounds like you feel more valued but said many supply teachers will not go into early years.
What do you think this is?

28. You also link tutor and have delivered a lecture to PGCE students but again, see this lecture as a token gesture saying that those going into year 1 classes even will not be fully equipped to meet children's needs.
What could be done to better prepare teachers to work with younger children?

29. You said that this constant fight takes its toll and that while you have done what you can to educate people about the importance of early years, in the face of constant criticism and blatant disrespect, you don't have the mental strength to continue.

This study is trying to make sure the voice of qualified teachers in maintained early years settings is heard in ITE programme development and in policy level decisions about how to support teacher retention.
What do you think ITE providers and policy makers need to hear? What changes do they need to make?

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At the age of 19 I was working on a summer scheme at St Johns Wood Adventure Playground.

At the end of the summer I remained as a volunteer on the site

I got to know other play workers and learn more about how to engage with children and young people through play.

I joined the women play workers group and NALGO the trade union for council employees.

I was successful in interview and began working full time at a Play centre on the estate at the base of the (now burnt out) Grenfell Tower.

I worked as part of a team of 5 with children and young people

I learnt much about the importance of reflecting in the setting the heritage of the community

I moved from Grenfell to work at a Play Centre near Kilburn for Camden council.

I worked part time and continued to develop my skills and understanding of communicating and building relationships with the children through their play.

I worked here for three years before beginning my career in teaching.

I began a 4 year BED Honours in Primary education

I loved every minute of this course and never missed a lecture or tutorial.

I enjoyed the time to read, discuss and debate, being able to write thoughts and ideas down and formulate an argument in essays.

I left Uni with a First Class Honours degree.

Part 1:

Read part 1

1. You wrote really eloquently about all the experience you gained as a play worker and explained how your decision to retrain as a teacher was motivated by two things: the council's decision to reduce the number of play settings, make them dependent on entrance payment and make play workers take in-loco parentis, meaning there would no longer be an open door approach of come and go as you please. But also because the play centre you worked at burnt down and you were relocated to become a mobile team.
Can you tell me a bit more about the circumstances around this transition?

2. You did a 4 year B-Ed in primary education and said you loved every minute of this course and never missed a lecture or tutorial.
Can you tell me a bit more about the course content and the placements you did?

(What early years input was there, how much emphasis on early years)

3. So your first post was teaching a mixed year three/four class in a two form entry primary with a large Indian and Pakistani intake, and your year 3 team partner was also an NQT. You used the integrated day model of teaching and what you thought of as a child centred approach to learning.

Were these inherited approaches or something you introduced?

4. So you explained that as the curriculum became more streamlined and the focus on numeracy and literacy as distinct subjects prominent, the sheer workload involved in trying to maintain an integrated day dictated that the school submitted and moved to a more subject based curriculum. the culture of the school shifted with the introduction of the NC, SATs and the literacy and numeracy hours and at this time you stayed motivated by engaging with these MA modules you did on bilingualism and Children Developing in Family Schools and Society. I loved the way you said that it became very clear that while you'd only ever wandered through thinking "what the hell is going on here! " you were now absolutely sure you wanted to be part of whatever the hell was going on and made the move into early years.

Tell me a bit more about that decision.

I realized very quickly that it was a highly skilled team with a great knowledge and understanding of early childhood development.

I was part of this team for seven years and have to say was privileged to be so.

It was a steep learning curve for me and one that brought back a joy to my teaching day and I would say a dynamism to my practice.

I became lead in the Nursey unit.

I knew that I would never return to teaching in KS1/2.

Part 2: Being a QTMEYS

5. You said 'It was a steep learning curve for me and one that brought back a joy to my teaching day and I would say a dynamism to my practice.' And that you were supported by this incredible, highly skilled team. The team knew that the practice in the nursery was at odds with that of the main school and often would comment on how the children they saw go into it every year, lost their agency and became passive learners no longer in control of even accessing their own resources. Funding issues resulted in your Leading teacher moving to the Reception class and you became lead in the Nursey unit. It was clear there was a wish to develop child lead learning there and to establish continuous provision in reception.

So what did reception look like at that point?

The team did training each year for the whole school and constantly challenged staff to consider their practice

How had this been allowed to happen, why was reception not seen as early years?)

I took up a part time teaching post, working with 3-4 year olds in a nursery within a large children's centre

I now feel confident and proud to say I am an experienced Early Years teacher.

My trajectory has never included becoming part of the senior management team, I have always believed everyone can be enabled to lead

I have been able to do so from the nursery floor in numerous ways

I have a TLR for Equalities. I have led training days every other year on an aspect of Equalities

 I have been able to work with ▇▇▇▇▇▇ Uni PHD students exploring children's perceptions of difference and empathy.

I have led staff meetings on sustained shared thinking and more recently planning in the moment

I have also always lead a curriculum area, at the moment my lead is PSE

Initially we were a large and integrated team

We had a community café which was run by our kitchen staff and local volunteers.

We were able to liaise about children and families quickly to meet need,

We were able to use expertise to sign post, We were able to support families

We developed a common approach to building up relationships with parents and developed trust among the community.

We have lost over half our team including our fantastic Head Teacher.

We have become a very small nursery

We have left 1.4 teaching posts and a full time deputy head (with no teaching responsibilities.)

It is amazing that myself and my colleague who lead the team pedagogically are able to continue

6. So you moved to ▇▇▇▇▇▇ for family reasons and took up a part time teaching post, working with 3-4 year olds in a nursery within a large children's center, with a catchment area that included one of the city wards with a high level of deprivation. Initially you were a large and integrated team, your Head Teacher led the Family workers and a large 0-3 provision in what was called day care unit. By year on year budget cuts and reorganizations that eventually saw the severing of the family workers from nursery and the café disappear. You now hardly see the Health visitors, have lost over half your team, including the Head Teacher. The under three unit now only take 2-3 year olds and have moved out of their part of the center and have joined you as you reduced teaching staff and 3-4 year olds intake. So you have become a very small nursery school with just a 1.4 teacher ratio, a non-teaching deputy head and are part of a federation joining with two other MNS in the city.
You said that you think government failure to provide sustainable funding for state maintained nurseries is a conscious strategy to shut them down slowly.

Why would they do that?
What impact has this had on morale/ your ability to provide high quality education and care for the children?

So what keeps me in the profession?

The Children

Our work is exciting and challenging. You never stop learning or wanting to.

What drags me down is the consistent attempts by government to undermine and eradicate child lead learning and play in our Early Years sector.

I think their failure to provide sustainable funding for state maintained nurseries is a conscious strategy to shut them down slowly.

I look at Reception classes and find the constant drive for phonics and numeracy, for handwriting and passive not active learning demoralising.

I stand in solidarity with those Reception teachers trying to remain true to their pedagogical beliefs.

Alongside the children it is this commitment and resolve of my early years colleagues, whom I feel have become more radicalized over the pandemic, that drives me on and makes me want to return each year.

We are a small part of the state education system

I believe our destiny is entwined with future resistance to the type of state education system the government is enforcing.

I remain an optimist

7. You said 'I look at Reception classes and find the constant drive for phonics and numeracy, for handwriting and passive not active learning demoralising. I stand in solidarity with those Reception teachers trying to remain true to their pedagogical beliefs.'
   What advice would you give to newly qualified teachers entering the profession now?
   Would you ever go and work in a reception class?
   What more can we do in ITT to prepare them, especially those going into reception, for what lies ahead?

8. You said that you never wanted to move into management (a SLT position) but have led in various ways from within the setting and after fourteen years now feel confident and proud to call yourself an experienced early years teacher.
   What could be done to keep more experienced teachers in early years?
   What needs to change at policy level?

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I first set out to be an Early Years teacher because I had a terrible time in school.

I didn't have very fond memories of my teachers

I wanted to be a fantastic first impression for children of what school could be like for them.

I wanted young children to love school, to love learning.

I trained to be a teacher in Canada

I learnt the most when I went on my teacher placements.

I got real life experience of what it was like being a teacher.

I saw the older teachers burnt out, the younger ones moaning in the staff room about everything that was wrong with the system.

But that didn't seem to put me off: I loved being with the children.

My first placement teacher told me that I was a breath of fresh air and that any child would be lucky to have me as their teacher.

I truly believed her.

My childhood dream of becoming the real life Miss Honey from Matilda had come true.

Part 1: Beginning

1. So, you grew up in Canada and you didn't love school. You said you weren't challenged academically, and you wrote about your Spanish teacher at senior school- the first teacher who was kind to you and it was her who made you want to be an early years teacher so that children had a fantastic first impression for children of what school could be like for them. You wanted young children to love school, to love learning. And so you did an early years specialist course on which you studied everything from Blooms taxonomy to trigonometry- none of which you use in your daily practice. So it was on placement that you learned the most.
Can you tell me a little more about your training- how long it was/ how long the placements were?

2. So, you taught in Canada for (how many years?) and you wrote this amazing piece that really resonated: Then budget cuts started happening, class sizes were growing, support for children with any additional need was disappearing faster than a bowl of popcorn on a Friday night. I saw how children were no longer people but numbers on a spreadsheet and dear God, they better make progress or you'd have some explaining to do. Old books weren't being replaced and if toys were broken, they went in the bin never to be replaced either. How can we teach children to love to read if we are teaching them to read with a book their parents probable learnt to read with? It just wasn't right. This

wasn't supposed to be what school was for these children. So you left Canada and moved to England so you could pursue your dreams of gaining experience teaching in different early years settings while seeing Europe.

How similar or different are the English and Canadian systems?

Have you seen similar things here?

I moved to England

My first supply teaching job I was offered a full time contract.

I was Head of Early Years after my first year of being there.

The second year, I trained my team on what it was like to be a fantastic Early Years Practitioner.

Early Years was my passion and I transformed my team to be passionate about it, too.

Queue Ofsted.

We got Outstanding!

I felt like Miss Honey, when she finally got her childhood home back.

This was it: I was destined to make people love Early Years again.

I got another Head of Early Years job in a shocking school.

I arrived and there was nothing: everything about the place just screamed nightmare.

But I took the job.

I accepted the challenge.

I was going to turn this Early Years setting around.

And I did.

I provided training that was relevant and hyper focussed on Early Years.

We worked hard and we were brave.

I was on my own with the Inspector for 4 straight hours.

I had no support from other members of my SLT

I was being drilled so much I blanked most of the meeting out.

I then demanded that the Inspector come with me and walk through my setting. Talk to the children, observe how they play.

I took that school from failing in Early Years to another Ofsted Outstanding Judgement.

Part 2: Middle

3. So during your first supply job you were offered a full time contract and by the end of the first year had become head of early years. Then, in your second year you set about training your team and when Ofsted came you were graded as outstanding which you

describe as a great accomplishment in your career. But you raised a really interesting question, you said: What the heck is Ofsted anyways? People that know nothing about your school and come in, grade you, make you feel horrible about yourself and then leave. Only to later publish a review of your school that is like life or death for some schools.

How did the arrival of Ofsted affect the rest of the members of your team and the wider team within the school?

4. So you changed school after that fantastic result and the new school was shocking! A brand new building but that was it. The team was over worked and miserable. Your resources were plastic everything and a whole lot of nothing. The playground was not fit for purpose. Your SEND support was non-existent. Everything about the place just screamed nightmare.

How did a brand new school get it so wrong when they had the opportunity to start from scratch and build something wonderful?

5. But after two years and a lot of bravery and hard work, you managed to turn it around and although you had a great team in early years, you had no support from SLT and were left alone with an inspector for 4 hours!

Tell me a bit more about your SLT- why did you have to be brave?

I was starting to get burnt out.

I was so tired of attending staff meetings and training that were always geared towards SATS or Science or anything that wasn't Early Years.

Since 2015 I have had 3 staff meetings or INSETs or training days that were aimed towards Early Years. THREE. How jaw dropping is that?

I got so tired of feeling the lack of support from my other SLT members and colleagues in school.

I was burning the candle at both ends.

I was showing up for my team every day and encouraging them to be their best selves.

Meanwhile I was falling apart.

I left the state school system because I wanted to leave teaching altogether.

I hated it.

I hated myself.

I was tired. Sick. Angry at the Government and the system for the way that Early Years teachers have been allowed to be treated all these years.

I decided to give teaching one more go and moved to an Independent school in hopes that it would be different.

I am still tired. Still burnt out, still holding on to that little voice in the back of my head saying that schools can be great again, and to not give up.

But quite honestly, I'm struggling to see how they will get better during my career lifetime.

Part 3: End

6. You said that it's no secret that early years teachers aren't respected and you got so tired of feeling the lack of support from your other SLT members and colleagues in school. What does that lack of respect look like on a day to day basis? Where does this lack of respect come from?

7. There was something that really struck me, you wrote: Since 2015 I have had 3 staff meetings or INSETs or training days that were aimed towards Early Years. THREE. How jaw dropping is that? I mean, that is jaw dropping!

    Why is there so little training around early years do you think?

    Is it just early years staff who need the training or could everyone benefit from it?

8. You said I was tired. Sick. Angry at the Government and the system for the way that Early Years teachers have been allowed to be treated all these years. So you searched for greener pastures in the independent sector and said that although you are still tired and burned out, it is different, early years teachers are valued more and are included more in staff meetings-but maybe that because your head teacher has a masters in early years.

    Tell me a bit more about the effect that has- What is it like working with a leader with that background, how is she able to support you differently?

9. You finished your story with this: I am still tired. Still burnt out, still holding on to that little voice in the back of my head saying that schools can be great again, and to not give up. But quite honestly, I'm struggling to see how they will get better during my career lifetime.

    What changes do you think ITE providers, school leaders and policy makers need to make to make early years provision in schools great again?

Checklist:

☐ Consent form returned
☐ Interview recording and transcription switched on
☐ Name for story to appear under
☐ Draft will be sent in six months, final thesis on completion if you would like to see it.

Appendix 7: Exploring dissonance and ambient support through I-Poetry- identifying emerging themes

Networks and communities of practice outside the setting	Early Years experts/ role models	Colleagues	Children and families	SLT	Policy makers/ ofsted	CPD

	Supportive		Negative/ limiting		
Nancy Forester	The town's local early years network Made me acutely aware Of everything that I was yet to learn, But also motivated me to keep going! Mindful of my lack of experience,	Local early years network were intimidating but supportive	No one really 'got 'that Others felt slightly 'put off'		Her PGCE cohort- not interested in early years
	I spent the summer holidays engrossed in a Masters assignment about best practice in transition from reception to year one, Julie Fisher, Alasdair Bryce-Clegg and Anna Ephgrave I was so grateful These practitioners They became My guides I paid to attend a course Led by Anna Ephgrave	Nancy looks to early years experts, engaging with key literature an attending courses to develop her knowledge and understanding of early years because her ITE did not prepare her for practice	The Head was pleased School leaders requested data returns There was little understanding We have 17 areas to observe and assess My request for additional lead in time Was met with suspicion Leadership felt it would not be fair On other year groups The moderators came They liked the direction of travel, The Head was pleased! The Head gave us the go ahead	Nancy wants to please the head. She is deferential to him. But the head/ SLT don't seem to understand or value early years or Nancy's identity as a QTMEYS	

The class TA, who was actually a Nursery Nurse, left I had three one to one support staff in the class, Who did their best to help fill the gap. My new job share was open minded We presented To the head The team did their best It was a challenging time for everyone We tried to provide virtual resources For the class Some parents wanted a more formal approach We signposted to websites and worksheets For other families any kind of school felt too difficult We encouraged connection I delivered colouring pencils To children who didn't have them. We emphasised well-being and emotional regulation. We worried about Some children whose families disconnected From us entirely When we returned to school Some families were reluctant to return at all. It enabled us to work in smaller groups To support and focus on the needs of the children who did come back Others didn't have that same connection and We had less time to support them virtually.	She finds a kindred spirit in her new job share There is a sense of solidarity arising from the pandemic, a shared endeavour. This is where Nancy shifts to the use of 'we' In the face of adversity, she finds a sense of belonging.	There was pressure. The children should be in assemblies. They need to feel part of the school. They have to learn to sit for a long time They might as well start now. How will you know that you have covered the curriculum? When a TA comes in to cover They don't know what to do because there are no formal groups to run. Should those children really be doing the hoovering? They have been building that same den for a week now. When are you hearing them read? There just wasn't the correct level of staffing. Senior leaders undertook risk assessments and fitted locks on the classroom doors To stop the children from escaping quite as regularly, But didn't really understand Cover arrangements for my sick leave had been rudimentary. I was told that I would be moving from reception School staff changes and logistics meant that this was the preferred option and The Head told me that I should be happy About the chance to expand my experience. I argued that I knew	The head is pleased that the moderators are pleased but questions everything Nancy is doing, reinforcing his lack of understanding

	Some children were still, worryingly, absent.	I wanted to be an early years specialist Not at this stage in my teaching career she told me My self-confidence was at rock bottom I didn't feel able to say no. They clearly wanted a change Setting up my new classroom I felt my mental health sliding I couldn't return to teaching for the academic year. I handed in my notice The school decided to recruit someone To start the year with the class	
		With her dual role in school My mentor He was very encouraging And told me He trusted my practice but, Without any specialist early years leadership I felt isolated	Her mentor didn't have the experience or understanding necessary to support her
		Whilst my colleagues were kind and thoughtful I did not have the adequate specialist support To feel confident in my role.	Colleagues did not understand early years either
		The government announced its plans to bring in a statutory baseline test. I spoke out The leadership of the school were supportive and respectful of My feelings	In this instance Nancy expresses both her distain for policy and the powerlessness of school leaders.

			Ultimately they knew They would have to implement the changes that were coming	SLT are portrayed here as policy enactors and enforcers. The implication is 'it's nothing personal'
Ben Ford	The children were amazing, But the parents And early years professionals were fantastic to work with too.	Working with early years children and practitioners inspired Ben to train to teach	I encountered extremely bad management And an institutional, Non-progressive, Discriminatory, Judgemental Dysfunctional organisation the like of which I had never experienced before. "What is this best practice that you always speak of? I was told, quite seriously, not to "google things". I found myself With a head teacher without knowledge, experience or value for the foundation stage of learning. What I considered the most important years of a child's education Weren't appreciated or recognised as important and so	In both settings, Ben has encountered poor leadership , a lack of understanding about early years and lack of respect for both young children and the teachers who work with them
	One of the best parts of my PGCE year was the opportunity to work alongside some highly experienced head teachers as a part of a Teaching School Pilot I applied for the pilot It offered additional sessions for eight students, Led by exemplary head teachers.	The teaching school pilot was inspirational too		
	I believe that early years education should be child-centred and should also be fun.	Children and their families are at the heart of Ben's practice.		

It should provide children with a love of learning and foster a love of coming to school. I seek to work in collaboration with parents I work for children, on the behalf of their parents and guardians. I value diversity and represent that in my classroom and believe that Inclusive practice in the early years should allow all children to make progress and feel valued and enabled. Early years education should provide the tools for children to begin to read and write, but to value these skills and understand why they are vital skills to learn. They should leave Reception with a love of stories and books, and an understanding and a sense of wonder at planet earth and the natural world. They should be interested and care about other people and have developed good	He has a strong sense of his identity and the value and purpose of his role	I frequently heard "Well you're early years…" "Well you're early years… so you can paint the fences in the garden", "Well you're early years… so cleaning is part of your job description". I have been assured that "play is okay" "You can use videos you know" Decisions are made that can have a profound effect on the children in Reception Without any discussion, professional dialogue, or consultation. We are extremely under resourced, There is a tendency towards labelling children, and adults too. An insistence on defining individuals by gender, class, sexual orientation, parental status, disability, special educational need or mental health status. I resist it,	

relationships with peers and key adults. The early years are really the most vital in a child's education and All children in my care have always made progress. SEND children have been included and most have made rapid progress in my care. I have made a positive contribution to early years, the school I do everything I can To support the wider school community. many parents have told me, and children continue to tell me, that they 'love' coming to school and 'love' 'reading', or 'writing' or 'animals' or 'science' or 'PE' or 'being outside'. It remains an absolute honour to be their teacher		Yet it is very clearly there in the motivations, actions and words of management. Children in the early years are too eagerly put into boxes and labelled	
		I have witnessed a slowly increasing formality demanded in Reception. It is a formality that many of the children are just not ready for when they first start school and yet it is a requirement despite the obvious opposition to the needs of the cohorts of children arriving at our school. . I find increasingly that There is a tendency towards labelling children, and adults too. An insistence on defining individuals by gender, class, sexual orientation, parental status, disability, special educational need or mental health status.	Ben appears uncomfortable with policy direction which does not meet the needs of the children

				In my current position there are absolutely no opportunities to move forward.	Ben appears frustrated by the lack of opportunity for professional development and the expectation that he should work beyond his remit with such limited resources
				No career development,	
				No autonomy,	
				No agency for change,	
				No access to continuing professional development,	
				Often not even the technology or resources I require to successfully do my job.	
				I find it is not only my time that is increasingly expected for nothing,	
				I often provide other essential resources too.	
Coco	It is telling that Coco does not mention any supportive factors at all.			The Foundation Stage document was quite new at this point and was already impacting on the people who worked in such settings. It was expected that staff would have a minimum qualification level and for many this was not something they were comfortable with on the basis that they were paid a low-level rate. This was the point at which it became clear that, not only did other staff consider EY to be second class citizens, but the government also felt the same. Staff go beyond the remit of their role in terms of time and resources,	Coco seems to see policy and policy makers as disrespectful of staff and students

		Not only do they work their hours in school, But they spend their own time and money creating resources and completing paperwork. I feel like the expectations, workload and paperwork Has taken over from actually spending time with the children I became increasingly disillusioned, with an education system that did not value its staff, Did not work for the benefit of the students, And was constantly criticised by parents, press and government. Schools are constantly trying to adapt to the latest guidance from government	
		However, even at this early point in my career it was clear that early years was considered a second-class citizen to main- stream education. I was fascinated By the dynamics between the Early Years team and the rest of the school. If other areas in the school needed staff cover, it was taking from EY But when EY needed cover, KS1 & KS2 were extremely reluctant. Comments like "I'm not going in Reception, they're all snotty and cry" from a Year 5 teacher, reflected the feelings of the staff, as a whole. The P.E. teacher, who taught across the whole school, would deliberately schedule other activities during the EY P.E. lesson so that he was not available,	It is evident that Coco did not feel a sense of relatedness with staff in the rest of the school. Their attitudes towards early years are captured in the two incidents she described which leave her feeling unvalued and like

		He said they "just muck about".	every day is a battle
		I think	
		They genuinely believed the children just appeared in Year 1 with all the groundwork done and the basic skills in place.	
		In my Reception class	
		I had managed to get a diagnosis and therefore	
		By the time she went into Year One, they were prepared and had appropriate resources.	
		The Year One teacher came into my class one day in October and cried,	
		She was exhausted from dealing with this child and	
		Feeling as though she was letting the other pupils down, even though she was prepared for what was coming into her class.	
		Her comment to me was "I don't know how you survived the year."	
		And yet no-one recognised the struggles I had while she was in my class because it was Early Years and "it's developmental".	
		I felt completely demoralised	
		No-one recognised my professional judgements and opinions	
		I was desperate	
		To make others think about what they were doing	
		I felt that everything was a token representation of what should be done, and nothing was ever followed through to its conclusion.	
		Schools are constantly trying to adapt to the latest guidance from government	

		Part is because of parental expectations When children moved into Year One, Staff were quick to blame EY staff if the pupils were not ready for KS1 Rather than considering what they needed to do differently Because they did not understand the EY curriculum, Despite my efforts. As a teacher in EY it felt like a constant battle between what is right for the children and what is expected by the wider school community.	
		The majority on the course felt that there was no such thing as problem solving in EY. I argued I gave the example of working out how many knives and forks were needed for dinner in the home corner. The other students did not comprehend that this was the beginning of the process I was frustrated by the lack of acknowledgement of the foundations that were being laid by the learning in EY. This is where the myths of "they're just playing" and "they don't do work" stem from.	People on her GTP course did not seem to understand early years. As an experienced practitioner, Coco seems to have felt compelled to educate them but frustrated by the encounter
		I think there is a difficulty across the EY workforce Who are predominantly female, in that... We do not recognise our own worth and so Others are happy to think that what we do is not important.	Coco seems to feel that he workforce needs to stand up for itself more and

					defend itself against the patriarchy.
			I was becoming increasingly frustrated by the lack of opportunities for professional development. Further up the school, there always seemed to be enhanced CPD, focus groups and development projects. I decided to complete a Masters' degree At my own cost and In my own time, even then I had to reassure My Head that there would be no impact On my teaching (which I felt was incredibly short-sighted and surely the point of any CDP is to impact your teaching).		This incident suggests that the head does not think that QTMEYS need the same level of professional development as the rest of the staff
Etta	The children and young people aged 5-18 years old who came to and from the site after school, at weekends and during the day when holidays came with no need for adult permission. For them the site was a safe haven where they would be welcomed, supported, played with, and challenged by the adults who worked there. It was a place they felt was theirs. I worked as part of a team of 5 With children and young people many of whom were of African Caribbean heritage. I learnt much about the importance of reflecting in the setting the heritage of the community in	Etta's respect for and commitment to the children is obvious. There is a strong sense that love and respect are at the heart of her practice. It is evident how much she enjoys	The sheer workload involved in trying to maintain an integrated day dictated that the school submitted and moved to a more subject based curriculum. The numeracy and literacy hour was now looming for KS2 and the imposition of SATs. Throughout this period I had tried to stay true to my pedagogical beliefs, which included taking part in a national boycott of SATs But found it hard to do so. What drags me down Is the consistent attempts by government to undermine and eradicate child lead learning and play		There is a sense of existential threat in Etta's description of policy makers deliberately underfunding the EYFS and challenging EY pedagogy Once again, it is the solidarity of

	order for the children and young people to feel welcome and connected. We worked to build a float and make costumes for the Notting Hill carnival So what keeps me in the profession? The Children, Their joy of learning The way we can nurture that in them. Being able to become part of their play, Enter their world Go with them to new places then step away. Observing them and being able to reflect and discuss what is going on what could be going on and what needs to be provided for them We one year worked extensively observing and understanding schemas and how to support their development when observed in the children's play. We have developed a large grass area with trees, a campfire, rope swing and climbing tree trunk. It has a mud kitchen and a hill and a large willow cave. Here the children play all year round in all weathers. Our work is exciting and challenging. You never stop learning or wanting to. Every year we meet or welcome back families We are welcoming a whole new cohort of children	working with her team to create meaningful learning opportunities. Her talk of welcoming back the children and their families suggests genuine warmth.	In our early years sector. I think Their failure to provide sustainable funding for state maintained nurseries is a conscious strategy to shut them down slowly. Our sector has a reputation for quality practice, We know what we are talking about And have lots of research to support us. Our sector is also the last stronghold of real child centered learning We have campaigned hard to stay in existence. The new EYFS is a challenge to our pedagogy I look at Reception classes and find the constant drive for phonics and numeracy, for handwriting and passive not active learning demoralizing. I stand in solidarity With those Reception teachers trying to remain true to their pedagogical beliefs.	the sector that is Etta's strength in coping with challenge The concern she expresses for reception teachers demonstrates not only her commitment to supporting others but, as she is in a maintained nursery, he understanding of how isolated reception teachers are

	Each with their own individual developing personalities and learning styles and needs.		
	I got to know other play workers and learn more about how to engage with children and young people through play. I joined The women play workers group and ▮▮▮▮▮ the trade union for council employees. Both of these became important in shaping My understanding of teamwork, a collective approach to working and the importance of solidarity in the broadest possible sense. I worked as part of a team of 5 With children and young people many of whom were of African Caribbean heritage. I learnt much about the importance of reflecting in the setting the heritage of the community in order for the children and young people to feel welcome and connected. We worked to build a float and make costumes for the Notting Hill carnival We took children to learn canoeing on the river Thames. I moved from ▮▮▮▮▮ to work at a Play Centre The team here was newly formed and very diverse. I worked part time and continued to develop my skills and understanding of communicating and building relationships with the children through their play.	Etta speaks with the greatest respect for her colleagues and mentors attributing much of her professional development to them. There is a strong sense of shared identity and belonging to a community of practice throughout Etta's narrative- even visually, this is striking! Could this be the secret to retention?	

We used what was then called the integrated day model of teaching
It was also based on what we thought was a child centered approach to learning.
We were faced with a standardized curriculum for every subject area with each one having what seemed millions of attainment targets.
We spent much of our staff training trying to cut up all these attainment targets and match them to our existing topics.
The Nursery team was made up two teachers, one of whom was the team leader and three nursery nurses, one of whom was bilingual, Punjabi speaking and section 11 funded to focus on EAL children and their families.
I realized very quickly
It was a highly skilled team with a great knowledge and understanding of early childhood development.
 The team knew that the practice in the nursery was at odds with that of the main school and often would comment on
How the children they saw go into it every year, Lost their agency and became passive learners no longer in control of even accessing their own resources.
I was part of this team for seven years
The theory I had learned both at university and in the MA modules I had studied, welded together with exciting early years practice

I was part of a team collectively shaping it. It was a steep learning curve for me One that brought back a joy to my teaching day And I would say a dynamism to my practice. One of the interesting things we did each year was to lead a training day For the rest of the staff in the school. This was aimed at informing them about what went on in the Nursery and why it was important for the future learning of our children as they moved through the school. We also consciously challenged staff To question their practice It is interesting that at this time we had no PPA time But we did have the half hours after each session to replenish and enhance continuous provision And to meet as a staff team. Observations were shared and discussed by the team and We also reflected on our practice at meetings during the week. We also as the experienced practitioners we were, at that stage felt confident in being able to intuitively interact with children and respond to their needs. Funding issues resulted in our Leading teacher moving to the Reception class I became lead in the Nursey unit.		

We started to have a meeting each week with Reception staff
Everyone can be enabled to lead
Initially we were a large and integrated team
By that I mean
Our Head Teacher led the Family workers and a large 0-3 what was called day care unit.
She liaised with the health visitors who worked out of the center
And the midwives and voluntary groups for the community.
We had a community café which was run by our kitchen staff and local volunteers.
We were able to liaise about children and families quickly to meet need,
We were able to use expertise to sign post,
We were able to support families often for the whole of their child's early years.
We developed a common approach to building up relationships with parents and developed trust among the community.
Our setting at that time felt alive and buzzing
The Health visitors we now hardly see.
Ourselves, we have lost over half our team including our fantastic Head Teacher.
The under three unit now only take 2-3 year olds
They have joined us as we reduced teaching staff and 3-4 year olds intake

We have become a very small nursery school and are part of a federation joining with two other MNS in the city. We have left 1.4 teaching posts and a full time deputy head (with no teaching responsibilities) It is amazing that myself and my colleague who lead the team pedagogically are able to continue to remain motivated and ready to initiate and extend aspects of our work. Covid has taken its toll on us all We have team members with long covid and some off with serious symptoms at the moment. We are only just beginning to re-establish our setting. Though it is true to say the challenges we faced working with key worker children and to support families virtually and with resources for home play was another learning experience, Built on our already good practice on and what needs to be provided for them We one year worked extensively observing and understanding schemas and how to support their development when observed in the children's play. We have developed a large grass area with trees, a campfire, rope swing and climbing tree trunk. It has a mud kitchen and a hill and a large willow cave.		

	Here the children play all year round in all weathers. Our work is exciting and challenging. You never stop learning or wanting to. Every year we meet or welcome back families We are welcoming a whole new cohort of children In our early years sector Our sector has a reputation for quality practice, We know what we are talking about And have lots of research to support us. Our sector is also the last stronghold of real child centered learning We have campaigned hard to stay in existence. The new EYFS is a challenge to our pedagogy Alongside the children it is this commitment and resolve Of my early years colleagues, Whom I feel have become more radicalized over the pandemic, That drives me on and makes me want to return each year. We are a small part of the state education system I believe Our destiny is entwined with future resistance To the type of state education system the government is enforcing. I remain an optimist.	

| Merida | My first teacher that was kind to me was my Spanish teacher in senior school.
I was very academically driven
I was never challenged enough in class.
After meeting this amazing Spanish teacher
I instantly knew that I wanted to be an Early Years teacher.
I wanted to be a fantastic first impression for children of what school could be like for them. I wanted young children to love school, to love learning. | Merida reflects on the impact a good teacher can make- her Spanish teacher was a role model | Then budget cuts started
I saw how children were no longer people but numbers on a spreadsheet
And dear God, they better make progress or
You'd have some explaining to do.
How can we teach children to love to read if we are teaching them to read with a book their parents probable learnt to read with?
What the heck is Ofsted anyways?
People that know nothing about your school
Come in, grade you,
Make you feel horrible about yourself and then leave. | Merida has felt the impact of budget cuts in Canada and England- both neoliberal systems. Her points about Ofsted indicate that she feels that a lack of understanding about EY is the heart of the problem. It also describes the impact the inspection had on her- the word 'drilled' is telling. Her agency is evident in taking back control of the inspection and insisting they visit the setting.

She expresses her anger at the way QTMEYS have |
| | We had INSET and Professional Development days where we could sign up for courses in our District (Borough) and our school would support us on going on them.
I would then come back to school and organise a mini training to my Early Years staff on what I had learnt while away.
We were a team
Everyone loved what we were doing for the children.
How can we teach children to love to read if we are teaching them to read with a book their parents probable learnt to read with?
We teach children to write letters, and then teach them about road safety, and the value of a £1 coin.
Then we would give them the real-life experience of walking to the post office to post the letter.

We would write shopping lists in preparation for our Christmas baking. | Merida builds teams up by sharing knowledge. She has a transformative leadership style, empowering rather than dominating her teams.

It is interesting that she talks about the training programme in Canada- where is this in England?

The words love and passion are used | Only to later publish a review of your school that is like life or death for some schools.
I mean, call me crazy but
I don't see how an inspector can judge a school after mere hours of building in the building!
I was fiercely willing to promote Early Years to the inspectors.
The Inspectors spent a total of 1.5 hours in our setting, over 3 days.
I then had a meeting where I was on my own with the Inspector for 4 straight hours.
I had
No support from other members of my SLT
I was being drilled so much
I blanked most of the meeting out.
I then demanded that the Inspector come with me and walk through my setting.
Talk to the children,
Observe how they play.
Look at the micro progress that happens in every interaction with every single child. | |

We would write apology notes if we were unkind to a friend. We would use anything and everything to help us learn our Maths skills. Why count with cubes on a table when you can sit outside, hunt for conkers and then count them? Early Years was my passion I transformed my team to be passionate about it, too. We got Outstanding! Our progress our children had made was like none other before All of our children were intrinsically motivated to learn and they all felt happy and safe at school. It was a great accomplishment in my career. The team was over worked and miserable. Our resources were plastic everything and a whole lot of nothing. The playground was not fit for purpose. Our SEND support was non-existent. Everything about the place just screamed nightmare. I was going to turn this Early Years setting around. And I did. Not just me this time though, The whole team. I provided training that was relevant and hyper focussed on Early Years. My team knew about curriculum and Government updates as and when they happened. We had valuable meetings Everyone had a voice.	indicating the drive and commitment necessary to do this. It is also interesting that the words 'relearned' are used- why had people forgotten? Does this infer the complexity and constant battle of defending EY practice in schools that others have spoken about?	It was important to me that the Inspectors spent time in Early Years. Really understanding what we were doing I hated it. I hated myself. I was tired. Sick. Angry At the Government and the system for the way that Early Years teachers have been allowed to be treated all these years. I am still tired. Still burnt out, still holding on to that little voice in the back of my head saying that schools can be great again, and to not give up. But quite honestly, I'm struggling to see how they will get better during my career lifetime.	been treated explicitly and despair that change seems unlikely.
		The Inspectors spent a total of 1.5 hours in our setting, over 3 days. I then had a meeting where I was on my own with the Inspector for 4 straight hours. I had No support from other members of my SLT	Why was Merida left alone! It appears that, although she was SLT, she was not supported as part of the team
		It's no secret that Early Years practitioners are not respected by other teachers in the school. They think we "play all day". We don't know what real teaching is like. How hard it is. I got so tired of feeling the lack of support from my other SLT members and colleagues in school.	Colleagues in early years are supportive but require education, those in KS1 and 2 may also need education too-

	We re-learnt how to do everything from writing purposeful observations, to engaging our parents to feel a part of our community, to interacting vs. interfering and even how to set up an open-ended learning environment where the children choose their learning each day. We worked hard We were brave. After two years I took that school from failing in Early Years to another Ofsted Outstanding Judgement. We are valued more We are included more in staff meetings. But is this just because my Head Teacher has a Masters in Early Years Education? We will never know.		where does their lack of respect come from?
		Three years ago I left the state school system because I wanted to leave teaching altogether. I hated it. I hated myself. I was tired. Sick. Angry At the Government and the system for the way that Early Years teachers have been allowed to be treated all these years.	Merida's words are powerful- the system made her hate herself, it changed the way she felt and worked. How? Was it the constant battle?
		We had INSET and Professional Development days where we could sign up for courses in our District (Borough) and our school would support us on going on them. I would then come back to school and organise a mini training to my Early Years staff on what I had learnt while away. I trained my team on what it was like to be a fantastic Early Years Practitioner. Early Years was my passion I transformed my team to be passionate about it, too. I provided training that was relevant and hyper focussed on Early Years. After two years I took that school from failing in Early Years to another Ofsted Outstanding Judgement. I was starting to get burnt out.	Merida strongly advocates the importance of professional development but why is she the one doing all the training! The focus in England seems to be on training the lowest skilled but no money so the

		I was so tired of attending staff meetings and training that were always geared towards SATS or Science or anything that wasn't Early Years.	teacher has to do it.
		Since 2015 I have had 3 staff meetings or INSETs or training days that were aimed towards Early Years. THREE. How jaw dropping is that?	Merida's professional development seems to have stalled when she came to England- why is there a celling for QTMEYS? What does that say about how they are viewed within their settings and at policy level?
		This is why when I became Head of Early Years I fought to have separate meetings and trainings with my team.	
		We stopped going to the pointless meetings that were never inclusive of Early Years	
		We really worked as a team to develop our skills and find our WHY.	

1. Needs identified within literature/ theoretical framework

competence	Autonomy	Relatedness

2. Sources of ambient support/ dissonance (emerging from the written narratives)

Networks and communities of practice outside the setting	Early Years experts/ role models	Colleagues	Children and families	SLT	Policy makers/ Ofsted	CPD

3. Collated themes

Neglect	Isolation	Conflict and control

Transcript	Who	What
I … there we are. So the first thing I did was what's called an 'I poem' … did I tell you about 'I poems' before?		
R No.		
I So what I did was I printed out your story, because I'm old fashioned like that, and I could have done it on a computer, but I like doing it like that, and I highlighted all the 'I' statements.		
R Okay, oh interesting, there was probably quite a few of those. (laughs)		
I Well that's good, that's what we want, because what it shows then is the emotion comes through which it wouldn't do … it doesn't do so much, you can lose yourself in bits. So what I've done is		

	this kind of reduction and then expansion technique – it sounds like a boiler engineer, reduction and expansion – so this is your story reduced to an 'I poem'.		
R	Okay.		
I	So it's taken out the 'I' bits, and then I added on the end … which I probably shouldn't have done … but I thought it was such a powerful 'I' statement from your email I naively thought I could change the world.		
R	(laughs)		
I	And I thought actually I'm going to put that in there, because if that's all right with you …		
R	Absolutely.		
I	… I think that's quite nice. So what this allows us to do is … because it is a very emotional story … the story's about what we do for work, I'm always going to be emotional … so it kind of allows you to step back from it and step back into it, so it kind of reframes it a bit. So I don't know if you want to read the first bit yourself or if you want me to read it, but it might be quite nice to hear it in your own voice, even though there's no punctuation so you can put the punctuation wherever you want. What do you think?		
R	There's a distinct possibility I didn't bother with any.		
I	I like a lady who doesn't punctuate. (laughs) So this is the reduction.		
R	(Not what they said 02:22) when I did my masters. (laughter)		
I	So if you're happy to, if I get you to read that and then I'm going to ask you some questions about the beginning of your story.		
R	Okay. I guess I stumbled into Early Years by accident. I took time out to care for my newborn twins and I was fascinated. I applied, I completed my diploma in pre-school practice. I then moved on to work as a teaching assistant in an early years department of a school. I also completed my BA in Education Studies. I became very aware of the complete lack of understanding around early years. I was frustrated by the lack of acknowledgement and moved on to lead an Early Years department, and I completed my graduate teaching programme and became a qualified teacher.		
I	So it's quite a powerful beginning there, a beginning … a story that tells about how you got into teaching in early years. And I really liked the fact that you said you stumbled into it by accident. And you also said you'd always been a perpetual student, so you're obviously someone who loves learning. So what did you do before you started your career in teaching?		

R	I was an accounting technician and PA in a trading company.	
I	So very very different.	
R	Yes, yes.	
I	Very different. So that fascination that you had watching your own twins growing and developing and going into nursery – that must have been quite powerful to have made you made a switch.	
R	**I think years ago I'd always thought about being a teacher, but I hadn't gone to university, I hadn't done a degree, and therefore at that point in my life that pathway was shut down.** And when the boys were born obviously having two at once kind of limits your options a little bit in terms of going back because of costs and everything else – and I wasn't about to do it again, so let's make the most of it. And we sort of decided that we could manage and I'd take some time out and then we'd review in a few years' time. And I think having two at the same time really enhances what's going on with their development and their learning as they're going through. They were part of a TED study, which a Twins Early Development study that was … it runs out of … can't remember … University College in London.	
I	Yeah yeah, UCL yeah.	
R	Yeah. And they've been part of that all of their life, so we'd go and we'd do a day at the University and they'd been taking part in different experiments doing different activities. And the way they responded was like 'Oh my God, they're just weird' and so you then go down that 'Is that weird because there's two of them, or is it the way children are and how they progress and how they learn?' So I think that built up what they were … you know that sort of fascination. And to be part of that from that very early stage sort of made you think about it more than just 'Oh look they can walk now' or … do you know what I mean? It was like 'Oh look, what are they doing now? Why are they doing that? How's that working? Why is he doing that but he's not there yet?' – and all of those things were really quite … it was like bizarre. And then when they first starting at pre-school I was quite fascinated about how they then interacted with other children, and they started doing one day separate and one day together so that they had some time apart. Because as identical twins life is hard enough – allow me to have a little bit of time that's my own. So then I got some time with one of them and they got some time apart, and you know that worked quite well for us. And as they were coming towards the end of that time a vacancy came in the preschool, and it was like 'I can carry on with this and I can learn some more' – it just became quite exciting at that point	

	in terms of my learning and my understanding. But this whole little group of small people who go through these stages … you know one minute they're a toddler and the next they're a real little person - and how does that happen, how do they get there? So yeah, I think it was enhanced by the fact that I got to try it all out on them to start with, but it sort of built from there.		
I	And almost I guess being part of that study, that little Jiminy Cricket kind of thing going 'Have you looked at this, have you thought about that?' – so you've got that little voice going 'Oh this is interesting' or those ideas that are saying 'Oh look at this', so it sounds like a really quite powerful learning experience to be part of that study.		
R	Yeah it was. And I think because as I say I've sort of … **having left school at 16 I then went back and did some more O Levels, then I went back and did something else, and then I did my Accounting exams, then I did something … yeah I've always been learning. So when they came along and I was suddenly faced with two, my natural go-to is go and read, go and find out. So I did a lot of reading around twins and about twin development and relationships and all of those things as well. So I was like 'I'm being bombarded with all this information, I need to do something with it'.**		
I	Wow, so you had such a good understanding going in then. And had you been volunteering in the preschool before you started? Yeah, so you'd kind of seen what it was like there as well … and then you did your diploma in preschool practice, and then worked as a teaching assistant in a primary school and did your BA in Education Studies, and then went on and did the graduate teacher programme. But what was really interesting was that it sounds like in that preschool you saw very very different practice to what you were seeing in the primary school and you said you became very aware of the lack of understanding around early years. So what does that look like, how is it different?		
R	I think when I was in the preschool … it was a community preschool, and it was a community preschool that served a very deprived part of the community – it was quite a mixed community, but some of the areas were incredibly deprived, and they were also a setting for social services referrals and things like that. So there was a huge amount of need in that community preschool. ==When I went into the school I became very aware that teachers that weren't in the areas were never going to cover early years – if anyone had to come and cover in the Early Years department I as the TA did the teaching, and they sat in a corner somewhere – that was the initial bit. And then==	Lack of understanding breads disrespect	Isolation Conflict?

	the PE teacher at that school who used to teach across all of the year groups would deliberately schedule things for when we had our PE slots because he didn't want to teach them.	and although some of the 'jokes' are made 'tongue in cheek' they are barbed and they hurt.	
I	What is wrong with people?		
R	(laughs) I mean in fairness I used to have one little girl who when we had apparatus … because the PE teacher was male … and she'd go and sit on the corner of a piece of apparatus and rock – and he just didn't know what to do with that. (laughs) Like 'What's going on there?' – and I can see why that would make him a little bit uncomfortable and fair enough, but you're a professional, deal with it, move on. And I was friends with the Year 4 and the Year 5 teachers in that school and we were quite friendly, but the joke was always that that wasn't the real teaching – early years is not real teaching. And we're not coming down there because all you do is wipe bums and noses, you know, and what can we do down there. And it was about them not understanding everything that was taking place in there. I talked about an argument I had in my BA class one week when they were discussing problem solving in maths.	The incident with the little girl is interesting- quite common in early years but shows the skills needed are so different	
I	Yes you did, yeah yeah.		
R	And I was just going … I just couldn't understand this 'What do you mean they're not solving problems?' 'Well they're not doing problem solving, are they?' 'Well what do you think they're doing?' - what is it that you think that they're doing, how do you think that they're tackling the things that they come across that they don't know how to tackle. You know they're not going 'Oh I'll sit here then'. You know when we're in the home corner playing and setting the table we've got to work those things out. And they might be very simple problems in terms of … and they might not be recorded, but they are problem solving and they're learning the skills that they need and the logic that they need to apply to problem solving as they go up, and if they don't get that skill at the beginning they don't get that skill further up. And the group that was in my BA class were mixed right from early years across to secondary – most of them were TAs across those whole year group, so they were all doing this BA in Education Studies. And it was very much a case of 'Yeah but only when you get to …' – I mean the secondary teachers obviously think that they only teach when you get to secondary school, and the primary teachers think they only teach when they get to primary school – so what do you do in early years? – you just play. And so even at that early stage like I said the warning signs were there – and you just choose to ignore them don't you, and you think 'No I'm going to go and educate all these teachers, I'm going to show them that actually this is what	Lack of interest/ understanding of early learning so how can they possibly help children who are struggling if they don't get this! Ignorance?	Isolation Conflict Isolation Conflict

	you need to happen'. And I did write in an essay about … **I think all teachers as part of their teacher training should spend at least a term in early years.**	Offers a solution	Neglect
I	And that lack of understanding, even being on that course, and I can get that if you've been in a secondary school you haven't had that experience in early years, you might not be aware of what happens. I mean I don't know what it's like teaching in a secondary school, it's not my bag, but I can respect that person's job and I can respect that they have a unique skillset, and it sounds like that is missing right from when you started that course.		
R	Yeah.		
I	Did the lecturers not step in at any point? Did nobody back you up? Were you out there on your own fighting?		
R	I'm quite … if there's something that I believe in I will quite happily stand up and fight my corner on my own. The lecturer in that particular class was quite happy to let us have this 'healthy debate' – aside from the fact that there was probably three early years students in the class and the rest of them were primary and secondary – so slightly one sided. And the others were quite sort of timid and you sort of don't say anything. And I was like 'No, things only change if you speak out, things will only be different if somebody says this is not how it is'. And I think it was that … I wanted to teach, I only ever wanted to teach small people, I've never had an interest in teaching the bigger people … because quite frankly by the time they get to Year 6 they're bigger than me.	Strong sense of identity and mission but still able to respect others- why doesn't that work both ways?	Isolation Conflict?
I	And (inaudible 15:29)		
R	Yes, that's just not my thing. But to not have the respect for what goes on in those departments, the professional courtesy to acknowledge that what you do is important – it's a big burden to carry, and I think it's still … a lot of the time it is still that way across … you know the gap between early years and key stage 2 is huge – and key stage 2 staff just have no interest, they have no care, they have no understanding. And I think for me the difficulties come with the fact that quite often the teachers that are in Year 1 have just as little understanding of what's going on in early years, and that means that they're not able to support those children. Because they don't understand what you were doing while they were with you and how to move them up to where they perhaps should be – they're not there when they get there.	Impact on QTMEYS	Isolation Conflict?
I	And do you think that week in early years would be enough to gain that? Do you think it would be …		

R	No, I think there should be at least a term.		
I	Yeah, a term. So you really get that … because I guess that has implications for the type of courses that could be available for teachers because really if you think about a PGCE you get 20 weeks in school.		
R	I know. I've been doing a link tutoring job for ███ and some of these students are going into a Year 1 classroom and they have no clue – they have no clue about where these children are coming from.	ITE not working for QTMEYS or any teacher because not prepared for all three key stages	Neglect
I	And they could be just as easily going into a reception classroom, because you know they don't employ specialist early years teachers in reception – or even nursery sometimes, so that lack of understanding then from initial training, there's got to be more going on there so that you get that understanding and almost like sort of … like you say, the professional respect for that's happening. You can say it's not my thing but I respect you for doing that.		
R	I mean I worked with one head and her … you know she was smaller than me, and she said she didn't like going down to early years because you know they were ankle biters. But if she needed anything, or she needed to know anything, she would come to me and she would talk to me. And she was amazing – she knew she knew nothing about early years and she was okay with that – but she wanted somebody in there that did, and it was her that I worked for when I was leading the early years unit in one of the schools. And I was leading the early years unit whilst I was finishing my GTP (laughs) but I was the most experienced early years person and she wanted the most experienced early years person in that role, because she didn't have that expertise and she didn't have that experience. And I can almost … I can go on that journey, I can understand that thinking, you know you can't be an expert. You know as a head you don't have expertise across all of the areas, so you need to have people who do. But if you're going to have people who do, then you need to listen to those people.	Humility in leadership- an interesting point, maybe you don't need experience just humility and the willingness to listen to those who do?	Relinquishing control reduces conflict
I	Absolutely. And it sounds like she really did, but perhaps other people, other heads, other senior leaders – maybe not quite so good at listening to the experts.		
R	No.		
I	So let's go back to your story here, I'll pull it up again, so once you got that qualification, what you were doing in school changed quite a lot. So are you happy to read that bit?		
			Control

R	Yeah I was in school from 7.30 to 5, and in actual fact some days it was more like 7, and possibly 5.30. And the role takes over your life very easily, and I constantly felt like I was failing, I was expected to complete PIPs assessments. And I knew what the next steps were, I didn't need to do those assessments to do that - it did not matter how hard I tried … I had a child who clearly had some difficulty and I worked so hard with her parents. I managed to get her a diagnosis and appropriate resources, and the Year 1 teacher cried and said I don't know you survived the year, but no one had recognised the struggles I had had while she was in my class. I felt completely demoralised, and I think that was the tipping point.	Pointless tasks- Sisyphus Lack of interest/ recognition/ respect until going through it herself	Isolation
I	This bit's quite painful to read, and I've done the PIPs assessment and … that what's it called a 'box and whisker' graph that tells you where the spread is, and I completely … your frustration was pouring off the page. It's very very hard to communicate to people because we do have an assessment culture and you know people are used to doing tests, but it's a very different type of assessment. But I'll go back to the bit where you said you know you trained on the job, you knew what you were getting into.		
R	Yeah.		
I	Once you'd qualified the role took over your life and you talked a lot about expectations and the expectation to be there and the paperwork taking over – can you tell me a bit more about that, about expectations and paperwork?		Conflict and control
R	Yeah I think that's … part of that is your own expectations in terms of what you want to do and what you want to deliver. And you're fighting that alongside what the system dictates you have to do. And as an early years professional you spend your first … if you're in a reception class you spend your first half term getting to know your children. And by the end of those first 6 weeks you know those children, you know what they're good at, you know what ticks their boxes, you know what upsets them, you know when they're going to need extra support – you know all of those things. So why do I have to fill in your bit of paper that tells them whether they know whether it's a square or a triangle – because I know that.	Pointless tasks- Sisyphus	
I	Whenever they can say 'frigglejang' and 'demoty'		Neglect
R	Yes, and it was that, it was the frustrations of … the expectations of doing all of those things, of writing formal reports for 4 year olds and 5 year olds that parents didn't read, because actually parents didn't really care – most of them at that stage just wanted to know that their child was	Parents don't want this	Conflict and control

	happy and that they were making progress, and if there was a problem tell me about it and work together. Generally speaking that's what most parents want. Yes I had parents who thought that if there was a problem it wasn't their job it was my job, and yes you have parents that you never see and you know trying to communicate any concerns or get to the bottom of any concerns is really difficult. That part of the job though – that was part of my job that I understood and that was fine. But it was the 'I've got to fill in all those forms by this point, I've got to do the end of year assessments by May … well actually I've got another half a term and they're 4 and 5 years old, and they make quite a lot of progress in half a term, so why am I doing it in May? And I've got to do all of these things whilst making resources because you don't fund me enough for me to buy resources. And looking after my own home and looking after my own children and making sure my classroom is stimulating and looks nice and that I've got everything ready because I'm not a Year 5 teacher who when the children walk in you can say get that out, get that out, you need this – it needs to be there and ready. And **it's like everybody's pulling you in so many different directions that you are not actually allowed to have a life of your own outside the school because you are exhausted from trying to keep up**. And then they change the framework so you've got to make sure you've got the right language in your written assessments that you didn't really need to do anyway because they were in your head. And all of those things, it's like you're on a conveyor belt to nowhere constantly, and then your own children need support, and you'd quite like to go out and catch up with some friends on occasion – but no that's a school night and that's not happening. Oh it's half term, I can go out. But you know the number of times that my own children spent holidays cutting things out or help- … you know when they were a bit older helping me do boards. Why? – why do they have to do that, these things that should be … yes it's part of the job, but **if I was allowed to be professional and do my job and you took my professional opinion and the fact that I have all of these qualifications and this experience and I can make those judgements without spending an hour per child to fill in an assessment that they have no clue what they're doing, and quite frankly getting them to sit for an hour is a miracle.**	Its policy makers who don't understand or who don't care enough to address the issues	
I	Yes yes.		Conflict and control
R	And why would you at that age? So it's like somebody always seems to think that they know better, and the people that think that they know better are not people that have spent time with children of that age, and they're not people that have spent time in early years classrooms. It's like	Ne size DOES NOT fit all! Patriarchal systems- father	

	well we use this system in secondary and it works okay and we use it in primary and they're fine with it so it should be fine for early years – no.	knows best but maybe he doesn't, why is he afraid to listen to those who do?	
I	Square pegs, round holes.		
R	Yes. And the whole system is about squashing children into boxes. And why do they have to go in boxes at 4 years old?		
I	Yeah yeah. So the expectations is … I think you put it so brilliantly there because you said it's your own expectation about what you're there to do and what you can achieve, and then the expectations in terms of not even so much the parents because you said that's part of your job and you can manage that and you accept that, but this imposition of expectations that are perhaps either unrealistic or inappropriate – all of those things that just don't gel with what you're actually doing, they don't seem to be for the child.		Conflict and control
R	No. And that was always my thing you know for whose benefit, what is this achieving … because it's not achieving anything for Freddy, and it's not achieving anything for Betty. It's just what … because does it matter whether you know from a tick sheet when they go into Year 1, or whether you know from me saying this this this and this, off you go.	Demoralising and pointless No value to teachers or children	
I	So I suppose that datafication, that 'Let's have some evidence, let's have some proof' - let's have a document that's the same, that Year 6 can look at and understand, Year 1 can look at and understand, so Reception you need to be able to understand this.		
R	But then make it so that curriculum matches up. If that's what you want to do with the system … and you know if we're going to go and take … I was doing my masters and we were doing about (Biesta 28:49) and his qualification and personification – it's all about the qualification, it's not about anything else in our education system anymore, it's about the qualifications, that aspect. So if that's going to be the case, then the curriculum should start from the bottom and build up. And if your curriculum started from the bottom and built up, and the whole pedagogical approach started from the bottom and built up, it would work for everybody - whereas at the moment I don't think it really works for anybody.	Top down approach doesn't work- I wonder what would happen if we did work from the bottom up instead- an interesting idea	Conflict and control
I	Almost people striving in spite of it aren't they?		
R	Yeah.		
I	I think what they've tried to do, what it feels like they've tried to do … you mentioned like being under-resourced, if you weren't under-resourced and having to spend 6 hours making resources		

	you would have had that 6 hours that could have actually been your family time, or that could have actually … and you would have had more balance, but what's happening instead is that expectation that you will just do more without taking something out or … you know the phonics is a case in point where that's been pushed lower and lower and lower and they're saying look go on then, start from the bottom, start from the bottom. But there's something that goes before the phonics and there isn't space for that.		Conflict and control
R	No no. Let's play Chinese Whispers because that's quite important. And I think that's the thing, and I know **for me it was about this, you know the constant battle – everything is a constant battle. And you know you reach a point where those battles – you have to let go of something, you can't win in every battle. But then the ones that you can win are so few that that's when you become really unsettled and unbalanced in the role, because if your battles are constantly lost … it shouldn't be a battle, but while it is and you're constantly losing, it's just demoralising.**	Is this what they want- for us to stop fighting?	
I	Yeah. And you talked about this little girl in particular, you said you felt like you were constantly failing and you talked about those specific tasks like the baseline and things, but this little girl – that really struck me, and I moved your words around slightly just so the 'I' was at the beginning there, that's why they're in brackets … but you talked about having to fight to get her a diagnosis and to have her needs recognised. And then the Year 1 teacher coming in and crying to you saying I don't know how you survived the year. So at that point it sounded like you kind of just went … and it was that demoralising, that moment of just going 'Yeah no I don't either actually'		
R	No and I mean there's a little bit more to that story in that my TA had gone on maternity leave at the beginning and this is my … she'd been my TA for 4 years … and the person that they replaced her with was someone who … she was actually a qualified teacher in Hungary and then had done an early years degree over here. So she was very capable, we worked really well together, you develop that understanding don't you with your TA – and that was lovely. And they replaced her with someone who had just done a level 2 qualification and had previously applied for a TA's job and not got it because she wasn't up to scratch. But it was cheaper because they then didn't have to go through the whole process again, so she was still on the books 'Well she'll do as maternity cover' – and I had this class where I had this one little girl … and she was amazing, don't get me wrong, this little girl was amazing … but eventually her diagnosis was ADHD and dyspraxic and hypermobility syndrome. That child is never going to sit still anywhere – ever. (laughs) But she was		Neglect

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	really bright so everything just came out of her mouth, yeah? So you've got that going on. I had other children in the class who were already on Year 1 maths and working beyond. I had others who couldn't hold a pencil. And you've given me someone who you wouldn't have employed previously to support me in this classroom when I've got what actually turned out to be one of the most challenging classes that went through the school.	Lack of respect- they seem to think anyone will do	
I	'They're only early years, they only play all day, don't they – why do you need someone qualified down there?'		
R	Well you know …		
I	(laughs)		Neglect
R	… (inaudible 34:05) someone to make me tea and that sort of thing. And that particular child's parents were amazing, and they were completely aware that although she was their eldest first, it was only when the second one came along that they realised that you know 'Ah, they're not all quite as mad as she is'. (laughs) So her mum used to come in and cry because she hadn't slept and she hadn't … you know she wouldn't eat, she'd only eat things if they weren't touching each other on the plate … you know there was all sorts of things going on with her. And so you're dealing with parents who are quite anxious under normal circumstances, and this was not a normal circumstance … as well as dealing with the whole class and then you feel as though you're failing the rest of the students because you're having to focus on making sure she's got what she needs. You're having to create a whole new set of resources so that she can do her best as well as create the resources for everybody else. It was just like I'm seriously firefighting. And when I got to the October half term of that year and I said to my then deputy head it's not working, this is not working, I need some support, I need some help, I need some time – 'Well what's the problem?' And I says well this this this this, and she went 'Oh well that's just a normal class'. Okay then. And the fact that all of the teachers in the infants part of the school knew this child before she'd even been at the school for a term tells you that it wasn't just a normal situation. And this sort of coincided with the fact that **I'd been in that classroom for 8 years and I was like 'I need more, I need more mental stimulation for me' and then you go back to the professional development and that side of things. And it's like I can't just keep doing the same thing and … I'm good at what I do, I know I'm good at what I do, but I want to be better, I want to be more.** And then you get that whole thing in schools where 'Oh yeah but we can't move people around' and we don't do	Isolation We don't just support children, we work so closely with families too- closer than anywhere else in the school but the emotional investment takes a toll SLT didn't know what was and wasn't normal because they had never worked in reception! Coco was stagnating and needed CPD	Isolation Conflict Neglect

	this and we don't do that' and the politics and everything else, it's like that's a whole other set of expectations and another battle to fight, and quite frankly I was done, I'm done – I'm done with the battles.		
I	You were tired. Tired, you reach a point I think, and it sounds like that was your point when you went 'I'm tired enough' – and you said … there was something that really struck me, and you said you think there's a difficulty across the predominantly female early years workforce in that we do not recognise our own worth, and so are happy to let others think that what we do is not important too. You sound like a lady who knows her value, but when you're dealing with a level 2 person who didn't get accepted for a TA job because they weren't qualified enough and they weren't up to it, and then … I mean does that self-worth … are you able to maintain that? What does it look like in a setting when you're constantly fighting and you're tired – where does the self-worth go if it's there in the first place?		
R	Well I mean I am quite … now I can look back at it pragmatically and a little bit more removed I am quite firm and quite outgoing in my views and my opinions and things. And I think when I first started in that school and I was supported by a very supportive head I was like 'Hey I'm good, I've got this' and I think then when that situation changed and my role changed you were then faced with … I have one teacher who when I was given the role of early years lead she came to me and she says 'I'm in charge in this school not you' – because she'd been there for 20 years and she was the Year 1 teacher. So you know you're having that little bit of sniping about the fact that you're newly qualified and now you've got that role and you know … well actually I'm newly qualified in this area, this means I know about now, not 20 years ago.	Coco was respected by the head But, as her role changed, there was resentment from colleagues	Isolation Conflict
I	Yeah yeah, and I'm newly qualified in early years because I've had experience in early years.		
R	Yeah. I think there's that. I think for a while I shut down, I just didn't engage. You know I sat in staff meetings and didn't say a word, I just sort of let everything go on around me and just thought well I'll just be in my classroom, I'll shut the doors and that'll be fine. And then I decided I was going to do my masters, and I sort of became quite bolshy in the meetings.		Isolation Conflict
I	Yeah I loved the way you said that, I loved the way you said it. (laughs)		
R	I'm not going to lie, I was quite … I mean interestingly it was around the time they were reviewing the early years curriculum and the deputy head who was our … so I was in the reception class of the early years unit and she had been in the other reception class but then went into Year 2. And	Maybe this is why they don't want people doing CPD!	

	Transcript	Comments	Themes
	once she went into Year 2 she lost all interest in early years and reception and things, and wasn't on top of things. So we were due an inspection and there was this discussion around the early years and the changes and everything else, and there was a paper had come out from the early years research group that talked about a black hole. I don't know if it's a paper you're familiar with but it was a really quite powerful paper around what was going to happen to these children if we didn't make the changes that needed to be made – and this wasn't what was in the changes in the early years. And I said 'Have you read that?' and she says 'No'. I says 'Well you might want to before you start making conversation about it'. (laughs) You know and that was just the first one, and then I started getting quite stroppy about other things, and I just thought 'Yeah I'm not really helping anyone now because I am …' and I knew I was being antagonistic, and I was doing it in a way that was polite but I was being antagonistic. And others in the early years team were like 'Yes!' because the deputy head had detached herself and wasn't interested. I had the support of the team behind me, but then I was obviously rubbing the senior management up the wrong way, so then you sort of get that (inaudible 42:10)	Courage to challenge came from CPD And from colleagues who were in agreement	Needs being neglected and DH neglecting to stay on top of developments Conflict because DH wasn't genuinely interested or maybe just didn't have time?
I	Yeah and I think that's … you know with our early years background we know that all behaviour is a form of communication, and what you were communicating there was 'My needs are not being met …		
R	Yes.		
I	… I am not being heard'		
R	I was incredibly frustrated.		
I	Yeah and that frustration went from a shut down 'I'm not engaging with this' to a 'Right, let's take on the world'. But you said about the rest of the team being behind you – why weren't they standing beside you fighting? Is that down to lack of self worth again?		
R	Yes, yes that was down to the fact that the rest of the early years team were not qualified teachers, they were … some had nursery nurse qualifications, some didn't – as is the case in most early years because of funding. You've got to have enough people in the room to cover the ratios but actually we're not going to pay anyone. (laughs)	Why should people who know less have more power?	Neglect Isolation Conflict and control
I	So just you know anyone will do.		
R	Yes, so there was that side of it. And also the fact that this deputy head was a bit of a bully and generally people didn't stand up to her. And I think to me as well that's not something I tolerate,	Others in EY left it to Coco to challenge	

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	the whole bullying kind of thing I tend to be a little bit … but I mean it wasn't just in that meeting, because as a reception teacher I had to be coordinator of a subject across the whole of the infants part of the school.	
I	Why?	
R	Nobody comes and coordinates bits for me – why do I have to do it? So I used to have to go to a Humanities meeting every half term and the school was taking on the 'growth mindset' approach. Yes exactly. So we're going to have some stickers made for the girls.	Raises question of why people go into management
I	And some posters yeah.	
R	I says 'Hang on a minute' I says 'isn't growth mindset about intrinsic motivation? Why are we having stickers made?' I says 'Have you read the actual original bit of the growth mindset?'	
I	'No but I've seen a poster on a wall.'	
R	Yes. And this was then the deputy head of the junior part of the school, so it was sort of split over two sites. I said 'You might want to look at that by', whoever it is, I says 'Look at that and read it' I says 'because it's very much about intrinsic motivation and encouraging intrinsic motivation and giving out stickers is not encouraging intrinsic motivation.'	
I	No, but you can see a sticker, it's a tangible – you can see it. And I think you know that's something that kind of is coming through your story is that that … you know the paperwork so that you've been seen to have done something, you've got a sticker because you can be seen that you've got a growth mindset. Whereas actually these things are so much more complex and multifaceted that actually that isn't really what we're trying to do here - we're trying to make whole people, not just tick boxes.	
R	No. I mean going back to the prime areas … and the prime areas are the prime areas for a reason. And if you've done the job right in those three prime areas those children can communicate effectively, they can manage their physical needs properly, and they have the confidence to do these things. Well hang on a minute, is that not building a growth mindset from the beginning?	
I	Well the thing is as well I think is that … that growth mindset is one of my bugbears because obviously it's done so incredibly badly, it is literally a poster … stickers you know posters, stickers …	
R	(inaudible 46:34) painted on the wall.	
I	Yeah 'Let's do that, look it's visible, there it is' - you know and like actually how are you fostering a growth mindset in your staff?	

R	Oh no no no, staff need to stay in their place.		
I	Right in the box, back in the box. Back in the box.		
R	Yes back in your box.		
I	Back in your box. So your frustration mounted and mounted and mounted. The only way you could presumably get a leadership point or whatever was by taking on this coordinator role outside the early years, even though nobody was coordinating things. I'm quite sure people weren't … when they were thinking about PE for example weren't thinking about what do early years need, oh they need some more large heavy equipment that they can drag around and that they can lift, and not seeing that as PE. So there's this again coming to that sort of lack of valuing and understanding that you made that decision to go and do the masters and you paid for it yourself, you did it in your own time.		
R	Yes.		
I	But you said you had to have a conversation with the head to reassure them that this wouldn't impact your teaching.		
R	Yes.		
I	Tell me a little bit more about that conversation and how that … how did that affect you?		
R	Yeah that went really well. (laughs) They were concerned that I was taking on too much and we wouldn't be able to meet the needs of the children.		
I	Did you try getting out of your box one day?		
R	I think that was the main concern. Yeah …		
I	Did the head have a masters I wonder.		
R	She did actually.		
I	Oh she did.		
R	She did, I think she was the only one, but she did. The deputy head – no, and none of the rest of the SLT did.		
I	How very dare you in your early years box think you should be doing a masters!		
R	I know. And the thing was I didn't do an Early Years masters, I did a masters with Management & Leadership actually. (laughs) That wasn't as I planned it because the way the masters was set up when I started it, there were three pathways or you could do it as a general. And as it turned out you then chose … so there was set modules and then optional modules. Now as it turned out when		Control

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	I chose my optional modules they were the modules that were on the leadership pathway. And so when I got to the end as long as my dissertation had a leadership aspect to it I might as well have had it with the leadership and management bit as well, because you know why wouldn't you quite frankly. But yeah they were very concerned that it was going to impact on my teaching and my time. I used to go straight from work, I worked in ██████████ at the time, and I went to ██████ – which used to take me about 40 minutes. So I used to leave pretty much as I dismissed the children to go over to university.		
I	One day a week.		Control
R	One day a week, and so I had to go and ask permission you see if I could leave that one day a week. And that was fine apart from the days, the one Monday a term when I had the Humanities meeting when I had to stay for the Humanities meeting.		
I	Oh, and that had to be on a Monday, that couldn't change?		
R	No that couldn't move.		
I	Right.		
R	So I had to stay. So once every half term I'd be late for uni and I explained that to them and they were fine with it. But you know that was the level, and we're talking about the difference between being at uni for a 4 o'clock start to not leaving work till 5 o'clock. So I'd get there for the second half of the lectures or you know the bit after the break or whatever, and fair enough. But of course then it took you longer to get there because everybody was going home.	What does the power play here say about her day to day experience- working with people so petit minded.	
I	Yeah the traffic would be uncertain.		
R	So yeah that was their main concern and they were worried that that was (inaudible 51:23) And this all coincided with having this class when I didn't have a decent TA and I didn't have … so it's like 'Thanks'. And when I said 'I need help' 'Are you sure you haven't taken on too much?' 'No, absolutely not'.		
I	No actually, because this is my soul food, this is what's keeping me going. And on the course did you find people who understood you, who understood what you were going through? Or was it again a sort of 'You're early years, we don't really get you'?		
R	It was really interesting actually because there was a real mix on the course, and a lot of masters are distance taught, so you don't actually get to be there with them, but we did. And I was with … I made friends with a head, somebody else was doing an admin role in one of the universities, so it		

really was a real eclectic mix of people that were on the course. So nobody was coming at it with a prejudged opinion or approach. And because it was much more generalised about the role of education and about the position of education in society and the philosophy of education and all these sorts of things, rather than it being about classroom practice. So for me it was ideal because it allowed me to be out of … well in a new arena, yes out of my box. Not just for me, but I think it's very easy when you're teaching in a school because it's so demanding – you go in, your head's down, that's your school, that's what you're dealing with, and you never look up, and you never see the bigger picture. And I think for me this was the looking up and finding the bigger picture, and consequently going 'I don't to be part of that picture anymore'.		Isolation
I 'I don't like that picture'		
(laughter)		
R I want this picture. But it was, it was the only way I could find of doing something that was for me, that was mine. I wasn't doing it for the school – they would probably have benefited had I stayed and they'd have valued my work. But I wasn't doing it for them, I was doing it for me. My own children had gone off to uni, they were doing their degrees, they were fine and sorted, my husband was fine – I'm doing this for me.	Really important- learning from action and reflection on action etc	
I Because you'd given so much of yourself to that role – it doesn't sound unreasonable to want a bit of professional development.		
R No.	Staying sane. (Like Ben making the head teacher say names they can't pronounce!)	
I Not on a Monday.		
R Not on a Monday. But I think professional development in early years is really quite difficult. There are a huge number of local authority courses, but they're aimed at people that are starting out …		
I And they're functional, you have your safeguarding, your first aid …		
R Yeah and you might have a creativity one and you might have an outside learning one.		Neglect
I Probably a phonics one, there'll be a phonics one.		
R I don't know because I've chucked Letters and Sounds in the bin, so it's … but do you know what I mean, it's all about can you tick those boxes, and it's not about are you developing in your own practice and as a person able to fulfil that role. And I think again this comes back to the funding situation, and I know at one point we were part of the funding discussion group with a lot of the local authorities when the funding formula was being created, and I think at the time they decided	Unavailability of CPD for QTMEYS	Neglect

				Control
	£6/10 per pupil was the rate. And then you start thinking okay so if you're talking about an early years unit in a school that's got a qualified teacher in the reception, some of them might have a graduate in the nursery, and then the rest of the staff around … well hang on a minute I've spent that, I haven't got maintenance for the building, I've got no resources, but I've spent what you've just funded for me. I think you know that is very telling as to how valued early years is as an area (inaudible 56:18) then.	Performativity		
I	Yeah, and in your story you said you became increasingly disillusioned by the education system which doesn't value its staff, work for the benefits of the students, and is constantly criticised by parents, press and government. There's a lot there …			
R	(laughs)			
I	… about … yeah, but it's that lack of value on any level that's interesting. You know not valuing the staff or not giving you professional development opportunities, not recognising what you're doing, not benefiting the students. We've talked about you know that these tests are not for the students, and the battle to get support … and this constant criticism by parents, press and government. So tell me a bit more about the constant criticism – is that sort of media and things?			
R	I mean the media love a bit of teacher bashing don't they, and over the last 18 months that's become an ever popular sport. I mean that's standard. I think you know the government are always quick to find someone else to blame, and in this case it's been teachers. I mean I've been doing supply over this challenging period that we've just gone in, and the teachers in some of the schools … bless their cotton socks … are on their knees, they've been having to do online lessons at the same time as teaching children in the classroom. So that's two lots of lessons they have to plan for that bit. And you're going to tell me that we should run summer schools and we should do extra lessons and longer school days – have you any idea what an extra hour on the school day looks like to a teacher?			
I	Or a child.			
R	I know, I know. I used to have children who used to come in to the early morning club at 8 o'clock and not be picked up until 5.30 – and this was reception age children. I know I was very fortunate when mine were young, you know I was there, I could be there to pick them up, I could be there to drop them off – or my husband could be there. You know he worked shifts at the time, so that was … you know there was always someone there, they were never in that situation. But they used to			

be exhausted, and small children are exhausted – putting an extra hour on the day isn't going to make them learn any better, it isn't going to make them do any better in your lovely little tests, it's just going to make them more exhausted.		
I	And again it's that putting more on rather than taking something off that is just such a bizarre concept that you just think well at what point do you think the camel's … or you know the expression I mean although it's gone of my head now … the camel's back is going to break, you can't just keep piling more on.		
R	No. And I think you know … again it comes back to it being a predominantly female profession, but we do that thing where we just think that … well it just needs to be done so we'll do it. And it's become expected, it goes back to those expectations again, it's become expected – because we've done that we've created this environment in which it's expected that we will continue to do that. And that's not healthy for anybody – least of all the teaching staff. When I wrote my dissertation I read a bit about the Matilda effect … I think the teaching profession is a prime example of the fact that **we are not recognised for what we do, until a male teacher comes in who is suddenly God because he's a male teacher in primary education, whether it's … and if it's a male teacher in early years, then hallelujah, but even in primary education he's a male teacher, so he's got … but then he'll only be there for a few years before he's promoted, so that's fine, don't need to worry about that. But it is, it's that constant squash you down, keep you there. You'll carry on doing what you're doing – because you do, that's what you do - because we want to the best for the children and we know that if we don't do those things they're not getting the best. And so it's like we're winding ourselves into a hole in the ground.** (laughs)	Patriarchy- views on position of women in society and need to dominate or ignore or repress them- why? FEAR?	Control
I	Yeah, I think that's a really good metaphor for it, because you know it is like that, you're making it worse for yourself. I loved this bit in your story, I'm just going to share this … there it goes look … where you talked about … and I love this … do you want to read that bit down to 'I took a step back'?		
R	Yeah, I decided to complete my masters, I had to reassure my Head that there would be no impact on my teaching, but I became increasingly disillusioned, I became quite disruptive in staff meetings, and I was desperate to make others think. I felt that everything was a token and a constant battle and I was completely exhausted – I took a step back.		
I	That bit where you said 'I became quite disruptive in meetings' and I thought yes I recognise that.		

R	(laughs)		
I	Yeah. Because it's almost that … you know we talked just before didn't we about that behaviour being a sort of 'my needs are not being met'		
R	Yes.		
I	And if you're not hearing me then I'm just going to have to shout louder and I'm going to have to fight everything. And that in itself is exhausting, but you also talked about that tokenism and the constant balancing act, particularly in reception between parental expectations, government guidance, play-based pedagogy, preparation for Year 1, that constant battle. So what could be done to make that balancing act any easier or to manage … to make the battle any more fightable?		
R	I think the play-based pedagogy needs to continue. I don't think we should get to the end of reception and go 'push' – that's the end of it. You know you're now going to sit in lessons and you're going to get on with your work - because they're not equipped for that. I have been in some schools where I've been supply teaching and in that first half term there are now some play-based activities alongside the formal teaching. Which is a gesture towards that some of those children are just not equipped. But I think if you take those prime areas from the early years curriculum, you thread those through the rest of the curriculum and work your way through that, so that your focus is always on are they able to communicate effectively. Because if they can't communicate effectively then they're not going to learn, because they can't tell me what's wrong and they can't tell me what's right, and they can't explain, so stick with that, keep that one in. Physical, you know they're little – if you sit there and expect them to write they're not going to do it, they haven't got it, they haven't got the strength. Doesn't matter how many pegs they've played with, they're not going to have that to do it for a long period of time, so give them appropriate activity. And if that means storytelling verbally or with pictures or with puppets or with drama or whatever else – allow them to build the skills before we insist that they sit down and recall everything. And then their social and emotional needs are then being met because they are being heard, they are being listened to, they are being thought about, and their confidence when then faced with challenges is going to be on a whole different level. Whereas now you know they're suddenly faced with this whole new world at 5 years old that they're … with the best will in the world with the most amazing teachers in early years and reception they're just not ready to cope with that.	Reimagining the curriculum if it was based on children's needs throughout primary	
I	And listening to you I'm thinking that's pretty much summed up what you needed as well.		

R	Yes.		
I	You needed to communicate, but not just for you to say things, but to have them heard and to have … because the communication is a two way streak isn't it, it's not about you not being able to communicate the importance of play-based pedagogy, it's about people not being willing to listen to it. And the physical side of things is that having that ability to be mobile within things, to be flexible, to move around wasn't there, and so from the social and emotional level your behaviour changed, which is as I said so familiar because you just reached that point where you just think no I'm not following the rules.		
R	Not going to take it anymore.		
I	I'm not doing this. I'm not changing things. So who is it that needs to hear that? Who is it? Because we talked about you know if this is the curriculum and this is where we're going then that needs to be the plan from the start. But then what you've just said is actually let's take what we're doing here, because we're doing it right and move it up.		
R	Yeah.		
I	So who needs to hear that? Is it other teachers, is it the heads, the SLT, is it policymakers?		
R	I think it needs to be a combination, but there is … I don't know if you're aware of an organisation called Oracy 21.		
I	Yeah.		
R	And I saw Rebecca Earnshaw speak at a BERA conference a little while ago and she is amazing. And that is basically what they did – in the school that they started in they threw the curriculum out and built it from the bottom with learning to speak and listen. And one of the things that stuck with me is the only time speaking and listening is assessed is in early years and in foreign languages. And it's like but surely that's the most important skill. Because if you can't say it you can't write it down.		
I	And it's so interesting the parallels with MFL in terms of literally learning a new language, learning new cultures and customs – how do I behave here, what do we do here, what's the convention for this, what's the way that I organise that.		
R	How do I fit into that bit.		
I	Yeah yeah.		

R	And so I think that's … they have sort of spread out quite a long way now, there's a lot of schools that they've got on board using that philosophy. But it shouldn't be a case of some schools are now going to have that amazing opportunity, but as with anything that becomes a big change you're going to have battles, there's going to be schools that will go 'No we're not doing that, we're not doing that, we don't need to do that, we're going to do it this way' and so it depends on whether the government are strong enough to say actually we need to review the whole of our education system and we need to start here, not here. You know we can tweak with the A Levels, do what you like, I don't care, but that (inaudible 1:09:17) it has to start at the bottom.		
I	And actually … I'm not sure what you think, but when I look at the EYFS and I look at the … not perhaps so much the new one, but when you look at it and you think actually this is good, this is right, this is prime areas, characteristics of effective learning, we've got it – we know what we're doing, why are we adding onto that.	Get it right from the start!	
R	Why are we not allowed to know what we're doing. I think that's one of the key things. You know you've given me this framework, and it's a great framework for focus and it's really good for those that are coming into the profession, it's an amazing piece of equipment to help them understand how learning develops. And I haven't looked at the new one because I just can't bring myself to do it, but I know that there was talk of the knowledge and understanding disappearing completely, and you're like – well okay then so we don't need to worry about whether it's raining and there's puddles to jump in and what happens to them when the sun comes out.		Control
I	They don't want to engage with the world, get back in the box.		
R	Yes – can they read, can they write, that's all you need to worry about. What a sad reflection.	But this means giving back control by listening to the experts, by being brave enough to admit that they were wrong! By using the evidence !!!	
I	Are they a mentally stable individual who's able to contribute to society and live a good and fulfilling life – we don't worry about that. That's …		
R	No no no, that's irrelevant. As long as they can … can they do a number 5 with it being the right way round.		
I	Okay good. Job done, job done, tick the box.		
R	And do they know which way B and D goes – that's fine, don't need to worry about it.		
I	Good good good. So I suppose really what we're saying is that to make this battle easier to fight it's not about us talking, it's about people listening. And we don't want people to get involved, we want them to back off a bit and say actually you know what you're doing, what can I learn from		

	you, what can I take from you to make what I'm doing better. So you've said that you've been going in, you're link tutoring, you've done a lecture for the PGCE students, and you said you see this lecture as a token gesture saying that those going into Year 1 classes even won't be fully equipped to meet the needs, and you talked about that earlier. So what more could be done to better prepare these teachers to work with young children? You said about a whole term in early years, which on a PGCE course would be a challenge – are you saying that maybe this course is not the best course?		Neglect Control
R	Yeah. I mean having gone through it – this is the third year that I've done link tutoring for it – those students are not equipped to go out into a classroom. And the questions that they're asking when you visit and he the things that they - show very clearly that they're not equipped. And part of that is because they've gone school, university, PGCE and they have no life experience at all, and part of it is that they just haven't linked up all the bits that have been thrown at them. And when I was doing my … during lockdown when I was having a bit of a moment and I'd been talking to one of the students … and this was during the first lockdown so it was the end … they'd lost that last bit of their placement … and we were having to make judgements as to whether they were going forward to QTS or not, and were like 'I've never seen her teach, I don't know'. And I think one of the things … I sort of sat down and I wrote … I just sort of wrote things down just for my own clarity if you like, and I sort of came to the conclusion that actually it should be a two year course, and it should be a two year course so that they can have a year doing the theory … whether they do it in and out and in and out, or whether they do it as a whole year and then … they have a year doing the theory and they have a year doing placements. And in that year doing placement they do a term in early years, a term in Key Stage 1 and a term in Key Stage 2. Then a) they find out where they're comfortable, b) they'd see how the learning grows. And even if they do it the other way round, you know if they start off in Year 5 and then drop to Year 2 and go 'Oh, oh so they need that before they can get that' – and that understanding only comes from doing it. And now they've extended the … we're no longer NQTs, we're going to have the early career framework and it's going to be two years, so actually what you're saying is the PGCE doesn't equip you because you need another two years of support in order to be able to qualify as a teacher really.	PGCE is not preparing QTMEYS or Year 1 teachers adequately

Reimagining ITE

Interesting that it is not just me who sees the ECF acknowledging that this route is not working | |
| I | Yeah it's not long enough and … | | |
| R | No. | | |

I	But also I think it's almost … it again … there's that subtext there about money and just get the bodies in the classroom.		
R	Well when I was writing I was going except of course if you did it over two years it's going to cost the students more money, it's going to cost the universities more money – the schools are going to have a backlog of unqualified teachers, and actually you're going to have this whole sort of shift. So I get that it's possibly now a practical approach, but I still think it's the right approach. (laughs)		Neglect Control
I	Yeah, and that's the thing, it's a very brave decision, and there is I think a misconception somehow that the PGCE is superior and is the gold standard. But it doesn't … it's the PGCE students that early career framework is there for because they're not ready.	Exploring why they won't do this	
R	No. I mean when I did mine I'd been in pre-school, so I'd had my own children, I'd done pre-school practice, I'd then gone in as a TA and sort of worked across the whole of that early years before I got to my GTP. So by the time I got to my GTP I was already working in the role of a teacher. And …		
I	Already?		
R	Yes, and I fast tracked my GTP – I did it in two terms. And my mentor came in one day and she says 'Well have you done this?' And I says how much more … it was something about reading 'You don't seem to have done much reading'. And I says 'Hang on a minute' I says 'I finish my degree in June, how much more reading would you like me to do on top of putting all these pieces of paper in this file so you've got something to look at when you come, because you know I am actually teaching as well'. And she didn't like that, because obviously I was challenging her and …		
I	Back in the box!		
R	No, I don't like it in the box!		
I	It's dark and it's boring – let me out. (laughs)		
R	(laughs) Are you getting a sense of the fact that I'm not very good about …		
I	I'm not a box person. No I'm with you, I'm with you.		
R	But I think you know … we recruit people into this profession who are not equipped with life skills, and you want them to go and teach …		
I	Life skills.		Fulfilling ethical responsibilities that are gradually being eroded
R	… people life skills. You know you can just about do your own coat up, can you do theirs up as well – do you know what I mean, I just think it's … and then you go back round, because teaching as a		

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	profession is not valued, you know it is looked down upon by other professions. So how do you then recruit people into it that have had some life experience and have the skills and the understanding and all the rest of it? At that point that that would require universities to do a little bit more discerning investigation into their students before they accept them on the course - and they're not allowed to do that anymore, they're not even allowed to make sure they've got their maths and English.	Reimagining recruitment- giving power back to universities to say no more often	
I	So it's really … it's coming right back down to … we need to think about who goes onto a teaching course, we need to change the shape of those courses so they're fit for purpose. And then we might stand a better chance of people coming in, knowing what they're getting into, so they might be better prepared for it. How do we prepare them for the site though, how do we get that? Cos you said about this constant fight takes its toll, and while you've done what you can to educate people about the importance of early years, in the face of constant criticism and blatant disrespect you don't have the mental strength to continue. So it's that how do we get the right people … and you were the right person, you had all this experience, you had all of this, you took your time, you built your qualification up over a long period, so you had the practical experience, you knew what you were doing … (inaudible 1:19:39) constant battle.	Need to make the profession more appealing	
R	But perhaps if there was the shift in culture in schools and the shift in emphasis away from ticking the boxes, then the staff would have time to value each other and to value what each other bring. Because at the moment it's a … I'm in Year 2 I haven't got time to be thinking about that, or I'm in Year 4, whatever – you haven't got that time, there's no more hours – there are no more - (inaudible 1:20:18) of that time. I know somebody who went to Singapore as a maths exchange – they only teach for half a day and the rest of the time is professional development and research and things. I mean can you imagine – good God! – that's really …	Reimagining schools where there is CPD and where all staff have walked in each other's shoes- building competence, trust, respect and stronger teachers	Neglecting to make a sincere commitment- if policy is evidence informed, why isn't
I	Radical.		
R	I know but it's that valuing your professional development and understanding.		
I	Yeah. And I think that's the thing is that if you know you're valued, if you think about a child and you think about the positive relationships – when a child has that secure base of knowing they're valued … knowing their needs are met, they're respected, they're loved, they belong – they've got that self esteem, there's the potential to actualise.		
R	Put Maslow's hierarchy away now (laughs)		

I	That's my Maslow … you know you've got that … if you've got that, does it make the fight easier, because then like you said, you've got everybody's needs being met, so nobody's competing or hiding in their box going 'It's okay, it's all right, I'm okay in here' you know – you've got that more … you're able to get to that top level of transcendence and go 'Do you know what, I'm okay, so let me help you now'.	The valuing of professional development is written into the ECF but will the culture shift and will it shift for everyone- what is there for QTMEYS?	<mark>this evidence being used?</mark> CPD in England focuses on compliance, performativity and control instead
R	Yeah, and I think it's that, it's that … <mark>if you have that and you have a culture within a school where you feel valued</mark> … and don't get me wrong, I've been in some schools where … there's one that I supply in quite regularly and they were having a conversation around getting changed for PE and how they were going to work it as the restrictions changed and things … and I'm sat in the corner and I went 'Yeah but if the reception children don't get changed for PE how do you know they can?' And they went 'Oh'. I says 'I've done it so that they can get changed one way or the other way, but they don't have to do both ways'. You know so they can come in in their PE kit and get changed into their uniform, or come in in their uniform and get changed into their PE kit – at least then you get to see that. And they went 'Oh that's a good idea'. And you're like 'What?' - (inaudible 1:22:55) their regular supply, but to have the head say 'Oh that's a really sensible idea, that's really good' – <mark>you know you can see how much difference having that sort of approach and that value. And then they all move round – every couple of years they all move round classrooms, including the reception – the only one that doesn't is the nursery, because that is … I'll go along that lines, that is quite a specialist area, and that's not right for everybody … but they all move round, so they've all had experience in each of the rooms. And that then creates that sense of respect, because I've done it, I understand what it's like, I know how it works, I can use strategies from there in there, and I can use those strategies for that to extend those children – and all of those things. So when it works well it's fantastic, but I think there are so many, too many teachers in the profession who don't have that understanding, don't have that level of respect, don't have that comprehension, or even willingness to look.</mark>	It's interesting that this completely contradicts what Nancy said but Nancy hadn't really had three years in Reception because of the pandemic	Could combat some of the isolation and improve mentoring if everyone has had some experience
I	So it's about I suppose walking a mile in someone else's shoes isn't it? – teaching a term in someone else's key stage gives you the respect for that, which comes down again to you know that cultural shift in schools, but right back to training that you literally are going to have to walk in each of those key stages before you might decide that …		
R	Yeah you might decide that I never want to go in an early years classroom.		

I	But that's okay because you can see how hard it is and you can understand and value and respect.		
R	And understand how that links. And they're doing that so that you can do that.		
I	Yeah yeah.		
R	Because if they don't you can't.		
I	Exactly, exactly. So it's that understanding. There's so much here about what can be done better in ITT, about what can be done culturally within schools. So what I'm trying to do is to really make sure that the voice of qualified teacher in those maintained early years settings is heard in ITE so that the programmes are fit for purpose. But also in policy decisions about how to support teacher retention. So you've given me lots there about what you think the schools need to hear and what needs to change in ITE. Now without using any naughty words …		
R	(laughs)		
I	… what do you think (laughs) those policymakers need to hear. If we had their ear and we said look this is what you need to do – what would you say to them?		
R	They need to look at the whole curriculum and they need to look at it from the bottom up, not from the top down. Don't look at it from the 'Right we need to get everybody ten GCSEs' – that's what we get, because that's not going to work. What we need to do is focus on what the children need … like you said, in order to be contributing to society in a productive way – and that involves them being able to listen and communicate effectively, and it comes from them having resilience and emotional strength. Because they're going to face challenges, life is challenging. And you know this idea that children don't fail and can't fail, you know we just …		Reimagining the curriculum again
I	Failure's important.		
R	It's really important, and it's not about whether you fail or whether you succeed, it's about what you do in response to those things.		
I	What have you learned from that failure.		
R	Yeah. That's such a powerful message that gets lost on its route. So we might have that message in early years, and we might really focus on you know it's your turn to do show and tell today, so you're going to listen to what they ask you and then you're going to answer their questions. You know they think we do show and tell for the fun of it – no. (laughs)		
I	But we can spend a few hours on a Friday without doing any planning.		
R	Yeah yeah.		

I	Don't you know, you're right.		
R	That understanding that actually they have to learn to communicate, and communication is not just speaking. You know we've got this whole society now who think that if somebody's got an opinion that's different to theirs it's wrong and they shouldn't listen to it. No – you have to listen to everything and make your own decisions. So if you get something wrong what did you get from that. If you did something right – great, how are you going to move forward. How are you going to explain that to somebody else? We want them to have that skill, they need to be able to express themselves, and at the moment that is lost because we're too busy ticking boxes to making sure that they can do their timestables and that they can do their spellings and everything else. They might be able to spell the words, they have no clue what to do with it once they can.		
I	I suppose it's like … because I often think … I kind of get into building metaphors and cooking metaphors – you build a foundation before you build a house.		
R	Yes.		
I	So that's important, but then in terms of the cooking metaphor it's that thing where you know I could give you a pound of beef and some onions and whatever else, and you can make with that whatever you want. Whereas if I say to you you've got to make this, how will I ever know – what could I be missing out on, what could I be … you know you could create something amazing, you could create an incredible steak dish, but if I tell you you've got to mince it and you've got to do it like this and you've got do that I'm reducing it, and I'm reducing your ability – that then squashes you down even more. So back in your box, there's no empowering. I suppose the biggest thing you said there is about learning from your mistakes. And when you look at the kind of research (inaudible 1:30:04) what works – getting it right. And it's like actually no, we know what's gone wrong, let's look at that and fix that.		
R	I used to run a science club for the Year 2 children and I once put loads of different things on the table – vinegar, bicarb, Coke everything, mentos everything on the table. And I says 'It's yours – see what happens' 'What do you mean?' 'Put it together anyhow you like – see what happens. What happens when you put that in there?' 'Oh nothing.' 'Oh what happens if you put that in there?' 'Oh!' 'Well what happens if you put that and that in there?' And you know the idea that children have freedom to explore and investigate for themselves is a completely alien concept. You know go out in the garden, go and play, I don't care what you do – dig a hole, fall in it, you		

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	know … but we've lost that because children are only allowed to do what they're assigned to do. You know you go to that club, that club, that club, that club – do what you're told when you get there, and come home again. And so you know we try our very best in early years to give them the idea that they can do things for themselves and they can explore for themselves and they can investigate for themselves, and then we take it away.		
I	And now do this.		
R	Yes.		
I	Like this, not like that, like this.		
R	Art in school is just a complete and utter misnomer, I mean what's that about? Because what you're actually talking about is art appreciation. This is a picture, this is who did it, have a go at doing your own.		
I	My favourite is with the 30 identical Christmas cards – because that's your art for the week. And you're like …		
R	Never in my classroom. (laughs)		
I	Good. (laughs)		
R	But you know the fact that we do that once they get out of early years means where are you getting the entrepreneurs of the future from, where are you getting those free thinkers that are going to come up with new ideas and new solutions to old problems and everything else – because you are squashing them right at the beginning. And so …		
I	And telling them there's something wrong with them.		
R	Yes. And so the policymakers need to know that that approach in early years is actually the approach that should be permeating all the way through the curriculum.	Impact of current curriculum on children	
I	And not just in school, I think in university as well we want teachers who think, not who just do what they're told. I'm very aware … I've kept you for ages now I'm having a lovely conversation here, but I'm very aware of your time. Wendy I can't thank you enough, I could carry on chatting all night, this is fantastic – set the world to rights.		
R	Well it's nice to have the conversation and I know when I was doing my research I know … you know some people you ask a question and you get an answer, and other people you ask a question and it goes … and those are the ones you get something from.		

I	They're the best ones. It's like actually … you know one of the big things that I've been writing about is the fact that so many of the questions that are asked are the wrong questions. And the questions that are the right questions are given a fixed response, so you can pick from this this this or this. None of them are quite right, and then they're asking the questions to the wrong people. So it's that how can you possibly ask a secondary school teacher what aspects of their job they find the most demoralising, and assume from that that you know what makes an early years teacher's job demoralising, or what kind of support do you need and assume … and it might be that the answers are the same – perhaps they are the same, but how do you know if you don't ask.		
R	No. And I think that's the thing, because obviously secondary teachers are valued, professional opinion is much more valued than an early years professional opinion - and there lies the problem.		
I	And that's why we get them to write the maths curriculum for early years.		
R	Of course, of course. And you know why do we have to do money in early years, because most of them have never seen it.		
I	Don't need to know about money or shape and space – don't need to know about that, just numbers – numbers.		
R	Yeah numbers are good, numbers are good, just put them in the right order.		
I	Put them in the right order, yeah. And it doesn't actually matter if you understand what 5 is as long as you can replicate a 5.		
R	No. And a little boy I was teaching the other day, and it was a Year 1 class and he was quietly going 5 and 2 is 7. So he was (inaudible 1:35:22) everything really really quickly, but couldn't show me – didn't understand that concept. And I thought mm, he might need that one later on, he might need to be able to do it.		
I	That's going to come in handy, because it's like when parents tell you their child can count to 100 and you're like 'No they can't' – they can say number names in order to 100, they can't actually count beyond 3'.		
R	I know this because the other day in the home corner they gave me a pile of forks. (laughs)		
I	Yes, and said there's 10 …		
R	Yes.		
I	… but it was 3.		
R	These are things we know, we know these things, and you know …		

I	If only somebody asked us.		
R	Yes, yeah. Wouldn't that be joyous.		
I	That would be nice, oh ████, it's been so good talking to you, thank you so so much.		
R	You're more than welcome.		

4. Needs identified within literature/ theoretical framework

competence	Autonomy	Relatedness

5. Sources of ambient support/ dissonance (emerging from the written narratives)

Networks and communities of practice outside the setting	Early Years experts/ role models	Colleagues	Children and families	SLT	Policy makers/ Ofsted	CPD

Ben Ford Careers guidance		
I don't think I actually thought it was possible. For some reason it had just never – I don't know, nobody had ever kind of said 'Oh you'd be good at this', so I kind of just – I kind of thought it was impossible. And as brilliant as my parents were, and they'd always kind of said I'd get an education, go to university, you'll be okay – my mum worked in Tesco's and my dad worked in a factory, so there was no kind of – I had no … apart from being told you had to go to university, that was what happened, that's kind of what I did, nobody had ever said 'What do you think you might like to do? , I was lost really. The only people who took an interest were drama teachers, because I was good at drama. But there was never an end goal – I didn't know what I wanted to do. Well maybe I wanted to be an actor, but I think by the time I got to university I didn't want to be an actor anymore, but then I didn't really know what to do.	Secondary schools- importance of careers advice/ guidance Societal barriers- who are these people who make people feel like this!	Care for others-

I think – I don't know, I guess I kind of – in my mind, even though I never really thought about it … there were reasons why I couldn't be. And those reasons I couldn't be were being gay, being working class, you know – there were barriers that I assumed meant that I couldn't do it I think. – **all I knew is I needed to have a job that was useful, I needed to be doing something that was useful**.	What are they afraid of?	wanting others to be included

Nancy Forester- ITE

~~our tutor was amazing like brilliant and supportive, so I really, really respect her and that she was a very sort of key stage two in terms of her career and her experience so on examples on things that she, you know that she was able to draw on and authentically talk about work from her career and her kind of experience, so I guess that kind of manifested sort of just… embedded that feeling of oh yeah yeah,~~	ITE lecturers lack of exp	
I was wanting to study part time. And I couldn't find a course for three to seven offered. To be away from my kids full time yeah so there was do because it ended up being a primary rather than an early years one, the focus very heavily on primary but not perhaps…	Lack of availability of specialist routes	
~~obviously I kind of signed up to a primary route, but I was really clear from the beginning that I wanted, you know I wanted to at least gain some more understanding about you know I didn't necessarily know that stage I would definitely become an early years teacher, but because I was quite open minded and.~~ ~~But yeah I suppose I suppose that sort of flexibility and knowledge and expertise available at university level to get the experience that I then had to go and seek when I was NQT. And I remember, actually, but when before you… before you start your teacher training, you have to have, what is it 10 days experience in school…I'd done three or something in reception and they said no, they don't count. So see… you know just from the beginning, it felt like it's a second rate experience in reception~~	Lack of EY content on primary PGCE There are 3 key stages in a primary school- why doesn't EY	
~~I mean there was obviously an emphasis on phonics and things like that which is EY focused and and you know when we're doing our masters it was you know, obviously very much through the primary but~~		

~~...yeah I think I think I said that there was kind of one hour dedicated.~~

~~It was really nicely done and our lecturer brought in the early years lead from her previous school, so it was really nicely done it was from you know practitioner currently working leading in early years and she bought lots of examples and she gave us the earliest framework and a kind of scenario and she got us to kind of talk through an observation that we might do and how we would map it to the framework so It was really nicely done and I felt quite confident talking that away and, and it was it was kind of quite refreshing to have our tutor kind of say how much she respected this person's practice and...You know kind of give it the gravitas that she had all the other ones that we'd been working on.~~

~~None of my early years teaching was ever observed, so I never received feedback so. Yeah there was there was never any mentoring~~

~~You know how do you apply that framework to what you're seeing and how do you think about the next steps and... Just kind of modelling really I suppose that more in the moment planning and and... and then mentoring,~~

~~I did some teaching, I mean the teacher, I was in with she was very she sort of said to me whatever you feel confident to do so. One of my targets are at that time with to get more experience of teaching phonics because I've been in year six I haven't gotten a chance to teach phonics so and.~~
~~So as yeah just as and when I felt able to do some phonics input, but there wasn't very much formal teaching, because it was all play well as it should be, of course. She encouraged me make observations and.~~
~~She showed me their learning journals yeah all of that, and then, and then I did do a couple of things because they were doing space, so I did a kind of input for them and we looked at the size of the planets using fruit.~~
~~yeah so I did I did a bit of planning and then teaching and then they were also doing the the new year, the Chinese New Year story, and with some of the more able writers, I did like a drama workshop and and they did some writing in response to that drama workshop that I did~~

~~Well, they Just sort of said, you know, whatever you feel you'd like to do is we're learning, and so they, let me just kind of create some bits of input.~~

You at that point, you had seen as a parent and a governor and in placements during your part time PGCE spent, probably by the time you take off the observations and you're equating to about six days experience in an early years setting.
How well prepared, did you feel at that stage to take on the responsibility of the leading position?

1- 00:12:42.360 --> 00:13:35.400 Nancy: ~~Woefully under prepared. Woefully under prepared~~.		
Ben Ford- ITE		
~~we had sessions in all of the foundation subjects, but there was a lot of child development, a lot of phonics, a lot of early maths. It was all fascinating the university stuff.~~ When I worked in the ██████████ ███████████████████████████████████ – which has got a cathedral at each end and has the university behind it and … so it's a lovely place to be and there were lots of kind of Georgian squares where in the summer you'd see students kind of spread out on the grass reading textbooks – it always looked … and I'd always kind of thought oh it'd be lovely to go back to university, that'd be really nice. But there was no sprawling on the grass reading textbooks it was … I You were far too busy. R Yeah, frantic, it was nonstop. And we were in uni for 4 days and then had Fridays clear, but because of the teaching school practice we always had something on a Friday as well. So there wasn't much time for essay writing or … ~~it did feel it was a lot packed into a year~~	Tailored content on EY specific courses	Better prepares students for practice
Coco- ITE		
~~I think all teachers as part of their teacher training should spend at least a term in early years.~~ ~~I've been doing a link tutoring job for ██████ and some of these students are going into a Year 1 classroom and they have no clue – they have no clue about where these children are coming from.~~ ~~this is the third year that I've done link tutoring for it – those students are not equipped to go out into a classroom. And the questions that they're asking when you visit and he the things that they show very clearly that they're not equipped. And part of that is because they've gone school, university, PGCE and they have no life experience at all, and part of it is that they just haven't linked up all the bits that have been thrown at them.~~	ITE not working for QTMEYS or any teacher because not prepared for all three key stages PGCE is not preparing QTMEYS or Year 1	

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~~I sort of came to the conclusion that actually it should be a two year course, and it should be a two year course so that they can have a year doing the theory … whether they do it in and out and in and out, or whether they do it as a whole year and then … they have a year doing the theory and they have a year doing placements. And in that year doing placement they do a term in early years, a term in Key Stage 1 and a term in Key Stage 2. Then a) they find out where they're comfortable, b) they'd see how the learning grows. And even if they do it the other way round, you know if they start off in Year 5 and then drop to Year 2 and go 'Oh, oh so they need that before they can get that' – and that understanding only comes from doing it. And now they've extended the … we're no longer NQTs, we're going to have the early career framework and it's going to be two years, so actually what you're saying is the PGCE doesn't equip you because you need another two years of support in order to be able to qualify as a teacher really.~~ ~~of course if you did it over two years it's going to cost the students more money, it's going to cost the universities more money – the schools are going to have a backlog of unqualified teachers, and actually you're going to have this whole sort of shift. So I get that it's possibly now a practical approach, but I still think it's the right approach~~ … we recruit people into this profession who are not equipped with life skills, and you want them to go and teach … I Life skills. R … people life skills. You know you can just about do your own coat up, can you do theirs up as well – do you know what I mean, I just think it's … and then you go back round, because teaching as a profession is not valued, you know it is looked down upon by other professions. So how do you then recruit people into it that have had some life experience and have the skills and the understanding and all the rest of it? At that point that that would require universities to do a little bit more discerning investigation into their students before they accept them on the course - and they're not allowed to do that anymore	teachers adequately Interesting that it is not just me who sees the ECF acknowledging that this route is not working Exploring why they won't do this giving power back to universities to say no more often Need to make the profession more appealing	Fulfilling ethical responsibilities that are gradually being eroded
Etta		
I never considered I was going to be a teacher. Some people I knew were, and actually when I went to speak to them about how to get a place at university and what have you and what it was like, they would always talk to me and then end up saying 'I don't know if I can recommend you to do it because of you know what it's like.' And for me in some senses – I think I had selective hearing of that because I needed to do something and get a job,	It's interesting that, although she was almost on a	

and what I thought as well was that teaching would maybe give me some deeper understanding of child development.

in hindsight and looking at what's happened to teacher education I think you know … I can see why the government want to have as much condensed university based stuff or whatever and more in the settings, because there was a big focus, and having four years was just amazing. So I'm not saying it wasn't intense or what have you, but it meant that you know you could start off with your first placement just really going in observing, going into different schools, getting a feel for it, you know it gradually increased with the amount of responsibility you would have. So by the time you came to your fourth year and that final placement and you took the whole class and led it, you know you had a level of confidence. You'd been with different settings and different teams and what have you. So all of that I love the practical, but then having a back-up as well of you know college and tutors to support you

early years was a separate avenue, and in fact I had … one of the friends in my mature student group was a nursery nurse, and so she was following the early years module when we sort of split for which key stages. But there wasn't really … I mean apart from you know when you were looking at people like Piaget and Vygotsky and going through different models you would touch on it then, but no. I was also very sure because I'd worked with 5 to 18 year olds and I was going to work not with the younger children. So yeah, that came through teaching. And then again for this period of study outside of the classroom, which is so important.

I had a placement in a reception class. So that was … you know I enjoyed it, but again it was very structured – that's what I remember about it you know. And I can remember having to do an activity, a teacher-led activity. I did one with Smarties and blotting paper, to do with looking at the colours that came out and talking about them. So everything in the class was like that – it was teacher-led really.

on my B.Ed. even with the 18 year olds that came in people had generally I think chosen … because you asked me why did I go into teaching. And while it was kind of like 'Well this is something I could do because I've got experience' I think most people wanted to be a teacher for vocational reasons you know. And I think quite often … I don't know, maybe this is unfounded, I've got nothing to say about this … when I speak to people who've done PGCEs they've often chosen it because they know it's going to give them an income, they'll get a job, it will give them an income, and

parallel pathway up until this point.	
Benefits of a longer training/ ITE programme	
Why would the government deliberately reduce professional confidence	The focus on fast track courses and now SCITT gets bodies in classrooms quicker but neglects the developmental needs of the teachers at the expense of the children they work with
So, not an EY specialist course but parallels with LOTC	
Length of course allowed time for EY placement	
Are people going in to teaching for the right reasons? Links	There is a failure her in terms of long term thinking (neglect)

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~~so they're not quite sure possibly where they want to go, so they'll do some teaching. And then of course they get in it and they realise that doing something else you know would give them a far bigger income and less stress basically.~~ ~~I think it is highly likely you can come into a reception class and there won't be anyone who has a memory of practice – that's what I feel about my setting is that in my setting you can see how we work, it's a memory of change and development and the implementation of new sort of ideas, you know it's all contributing to how we work now. What you will have in reception – the memory – is highly likely to be that of what the government has implemented.~~	to Coco's points about strengthening recruitment rather than making it easier to apply	which means ITE and the system are doomed	

Merida

R	Of course. So I did … the programme was 4 ½ years in total, and you do one year of not so specialist subjects, just a bit of maths, English, science. And then you do 3 ½ years of intense early years … like everything to do with early years basically. But it's still not early years in terms of … say the maths we would teach in early years, so yeah it's a lot of … almost like university level courses where they throw in strategies you could use for your teaching. But it wasn't until you went on placements and you had mentor teachers where they stripped it back to 'If I have three apples and I were to eat one how many would be left?' – and that's real life teaching in early years, I don't need a calculator and all of these Excel spreadsheets. You know I'm a whiz on Excel because that was half my uni courses, but early years teachers, like we don't work like that, so (laughs)	This is the longest course discussed. It seems to have been more practical than others in some ways, focusing on strategies and skills. The Canadian system is quite different and there seems to have been a distinct focus each year. The course itself was different and the placements	
I	So even on an early years course they were making sure you had this subject knowledge like about maths and things rather than … but did you do all the sort of child … I know you mentioned Bloom's Taxonomy, but did you do the childhood development – the Maslow, the Piaget – all of that kind of thing?		
R	We had a year of it, the first year was all of that, and then the rest of the years were more vague, it was how to structure writing a paper or how to structure planning science experiments, but it wasn't … yeah it wasn't …		
I	That's so strange, you'd think on an early years specialist course you'd get that opportunity to really drill down into like developmental theory and stuff and early maths and early English and early … yeah.		
R	No that was just in the first year, and then because I went the early years route we had more placements. So we had two placements a year where if you for example got a degree in Art and then did a one year teacher's and attached it to it – in that programme I think you had two placements, they were 6 weeks long, and then that was the end of it. So with my route it gave you more opportunity to learn in the classroom rather than learning at uni.		
I	So how long were those placements then? Did you get a good long block in school? Or …		

R	Yeah, so the first one was only three weeks, and then towards the end of the year the next one was 3 months. That was the second year, the third year there was a 6 week one and an 8 week one. And the last year was a 4 month placement.	seem to have been longer. This is essential- it gives the students time to be exposed to different ways of doing things and to choose which ways work for them really supporting the development of their teacher identity.
I	That's a really nice big chunk in a setting to get to know it, so no wonder you really knew … when you started off in early years you knew what you were doing, because you'd spent … and all those placements were in early years?	
R	Yes.	
I	Yeah, so you knew what you were about.	
R	Yes, and they were all at different schools, which was brilliant. I know that they still do that for placements, but it was really helpful for me because you could choose. If a head of school requested you back you had a choice to go back to that same school or try a different school, and the heads would always request the students back because they knew the students. But we were always so encouraged to try different schools, so I went to a different school every time. And I picked out things that I liked, that I absolutely hated, so it was really valuable. But being back in the uni part of the classroom I was so dry it wasn't really … We need to be more focussed on the child, it needs to come back to the children. When you're in uni you need to think about children's wellbeing and what does that look like. You know we throw around the word 'wellbeing' so much, but can you actually define that word – what does that look like. You know you're worried about someone's wellbeing, you're worried about someone's mental health, okay what is that, what does that look like, how can you promote positive learning, how can you foster and nurture a child – they don't know. And I've been an NQT mentor and I always ask them that – and they can't tell me. And you know **I think in a lot of unis we're failing students straight out of the gate because … you know they got good grades - awesome, they've got great feedback from their placements – awesome, but they can't tell me what makes a child happy at school, what does that look like.** Okay they can waste three hours on their Sunday planning awesome lesson plans – great … well 10 minutes into your day Peter's going to wet himself, you're not going to be able to teach maths at 9am, it's going to move till 2pm – how do you adapt? And so many NQTs that I've worked with can't adapt, they panic. And I remember one time we had a fire drill and I took a child, I hid a child back – just to see what would happen … I had the child safe obviously … but I hid that child, and it took 45 minutes for anyone even to realise who was missing. So it's little things like that, it's being aware … like there's	University failing teachers by forgetting to teach them about holistic development Why do we spend so much time teaching lesson planning when actually, you cant teach a

		child you don't understand? Link to CPD in Japan- it takes time to develop as a teacher

	just so much wrong. So I think as an NQT you need to be able to adapt to what's happening in the day. I'm not saying take children, obviously … I just did that as a one off because I had this NQT that was just like never aware of who was in. You know you'd walk in – 'How many children do you have in today?' 'Oh they're all in' - 'Okay how many is that?'	child you don't understand? Link to CPD in Japan- it takes time to develop as a teacher Expectations are unrealistic but also, have nothing really to do with the job becayse they have been set by people who fundamentally do not understand the role of QTNMEYS and children's early learning nd development
I	How many yes.	
R	You know when we're coming in from lunch have you counted them – no. Why not?	
I	It's a safeguarding thing isn't it?	
R	Yeah it's massive. But yeah I just think so many of them straight out of the gate focus so much on lesson plans and differentiation in your lessons, but it's just not practical. I don't care if my NQT can write a lesson plan – can you teach them a lesson. I think teachers coming into early years now are more and more set up to fail. Even the NQT I had last year, I said you know what are you learning in university. Oh we learn about safeguarding and the right questions, and what to look out for in abuse and you know how to do a lesson plan like this. And I'm just thinking that's awesome, yeah you need to learn that safeguarding is so crucial, but what about your actual day when something goes wrong. What about when you have reports, parents evenings data, phonics assessment, and you have to mark all your books within 5 days, like how do you manage that? And you talk about the wellbeing of a child, well what about yourself, because if you come in to work stressed out the children will be stressed out. Yeah it just baffles me. And I think also we need to be more brave with trying new things and being okay with failure, you know. Okay you tried this in whatever you're doing and it went horribly wrong – change it or don't do it again, or you know collaborate with your colleagues, how can we make it better next time – I just think there needs to be more of that discussion. And there isn't, I find so much now everything is just top down, top down. You know you're dictated by what you need to do, but actually you need to evaluate, and we need to acknowledge what we're not good at and how we can make that better, because no one is perfect	

what I hadn't really anticipated was that environment preparation and, and, whereas in the four form entry primary school where I did my reception placement, there was quite an abundance of help. And environment prep and things and going then from what from that to like one form entry the TA was you know just sort of [no idea] that was no extra help. The person who is my mentor was like a really lovely person, but he was. His experience was predominantly key stage two and he was also deputy head of the school. And he was our phase leader for infant. And, and he so he was teaching full time will pretty much four days a week in year two. And that was quite new for him and he really he really liked all my ideas. And he could see the benefit in terms of you know, when you came into the... He could see that the children were more happy and engaged and that when he came in sort of a group session or something that you know my teaching was good and everything and, but when I had a question or a suggestion or, and I mean he was actually one thing that he was really good with his sort of... his support for dealing with the parents, because that was yeah I think probably quite consistent across I mean obviously there's early years things. Things that happened just in early years but that was really good so he helped me with that a lot and, but I think it was almost like he was just so busy, and he could see that I was doing a good job, and he kept saying no you're fine you don't you don't need any more you're doing fine. And, which was lovely to hear but...It didn't necessarily make me feel that, and so, when I say, like, for example, I had a group of. You know it's probably a bit of a stereotype that a group of quite physical boys when, and you know different strategies that I tried to engage them. And he didn't have anything else to offer, for example, in essence, so the little, little things that you know kind of make a big difference to environment yeah. There's a lack of real life experience there yeah, people who are supporting me to... to make me feel more confident. I may say a repetition of that university experience, whether it's just a lack of specialism and then lack of understanding of the particular challenges that specialist mentor is key,	Mentor needs relevant experience Almost given too much autonomy because of the mentor's lack of experience?	

Nancy Forester- Funding/staff development/ SLT		
School just didn't have any money, and when I asked to go on some training for an around maths and and best practice in maths and maths in the continuous provision, it was funded, because it was maths. And I think, basically, you know, there was a kind of	Is this because senior leaders did not know what to buy?	

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~~there was a certain budget for training, and so I was given a little bit, but not enough to do everything I wanted to. And I think I was given I think I was given one day off so yeah.~~ I've been on the Anna Ephgrave Training I kind of knew, you know, had something that I was working towards. And when I found somebody who is doing something similar that was, you know that was lovely but then I can…yeah exactly, but then you also sort of that sort of naivety of you're working towards an ideal that actually you know the reality is you're probably never going to achieve that. Yeah **I felt a bit naive, I suppose**. ~~There are some areas that were alright, that were well resourced when you looked at it, for me, so you know, there was a lot of formal maths resources, but I didn't necessarily always want to work with those resources. And so I wanted to make sure there was an environment which was…You know full of other more open ended objects which could be used in multiple different ways and those transformative resources. You can use it, you know yeah yeah yeah exactly yeah I'm just that goes through even things like role play and everything that you just there wasn't so they were kind of firemen outfits and princess outfits.~~ we certainly found that as different adults came in, you know for one to one support or whatever and …going back going back to the beginning again. They didn't always you know felt that was authentic with their practice which it's understandable so I've been teaching another go on you're an alien and they didn't feel. ~~Development doesn't seem a high priority.~~	Suggests SLT did not understand or value what Nancy was proposing? Staff from other key stages lacked understanding of EY practice	
Ben Ford		
we've got a new early years curriculum haven't we from September and we've had a few meetings about it. The last one we had talked about … I (inaudible 1:24:38) don't worry about that though. R Well the last meeting we had to talk about the assessment stuff, the actual important stuff of what we're going to be doing, what's it going to look like in September – the head teacher cancelled that meeting so that we could have a whole school Zoom where for 40 minutes they talked about swimming in Year 4. I When do you think you might get to have that conversation? R Well I don't think we're going to have it. I Do you think you'll just do it – do it anyway?	Are QTMEYS just supposed to pick this up or do they just not care? The problem is, if you don't support your staff, they wont support you and this leads to conflict	Neglect Isolation Conflict and control

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R I think we'll end up doing what we've always done. And if OFSTED come in the next year and ask me why I'm doing it I'm going to say … I Because it's wrong. R … go and speak to the head teacher, you know. I know what I'm doing, but yeah the wider – why haven't we had the discussions, why isn't the policy in place, why isn't this … you know – speak to the head teacher. Why are you still doing (inaudible 1:25:36) why are you still focussing on all the wrong things? 'Well go and speak to the head teacher' - that's going to be my response	Why is the Ofsted the only opportunity Ben has to raise this, to take back control, to be heard!	

Merida- SLT

my SENCo who was just useless, she was just there to get a pay cheque essentially. And then my head of school who … I think in my time there we had three heads of schools, so it was just … basically the head teacher had no input. Every head teacher we had just said 'You know what you're doing, get on with it, if there's a problem I'll come and talk to you, just close the doors in your wing and get on with it.' And so that's what I mean – I had no SLT support, so I just closed my doors and got on with it. They had no idea what I was doing. I think for the first year … no no no, for the first two terms we were still doing topic-based learning and I went to my head teacher going into summer term and I said 'I can't do this anymore, we have no resources, we're failing the children, the learning sucks, it's boring, I don't even want to be here. The behaviour of the children is horrible, you can see why – school's boring, I want to change it. I want to go with the children's interests, I want to go all down the route of child-led learning, I don't want any forward planning aside from phonics. You know no forward planning maths – nothing' … and she said absolutely not … and I did it anyways. I (laughs) Of course you did! R So she just went back to 'Shut the doors, I don't care, get on with it, you're great at your job' so I thought fine. So for all of summer term we had a weekly SLT and I lied about … which I shouldn't have done, it was wrong … but I lied about what we were doing in early years in terms of our curriculum, because I wanted the evidence to prove in September when we looked at our curriculum that the way I wanted to do it was better. And I knew that if I asked again to change things I would be told categorically no, so I was very unprofessional and I went behind SLT's back and my governor's backs and I did it anyways, and I changed everything. And I trained	Forced to take drastic action because no one was listening Trying to do what is right for the children	Neglect- they should have been more involved Isolation- emphasises how detached EY are from the rest of the school Conflict and control- if they are so hands off,

		why do they care?
~~my staff, I lobbied to not be included in the rest of the school staff meetings and I did my own trainings, and we had those every week. And every Tuesday morning we had team meetings where we would digress from the week, and we would talk about what's going well, what do we need to work on. And anyway, we did that for all of the summer term, and then in August when I had our SLT meeting to talk about the curriculum I said 'So this is what I have been doing' - I got in huge trouble from the governors and everything — a lot of trouble - I had to sign a document saying I'd never do it again. It was my fault, I shouldn't have done that, I appreciate I was deeply unprofessional from going behind their backs — however I couldn't get through to these people that we're running this school … it was like trying to fit a square inside a circle, like it just was never going to happen. And I had the evidence to back me because I knew … well actually I went into that meeting in August thinking that I'm going to come out of it without a job, because I thought I was going to get fired, because I knew what I had done was wrong. And I went in with a huge folder, like 3 inches thick of evidence, on why we need to change our curriculum, and they accepted it.~~		

Ben Ford- CPD

~~I also find that in my current position there is absolutely no opportunity to move forward, no career development, no autonomy, no agency for change, no access to continuing professional development, not even the technology or resources I require to successfully do my (inaudible 1:12:30) I find it's not only my time that's increasingly expected for nothing, I also provide other essential resources too. My story will continue, but if I'm honest I cannot say right now for how much longer. I do question the sustainability of the role. I certainly know that I'm looking for a new role in the next year or two. I know there is a conflict in my current position between my ethos and values as an early years educator, and I know this conflict must come to an end at some point~~	Lack of opportunity for growth	
~~I wonder how far … you know at what point … how does that happen, how do you get to decent rational people accepting terrible things because that's just what is happening, and what you have to do. I wonder how far you can move away from your core ethos, how many times your values are tested before you say right … or how far do you get down the line before you look and think hold on a minute I'm labelling kids or I'm doing things that I know is …~~	Government policy IS abusive- as Al Aynsley Green says 'why do you hate your children?'	This goes beyond neglect- it IS abuse
~~I It's wrong.~~	Ben, like most teachers (I hope)	

R ~~Abusive you know – I'm there to protect them. If I am carried along down a line to a point of being abusive, that's something that's seriously wrong and dangerous, scary~~	is here to protect the children	
Coco		
~~**I'd been in that classroom for 8 years and I was like 'I need more, I need more mental stimulation for me' and then you go back to the professional development and that side of things. And it's like I can't just keep doing the same thing and … I'm good at what I do, I know I'm good at what I do, but I want to be better, I want to be more.**~~ And then you get that whole thing in schools where 'Oh yeah but we can't move people around' and we don't do this and we don't do that' and the politics and everything else, it's like that's a whole other set of expectations and another battle to fight, and quite frankly I was done, I'm done – I'm done with the battles.	Coco was stagnating and needed CPD	
R I want this picture. But it was, it was the only way I could find of doing something that was for me, that was mine. I wasn't doing it for the school – they would probably have benefited had I stayed and they'd have valued my work. But I wasn't doing it for them, I was doing it for me. My own children had gone off to uni, they were doing their degrees, they were fine and sorted, my husband was fine – I'm doing this for me.	Unavailability of CPD for QTMEYS	
But ~~I think professional development in early years is really quite difficult. There are a huge number of local authority courses, but they're aimed at people that are starting out …~~	Performativity	Neglecting to make a sincere commitment- if policy is evidence informed, why isn't this evidence being used?
~~it's all about can you tick those boxes, and it's not about are you developing in your own practice and as a person able to fulfil that role. And I think again this comes back to the funding situation,~~	The valuing of professional development is written into the ECF but will the culture shift and will it shift for everyone- what is there for QTMEYS?	
R But perhaps if there was the shift in culture in schools and the shift in emphasis away from ticking the boxes, then the staff would have time to value each other and to value what each other bring. Because at the moment it's a … I'm in Year 2 I haven't got time to be thinking about that, or I'm in Year 4, whatever – you haven't got that time, there's no more hours – there are no more - (inaudible 1:20:18) of that time. I know somebody who went to Singapore as a maths exchange – they only teach for half a day and the rest		CPD in England focuses on compliance, performativity

of the time is professional development and research and things. I mean can you imagine – good God! – that's really … I Radical. R I know but it's that valuing your professional development and understanding.		and control instead

Merida

So a staff Inset in a school is free – the head teacher plans it and puts it on, or SLT plans it and puts it on – whereas sending six early years practitioners to go to this hotel in the middle of London to learn about how to use the sand tray to teach maths and spend thousands is just not practical – schools aren't willing to do it. So I think in terms of training it's just inaccessible for schools that don't have big budgets to send their teams on these trainings. , we need to be included. I … and be included in that decision-making so that what we have isn't just a chopped down version that a Year 6 teacher can understand, it's actually something meaningful. What do we need from our school leaders? R We need support, we need educated leaders, you can't have a head teacher that's never been in early years. You know our head teachers need to be teaching in all of the year groups, we need discussions. And I appreciate it's difficult to run a school when you're busy, you can't listen to every single staff member, but early years practitioners need to be heard, and every year that's … you know you go to these seminars and that's what comes up every single year – 'I'm not heard, I'm ignored' and I think our SLT, our head teachers, they need to wake up to that, they need to hear what we're screaming out at them. And we need to say … we don't need to have a moaning fest, that's not what it needs to be, it needs to be a constructive conversation, this is what's working well, maybe we could change a few things, and everyone needs to be on the same page, and the leaders need to be not so afraid of trying new things. You know they need to turn into the child, they need to learn from the people, they need to work on their grit and really get into it, and not be afraid of those inspectors. Because a lot of my friends that I speak to that are in early years say the same thing, that their heads are just worried to change anything because what if it goes wrong. Amazing if it goes wrong, learn from it when it goes wrong, good like you can learn from that.	Because QTMEYS are a minority, training is not cost effective and not a priority SLT lack understanding nd wont develop it unless they start listening to QTMEYS	Neglect- not having any understanding of EY makes you an ineffective leader unless you are willing to listen because your vision will be in conflict with EY practice

Nancy Forester- Funding/ support

| Nancy: ..access the help that you know might be available to along... along the way, and yeah so again, it was kind of sometimes feeling a bit like... **well, we can't do anything about it, yet you've got to wait two terms anyway so you're just gonna have to get on with it and get some locks on the doors so he can't escape quite as much, there was a few instances where I was like I'm just I'm just I have to call for someone you know we need people here because I can't leave that child running around the school grounds but I can't leave these children here. Yeah. Yeah. But, again, I suppose you know, everybody, you know everyone was trying their best and we hadn't come across that situation before so. Yeah.** to have had somebody able to come in with that kind of external I would have been really helpful actually Perhaps that university did sort of discussions around ADHD things like that, with a more focused on once you've already identified a particular neuro thing, I think, so I mean there was some...I'm trying to dredge up in my memory, now that, and you know, there was some sort of discussion around best practice around...you know visual timetables and all the tools that we can use in the classroom to make things more accessible. And there was certainly a great you know kind of push on inclusion and inclusive practice, and that was. but again, that early is environment is so different isn't it I would have probably felt better about that if I felt that my understanding of the needs was better and because it would have felt like I was talking from a place of experience and knowledge, whereas I was, you know... I felt very naive about how best to support the children and how to juggle it all, because obviously that that parent is there for their child and that that is their interests. I signed posted her to the SENCO who was in school, but then the SENCO came and said, why did you send that woman to me, and you know so didn't necessarily always feel like I was always as well supported as, maybe I could have been the resources for school projects and staffing training, and the joining up for services, you know those sort of early intervention any support services for those very young children with those needs coming into school and not being able to access appropriate support for them is massively frustrating for them and their families | Frustration with system and SLT but still saying everyone is trying their best

Need for expert advise

Lack of input in ITE = lack of competence in school

Was this because it was reception and the SENCO didn't see it as her job, was she overstretched too or was Nancy drowning? | |

Ben- Funding

| The school can't provide you with the equipment you need, but you're expected to do this in your own time, you're expected to go out and buy the equipment. Yeah I am sitting here with a laminator next to me which is ... how many laminators I've bought and broken because (laughs) ... it's a fixture on my dining room table | Chronic underfunding | |

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~~because there's just no time in school time to do what you need to do. And you know I've got a bag of stuff up there ready to go to take back with clipboards and stickers and pens, you know, to be able to do what I need to do – I need certain things. And the easiest way of getting them sometimes is to just buy them yourself, because then I can do what I need to do.~~	but also lack of value for staff and lack of understanding about peoples finances- doesn't anyone care!	

Etta- destruction of maintained nurseries

~~it's driven by economic need, and how you do it cheaply basically. And the need is to allow more families, especially women out into the workforce, so … we are expensive. I mean even when I came from the school nursery to the children's centre I was amazed at the children's centre provision. You know we'd get something like £1000 or something a year in the budget at this school to spend, so there was very little materials or resources. I mean the children's centre, the nursery I'm in is not typical necessarily but it was huge. I mean it's got a huge outdoor area and a huge grassed area and three really big rooms you know – cupboards full of exciting things. So I mean basically we're not allowed to buy anything at the moment – and that's been going on for two years or so. And we can just about replenish our paints and paper and those sort of things. So they're expensive I think. I think also it's not just … and I've tried to explain this … I don't think it's just that we're expensive, it is also that we are a challenge pedagogically you know. And that is what I try to build up the background evidence for through my journey – my personal journey. Through early years it's completely the area where I've been enriched, and the number of people who know what they're talking about because they've been in practice is huge basically, it's like this solid mass. It kind of makes me reflect back to how I used to look at the nursery team in the school and think why are they so confident and happy. And it was because of their self-confidence about what they were doing, why they were doing it, their role you know. And what we do is … I think they need to get rid of us, to swipe if off basically~~		
I believe our destiny is entwined with future resistance to the type of state education system the government is enforcing.	Etta is fiercely committed to her setting, her	Neglect (more like abuse really)

in a day sometimes I feel that I can move from being completely at one and comfortable and happy and engaged in what I'm doing and it can very quickly turn to being very stressed and annoyed and upset. And that's because purely physical things … well two things – physical things, the team is so small and we're managing such a large area there are real concrete problems arise that create tensions. And I was speaking to the other teacher in setting and there's been no cover for me when I've been off except for the deputy who will come down perhaps at the end of session or the beginning of session, but then will be there and suddenly not there because she's got lots of meetings and things. And we've had another member off due to Covid, there's been no cover for her. So people are really really struggling you know. But you know … yeah, I kind of think my personal feeling is I will probably end up being made redundant unless we win something soon, and our setting will disappear basically	colleagues and the children she works with, without proper funding, the centre is unsustainable	Control- they are breaking it so it will no longer be their responsibility
You can't get around it, you have to invest in it, and you have to invest in it financially, and then you have to commit to investment in its development you know. And by that I mean as a state run body. I mean I strongly believe that. I mean the federation, all of these things that have happened to us … you mentioned SCITT, I didn't even put that in, but we are a teaching school, and that we became a teaching school in order to try and help us survive. But of course it hasn't worked, I mean last year we didn't have any students. So I think for me – everything that we're calling for has to be met, which is you know the funding. Also I think it's kind of the same cry that's coming out of the mainstream which is to let us listen to our voices, you know in terms of what should be going on and how it should be going on. So you know again that's not going to happen under the current government. And you know I think courses like mine … and in fact the one that I was on, the 4 year B.Ed, are invaluable, absolutely invaluable. And look at me – it's kept me in the profession you know. And I'm sure there are other people who've done a one year PGCE and what have you, but I think it was good value for money in the long term really.	Investment is essential but professional satisfaction must also be addressed. The government needs to listen. The system is broken	
Merida		
It went horribly wrong, I think when that school opened the executive head teacher and the governors had a lot of say over what was going in the building. And none of the teachers – at the time it was just early years because then it grew each year, but at the time none of the early years staff were included in that decision at	Links to Ben's point about decisions being made that effect	

	~~all, so you know it was filled with tables and chairs … because people who didn't have the early years experience (inaudible 29:12). And then by the time it was all furnished our budget was blown and we couldn't get anything else, so we just had to work with what we had. So you know it did have the potential to be an amazing setting, but everything about it was all wrong, and I think it's just because there wasn't the right people designing it.~~	EY by people with no EY experience- is this arrogance or ignorance? Is it a patriarchal attitude that just assumes they know best?
I	So the people who designed the early years setting had no early years experience of expertise?	
R	Yeah. Why? Why?	
I	Hi, what's going on? (laughs)	
R	Yeah definitely.	
I	Were you the first teacher to teach in that early years setting?	
R	I was the second teacher to teach in that setting.	
I	And had the first teacher who taught in that setting in early years in that setting got any early years experience and expertise? Or …	
R	She had worked in reception for one year the year before. And there's nothing wrong with being an NQT, I actually think NQTs are brilliant because they're fresh out of school, specially if they've had great teachers at uni. So there's nothing wrong with her lack of experience. What was wrong with that was that because of her lack of experience there was so much pressure in a brand new school, there was no planning, there was no assessments put in, there was just nothing. So how do you only teach for one year – in a completely different borough as well, so never mind you know … your dynamic of families, everything is so different … and then expect to run a setting from literal ground zero, I mean it's an impossible task. It's a challenging task for an experienced practitioner, never mind someone that's done it for 10 months.	Such a great opportunity but so much pressure on such an inexperienced teacher!
I	But they found this teacher with one year experience of teaching reception and decided that it would be a good idea to put her in charge of this. But all the decision making had already been done, they'd already got the resources, and they just gave her pressure to get results presumably, to sort of show progress in that year, to …	
R	Yeah, she was friends with the head teacher, so that's how she got the job. So it wasn't really … you know they didn't even really vet any candidates or anything like that. And then I think the idea was that the head teacher and her would develop the setting. But I think everyone involved … because I came a year later … I think everyone involved just really underestimated the amount of work that goes into building a new school. And not even just a nursery, like it was designed to go up to Year 6, so there's a lot of work that had to go	

into it, so their minds I guess were just on other things. But then because of that they got it wrong from day dot, because they couldn't focus on early years. I don't really know how it went so horribly wrong because there's nurseries popping up all over the place that are just brilliant and you just think how have you got this so wrong. They were set up to fail before they even opened.		

1. Needs identified within literature/ theoretical framework		
competence	Autonomy	Relatedness

2. Sources of ambient support/ dissonance (emerging from the written narratives)					
Networks and communities of practice outside the setting	Early Years experts/ role models	Colleagues	Children and families	SLT	Policy makers/ Ofsted	CPD

Ben Ford

R I think – I don't know, I guess I kind of – in my mind, even though I never really thought about it … there were reasons why I couldn't be. And those reasons I couldn't be were being gay, being working class, you know – there were barriers that I assumed meant that I couldn't do it I think. I Yeah. R I found that those barriers are quite real (laughs) still – I am quite freakish as a man, as a gay man. I got picked on quite a lot. You know the elephant in the room was the man in the room. I kind of couldn't help myself, there were times when people would refer to 'So ladies …' or 'So girls …' – and I'd just kind of go 'Uh … hi, just reminding you, I'm here'. (laughs) So yeah, and I was kind of – if they needed a body for anything I was that person. Yeah. It was either I was completely ignored and you know they talk to the girls, or I was just whoo – focus on … I Like a pendulum – you can have all or nothing, all or nothing. R Yeah it was. And there were literally times when it felt like 'Now everybody, turn and look at the man' (laughs) – I did feel a little bit odd	Societal barriers-who are these people who make people feel like this! What are they afraid of? Gendered nature of workforce means even in ITE, men are a minority	Isolation/ lack of inclusion

Coco		
~~When I went into the school I became very aware that teachers that weren't in the areas were never going to cover early years – if anyone had to come and cover in the Early Years department I as the TA did the teaching, and they sat in a corner somewhere – that was the initial bit. And then the PE teacher at that school who used to teach across all of the year groups would deliberately schedule things for when we had our PE slots because he didn't want to teach them.~~ ~~(laughs) I mean in fairness I used to have one little girl who when we had apparatus … because the PE teacher was male … and she'd go and sit on the corner of a piece of apparatus and rock – and he just didn't know what to do with that. (laughs) Like 'What's going on there?' – and I can see why that would make him a little bit uncomfortable and fair enough, but you're a professional, deal with it, move on. And~~ ~~I was friends with the Year 4 and the Year 5 teachers in that school and we were quite friendly, but the joke was always that that wasn't the real teaching – early years is not real teaching. And we're not coming down there because all you do is wipe bums and noses, you know, and what can we do down there. And it was about them not understanding everything that was taking place in there.~~ ~~The gap between early years and key stage 2 is huge~~ – and key stage 2 staff just have no interest, they have no care, they have no understanding. And I think for me the difficulties come with the fact that quite often the teachers that are in Year 1 have just as little understanding of what's going on in early years, and that means that they're not able to support those children. Because they don't understand what you were doing while they were with you and how to move them up to where they perhaps should be – they're not there when they get there.	Lack of understanding breads disrespect and although some of the 'jokes' are made 'tongue in cheek' they are barbed and they hurt. The incident with the little girl is interesting- quite common in early years but shows the skills needed are so different	
Merida		

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I just saw so many people's true colours, and I just thought I don't want to do this, I don't want to work in this type of environment, and is every school like this? Then I went to the next school, then I met more teachers, and I thought 'No it's like this almost everywhere'. (laughs)	Everyone at their worse right when they should have been pulling together	

Ben Ford		

~~it just staggers me that actually you can be a teacher and not understand where these children have come from. But it's a common attitude I have, you know as I say later on I think …~~ I've heard a lot from the head teacher 'Well you're early years' - well you're early years, so you're not really a teacher is the implication. Never mind I have to teach them to read and write, you know – and there are questions if they can't do that by the end of the year … but how do you expect me to teach them to read and write and maintain an outside classroom as well as an inside?	Inadequacy in ITE? Also means those in SLT lack understanding	Mitigates neglect and isolation to some extent and makes the conflict worthwhile
I took her to one side and said look I'm here for you, I'm here for your daughter and for you, you know. I work for the school and the organisation, I'm going to follow the rules, however I'm here for you, so if there's a problem come to me. And she was just like oh okay okay. And then over the year she kind of warmed	This is who we work for! To what extent does what we are asked to focus on in schools enable or inhibit us from building these vital partnerships with parents?	He shouldn't have to wait for a stranger to get this affirmation
even if this does nothing else but reaffirm actually that you know I'm a nice guy and I kind of know what I'm talking about you know I'm doing my best … but I really just appreciate that, thank you, just to kind of have a (reflection 1:04:48)		
~~I do understand that head teachers have you know a really really difficult job and their necks are on the line, you know, I understand that. And they have mortgages and children to pay for – I worry that their mortgages are actually more important than the children in the school in a lot of cases. I worry that the people who get to be head teachers are … you know there are two types of teacher, there are those that are creative and rebel and want the best for the child, you know child centred, and there are those that like ticking boxes. And I think those that like ticking boxes are yes people, they're not the 'yes but',~~ you	SLT don't have autonomy- they have submitted to the system- links to Freire and DeBeauvoir	

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know they're just 'yes'. So they get promoted and they're not the mavericks that I learnt from when I did my PGCE. you know my plan was to go into management, but now absolutely not, you know, that's not … I'm not doing that, no way. No. That would be going too far beyond my values. Or I think I would do it in a way that would mean that I couldn't sustain it because I would be having arguments with people. I just need to find a different way. I still hold out that there's got to be good out there, there's got to be somewhere where you find likeminded people, and people are doing things for the right reasons and then – there's got to be, got to be.	Ben would be a great leader but this is perhaps why more people don't want to do it- it's NOT leadership!	
Coco		
the role takes over your life very easily, and I constantly felt like I was failing, I was expected to complete PIPs assessments. And I knew what the next steps were, I didn't need to do those assessments to do that - it did not matter how hard I tried … I had a child who clearly had some difficulty and I worked so hard with her parents. I managed to get her a diagnosis and appropriate resources, and the Year 1 teacher cried and said I don't know you survived the year, but no one had recognised the struggles I had had while she was in my class. I felt completely demoralised, and I think that was the tipping point. I had this class where I had this one little girl … and she was amazing, don't get me wrong, this little girl was amazing … but eventually her diagnosis was ADHD and dyspraxic and hypermobility syndrome. That child is never going to sit still anywhere – ever. (laughs) But she was really bright so everything just came out of her mouth, yeah? So you've got that going on. I had other children in the class who were already on Year 1 maths and working beyond. I had others who couldn't hold a pencil. And you've given me someone who you wouldn't have employed previously to support me in this classroom when I've got what actually turned out to be one of the most challenging classes that went through the school.	Pointless tasks-Sisyphus Lack of interest/ recognition/ respect until going through it herself We don't just support children, we work so closely with families too- closer than anywhere else in the school but the emotional investment takes a toll	

~~I   'They're only early years, they only play all day, don't they – why do you need someone qualified down there?'~~
~~R   Well you know …~~
~~I   (laughs)~~
~~R   ... (inaudible 34:05) someone to make me tea and that sort of thing. And that particular child's parents were amazing, and they were completely aware that although she was their eldest first, it was only when the second one came along that they realised that you know 'Ah, they're not all quite as mad as she is'. (laughs) So her mum used to come in and cry because she hadn't slept and she hadn't … you know she wouldn't eat, she'd only eat things if they weren't touching each other on the plate … you know there was all sorts of things going on with her. And so you're dealing with parents who are quite anxious under normal circumstances, and this was not a normal circumstance … as well as dealing with the whole class and then you feel as though you're failing the rest of the students because you're having to focus on making sure she's got what she needs. You're having to create a whole new set of resources so that she can do her best as well as create the resources for everybody else. It was just like I'm seriously firefighting. And when I got to the October half term of that year and I said to my then deputy head it's not working, this is not working, I need some support, I need some help, I need some time – 'Well what's the problem?' And I says well this this this this, and she went 'Oh well that's just a normal class'. Okay then. And the fact that all of the teachers in the infants part of the school knew this child before she'd even been at the school for a term tells you that it wasn't just a normal situation.~~

I think when I first started in that school and I was supported by a very supportive head I was like 'Hey I'm good, I've got this' and I think then when that situation changed and my role changed you were then faced with … I have one teacher who when I was given the role of early years lead she came to me and she says 'I'm in charge in this school not you' – because she'd been there for 20 years and she was the Year 1 teacher.
I think for a while I shut down, I just didn't engage. You know I sat in staff meetings and didn't say a word, I just sort of let everything go on around me and just thought well I'll just be in my classroom, I'll shut the doors and that'll be fine. And then I decided I was going to do my masters, and I sort of became quite bolshy in the meetings.

SLT didn't know what was and wasn't normal because they had never worked in reception!	
Coco was respected by the head	
But, as her role changed, there was resentment from colleagues	
Maybe this is why they don't want people doing CPD!	
Really important- learning from action	

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think ~~it's very easy when you're teaching in a school because it's so demanding – you go in, your head's down, that's your school, that's what you're dealing with, and you never look up, and you never see the bigger picture. And I think for me this was the looking up and finding the bigger picture, and consequently going 'I don't to be part of that picture anymore'.~~	and reflection on action etc	
Merida		
And my Key Stage 1 leader was just useless, she'd never been a leader of anything before, and she didn't want anything to do with early years. She had applied for my job and didn't get it. So she was bitter from the moment I got hired, because they put her in Key Stage 1 instead of early years - she wanted to be in early years and she didn't get the job. She was just miserable, a horrible colleague. And then SLT – so we were on SLT and then there was my SENCo who was just useless, she was just there to get a pay cheque essentially. And then my head of school who … I think in my time there we had three heads of schools, so it was just … basically the head teacher had no input. Every head teacher we had just said 'You know what you're doing, get on with it, if there's a problem I'll come and talk to you, just close the doors in your wing and get on with it. ~~I just had enough and I wrote a letter to the governors actually, and I just said listen, you talk about budgets and this and that and the other thing, but from September to now May we've spent 28 hours in these staff meetings learning all of these different topics, but when … so you're investing all of that, you're paying us to be here for all of those staff meetings, but not one of them is relevant to early years, so can you not spare two hours, can I not have two hours to plan an Inset or to plan an evening where I train the whole school on this is what we do in early years, these are the characteristics of effective learning, like in the statutory requirements – what do you mean you don't know what creating and thinking critically even means, why can you not give me … you know it just baffled me. And she said yes, do it and we'll see how it goes – and I trained the whole school … my first training was on the characteristics of effective learning. And they all moaned, how was this relevant, you know – why do I need to care about active learning, and they just moaned. And by the end of it there were more teachers leaving thinking 'Oh I could implement that in Year 2' 'I could do that in Year 3' 'I could do that in Year 1' – because it was engaging you know, it wasn't just~~	Lack of opportunities in Primary mean people go for posts they aren't qualified for because there is nothing else available Hands off leadership The transferability of EY training makes it beneficial for everyone Sharing this with everyone raises awareness of EY and could help to increase respect for QTMEYS	

listing to me talk, we had games, we had to match things, we had to watch videos of the children playing and write an observation about it. It was just so hands-on, just like early years is, and it inspired more teachers to change their practice, never mind come down and visit early years, it was 'Oh I could implement this early years strategy in my Year 3 teaching'.		

Nancy Forester		
I guess it was an opportunity to yeah to learn, you know in person, a bit more about those differences, but you know you don't want to appear too stupid. especially as being the only teacher in early is in a school, you know you sort of think well I can't appear to be lacking in in knowledge, because otherwise I think the whole school is rubbish and so you know you're there is that, yes, you are an NQT but at the same time, you know you have this responsibility and colleague so you don't know all that well yeah but there's also you know the sort of acronyms and things like that which I mean, obviously, education is littered with those things anyway, but there are quite a few early years specific ones. And then you know the sort of debates around handwriting and things	Early years network meeting	
Etta		
there are all sorts of people. And one of the things about the pandemic I think that is good and has helped us is that people have been put in touch with these organisations people can have access much easier, you don't have to go on a physical course somewhere you know. So I think that's a good thing. And there have been many more forums actually talking about what goes on in the under 4s really. But otherwise … I mean I think it's incredibly hard especially if you are one or two reception teachers to stand your ground. Because you're on your own to some extent in that setting. my morale … when there's some sort of fight collectively going on that involves beyond our setting I think that has kept me going. And during the pandemic we have had members of the ▮ in the sector	And get involved in professional organisations- again, the pandemic has made this easier and could have a positive impact on reducing isolation and supporting the development of professional	

has grown, but also I know more people now who are activists across the country in different layers, in different positions in nurseries, so it's more cohesive – so that sort of thing has kept me going. But my morale I think it goes – it fluctuates all the time really.

~~I think what's been good about some of the people that I've met … you know I'll talk to them not just about organising activity, but I'll talk to them about … so for example when the under 3 unit came down to us I was thinking how do we work this. And so having people to go and talk to who had integrated … and actually talk to them about how it worked and what didn't work, and it was quite interesting because one had tried it and they stopped it, another one you know they loved that way of working. So in terms of like professionally I've been able to meet other people outside of … because one of the things about as well our training is that we've become … because there's no money we train each othe~~

confidence amoung ECT's- valuable sources of confirmatory cognition

he pandemic has encouraged people to find new ways of working and supported the cross pollination of ideas while making people feel like part of a wider professional community

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Merida

so many good really brilliant teachers are leaving the profession and they're leaving with such a horrible taste in their mouth because they hate the job now. And you know it shouldn't be like that – especially in early years

it's so sad to see so many teachers leaving. And then what's replacing them is this just like cookie cutter version of not at all what we need in early years. And it's no wonder so many children don't want to come to school

~~unfortunately the practitioners that are really good and really passionate are so few and far between that they just get burnt out because they try and try and try to make change but no one hears them. So eventually they do the easy thing which is just give up. Not all of them, there are some still fighting for us, you're still fighting for us, you know there's brilliant people out there still fighting for early years, but~~

Retention- people become exhausted by trying to fight the system

Cookie cutter teachers won't cut it in the EY classroom

And are damaging children

Human casualties- link to Ben, the job shouldn't be incompatible with

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so many people … you know especially with mental health all around us now think okay well what's more important – my career where no one's listening to me, or my family at home and my children never see me because I'm working such long hours trying to sort out my early years. And when I am home I'm not present because I'm so stressed about what failed in the day, so now I'm failing my children – now my relationship's falling apart because my mind is somewhere else. And then you have to think when does it stop.	having a family, and Coco and Nancy talking about impact on home life	Reducing isolation and conflict

6. Needs identified within literature/ theoretical framework		
competence	Autonomy	Relatedness

1. Sources of ambient support/ dissonance (emerging from the written narratives)						
Networks and communities of practice outside the setting	Early Years experts/ role models	Colleagues	Children and families	SLT	Policy makers/ Ofsted	CPD

Etta		
I often hear that people are being placed into reception or even nursery, you know, from higher up. And I think it has a major impact. Especially I think in reception, because it means that these teachers are coming, driven by the SATs you know, and the whole thing about assessed learning and what have you. They talk about continuous provision but they don't get it really - it's almost like that's 'This is your free playtime' sort of thing.

often you find where there are nurseries and receptions in school that are remaining true, it's because there's something progressive as I would call it going on in the rest of the school. But again I think it's very hard for those heads you know to … many of them have had to compromise on things, you know, you won't find a head that's not doing SATs basically. | | |
| Nancy- baseline | | |

it felt like it was moving away from child led learning and it felt like there would be a tendency towards one style of learning that it kind of was gearing up for that more formal learning environment and the baseline and really scared me because it felt like. it felt like it, and you know that expectation of take of taking children out of an environment they would just you know be newly settling into and would be really potentially disruptive for their social and emotional wellbeing, and the time out for whichever adult was going to have to facilitate that baseline felt well we don't we're not gonna we're not gonna have spare you know spare adults around doing nothing that can do. You know I suppose the nature of the baseline you're being taught screen based and where we're seeing children coming in, you know with who have so much use of screens at home and and that that sort of it's a little bit of a bugbear of that sort of you know, the iPad between yourself and the child- tapestry # We tried really hard to not have yeah yeah, and so it felt like and then any little reasons that and also it was kind of… the arguments floating around were all, you know, how do you know where they are, if you don't baseline them . We do baseline them, but we baseline them in a way that gives us a much better picture of where that child is at because we observed them, for you know, for a number of weeks. And once they're settled and we wait until we know they're settled because we use an assessment tool to make sure they're settled, before we do that, though, and it's a much more again that word authentic assessment. And then, what this will, and anyway **it's not for the child is for the government. So why are we doing this.** Lack of authenticity at all levels around the proposed changes and, as you said that shift to a very formal way of doing things that's not for the benefit of the child. I feared that it would take away from that important settling in that they might. I mean, obviously we would we would have done it in a way that would have been friendly and fun and you know as far as it goes, but it wouldn't have it would have been very different from their Parents own school experience. Yeah they wouldn't have been performing at their best because it wouldn't have felt- It was unfair really on them yeah. they wouldn't show you the whole child as well you know such an amazing talkers but they're not yet you know they're not yet there with their numbers so like what's being valued here what. You know why it's one thing that needs more than another when you're looking at the whole child in their development. we felt it wasn't going really to work.		
Coco- patriarchy/ curriculum		

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Why are we not allowed to know what we're doing. I think that's one of the key things. You know you've given me this framework, and it's a great framework for focus and it's really good for those that are coming into the profession, it's an amazing piece of equipment to help them understand how learning develops. And I haven't looked at the new one because I just can't bring myself to do it, but I know that there was talk of the knowledge and understanding disappearing completely, and you're like – well okay then so we don't need to worry about whether it's raining and there's puddles to jump in and what happens to them when the sun comes out.	Patriarchy- views on position of women in society and need to dominate or ignore or repress them- why? FEAR?
can they read, can they write, that's all you need to worry about. What a sad reflection.	
As long as they can … can they do a number 5 with it being the right way round.	But this means giving back control by listening to the experts, by being brave enough to admit that they were wrong! By using the evidence !!!
And do they know which way B and D goes – that's fine, don't need to worry about it.	
That understanding that actually they have to learn to communicate, and communication is not just speaking. You know we've got this whole society now who think that if somebody's got an opinion that's different to theirs it's wrong and they shouldn't listen to it. No – you have to listen to everything and make your own decisions. So if you get something wrong what did you get from that. If you did something right – great, how are you going to move forward. How are you going to explain that to somebody else? We want them to have that skill, they need to be able to express themselves, and at the moment that is lost because we're too busy ticking boxes to making sure that they can do their timestables and that they can do their spellings and everything else. They might be able to spell the words, they have no clue what to do with it once they can.	
You know the idea that children have freedom to explore and investigate for themselves is a completely alien concept. You know go out in the garden, go and play, I don't care what you do – dig a hole, fall in it, you know … but we've lost that because children are only allowed to do what they're assigned to do	

we try our very best in early years to give them the idea that they can do things for themselves and they can explore for themselves and they can investigate for themselves, and then we take it away. you are squashing them right at the beginning. so the policymakers need to know that that approach in early years is actually the approach that should be permeating all the way through the curriculum. These are things we know, we know these things		
Merida- curriculum		
There's higher expectations in England for the children which is a positive in some ways. In Canada the ~~curriculum is more about the whole child. Like it's even on our curriculum teaching them how to sit up properly and eat with cutlery. And not in a Victorian style but just about the whole child, teaching them about manners and their units and books that they recommend on how to have lovely manners, and just about the whole child. And everything is done through a different enquiry topic and the children lead their learning, so if we're learning about families in Canada you might read a book about families and then it would stem – okay who's in your family, do you have siblings, do you consider your pets your family – and you would go down all of these different lines of enquiry to learn about families, how we are like different. And then a lot of schools here I found do like an 'I am me' topic or – they're always so similar. And you know you do the classic look at yourself in the mirror and everyone paints a self-portrait, I think is so classic in early years. Whereas in Canada it goes a lot deeper than that, and it's you know where are you from, what's the land around us, and it's just a more holistic approach to learning. Yeah and in England I found the curriculum very closed off. **I found when I first moved here teachers were afraid to leave development matters behind. I know that the early years curriculum is now shifting, which is brilliant, but if that child didn't hit that statement in that 40 to 60 band it doesn't matter, or if they're doing this amazing learning in the garden where they've counted the worms they've found when they're planting beans for Jack and the Beanstalk, but that doesn't link to a statement on development matters, we won't observe them we'll move on. And that wasn't the**~~	nteresting comparisons- England promotes surface learning and performativity more than Canada. There is a lot that MUST be covered so teachers focus on this rather than being truly child led. Teachers lack professional confidence Merida is describing a climate of fear where there is constant pressure	

~~practitioner's fault, it was the way the curriculum has been built, and it's the pressure that early years practitioners have to have the evidence, because teacher judgement does not exist. Anyone who says teacher judgement – they're wrong, okay they're wrong. If it's not on a piece of paper, if it's not written down on an observation, if it's not photographed it didn't happen, the inspectors don't care, the head teacher doesn't care – they need the proof. And I've found when I first moved here that so many practitioners were ignoring those beautiful moments with children because they had to get the evidence, they had to get the data … and I hated it to be honest with you.~~	from SLT to ensure targets are met… …to satisfy Ofsted.	

Nancy Forester- impact of Ofsted on SLT		
~~I think almost like..and you know… we know you're getting success so so let's move on now to something. You know something else that's think about I will they're being really successful in their learning, so why can't they come to assembly it's like well they're being successful in their learning because they're not coming to assembly. You know that ain't broke don't fix it and. That, I think… There is, you know, sometimes, and in a in an environment where people don't fully understand and maybe they fill in that there are gaps in understanding with…assumptions or suspicions. And instead of asking what's actually going on and partly that's because schools are such pressurised places no one's ever got any time. And…and…yeah I remember the head saying, because her daughter was sort of three two or three at the time and her she's saying Oh, I really hope that you're still the teacher here when she starts because she's likely to come to the school and I really hope that you're that you're…. and then kind of the next day so okay how about how about formal registration.~~ ~~I mean OFSTED was coming, and there was concern about all we're trying this new thing, and… and we need to maybe… maybe we need to redress the balance you don't want to go back to how it was maybe we want a bit too far, that way.~~ ~~I know that early years gets its own writing doesn't it, but so rare that you get an OFSTED inspector he has a really decent understanding what it should look like and because I felt I felt certainly towards the ending, OFSTEAD said kind of looming, obviously we didn't know when it would actually happen, but, that that was definitely part of you~~		

know, a cog in the wheel of kind of changes. We've been a bit experimental but now OFSTED's coming we better kind of pull ourselves together and….		
Merida- ofsted		
I was never afraid of OFSTED because when I first moved here I'd never experienced it, nothing, so when we got the call and everyone was panicking I thought what do you have to worry about – if you're doing your job well you have nothing to worry about. But teachers are petrified of … literally petrified of OFSTED and what they're going to say. And that is a huge problem with our curriculum. Even though OFSTED have nothing to do with our curriculum, teachers feel such pressure to teach everything that's on the national curriculum and Development Matters and get the evidence – that they miss all of those moments that actually they could link together. So my first inspection, not so much early years, but the rest of the school they stayed until 9 o'clock at night, they were hiding terrible books in the boot of their car so it wasn't in school, they were ripping down displays and changing displays. They were moving better teachers into more trickier classrooms so that the pupil behaviour would be better, even though they had never taught that class before. I was so naïve. I knew what OFSTED was obviously, at least I did my research, but I just thought we've got nothing to worry about, we're amazing, we're brilliant. And my earlier team was like 'What displays do we need to change? What needs to be double backed?' Nothing, you know. And they were like oh that display in the mud kitchen, it's ripped. And I said yeah it's ripped because a boy ripped that bit of paper and wrote 'mud' on that bit of paper, and that's why that is the label for our mud kitchen.	Teachers lack professional confidence Merida is describing a climate of fear where there is constant pressure from SLT to ensure targets are met… …to satisfy Ofsted Climate of fear generated by Ofsted- VIP in this narrative Although Ofsted shouldn't set the curriculum, they enforce it and have changed the way education is perceived	

So we didn't do that, and actually the night before OFSTED came my team and I had a huge blow-out because they were like 'You have no idea what you're doing, you're not from this country, we've done this before'. You know one of my TAs was like twice my age 'I've been doing this longer than you've been alive, you're going to fail us, we're going to fail' – horrible, because I wouldn't let them change a thing. And I sat them down and I … I was young and I said 'Listen, we're only as good as our weakest link, and right now you are our weakest link – you are doubting our setting, what does that say to the children?' 'Well the children aren't here, it's 6 o'clock at night'. I said 'Yeah, but your attitude – you're going to bring that into school tomorrow and the children will pick up on that attitude. You need to believe, you need to leave here tonight believing that we're amazing – because we are. And we've worked damned hard and we deserve this and we have nothing to stress about. So what – our learning journeys have scribble in them from the children or from the SEN child that ripped his front cover. You know why his learning journey is ripped? – because we put our learning journeys in the book corner where the children take pride in their work because they look at their learning journey every day because it's not hidden in a cupboard.'

so after we got over that huge argument – I sent them all home and my head teacher called me into her office and gave me a huge scorning for sending them home, I didn't have the right to send them home. I went above her and made that decision – no one was to leave until 9pm. She made me cry, I felt this big – yeah it was ridiculous. And I just apologised and moved on, but I wanted everyone to have a good night's sleep because no one can do their job properly when they're tired or stressed out, so I thought I was doing the right thing - that was my first experience. Yeah the school was in chaos, everyone was so panicked

it's so ridiculous. And yeah I just told my team to carry on like a normal day – and we did, we carried on like a normal day. And OFSTED was in our room for I think 2 hours both days, and they spent most of the time in Year 2 and Year 6, which I found in my next inspection was the same thing - they don't seem to care about early years as much. There's always one inspector isn't there that's you know 'early years'. But just because they did 3 months in early years 30 years ago it doesn't really make them early years does it? Yeah, and it was mainly aimed at the rest of the school. And then then they came in and observed us and we were doing what we normally do, we didn't change a

Annotations
(From written narrative)
Colleagues in other year groups panicking
Team panicking- the need to be perfect- to paint a picture/ a snap shot is all you get to show
Lack of confidence
Merida points out that their fear will impact the children
Lack of support- SLT just as afraid and lacking confidence

thing. At the time I was really big on outdoor learning, and so I was observed teaching a phonics lesson outside in the forest, and we made the sound, I think it was the letter P, and we had made it with sticks and we made it with stones and flower petals and all sorts. At the time my head teacher asked me not to do it, she said stay in the classroom and get them to practise on whiteboards, OFSTED's going to want to see them writing on whiteboards. And I said well if that's what you want me to do I will not be coming in, because that's … you've observed me so many times and you've said (inaudible 23:21) and I just said to her like why have you made me head of early years if I have no control over my team basically. I think I had just kind of a bad attitude. I was very much like 'I know what I'm doing is great, and if you make us change a thing we won't get outstanding'. I don't know if I was really full of myself or what, but I truly believed we had nothing to worry about.

It did freak the inspector out … I don't remember his name, but he was a man, and he did say to me he has never seen a lesson taught like that and he's never seen someone brave enough to do it, you know, it did freak him out. He asked me what was the progress, how can they make progress in literacy if they're not forming any letters. And I said 'But they did make progress because we learnt a new sound, we reviewed our old sound, then we learnt all of those fine motor activities to collect the sticks we needed'. And I said 'It's not just about their writing, we had to count how many flowers do we need to make the letter P — you know then we had to point to them. So now we're doing one to one correspondence, so that's our cross curricular linking' — and I just like went down this whole rabbit hole about how much progress they made. And I just freaked him out I think because I think he'd never had anyone speak to him like that before.

I just think there needs to be more of that discussion. And there isn't, I find so much now everything is just top down, top down. You know you're dictated by what you need to do, but actually you need to evaluate, and we need to acknowledge what we're not good at and how we can make that better, because no one is perfect

learning is messy, and I think we need to get messy and we need to really shake things up and be you know not afraid to do that. And everyone is so worried about OFSTED — OFSTED are only judging

Ofsted are so powerful, they are treated like gods!		
Do Ofsted really expect this or is this a lack of confidence in SLT? Why would she change if what she was doing had been highly praised already? Link to Nancy		
Merida has the professional confidence to speak truth to power- how do we get that for everyone?		

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~~you on those two days. So if three weeks before your inspection you tried to change the way you teach maths and it went horribly wrong OFSTED don't care. So make the mistakes, learn from them, adapt – and I just think there's not enough of that~~	Expectations are unrealistic but also, have nothing really to do with the job becayse they have been set by people who fundamentally do not understand the role of QTNMEYS and children's early learning nd development Culture of fear	